

World Religions

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Contents

Section 1: Introduction	1
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Part I. Section 2: Hinduism

1. Hinduism: Introduction	7
2. Fundamental Principles	14
3. Texts	16
4. Philosophy	19
5. Gods	23
6. Worship and Ritual	26
7. History	29
8. Links and attributions	34

Part II. Section 3: Jainism

9. Jainism: Introduction	39
10. The Teachings of Mahavira	41
11. Jina and the Soul	44
12. Origins and History	46
13. Links and Attributions	49

Part III. Section 4: Buddhism

14. Buddhism: Introduction	53
15. Overview	56

16. Origins	58
17. Buddha's Teachings	60
18. Early Development of Buddhism	64
19. Mahayana and Tantrism	69
20. Expansion of Buddhism	72
21. Institutions and Practices	76
22. Buddhism Today	79
23. Links and Attributions	81

Part IV. Section 5: Confucianism

24. Confucianism: Introduction	87
25. Principles and Texts	89
26. Confucian Schools of Thought	92
27. Neo-Confucianism	94
28. Links and Attributions	97

Part V. Section 6: Taoism

29. Taoism: Introduction and History	101
30. Links and Attributions	105

Part VI. Section 7: Shintoism

31. Shinto: Introduction and History	113
32. Links and Attributions	119

Part VII. Section 8: Judaism

33. Judaism: Introduction	123
34. Basic Doctrine and Sources	127

35. Worship and Practices	131
36. History	137
37. Judaism in America	145
38. Links and Attributions	149

Part VIII. Section 9: Zoroastrianism

39. Zoroastrianism: Overview	157
40. Tenets and History	159
41. Links and Attributions	164

Part IX. Section 10: Christianity

42. Christianity: Introduction	167
43. Doctrine and Practice	169
44. History: The Beginnings of the Church	176
45. Councils and Creeds, Persecution, and Official Acceptance	180
46. Eastern Christianity and Western Christianity	183
47. Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Modern Period	191
48. Links and Attributions	198

Part X. Section 11: Islam

49. Islam: Introduction	209
50. The Teachings of Muhammad	213
51. The Five Pillars	215
52. The Mosque	225
53. The God of Islam	228
54. The Prophet Muhammad	236

55. The Qur'an	239
56. Hadith	244
57. The Spread of Islam	247
58. Links and Attributions	254

Part XI. Section 12: Sikhism

59. Sikhism: Overview	261
60. Introduction, Beliefs and Practices, and History	266
61. Links and Attributions	269

Section 1: Introduction

Religions can be compared and contrasted with one another. However, you may first ask “what is a religion?” Religions may be called such because they share in a number of traits or family characteristics that identify them as belonging to the set of phenomena that are commonly referred to as being a “religion”. While it is not necessary that each religion demonstrate all of these features, the more of these features a phenomena manifests, the more likely it is that the phenomena will be called a “religion”. You should learn about a number of religions by reading and speaking to members of the religion, visiting houses of worship, viewing films and websites concerning the religion. When you do attempt to recognize these features if you can.

Characteristics of a Religion Elements of Religions and their Worldview:

- **THE ABSOLUTE:** what do the believers hold as most important? What is the ultimate source of value and significance? For many, but not all religions, this is given some form of agency and portrayed as a deity (deities). It might be a concept or ideal as well as a figure.
- **THE WORLD:** What does the belief system say about the world? Its origin? its relation to the Absolute? Its future?
- **HUMANS:** Where do they come from? How do they fit into the general scheme of things? What is their destiny or future?
- **THE PROBLEM FOR HUMANS:** What is the principle problem for humans that they must learn to deal with and solve?
- **THE SOLUTION FOR HUMANS:** How are humans to solve or overcome the fundamental problems?
- **COMMUNITY AND ETHICS:** What is the moral code as promulgated by the religion? What is the idea of community and how humans are to live with one another?
- **AN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY:** Does the religion offer an explanation for events occurring in time? Is there a single linear history with time coming to an end or does time recycle? Is there a plan working itself out in time and detectable in the events of history?
- **RITUALS AND SYMBOLS:** What are the major rituals, holy days, garments, ceremonies and symbols?
- **LIFE AFTER DEATH:** What is the explanation given for what occurs after death? Does the religion support a belief in souls or spirits which survive the death of the body? What is the belief in what occurs afterwards? Is there a resurrection of the body? Reincarnation? Dissolution? Extinction?
- **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RELIGIONS:** What is the prescribed manner in which believers are to regard other religions and the followers of other religions?

In the sections of this chapter that follow most of the Major Living Religions of the World will be presented. They have long and rich traditions. There is an enormous amount of material available in print medium, in films and videos and on the world wide web. This text will present materials through active links to internet sites. You should read enough of the materials in order to understand how each of the religions displays the characteristics listed above. The journey through these sections serves as a mere introduction to the study of these religions. A study of the living religions of this world could easily take an entire lifetime and for some scholars it has. The purpose here is to gain an understanding of the fundamental features of the religions. It should prove to be a most fascinating experience! The reader is encouraged to read as much as is interesting to the reader but at least to read as much as is needed to gain the understanding of the fundamentals. This material is not intended to serve as a comprehensive or in depth presentation of the religions of the world.

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PART I

SECTION 2: HINDUISM

I. Hinduism: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller.

If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441>

Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

Hinduism is a religion with various Gods and Goddesses. According to Hinduism, three Gods rule the world. Brahma: the creator; Vishnu: the preserver and Shiva: the destroyer. Lord Vishnu did his job of preserving the world by incarnating himself in different forms at times of crisis.

The three Lords that rule the world have consorts and they are goddesses too. Consort of Brahma is Sarasvati; goddess of learning. Vishnu's consort is Lakshmi; goddess of wealth and prosperity. Shiva's consort is Parvati who is worshipped as Kali or Durga.

Besides these Gods and Goddesses there are a number of other Gods and Goddesses. To name a few of them, there is Ganesh; who has an elephant's head and he is also a son of Shiva and Parvati, Hanuman; who is an ape, Surya; Lord of sun, Ganga Ma; Goddess of river Ganges; Samundra; Lord of the sea, Indra; king of the Gods (but he isn't an important God), Prithvi; Goddess of earth, Shakti; Goddess of strength. The Hindus call their Goddesses 'Ma' meaning mother.

Some gods have more than one name. Shiva is also known

as Shankar, Mahadev, Natraj, Mahesh and many other names. Ganesh is also called Ganpati. God Vishnu [incarnated 9 times](#) to do his job and in his every appearance he had a different form which are also worshipped as Gods. Among his appearances, he appeared as Rama, Krishna, Narsimha, Parsuram and Buddha. Krishna also has different names, Gopal; Kishan; Shyam and other names. He also has other titles with meanings like 'Basuri Wala' which means the flute musician and 'Makhan Chor' which means the butter stealer. There are also Gods who can change their forms, for example: Parvati can change into Kali or Durga.

Not all of these Gods are worshiped by all Hindus. Some Hindus worship only Vishnu. Others worship only Shiva. Others worship only the Goddesses and call these Goddesses collectively as Shakti meaning strength. Many of these Goddess worshipers worship Parvati in her images as Kali or Durga. People who worship Shiva or Vishnu also worship characters and images connected with these Gods. Vishnu worshipers (Vaishnavites) also worship his appearances. Shiva's worshipers (Shaivites) also worship images of bull called Nandi, who was Shiva's carrier and a unique stone design connected to Shiva. There are also Hindus who worship all the Gods. There are some Gods who are worshiped all over India like Rama and Krishna and other Gods who are worshiped more in one region than the other like Ganesh who is worshiped mainly in west India. Hindus also worship Gods according to their personal needs. People who engage in wrestling, body building and other physical sports worship Hanuman, who in Hindu legends was an ape with lot of physical strength. Businessmen worship Lakshmi, Goddess of wealth.

Though these Hindus worship different idols, there are many Hindus who believe in one God and perceive in these different Gods and Goddesses as different images of the

same one God. According to their beliefs idolatry is the wrong interpretation of Hinduism.

Hindus believe in reincarnation. The basic belief is that a person's fate is determined according to his deeds. These deeds in Hinduism are called 'Karma'. A soul who does good Karma in this life will be awarded with a better life in the next incarnation. Souls who do bad Karma will be punished for their sins, if not in this incarnation then in the next incarnation and will continue to be born in this world again and again. The good souls will be liberated from the circle of rebirth and get redemption which is called 'Moksha' meaning freedom. Hindus normally cremate their dead ones, so that the soul of the dead would go to heaven, except in a few cases of Hindu saints, who are believed to have attained 'Moksha'.

The main Hindu books are the four Vedas. They are Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The concluding portions of the Vedas are called Upanisads. There are also other holy books like Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. The different Gods and Goddesses in the Hindu mythology are derived from these books. Ramayana and Mahabharata are the most popular Hindu books.

The main story of [Ramayana](#) is the story of Lord Rama. Rama was born in a royal family and was suppose to be the king, but because of his step- mother, he was forced to exile from his kingdom for fourteen years. During this period his consort Sita was kidnapped by a demon called Ravan, who was king of Lanka. Rama with the help of his brother, Lakshman, and an army of monkeys under the leadership of Hanuman, rescued Sita. Many Indians believe that the present day Sri Lanka was then the kingdom of Lanka.

Mahabharata is a family epic. In this epic the Pandva family and the Kaurav family who are cousins fight with each other for the control over a kingdom. Kaurav family, which consisted of 100 brothers rule an empire. The five Pandva

brothers ask for a small kingdom which belongs to them. The Kauravs refuse to give the Pandvas the kingdom so there is a war between the Pandvas and the Kauravs in which it is believed that all the kingdoms of that period in India took part. In this war the Pandvas, with the help of Lord Krishna win the war. Before the commencement of the war, while the two armies are facing each other, one of the Pandva brothers Arjun gets depressed. Arjun is depressed because he has to fight against people whom he knows, loves and respects. At this point Krishna, (who was also a king of a kingdom, and participated in this war only as the chariot driver for Arjun) convinces Arjun to fight. Krishna lectures Arjun about life, human beings and their religious duties. He explains to Arjun that he belongs to a warrior caste and he has to fight for that's his destination in this incarnation. Those chapters in the Mahabharata which are Krishna's discourses on religious philosophy are called Bhagvad Gita. Because of its importance the Bhagvad Gita is considered as a separate holy book. Another Hindu holy book that deals with religious duties is 'Law of Manu' or the 'Dharma Shashtra'.

In the wars that occur in the holy books, as in Mahabharata, the different sides had different war weapons which had characters similar to modern day war weapons. In some stories the traveling vehicles were normally birds and animals. But these animals and birds had features similar to modern day aircrafts. There were even aircrafts with over velocity of light. The main war weapons were bows and arrows. But these arrows were more like modern missiles than simple arrows. These arrows were capable of carrying bombs with destructive power similar to modern day chemical, biological or even atom bombs. Other arrows could be targeted on specific human beings. There were even arrows capable of neutralizing other arrows, similar to modern day anti-missiles.

Hindus have many holy places. Badrinath, Puri, Dwarkha and Rameshwaram are four holiest places for the Hindus. Other holy places are Varanasi, Rishikesh, Nasik, Pushkar, Ujjain and other places. Some rivers are also holy to them. Among them are Godavri, Yamuna and above all Ganges which the Indians call Ganga. Another holy river is Sarasvati and it is invisible. Hindus also worship and respect some animals and birds like cobra, apes, peacocks and cow. Hindus also respect some trees and bush trees. The famous and the most respected bush tree is Tulsi.

Some of the Hindu customs, which exist or existed, do not have their bearing in Hindu scriptures but became part of Hinduism in different ways and fashion. For example, the Hindus see in cow a sacred animal. Religiously there is no reason to see cow as sacred and it is believed that cows were made 'sacred' to prevent their slaughter during periods of droughts and hunger. Cobra worship also is not found in Hindu scripts. This custom became part of Hinduism when some Indian tribes who use to worship cobra adopted Hinduism. [Burning of the widow](#) on the dead husband's pyre also has no religious justification. This custom, outlawed in 1829, was probably brought to India by the Scythians invaders of India. Among the Scythians it was a custom to bury the dead king with his mistresses or wives, servants and other things so that they could continue to serve him in the next world. When these Scythians arrived in India, they adopted the Indian system of funeral, which was cremating the dead. And so instead of burying their kings and his servers they started cremating their dead with his surviving lovers. The Scythians were warrior tribes and they were given a status of warrior castes in Hindu religious hierarchy. The different castes who claimed warrior status or higher also adopted this custom.

There are four [castes](#) in Hindu religion arranged in a

hierarchy. The highest caste is Brahman, and they are the priest caste of Hinduism. After them are the Kshatria, who are the warrior castes. After them are the Vaishya caste, who are business people. And after them are the Sudra, who are the common peasants and workers. Below these four castes there are casteless, the untouchables. The four castes were not allowed to have any physical contact with the untouchables.

Each caste is divided into many sub-castes. The religious word for caste is Varna and for sub-caste Jat or Jati. But sometimes in English the term caste is used in both cases. Religiously, people are born in a caste and it cannot be changed. Each caste has some compulsory duties, which its members must do. Each caste has professional limits which decides what profession each caste can follow. Each caste members can have social relations only with its caste members. Religiously this includes marriage and even eating only with caste members. Please note that socially the caste system is different from the religious form of caste system.

How did Hinduism originate is a difficult question. The accepted theory is that Hinduism was evolved after the historical meeting between the [Aryans and Dravidians](#). Some claim that Hinduism is mainly an Aryan culture whereas the others claim that it is mainly a Dravidian culture. Religiously the Vedas were given by Brahma.

Before Hinduism there existed another religion in India called Brahmanism and its followers were called Brahmins. The Brahmins were the spiritual and moral guides of the Indian society. The members of this religion were a close sect and others could not join it. The Brahmins slowly started accepting others into their religion and so was created Hinduism which included in it the customs which aren't the part of the Vedas. One of the reasons the Brahmins accepted others to their religion was the fear to lose their status as moral guides to

priests of a new religion that started in India, namely Buddhism. The Brahmins even accepted Buddha as a Hindu God and part of his teachings and philosophy like non-violence into their religion. – ©[Aharon Daniel](#) Israel 1999-2000 **allowed to use**

2. Fundamental Principles

I. Introduction

Hinduism, religion that originated in India and is still practiced by most of its inhabitants, as well as by those whose families have migrated from India to other parts of the world (chiefly East Africa, South Africa, Southeast Asia, the East Indies, and England). The word *Hindu* is derived from the Sanskrit word *sindhu* ("river"—more specifically, the Indus); the Persians in the 5th century BC called the Hindus by that name, identifying them as the people of the land of the Indus. The Hindus define their community as "those who believe in the Vedas" (see [Veda](#)) or "those who follow the way (dharma) of the four classes (*varnas*) and stages of life (*ashramas*)."

Hinduism is a major world religion, not merely by virtue of its many followers (estimated at more than 700 million) but also because of its profound influence on many other religions during its long, unbroken history, which dates from about 1500 BC. The corresponding influence of these various religions on Hinduism (it has an extraordinary tendency to absorb foreign elements) has greatly contributed to the religion's syncretism—the wide variety of beliefs and practices that it encompasses. Moreover, the geographic, rather than ideological, basis of the religion (the fact that it comprises whatever all the people of India have believed and done) has given Hinduism the character of a social and doctrinal system that extends to every aspect of human life.

II. Fundamental Principles

The canon of Hinduism is basically defined by what people do rather than what they think. Consequently, far more uniformity of behavior than of belief is found among Hindus, although very few practices or beliefs are shared by all. A few usages are observed by almost all Hindus: reverence for [Brahmans](#) and cows; abstention from meat (especially beef); and marriage within the caste (*jati*), in the hope of producing male heirs. Most Hindus chant the gayatri hymn to the sun at dawn, but little agreement exists as to what other prayers should be chanted. Most Hindus worship [Shiva](#), [Vishnu](#), or the Goddess (Devi), but they also worship hundreds of additional minor deities peculiar to a particular village or even to a particular family. Although Hindus believe and do many apparently contradictory things—contradictory not merely from one Hindu to the next, but also within the daily religious life of a single Hindu—each individual perceives an orderly pattern that gives form and meaning to his or her own life. No doctrinal or ecclesiastical hierarchy exists in Hinduism, but the intricate hierarchy of the social system (which is inseparable from the religion) gives each person a sense of place within the whole.

3. Texts

A. Texts

The ultimate canonical authority for all Hindus is the Vedas. The oldest of the four Vedas is the [Rig-Veda](#), which was composed in an ancient form of the [Sanskrit language](#) in northwest India. This text, probably composed between about 1500 and 1000 BC and consisting of 1028 hymns to a pantheon of gods, has been memorized syllable by syllable and preserved orally to the present day. The *Rig-Veda* was supplemented by two other Vedas, the *Yajur-Veda* (the textbook for sacrifice) and the *Sama-Veda* (the hymnal). A fourth book, the *Atharva-Veda* (a collection of magic spells), was probably added about 900 BC. At this time, too, the Brahmanas—lengthy Sanskrit texts expounding priestly ritual and the myths behind it—were composed. Between the 8th century BC and the 5th century BC, the [Upanishads](#) were composed; these are mystical-philosophical meditations on the meaning of existence and the nature of the universe.

The Vedas, including the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, are regarded as revealed canon (*shruti*, “what has been heard [from the gods]”), and no syllable can be changed. The actual content of this canon, however, is unknown to most Hindus. The practical compendium of Hinduism is contained in the *Smriti*, or “what is remembered,” which is also orally preserved. No prohibition is made against improvising variations on, rewording, or challenging the *Smriti*. The *Smriti* includes the two great Sanskrit

epics, the [Mahabharata](#) and the [Ramayana](#); the many Sanskrit [Puranas](#), including 18 great Puranas and several dozen more subordinate Puranas; and the many *Dharmashastras* and *Dharmasutras* (textbooks on sacred law), of which the one attributed to the sage Manu is the most frequently cited.

The two epics are built around central narratives. The *Mahabharata* tells of the war between the Pandava brothers, led by their cousin [Krishna](#), and their cousins the Kauravas. The *Ramayana* tells of the journey of [Rama](#) to recover his wife Sita after she is stolen by the demon Ravana. But these stories are embedded in a rich corpus of other tales and discourses on philosophy, law, geography, political science, and astronomy, so that the *Mahabharata* (about 200,000 lines long) constitutes a kind of encyclopedia or even a literature, and the *Ramayana* (more than 50,000 lines long) is comparable. Although it is therefore impossible to fix their dates, the main bodies of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* were probably composed between 400 BC and AD 400. Both, however, continued to grow even after they were translated into the vernacular languages of India (such as Tamil and Hindi) in the succeeding centuries.

The Puranas were composed after the epics, and several of them develop themes found in the epics (for instance, the *Bhagavata-Purana* describes the childhood of Krishna, a topic not elaborated in the *Mahabharata*). The Puranas also include subsidiary myths, hymns of praise, philosophies, iconography, and rituals. Most of the Puranas are predominantly sectarian in nature; the great Puranas (and some subordinate Puranas) are dedicated to the worship of Shiva or Vishnu or the

Goddess, and several subordinate Puranas are devoted to Ganesha or Skanda or the sun. In addition, they all contain a great deal of nonsectarian material, probably of earlier origin, such as the "five marks," or topics (*panchalakshana*), of the Puranas: the creation of the universe, the destruction and re-creation of the universe, the dynasties of the solar and lunar gods, the genealogy of the gods and holy sages, and the ages of the founding fathers of humankind (the Manus).

4. Philosophy

B. Philosophy

Incorporated in this rich literature is a complex cosmology. Hindus believe that the universe is a great, enclosed sphere, a cosmic egg, within which are numerous concentric heavens, hells, oceans, and continents, with India at the center. They believe that time is both degenerative—going from the golden age, or Krita Yuga, through two intermediate periods of decreasing goodness, to the present age, or Kali Yuga—and cyclic: At the end of each Kali Yuga, the universe is destroyed by fire and flood, and a new golden age begins. Human life, too, is cyclic: After death, the soul leaves the body and is reborn in the body of another person, animal, vegetable, or mineral. This condition of endless entanglement in activity and rebirth is called *samsara* (see [Transmigration](#)). The precise quality of the new birth is determined by the accumulated merit and demerit that result from all the actions, or [karma](#), that the soul has committed in its past life or lives. All Hindus believe that karma accrues in this way; they also believe, however, that it can be counteracted by expiations and rituals, by “working out” through punishment or reward, and by achieving release (*moksha*) from the entire process of *samsara* through the renunciation of all worldly desires.

Hindus may thus be divided into two groups: those who seek the sacred and profane rewards of this world (health, wealth, children, and a good rebirth), and those who seek release from the world. The principles of the

first way of life were drawn from the Vedas and are represented today in temple Hinduism and in the religion of Brahmins and the caste system. The second way, which is prescribed in the Upanishads, is represented not only in the cults of renunciation (*sannyasa*) but also in the ideological ideals of most Hindus.

The worldly aspect of Hinduism originally had three Vedas, three classes of society (*varnas*), three stages of life (*ashramas*), and three "goals of a man" (*purusharthas*), the goals or needs of women being seldom discussed in the ancient texts. To the first three Vedas was added the *Atharva-Veda*. The first three classes (Brahman, or priestly; Kshatriya, or warrior; and Vaisya, or general populace) were derived from the tripartite division of ancient Indo-European society, traces of which can be detected in certain social and religious institutions of ancient Greece and Rome. To the three classes were added the *Shudras*, or servants, after the Indo-Aryans settled into the Punjab and began to move down into the Ganges Valley. The three original *ashramas* were the chaste student (*brahmachari*), the householder (*grihastha*), and the forest-dweller (*vanaprastha*). They were said to owe three debts: study of the Vedas (owed to the sages); a son (to the ancestors); and sacrifice (to the gods). The three goals were *artha* (material success), *dharma* (righteous social behavior), and *kama* (sensual pleasures). Shortly after the composition of the first Upanishads, during the rise of Buddhism (6th century BC), a fourth *ashrama* and a corresponding fourth goal were added: the renouncer

(*sannyasi*), whose goal is release (*moksha*) from the other stages, goals, and debts.

Each of these two ways of being Hindu developed its own complementary metaphysical and social systems. The caste system and its supporting philosophy of *svadharma* ("one's own dharma") developed within the worldly way. *Svadharma* comprises the beliefs that each person is born to perform a specific job, marry a specific person, eat certain food, and beget children to do likewise and that it is better to fulfill one's own dharma than that of anyone else (even if one's own is low or reprehensible, such as that of the Harijan caste, the Untouchables, whose mere presence was once considered polluting to other castes). The primary goal of the worldly Hindu is to produce and raise a son who will make offerings to the ancestors (the *shraddha* ceremony). The second, renunciatory way of Hinduism, on the other hand, is based on the Upanishadic philosophy of the unity of the individual soul, or [*atman*](#), with Brahman, the universal world soul, or godhead. The full realization of this is believed to be sufficient to release the worshiper from rebirth; in this view, nothing could be more detrimental to salvation than the birth of a child. Many of the goals and ideals of renunciatory Hinduism have been incorporated into worldly Hinduism, particularly the eternal dharma (*sanatana dharma*), an absolute and general ethical code that purports to transcend and embrace all subsidiary, relative, specific dharmas. The most important tenet of *sanatana dharma* for all Hindus is *ahimsa*, the absence of a desire to injure, which is used to justify vegetarianism (although it does not

preclude physical violence toward animals or humans, or blood sacrifices in temples).

In addition to *sanatana dharma*, numerous attempts have been made to reconcile the two Hinduisms. The [*Bhagavad-Gita*](#) describes three paths to religious realization. To the path of works, or karma (here designating sacrificial and ritual acts), and the path of knowledge, or *jnana* (the Upanishadic meditation on the godhead), was added a mediating third path, the passionate devotion to God, or [*bhakti*](#), a religious ideal that came to combine and transcend the other two paths. *Bhakti* in a general form can be traced in the epics and even in some of the Upanishads, but its fullest statement appears only after the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It gained momentum from the vernacular poems and songs to local deities, particularly those of the Alvars, Nayanars, and Virashaivas of southern India and the Bengali worshippers of Krishna (see below).

In this way Hindus have been able to reconcile their Vedantic monism (see [Vedanta](#)) with their Vedic polytheism: All the individual Hindu gods (who are said to be *saguna*, "with attributes") are subsumed under the godhead (*nirguna*, "without attributes"), from which they all emanate. Therefore, most Hindus are devoted (through *bhakti*) to gods whom they worship in rituals (through karma) and whom they understand (through *jnana*) as aspects of ultimate reality, the material reflection of which is all an illusion (*maya*) wrought by God in a spirit of play (*lila*).

5. Gods

C. Gods

Although all Hindus acknowledge the existence and importance of a number of gods and demigods, most individual worshipers are primarily devoted to a single god or goddess, of whom Shiva, Vishnu, and the Goddess are the most popular.

Shiva embodies the apparently contradictory aspects of a god of ascetics and a god of the phallus. He is the deity of renouncers, particularly of the many Shaiva sects that imitate him: Kapalikas, who carry skulls to reenact the myth in which Shiva beheaded his father, the incestuous Brahma, and was condemned to carry the skull until he found release in Benares; Pashupatas, worshipers of Shiva Pashupati, "Lord of Beasts"; and Aghoris, "to whom nothing is horrible," yogis who eat ordure or flesh in order to demonstrate their complete indifference to pleasure or pain. Shiva is also the deity whose phallus (*linga*) is the central shrine of all Shaiva temples and the personal shrine of all Shaiva householders; his priapism is said to have resulted in his castration and the subsequent worship of his severed member. In addition, Shiva is said to have appeared on earth in various human, animal, and vegetable forms, establishing his many local shrines.

To his worshipers, Vishnu is all-pervasive and supreme; he is the god from whose navel a lotus sprang, giving birth to the creator (Brahma). Vishnu created the universe by separating heaven and earth, and he rescued it on a number of subsequent occasions.

He is also worshiped in the form of a number of “descents”—avatars (see [Avatar](#)), or, roughly, incarnations. Several of these are animals that recur in iconography: the fish, the tortoise, and the boar. Others are the dwarf (Vamana, who became a giant in order to trick the demon Bali out of the entire universe); the man-lion (Narasimha, who disemboweled the demon Hiranyakashipu); the Buddha (who became incarnate in order to teach a false doctrine to the pious demons); Rama-with-an-Axe (Parashurama, who beheaded his unchaste mother and destroyed the entire class of Kshatriyas to avenge his father); and Kalki (the rider on the white horse, who will come to destroy the universe at the end of the age of Kali). Most popular by far are Rama (hero of the *Ramayana*) and Krishna (hero of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata-Purana*), both of whom are said to be avatars of Vishnu, although they were originally human heroes.

Along with these two great male gods, several goddesses are the object of primary devotion. They are sometimes said to be various aspects of the Goddess, Devi. In some myths Devi is the prime mover, who commands the male gods to do the work of creation and destruction. As Durga, the Unapproachable, she kills the buffalo demon Mahisha in a great battle; as Kali, the Black, she dances in a mad frenzy on the corpses of those she has slain and eaten, adorned with the still-dripping skulls and severed hands of her victims. The Goddess is also worshiped by the Shaktas, devotees of Shakti, the female power. This sect arose in the medieval period along with the Tantrists, whose esoteric ceremonies involved a black mass in which such forbidden substances as meat, fish, and wine were

eaten and forbidden sexual acts were performed ritually. In many Tantric cults the Goddess is identified as Krishna's consort Radha.

More peaceful manifestations of the Goddess are seen in wives of the great gods: Lakshmi, the meek, docile wife of Vishnu and a fertility goddess in her own right; and Parvati, the wife of Shiva and the daughter of the Himalayas. The great river goddess Ganga (the Ganges), also worshiped alone, is said to be a wife of Shiva; a goddess of music and literature, Sarasvati, associated with the Saraswati River, is the wife of Brahma. Many of the local goddesses of India—Manasha, the goddess of snakes, in Bengal, and Minakshi in Madurai—are married to Hindu gods, while others, such as Shitala, goddess of smallpox, are worshiped alone. These unmarried goddesses are feared for their untamed powers and angry, unpredictable outbursts.

Many minor gods are assimilated into the central pantheon by being identified with the great gods or with their children and friends. Hanuman, the monkey god, appears in the *Ramayana* as the cunning assistant of Rama in the siege of Lanka. Skanda, the general of the army of the gods, is the son of Shiva and Parvati, as is Ganesha, the elephant-headed god of scribes and merchants, the remover of obstacles, and the object of worship at the beginning of any important enterprise.

6. Worship and Ritual

D. Worship and Ritual

The great and lesser Hindu gods are worshiped in a number of concentric circles of public and private devotion. Because of the social basis of Hinduism, the most fundamental ceremonies for every Hindu are those that involve the rites of passage (*samskaras*). These begin with birth and the first time the child eats solid food (rice). Later rites include the first haircutting (for a young boy) and the purification after the first menstruation (for a girl); marriage; and the blessings upon a pregnancy, to produce a male child and to ensure a successful delivery and the child's survival of the first six dangerous days after birth (the concern of Shashti, goddess of Six). Last are the funeral ceremonies (cremation and, if possible, the sprinkling of ashes in a holy river such as the Ganges) and the yearly offerings to dead ancestors. The most notable of the latter is the *pinda*, a ball of rice and sesame seeds given by the eldest male child so that the ghost of his father may pass from limbo into rebirth. In daily ritual, a Hindu (generally the wife, who is thought to have more power to intercede with the gods) makes offerings (*pūja*) of fruit or flowers before a small shrine in the house. She also makes offerings to local snakes or trees or obscure spirits (benevolent and malevolent) dwelling in her own garden or at crossroads or other magical places in the village.

Many villages, and all sizable towns, have temples where priests perform ceremonies throughout the day:

sunrise prayers and noises to awaken the god within the holy of holies (the *garbagriha*, or “womb-house”); bathing, clothing, and fanning the god; feeding the god and distributing the remains of the food (*prasada*) to worshipers. The temple is also a cultural center where songs are sung, holy texts read aloud (in Sanskrit and vernaculars), and sunset rituals performed; devout laity may be present at most of these ceremonies. In many temples, particularly those sacred to goddesses (such as the Kalighat temple to Kali, in Kolkata), goats are sacrificed on special occasions. The sacrifice is often carried out by a special low-caste priest outside the bounds of the temple itself. Thousands of simple local temples exist; each may be nothing more than a small stone box enclosing a formless effigy swathed in cloth, or a slightly more imposing edifice with a small tank in which to bathe. In addition, India has many temples of great size as well as complex temple cities, some hewn out of caves (such as Elephanta and Ellora), some formed of great monolithic slabs (such as those at Mahabalipuram), and some built of imported and elaborately carved stone slabs (such as the temples at Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar, Madurai, and Kanjeevaram). On special days, usually once a year, the image of the god is taken from its central shrine and paraded around the temple complex on a magnificently carved wooden chariot (*ratha*).

Many holy places or shrines (*tirthas*, literally “fords”), such as Rishikesh in the Himalayas or Benares on the Ganges, are the objects of pilgrimages from all over India; others are essentially local shrines. Certain shrines are most frequently visited at special yearly festivals. For example, Prayaga, where the Ganges and

Yamuna rivers join at Allahabad, is always sacred, but it is crowded with pilgrims during the Kumbha Mela festival each January and overwhelmed by the millions who come to the special ceremony held every 12 years. In Bengal, the goddess Durga's visit to her family and return to her husband Shiva are celebrated every year at Durgapuja, when images of the goddess are created out of papier-mâché, worshiped for ten days, and then cast into the Ganges in a dramatic midnight ceremony ringing with drums and glowing with candles. Some festivals are celebrated throughout India: Diwali, the festival of lights in early winter; and Holi, the spring carnival, when members of all castes mingle and let down their hair, sprinkling one another with cascades of red powder and liquid, symbolic of the blood that was probably used in past centuries.

7. History

III. History

The basic beliefs and practices of Hinduism cannot be understood outside their historical context. Although the early texts and events are impossible to date with precision, the general chronological development is clear.

A. Vedic Civilization

About 2000 BC, a highly developed civilization flourished in the Indus Valley, around the sites of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. By about 1500 BC, when the Indo-Aryan tribes invaded India, this civilization was in a serious decline. It is therefore impossible to know, on present evidence, whether or not the two civilizations had any significant contact. Many elements of Hinduism that were not present in Vedic civilization (such as worship of the phallus and of goddesses, bathing in temple tanks, and the postures of yoga) may have been derived from the Indus civilization, however. See [Indus Valley Civilization](#).

By about 1500 BC, the Indo-Aryans had settled in the Punjab, bringing with them their predominantly male Indo-European pantheon of gods and a simple warrior ethic that was vigorous and worldly, yet also profoundly religious. Gods of the Vedic pantheon survive in later Hinduism, but no longer as objects of worship: Indra, king of the gods and god of the storm and of fertility;

Agni, god of fire; and Soma, god of the sacred, intoxicating Soma plant and the drink made from it. By 900 BC the use of iron allowed the Indo-Aryans to move down into the lush Ganges Valley, where they developed a far more elaborate civilization and social system. By the 6th century BC, [Buddhism](#) had begun to make its mark on India and what was to be more than a millennium of fruitful interaction with Hinduism.

B. Classical Hindu Civilization

From about 200 BC to AD 500 India was invaded by many northern powers, of which the Shakas (Scythians) and Kushanas had the greatest impact. This was a time of great flux, growth, syncretism, and definition for Hinduism and is the period in which the epics, the *Dharmashastras*, and the *Dharmasutras* took final form. Under the Gupta Empire (320-550?), when most of northern India was under a single power, classical Hinduism found its most consistent expression: the sacred laws were codified, the great temples began to be built, and myths and rituals were preserved in the Puranas.

C. Rise of Devotional Movements

In the post-Gupta period, a less rigid and more eclectic form of Hinduism emerged, with more dissident sects and vernacular movements. At this time, too, the great devotional movements arose. Many of the sects that emerged during the period from 800 to 1800 are still active in India today.

Most of the *bhakti* movements are said to have been founded by saints—the gurus by whom the tradition has been handed down in unbroken lineage, from guru to

disciple (*chela*). This lineage, in addition to a written canon, is the basis for the authority of the *bhakti* sect. Other traditions are based on the teachings of such philosophers as Shankara and Ramanuja. Shankara was the exponent of pure monism, or nondualism (Advaita Vedanta), and of the doctrine that all that appears to be real is merely illusion. Ramanuja espoused the philosophy of qualified nondualism (Vishishta-Advaita), an attempt to reconcile belief in a godhead without attributes (*nirguna*) with devotion to a god with attributes (*saguna*), and to solve the paradox of loving a god with whom one is identical.

The philosophies of Shankara and Ramanuja were developed in the context of the six great classical philosophies (*darshanas*) of India: the Karma Mimamsa ("action investigation"); the Vedanta ("end of the Vedas"), in which tradition the work of Shankara and Ramanuja should be placed; the Sankhya system, which describes the opposition between an inert male spiritual principle (*purusha*) and an active female principle of matter or nature (*prakriti*), subdivided into the three qualities (*gunas*) of goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and darkness (*tamas*); the Yoga system; and the highly metaphysical systems of Vaisheshika (a kind of atomic realism) and Nyaya (logic, but of an extremely theistic nature).

D. Medieval Hinduism

Parallel with these complex Sanskrit philosophical investigations, vernacular songs were composed, transmitted orally, and preserved locally throughout India. They were composed during the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries in Tamil and Kannada by the Alvars, Nayanars, and Virashaivas and during the 15th century by the

Rajasthani poet Mira Bai, in the Braj dialect. In the 16th century in Bengal, Chaitanya founded a sect of erotic mysticism, celebrating the union of Krishna and Radha in a Tantric theology heavily influenced by Tantric Buddhism. Chaitanya believed that both Krishna and Radha were incarnate within him, and he believed that the village of [Vrindaban](#), where Krishna grew up, had become manifest once again in Bengal. The school of the Gosvamins, who were disciples of Chaitanya, developed an elegant theology of aesthetic participation in the ritual enactment of Krishna's life.

These ritual dramas also developed around the village of Vrindaban itself during the 16th century, and they were celebrated by Hindi poets. The first great Hindi mystic poet was Kabir, who was said to be the child of a Muslim and was strongly influenced by Islam, particularly by [Sufism](#). His poems challenge the canonical dogmas of both Hinduism and Islam, praising Rama and promising salvation by the chanting of the holy name of Rama. He was followed by Tulsidas, who wrote a beloved Hindi version of the *Ramayana*. A contemporary of Tulsidas was Surdas, whose poems on Krishna's life in Vrindaban formed the basis of the *ras lilas*, local dramatizations of myths of the childhood of Krishna, which still play an important part in the worship of Krishna in northern India.

E. 19th and 20th Centuries

In the 19th century, important reforms took place under the auspices of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and the sects of the [Arya Samaj](#) and the [Brahmo Samaj](#). These movements attempted to reconcile traditional Hinduism with the social reforms and political ideals of the day.

So, too, the nationalist leaders Sri Aurobindo Ghose and Mohandas Gandhi attempted to draw from Hinduism those elements that would best serve their political and social aims. Gandhi, for example, used his own brand of *ahimsa*, transformed into passive resistance, to obtain reforms for the Untouchables and to remove the British from India. Similarly, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar revived the myth of the Brahmans who fell from their caste and the tradition that Buddhism and Hinduism were once one, in order to enable Untouchables to gain self-respect by “reconverting” to Buddhism.

In more recent times, numerous self-proclaimed Indian religious teachers have migrated to Europe and the United States, where they have inspired large followings. Some, such as the Hare Krishna sect founded by Bhaktivedanta, claim to base themselves on classical Hindu practices. In India, Hinduism thrives despite numerous reforms and shortcuts necessitated by the gradual modernization and urbanization of Indian life. The myths endure in the Hindi cinema, and the rituals survive not only in the temples but also in the rites of passage. Thus, Hinduism, which sustained India through centuries of foreign occupation and internal disruption, continues to serve a vital function by giving passionate meaning and supportive form to the lives of Hindus today. For information on religious violence in India, See [India](#).

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Introduction to Hinduism

The Hindu Universe

<http://adaniel.tripod.com/hinduism.htm>

[Hinduwebsite – Hinduism Reference Center](#)

Overall view of Hinduism

<http://isdl.org/html/hinduism.html>

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/hinduism.htm>

http://www.sivanandadlshq.org/download/hinduismbk.htm#_VPID_4

Origin of Hinduism

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduintrod1.htm>

Hindu beliefs

<http://www.hindumythology.com/hindu.htm>

The caste system

<http://www.friesian.com/caste.htm>

Gods and goddesses in Hinduism

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/onegod.htm>

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/devas.htm>

Karma and Hinduism

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/conceptofkarma.htm>

Aspects of Brahman

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/brahmanaspects.htm>

Idol worshipping

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/idols.htm>

The Hindu way of life, beliefs and practices

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduwaymain2.htm>

Hinduism and Daily Life

Beliefs about the soul

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/beliefinsoul.htm>

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduwaymain1.htm>

Reincarnation of the soul

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/reincarnation.htm>

Hindu History:

http://www.hindubooks.org/sudheer_birodkar/hindu_history/contents.html

Mysticism and Hinduism

[Indiadinve.com](#)

[Indexes & Directories](#)

[Reference Desk](#)

[Digital Library](#)

[General Philosophy](#)

[Anthropology](#)

[Hare Krishna](#)

[Philosophy](#)

Central Directory of Hindu Sites

www.hindu.org – The Directory of Hindu Resources Online

Additional Sites of Interest

[God in Hindu Dharma and Representation in Temples](#)

[The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo](#)

Essays in Spirituality in Life The Mother's Service Society

[Spirituality Home Page](#)

"It deals with matters connected with Science, Spirituality, Hinduism, Vedanta, Religion...This is a revised and enlarged version of my monograph entitled SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY."

By Professor V. Krishnamurthy

[Suddha Dharma Mandalam](#)

"Yoga Brahma Vidya, Synthetic Science of the Absolute. Suddha Raja Yoga."

[Spiritual Journeys](#)

"Spiritual tours addressing all religions in India..."

SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm>

<http://www.hindunet.org/scriptures/>

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PART II

SECTION 3: JAINISM

9. Jainism: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of PODCASTS on RELIGIONS by Cynthia Eller.

If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441>

Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made.

<http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

**

Jainism was born in India about the same period as Buddhism. It was established by Mahavira (c. 599 – 527 BC) in about 500 B. C. He was born near Patna in what is now Bihar state. Mahavira like Buddha belonged to the warrior caste. Mahavira was called 'Jina' meaning the big winner and from this name was derived the name of the religion.

In many senses Jainism is similar to Buddhism. Both developed as a dissension to the Brahmanic philosophy that was dominant during that period in north-east India. Both share a belief in reincarnation which eventually leads to liberation. Jainism is different to Buddhism in its ascetic beliefs. Both these religions emphasize non-violence, but non-violence is the main core in Jainism. Mahavira just like Buddha isn't the first prophet of his religion. In Jainism like Buddhism there is a belief in reincarnation which eventually leads to liberation. Neither of these religions their religious philosophy around worship. But Jainism is different than Buddhism in its ascetic beliefs. Both these religions emphasis on non-violence, but in Jainism non-violence is its main core.

Jains believe that every thing has life and this also includes stones, sand, trees and every other thing. The fact that trees breath came to

be known to the science world only from the 20th century. Mahavira who believed that every thing has life and also believed in non-violence practically didn't eat anything causing his self- starvation to death. Mahavira was also extremely ascetic and walked around completely naked because of his renouncement of life. After years of hardship and meditation he attained enlightenment; thereafter he preached Jainism for about 30 years and died at Pava (also in Bihar) in 527 BC.

Mahavira's religion followers are less extreme than him in diets. They are vegetarians. But the religious Jains will do everything possible to prevent hurting any being. They won't walk in fields where there are insects to prevent the possibility of stepping on them. They also cover their mouth to prevent the possibility of swallowing small invisible microbes. They mostly do not work in professions where there is a possibility of killing any living being like in agriculture instead professions like banking and business. But it is not clear what came first, businessmen who adopted Jain philosophy because it was easy for them to follow or Jainish philosophy which convinced the Jains to adopt non violent professions.

There are two Jain philosophies. Shvetember and Digamber. Digamber monks like Mahavira don't wear any clothes, but normally they don't walk like that outside their temples. The Digambers include among them only men. The Shvetembers monks wear white clothes and they include women.

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10. The Teachings of Mahavira

THE TEACHINGS OF LORD MAHAVIRA

Lord Mahavira was born on March 30, 599 B.C. and attained the nirvana in the year 527 B.C. at the age of 72. He was a contemporary of Lord Buddha. He was the 24th and the last of the Tirthankars. The present form of Jainism was shaped by him.

The cardinal principles of Jainism are:

1. Ahimsa (non-violence)
2. Anekantvada (multiplicity of views)
3. Aparigraha (non-possessiveness)
4. Non-stealing
5. Brahmacharya

The first and the third are quite simple to understand but the second one needs some explanation. It is dealt under 'Multiplicity of Viewpoints and Relativism (Syadavada)', in the Jain literature. Difference of view points, quite often, add to the knowledge and one should infer, only after hearing diverse views on any subject. If it is not done, then the conclusions

reached could be biased or incorrect. It provides for the tolerance for the views of the others. One can have a better perception only after hearing others. For example, we are all familiar with the story of the eight blind men and an elephant. There the views expressed about the elephant by each of the blind men were correct but only partial knowledge could be obtained from any one view. The

total knowledge about the elephant could be had only by listening to all of them.

An object can, on occasions, be described by two completely opposite statements, i.e. it is (ASTI) and it is not (NASTI). These two statements can be made referring to (1) substance, (2) place, (3) time, and (4) form. Let us take an example of a piece of furniture. A piece of furniture made of jungle wood is not made of sandal wood. Similarly, it could be located in a given room but not in other rooms. Thus, it can be specified in either way which seem to be opposite to each other. This way of specification is called ASTI – NASTI – VADA.

Another set of logic lines has been developed by the Jain thinkers which postulate that there can be as many as seven modes of prediction in a given case. This introduces an element of uncertainty in the predictions and therefore introduces the concept of probability. This is called Syadavada or the doctrine of 'may be'.

If we consider the Jainist and the Vedantic philosophies, we will find that both are correct in their own ways. They do not contradict each other. The Jain philosophy does not go into the depth of the process of creation as does the Vedantism and therefore it (Vedantism) arrives at the conclusion of The God as the First Cause. On the other hand, the Jainism comes up with the understanding of the complexity of the universe for the common humans and proposes the Syadavada which is a marvellous concept of accommodation which is necessary for the correct evaluation of anything. The Jainism defines life in almost everything, and therefore, preaches non-violence of extreme degree.

In summary, the Jains consider the highest ideal – Tirthankara who possesses infinite knowledge, infinite

bliss and infinite power. This blissful state is similar to that of Vedantic 'Chitananda'. Jainism makes distinction between Arhat and Siddha which are analogous to the Vedantic Jivan Mukta (free form life) and Videha Mukta (free from body). A Jivan Mukta might also be a Videha Mukta as in the case of King Janaka. Tirthankaras are those Siddhas who profound the truth during their life time which is a higher thing. The Jains have Arhats, the Siddhas, and the Tirthankaras who in the simpler terms and in the corresponding manner are: those who deserve, those who accomplish, and those who sanctify. It is possible for every man to attain the highest state. Tirthankaras take the place of God in the Jain philosophy

II. Jina and the Soul

Jainism begins with a serious concern for the human soul in its relationship with the laws governing existence in the universe, with other living beings, and to its own future state in eternity. First and foremost, it is a religion of the heart: the golden rule is Ahimsa or nonviolence in all parts of a person— mental, verbal, and physical. Jains have deep compassion for all forms of life

Jainism offers a quiet, overwhelmingly serious way of life, a cultural insistence on compassion, a society of ethics that has dramatically changed the world and will continue to effect change. Jainism is an ecologically responsible way of life which is nonviolent in thought, action, and deed.

Jina and the Soul

The “Jains” are the followers of the Jinas. “Jina” literally means “Conqueror.” He who has conquered love and hate, pleasure and pain, attachment and aversion, and has thereby freed ‘his’ soul from the karmas obscuring knowledge, perception, truth, and ability, is a Jina. The Jains refer to the Jina as God.

Origins of Jainism

Originating on the Indian subcontinent, Jainism — or, more properly, the Jain Dharma — is one of the oldest religions of its homeland and indeed of the world. Jainism has prehistoric origins dating before 3000 BC, and before the beginning of Indo-Aryan culture.

Jain religion is unique in that, during its existence of over 5000 years, it has never compromised on the concept of nonviolence either in principle or practice. It upholds nonviolence as the supreme religion (Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah) and has insisted upon its observance in thought, word, and deed at the individual as well as social levels. The holy text Tattvartha Sutra sums it up in the phrase “Parasparopagraho Jivanam” (all life is mutually supportive). Jain religion presents a truly enlightened perspective of equality of

souls, irrespective of differing physical forms, ranging from human beings to animals and microscopic living organisms. Humans, alone among living beings, are endowed with all the six senses of seeing, hearing, tasting smelling, touching, and thinking; thus humans are expected to act responsibly towards all life by being compassionate, egoless, fearless, forgiving, and rational.

The Jain Code of Conduct

In short, the code of conduct is made up of the following five vows, and all of their logical conclusions: Ahimsa, Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Brahmacharya (chastity). Jain religion focuses much attention on Aparigraha, non-possessiveness towards material things through self-control, self-imposed penance, abstinence from over-indulgence, voluntary curtailment of one's needs, and the consequent subsiding of the aggressive urge.

Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism is a way of life for a Jain, taking its origin in the concept of compassion for living beings, Jiva Daya. The practice of vegetarianism is seen as an instrument for the practice of nonviolence and peaceful, cooperative coexistence. Jains are strict vegetarians, consuming only one-sensed beings, primarily from the plant kingdom. While the Jain diet does, of course, involve harm to plants, it is regarded as a means of survival which involves the bare minimum amount of violence towards living beings. (Many forms of plant material, including roots and certain fruits, are also excluded from the Jain diet due to the greater number of living beings they contain owing to the environment in which they develop.)

12. Origins and History

I. Introduction

Jainism, religion of India concentrated largely in Gujarat and Rajasthan, in parts of Mumbai (formerly Bombay), and in the state of Karnataka (Mysore), as well as in the larger cities of the Indian peninsula. The Jains totaled about 3.7 million as the 1990s began, but they exert an influence in the predominantly Hindu community far out of proportion to their numbers; they are mainly traders, and their wealth and authority have made their comparatively small sect one of the most important of living Indian religions.

II. Origins

Jainism is somewhat similar to [Buddhism](#), of which it was an important rival in India. It was founded by Vardhamana Jnatiputra or Nataputta Mahavira (599-527 BC), called Jina (Spiritual Conqueror), a contemporary of [Buddha](#). As do the Buddhists, the Jains deny the divine origin and authority of the Veda and revere certain saints, preachers of Jain doctrine from the remote past, whom they call *tirthankaras* ("prophets or founders of the path"). These saints are liberated souls who were once in bondage but became free, perfect, and blissful through their own efforts; they offer salvation from the ocean of phenomenal existence and the cycle of rebirths. Mahavira is believed to have been the 24th *tirthankara*. Like adherents to their parent sect, Brahmanism, the Jains admit in practice the institution of caste, perform a group of 16 essential

rites, called *samskaras*, prescribed for the first three *varna*(castes) of Hindus, and recognize some of the minor deities of the Hindu pantheon; nevertheless, their religion, like Buddhism, is essentially atheistic.

Fundamental to Jainism is the doctrine of two eternal, coexisting, independent categories known as *jiva* (animate, living soul: the enjoyer) and *ajiva* (inanimate, nonliving object: the enjoyed). Jains believe, moreover, that the actions of mind, speech, and body produce subtle karma (infraatomic particles of matter), which become the cause of bondage, and that one must eschew violence to avoid giving hurt to life. The cause of the embodiment of the soul is thought to be karmic matter; one can attain salvation (*moksha*) only by freeing the soul of karma through the practice of the three "jewels" of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct.

III. Differences in Doctrine

These principles are common to all, but differences occur in the religious obligations of the monastic orders (whose members are called *yatis*) and the laity (*sravakas*). The *yatis* must observe five great vows (*panca-mahavrata*): refusal to inflict injury (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), refusal to steal (*asteya*), sexual restraint (*brahmacarya*), and refusal to accept unnecessary gifts (*aparigraha*). In keeping with the doctrine of nonviolence, they carry the Jainist reverence for animal life to its most extreme lengths; the *yati* of the *Svetambara* sect, for example, wears a cloth over his mouth to prevent insects from flying into it and carries a brush to sweep the place on which he is about to sit, to remove any living creature from danger. The

observation of the nonviolent practices of the *yatis* was a major influence on the philosophy of the Indian nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi. The secular *sravaka*, in addition to his observance of religious and moral duties, must engage in the adoration of the saints and of his more pious brethren, the *yatis*.

The two main sects of Jainism, the Digambara (space-clad, or naked) and the Svetambara (white-clad, wearers of white cloth), have produced a vast body of secular and religious literature in the Prakrit and Sanskrit languages. The art of the Jains, consisting primarily of cave temples elaborately decorated in carved stones and of illustrated manuscripts, usually follows Buddhist models but has a richness and fertility that mark it as one of the peaks of Indian art. Some sects, particularly the Dhundia and the Lunka, which reject the worship of images, were responsible for the destruction of many works of art in the 12th century, and Muslim raids were responsible for the looting of many temples in northern India. In the 18th century another important sect of Jainism was founded; it exhibited Islamic inspiration in its iconoclasm and rejection of temple worship. Complex rituals were abandoned in favor of austere places of worship called *sthanakas*, from which the sect is called Sthanakavasi.

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Basic Listing of Sites

<http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jainhlinks.html>

Fundamentals of Jainism

READ: <http://www.angelfire.com/co/jainism/>

Introduction to Jainism

<http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/world/asia/reljain3.htm>

http://www.beliefnet.com/index/index_10040.html

Overall view of Jainism

<http://www.engr.mun.ca/~asharan/bihar/jainism.html>

http://arham.com/abt_jain_index.htm

Philosophy of Jainism

<http://www.jinvani.com/eng/philosophy/index.htm>

Mahavira and Jainism

<http://www.san.beck.org/EC8-Mahavira.html>

Glossary <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jaingloss.html>

SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>

<http://www.davidwiley.com/religion.html>

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PART III

SECTION 4: BUDDHISM

14. Buddhism: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller.

If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441>

Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

Buddhism evolved in India. There were periods in India's past when Buddhism was dominant in India. Today less than 1% of India's population is Buddhist. Buddhism has more followers in countries east of India. Buddhism was established in about 500 BC. Buddhism began with a prince called Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha belonged to an aristocratic family. As a prince he had lot of wealth. He never left his palace. At some point Siddhartha began to leave his palace and behold for the first time poverty, sickness and misery. After seeing this Siddhartha lost interest in his spoiled life and left his palace forever and gave his rich personal belongings to the needy. He joined a group of ascetics who were searching for enlightenment. In those days people searching for enlightenment believed that this could be gained only by people who were capable of resisting their basic needs. These people almost did not eat anything and almost starved themselves to death. Siddhartha also adopted this path of searching

enlightenment. But at some point he came to a conclusion that this was neither the way towards enlightenment nor the spoiled life he had as a prince was the right path towards enlightenment. According to him the right path was somewhere in the middle and he called it the ‘middle path’.

In order to focus on his enlightenment search, Buddha sat under a fig tree and after fighting many temptations he got his enlightenment. In his region ‘enlightened’ people were called Buddha. And so Siddharta was named Buddha. According to Buddha’s theory life is a long suffering. The suffering is caused because of the passions people desire to accomplish. The more one desires and the less he accomplishes the more he suffers. People who do not accomplish their desirable passions in their lives will be born again to this life circle which is full of suffering and so will distant themselves from the world of no suffering – Nirvana.

To get Nirvana, one has to follow the eight-fold path which are to believe right, desire right, think right, live right, do the right efforts, think the right thoughts, behave right and to do the right meditation.

Buddhism emphasis non- violence. Buddha attacked the Brahmanic custom of animal slaughtering during religious ceremonies. Religiously the Buddhists are vegetarians. But many Indians believe that Buddha, died because he ate a sick animal. Buddhism does not have a God. But many Buddhists keep images of Buddha. Buddha is not seen as the first prophet of the religion, but as the fourth prophet of the religion.

There are two main doctrines in Buddhism, Mahayana and Hinayana. Mahayana Buddhist believe that the right path of a follower will lead to the redemption of all human beings. The Hinayana believe that each person is

responsible for his own fate. Along with these doctrines there are other Buddhist beliefs like 'Zen Buddhism' from Japan and the 'Hindu Tantric Buddhism' from Tibet. Zen Buddhism is a mixture of Buddhism as it arrived from India to Japan and original Japanese beliefs. The Hindu Tantric Buddhism is a mixture of Indian Buddhism and original Tibetan beliefs which existed among the Tibetians before the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet, among it magic, ghosts and tantras (meaningless mystical sentences).

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15. Overview

I. Introduction

Buddhism, a major world religion, founded in northeastern India and based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who is known as the Buddha, or Enlightened One. See [Buddha](#).

Originating as a monastic movement within the dominant Brahman tradition of the day, Buddhism quickly developed in a distinctive direction. The Buddha not only rejected significant aspects of Hindu philosophy, but also challenged the authority of the priesthood, denied the validity of the Vedic scriptures, and rejected the sacrificial cult based on them. Moreover, he opened his movement to members of all castes, denying that a person's spiritual worth is a matter of birth. See [Hinduism](#).

Buddhism today is divided into two major branches known to their respective followers as [Theravada](#), the Way of the Elders, and [Mahayana](#), the Great Vehicle. Followers of Mahayana refer to Theravada using the derogatory term Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle.

Buddhism has been significant not only in India but also in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), and Laos, where Theravada has been dominant; Mahayana has had its greatest impact in China, Japan, Taiwan, Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as in India. The number of Buddhists worldwide has been estimated at between 150 and 300 million. The reasons for such a range are twofold: Throughout much of Asia religious affiliation has tended to be nonexclusive; and it is especially

difficult to estimate the continuing influence of Buddhism in Communist countries such as China.

16. Origins

II. Origins

As did most major faiths, Buddhism developed over many years.

A. Buddha's Life

No complete biography of the Buddha was compiled until centuries after his death; only fragmentary accounts of his life are found in the earliest sources. Western scholars, however, generally agree on 563 BC as the year of his birth.

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, was born in Lumbini near the present Indian-Nepal border, the son of the ruler of a petty kingdom. According to legend, at his birth sages recognized in him the marks of a great man with the potential to become either a sage or the ruler of an empire. The young prince was raised in sheltered luxury, until at the age of 29 he realized how empty his life to this point had been. Renouncing earthly attachments, he embarked on a quest for peace and enlightenment, seeking release from the cycle of rebirths. For the next few years he practiced [Yoga](#) and adopted a life of radical asceticism.

Eventually he gave up this approach as fruitless and instead adopted a middle path between the life of indulgence and that of self-denial. Sitting under a bo tree, he meditated, rising through a series of higher states of consciousness until he attained the enlightenment for which he had been searching. Once

having known this ultimate religious truth, the Buddha underwent a period of intense inner struggle. He began to preach, wandering from place to place, gathering a body of disciples, and organizing them into a monastic community known as the *sangha*. In this way he spent the rest of his life.

17. Buddha's Teachings

B. Buddha's Teachings

The Buddha was an oral teacher; he left no written body of thought. His beliefs were codified by later followers.

1. The Four Noble Truths

At the core of the Buddha's enlightenment was the realization of the Four Noble Truths: (1) Life is suffering. This is more than a mere recognition of the presence of suffering in existence. It is a statement that, in its very nature, human existence is essentially painful from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Even death brings no relief, for the Buddha accepted the Hindu idea of life as cyclical, with death leading to further rebirth. (2) All suffering is caused by ignorance of the nature of reality and the craving, attachment, and grasping that result from such ignorance. (3) Suffering can be ended by overcoming ignorance and attachment. (4) The path to the suppression of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right-mindedness, and right contemplation. These eight are usually divided into three categories that form the cornerstone of Buddhist faith: morality, wisdom, and *samadhi*, or concentration.

2. Anatman

Buddhism analyzes human existence as made up of five aggregates or "bundles" (*skandhas*): the material

body, feelings, perceptions, predispositions or karmic tendencies, and consciousness. A person is only a temporary combination of these aggregates, which are subject to continual change. No one remains the same for any two consecutive moments. Buddhists deny that the aggregates individually or in combination may be considered a permanent, independently existing self or soul ([atman](#)). Indeed, they regard it as a mistake to conceive of any lasting unity behind the elements that constitute an individual. The Buddha held that belief in such a self results in egoism, craving, and hence in suffering. Thus he taught the doctrine of *anatman*, or the denial of a permanent soul. He felt that all existence is characterized by the three marks of *anatman* (no soul), *anitya* (impermanence), and *dukkha* (suffering). The doctrine of *anatman* made it necessary for the Buddha to reinterpret the Indian idea of repeated rebirth in the cycle of phenomenal existence known as *samsara*. To this end he taught the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada*, or dependent origination. This 12-linked chain of causation shows how ignorance in a previous life creates the tendency for a combination of aggregates to develop. These in turn cause the mind and senses to operate. Sensations result, which lead to craving and a clinging to existence. This condition triggers the process of becoming once again, producing a renewed cycle of birth, old age, and death. Through this causal chain a connection is made between one life and the next. What is posited is a stream of renewed existences, rather than a permanent being that moves from life to life—in effect a belief in rebirth without transmigration.

3. Karma

Closely related to this belief is the doctrine of karma. Karma consists of a person's acts and their ethical consequences. Human actions lead to rebirth, wherein good deeds are inevitably rewarded and evil deeds punished. Thus, neither undeserved pleasure nor unwarranted suffering exists in the world, but rather a universal justice. The karmic process operates through a kind of natural moral law rather than through a system of divine judgment. One's karma determines such matters as one's species, beauty, intelligence, longevity, wealth, and social status. According to the Buddha, karma of varying types can lead to rebirth as a human, an animal, a hungry ghost, a denizen of hell, or even one of the Hindu gods.

Although never actually denying the existence of the gods, Buddhism denies them any special role. Their lives in heaven are long and pleasurable, but they are in the same predicament as other creatures, being subject eventually to death and further rebirth in lower states of existence. They are not creators of the universe or in control of human destiny, and Buddhism denies the value of prayer and sacrifice to them. Of the possible modes of rebirth, human existence is preferable, because the deities are so engrossed in their own pleasures that they lose sight of the need for salvation. Enlightenment is possible only for humans.

4. Nirvana

The ultimate goal of the Buddhist path is release from the round of phenomenal existence with its inherent suffering. To achieve this goal is to attain [nirvana](#), an enlightened state in which the fires of greed, hatred, and ignorance have been quenched. Not to be confused

with total annihilation, nirvana is a state of consciousness beyond definition. After attaining nirvana, the enlightened individual may continue to live, burning off any remaining karma until a state of final nirvana (*parinirvana*) is attained at the moment of death.

In theory, the goal of nirvana is attainable by anyone, although it is a realistic goal only for members of the monastic community. In Theravada Buddhism an individual who has achieved enlightenment by following the Eightfold Path is known as an *arhat*, or worthy one, a type of solitary saint.

For those unable to pursue the ultimate goal, the proximate goal of better rebirth through improved karma is an option. This lesser goal is generally pursued by lay Buddhists in the hope that it will eventually lead to a life in which they are capable of pursuing final enlightenment as members of the *sangha*.

The ethic that leads to nirvana is detached and inner-oriented. It involves cultivating four virtuous attitudes, known as the Palaces of Brahma: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. The ethic that leads to better rebirth, however, is centered on fulfilling one's duties to society. It involves acts of charity, especially support of the *sangha*, as well as observance of the five precepts that constitute the basic moral code of Buddhism. The precepts prohibit killing, stealing, harmful language, sexual misbehavior, and the use of intoxicants. By observing these precepts, the three roots of evil—lust, hatred, and delusion—may be overcome.

18. Early Development of Buddhism

III. Early Development

Shortly before his death, the Buddha refused his disciples' request to appoint a successor, telling his followers to work out their own salvation with diligence. At that time Buddhist teachings existed only in oral traditions, and it soon became apparent that a new basis for maintaining the community's unity and purity was needed. Thus, the monastic order met periodically to reach agreement on matters of doctrine and practice. Four such meetings have been focused on in the traditions as major councils.

A. Major Councils

The first council was held at Rajagrha (present-day Rajgir) immediately after the Buddha's death. Presided over by a monk named Mahakasyapa, its purpose was to recite and agree on the Buddha's actual teachings and on proper monastic discipline.

About a century later, a second great council is said to have met at Vaishali. Its purpose was to deal with ten questionable monastic practices—the use of money, the drinking of palm wine, and other irregularities—of monks from the Vajjian Confederacy; the council declared these practices unlawful. Some scholars trace the origins of the first major split in Buddhism to this event, holding that the accounts of the council refer to the schism between the Mahasanghikas, or Great

Assembly, and the stricter Sthaviras, or Elders. More likely, however, the split between these two groups became formalized at another meeting held some 37 years later as a result of the continued growth of tensions within the *sangha* over disciplinary issues, the role of the laity, and the nature of the *arhat*.

In time, further subdivisions within these groups resulted in 18 schools that differed on philosophical matters, religious questions, and points of discipline. Of these 18 traditional sects, only Theravada survives.

The third council at Pataliputra (present-day Patna) was called by King Ashoka in the 3rd century BC. Convened by the monk Moggaliputta Tissa, it was held in order to purify the *sangha* of the large number of false monks and heretics who had joined the order because of its royal patronage. This council refuted the offending viewpoints and expelled those who held them. In the process, the compilation of the Buddhist scriptures (Tipitaka) was supposedly completed, with the addition of a body of subtle philosophy (*abhidharma*) to the doctrine (dharma) and monastic discipline (vinaya) that had been recited at the first council. Another result of the third council was the dispatch of missionaries to various countries.

A fourth council, under the patronage of King Kanishka, was held about AD 100 at Jalandhar or in Kashmir. Both branches of Buddhism may have participated in this council, which aimed at creating peace among the various sects, but Theravada Buddhists refuse to recognize its authenticity.

B. Formation of Buddhist Literature

For several centuries after the death of the Buddha, the scriptural traditions recited at the councils were

transmitted orally. These were finally committed to writing about the 1st century BC. Some early schools used Sanskrit for their scriptural language. Although individual texts are extant, no complete canon has survived in Sanskrit. In contrast, the full canon of the Theravadins survives in Pali, which was apparently a popular dialect derived from Sanskrit.

The Buddhist canon is known in Pali as the [Tipitaka](#) (Tripitaka in Sanskrit), meaning “Three Baskets,” because it consists of three collections of writings: the Sutta Pitaka (Sutra Pitaka in Sanskrit), a collection of discourses; the Vinaya Pitaka, the code of monastic discipline; and the Abhidharma Pitaka, which contains philosophical, psychological, and doctrinal discussions and classifications.

The Sutta Pitaka is primarily composed of dialogues between the Buddha and other people. It consists of five groups of texts: Digha Nikaya (Collection of Long Discourses), Majjhima Nikaya (Collection of Medium-Length Discourses), Samyutta Nikaya (Collection of Grouped Discourses), Anguttara Nikaya (Collection of Discourses on Numbered Topics), and Khuddaka Nikaya (Collection of Miscellaneous Texts). In the fifth group, the Jatakas, comprising stories of former lives of the Buddha, and the Dhammapada (Religious Sentences), a summary of the Buddha’s teachings on mental discipline and morality, are especially popular.

The Vinaya Pitaka consists of more than 225 rules governing the conduct of Buddhist monks and nuns. Each is accompanied by a story explaining the original reason for the rule. The rules are arranged according to the seriousness of the offense resulting from their violation.

The Abhidharma Pitaka consists of seven separate works. They include detailed classifications of psychological phenomena, metaphysical analysis, and a thesaurus of technical vocabulary. Although technically authoritative, the texts in this collection have little influence on the lay Buddhist. The complete canon, much expanded, also exists in Tibetan and Chinese versions.

Two noncanonical texts that have great authority within Theravada Buddhism are the *Milindapanha* (Questions of King Milinda) and the *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification). The *Milindapanha* dates from about the 2nd century AD. It is in the form of a dialogue dealing with a series of fundamental problems in Buddhist thought. The *Visuddhimagga* is the masterpiece of the most famous of Buddhist commentators, Buddhaghosa (flourished early 5th century AD). It is a large compendium summarizing Buddhist thought and meditative practice.

Theravada Buddhists have traditionally considered the Tipitaka to be the remembered words of Siddhartha Gautama. Mahayana Buddhists have not limited their scriptures to the teachings of this historical figure, however, nor has Mahayana ever bound itself to a closed canon of sacred writings. Various scriptures have thus been authoritative for different branches of Mahayana at various periods of history. Among the more important Mahayana scriptures are the following: the *Saddharmapundarika Sutra* (Lotus of the Good Law Sutra, popularly known as the Lotus Sutra), the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (Garland Sutra), and the *Lankavatara Sutra* (The Buddha's Descent to Sri Lanka Sutra), as well as a group of

writings known as the Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom).

C. Conflict and New Groupings

As Buddhism developed in its early years, conflicting interpretations of the master's teachings appeared, resulting in the traditional 18 schools of Buddhist thought. As a group, these schools eventually came to be considered too conservative and literal minded in their attachment to the master's message. Among them, Theravada was charged with being too individualistic and insufficiently concerned with the needs of the laity. Such dissatisfaction led a liberal wing of the *sangha* to begin to break away from the rest of the monks at the second council in 383 BC.

While the more conservative monks continued to honor the Buddha as a perfectly enlightened human teacher, the liberal Mahasanghikas developed a new concept. They considered the Buddha an eternal, omnipresent, transcendental being. They speculated that the human Buddha was but an apparition of the transcendental Buddha that was created for the benefit of humankind. In this understanding of the Buddha nature, Mahasanghika thought is something of a prototype of Mahayana.

19. Mahayana and Tantrism

1. Mahayana

The origins of Mahayana are particularly obscure. Even the names of its founders are unknown, and scholars disagree about whether it originated in southern or in northwestern India. Its formative years were between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD.

Speculation about the eternal Buddha continued well after the beginning of the Christian era and culminated in the Mahayana doctrine of his threefold nature, or triple “body” (*trikaya*). These aspects are the body of essence, the body of communal bliss, and the body of transformation. The body of essence represents the ultimate nature of the Buddha. Beyond form, it is the unchanging absolute and is spoken of as consciousness or the void. This essential Buddha nature manifests itself, taking on heavenly form as the body of communal bliss. In this form the Buddha sits in godlike splendor, preaching in the heavens. Lastly, the Buddha nature appears on earth in human form to convert humankind. Such an appearance is known as a body of transformation. The Buddha has taken on such an appearance countless times. Mahayana considers the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, only one example of the body of transformation.

The new Mahayana concept of the Buddha made possible concepts of divine grace and ongoing revelation that are lacking in Theravada. Belief in the Buddha’s heavenly manifestations led to the development of a significant devotional strand in Mahayana. Some

scholars have therefore described the early development of Mahayana in terms of the “Hinduization” of Buddhism.

Another important new concept in Mahayana is that of the [*bodhisattva*](#) or enlightenment being, as the ideal toward which the good Buddhist should aspire. A *bodhisattva* is an individual who has attained perfect enlightenment but delays entry into final nirvana in order to make possible the salvation of all other sentient beings. The *bodhisattva* transfers merit built up over many lifetimes to less fortunate creatures. The key attributes of this social saint are compassion and loving-kindness. For this reason Mahayana considers the *bodhisattva* superior to the *arhats* who represent the ideal of Theravada. Certain *bodhisattvas*, such as Maitreya, who represents the Buddha’s loving-kindness, and Avalokitesvara or Guanyin, who represents his compassion, have become the focus of popular devotional worship in Mahayana.

2. Tantrism

By the 7th century AD a new form of Buddhism known as Tantrism (see [Tantra](#)) had developed through the blend of Mahayana with popular folk belief and magic in northern India. Similar to Hindu Tantrism, which arose about the same time, Buddhist Tantrism differs from Mahayana in its strong emphasis on sacramental action. Also known as Vajrayana, the Diamond Vehicle, Tantrism is an esoteric tradition. Its initiation ceremonies involve entry into a *mandala*, a mystic circle or symbolic map of the spiritual universe. Also important in Tantrism is the use of *mudras*, or ritual gestures, and mantras, or sacred syllables, which are repeatedly

chanted and used as a focus for meditation. Vajrayana became the dominant form of Buddhism in Tibet and was also transmitted through China to Japan, where it continues to be practiced by the Shingon sect.

20. Expansion of Buddhism

IV. From India Outward

Buddhism spread rapidly throughout the land of its birth. Missionaries dispatched by King Ashoka introduced the religion to southern India and to the northwest part of the subcontinent. According to inscriptions from the Ashokan period, missionaries were sent to countries along the Mediterranean, although without success.

A. Asian Expansion

King Ashoka's son Mahinda and daughter Sanghamitta are credited with the conversion of Sri Lanka. From the beginning of its history there, Theravada was the state religion of Sri Lanka.

According to tradition, Theravada was carried to Myanmar from Sri Lanka during the reign of Ashoka, but no firm evidence of its presence there appears until the 5th century AD. From Myanmar, Theravada spread to the area of modern Thailand in the 6th century. It was adopted by the Thai people when they finally entered the region from southwestern China between the 12th and 14th centuries. With the rise of the Thai Kingdom, it was adopted as the state religion. Theravada was adopted by the royal house in Laos during the 14th century.

Both Mahayana and Hinduism had begun to influence Cambodia by the end of the 2nd century AD. After the 14th century, however, under Thai influence, Theravada

gradually replaced the older establishment as the primary religion in Cambodia.

About the beginning of the Christian era, Buddhism was carried to Central Asia. From there it entered China along the trade routes by the early 1st century AD. Although opposed by the Confucian orthodoxy and subject to periods of persecution in 446, 574-77, and 845, Buddhism was able to take root, influencing Chinese culture and, in turn, adapting itself to Chinese ways. The major influence of Chinese Buddhism ended with the great persecution of 845, although the meditative Zen, or Ch'an (from Sanskrit *dhyana*, "meditation"), sect and the devotional Pure Land sect continued to be important.

From China, Buddhism continued its spread. Confucian authorities discouraged its expansion into Vietnam, but Mahayana's influence there was beginning to be felt as early as AD 189. According to traditional sources, Buddhism first arrived in Korea from China in AD 372. From this date Korea was gradually converted through Chinese influence over a period of centuries.

Buddhism was carried into Japan from Korea. It was known to the Japanese earlier, but the official date for its introduction is usually given as AD 552. It was proclaimed the state religion of Japan in 594 by Prince Shotoku.

Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet through the influence of foreign wives of the king, beginning in the 7th century AD. By the middle of the next century, it had become a significant force in Tibetan culture. A key figure in the development of Tibetan Buddhism was the Indian monk Padmasambhava, who arrived in Tibet in 747. His main interest was the spread of

Tantric Buddhism, which became the primary form of Buddhism in Tibet. Indian and Chinese Buddhists vied for influence, and the Chinese were finally defeated and expelled from Tibet near the end of the 8th century.

Some seven centuries later Tibetan Buddhists had adopted the idea that the abbots of its great monasteries were reincarnations of famous *bodhisattvas*. Thereafter, the chief of these abbots became known as the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lamas ruled Tibet as a theocracy from the middle of the 17th century until the seizure of Tibet by China in 1950. See [Tibetan Buddhism](#).

B. New Sects

Several important new sects of Buddhism developed in China and flourished there and in Japan, as well as elsewhere in East Asia. Among these, Ch'an, or Zen, and Pure Land, or Amidism, were most important.

Zen advocated the practice of meditation as the way to a sudden, intuitive realization of one's inner Buddha nature. Founded by the Indian monk Bodhidharma, who arrived in China in 520, Zen emphasizes practice and personal enlightenment rather than doctrine or the study of scripture. See [Zen](#).

Instead of meditation, Pure Land stresses faith and devotion to the Buddha Amitabha, or Buddha of Infinite Light, as a means to rebirth in an eternal paradise known as the Pure Land. Rebirth in this Western Paradise is thought to depend on the power and grace of Amitabha, rather than to be a reward for human piety. Devotees show their devotion to Amitabha with countless repetitions of the phrase "Homage to the Buddha Amitabha." Nonetheless, a single sincere

recitation of these words may be sufficient to guarantee entry into the Pure Land.

A distinctively Japanese sect of Mahayana is Nichiren Buddhism, which is named after its 13th-century founder. Nichiren believed that the Lotus Sutra contains the essence of Buddhist teaching. Its contents can be epitomized by the formula "Homage to the Lotus Sutra," and simply by repeating this formula the devotee may gain enlightenment.

2I. Institutions and Practices

V. Institutions and Practices

Differences occur in the religious obligations and observances both within and between the *sangha* and the laity.

A. Monastic Life

From the first, the most devoted followers of the Buddha were organized into the monastic *sangha*. Its members were identified by their shaved heads and robes made of unsewn orange cloth. The early Buddhist monks, or *bhikkus*, wandered from place to place, settling down in communities only during the rainy season when travel was difficult. Each of the settled communities that developed later was independent and democratically organized. Monastic life was governed by the rules of the Vinaya Sutra, one of the three canonical collections of scripture. Fortnightly, a formal assembly of monks, the *uposatha*, was held in each community. Central to this observance was the formal recitation of the Vinaya rules and the public confession of all violations. The *sangha* included an order for nuns as well as for monks, a unique feature among Indian monastic orders. Theravadan monks and nuns were celibate and obtained their food in the form of alms on a daily round of the homes of lay devotees. The Zen school came to disregard the rule that members of the *sangha* should live on alms. Part of the discipline of this sect required its members to work in the fields to earn their own food.

In Japan the popular Shin school, a branch of Pure Land, allows its priests to marry and raise families. Among the traditional functions of the Buddhist monks are the performance of funerals and memorial services in honor of the dead. Major elements of such services include the chanting of scripture and transfer of merit for the benefit of the deceased.

B. Lay Worship

Lay worship in Buddhism is primarily individual rather than congregational. Since earliest times a common expression of faith for laity and members of the *sangha* alike has been taking the Three Refuges, that is, reciting the formula "I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the dharma. I take refuge in the *sangha*." Although technically the Buddha is not worshiped in Theravada, veneration is shown through the stupa cult. A stupa is a domelike sacred structure containing a relic. Devotees walk around the dome in a clockwise direction, carrying flowers and incense as a sign of reverence. The relic of the Buddha's tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka, is the focus of an especially popular festival on the Buddha's birthday. The Buddha's birthday is celebrated in every Buddhist country. In Theravada this celebration is known as Vaisakha, after the month in which the Buddha was born. Popular in Theravada lands is a ceremony known as *pirit*, or protection, in which readings from a collection of protective charms from the Pali canon are conducted to exorcise evil spirits, cure illness, bless new buildings, and achieve other benefits.

In Mahayana countries ritual is more important than in Theravada. Images of the buddhas and *bodhisattvas* on temple altars and in the homes of devotees serve as a focus for worship. Prayer and chanting are common

acts of devotion, as are offerings of fruit, flowers, and incense. One of the most popular festivals in China and Japan is the Ullambana Festival, in which offerings are made to the spirits of the dead and to hungry ghosts. It is held that during this celebration the gates to the other world are open so that departed spirits can return to earth for a brief time.

22. Buddhism Today

VI. Buddhism Today

One of the lasting strengths of Buddhism has been its ability to adapt to changing conditions and to a variety of cultures. It is philosophically opposed to materialism, whether of the Western or the Marxist-Communist variety. Buddhism does not recognize a conflict between itself and modern science. On the contrary, it holds that the Buddha applied the experimental approach to questions of ultimate truth.

In Thailand and Myanmar, Buddhism remains strong. Reacting to charges of being socially unconcerned, its monks have become involved in various social welfare projects. Although Buddhism in India largely died out between the 8th and 12th centuries AD, resurgence on a small scale was sparked by the conversion of 3.5 million former members of the untouchable caste, under the leadership of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, beginning in 1956. A similar renewal of Buddhism in Sri Lanka dates from the 19th century.

Under the Communist republics in Asia, Buddhism has faced a more difficult time. In China, for example, it continues to exist, although under strict government regulation and supervision. Many monasteries and temples have been converted to schools, dispensaries, and other public use. Monks and nuns have been required to undertake employment in addition to their religious functions. In Tibet, the Chinese, after their takeover and the escape of the Dalai Lama and other

Buddhist officials into India in 1959, attempted to undercut Buddhist influence.

Only in Japan since World War II have truly new Buddhist movements arisen. Notable among these is Soka Gakkai, the Value Creation Society, a lay movement associated with Nichiren Buddhism. It is noted for its effective organization, aggressive conversion techniques, and use of mass media, as well as for its nationalism. It promises material benefit and worldly happiness to its believers. Since 1956 it has been involved in Japanese politics, running candidates for office under the banner of its Komeito, or Clean Government Party.

Growing interest in Asian culture and spiritual values in the West has led to the development of a number of societies devoted to the study and practice of Buddhism. Zen has grown in the United States to encompass more than a dozen meditation centers and a number of actual monasteries. Interest in Vajrayana has also increased.

As its influence in the West slowly grows, Buddhism is once again beginning to undergo a process of acculturation to its new environment. Although its influence in the U.S. is still small, apart from immigrant Japanese and Chinese communities, it seems that new, distinctively American forms of Buddhism may eventually develop.

23. Links and Attributions

Special thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for their contribution to our site. The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

About Buddha and His Teachings

[His Life](#) [Meditation](#) [Doctrine](#) [What's New](#) [Influence](#) [Meaning](#) [Truths](#) [Path](#) [Commandments](#) [Dharma](#)

General

[Buddhist Studies WWW Virtual Library: The Internet Guide to Buddhism and Buddhist Studies](#)
<http://www.academicinfo.net/buddhism.html>
http://www.beliefnet.com/index/index_10001.html
<http://buddhism.about.com/mbody.htm>
Fundamentals of Buddhism
[Fundamental Buddhism Explained](#)
<http://www.fundamentalbuddhism.com/>
<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/buddhaintro.html>
<http://adaniel.tripod.com/buddhism.htm>
Life of Buddha
<http://www.miami.edu/phi/bio/Buddha/bud-life.htm>
Philosophy
<http://www.miami.edu/phi/bio/Buddha/bud-read.htm>
Buddhist Studies
http://www.buddhanet.net/l_study.htm
Resources for the Study of Buddhism: compilation
<http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/Buddhism.htm>
TEXTS
King Milinda
<http://www.miami.edu/phi/bio/Buddha/Milinda.htm>
Glossary
Buddhism: A to Z
<http://online.sfsu.edu/%7Erone/Buddhism/BuddhistDict/BDIntro.htm>

Indexes & Directories	Anthropology
Reference Desk	China Studies
Digital Library	Foreign Language Study
Zen Buddhism	Japan Studies
Shin Buddhism	Philosophy
Women & Buddhism	Sanskrit
Buddhism in the U.S.	
Buddhist Art	
Centers & Organizations	

[Buddhist Studies WWW Virtual Library: The Internet Guide to Buddhism and Buddhist Studies](#)
[Access to Insight: Readings in Theravada Buddhism](#)
[Asian Studies WWW Monitor](#)
[Buddhasasana](#)
[Buddhism Depot](#)
[Buddhist Resources Links Pitaka](#)
[Buddhist Studies and the Arts](#)
[Center for Buddhist Studies, National Taiwan University](#)
[DharmaNet International](#)
[Engaged Buddhist Dharma](#)
[Page Explained](#)

[Fundamental Buddhism The History.](#)

[Philosophy and Practice of Buddhism](#)
[Korean Buddhism](#)
[Korean Society of Indian Philosophy](#)
[RainbowDharma](#)
[Resources for the Study of East Asian Language and Thought](#)
[Sacred Rocks and Buddhist Caves in Thailand](#)
[Siddhartha – The Warrior Prince](#)
[Sparsabhumi – Buddhist & Indological Studies](#)
[Tibetan BuddhistLinks](#)
[Unified Buddhist Church](#)

SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/index.htm>

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PART IV

SECTION 5: CONFUCIANISM

24. Confucianism: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller.

If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441>

Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

The Philosopher Confucius 551-479 B.C. was a scholar and a teacher and a great thinker. He was of a tradition that studied the previous great works. He was one of the “literati”. He studied and reflected on and taught the “literature” at the center of Chinese culture in its formative period. He consolidated the ancient texts and contributed commentaries upon them. He spoke about and answered questions about the most serious matters of concern to human beings. Confucianism is humanism, a philosophy or attitude that is concerned with human beings, their achievements and interests, rather than with the abstract beings and problems of theology. In Confucianism man is the center of the universe: man cannot live alone, but with other human beings. For human beings, the ultimate goal is individual happiness. The necessary condition to achieve happiness is through peace. To obtain peace, Confucius discovered human relations consisting of the five

relationships which are based on love and duties. War has to be abolished; and the Great Unity of the world should be developed.

The tradition which developed following his work and teachings came to bear his name. He did not express any desire to create a way of life but his influence was so great that it could not be ignored or forgotten. The tradition which developed is usually considered as a religion in as much as it does exhibit the characteristics of a religion, although there are many raised in the West who have doubts about calling Confucianism a “religion” because it does not have a deity or deities that feature prominently in the tradition. On the other hand it does convey clearly what matters most and it does hold the focus on humanity and basic human virtues as being of “ultimate concern” and thus has an idea or concept of an Absolute which serves as bedrock belief for an entire way of life.

25. Principles and Texts

Confucianism, major system of thought in China, developed from the teachings of Confucius and his disciples, and concerned with the principles of good conduct, practical wisdom, and proper social relationships. Confucianism has influenced the Chinese attitude toward life, set the patterns of living and standards of social value, and provided the background for Chinese political theories and institutions. It has spread from China to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam and has aroused interest among Western scholars.

Although Confucianism became the official ideology of the Chinese state, it has never existed as an established religion with a church and priesthood. Chinese scholars honored Confucius as a great teacher and sage but did not worship him as a personal god. Nor did Confucius himself ever claim divinity. Unlike Christian churches, the temples built to Confucius were not places in which organized community groups gathered to worship, but public edifices designed for annual ceremonies, especially on the philosopher's birthday. Several attempts to deify Confucius and to proselyte Confucianism failed because of the essentially secular nature of the philosophy.

The principles of Confucianism are contained in the nine ancient Chinese works handed down by Confucius and his followers, who lived in an age of great philosophic activity. These writings can be divided into two groups: the Five Classics and the Four Books.

The *Wu Ching* (Five Classics), which originated before the time of Confucius, consist of the *I Ching* (Book of Changes), *Shu Ching* (Book of History), *Shih Ching* (Book of Poetry), *Li Chi* (Book of Rites), and *Ch'un Ch'iu* (Spring and Autumn Annals). The *I Ching* is a manual of divination probably compiled before the 11th century BC; its supplementary philosophical

portion, contained in a series of appendixes, may have been written later by Confucius and his disciples. The *Shu Ching* is a collection of ancient historical documents, and the *Shih Ching*, an anthology of ancient poems. The *Li Chi* deals with the principles of conduct, including those for public and private ceremonies; it was destroyed in the 3rd century BC, but presumably much of its material was preserved in a later compilation, the *Record of Rites*. The *Ch'un Ch'iu*, the only work reputedly compiled by Confucius himself, is a chronicle of major historical events in feudal China from the 8th century BC to Confucius's death early in the 5th century BC.

The *Shih Shu* (Four Books), compilations of the sayings of Confucius and Mencius and of commentaries by followers on their teachings, are the *Lun Yü* (Analects), a collection of maxims by Confucius that form the basis of his moral and political philosophy; *Ta Hsüeh* (The Great Learning) and *Chung Yung* (The Doctrine of the Mean), containing some of Confucius's philosophical utterances arranged systematically with comments and expositions by his disciples; and the *Mencius* (Book of Mencius), containing the teachings of one of Confucius's great followers.

The keynote of Confucian ethics is *jen*, variously translated as "love," "goodness," "humanity," and "human-heartedness." *Jen* is a supreme virtue representing human qualities at their best. In human relations, construed as those between one person and another, *jen* is manifested in *chung*, or faithfulness to oneself and others, and *shu*, or altruism, best expressed in the Confucian golden rule, "Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself." Other important Confucian virtues include righteousness, propriety, integrity, and filial piety. One who possesses all these virtues becomes a *chün-tzu* (perfect gentleman). Politically, Confucius advocated a paternalistic government in which the sovereign is benevolent and honorable and the subjects are respectful and obedient. The ruler should cultivate moral perfection in order to set a

good example to the people. In education Confucius upheld the theory, remarkable for the feudal period in which he lived, that “in education, there is no class distinction.”

26. Confucian Schools of Thought

Confucian Schools of Thought

After the death of Confucius two major schools of Confucian thought emerged: one was represented by Mencius, the other by Hsün-tzu (Hsün K'uang, 300?-235? BC). Mencius continued the ethical teachings of Confucius by stressing the innate goodness of human nature. He believed, however, that original human goodness can become depraved through one's own destructive effort or through contact with an evil environment. The problem of moral cultivation is therefore to preserve or at least to restore the goodness that is one's birthright. In political thought, Mencius is sometimes considered one of the early advocates of democracy, for he advanced the idea of the people's supremacy in the state.

In opposition to Mencius, Hsün-tzu contended that a person is born with an evil nature but that it can be regenerated through moral education. He believed that desires should be guided and restrained by the rules of propriety and that character should be molded by an orderly observance of rites and by the practice of music. This code serves as a powerful influence on character by properly directing emotions and by providing inner harmony. Hsün-tzu was the main exponent of ritualism in Confucianism.

After a brief period of eclipse in the 3rd century BC, Confucianism was revived during the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). The Confucian works, copies of which had been destroyed in the preceding period, were restored to favor, canonized, and taught by learned scholars in national academies. The works also formed the basis of later civil service examinations; candidates for responsible government positions received their appointments on the strength of their knowledge of classic

literature. As a result, Confucianism secured a firm hold on Chinese intellectual and political life.

The success of Han Confucianism was attributable to Tung Chung-shu, who first recommended a system of education built upon the teachings of Confucius. Tung Chung-shu believed in a close correspondence between human beings and nature; thus a person's deeds, especially those of the sovereign, are often responsible for unusual phenomena in nature. Because of the sovereign's authority, he or she is to blame for such phenomena as fire, flood, earthquake, and eclipse. Because these ill omens can descend on earth as a warning to humanity that all is not well in this world, the fear of heavenly punishment proves useful as a curb to the monarch's absolute power.

In the political chaos that followed the fall of the Han dynasty, Confucianism was overshadowed by the rival philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism, and the philosophy suffered a temporary setback. Nevertheless, the Confucian Classics continued to be the chief source of learning for scholars, and with the restoration of peace and prosperity in the Tang dynasty (618-907), the spread of Confucianism was encouraged. The monopoly of learning by Confucian scholars once again ensured them the highest bureaucratic positions. Confucianism returned as an orthodox state teaching.

27. Neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucianism

The intellectual activities of the Song (Sung) dynasty (960-1279) gave rise to a new system of Confucian thought based on a mixture of Buddhist and Taoist elements; the new school of Confucianism was known as Neo-Confucianism. The scholars who evolved this intellectual system were themselves well versed in the other two philosophies. Although primarily teachers of ethics, they were also interested in the theories of the universe and the origin of human nature.

Neo-Confucianism branched out into two schools of philosophy. The foremost exponent of one school was Chu Hsi, an eminent thinker second only to Confucius and Mencius in prestige, who established a new philosophical foundation for the teachings of Confucianism by organizing scholarly opinion into a cohesive system. According to the Neo-Confucianist system Chu Hsi represented, all objects in nature are composed of two inherent forces: *li*, an immaterial universal principle or law; and *ch'i*, the substance of which all material things are made. Whereas *ch'i* may change and dissolve, *li*, the underlying law of the myriad things, remains constant and indestructible. Chu Hsi further identifies the *li* in humankind with human nature, which is essentially the same for all people. The phenomenon of particular differences can be attributed to the varying proportions and densities of the *ch'i* found among individuals. Thus, those who receive a *ch'i* that is turbid will find their original nature obscured and should cleanse their nature to restore its purity. Purity can be achieved by extending one's knowledge of the *li* in each individual object. When, after much sustained effort, one has investigated and comprehended the universal *li* or natural law inherent in all animate and inanimate objects, one becomes a sage.

Opposed to the *li* (law) school is the *hsin* (mind) school of Neo-Confucianism. The chief exponent of the *hsin* school was Wang Yang-ming, who taught the unity of knowledge and practice. His major proposition was that “apart from the mind, neither law nor object” exists. In the mind, he asserted, are embodied all the laws of nature, and nothing exists without the mind. One’s supreme effort should be to develop “the intuitive knowledge” of the mind, not through the study or investigation of natural law, but through intense thought and calm meditation.

During the Qing (Ch’ing) dynasty (1644-1911) there was a strong reaction to both the *li* and *hsin* schools of Neo-Confucian thought. Qing scholars advocated a return to the earlier and supposedly more authentic Confucianism of the Han period, when it was still unadulterated by Buddhist and Taoist ideas. They developed textual criticism of the Confucian Classics based on scientific methodology, using philology, history, and archaeology to reinforce their scholarship. In addition, scholars such as Tai Chen introduced an empiricist point of view into Confucian philosophy.

Toward the end of the 19th century the reaction against Neo-Confucian metaphysics took a different turn. Instead of confining themselves to textual studies, Confucian scholars took an active interest in politics and formulated reform programs based on Confucian doctrine. K’ang Yu-wei, a leader of the Confucian reform movement, made an attempt to exalt the philosophy as a national religion. Because of foreign threats to China and the urgent demand for drastic political measures, the reform movements failed; in the intellectual confusion that followed the Chinese revolution of 1911, Confucianism was branded as decadent and reactionary. With the collapse of the monarchy and the traditional family structure, from which much of its strength and support was derived, Confucianism lost its hold on the nation. In the past, it often had managed to weather adversities and to emerge with renewed vigor, but during this

period of unprecedented social upheavals it lost its previous ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

In the view of some scholars, Confucius will be revered in the future as China's greatest teacher; Confucian classics will be studied, and Confucian virtues, embodied for countless generations in the familiar sayings and common-sense wisdom of the Chinese people, will remain the cornerstone of ethics. It is doubtful, however, that Confucianism ever again will play the dominant role in Chinese political life and institutions that it did in past centuries.

The Chinese Communist victory of 1949 underlined the uncertain future of Confucianism. Many Confucian-based traditions were put aside. The family system, for example, much revered in the past as a central Confucian institution, was deemphasized. Few Confucian classics were published, and official campaigns against Confucianism were organized in the late 1960s and early '70s.

28. Links and Attributions

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About Confucius and his teachings:

[His Life](#) [Basic Idea](#) [Morals](#) [Wisdom](#) [Limits](#) [Personality](#) [Adversaries](#) [Influence](#) [Sage](#) [Analects](#)

Internet Sites related to Confucianism:

<http://religion-cults.com/Eastern/Confucianism/confuci.htm>

<http://people.morehead-st.edu/fs/t.pitts/confucs.htm>

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/confuciu.htm>

<http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm>

<http://www.wam.umd.edu/~tkang/>

Chinese Philosophy

<http://main.chinesephilosophy.net/index.html>

Lexicon for Confucian Studies:

<http://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/ConfLex/>

In Japan

<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2300.html>

SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>

<http://www.davidwiley.com/religion.html>

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PART V

SECTION 6: TAOISM

29. Taoism: Introduction and History

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here
Cynthia Eller. If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will
<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast>
site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which th
made.<http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

I. Introduction

Daoism, Chinese philosophical and religious system, dating from the 3rd century BC. Alongside the native Chinese schools of thought, the influence of Daoism is evident in the development of [Confucianism](#).

II. Basic Tenets

The essential Daoist philosophical and mystical beliefs can be found in the *Ching*, *Classic of the Way and Its Power*) attributed to the his (6th century BC) and possibly compiled by followers as late as the 3rd century BC. The Daoist ideal is for an individual to conform to the standards of an ideal social system. The Daoist believes that one should ignore the dictates of society and seek only to conform to the natural order of the universe, the Dao (or Tao, meaning "way"), which can neither be seen nor heard nor thought. To be in accord with Dao, one has to "do nothing" (*wuwei*), which means to act in a natural or unnatural. Through spontaneous compliance with the impulses of nature, one achieves a mystical power. This power enables one to transcend all mundane concerns, including life and death. At the sociopolitical level, the Daoists called for

III. History

Unsuited to the development of an explicit political theory, Daoism has had a profound influence on Chinese aesthetics, hygiene, and religion. Alongside the philosophical and mystical beliefs outlined above, Daoism also developed on a popular level as a form of magic and the use of various elixirs. Experimental development, between the 3rd and 6th centuries, of various health practices led to the development of these. These developed into a general hygiene system, still practiced today, which emphasizes concentration to prevent disease and promote longevity.

About the 2nd century AD, popular Daoist religious organizations began to appear. Subsequently, under the influence of [Buddhism](#), Daoism developed into institutional monasticism and a concern for spiritual afterlife rituals. The organization of these groups was the local parish, which supported the Daoist community through contributions. Daoism was recognized as the official religion of the Han Dynasty. Daoist sects eventually developed, and in 1019 the leader of one of the sects, Zhang Sanfeng, was granted a tract of land in [Jiangxi](#) (Kiangsi) Province. The successors of the

this tract and nominal supremacy over local Daoist clergy until Chinese [Communists](#). In contemporary China, religious Daoism, Buddhism and other religions.

30. Links and Attributions

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The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the
Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

About the Master Lao Tzu and His Teachings:

[Master](#) [Meaning](#) [Power](#) [Quietude](#) [Values](#) [Conclusion](#) [Tao Te Ching 1](#) [Tao Te Ching 2](#)

Taoism: Introductions

Basics of Taoism <http://www.edepot.com/taoism.html> Basics of Taoism along with fundamental resources for additional information.

Taoism

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/taoism.htm>

[One-page simple summary from the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance.]

Taoism, or the Way

<http://www.askasia.org/frclasrm/readings/r000005.htm>

[An academic introduction written by Judith A. Berling for Focus on Asian Studies, a publication of the Asia Society.]

About Alternative Religions (Taoism) <http://www.religioustolerance.org/taoism.htm>

Taoism: History and Canon

The Taoist Canon: A Guide to Studies and Reference Works

http://venus.unive.it/dsao/pregadio/tools/daoang/dz_0.html Note: This server may be unavailable from time to time. If so, try again later. ~

[Fabrizio Pregadio's scholarly guide provides useful information about the canon, its categories, and individual texts. The version of the Guide that is linked requires no Chinese language skills. If you are skilled in reading characters and have your browser set to represent them properly via Big5, you can select an alternative version of the files once you have connected to Dr. Pregadio's [Chinese and Asian Studies site](#).]

Taoism: Images, Books, and Bibliographies

Recommended Reading

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism/introbib.htm>

[A basic list of recent books in English. Recommended for beginners, students, and others who want more detailed information and more advanced interpretation of Taoism.]

Background: Chinese History and Culture

[Calabash Gate: In a Calabash, a Chinese Myth of Origins](http://www.fengshuigate.com/calabash/index.html)

<http://www.fengshuigate.com/calabash/index.html>

[An introduction and translation by [Stephen L. Field](#) of Trinity University.
Requires patient attention.]

[Classical Historiography for Chinese History](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/elman/ClassBib/)

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/elman/ClassBib/>

[An extensive set of resources, some of them for advanced students,
provided by Professor Benjamin A. Elman at the University of California at
Los Angeles.]

[Condensed China](http://asterius.com/china/)

<http://asterius.com/china/>

[Chinese History for Beginners, provided by Paul Frankenstein, is not a
complete history of China, but is an very useful “greatest hits” or “Cliff’s
Notes” that is an excellent starting-point for the beginner or quick review
for the old hand who happens to be forgetful. The information is divided
into the following sections for easy access: Introduction, The Origins of
Chinese Civilization, The Early Empire, The Second Empire, The Birth of
Modern China, and Bibliography.]

[Internet East Asian History Sourcebook](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/eastasia/eastasiasbook.html)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/eastasia/eastasiasbook.html>

[A large set of linked resources on China, its cultures and religions, in the
context of its geographical setting.]

Taoist web sites:

Jeff Rasmussen's Tao Te Ching web site features an illustrated Tao Te Ching, an introduction to Taoism, and links.

See: http://www.symynet.com/tao_te_ching/

Bill Mason's Taoism Page is at: <http://www.taoism.net> This web site emphasizes the practical application of the Tao to everyday life.

Maury Merkin, "Daoism in brief," is at: <http://www.his.com/~merkin/> This website offers a brief introduction to Taoism and a glossary of terms.

"The Taoist Canon: A guide to studies and reference works"

at: <http://helios.unive.it/~dsao/pregadio/tools/daoasang/>

The "Taoism Information Page" is at: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism>

The "Taoism Depot" contains a Taoism discussion forum, live chat and a wide range of resources. See: <http://www.edepot.com/taoism.html>

Western Reform Taoism has an excellent web site which publishes their creed and beliefs on dozens of important topics. See: <http://wrt.org/>

The Taoist Restoration Society (TRS) is "a U.S. nonprofit corporation dedicated to the rehabilitation and rebirth of China's Taoist tradition."

See: <http://www.taorestore.org/intro.html>

Taoism information page <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism/>

Virtual Library Information Page <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism/>

University of Florida - Historical outlines and summary <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism/intros.htm>

Information on Taoism supported by captioned texts <http://www.37.com/37w2.htm>

Academic Resources <http://www.academicinfo.net/chinarelig.html#Taoism>

The Center of traditional Taoist studies: a non-profit religious organization established to encourage traditional Taoist studies. The Center offers four integrated programs to provide the introductory knowledge required to be a student of Tao; Martial Arts & Chi Quong to train the body and The Yin and Yang of Meditation and Philosophy to provide training for the mind. <http://www.tao.org/>

Emphasizing the application of the Tao to everyday life. <http://www.taoism.net>

Sacred **Texts**:

[The Abode of the Eternal Tao](#)

[Taoism Information Page](#)

[EAWC Anthology: The Art of War](#)

SACRED TEXTS : <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/index.htm>

CONTRIBUTORS: Judith Grote (2001) Donald Osorio(2001)

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PART VI

SECTION 7: SHINTOISM

31. Shinto: Introduction and History

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller. If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441> Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

I. Introduction

Shinto (Japanese, “the way of the gods”), Japanese cult and religion, originating in prehistoric times, and occupying an important national position for long periods in the history of Japan, particularly in recent times. During its early period, the body of religious belief and practice called Shinto was without a name and had no fixed dogma, moral precepts, or sacred writings. Worship centered on a vast pantheon of spirits, or *kami*, mainly divinities personifying aspects of the natural world, such as the sky, the earth, heavenly bodies, and storms. Rites included prayers of thanksgiving; offerings of valuables, such as swords and armor and, especially, cloth; and ablutionary purification from crime and defilement.

II. Early History

In the late 6th century AD the name Shinto was created for the native religion to distinguish it from Buddhism and Confucianism, which had been introduced from China. Shinto was rapidly overshadowed by Buddhism, and the native gods were generally regarded as manifestations of Buddha in a previous state of existence. Buddhist priests became the custodians of Shinto shrines and introduced their own ornaments, images, and ritual. At the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th centuries, the celebrated Japanese teacher Kukai, or (posthumously) Kobo Daishi, established a doctrine uniting Buddhism and Shinto under the name of Ryobu Shinto (Japanese, “the Shinto of two kinds”). In the new religion, Buddhism dominated Shinto, and elements were adopted from Confucianism.

The ancient practice of Shinto proper virtually disappeared and was maintained only at a few great shrines and in the imperial palace, although the emperors themselves had become Buddhists. The distinctively Shinto priests became fortune-tellers and magicians.

Beginning in the 18th century, Shinto was revived as an important national religion through the writings and teachings of a succession of notable scholars, including Mabuchi, Motoori Norinaga, and Hirata Atsutane. Motivated by nationalistic sentiments that took the form of reverence for Japanese antiquity and hatred for ideas and practices of foreign origin, these men prepared the way for the disestablishment of Buddhism and the adoption of Shinto as the state religion. In 1867 the shogunate was overthrown, and the emperor was restored to the head of the government. According to revived Shinto doctrine, the sovereignty of the emperor was exercised by divine right through his reputed descent from the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami, who is considered the founder of the Japanese nation. Related beliefs included the doctrines that the Japanese were superior to other peoples because of their descent from the gods, and that the emperor was destined to rule over the entire world. Until the defeat of Japan in World War II, these beliefs were of the utmost importance in assuring popular support for the military expansion of the Japanese Empire.

III. Contemporary Shinto

Before 1946 Shinto took two forms: State, or Shrine, Shinto, a patriotic nationalistic cult, identified with and financially supported by the imperial Government; and Sectarian Shinto, a general term for a number of sects

founded by private persons and based on various interpretations of traditional Shinto. State Shinto, as the official government cult, theoretically embodied the religious beliefs of the entire Japanese people, and the number of its adherents was counted as the total population of the empire. The cult centered on a great profusion of shrines in all parts of the country, ranging from small wayside chapels commemorating local spirits and families to great national sanctuaries, such as the Yasukuni Shrine, Tokyo, dedicated to the spirits of soldiers who had died in battle for Japan. In 1946, during the American occupation of Japan following World War II, the cult was completely separated from the state by order of General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander for the Allied powers. Government financial support of State Shinto was eliminated, the former practice of teaching cult doctrines in the schools was abolished, and the use of Shinto symbols for nationalistic purposes was forbidden. At the same time the emperor issued a statement renouncing all claims to divinity.

Sectarian Shinto, a religion of the same status as Buddhism and Christianity, was unaffected by these changes. At the present time it comprises 13 major and numerous minor sects. The principal sects are divided into 5 main groups: those that continue with little modification the traditions of ancient Shinto; those that emphasize adherence to Confucian ethics; those that are predominantly devoted to faith healing; those that practice the worship of mountains; and those that are primarily devoted to purification rites. In the early 1990s more than 110 million Japanese participated in the various Shinto sects, but those who professed Shinto as their sole or major religion numbered only about 3.4

million. The Shinto sects have approximately 101,000 priests and about 81,000 shrines. One of the most authoritative works on the subject is *Shinto: The Way of Japan* (1965) by the American educator and clergyman Floyd H. Ross.

32. Links and Attributions

Special thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for their contribution to our site. The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

[Basic Terms of Shinto](#) – Explanation of fundamentals of Shinto.

[Futahashira Shrine](#) – Located in Miyagi Prefecture. Festivals, history, Priest biography.

[The “Interi” Shinto Homepage](#) – An introduction to Interi Shintoism. It includes various topics of importance to the person seeking an understanding life and death.

[Jinja & Shinto](#) – A site from Jinja Online Network League.

[Study Guide: Shinto](#) – A short and basic page about shintoism.

Basic Information: <http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~QM9T-KNDU/shintoism.htm>

Images: <http://www.trincoll.edu/zines/tj/tj4.4.96/articles/cover.html>

Shrines: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2059.html>

Festivals: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2063.html>

SACRED TEXTS <http://www.sacred-texts.com/shi/index.htm>

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Web Surfer’s Caveat: These are class notes, intended to comment on readings and amplify class discussion. They should be read as such. They are not intended for publication or general distribution.

PART VII

SECTION 8: JUDAISM

33. Judaism: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller. If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441> Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

I. Introduction

Judaism, religious culture of the Jews (also known as the people of Israel); one of the world's oldest continuing religious traditions.

The terms *Judaism* and *religion* do not exist in premodern Hebrew. The Jews spoke of Torah, God's revealed instruction to Israel, which mandated both a worldview and a way of life—see [Halakah](#). Halakah, meaning the “way” by which to walk, encompasses Jewish law, custom, and practice. Premodern Judaism, in all its historical forms, thus constituted (and traditional Judaism today constitutes) an integrated cultural system encompassing the totality of individual and communal existence. It is a system of sanctification in which all is to be subsumed under God's rule—that is, under divinely revealed models of cosmic order and lawfulness. Christianity originated as one among several competing Jewish ideologies in 1st-century Palestine, and Islam drew in part on Jewish sources at the outset. Because most Jews, from the 7th century on, have lived within the cultural sphere of either Christianity or Islam, these religions have had an impact on the subsequent history of Judaism.

Judaism originated in the land of Israel (also known as Palestine) in the Middle East. Subsequently, Jewish communities have existed at one time or another in almost all parts of the world, a result of both voluntary migrations of Jews and forced exile or expulsions (see [Diaspora](#)). In the early 1990s the total world Jewish population was about 12.8 million, of whom about 5.5 million lived in the United States, more than 3.9 million in Israel, and nearly 1.2 million in the Soviet

Union, the three largest centers of Jewish settlement. About 1.2 million Jews lived in the rest of Europe, most of them in France and Great Britain. About 356,700 lived in the rest of North America, and 32,700 in Asia other than Israel. About 433,400 Jews lived in Central and South America, and about 148,700 lived in Africa.

34. Basic Doctrine and Sources

II. Basic Doctrines and Sources

As a rich and complex religious tradition, Judaism has never been monolithic. Its various historical forms nonetheless have shared certain characteristic features. The most essential of these is a radical monotheism, that is, the belief that a single, transcendent God created the universe and continues providentially to govern it. Undergirding this monotheism is the teleological conviction that the world is both intelligible and purposive, because a single divine intelligence stands behind it. Nothing that humanity experiences is capricious; everything ultimately has meaning. The mind of God is manifest to the traditional Jew in both the natural order, through creation, and the social-historical order, through revelation. The same God who created the world revealed himself to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The content of that revelation is the [Torah](#) ("revealed instruction"), God's will for humankind expressed in commandments (*mizvot*) by which individuals are to regulate their lives in interacting with one another and with God. By living in accordance with God's laws and submitting to the divine will, humanity can become a harmonious part of the cosmos.

A. Covenant

A second major concept in Judaism is that of the [covenant](#) (berith), or contractual agreement,

between God and the Jewish people. According to tradition, the God of creation entered into a special relationship with the Jewish people at Sinai. They would acknowledge God as their sole ultimate king and legislator, agreeing to obey his laws; God, in turn, would acknowledge Israel as his particular people and be especially mindful of them. Both biblical authors and later Jewish tradition view this covenant in a universal context. Only after successive failures to establish a covenant with rebellious humanity did God turn to a particular segment of it. Israel is to be a “kingdom of priests,” and the ideal social order that it establishes in accordance with the divine laws is to be a model for the human race. Israel thus stands between God and humanity, representing each to the other.

The idea of the covenant also determines the way in which both nature and history traditionally have been viewed in Judaism. Israel’s well-being is seen to depend on obedience to God’s commandments. Both natural and historical events that befall Israel are interpreted as emanating from God and as influenced by Israel’s religious behavior. A direct causal connection is thus made between human behavior and human destiny. This perspective intensifies the problem of theodicy (God’s justice) in Judaism, because the historical experience of both individuals and the Jewish people has frequently been one of suffering. Much Jewish religious thought, from the biblical Book of Job onward, has been preoccupied with the problem of affirming justice and meaning in the face of apparent injustice. In time, the problem was mitigated by the belief that virtue and obedience ultimately would be rewarded and sin punished by divine judgment after death, thereby

redressing inequities in this world. The indignities of foreign domination and forced exile from the land of Israel suffered by the Jewish people also would be redressed at the end of time, when God would send his [Messiah](#) (*mashiah*, “one anointed” with oil as a king), a scion of the royal house of David, to redeem the Jews and restore them to sovereignty in their land. Messianism, from early on, has been a significant strand of Jewish thought. Yearning for the Messiah’s coming was particularly intense in periods of calamity. Ultimately, a connection was drawn between the messianic idea and the concept of Torah: The individual Jew, through proper study and observance of God’s commandments, could hasten the Messiah’s arrival. Each individual’s action thus assumed a cosmic importance.

B. The Rabbinic Tradition

Although all forms of Judaism have been rooted in the Hebrew Bible (referred to by Jews as the Tanach, an acronym for its three sections: Torah, the Pentateuch; Nebiim, the prophetic literature; and Ketubim, the other writings), it would be an error to think of Judaism as simply the “religion of the Old Testament.” Contemporary Judaism is ultimately derived from the rabbinic movement of the first centuries of the Christian era in Palestine and Babylonia and is therefore called rabbinic Judaism. *Rabbi*, in Aramaic and Hebrew, means “my teacher.” The rabbis, Jewish sages adept in studying the Scriptures and their own traditions, maintained that God had revealed to Moses on Sinai a twofold Torah. In addition to the written Torah (Scripture), God revealed an oral Torah, faithfully

transmitted by word of mouth in an unbroken chain from master to disciple, and preserved now among the rabbis themselves. For the rabbis, the oral Torah was encapsulated in the Mishnah ("that which is learned or memorized"), the earliest document of rabbinic literature, edited in Palestine at the turn of the 3rd century. Subsequent rabbinic study of the Mishnah in Palestine and Babylonia generated two Talmuds ("that which is studied"; also called *Gemara*, an Aramaic term with the same meaning; see [Talmud](#)), wide-ranging commentaries on the Mishnah. The Babylonian Talmud, edited about the 6th century, became the foundation document of rabbinic Judaism.

Early rabbinic writings also include exegetical and homiletical commentaries on Scripture (the *Midrashim*; see [Midrash](#)) and several Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch and other scriptural books (the see [Targums](#)). Medieval rabbinic writings include codifications of talmudic law, the most authoritative of which is the 16th-century *Shulhan Arukh* (Set Table) by Joseph ben Ephraim Caro. In Judaism, the study of Torah refers to the study of all this literature, not simply of the Pentateuch ("the Torah," in the narrow sense).

35. Worship and Practices

III. Worship and Practices

For the religious Jew, the entirety of life is a continuous act of divine worship. "I keep the Lord always before me" (Psalms 16:8), a verse inscribed on the front wall of many see [synagogues](#), aptly characterizes Judaic piety.

A. Prayers and Services

Traditionally, Jews pray three times a day: in the morning (*shaharith*), afternoon (*minhah*), and evening (*maarib*). The times of prayer are deemed to correspond to the times when sacrifices were offered in the Jerusalem Temple. In this and other ways, rabbinic Judaism metaphorically carries forward the structure of the destroyed Temple cult. A company of ten men forms a congregation, or quorum (*minyan*), for prayer.

The single required component of all Jewish worship services is a series of benedictions called the *Tefillah* ("prayer"); it is also known as the *Amidah*, or "standing" prayer, because it is recited standing, and the *Shemoneh Esreh*, because it originally contained 18 benedictions. On weekdays it is now composed of 19 benedictions, including 13 petitions for welfare and messianic restoration. On see [Sabbaths](#) and festivals, these petitions are replaced by occasional prayers. A second major rubric is the recitation of the [Shema](#) in the morning and evening. All services conclude with two messianic prayers, the first called *Alenu*, the second an Aramaic doxology called

the [Kaddish](#). As a sign of devotion to God, the observant adult male Jew during weekday morning prayers wears both a fringed prayer shawl (*tallith*; the fringes are called *zizith*) and [phylacteries](#) (prayer boxes, called *tefillin*). Both customs are derived from the scriptural passages that are recited as the Shema, as is a third, the placing of a *mezuzah* (prayer box) on the doorpost of one's house, a further reminder that God is everywhere. As a gesture of respect to God, the head is covered during prayer, either with a hat or a skullcap (*kippah*; Yiddish *yarmulke*). Pious Jews wear a head covering at all times, recognizing God's constant presence.

B. Torah

The study of Torah, the revealed will of God, also is considered an act of worship in rabbinic Judaism. Passages from Scripture, Mishnah, and Talmud are recited during daily morning services. On Monday and Thursday mornings, a handwritten parchment scroll of the Torah (that is, the Pentateuch) is removed from the ark at the front of the synagogue and read, with cantillation, before the congregation. The major liturgical Torah readings take place on Sabbath and festival mornings. In the course of a year, the entire Torah will be read on Sabbaths. The annual cycle begins again every autumn at a celebration called Simhath Torah ("rejoicing in the Torah"), which falls at the end of the [Sukkot](#) festival. Torah readings for the festivals deal with the themes and observances of the day. Thematically appropriate readings from the Prophets (Haftarah, meaning "conclusion") accompany the Torah readings on Sabbaths and festivals. The public reading

of Scripture thus constitutes a significant part of synagogue worship. In fact, this appears originally to have been the primary function of the synagogue as an institution.

C. Benedictions

In addition to the daily prayers, Jews recite numerous benedictions throughout the day before performing commandments and before enjoying the bounties of nature. For the Jew, the earth belongs to God. Humans are simply tenant farmers or gardeners. The owner, therefore, must be acknowledged before the tenant may partake of the fruits.

D. Dietary Laws

Jewish dietary laws relate to the Temple cult. One's table at home is deemed analogous to the table of the Lord. Certain animals, considered unclean, are not to be eaten (see Deuteronomy 14:3-21). Into this category fall pigs as well as fish without fins or scales. Edible animals—those that have split hooves and chew their cuds—must be properly slaughtered (*kasher*, or "fit") and the blood fully drained before the meat can be eaten. Meat and milk products are not to be eaten together. See [Kosher](#).

E. The Sabbath

The Jewish liturgical calendar carries forward the divisions of time prescribed in the Torah and observed in the Temple cult. Every seventh day is the Sabbath, when no work is performed. By this abstention, the Jew returns the world to its owner, that is, God, acknowledging that humans extract its produce only on

sufferance. The Sabbath is spent in prayer, study, rest, and family feasting (see [Kiddush](#)). An additional (*musaf*) service is recited in the synagogue on Sabbaths and festivals, corresponding to the additional sacrifice that is offered in the Temple on these days.

F. Festivals

The Jewish year includes five major festivals and two minor ones. Three of the major festivals originally were agricultural and are tied to the seasons in the land of Israel. Pesach ([Passover](#)), the spring festival, marks the beginning of the barley harvest, and Shabuoth (Weeks or Pentecost) marks its conclusion 50 days later. Sukkot (Tabernacles) celebrates the autumn harvest and is preceded by a 10-day period of communal purification. From an early date, these festivals came to be associated with formative events in Israel's historical memory. Passover celebrates the [Exodus](#) from Egypt. [Shabuoth](#) is identified as the time of the giving of the Torah on Sinai. It is marked by the solemn reading of the [Ten Commandments](#) in the synagogue. Sukkot is still observed primarily as a harvest festival, but the harvest booths in which Jews eat during the festival's seven days also are identified with the booths in which the Israelites dwelt on their journey to the Promised Land. The ten-day penitential period before Sukkot is inaugurated by [Rosh Hashanah](#), the New Year, and concludes with [Yom Kippur](#), the Day of Atonement. According to tradition, the world is judged each New Year and the decree sealed on the Day of Atonement. A ram's horn (*shofar*) is blown on the New Year to call the people to repentance. The Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish year, is spent in fasting, prayer, and confession. Its liturgy begins with the plaintive chanting

of the [Kol Nidre](#) formula and includes a remembrance of the day's rites (*avodah*) in the Temple.

The two minor festivals, [Hanukkah](#) and [Purim](#), are later in origin than the five Pentateuchally prescribed festivals. Hanukkah (Dedication) commemorates the victory of the [Maccabees](#) over the Syrian king Antiochus IV in 165 BC and the ensuing rededication of the Second Temple. Purim (Lots) celebrates the tale of Persian Jewry's deliverance by see [Esther](#) and Mordecai. It occurs a month before Passover and is marked by the festive reading in the synagogue of the Scroll of Esther (*megillah*). Four fast days, commemorating events in the siege and destruction of the two Temples in 586 BC and AD 70, complete the liturgical year. The most important of these is Tishah b'Ab, or the Ninth of Ab, observed as the day on which both Temples were destroyed.

G. Special Occasions

Significant events in the life cycle of the Jew also are observed in the community. At the age of eight days, a male child is publicly initiated into the covenant of Abraham through circumcision (*berith milah*). Boys reach legal maturity at the age of 13, when they assume responsibility for observing all the commandments ([bar mitzvah](#)) and are called for the first time to read from the Torah in synagogue. Girls reach maturity at 12 years of age and, in modern Liberal synagogues, also read from the Torah (bat mitzvah). In the 19th century, the modernizing Reform movement instituted the practice of confirmation for both young men and women of secondary school age. The ceremony is held on Shabuoth and signifies acceptance of the faith revealed

at Sinai. The next turning point in a Jew's life is marriage (*kiddushin*, "sanctification"). Even at the hour of greatest personal joy, Jews recall the sorrows of their people. The seven wedding benedictions include petitionary prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the Jewish people to Zion. Also, at the Jewish funeral the hope for resurrection of the deceased is included in a prayer for the redemption of the Jewish people as a whole. The pious Jewish male is buried in his tallith.

36. History

IV. History

The biblical literature and cognate archaeological materials provide the earliest information about the history of Judaism (see [Bible](#); [Jews](#)). Earliest Israel was not monotheistic, but henotheistic: Worshiping only one God themselves, the Israelites did not deny the existence of other gods for other nations.

Preexilic Israel, first as a confederation of tribes and then as a kingdom, celebrated as its formative experiences the redemption from Egyptian bondage and, particularly, the conquest and settlement of the land of Canaan (the land of Israel). Its deity was Yahweh (see [Jehovah](#)), the god of the patriarchs. Yahweh had redeemed the Israelites from Egypt and brought them into the promised land. Israelite religion was intimately bound to the land, its climate, and the agricultural cycle of the year. Yahweh was believed to bring the rainfall that guaranteed a bountiful harvest or famine, drought, and pestilence if the community proved unfaithful and recalcitrant. Israel thus saw itself as dependent on God for its livelihood and obligated to respond with sacrificial offerings of gratitude and propitiation. The sacrificial cult ultimately was centralized in the royal sanctuary in Jerusalem, which later was rivaled by the northern sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan. Opposition to syncretistic cultic practices at both the northern (Israelite) and southern (Judean) sanctuaries and to social injustices under the monarchies was voiced during this period by the prophets, charismatic “men of God.” They did not

reject the sacrificial cult per se, but merely what they saw as an exclusive, smug reliance on it that ignored the moral dimension of Israelite society. Their warnings were perceived to have been vindicated when first the northern, then the southern, kingdoms were destroyed by foreign conquerors.

A. Babylonian Exile

The exile of the Judeans to Babylonia in 586 BC was a major turning point in Israelite religion. The prior history of Israel now was reinterpreted in light of the events of 586, laying the foundation for the traditional biblical Pentateuch, prophetic canon, and historical books. The prophets Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah believed that Yahweh had used the Babylonian Empire to punish the Israelites for their sins, and he therefore had the power to redeem them from captivity if they repented. A truly monotheistic religion developed, the God of Israel now being seen as the God ruling universal history and the destiny of all nations. The Babylonian exiles' messianic hope for a restored Judean kingdom under the leadership of a scion of the royal house of David seemed to have been vindicated when Cyrus the Great, after conquering Babylon in 539 BC, permitted a repatriation of subject populations and a restoration of local temples. The restored Judean commonwealth did not fully realize this hope, however, because the Persians did not allow the reestablishment of a Judean monarchy, but only a temple-state with the high priest as its chief administrator.

B. Maccabean and Roman Periods

The introduction into the Middle East of Greek culture, beginning with the conquests of Alexander the Great in 331 BC, put the indigenous cultures of the region on the defensive (see [Hellenistic Age](#)). The Maccabean revolt of 165 to 142 BC began as a civil war between Jewish Hellenizers and offended nativists; it ended as a successful war for Judean political independence from Syria. This political and cultural turmoil had a major impact on religion. The earliest [apocalyptic writings](#) were composed during this period. This genre of cryptic revelations interpreted the wars of the time as part of a cosmic conflict between the forces of good and evil that would end with the ultimate victory of God's legions. Bodily resurrection at the time of God's Last Judgment was promised for the first time to those righteous Jews who had been slain in the conflict. (In earlier Judaism, immortality consisted solely in the survival of the individual's children and people and in a shadowy afterlife in the netherworld, Sheol.)

The Maccabean victories inaugurated an 80-year period of Judean political independence, but religious turmoil persisted. Members of the Hasmonaeen priestly family that led the revolt proclaimed themselves hereditary kings and high priests, although they were not of the ancient high priestly lineage. This, together with their Hellenistic monarchical trappings, prompted fierce opposition from groups such as the Qumran community, known to modern scholars from the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#). Led by dissident priests, this sect believed that the Jerusalem Temple had been profaned by the Hasmonaeans and saw itself as a purified Temple exiled in the wilderness.

The Qumran group can probably be identified with the

Essenes described by Jewish historian Flavius Josephus and other ancient writers. Josephus also described two other groups, the [Sadducees](#) and the [Pharisees](#), for whom no identifiable firsthand sources have been found. The Pharisees (*perushim*, “separatists”), like the Qumran group, put forth their own traditions of biblical law, which were disputed by the Sadducees, an aristocratic priestly group. The Pharisees were the lineal forerunners of the rabbinic movement after AD 70. All the religious factions of this period, particularly those opposed to the Temple administration, appealed to the authority of Scripture, to which each gave its own distinctive interpretation.

Messianic-apocalyptic fervor increased when Judean political independence was brought to an end by Roman legions in the middle of the 1st century BC and climaxed in the outbreak of an unsuccessful revolt against Rome in AD 66 to 70. (Christianity began as one of these messianic-apocalyptic movements.)

C. Development of Rabbinic Judaism

The Romans’ destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70 and their suppression of a second messianic revolt in 132 to 135 led by Simon Bar Kokhba were catastrophes for Judaism of no less magnitude than the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC. The priestly leadership was decisively discredited. In this context the rabbinic movement emerged. Because the Jewish people had lost control of their political destiny, the rabbis emphasized their communal and spiritual life. They taught that by conformity in daily life to the Torah as elaborated in the rabbinic traditions—through study, prayer, and observance—the individual Jew could achieve salvation

while waiting for God to bring about the messianic redemption of all Israel. Some rabbis held that if all Jews conformed to the Torah, the Messiah would be compelled to come. Institutionally, the synagogue (which had existed before AD 70) and the rabbinic study house replaced the Temple that had been destroyed.

D. Medieval Judaism

The rabbinization of all Jewry, including the growing Mediterranean and European Diasporas, was a gradual process that had to overcome sharp challenges from the [Karaites](#) and other antirabbinic movements. The Arab conquest of the Middle East in the 7th century by Islamic Arab armies facilitated the spread of a uniform rabbinic Judaism. Near the seat of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, the heads of the Babylonian rabbinical academies (*geonim*; plural of *gaon*, meaning “excellence”) attempted to standardize Jewish law, custom, and liturgy in accordance with their own practices, which they set forth in their replies (*responsa*) to inquiries from Diaspora communities. Thus, the hegemony over Jewry passed from Palestine to Babylonia, and the Babylonian Talmud came to be the most authoritative rabbinic document.

In the cultural ambit of Islam, rabbinic Judaism encountered Greek philosophy as recovered and interpreted by Islamic commentators. Rabbinic intellectuals began to cultivate philosophy to defend Judaism against the polemics of Islamic theologians and to demonstrate to other Jews the rationality of their revealed faith and law. Medieval Jewish philosophy typically concerns the attributes of God, miracles, prophecy (revelation), and the rationality of the

commandments. The most notable philosophical interpretations of Judaism were put forth by Babylonian *gaon* Saadia ben Joseph in the 9th century, Judah Ha-Levi in the 12th century, and, preeminently, Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) in the 12th century (*Guide for the Perplexed*, 1190?; translated 1881-1885). The exposure to systematic logic also affected rabbinic legal studies in the Islamic world and is evident in numerous posttalmudic codifications of Jewish law, the most famous being Maimonides' elegant *Mishneh Torah*.

Medieval Judaism developed two distinctive cultures, Sephardic (centered in Moorish Spain) and Ashkenazic (in the lands of the Holy Roman Empire; see [Ashkenazim](#)). Philosophy and systematic legal codification were distinctly Sephardic activities and were opposed by the Ashkenazim, who preferred intensive study of the Babylonian Talmud. The great Rhineland school of Talmud commentary began with 11th-century scholar Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi) of Troyes and continued with his grandsons and students, known as the tosaphists, who produced the literature of *tosaphoth* ("additions" to Rashi's Talmud commentary).

Throughout the medieval period, Judaism was continually revitalized by mystical and ethical-pietistic movements. The most significant of these were the 12th-century German Hasidic, or "pietist," movement and the 13th-century Spanish [Cabala](#), of which the most influential work was *Sefer ha-zohar* (The Book of Splendor) by Moses de León.

The Cabala is an esoteric theosophy, containing elements of [Gnosticism](#) and [Neoplatonism](#), that

describes the dynamic nature of the godhead and offers a powerful symbolic interpretation of the Torah and the commandments. It began in small, elite scholarly circles but became a major popular movement after the calamitous expulsion of the Jews from Catholic Spain in 1492. The spread of the Cabala was facilitated by the mythical, messianic reinterpretation of it made by Isaac Luria of Safed. Lurianic Cabala explained to the exiles the cosmic meaning of their suffering and gave them a crucial role in the cosmic drama of redemption. Luria's ideas paved the way for a major messianic upheaval, centered around the figure of Sabbatai Zevi, which affected all Jewry in the 17th century. They also influenced the popular 18th-century Polish revival movement called Hasidism.

Begun by Israel Baal Shem Tov, Hasidism proclaimed that, through fervent, rapturous devotion, the poor, unlearned Jew could serve God better than the Talmudist. Rabbinic opposition to Hasidism was eventually mitigated in the face of a more serious threat to both groups: the western European see [Age of Enlightenment](#) and the various modernizing movements that it generated within Judaism.

E. Modern Tendencies

The civil emancipation of European Jewry, a process complicated by lingering anti-Jewish sentiment, evoked different reformulations of Judaism in western and eastern Europe. In the west (particularly in Germany) Judaism was reformulated as a religious confession like modern [Protestantism](#). The German Reform movement abandoned the hope of a return to Zion (the Jewish homeland), shortened and aestheticized the worship

service, emphasized sermons in the vernacular, and rejected as archaic much Jewish law and custom. The Reform rabbi took on many of the roles of the Protestant minister. Early Reform theologians such as Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim, influenced by German philosophers Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel, emphasized ethics and a belief in human progress. Right-wing Reformers, led by Zacharias Frankel, favored the retention of Hebrew and more traditional customs. Modern Orthodoxy, championed by [Samson R. Hirsch](#) in opposition to the Reformers, sought a blend of traditional Judaism and modern learning.

In eastern Europe, where Jews formed a large and distinctive social group, modernization of Judaism took the form of cultural and ethnic nationalism. Like the other resurgent national movements in the east, the Jewish movement emphasized the revitalization of the national language (Hebrew; later also Yiddish) and the creation of a modern, secular literature and culture. [Zionism](#), the movement to create a modern Jewish society in the ancient homeland, took firm hold in eastern Europe after its initial formulations by Leo Pinsker in Russia and Theodor Herzl in Austria. Zionism was a secular ideology but it powerfully evoked and was rooted in traditional Judaic messianism, and it ultimately led to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

37. Judaism in America

V. Judaism in America

The contemporary American Jewish community is descended largely from central European Jews who immigrated in the mid-19th century and, particularly, from eastern European Jews who arrived between 1881 and 1924, as well as more recent refugees from, and survivors of, the [Holocaust](#). The multiple forms of Judaism in America—Reform, Conservative, Orthodox—have resulted from the adaptation of these Jewish immigrant groups to American life and their accommodation to one another. Institutionally, Judaism in America has adopted the strongly congregationalist structure of American Christianity. Although affiliated with national movements, most congregations retain considerable autonomy.

A. Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism, the first movement to define itself, was largely German at the outset. In America, it was influenced by liberal Protestantism and particularly by the [Social Gospel](#) movement. Its national institutions, all founded in the 1870s and 1880s by [Isaac M. Wise](#), are the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), and the Hebrew Union College, the oldest surviving rabbinical school in the world (which merged in 1950 with the more Zionist-oriented Jewish Institute of Religion). Once the bastion of religious rationalism,

the Reform movement since the 1940s has put more emphasis on Jewish peoplehood and traditional religious culture. Its orientation remains liberal and nonauthoritarian. The Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, ordained its first woman rabbi in 1972, and the Reform movement has worked to increase the participation of women in religious ritual. In the year 2000 Reform rabbis voted to affirm gay and lesbian unions. While supporting same-sex unions, the CCAR, which passed the resolution, left it to individual rabbis to decide whether to perform such ceremonies and what kind of ritual to use.

B. Conservative Judaism

The Conservative movement embodies the sense of community and folk piety of modernizing eastern European Jews. It respects traditional Jewish law and practice while advocating a flexible approach to Halakah. Its major institutions, founded at the turn of the century, are the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA), the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), and the Rabbinical Assembly (RA). An offshoot of the Conservative movement is the Reconstructionist movement founded by Mordecai M. Kaplan in the 1930s. Reconstructionism advocates religious naturalism while emphasizing Jewish peoplehood and culture. Reconstructionists began to ordain women rabbis in the 1970s, and in 1983 the JTSA voted to admit women to its rabbinical program and ordain them as Conservative rabbis. Outside of the US Conservative Judaism and its official association is called Masorti.

C. Orthodoxy

American Orthodoxy is not so much a movement as a spectrum of traditionalist groups, ranging from the modern Orthodox, who try to integrate traditional observance with modern life, to some Hasidic sects that attempt to shut out the modern world. The immigration to America of many traditionalist and Hasidic survivors of the Holocaust has strengthened American Orthodoxy. No single national institution represents all Orthodox groups. Among the synagogue organizations are the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and Young Israel ("modern" Orthodox) and Agudas Israel; among the rabbinical groups, the Rabbinical Council of America ("modern") and the Rabbinical Alliance of America; and among the rabbinical schools, Isaac Elchanan Seminary at Yeshiva University and the Hebrew Theological College ("modern") in Skokie, Illinois, and numerous small European-type *yeshivas* (talmudic academies). The Synagogue Council of America is a forum for discussion and joint action among these movements.

D. Significance of Israel

American Judaism has been profoundly affected by the Nazi destruction of European Jewry and the founding of the modern state of Israel. The Holocaust and Israel are closely linked in the perceptions of most contemporary Jews as symbols of collective death and rebirth—profoundly religious themes. Israel has a religious dimension, embodying Jewish self-respect and the promise of messianic fulfillment. All movements in American Judaism (excepting the ultra-Orthodox sectarians) have become more Israel-oriented in the

past decades. Both the Reform and Conservative movements have been striving to achieve legal recognition and equal status with Orthodoxy in the state of Israel, where marriage, divorce, and conversion are controlled by the Orthodox rabbinate, which is backed in the government by the important National Religious Party.

38. Links and Attributions

Special thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for their contribution to our site. The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

Related Sites of Interest:

All sites have been renamed to be self-explanatory. Some of these links also have links to explore..

A major search engine: [Judaism and Jewish Resources – Andrew Tannenbaum](#)

[UCal @Davis INTRO TO JUDAISM HOMEPAGE](#) Everything about Judaism

[GLOSSARY FOR INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM](#)

[THE LAWS OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE TORAH](#)

[Jewish Beliefs–13 Principles](#)

[HISTORICAL CHART – time-line for the History of Judaism](#)

[NOVA -Lost Tribes of Israel](#)

[Calendar of Jewish Holidays](#)

[A Cybrary of the Holocaust, Remember.org](#)

[An Invitation to Understanding Bar and Bat Mitzvahs](#) By [Allison De Meulder](#)

- [Bar Mitzvah Cross Currents](#)
- [Bar Mitzvahs and the Dyslexic Child](#)
- [My Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guide](#)
- [Adult Bat Mitzvah Guide](#)
- [Bar & Bat Mitzvah: Entering Adulthood](#)

<http://www.academicinfo.net/Judaism.html>

Indexes & Directories	History Gateway
Reference Desk	Holocaust Studies
Digital Library	American Jews
	Organizations

[Academic Jewish Studies Internet Directory](#)

"Comprehensive list of links to academic associations, research institutes, study programs, libraries, archives, e-mail discussion groups and other WWW resources in the field of academic Jewish Studies worldwide. Offers direct access to online library catalogs and to 'RAMBI - Index of Articles in Jewish Studies'. Part of the WWW-Virtual Library." Provided by the Jewish Studies Dept., University of Duisburg, Germany

[The Jewish History Resource Center](#)

A well organized and extensive collection of academic resources. A selection of the units include Databases; Biblical History; Syllabi; Libraries - Archives; American Jewish History; Grants & Fellowships; Basic Readings; and much more.

The Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

[The Ultimate Jewish/Israel Link Launcher](#)

Sections include: Politics ; Judaism ; Culture ; Local ; People ; History ; Antisemitism ; Information ; Travel ; Business ; Academic ; Organizations. By Steve Ruttenberg, University of Colorado

[Academic Jewish Studies on the Internet](#)

"This network is one of the oldest Internet projects in the humanities, initially operating under the name Judaica/He'Asif, starting in February 1989, operating out of Tel Aviv University. In 1991, the network moved to the University of Minnesota, and in 1993 it became part of the H-Net Consortium in collaboration with the Shamash Project."

[Bluethread](#)

"We provide a neutral space to study the Torah, Mitzvot and their meaning to Reform Jews. We are searching for a common thread of knowledge, belief and practice that can be agreed upon and used to unify Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews. We support amateur Torah scholarship and provide resources to beginning students of Biblical Hebrew and Torah."

[Conversion to Judaism](#)

"The Conversion to Judaism Home Page is the web site of the Conversion to Judaism Resource Center. The Center provides information and advice to people who are considering converting to Judaism and to those who have converted."

By Lawrence J. Epstein

[Dead Sea Scrolls](#)

An exhibit at the Library of Congress. The online exhibit includes images of 12 scroll fragments and 29 other objects loaned by the Israel Antiquities Authority. The exhibit also includes introductions to the Qumran library and community and the 'World of the Scrolls'

[H-Judaic Home Page](#)

Jewish Studies Online

[Israel Social Sciences Data Center](#)

"...established by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, with a mission to collect, preserve and distribute data of interest to the academic community...The ISDC now houses approximately 1200 datasets including national sample survey data, local studies, census micro-data, government records in selected fields as well as macro-economic series...Sources of data include the Central Bureau of Statistics, central and local government agencies, research institutes as well as independent researchers from the affiliated academic institutes."

[Jewish History Resource Center](#)

"This Website from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem serves primarily as a fine gateway on Jewish History resources. Topics covered include biblical history, the Second Temple and the Talmudic Era, the Holocaust, Archaeology, Zionism and the State of Israel, American Jewish History, and Women's Studies, among others. Also available on-site are a listing of Hebrew University Dissertations; a conference calendar; annotated directories of relevant archives, libraries, and databases; numerous bibliographies indexed by historical topics, and much more. The site is frequently updated and easily navigated. [DC]"

From The Scout Report for Social Sciences [04/18/00], Copyright Internet Scout Project 1994-2000. <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/>
The Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

[Jewish Learning Index](#)

"Project Genesis promotes further Jewish education about our Jewish roots, as represented in Jewish sources. Project Genesis believes that this is the best way to restore self-respect, self-confidence, and an interest in our own continuity, among modern Jewish collegiates and unaffiliated Jews worldwide. Project Genesis works to establish a strong Jewish identity, expand Jewish knowledge, and encourage its participants to become more involved with Judaism and the Jewish community."

Study sections include: Torah Portion ; Jewish Law ; Ethics ; Texts ; Seasons ; Features ; Jewish Basics.

From torah.org

[Jewish National and University Library, Hebrew University](#)

[The Library Catalogue](#)

[Jewish Ozzies' Inter.Net \(J.O.I.N.\)](#)

"...the non-profit association which helps organisations and individuals to participate in the Jewish internet and learn about matters of importance and interest to the Australian Jewish community."

[Jewish Student Online Research Center \(JSOURCE\)](#)

"JSOURCE is not an index or search engine for surfing the web. We purposely avoided links with other sites to make this a one-stop shop for information. Our goal is to provide the basic information you need to be informed, whether it is to satisfy your own interest or to prepare for a research paper, speech, article or debate."

[Jewish Studies Resources](#)

"The page links to academic resources in field of Jewish studies and is partially annotated. There are links to important online databases in Jewish studies, major libraries and archives, and other subjects such as history, the Holocaust, Israel, Bible, and full-text resources. The page is updated on a regular basis."

Nancy Pressman Levy, Hebrew and African Studies Selector, Princeton University Library

[Jewish Women's Archive](#)

"The mission of the Jewish Women's Archive is to uncover, chronicle, and transmit the rich legacy of Jewish women and their contributions to our families and communities, to our people and our world."

Sections include: Exhibits ; Virtual Archive ; Resources.

[Jewish/Israel History](#)

Sections on genealogy, ancient Israel, diaspora history and Israel

[Judaism and Jewish Resources](#)

Mix of both practice and academic sites.

Maintained by Andrew Tannenbaum

[Judaica Collection](#)

Both religious and political links

[Maven](#)

A meta-directory of thousands of links

[WebNexus](#)

"Links for students and scholars of Early Judaism and Christianity, offering a selective, annotated guide to various web sites."

Sections include: Early Judaism & Christianity ; General Christian Links ; General Jewish Links ; Religious Studies ; Classical Studies ; Library Resources ; Publishers & Booksellers ; Software for Theology ; Greek & Hebrew Fonts ; Desk References ; Search Engines ; Directories ; World News ; Web-Servant.

By Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Jerry D. Truex

[Yad Vashem on the Internet](#)

"Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was established in 1953 by an act of the Israeli Knesset...Yad Vashem's task is to perpetuate the legacy of the Holocaust to future generations so that the world never forgets the horrors and cruelty of the Holocaust. Its principal missions are commemoration and documentation of the events of the Holocaust, collection, examination and publication of testimonies to the Holocaust, the collection and memorialization of the names of Holocaust victims, research and education."

[Yad Vashem Magazine \(Internet Edition\)](#)

Additional Sites of Interest

[Adam and Eve Archive](#)

The biblical story in Judaism and Christianity

Gary A. Anderson, University of Virginia & Michael E. Stone, Hebrew University

[aronson.com – Jewish Books](#)

Online Jewish bookstore

[The Aseneth Home Page](#)

"...the web site devoted to **Joseph and Aseneth**, a tale told about the Biblical Patriarch Joseph and his Egyptian wife Aseneth, usually classed

as part of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. This page was created to coincide with course THM393 (Set Texts) taught the Spring Semester 1999 in the Department of Theology, University of Birmingham. You will find here an introduction, a translation, bibliography and links."

By Dr Mark Goodacre, University of Birmingham

[Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace](#)

"This is the official host of the world-wide Chabad-Lubavitch Movement, a project of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch – the educational arm of the Lubavitch movement."

Includes daily and weekly lectures and is available in eight languages

[GeoPassage.com](#)

They offer custom-designed vacations for individuals and groups to Israel through their websites.

[The Jews of Bukhara](#)

"This is a brief outline of the history of the Jewish community of Bukhara (also written Bokhara or Bochara), Uzbekistan, from earliest times to the present."

Donna L. Carr

[Lilith](#)

An overview by Alan Humm

[Material Culture](#)

Ancient Canaanites, Israelites and Related Peoples

[Philo of Alexandria](#)

Resources for the study of Philo of Alexandria

Includes online texts, introduction, articles, and reviews.

By Torrey Seland, Prof. Biblical Studies, Volda University College, Norway

SACRED TEXTS: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/index.htm>

CONTRIBUTOR: Bethany Hessenthaler (2001)

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Web Surfer's Caveat: These are class notes, intended to comment on readings and amplify class discussion. They should be read as such. They are not intended for publication or general distribution.

PART VIII

SECTION 9:
ZOROASTRIANISM

39. Zoroastrianism: Overview

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller.

If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441>

Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

A small religious community, which exists mostly in Mumbai, is Zoroastrianism. The follower is called Parsi because the religion arrived in India from Persia. This religion was established by Zarathustra in 6th or 7th century BC. The followers of this religion exiled from Iran in the 7th century AD. because of religious persecutions by the Muslims. They arrived in Gujarat region of India.

The Parsis believe in the existence of one invisible God. They believe that there is a continuous war between the good forces (forces of light) and the evil forces (forces of darkness). The good forces will win if people will do good deeds think good and speak well. God is represented in their temples through fire, which symbolizes light. The holiest place for them is the village of Udvada in Gujarat, India. The holy language of the Parsis is an ancient language spoken in Iran, Avesta. The Parsis believe that fire, water, air and earth are pure element to be preserved

and therefore they do not cremate or bury their dead ones but leave them on high towers, specially built for this purpose, to be eaten by hawks and crows.

The Parsis are less than 0.02% of India's population but their contribution to India is much more than their proportion in India's population. Some Parsis were main figures in establishing the Indian Nationalist movement. They were the pioneers in establishing the modern Indian industry. The rich Parsi families contributed enormously to establish institutions of all kinds in India. Even today some of the bigger finance houses in India belong to followers of this religion.

[©Aharon Daniel](#) Israel 1999-2000

40. Tenets and History

I. Introduction

Zoroastrianism, religion founded in ancient [Persia](#) by the prophet Zoroaster. The doctrines preached by [Zoroaster](#) are preserved in his metrical Gathas (psalms), which form part of the sacred scripture known as the [Avesta](#).

II. Tenets

The basic tenets of the Gathas consist of a monotheistic worship of Ahura Mazda (the "Lord Wisdom") and an ethical [dualism](#) opposing Truth (Asha) and Lie, which permeate the entire universe. All that is good derives from, and is supported by, Ahura Mazda's emanations: Spenta Mainyu (the "Holy Spirit" or "Incremental Spirit," a creative force) and his six assisting entities, Good Mind, Truth, Power, Devotion, Health, and Life. All evil is caused by the "twin" of Spenta Mainyu, who is Angra Mainyu (the "Fiendish Spirit"; Persian. Ahriman), and by his assistants. Angra Mainyu is evil by choice, having allied himself with Lie, whereas Spenta Mainyu has chosen Truth. So too, human beings must choose. Upon death each person's soul will be judged at the Bridge of Discrimination; the follower of Truth will cross and be led to paradise, and the adherents of Lie will fall into hell. All evil will eventually be eliminated on earth in an ordeal of fire and molten metal.

III. The Gathas and the Seven Chapters

The structural complexity of the Gathic scheme has best been explained by the assumption that Zoroaster amalgamated two religious systems. The first is outlined in the Gathas and is most probably Zoroaster's own; this is the monotheistic worship of Wisdom and his emanations (including Asha). The second, describing a cult worshipping a Lord (Ahura) who is custodian of Asha, is actually attested to in a portion of the Avesta, the Liturgy of the Seven Chapters, composed after Zoroaster's death in his own [dialect](#). Zoroaster's teaching is praised and revered in the later section; its religious outlook, however, in part amalgamating earlier beliefs in Persia, is quite different from that of the Gathas. In the Seven Chapters, the emanations occur in the company of other sacred abstractions; Ahura has the epithet "possessing Asha," but Lie and Angra Mainyu are not mentioned. Many natural objects and mythical creatures, as well as ancestor spirits, are worshiped, and the very figure of Ahura Mazda resembles not so much Zoroaster's deity as the god Varuna (sometimes called the Asura, "Lord") of the most ancient Indian religious compositions, the *Rig-Veda*. See [Veda](#).

The ancestors of the Persians (that is, the Aryan subgroup of the Indo-European peoples) and the invaders of northern India were of the same stock, and it may be assumed that they worshiped a number of similar deities. The Ahura of the Seven Chapters has wives, called Ahuranis, who, like Varuna's Varunanis, are rain clouds and waters. Ahura is possessor of Asha, as Varuna is custodian of Rta ("Truth" or "cosmic order" = Asha = Old Persian. Arta). The sun is the "eye" of both deities, and the name of Ahura is at times joined to that of the god Mithra. In the Veda, the names

of Mithra and Varuna are similarly joined. The Seven Chapters also revere Haoma (Vedic, Soma), a divinized plant yielding an intoxicating juice (perhaps the “filth of intoxication” against which Zoroaster warned). The worship of ancestors and nature spirits and other deities (for example, the fire god, called Agni by the Hindus) likewise have Vedic correspondences. See *also* [Hinduism](#).

IV. The Yasna and the Vendidad

The Gathas and the Seven Chapters form part of the larger liturgy called the Yasna, the remainder of which is composed in another, closely related, dialect. This material further illustrates the incorporation of the Aryan polytheistic paganism into Zoroastrianism, as do the linguistically similar Yashts, which are hymns to individual deities. Among these deities is Anahita, a fertility and river goddess probably borrowed (as was, perhaps, the custom of incestuous marriages) from the non-Aryan Elamites. The latest part of the Avesta, the Vendidad or Videvdat, was composed after the Greek conquest of Persia in the 4th century BC, and is mainly a codification of ritual and law, somewhat similar in tone to the Old Testament Book of Leviticus. It reflects those customs attributed by the Greek historian Herodotus to the [Magi](#), a priestly caste of Median origin. These customs include exposure of corpses, protection of dogs, and the gleeful slaughter of crawling animals. The Avesta was composed in eastern Persia, as may be judged from its language and place-names.

V. Recognition and History

Probably the first Persian king to recognize the religion proposed by Zoroaster was [Darius I](#). His inscriptions are full of the praises of Ahura Mazda; he stresses rationality and seems to regard Lie as a world force. His son, [Xerxes I](#), was also a worshiper of Ahura Mazda, but he probably had less of an understanding of the details of Zoroaster's religion. Most striking is his conception that Arta will be attained in the afterlife, which view reflects the old Aryan idea that Rta has a location beyond the earth. Artaxerxes I (reigned 465-425 BC) was also a Mazda worshiper, but probably approved of a synthesis, under Magian direction, of Zoroaster's teachings with the older polytheism; this development is reflected in the syncretism of the Yashts. Artaxerxes II (reigned 409-358 BC) venerated Ahura Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita; in his reign the first Persian temples were probably built. Under the rule of the Greek Seleucids (312-64BC) and Parthian Arsacids (250? BC-AD 224), cults of foreign gods flourished along with Zoroastrianism. The new Persian dynasty of the Sassanids (AD 224-651) established Zoroastrianism as the state religion of Persia. In the Sassanid theology, Ahriman was opposed to Ohrmuzd (Ahura Mazda), not to Spenta Mainyu. This theology had already appeared in the Magian system of the 4th century BC, according to Greek historians. Certain Sassanid theologians taught that Ohrmuzd and Ahriman were the twin sons of Infinite Time (Zervan), but this doctrine was eventually rejected.

Persia was gradually converted to Islam after its conquest by the Arabs in the 7th century. Zoroastrianism survived, however, in small communities of Gabars (a derogatory term coined by the Arabs) in

the mountainous regions of Yezd and Kerman. About 18,000 still live in Iran. Zoroastrians, called [Parsis](#) (literally, Persians), are numerous and prosperous in India, chiefly in the vicinity of Bombay (now Mumbai). They still recite the Avestan liturgy and tend the sacred fires, but today they prepare a nonintoxicant "haoma," and few still follow the Magian doctrine of placing corpses on raised edifices (the so-called towers of silence) to be the prey of vultures.

4I. Links and Attributions

Special thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for their contribution to our site. The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

[The Dakhma-nashini mode of disposal of the dead.](#)

SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.avesta.org/avesta.html>
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/zor/index.htm>

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PART IX

SECTION 10: CHRISTIANITY

42. Christianity: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here **RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller. If you have iTunes on your computer just click <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast> to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to world religions made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

I. Introduction

Christianity, the most widely distributed of the world religions in all the populated continents of the globe. Its total membership is estimated at over 2 billion. Like any system of belief and values—be it Platonism, democracy—Christianity is in many ways comprehensible only to those who share the beliefs and strive to live by the values; and a description of its aspects of it would not be historically faithful. To a degree that we can recognize, however, such a system of beliefs and values can also be understood in some sense as well to an interested observer who does not, or even

43. Doctrine and Practice

II. Doctrine and Practice

A community, a way of life, a system of belief, a liturgical observance, a tradition—Christianity is all of these, and more. Each of these aspects of Christianity has affinities with other faiths, but each also bears unmistakable marks of its Christian origins. Thus, it is helpful, in fact unavoidable, to examine Christian ideas and institutions comparatively, by relating them to those of other religions, but equally important to look for those features that are uniquely Christian.

A. Central Teachings

Any phenomenon as complex and as vital as Christianity is easier to describe historically than to define logically, but such a description does yield some insights into its continuing elements and essential characteristics. One such element is the centrality of the person of [Jesus Christ](#). That centrality is, in one way or another, a feature of all the historical varieties of Christian belief and practice. Christians have not agreed in their understanding and definition of what makes Christ distinctive or unique. Certainly they would all affirm that his life and example should be followed and that his teachings about love and fellowship should be the basis of human relations. Large parts of his teachings have their counterparts in the sayings of the rabbis—that is, after all, what he was—or in the wisdom of Socrates and Confucius. In Christian teaching, Jesus cannot be less than the supreme preacher and exemplar of the moral

life, but for most Christians that, by itself, does not do full justice to the significance of his life and work.

What is known of Jesus, historically, is told in the Gospels of the New Testament of the [Bible](#). Other portions of the New Testament summarize the beliefs of the early Christian church. Paul and the other writers of Scripture believed that Jesus was the revealer not only of human life in its perfection but of divine reality itself. See *also* [Christology](#).

The ultimate mystery of the universe, called by many different names in various religions, was called "Father" in the sayings of Jesus, and Christians therefore call Jesus himself "Son of God." At the very least, there was in his language and life an intimacy with [God](#) and an immediacy of access to God, as well as the promise that, through all that Christ was and did, his followers might share in the life of the Father in heaven and might themselves become children of God. Jesus' [crucifixion](#) and [resurrection](#), to which early Christians referred when they spoke about him as the one who had reconciled humanity to God, made the cross the chief focus of Christian faith and devotion and the principal symbol of the saving love of God the Father.

This love is, in the New Testament and in subsequent Christian doctrine, the most decisive among the attributes of God. Christians teach that God is almighty in dominion over all that is in heaven and on earth, righteous in judgment over good and evil, beyond time and space and change; but above all they teach that "God is love." The creation of the world out of nothing and the creation of the human race were expressions of that love, and so was the coming of Christ. The classic

statement of this trust in the love of God came in the words of Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount: "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26). Early Christianity found in such words evidence both of the special standing men and women have as children of such a heavenly Father and of the even more special position occupied by Christ. That special position led the first generations of believers to rank him together with the Father—and eventually "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father [sent] in [Christ's] name"—in the formula used for the administration of [baptism](#) and in the several [creeds](#) of the first centuries. After controversy and reflection, that confession took the form of the doctrine of God as [Trinity](#). See also [Holy Spirit](#).

[Baptism](#) "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," or sometimes perhaps more simply "in the name of Christ," has been from the beginning the means of initiation into Christianity. At first it seems to have been administered chiefly to adults after they had professed their faith and promised to amend their lives, but this turned into a more inclusive practice with the baptism of infants. The other universally accepted ritual among Christians is the [Eucharist](#), or Lord's Supper, in which Christians share in bread and wine and, through them, express and acknowledge the reality of the presence of Christ as they commemorate him in the communion of believers with one another. In the form it acquired as it developed, the Eucharist became an elaborate ceremony of consecration and adoration, the texts of which have been set to music by numerous

composers of masses. The Eucharist has also become one of the chief points of conflict among the various Christian churches, which disagree about the “presence” of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine and about the effect of that presence upon those who receive. See also [Liturgy](#); [Mass](#); [Mass, Musical Settings of](#).

Another fundamental component of Christian faith and practice is the Christian community itself—the [church](#). Some scholars question the assumption that Jesus intended to found a church (the word *church* appears only twice in the Gospels), but his followers were always convinced that his promise to be with them “always, to the close of the age” found its fulfillment in his “mystical body on earth,” the holy catholic (universal) church. The relation of this holy catholic church to the various ecclesiastical organizations of worldwide Christendom is the source of major divisions among these organizations. Roman Catholicism has tended to equate its own institutional structure with the catholic church, as the common usage of the latter term suggests, and some extreme Protestant groups have been ready to claim that they, and they alone, represent the true visible church. Increasingly, however, Christians of all segments have begun to acknowledge that no one group has an exclusive right to call itself “the” church, and they have begun to work toward the reunion of all Christians. See [Ecumenical Movement](#); [Protestantism](#); [Roman Catholic Church](#).

B. Worship

Whatever its institutional form, the community of faith in the church is the primary setting for Christian worship. Christians of all traditions have placed a strong

emphasis on private devotion and individual prayer, as Jesus taught. But he also prescribed a form of praying, universally known as the [Lord's Prayer](#), the opening words of which stress the communal nature of worship: "Our Father, who art in heaven." Since New Testament times, the stated day for the communal worship of Christians has been the "first day of the week," Sunday, in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. Like the Jewish [Sabbath](#), Sunday is traditionally a day of rest. It is also the time when believers gather to hear the reading and preaching of the word of God in the Bible, to participate in the sacraments, and to pray, praise, and give thanks. The needs of corporate worship have been responsible for the composition of thousands of hymns, chorales, and chants, as well as instrumental music, especially for the organ. Since the 4th century, Christian communities have also been constructing special buildings for their worship, thereby helping to shape the history of architecture. See [Basilica](#); [Church](#); [Early Christian Art and Architecture](#); [Hymn](#); [Prayer](#).

C. Christian Life

The instruction and exhortation of Christian preaching and teaching concern all the themes of doctrine and morals: the love of God and the love of neighbor, the two chief commandments in the ethical message of Jesus (see Matthew 22: 34-40). Application of these commandments to the concrete situations of human life, both personal and social, does not produce a uniformity of moral or political behavior. Many Christians, for example, regard all drinking of alcoholic beverages as sinful, whereas others do not. Christians can be found on both the far left and the far right of many

contemporary questions, as well as in the middle. Still it is possible to speak of a Christian way of life, one that is informed by the call to discipleship and service. The inherent worth of every person as one who has been created in the image of God, the sanctity of human life and thus of marriage and the family, the imperative to strive for justice even in a fallen world—all of these are dynamic moral commitments that Christians would accept, however much their own conduct may fall short of these norms. It is evident already from the pages of the New Testament that the task of working out the implications of the ethic of love under the conditions of existence has always been difficult, and that there has, in fact, never been a “golden age” in which it was otherwise.

D. Eschatology

There is in Christian doctrine, however, the prospect of such a time, expressed in the Christian hope for everlasting life. Jesus spoke of this hope with such urgency that many of his followers clearly expected the end of the world and the coming of the eternal kingdom in their own lifetimes. Since the 1st century such expectations have tended to ebb and flow, sometimes reaching a fever of excitement and at other times receding to an apparent acceptance of the world as it is. The creeds of the church speak of this hope in the language of resurrection, a new life of participation in the glory of the resurrected Christ. Christianity may therefore be said to be an otherworldly religion, and sometimes it has been almost exclusively that. But the Christian hope has also, throughout the history of the church, served as a motivation to make life on earth conform more fully to the will of God as revealed in

Christ. See
[Coming](#).

also [Catechism](#); [Eschatology](#); [Second](#)

44. History: The Beginnings of the Church

III. History

Almost all the information about Jesus himself and about early Christianity comes from those who claimed to be his followers. Because they wrote to persuade believers rather than to satisfy historical curiosity, this information often raises more questions than it answers, and no one has ever succeeded in harmonizing all of it into a coherent and completely satisfying chronological account. Because of the nature of these sources, it is impossible, except in a highly tentative way, to distinguish between the original teachings of Jesus and the developing teachings about Jesus in early Christian communities.

What is known is that the person and message of Jesus of Nazareth early attracted a following of those who believed him to be a new prophet. Their recollections of his words and deeds, transmitted to posterity through those who eventually composed the Gospels, recall Jesus' days on earth in the light of experiences identified by early Christians with the miracle of his [resurrection](#) from the dead on the first [Easter](#). They concluded that what he had shown himself to be by the resurrection, he must have been already when he walked among the inhabitants of Palestine—and, indeed, must have been even before he was born of Mary, in the very being of God from eternity. They drew upon the language of their

Scriptures (the Hebrew Bible, which Christians came to call the Old Testament) to give an account of the reality, “ever ancient, ever new,” that they had learned to know as the apostles of Jesus Christ. Believing that it had been his will and command that they should band together in a new community, as the saving remnant of the people of Israel, these Jewish Christians became the first church, in Jerusalem. There it was that they believed themselves to be receiving his promised gift of the Holy Spirit and of a new power.

A. The Beginnings of the Church

Jerusalem was the center of the Christian movement, at least until its destruction by Roman armies in AD 70, but from this center Christianity radiated to other cities and towns in Palestine and beyond. At first, its appeal was largely, although not completely, confined to the adherents of [Judaism](#), to whom it presented itself as “new,” not in the sense of novel and brand-new, but in the sense of continuing and fulfilling what God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Already in its very beginnings, therefore, Christianity manifested a dual relation to the Jewish faith, a relation of continuity and yet of fulfillment, of antithesis and yet of affirmation. The forced conversions of Jews in the Middle Ages and the history of anti-Semitism (despite official condemnations of both by church leaders) are evidence that the antithesis could easily overshadow the affirmation. The fateful loss of continuity with Judaism has, however, never been total. Above all, the presence of so many elements of Judaism in the Christian Bible has acted to remind Christians that he whom they worshipped as their Lord was himself a Jew, and that

the New Testament did not stand on its own but was appended to the Old.

An important source of the alienation of Christianity from its Jewish roots was the change in the membership of the church that took place by the end of the 2nd century (just when, and how, is uncertain). At some point, Christians with Gentile backgrounds began to outnumber Jewish Christians. Clearly, the work of the apostle Paul was influential. Born a Jew, he was deeply involved in the destiny of Judaism, but as a result of his conversion, he believed that he was the “chosen instrument” to bring the message of Christ to the Gentiles. He was the one who formulated, in his Epistles (see [Epistle](#)) to several early Christian congregations, many of the ideas and terms that were to constitute the core of Christian belief. He deserves the title of the “first Christian theologian,” and most theologians who came after him based their concepts and systems on his Epistles, now collected and codified in the New Testament. See *also* [Paul, Saint](#).

From these Epistles and from other sources in the first two centuries it is possible to gain some notion of how the early congregations were organized. The Epistles to Timothy and to Titus bearing the name of Paul (although many biblical scholars now find his authorship of these letters implausible) show the beginnings of an organization based on an orderly transmission of leadership from the generation of the first apostles (including Paul himself) to subsequent “bishops,” but the fluid use of such terms as [bishop](#), *presbyter*, and [deacon](#) in the documents precludes identification of a single and uniform policy. By the 3rd century agreement was widespread about

the authority of the bishop as the link with the apostles. He was such a link, however, only if in his life and teaching he adhered to the teaching of the apostles as this was laid down in the New Testament and in the "deposit of faith" transmitted by the apostolic churches.

45. Councils and Creeds, Persecution, and Official Acceptance

B. Councils and Creeds

Clarification of this deposit became necessary when interpretations of the Christian message arose that were deemed to be deviations from these norms. The most important deviations, or heresies (see [Heresy](#)), had to do with the person of Christ. Some theologians sought to protect his holiness by denying that his humanity was like that of other human beings; others sought to protect the monotheistic faith by making Christ a lesser divine being than God the Father.

In response to both of these tendencies, early creeds began the process of specifying the divine in Christ, both in relation to the divine in the Father and in relation to the human in Christ. The definitive formulations of these relations came in a series of official church councils during the 4th and 5th centuries—notably the one at Nicaea in 325 and the one at Chalcedon in 451—which stated the doctrines of the Trinity and of the two natures of Christ in the form still accepted by most Christians (see [Chalcedon, Council of](#); [Nicene Creed](#)). To arrive at these formulations, Christianity had to refine its thought and language, creating in the process a philosophical [theology](#), both in Greek and in Latin, that was to be the dominant intellectual system of Europe for more than a thousand years. The principal architect of

Western theology was [Saint Augustine](#) of Hippo, whose literary output, including the classic *Confessions* and *The City of God*, did more than any other body of writings, except for the Bible itself, to shape that system.

C. Persecution

First, however, Christianity had to settle its relation to the political order. As a Jewish sect, the primitive Christian church shared the status of Judaism in the Roman Empire, but before the death of Emperor Nero in 68 it had already been singled out as an enemy. The grounds for hostility to the Christians were not always the same, and often opposition and persecution were localized. The loyalty of Christians to “Jesus as Lord,” however, was irreconcilable with the worship of the Roman emperor as “Lord,” and those emperors, such as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, who were the most deeply committed to unity and reform were also the ones who recognized the Christians as a threat to those goals and who therefore undertook to eliminate the threat. As in the history of other religions, especially [Islam](#), opposition produced the exact contrary of its intended purpose, and, in the epigram of the North African church father Tertullian, the “blood of the martyrs” became the “seed of the church.” By the beginning of the 4th century, Christianity had grown so much in size and in strength that it had to be either eradicated or accepted. Emperor Diocletian tried to do the first and failed; Constantine the Great did the second and created a Christian empire.

D. Official Acceptance

The conversion of [Constantine the Great](#) assured the church a privileged place in society, and it became easier to be a Christian than not to be one. As a result, Christians began to feel that standards of Christian conduct were being lowered and that the only way to obey the moral imperatives of Christ was to flee the world (and the church that was in the world, perhaps even of the world) and to follow the full-time profession of Christian discipline as a monk. From its early beginnings in the Egyptian desert, with the hermit St. Anthony, Christian [monasticism](#) spread to many parts of the Christian empire during the 4th and 5th centuries. Not only in Greek and Latin portions of the empire, but even beyond its eastern borders, far into Asia, Christian monks devoted themselves to prayer, asceticism, and service. They were to become, during the Byzantine and medieval periods, the most powerful single force in the Christianization of nonbelievers, in the renewal of worship and preaching, and (despite the anti-intellectualism that repeatedly asserted itself in their midst) in theology and scholarship. Most Christians today owe their Christianity ultimately to the work of monks. See *also* [Religious Orders and Communities](#).

46. Eastern Christianity and Western Christianity

E. Eastern Christianity

One of the most influential acts of Constantine the Great was his decision in 330 to move the capital of the empire from Rome to “New Rome,” the city of Byzantium at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. The new capital, Constantinople (now Istanbul), also became the intellectual and religious focus of Eastern Christianity. While Western Christianity became increasingly centralized, a pyramid the apex of which was the pope of Rome (see [Papacy](#)), the principal centers of the East—Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and [Alexandria](#)—developed autonomously. The emperor at Constantinople held a special place in the life of the church. It was he, for example, who convoked and presided over the general councils of the church, which were the supreme organ of ecclesiastical legislation in both faith and morals. This special relation between church and state, frequently (but with some oversimplification) called Caesaropapism, fostered a Christian culture in which (as the great Church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople, dedicated by Emperor Justinian in 538, attests) the noblest achievements of the entire society blended the elements of Christianity and of classical antiquity in a new synthesis.

At its worst, this culture could mean the subordination of the church to the tyranny of the state. The crisis of the 8th century over the legitimacy of the use of

images in Christian churches was also a collision of the church and the imperial power. Emperor Leo III prohibited images, thus precipitating a struggle in which Eastern monks became the principal defenders of the icons. Eventually the icons were restored, and with them a measure of independence for the church (see [Iconoclasm](#)). During the 7th and 8th centuries three of the four Eastern centers were captured by the dynamic new faith of Islam, with only Constantinople remaining unconquered. It, too, was often besieged and finally fell to the Turks in 1453. The confrontation with the Muslims was not purely military, however. Eastern Christians and the followers of the Prophet Muhammad exerted influence on one another in intellectual, philosophical, scientific, and even theological matters.

The conflict over the images was so intense because it threatened the Eastern church at its most vital point—its liturgy. Eastern Christianity was, and still is, a way of worship and on that basis a way of life and a way of belief. The Greek word *orthodoxy*, together with its Slavic equivalent *pravoslavie*, refers to the correct form for giving praise to God, which is finally inseparable from the right way of confessing true doctrine about God and of living in accordance with the will of God. This emphasis gave to Eastern liturgy and theology a quality that Western observers, even in the Middle Ages, would characterize as mystical, a quality enhanced by the strongly Neoplatonic strain in Byzantine philosophy (see [Neoplatonism](#)). Eastern monasticism, although often hostile to these philosophical currents of thought, nonetheless practiced its devotional life under the influence of writings of church fathers and theologians, such as St. Basil of Caesarea, who had absorbed a

Christian Hellenism in which many of these emphases were at work.

All these distinctive features of the Christian East—the lack of a centralized authority, the close tie to the empire, the mystical and liturgical tradition, the continuity with Greek language and culture, and the isolation as a consequence of Muslim expansion—contributed also to its increasing alienation from the West, which finally produced the East-West schism. Historians have often dated the schism from 1054, when Rome and Constantinople exchanged excommunications, but much can be said for fixing the date at 1204. In that year, the Western Christian armies on their way to wrest the Holy Land from the hand of the Turks (see [Crusades](#)) attacked and ravaged the Christian city of Constantinople. Whatever the date, the separation of East and West has continued into modern times, despite repeated attempts at reconciliation.

Among the points of controversy between Constantinople and Rome was the evangelization of the Slavs, beginning in the 9th century. Although several Slavic tribes—Poles, Moravs, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, and Slovenes—did end up in the orbit of the Western church, the vast majority of Slavic peoples became Christians in the Eastern (Byzantine) church. From its early foundations in [Kyiv](#), Ukraine, this Slavic Orthodoxy permeated Russia, where the features of Eastern Christianity outlined above took firm hold. The autocratic authority of the Muscovite tsar derived some of its sanctions from Byzantine Caesaropapism, and Russian monasticism took over the ascetic and devotional emphases cultivated by the Greek monasteries of [Mount Athos](#). The stress on cultural and

ethnic autonomy meant that from its beginnings Slavic Christianity had its own liturgical language (still known as Old Church Slavic, or Slavonic), while it adapted to its uses the architectural and artistic styles imported from the centers of Orthodoxy in Greek-speaking territory. Also in the Eastern church were some of the Balkan Slavs—Serbs, Montenegrins, Bosnians, and Slavic Macedonians; the Bulgars, a Turkic people; Albanians, descendants of the ancient Illyrians; and Romanians, a Romance people. During the centuries-long rule of the Ottoman Turks in the Balkans some of the local Christian populations were forced to embrace Islam, as, for example, some of the Bosnians, some of the Bulgarians, and some of the Albanians.

See also [Byzantine Empire](#); [Eastern Church](#); [Eastern Rite Churches](#); [Orthodox Church](#).

F. Western Christianity

Although Eastern Christianity was in many ways the direct heir of the early church, some of the most dynamic development took place in the western part of the Roman Empire. Of the many reasons for this development, two closely related forces deserve particular mention: the growth of the papacy and the migration of the Germanic peoples. When the capital of the empire moved to Constantinople, the most powerful force remaining in Rome was its bishop. The old city, which could trace its Christian faith to the apostles Peter and Paul and which repeatedly acted as arbiter of orthodoxy when other centers, including Constantinople, fell into heresy or schism, was the capital of the Western church. It held this position when the succeeding waves of tribes, in what used to be called the “barbarian invasions,” swept into Europe.

Conversion of the invaders to Catholic Christianity meant at the same time their incorporation into the institution of which the bishop of Rome was the head, as the conversion of the king of the Franks, [Clovis I](#), illustrates. As the political power of Constantinople over its western provinces declined, separate Germanic kingdoms were created, and finally, in 800, an independent Western "Roman empire" was born when Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III. See [Holy Roman Empire](#).

Medieval Christianity in the West, unlike its Eastern counterpart, was therefore a single entity, or at any rate strove to be one. When a tribe became Christian in the West, it learned Latin and often (as in the case of France and Spain) lost its own language in the process. The language of ancient Rome thus became the liturgical, literary, and scholarly speech of western Europe. Archbishops and abbots, although wielding great power in their own regions, were subordinate to the pope, despite his frequent inability to enforce his claims. Theological controversies occurred during the early centuries of the Middle Ages in the West, but they never assumed the proportions that they did in the East. Nor did Western theology, at least until after the year 1000, acquire the measure of philosophical sophistication evident in the East. The long shadow of St. Augustine continued to dominate Latin theology, and there was little independent access to the speculations of the ancients.

The image of cooperation between church and state, symbolized by the pope's coronation of Charlemagne, must not be taken to mean that no conflict existed between the two in the Middle Ages. On the contrary,

they clashed repeatedly over the delineation of their respective spheres of authority. The most persistent source of such clashes was the right of the sovereign to appoint bishops in his realm (lay investiture), which brought Pope Gregory VII and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV to a deadlock in 1075. The pope excommunicated the emperor, and the emperor refused to acknowledge Gregory as pope. They were temporarily reconciled when Henry subjected himself in penance to the pope at Canossa in 1077, but the tension continued. A similar issue was at stake in the excommunication of King John of England by Pope Innocent III in 1209, which ended with the king's submission four years later. The basis of these disputes was the complex involvement of the church in feudal society. Bishops and abbots administered great amounts of land and other wealth and were thus a major economic and political force, over which the king had to exercise some control if he was to assert his authority over his secular nobility. On the other hand, the papacy could not afford to let a national church become the puppet of a political regime. See [Investiture Controversy](#).

Church and state did cooperate by closing ranks against a common foe in the [Crusades](#). The Muslim conquest of Jerusalem meant that the holy places associated with the life of Jesus were under the control of a non-Christian power; and even though the reports of interference with Christian pilgrims were often highly exaggerated, the conviction grew that it was the will of God for Christian armies to liberate the Holy Land. Beginning with the First Crusade in 1095, the campaigns of liberation did manage to establish a Latin kingdom and patriarchate in Jerusalem, but Jerusalem returned

to Muslim rule a century later and within 200 years the last Christian outpost had fallen. In this sense the Crusades were a failure, or even (in the case of the Fourth Crusade of 1202-04, mentioned above) a disaster. They did not permanently restore Christian rule to the Holy Land, and they did not unify the West either ecclesiastically or politically.

A more impressive achievement of the medieval church during the period of the Crusades was the development of Scholastic philosophy and theology. Building as always on the foundations of the thought of St. Augustine, Latin theologians turned their attention to the relation between the knowledge of God attainable by unaided human reason and the knowledge communicated by revelation. [Saint Anselm](#) took as his motto "I believe in order that I might understand" and constructed a proof for the existence of God based on the structure of human thought itself (the ontological argument). About the same time, [Peter Abelard](#) was examining the contradictions between various strains in the doctrinal tradition of the church, with a view toward developing methods of harmonization. These two tasks dominated the thinking of the 12th and 13th centuries, until the recovery of the lost works of Aristotle made available a set of definitions and distinctions that could be applied to both. The philosophical theology of [Saint Thomas Aquinas](#) sought to do justice to the natural knowledge of God while at the same time exalting the revealed knowledge in the gospel, and it wove the disparate parts of the tradition into a unified whole. Together with such contemporaries as St. Bonaventure, Aquinas represents the intellectual ideal of medieval Christianity. See also [Scholasticism](#).

Even by the time Aquinas died, however, storms were beginning to gather over the Western church. In 1309 the papacy fled from Rome to Avignon, where it remained until 1377 in the so-called Babylonian Captivity of the church. This was followed by the Great Schism (see [Schism, Great](#)), during which there were two (and sometimes even three) claimants to the papal throne. That was not resolved until 1417, but the reunited papacy could not regain control or even respect.

47. Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Modern Period

G. Reformation and Counter Reformation

[Print section](#)

Reformers of different kinds—including [John Wycliffe](#), [John Huss](#) (Jan Hus), and [Girolamo Savonarola](#)—denounced the moral laxity and financial corruption that had infected the church “in its members and in its head” and called for radical change. Profound social and political changes were taking place in the West, with the awakening of national consciousness and the increasing strength of the cities in which a new merchant class came into its own. The Protestant Reformation may be seen as the convergence of such forces as the call for reform in the church, the growth of nationalism, and the emergence of the “spirit of capitalism.”

[Martin Luther](#) was the catalyst that precipitated the new movement. His personal struggle for religious certainty led him, against his will, to question the medieval system of salvation and the very authority of the church, and his excommunication by Pope [Leo X](#) proved to be an irreversible step toward the division of Western Christendom. Nor was the movement confined to Luther’s Germany. Native reform movements in Switzerland found leadership in [Huldreich Zwingli](#) and especially in [John Calvin](#), whose *Institutes of the*

Christian Religion became the most influential summary of the new theology. The English Reformation, provoked by the troubles of King Henry VIII, reflected the influence of the Lutheran and then of the Calvinistic reforms, but went its own “middle way,” retaining Catholic elements such as the historic episcopate alongside Protestant elements such as the sole authority of the Bible. The thought of Calvin helped in his native France to create the Huguenot party (see [Huguenots](#)), which was fiercely opposed by both church and state, but finally achieved recognition with the Edict of Nantes in 1598 (ultimately revoked in 1685). The more radical Reformation groups, notably the [Anabaptists](#), set themselves against other Protestants as well as against Rome, rejecting such long-established practices as infant baptism and sometimes even such dogmas as the Trinity and denouncing the alliance of church and state. See

also [Calvinism](#); [Lutheranism](#); [Presbyterianism](#).

That alliance helped to determine the outcome of the Reformation, which succeeded where it gained the support of the new national states. As a consequence of these ties to the rising national spirit, the Reformation helped to create the literary monuments—especially translations of the Bible—that decisively shaped the language and the spirit of the peoples. It also gave fresh stimulus to biblical preaching and to worship in the vernacular, for which a new hymnody came into being. Because of its emphasis on the participation of all believers in worship and confession, the Reformation developed systems for instruction in doctrine and ethics, especially in the form of catechisms, and an ethic of service in the world.

The Protestant Reformation did not exhaust the spirit of reform within the Roman Catholic church. In response both to the Protestant challenge and to its own needs, the church summoned the Council of Trent (see [Trent, Council of](#)), which continued over the years 1545-63, giving definitive formulation to doctrines at issue and legislating practical reforms in liturgy, church administration, and education. Responsibility for carrying out the actions of the council fell in considerable measure on the Society of Jesus, formed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (see [Jesuits](#)). The chronological coincidence of the discovery of the New World and the Reformation was seen as a providential opportunity to evangelize those who had never heard the gospel. Trent on the Roman Catholic side and the several confessions of faith on the Protestant side had the effect of making the divisions permanent. See also [Confession](#).

In one respect the divisions were not permanent, for new divisions continued to appear. Historically, the most noteworthy of these were probably the ones that arose in the [Church of England](#). The Puritans objected to the “remnants of popery” in the liturgical and institutional life of Anglicanism and pressed for a further reformation. Because of the Anglican union of throne and altar, this agitation had direct—and, as it turned out, violent—political consequences, climaxing in the English Revolution and the execution of King Charles I in 1649. [Puritanism](#) found its most complete expression, both politically and theologically, in North America. The Pietists of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches of Europe usually managed to remain within the establishment as a party instead of forming a separate church, but [Pietism](#) shaped the outlook of many among the

Continental groups who came to North America. European Pietism also found an echo in England, where it was a significant force in the life and thought of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement (see [Methodism](#)).

See also [Counter Reformation](#); [Reformation](#).

H. The Modern Period

Already during the Renaissance and Reformation, but even more in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was evident that Christianity would be obliged to define and to defend itself in response to the rise of modern science and philosophy. That problem made its presence known in all the churches, albeit in different ways. The condemnation of [Galileo](#) Galilei by the [Inquisition](#) on suspicion of heresy was eventually to find its Protestant equivalent in the controversies over the implications of the theory of [evolution](#) for the biblical account of [creation](#). Against other modern movements, too, Christianity frequently found itself on the defensive. The critical-historical method of studying the Bible, which began in the 17th century, seemed to threaten the authority of Scripture, and the rationalism of the Enlightenment was condemned as a source of religious indifference and anticlericalism (see [Biblical Scholarship](#); [Enlightenment, Age of](#)). Because of its emphasis on the human capacity to determine human destiny, even democracy could fall under condemnation. The increasing secularization of society removed the control of the church from areas of life, especially education, over which it had once been dominant.

Partly a cause and partly a result of this situation

was the fundamental redefinition of the relation between Christianity and the civil order. The granting of religious toleration to minority faiths and then the gradual separation of church and state represented a departure from the system that had, with many variations, held sway since the conversion of Constantine the Great and is, in the opinion of many scholars, the most far-reaching change in the modern history of Christianity. Carried to its logical conclusion, it seemed to many to imply both a reconsideration of how the various groups and traditions calling themselves Christian were related to one another and a reexamination of how all of them taken together were related to other religious traditions. Both of these implications have played an even larger role in the 19th and 20th centuries. See [Church and State](#).

The [ecumenical movement](#) has been a major force for bringing together, at least toward better understanding and sometimes even toward reunion, Christian denominations that had long been separated. At the [Second Vatican Council](#), the Roman Catholic church took important steps toward reconciliation both with the East and with Protestantism. That same council likewise expressed, for the first time in an official forum, a positive appreciation of the genuine spiritual power present in the world religions. A special case is the relation between Christianity and its parent, Judaism; after many centuries of hostility and even persecution, the two faiths have moved toward a closer degree of mutual understanding than at any time since the 1st century. See [Vatican Council, Second](#).

The reactions of the churches to their changed situation in the modern period have also included an

unprecedented increase in theological interest. Such Protestant theologians as [Jonathan Edwards](#) and [Friedrich Schleiermacher](#) and such Roman Catholic thinkers as [Blaise Pascal](#) and [John Henry Newman](#) took up the reorientation of the traditional apologias for the faith, drawing upon religious experience as a validation of the reality of the divine. The 19th century was preeminently the time of historical research into the development of Christian ideas and institutions. This research indicated to many that no particular form of doctrine or church structure could claim to be absolute and final, but it also provided other theologians with new resources for reinterpreting the Christian message. Literary investigation of the biblical books, although regarded with suspicion by many conservatives, led to new insights into how the Bible had been composed and assembled. And the study of the liturgy, combined with a recognition that ancient forms did not always make sense to the modern era, stimulated the reform of worship.

The ambivalent relation of the Christian faith to modern culture, evident in all these trends, is discernible also in the role it has played in social and political history. Christians were found on both sides of the 19th-century debates over slavery, and both used biblical arguments. Much of the inspiration for revolutions, from the French to the Russian, was explicitly anti-Christian. Particularly under 20th-century Marxist regimes, Christians have been oppressed for their faith, and their traditional beliefs have been denounced as reactionary. Nevertheless, the revolutionary faith has frequently drawn from Christian sources. Mohandas K. Gandhi maintained that he was acting in the spirit of Jesus

Christ, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the martyred leader of the world movement for civil rights, was a Protestant preacher who strove to make the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount the basis of his political program.

By the last quarter of the 20th century, the [missionary movements](#) of the church had carried the Christian faith throughout the world. A characteristic of modern times, however, has been the change in leadership of the “daughter” or mission churches. Since World War II national leaders have increasingly taken over from Westerners in Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant churches in the Third World. The adaptations of native customs pose problems of theology and tradition, as, for example, African polygamists attempt to live Christian family lives. The merger of denominations in churches such as the United Church of Canada may alter the nature of some of the component groups. Thus, change continues to challenge Christianity.

For additional information, see articles on individual Christian denominations and biographies of those persons whose names are not followed by dates.

48. Links and Attributions

Special thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for their contribution to our site. The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

Related Sites:

1. faith <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/text/faith.htm>
2. rituals <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/2310/Christ.htm>
3. the notion of a diety <http://search.botbot.com/bot/m/m.html?timeout=2&qtype=0&query=christian+notion+of+diety>
4. Divinity and providence <http://members.aol.com/hisbygrace2/bk3-ch4.html>
5. Human suffering http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris_en.html
6. The problem of evil <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/evil.html>
7. After life http://www.benabraham.com/html/is_there_death_after_life.html

Other Sites:<http://www.academicinfo.net/Christian.html>

Indexes & Directories	Gnostic Studies
Reference Desk	Orthodox Church
Digital Library	Luther & Lutheranism
Biblical Studies	Christianity in Canada
Philosophers	Christianity in the U.S.
Popes & Sees	

[Adventist Library Information Cooperative \(ALICE\)](#)

[AlaPadre Catholic Corner](#)

“Christian Directory (over 6,000 links on 500+ topical and alphabetically arranged pages) from a right-of-center Roman Catholic perspective.”

[C.S. Lewis: 20th-Century Christian Apologist](#) One of the best general collection of links on Lewis.

[Catholic Files](#)

Especially strong listing of Roman Catholic Orders.

Maintained by Jim McIntosh, American University

[Catholic Social Thought](#)

A wonderful collection of Catholic resources, including Online Catholic Periodicals, The Bible, Information on the Catholic Church and Specific Ethical Issues such Abortion, Women in the Church, Birth Control and others.

Joseph M. Incandela, Dept. of Religion, Saint Mary's College

[The Catholic – Labor Network](#)

“...hopes to be a place for those Catholics, lay, religious and clergy, who are active in their churches and in unions to learn about their Church's teachings as regards to labor issues, pray for those who are working for economic justice and share information about events and struggles that may be taking place in their area.

By Fr. Sinclair Oubre

[Catholic Resources on the Net](#)

Edited by John Mack Ockerbloom

[Catholic Online 'On the Web' Index](#)

“Seeks to provide Internet users with resources and connections to sites and information which are truly Catholic. In doing so, we are guided by the time honored principle that in all those things which must be embraced with Catholic faith we must have unity, in those things which are doubtful or open to discussion we must have liberty, while in all things we must foster and manifest true Christian charity. Thus, Catholic Online will endeavor to provide truly Catholic sites and information consistent with the aforementioned principles, always making choices of content under the guidance of the teaching of the Church's duly appointed pastors and in harmony with the Magisterium, the Supreme Pontiff together with the bishops, the Church's legislation and time-honored traditions, the dictates of common sense and intellectual honesty.”

[Catholic.net](#) (English or Spanish)

“is the new, successor site to the **Catholic Information Center on the**

Internet (CICI), one of the pioneering Catholic web sites since its inception in 1995.”

[Church Documents](#)

[Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics](#)

A Calvinist site with a listing of discussion groups , the CRTA Newsletter and nice selection of historic Church documents including Creeds, confessions, catechisms and sermons[Christianity.Net](#) Includes excellent search engines for locating Christian web sites and churches with links to over 8000 sites. Mostly popular and not academic sites but worth trying. Hosted by Christianity Today

[ChristianNewsToday.com](#)

This general site includes Christian World News, Shopping, Resources, Poems, Commentary, and more.

[Computer Assisted Theology on the Internet](#)

Provides an annotated index of Internet resources relating to theological studies

Maintained by Michael Fraser, Oxford University

[CrossSearch](#)

Another large popular Christian directory – with a pretty good history section

[Crosswalk.com OmniList](#)

Another large popular Christian directory with an excellent education section

[The Hall of Church History](#)

Not your normal history page. Sections on Church Fathers, Medieval Churchmen, Heretics, Eastern Orthodox, Catholics, Reformers, Puritans, Anabaptist, Armenians, Cultists, Unorthodox, Baptists, and recent Stalwarts

Phil Johnson, Curator

[The Labyrinth Resources for Medieval Studies](#)

“The Labyrinth is a global information network providing free, organized access to electronic resources in medieval studies through a World Wide Web server at Georgetown University. The Labyrinth’s easy-to-use menus and hypertext links provide automatic connections to databases, services, and electronic texts on other servers around the world. In addition, the Labyrinth will include a full range of new resources: an electronic library, on-line forums, professional directories and news, on-line bibliographies, an on-line “university” of teachers and scholars available for electronic conferencing, and an archive of pedagogical tools.”

Martin Irvine and Deborah Everhart, Co-Directors, Georgetown University

[Miami Christian University Virtual Library and Pastoral Resource Center](#)

A nice mix of devotional and academic links listed

[Not Just Bibles: A Guide to Christian Literature on the Internet](#)

“Part of a series of ICLnet Christian guides, provided for internet users interested in resources related to Classical Christianity”

[Pointing the Way: A Guide to Christian Literature on the Internet](#)

“This document contains pointers to internet accessible literature

related to Classical Christianity”

Includes Bibles, Bible study aids, books, and collections of books

[SDAnet](#)

Seventh-day Adventist Church

The SDAnet network center was established to support the SDAnet mailing list

[Virtual Christianity](#)

“An extensive catalogue of major christian resources with some commentary regarding content. Emphasis includes Bible resources, commentaries and devotionals, christian literature, and other major pages devoted to christianity.”

Maintained by Steven Adkins

Additional Sites of Interest

[African Initiated Churches \(AIC\)](#)

“These are Christian bodies in Africa that were established as a result of African initiative, rather than on the initiative of foreign missionary organisations. While most people agree on the initials, there is less agreement about what they stand for, and what the variations mean.”
Southern African Missiological Society

[Atheists for Jesus](#)

“A Site designed to provide a method of communication between religious and non-religious people who believe in the message of love and kindness put forth by Jesus.”

[Ark of the Covenant](#)

“An illustration of the “Ark of the Covenant” using the iconography of Egyptian art from the historic time frame of the Exodus. A short thesis explains the interpretation and derivation of the imagery.”

[Celtic Christianity](#)

Stuart Joseph

[Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations](#)

Cambridge, England

[Christian Coalition Worldwide](#)

[Christian Reconciliation Project](#)

“This site promotes reconciliation and unity in the Body of Christ by proposing for discussion a scriptural systematic theology which deliberately avoids the use of denominationally-defined theological terms”

Ian Johnson

[Church of God Proclaimed](#)

“This internet ministry helps in providing materials for bible study and evangelism through free literature.”

[Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) [The Mormons]

Official Home Page. Contains ‘basic media information,’ conference proceedings, Gospel Library and history.

[Scriptures – Internet Edition](#)

Includes: Old Testament ; New Testament ; Book of Mormon ; Doctrine and Covenants ; Pearl of Great Price ; Study Helps ; Additional Helps.

[Documentary of Hymns](#)

RealAudio excerpts of James Sundquist’s documentary on the history of hymns

[Documentation of Theological and Interdisciplinary Literature](#)

searchable databases on biblical literature, canon law, theology and Rene Girard

University of Innsbruck

[Dorothy Day Library on the Web](#)

This site is devoted to the writings of Dorothy Day who co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement with Peter Maurin in 1933

[English Literature and Religion](#)

"The main feature of this Web site is a large bibliographical database about religious aspects and backgrounds of English literature, from the Middle Ages to the present century, with primary (though not exclusive) emphasis upon writers within the Anglican tradition."

By William S. Peterson, Professor of English, University of Maryland, College Park

[The Fatima Network](#)

Our Lady of Fatima Online

[Fides Quaerens Internetum – Christian Theology Page](#)

Bryan Stone

[From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians](#)

A Frontline Special

The excellent companion web page to the PBS special

[The Gospel of the East](#)

Being the Teaching of Jesus Set in Parallel with Eastern Scriptures

"This work collects all the statements attributed to Jesus in the four conventional gospels and the Gospel of Thomas. As in a conventional "Harmony of the Gospels" presentation, parallel statements from each gospel are set side by side."

Maintained by Joseph Morales

[Greater World Christian Spiritualist Church](#)

"The Greater World is an organisation which desires to spread the knowledge of survival of life after death, spirit-communication, and the necessity to work out ones own salvation by spiritual progression in alignment with universal principles."

By Tony Bisson

[The Gregorian Chant Home Page](#)

Peter Jeffery

[Hill Monastic Manuscript Library](#)

Saint John's University

[Hourglass2 Outpost](#)

"International Bulletin Board Forums and World Chat Zones for Jehovah's Witnesses and Others Interested In Positive Discussions"

[Links to Revelation, Apocalyptic and Millennial Websites and Materials](#)

Has a wonder collection of Art and Images related to the Book of Revelation.

By Prof. Felix Just, S.J. – Loyola Marymount University

[Many Paths to One Goal?](#)

A Comparative Analysis of the Major World Religions from a Christian Perspective

By Ernest Valea

[Margins of the Past](#)

Manuscripts as Historical Documents (Vatican Exhibit)

[Religion and Society](#)

"Entries for all the major churches and religious organisations in the 19th century. Sections on: Religious Leaders, Unitarians and Parliamentary Reform, the Evangelical Movement, Quakers and Social Reform, the

Christian Socialists, Religion and Politics.”

From The Spartacus Internet Encyclopedia, British History 1700-1920

[Radical Catholic Page](#)

Paul Halsall

[Renaissance Liturgical Imprints : A Census](#)

A database of information on nearly 9000 worship books printed before 1601

University of Michigan

[Restoration Serials Index](#)

“A Christian College Librarians Publication. A computer-produced author/subject index to periodicals and lectureships by members of the church of Christ. Thirty-nine librarians from 17 institutions have contributed indexing.”

Abilene Christian University

[The Role of Women in the Christian Churches of Paul's Day](#)

Excerpts from Dr. Helmut Koester's September 13, 1997 address entitled, “St. Paul: His Mission to the Greek Cities & His Competitors,” which he delivered at The Foundation for Biblical Research, Charlestown, NH.

[The Spirithome Web Site](#)

By Robert Longman Jr.

[The Text This Week](#)

Resources for Students, Teachers, and Preachers of the Revised Common Lectionary

“...seeking to provide a comprehensive guide for scripture study and liturgy, indexed by the weeks of the Revised Common Lectionary. I am attempting to provide a wide range of theological positions and secular references for the weekly reading.”

By Jenee Woodard

[Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion WebNexus](#)

“Links for students and scholars of Early Judaism and Christianity, offering a selective, annotated guide to various web sites.”

Sections include: Early Judaism & Christianity ; General Christian Links ; General Jewish Links ; Religious Studies ; Classical Studies ; Library Resources ; Publishers & Booksellers ; Software for Theology ; Greek & Hebrew Fonts ; Desk References ; Search Engines ; Directories ; World News ; Web-Servant.

By Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Jerry D. Truex

SACRED TEXTS

Hypertext Bible: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/index.htm>

Bibles: <http://www.christiancolleges.com/blog/2013/the-best-online-bible-study-tools/>

Other Texts: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/index.htm>

Christian Fathers; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/>

Other Material: <http://www.davidwiley.com/religion.html>

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Web Surfer's Caveat: These are class notes, intended to comment on readings and amplify class discussion. They should be read as such. They are not intended for publication or general distribution.

PART X

SECTION II: ISLAM

49. Islam: Introduction

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller. If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441> Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

الْسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

I. Introduction

Islam, one of the three major world religions, along with Judaism and Christianity, that profess monotheism, or the belief in a single God. In the Arabic language, the word *Islam* means “surrender” or “submission”—submission to the will of God. A follower of Islam is called a *Muslim*, which in Arabic means “one who surrenders to God.” The Arabic name for God, *Allah*, refers to the same God worshiped by Jews and Christians. Islam’s central teaching is that there is only one all-powerful, all-knowing God, and this God created the universe. This rigorous monotheism, as well as the Islamic teaching that all Muslims are equal before God, provides the basis for a collective sense of loyalty to God that transcends class, race, nationality, and even differences in religious practice. Thus, all Muslims belong to one community, the *umma*, irrespective of their ethnic or national background.

Within two centuries after its rise in the 7th century, Islam spread from its original home in Arabia into Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain to the west, and into Persia, India, and, by the end of the 10th century, beyond to the east. In the following centuries, Islam also spread into Anatolia and the Balkans to the north, and sub-Saharan Africa to the south. The Muslim community comprises about 1 billion followers on all five continents, and Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. The most populous Muslim country is Indonesia, followed by Pakistan and Bangladesh. Beyond the Middle East, large numbers of Muslims live in India, Nigeria, the former republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and China.

One of the reasons for the growth of the Muslim community has been its openness to new members. Children born to Muslim parents are automatically considered Muslim. At any time, a non-Muslim can convert to Islam by declaring himself or herself to be a Muslim. A person's declaration of faith is sufficient evidence of conversion to Islam and need not be confirmed by others or by religious authorities.

50. The Teachings of Muhammad

II. The Teachings of Muhammad

Around the year AD 570 [Muhammad](#), the founding prophet of Islam, was born in [Mecca](#), at the time the central city of the Arabian Peninsula. Some 40 years later Muhammad started preaching a new religion, Islam, which constituted a marked break from existing moral and social codes in Arabia. The new religion of Islam taught that there was one God, and that Muhammad was the last and most important in a series of prophets and messengers. Through his messengers God had sent various codes, or systems of laws for living, culminating in the [Qur'an](#) (Koran), the holy book of Islam. These messengers were mortal men, and they included among many others [Moses](#), the Hebrew prophet and lawgiver, and [Jesus](#), whom Christians believe to be the son of God rather than a prophet.

Islam also taught that the Christian [Bible](#) (which includes the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament and an additional 27 books referred to as the New Testament), and the Qur'an were all holy books. According to the Qur'an, the two earlier Scriptures had been altered over time from their original forms given by God, while the Qur'an would remain perfect, preserved by God from such distortion. In addition to distinguishing itself from the Hebrew and Christian traditions, the new religion taught that the God of Islam had provided humanity with the means to know good from evil, through the

prophets and the Qur'an. Therefore, on the Day of Judgment people will be held accountable for their actions.

Muhammad's teachings met with severe and hostile opposition, and in the year 622 he left Mecca and sought refuge in the city of Yathrib, as a number of his followers had already done. Upon Muhammad's arrival, the name Yathrib was changed to [Medina](#) (meaning "the city"). The date of Muhammad's immigration was later set as the beginning of the 12-month lunar Islamic calendar.

51. The Five Pillars

III. The Five Pillars

During the ten years between his arrival in Medina and his death in AD 632, Muhammad laid the foundation for the ideal Islamic state. A core of committed Muslims was established, and a community life was ordered according to the requirements of the new religion. In addition to general moral injunctions, the requirements of the religion came to include a number of institutions that continue to characterize Islamic religious practice today. Foremost among these were the [five pillars of Islam](#), the essential religious duties required of every adult Muslim who is mentally able. The five pillars are each described in some part of the Qur'an and were already practiced during Muhammad's lifetime. They are the profession of faith (*shahada*), prayer (*salat*), almsgiving (*zakat*), fasting (*sawm*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*). Although some of these practices had precedents in Jewish, Christian, and other Middle Eastern religious traditions, taken together they distinguish Islamic religious practices from those of other religions. The five pillars are thus the most central rituals of Islam and constitute the core practices of the Islamic faith.

A. The Profession of Faith

The absolute focus of Islamic piety is Allah, the supreme, all knowing, all-powerful, and above all, all-merciful God. The Arabic word *Allah* means "the God,"

and this God is understood to be the God who brought the world into being and sustains it to its end. By obeying God's commands, human beings express their recognition of and gratitude for the wisdom of creation, and live in harmony with the universe.

The profession of faith, or witness to faith (shahada), is therefore the prerequisite for membership in the Muslim community. On several occasions during a typical day, and in the saying of daily prayers, a Muslim repeats the profession, "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet." There are no formal restrictions on the times and places these words can be repeated. To become a member of the Muslim community, a person has to profess and act upon this belief in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad. To be a true profession of faith that represents a relationship between the speaker and God, the verbal utterance must express genuine knowledge of its meaning as well as sincere belief. A person's deeds can be subjected to scrutiny by other Muslims, but a person's utterance of the profession of faith is sufficient evidence of membership in the Muslim community and cannot be challenged by other members of this community.

B. The Five Daily Prayers

The second pillar of Islam is the religious duty to perform five prescribed daily prayers or salat. All adult Muslims are supposed to perform five prayers, preceded by ritual cleansing or purification of the body at different intervals of the day. The Qur'anic references also mention the acts of standing, bowing, and prostrating during prayers and facing a set direction, known

as *qibla*. The Muslims were first required to face [Jerusalem](#) during prayer, but already during Muhammad's lifetime they were commanded to face the [Kaaba](#), an ancient shrine in the city of Mecca. The Qur'an also refers to the recitation of parts of the Qur'an as a form of prayer. However, even with its numerous references, the Qur'an alone does not give exact instructions for this central ritual of prayer.

The most detailed descriptions of the rituals for prayer derive from the example set by the prophet Muhammad and are preserved in later Islamic traditions. Some details of these rituals vary, however all Muslims agree that there are five required daily prayers to be performed at certain times of day: dawn (*fajr* or *subh*), noon (*zuhr*), midafternoon (*asr*), sunset (*maghrib*), and evening (*isha*). The dawn, noon, and sunset prayers do not start exactly at dawn, noon, and sunset; instead, they begin just after, to distinguish the Islamic ritual from earlier pagan practices of worshiping the sun when it rises or sets.

A prayer is made up of a sequence of units called bowings (*rak'as*). During each of these units, the worshiper stands, bows, kneels, and prostrates while reciting verses from the Qur'an as well as other prayer formulas. With some variations among different Muslim sects, at noon, afternoon, and evening prayers, these units are repeated four times, while during the sunset prayer they are repeated three times, and at dawn only twice. The opening chapter of the Qur'an, al-Fatiha, is repeated in each unit in a prayer sequence. Each prayer concludes with the recitation of the profession of faith followed by the greeting "may the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you."

Wherever Muslims live in substantial numbers throughout the world, the call to prayer, or *adhan*, is repeated five times a day by a *muezzin* (crier) from a mosque, the Muslim place of worship. Muslims are encouraged to pray together in mosques, but group prayer is only a religious obligation for the noon prayer on Friday. Women, travelers, sick Muslims, and those attending to the sick are granted license not to attend the Friday congregational prayer, although they may attend if they wish.

The Friday noon prayer is led by an *imam*, who is simply a prayer leader; this prayer differs from the usual noon prayers of the other days of the week. As a required part of the ritual at this congregational meeting, two sermons precede the prayer. On other days, Muslims can pray anywhere they wish, either individually or in groups. They must observe the rituals of praying at certain times of day, facing in the direction of Mecca, observing the proper order of prayers, and preparing through symbolic purification. Depending on the situation, this last ritual of ablution requires either total washing of the body or a less elaborate ritual washing of the hands, mouth, face, and feet.

In addition to the five required daily prayers, Muslims can perform non-obligatory prayers, some of which have fixed ritual formats and are performed before or after each of the five daily prayers. Others are performed at night, either individually or with other Muslims. These additional formal and informal prayers give expression to the primary function of prayer in Islam, which is personal communication with God for the purpose of maintaining the abiding presence of the divine in the personal lives of Muslims. The more formal

aspects of prayer also serve to provide a disciplined rhythm that structures the day and fosters a sense of community and shared identity among Muslims.

C. Almsgiving

The third pillar of Islam is zakat, or almsgiving. A religious obligation, zakat is considered an expression of devotion to God. It represents the attempt to provide for the poorer sectors of society, and it offers a means for a Muslim to purify his or her wealth and attain salvation. The Qur'an, together with other Islamic traditions, strongly encourages charity and constantly reminds Muslims of their moral obligation to the poor, orphans, and widows; however, it distinguishes between general, voluntary charity (*sadaqa*) and zakat, the latter being an obligatory charge on the money or produce of Muslims. While the meaning of terms has been open to different interpretations, the Qur'an regularly refers to zakat, identifying specific ways in which this tax can be spent. These specific uses include spending zakat on the poor and the needy, on those who collect and distribute zakat, on those whom Muslims hope to win over and convert to Islam, on travelers, on the ransom of captives, to relieve those who are burdened with debts, and on the cause of God.

The Qur'an provides less-detailed information about the kinds of things that are subject to the zakat tax or the precise share of income or property that should be paid as zakat. These determinations are provided in the traditions of the prophet Muhammad and have been the subject of elaborate discussions among Muslim legal experts, or jurists. For example, one-fortieth (2.5

percent) of the assets accumulated during the year (including gold, silver, and money) is payable at the end of the year, while one-tenth of the harvest of the land or date trees is payable at harvest time. Cattle, camels, and other domestic animals are subject to a more complex taxation system that depends on the animals in question, their age, the numbers involved, and whether they are freely grazing. Traditional zakat laws do not cover trade, but commercial taxes have been imposed by various Muslim governments throughout history.

D. Fasting

The fourth pillar of Islam is sawm, or fasting. Clear Qur'anic references to fasting account for the early introduction of this ritual practice. The Qur'an prescribes fasting during the month of [Ramadan](#), the 9th month of the 12-month Islamic lunar year (see [Calendar](#)). The month of Ramadan is sacred because the first revelation of the Qur'an is said to have occurred during this month. By tradition the month starts with the sighting of the new moon by at least two Muslims. For the entire month, Muslims must fast from daybreak to sunset by refraining from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. Menstruating women, travelers, and sick people are exempted from fasting but have to make up the days they miss at a later date.

According to various traditional interpretations, the fast introduces physical and spiritual discipline, serves to remind the rich of the misfortunes of the poor, and fosters, through this rigorous act of worship, a sense of solidarity and mutual care among Muslims of all social backgrounds. Thus Muslims usually engage in further

acts of worship beyond the ordinary during Ramadan, such as voluntary night prayer, reading sections from the Qur'an, and paying voluntary charity to the poor. Muslims may even choose to wake before daybreak to eat a meal that will sustain them until sunset. After the fasting ends, the holiday of breaking the fast, *'id al-fitr*, begins, lasting for three days.

At any time of year fasting is also required as a compensation for various offenses and violations of the law. Many Muslims also perform voluntary fasts at various times of the year as acts of devotion and spiritual discipline. However, such additional fasting is not required by Islamic law.

E. Pilgrimage to Mecca

The fifth pillar requires that Muslims who have the physical and financial ability should perform the pilgrimage, or [hajj](#), to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. The ritual of pilgrimage was practiced by Arabs before the rise of Islam and continues from the early days of Islam. The hajj is distinct from other pilgrimages. It must take place during the 12th lunar month of the year, known as *Dhu al-Hijja*, and it involves a set and detailed sequence of rituals that are practiced over the span of several days. All of the pilgrimage rituals take place in the city of Mecca and its surroundings, and the primary focus of these rituals is a cubical structure called the Kaaba. According to Islamic tradition, the Kaaba, also referred to as the House of God, was built at God's command by the prophet Ibrahim ([Abraham](#) of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles) and his son Ismail (see [Ishmael](#)).

The Qur'an provides detailed descriptions of various parts of the ritual, and it portrays many of these rituals as reenactments of the activities undertaken by Ibrahim and Ismail in the course of building the Kaaba. Set into one corner of the Kaaba is the sacred Black Stone, which according to one Islamic tradition was given to Ibrahim by the angel Gabriel. According to another Islamic tradition this stone was first set in place by Adam.

Once pilgrims arrive in Mecca, ritual purification is performed. Many men shave their heads, and most men and women put on seamless white sheets. This simple and common dress symbolizes the equality of all Muslims before God, a status further reinforced by the prohibition of jewelry, perfumes, sexual intercourse, and hunting. After this ritual purification, Muslims circle the Kaaba seven times, run between al-Safa and al-Marwa, two hills overlooking the Kaaba, seven times, and perform several prayers and invocations. This ritual is a reenactment of the search by [Hagar](#) for water to give her son Ismail.

After these opening rituals, the hajj proper commences on the seventh day and continues for the next three days. Again, it starts with the performance of ritual purification followed by a prayer at the Kaaba mosque. The pilgrims then assemble at Mina, a hill outside Mecca, where they spend the night. The next morning they go to the nearby plain of Arafat, where they stand from noon to sunset and perform a series of prayers and rituals. The pilgrims then head to Muzdalifa, a location halfway between Arafat and Mina, to spend the night. The next morning, the pilgrims head back to Mina, on the way stopping at stone pillars symbolizing Satan, at which they throw seven pebbles.

The final ritual is the slaughter of an animal (sheep, goat, cow, or camel). This is a symbolic reenactment of God's command to Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ismail, which Ibrahim and Ismail duly accepted and were about to execute when God allowed Ibrahim to slaughter a ram in place of his son. (In the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, Abraham is called to sacrifice his son Isaac rather than Ishmael.) Most of the meat of the slaughtered animals is to be distributed to poor Muslims. The ritual sacrifice ends the hajj and starts the festival of the sacrifice, *'id al-adha*. The festivals of breaking fast (*'id al-fitr*) at the end of Ramadan and *'id al-adha* are the two major Islamic festivals celebrated by Muslims all over the world.

During the pilgrimage most Muslims visit Medina, where the tomb of the Prophet is located, before returning to their homes. If the pilgrimage rituals are performed at any time of the year other than the designated time for hajj, the ritual is called *umra*. Although *umra* is considered a virtuous act, it does not absolve the person from the obligation of hajj. Most pilgrims perform one or more *umras* before or after the hajj proper.

Many Muslims pilgrims also travel to Jerusalem, which is the third sacred city for Islam. Muslims believe Muhammad was carried to Jerusalem in a vision. [The Dome of the Rock](#) houses the stone from which Muhammad is believed to have ascended to heaven and Allah in a night journey. Some Muslims perform pilgrimages to the Dome of the Rock and to other shrines where revered religious figures are buried. Some of these shrines are important primarily to the local populations, whereas others draw Muslims from distant

regions. There are no standard prescribed rituals for these pilgrimages nor are they treated as obligatory acts of worship.

F. Jihad

Many polemical descriptions of Islam have focused critically on the Islamic concept of [jihad](#). Jihad, considered the sixth pillar of Islam by some Muslims, has been understood to mean holy war in these descriptions. However, the word in Arabic means “to struggle” or “to exhaust one’s effort,” in order to please God. Within the faith of Islam, this effort can be individual or collective, and it can apply to leading a virtuous life; helping other Muslims through charity, education, or other means; preaching Islam; and fighting to defend Muslims. Western media of the 20th century continue to focus on the militant interpretations of the concept of jihad, whereas most Muslims do not.

52. The Mosque

IV. The Mosque

Of all Muslim institutions, the [mosque](#) is the most important place for the public expression of Islamic religiosity and communal identity. A mosque is a physical manifestation of the public presence of Muslims and serves as a point of convergence for Islamic social and intellectual activity. The Arabic word for mosque is *masjid*, which means a “place of prostration” before God. Mosques are mentioned in the Qur’an, and the earliest model for a mosque was the residence that the prophet Muhammad built when he moved to Medina. This first mosque was an enclosure marked as a special place of worship. A small part of the mosque was sectioned off to house the Prophet and his family, and the remaining space was left open as a place for Muslims to pray.

Although later mosques developed into complex architectural structures built in diverse styles, the one requirement of all mosques continues to be based on the earliest model: a designation of space for the purpose of prayer. The early mosque served an equally important function that thousands of mosques continue to serve today: The mosque is a place where Muslims foster a collective identity through prayer and attend to their common concerns. A Muslim city typically has numerous mosques but only a few congregational or Friday mosques where the obligatory Friday noon prayers are performed.

As Islam spread outside Arabia, Islamic architecture

was influenced by the various architectural styles of the conquered lands, and both simple and monumental mosques of striking beauty were built in cities of the Islamic world. Despite the borrowings from diverse civilizations, certain common features became characteristic of most mosques and thus serve to distinguish them from the sacred spaces of other religions and cultures.

The most important characteristic of a mosque is that it should be oriented toward Mecca. One or more niches (*mihrab*) on one of the walls of the mosque often serve as indicators of this direction, called *qibla*. When the imam leads the prayers he usually faces one of these niches. Next to the mihrab, a pulpit (*minbar*) is often provided for the delivery of sermons (*khutba*). Many mosques also have separate areas for performing ritual ablution, and separate sections for women. In many mosques, several rows of columns are used to mark the way for worshipers to line up behind the imam during prayer.

Mosques usually have one or more *minarets*, or towers, from which the muezzin calls Muslims to prayer five times a day. In addition to their functional use, these minarets have become distinguishing elements of mosque architecture. In large mosques in particular, minarets have the effect of tempering the enormity and magnificence of the domed structure by conveying to the viewer the elevation of divinity above the pretensions of human grandeur.

Most mosques also have a dome, and the line connecting the center of the dome to the niche is supposed to point toward Mecca. Throughout the world there are many mosques that are not actually directed

toward Mecca, but such misalignment is due to inaccurate methods for determining the direction of Mecca and does not imply a disregard for this requirement. The mosque is not a self-contained unit, nor is it a symbolic microcosm of the universe, as are some places of worship in other religions. Rather, the mosque is always built as a connection with Mecca, the ultimate home of Muslim worship that metaphorically forms the center of all mosques. See [Islamic Art and Architecture](#).

53. The God of Islam

V. The God of Islam

Islamic doctrine emphasizes the oneness, uniqueness, transcendence, and utter otherness of God. As such, God is different from anything that the human senses can perceive or that the human mind can imagine. The God of Islam encompasses all creation, but no mind can fully encompass or grasp him. God, however, is manifest through his creation, and through reflection humankind can easily discern the wisdom and power behind the creation of the world. Because of God's oneness and his transcendence of human experience and knowledge, Islamic law forbids representations of God, the prophets, and among some Muslims, human beings in general. As a result of this belief, Islamic art came to excel in a variety of decorative patterns including leaf shapes later stylized as arabesques, and Arabic script. In modern times the restrictions on creating images of people have been considerably relaxed, but any attitude of worship toward images and icons is strictly forbidden in Islam.

A. Islamic Monotheism

Before Islam, many Arabs believed in a supreme, all-powerful God responsible for creation; however, they also believed in lesser gods. With the coming of Islam, the Arab concept of God was purged of elements of polytheism and turned into a qualitatively different concept of uncompromising belief in one God, or

monotheism. The status of the Arabs before Islam is considered to be one of ignorance of God, or *jahiliyya*, and Islamic sources insist that Islam brought about a complete break from Arab concepts of God and a radical transformation in Arab belief about God.

Islamic doctrine maintains that Islam's monotheism continues that of Judaism and Christianity. However, the Qur'an and Islamic traditions stress the distinctions between Islam and later forms of the two other monotheistic religions. According to Islamic belief, both Moses and Jesus, like others before them, were prophets commissioned by God to preach the essential and eternal message of Islam. The legal codes introduced by these two prophets, the Ten Commandments and the Christian Gospels, took different forms than the Qur'an, but according to Islamic understanding, at the level of doctrine they are the same teaching. The recipients of scriptures are called the people of the book or the "scriptured" people. Like the Jews and the Christians before them, the Muslims became scripted when God revealed his word to them through a prophet: God revealed the Qur'an to the prophet Muhammad, commanding him to preach it to his people and later to all humanity.

Although Muslims believe that the original messages of [Judaism](#) and [Christianity](#) were given by God, they also believe that Jews and Christians eventually distorted them. The self-perceived mission of Islam, therefore, has been to restore what Muslims believe is the original monotheistic teaching and to supplant the older legal codes of the Hebrew and Christian traditions with a newer Islamic code of law that corresponds to the evolving conditions of human societies. Thus, for

example, Islamic traditions maintain that Jesus was a prophet whose revealed book was the Christian New Testament, and that later Christians distorted the original scripture and inserted into it the claim that Jesus was the son of God. Or to take another example, Muslims maintain that the strict laws communicated by Moses in the Hebrew Bible were appropriate for their time. Later, however, Jesus introduced a code of behavior that stressed spirituality rather than ritual and law.

According to Muslim belief, God sent Muhammad with the last and perfect legal code that balances the spiritual teachings with the law, and thus supplants the Jewish and Christian codes. According to the teachings of Islam, the Islamic code, called [Sharia](#), is the final code, one that will continue to address the needs of humanity in its most developed stages, for all time. The Qur'an mentions 28 pre-Islamic prophets and messengers, and Islamic traditions maintain that God has sent tens of thousands of prophets to various peoples since the beginning of creation. Some of the Qur'anic prophets are familiar from the Hebrew Bible, but others are not mentioned in the Bible and seem to be prophetic figures from pre-Islamic Arabia.

For the Muslim then, Islamic history unfolds a divine scheme from the beginning of creation to the end of time. Creation itself is the realization of God's will in history. Humans are created to worship God, and human history is punctuated with prophets who guarantee that the world is never devoid of knowledge and proper worship of God. The sending of prophets is itself understood within Islam as an act of mercy. God, the creator and sustainer, never abandons his creations,

always providing human beings with the guidance they need for their salvation in this world and a world to come after this one. God is just, and his justice requires informing people, through prophets, of how to act and what to believe before he holds them accountable for their actions and beliefs. However, once people receive the teachings of prophets and messengers, God's justice also means that he will punish those who do wrong or do not believe and will reward those who do right and do believe. Despite the primacy of justice as an essential attribute of God, Muslims believe that God's most fundamental attribute is mercy.

B. Humanity's Relationship to God

According to Islamic belief, in addition to sending prophets, God manifests his mercy in the dedication of all creation to the service of humankind. Islamic traditions maintain that God brought the world into being for the benefit of his creatures. His mercy toward humanity is further manifested in the privileged status God gave to humans. According to the Qur'an and later traditions, God appointed humankind as his vice regents (*caliphs*) on earth, thus entrusting them with the grave responsibility of fulfilling his scheme for creation.

The Islamic concept of a privileged position for humanity departs from the early Jewish and Christian interpretations of the fall from Paradise that underlie the Christian doctrine of [original sin](#). In the biblical account, [Adam and Eve](#) fall from Paradise as a result of disobeying God's prohibition, and all of humanity is cast out of Paradise as punishment. Christian theologians developed the doctrine that humankind is born with this sin of their first parents still on their souls, based upon

this reading of the story. Christians believe that Jesus Christ came to redeem humans from this original sin so that humankind can return to God at the end of time. In contrast, the Qur'an maintains that after their initial disobedience, Adam and Eve repented and were forgiven by God. Consequently Muslims believe that the descent by Adam and Eve to earth from Paradise was not a fall, but an honor bestowed on them by God. Adam and his progeny were appointed as God's messengers and vice regents, and were entrusted by God with the guardianship of the earth.

C. Angels

The nature of humankind's relationship to God can also be seen clearly by comparing it with that of angels. According to Islamic tradition, angels were created from light. An [angel](#) is an immortal being that commits no sins and serves as a guardian, a recorder of deeds, and a link between God and humanity. The angel [Gabriel](#), for example, communicated God's message to the prophet Muhammad. In contrast to humans, angels are incapable of unbelief and, with the exception of [Satan](#), always obey God.

Despite these traits, Islamic doctrine holds that humans are superior to angels. According to Islamic traditions, God entrusted humans and not angels with the guardianship of the earth and commanded the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam. Satan, together with the other angels, questioned God's appointment of fallible humans to the honorable position of viceregency. Being an ardent monotheist, Satan disobeyed God and refused to prostrate himself before

anyone but God. For this sin, Satan was doomed to lead human beings astray until the end of the world. According to the Qur'an, God informed the angels that he had endowed humans with a knowledge angels could not acquire.

D. Islamic Theology

For centuries Muslim theologians have debated the subjects of justice and mercy as well as God's other attributes. Initially, Islamic theology developed in the context of controversial debates with Christians and Jews. As their articulations of the basic doctrines of Islam became more complex, Muslim theologians soon turned to debating different interpretations of the Qur'an among themselves, developing the foundations of Islamic theology.

Recurring debates among Islamic scholars over the nature of God have continued to refine the Islamic concepts of God's otherness and Islamic monotheism. For example, some theologians interpreted Qur'anic attributions of traits such as hearing and seeing to God metaphorically to avoid comparing God to created beings. Another controversial theological debate focused on the question of free will and predestination. One group of Muslim theologians maintained that because God is just, he creates only good, and therefore only humans can create evil. Otherwise, this group argued, God's punishment of humans would be unjust because he himself created their evil deeds. This particular view was rejected by other Muslim theologians on the grounds that it limits the scope of God's creation, when the Qur'an clearly states that God is the sole creator of everything that exists in the world.

Another controversial issue was the question of whether the Qur'an was eternal or created in time. Theologians who were devoted to the concept of God's oneness maintained that the Qur'an must have been created in time, or else there would be something as eternal as God. This view was rejected by others because the Qur'an, the ultimate authority in Islam, states in many places and in unambiguous terms that it is the eternal word of God.

Many other theological controversies occupied Muslim thinkers for the first few centuries of Islam, but by the 10th century the views of Islamic theologian al-Ashari and his followers, known as Asharites, prevailed and were adopted by most Muslims. The way this school resolved the question of free will was to argue that no human act could occur if God does not will it, and that God's knowledge encompasses all that was, is, or will be. This view also maintains that it is God's will to create the power in humans to make free choices. God is therefore just to hold humans accountable for their actions. The views of al-Ashari and his school gradually became dominant in Sunni, or orthodox, Islam, and they still prevail among most Muslims. The tendency of the [Sunnis](#), however, has been to tolerate and accommodate minor differences of opinion and to emphasize the consensus of the community in matters of doctrine.

As is the case with any religious group, ordinary Muslims have not always been concerned with detailed theological controversies. For ordinary Muslims the central belief of Islam is in the oneness of God and in his prophets and messengers, culminating in Muhammad. Thus Muslims believe in the scriptures that God sent

through these messengers, particularly the truth and content of the Qur'an. Whatever their specific religious practices, most Muslims believe in angels, the Day of Judgment, heaven, paradise, and hell.

54. The Prophet Muhammad

VI. The Prophet Muhammad

Belief in the message of Muhammad comes second only to belief in the one God. Muhammad was born around the year 570 and was orphaned at an early age. He was eventually raised by his uncle, who had religious prominence within the main Quraysh tribe of Mecca but was of modest financial means. At age 25, Muhammad married Khadija, a well-to-do, 40-year-old woman. At age 40, during a retreat in the hills outside Mecca, Muhammad had his first experience of Islam. The angel Gabriel appeared to a fearful Muhammad and informed him that he was God's chosen messenger. Gabriel also communicated to Muhammad the first revelation from God. Terrified and shaken, Muhammad went to his home. His wife became the first person to accept his message and convert to Islam. After receiving a series of additional revelations, Muhammad started preaching the new religion, initially to a small circle of relatives and friends, and then to the general public.

The Meccans first ignored Muhammad, then ridiculed him. As more people accepted Muhammad's call, the Meccans became more aggressive. After failing to sway Muhammad away from the new religion they started to persecute his less prominent followers. When this approach did not work, the opposing Meccans decided to persecute Muhammad himself. By this time, two main tribes from the city of Yathrib, about 300 km (200 mi) north of Mecca, had invited Muhammad to live there. The clan leaders invited Muhammad to Yathrib as an

impartial religious authority to arbitrate disputes. In return, the leaders pledged to accept Muhammad as a prophet and thus support the new religion of Islam.

A. Hegira

In the year 622, Muhammad immigrated to Yathrib, and the name of the city was changed to Medina, meaning city of the Prophet. This date was designated by later Muslims as the beginning of the Muslim calendar, year one of hegira (Arabic *hijra*, “immigration”). Only two years after Muhammad’s arrival in Medina, the core community of Muslims started to expand. At Medina, in addition to preaching the religious and moral message of Islam, Muhammad organized an Islamic society and served as head of state, diplomat, military leader, and chief legislator for the growing Muslim community. Hostilities soon broke out between the Muslims in Medina and the powerful Meccans. In 630, after a series of military confrontations and diplomatic maneuvers, the Muslims in Medina extended their authority over Mecca, the most important city of Arabia at the time. Before Muhammad died in 632, the whole Arabian Peninsula was united for the first time in its history, under the banner of Islam.

B. Muhammad’s Humanity

Early accounts of Muhammad contain some stories that describe supernatural events such as his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his subsequent ascent to heaven on the back of a supernatural winged horse. Despite such stories, the primary focus of the

biographies, as well as Islamic doctrine in general, is on the humanity of Muhammad.

Like all prophets before him, Muhammad was a mortal man, commissioned by God to deliver a message to his people and to humanity. Like other prophets, Muhammad was distinguished from ordinary people by certain powers and faculties. For example, Muslims believe that the distinction of being sinless was granted to Muhammad by God to support his career as a prophet. Thus Muhammad is portrayed in the Qur'an as a person who makes mistakes but who does not sin against God. However, God corrected Muhammad's mistakes or errors in judgment, so that his life serves as an example for future Muslims to follow. This emphasis on Muhammad's humanity serves as a reminder that other humans can reasonably aspire to lead a good life as he did.

55. The Qur'an

VII. The Qur'an

As with other prophets and messengers, God supported Muhammad by allowing him to work miracles and thus prove that he was a genuine prophet. The singular miracle of Muhammad and the ultimate proof of the truthfulness of Islam is the Qur'an. In accordance with the words of the scripture itself, Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the timeless word of God, "the like of which no human can produce." This trait of the scripture, called inimitability (*i'jaz*), is based on belief in the divine authorship of the Qur'an. Unlike earlier religions, the miracle of Islam is a literary miracle, and Muhammad's other supernatural acts are subordinate to it.

This belief in the unique nature of the Qur'an has led Muslims to devote great intellectual energies to the study of its contents and form. In addition to interpreting the scripture and deriving doctrines and laws from it, many disciplines within Qur'anic studies seek to understand its linguistic and literary qualities as an expression of its divine origins.

A. The Format of the Holy Book

The Qur'an is made up of 114 chapters, called *suras*, which are roughly organized, from the second chapter onward, in order of length, beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest chapters. The first chapter, al-Fatiha ("the Opening"), is a short chapter that is recited during each of the five daily

prayers and in many other ritual prayers. All but one chapter begin with the formula “in the name of God, the Merciful Lord of Mercy” (*bism Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim*). Each chapter is divided into verses called *ayat*(singular *aya*, meaning “sign” or “proof”). With few exceptions the verses are randomly organized without a coherent narrative thread.

A typical chapter of the Qur’an may address any combination of the following themes: God and creation, prophets and messengers from Adam to Jesus, Muhammad as a preacher and as a ruler, Islam as a faith and as a code of life, disbelief, human responsibility and judgment, and society and law. Later Muslim scholars have argued that the text’s timelessness and universality explain the lack of narrative coherence and the randomness of the topics. In other words, the multiple meanings of the Qur’an transcend linear narrative as they transcend any particular historical moment.

B. The Qur’an and the Bible

Islam recognizes the divine origins of the earlier Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and represents itself as both a restoration and a continuation of their traditions. Because of this, the Qur’an draws on biblical stories and repeats many biblical themes. In particular, the stories of several biblical prophets appear in the Qur’an, some in a condensed form; other stories, such as those of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, are given in elaborate detail and even with subtle revisions of the biblical accounts.

One of the important differences between the Qur’anic and biblical stories of Abraham’s sacrifice of his son, for example, is that the Qur’an suggests this son is

Ishmael, from whom Arabs are descended, and not Isaac, from whom the tribes of Israel are descended. A more substantial difference relates to the Islamic story of Jesus, who according to the Qur'an is a mortal, human prophet. The Islamic faith categorically rejects the idea that God was ever born, as opposed to Christian belief that Jesus was born the son of God. Islam also rejects the idea that God shared his divinity with any other being.

Another important idea elaborated in the Qur'an and later Islamic doctrine, in conscious distinction from the biblical accounts, is that although prophets are capable of human errors, God protects them from committing sins and also protects them from excruciating suffering or humiliating experiences. God would not abandon his prophets in times of distress. Therefore, the Qur'an maintains that God interfered to save Jesus from torture and death by lifting him to heaven and replacing him on the cross with someone who looked like him.

C. The Preservation of the Qur'an

From its inception during the lifetime of Muhammad, Islamic doctrine gave priority to the preservation of the scripture. As a result, one of the earliest expressions of religiosity focused on studying, reciting, and writing down the scripture. When Muhammad died, the preservation of the scripture was also a conscious concern among his companions and successors. Early historical sources refer to immediate efforts undertaken by successors of Muhammad to collect the chapters of the Qur'an, which were written down by his various companions.

Within about two decades after the death of the

Prophet, various existing copies of parts of the Qur'an were collected and collated by a committee of close companions of Muhammad who were known for their knowledge of the Qur'an. This committee was commissioned by the third successor of Muhammad, Uthman ibn Affan, and the committee's systematic effort is the basis of the codified official text currently used by Muslims. The thematic randomness of the verses and chapters of the Qur'an in its current format clearly illustrates that the early companions who produced this official version of the Qur'an were primarily concerned with establishing the text and made no attempt to edit its contents in order to produce a coherent narrative. Because of this, scholars agree that the Uthmanic text genuinely reflects, both in its content and form, the message that Muhammad preached.

D. Translations of the Qur'an

Despite the consensus among Muslims on the authenticity of the current format of the Qur'an, they agree that many words in the Qur'an can be interpreted in equally valid ways. The Arabic language, like other Semitic languages, has consonants and vowels, and the meanings of words are derived from both. For several centuries, the written texts of the Qur'an showed only the consonants, without indicating the vowel marks. As a result, there are different ways in which many words can be vocalized, with different meanings; this allows for various legitimate interpretations of the Qur'an.

One of the disciplines for the study of the Qur'an is exclusively dedicated to the study and documentation of acceptable and unacceptable variant readings. According to Muslim scholars, there are some 40

possible readings of the Qur'an, of which 7 to 14 are legitimate. The legitimacy of different possible interpretations of the scripture is supported by a statement in the Qur'an that describes verses as either unambiguously clear, or as ambiguous because they carry a meaning known only to God. Therefore, with the exception of a small number of unquestionably clear injunctions, the meaning of the Qur'anic verses is not always final.

The Qur'an is the primary source of authority, law and theology, and identity in Islam. However, in many cases it is either completely silent on important Islamic beliefs and practices or it gives only general guidelines without elaboration. This is true of some of the most basic religious obligations such as prayer, which the Qur'an prescribes without details. Details elaborating on the teachings and laws of the Qur'an are derived from the *sunna*, the example set by Muhammad's life, and in particular from *hadith*, the body of sayings and practices attributed to him.

56. Hadith

VIII. Hadith

As the second source of authority in Islam, hadith complements the Qur'an and provides the most extensive source for Islamic law. The ultimate understanding of the Qur'an depends upon the context of Muhammad's life and the ways in which he demonstrated and applied its message. There is evidence that Muhammad's sayings and practices were invoked by his companions to answer questions about Islam. Unlike the Qur'an, however, in the early periods hadith was circulated orally, and no attempts were made to establish or codify it into law until the beginnings of the second century of Islam.

Due to the late beginnings of the efforts to collect and compile reports about Muhammad's traditions, Muslim scholars recognize that the authenticity of these reports cannot be taken for granted. Many spurious reports were often deliberately put into circulation to support claims of various political and sectarian groups. Other additions resulted from the natural tendency to confuse common practices that predated Islam with new Islamic laws and norms. The fading of memory, the dispersion of the companions of the prophet over vast territories, and the passing away of the last of these companions also contributed to the problem of authenticating Muhammad's traditions.

To establish the authority of hadith on firmer ground, Muslim scholars developed several disciplines dedicated to examining and verifying the relative authenticity of

various reports attributed to the Prophet. The contents of sayings, as well as the reliability of those who transmitted them, were carefully scrutinized, and the hadiths were classified into groups granted varying degrees of authenticity, ranging from the sound and reliable to the fabricated and rejected. This systematic effort culminated in the 9th century, some 250 years after the death of Muhammad, in the compilation of several collections of sound (*sahih*) hadith. Of six such highly reliable compilations, two in particular are considered by Muslims to be the most important sources of Islamic authority after the Qur'an. These are *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih Bukhari* (the sound books of Muslim and Bukhari).

Historically, the compilation of hadith went hand in hand with the elaboration of Islamic law and the parallel development of Islamic legal theory. Initially, neither the law nor its procedures were systematically elaborated, although there can be little doubt that both the Qur'an and hadith were regularly invoked and used to derive laws that governed the lives of Muslims. By the beginning of the 9th century, the use of these two sources was systematized and a complex legal theory was introduced. In its developed form, this theory maintains that there are four sources from which Islamic law is derived. These are, in order of priority, the Qur'an, the hadith, the consensus of the community (*ijma*), and legal analogy (*qiyas*). Functional only when there is no explicit ruling in the Qur'an or hadith, consensus confers legitimacy retrospectively on historical practices of the Muslim community. In legal analogy, the causes for existing Islamic rulings are applied by analogy to similar cases for which there are

no explicit statements in either the Qur'an or hadith. Using these methods, a vast and diverse body of Islamic law was laid out covering various aspects of personal and public life.

In addition to the laws pertaining to the five pillars, Islamic law covers areas such as dietary laws, purity laws, marriage and inheritance laws, commercial transaction laws, laws pertaining to relationships with non-Muslims, and criminal law. Jews and Christians living under Muslim rule are subject to the public laws of Islam, but they have traditionally been permitted to run their internal affairs on the basis of their own religious laws.

57. The Spread of Islam

IX. The Spread of Islam

Since its inception Islam has been perceived by Muslims to be a universal code. During Muhammad's lifetime, two attempts were made to expand northward into the Byzantine domain and its capital in Constantinople, and within ten years after Muhammad's death, Muslims had defeated the Sassanids of Persia and the Byzantines, and had conquered most of [Persia](#), [Iraq](#), [Syria](#), and [Egypt](#). The conquests continued, and the Sassanid Empire was soon after destroyed and the influence of Byzantium was largely diminished (see [Byzantine Empire](#)). For the next several centuries intellectuals and cultural figures flourished in the vast, multinational Islamic world, and Islam became the most influential civilization in the world.

A. The Rightly Guided Caliphs

The first four successors of Muhammad, known as rightly guided caliphs, ruled for some 30 years (see [Caliphate](#)). Their rule, together with that of Muhammad, is considered by most Muslims to constitute the ideal Islamic age. The second caliph, Umar, ruled from AD 634 to 644; he is credited with being the first caliph to found new Islamic cities, Al Basra (AD 635) and Kufah (AD 638). The administration of the eastern and western Islamic provinces was coordinated from these two sites. After the third caliph, Uthman, was murdered by a group of Muslim mutineers, the fourth

caliph, Ali, succeeded to power and moved his capital to Kufah in Iraq. From this capital he fought the different opposition factions. Among the leaders of these factions, Mu'awiyah, governor of the rich province of Syria and a relative of Uthman, outlasted Ali. After Ali's death in 661, Mu'awiyah founded the Umayyad dynasty, which ruled a united Islamic empire for almost a century. Under the Umayyads the Islamic capital was shifted to Damascus. See [Spread of Islam](#).

B. Shia Islam

The followers of Ali were known as the *Shia* (partisans) of Ali. Although they began as a political group, the Shia, or [Shia Muslims](#), became a sect with specific theological and doctrinal positions. A key event in the history of the Shia and for all Muslims was the tragic death at Karbala of Husayn, the son of Ali, and Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Husayn had refused to recognize the legitimacy of the rule of the Umayyad Yazid, the son of Mu'awiyah, and was on his way to rally support for his cause in Kufah. His plans were exposed before he arrived at Kufah, however, and a large Umayyad army met him and 70 members of his family at the outskirts of the city. The Umayyads offered Husayn the choice between a humiliating submission to their rule or a battle and definite death. Husayn chose to fight, and he and all the members of his family with him were massacred. The incident was of little significance from a military point of view, but it was a defining moment in the history of Shia Islam. Although not all Muslims are Shia Muslims, all Muslims view Husayn as a martyr for living up to his principles even to death.

The Twelver Shia, or *Ithna-'Ashariyya*, is the largest of the Shia Muslim sects. They believe that legitimate

Islamic leadership is vested in a line of descent starting with Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, through Ali's two sons, Hasan and Husayn, and then through Husayn's descendants. These were the first 12 imams, or leaders of the Shia Muslim community. The Shia Muslims believe that Muhammad designated all 12 successors by name and that they inherited a special knowledge of the true meaning of the scripture that was passed from father to son, beginning with the Prophet himself. This family, along with its loyal followers and representatives, has political authority over the Shia Muslims.

C. Sunni Islam

Sunni Islam was defined during the early Abbasid period (beginning in AD 750), and it included the followers of four legal schools (the Malikis, Hanafis, Shafi'is, and Hanbalis). In contrast to the Shias, the Sunnis believed that leadership was in the hands of the Muslim community at large. The consensus of historical communities, not the decisions of political authorities, led to the establishment of the four legal schools. In theory a Muslim could choose whichever school of Islamic thought he or she wished to follow and could change this choice at will. The respect and popularity that the religious scholars enjoyed made them the effective brokers of social power and pitched them against the political authorities.

After the first four caliphs, the religious and political authorities in Islam were never again united under one institution. Their usual coexistence was underscored by a mutual recognition of their separate spheres of influence and their respective duties and responsibilities. Often, however, the two powers

collided, and invariably any social opposition to the elite political order had religious undertones.

D. Sufism

An ascetic tradition called [Sufism](#), which emphasized personal piety and mysticism and contributed to Islamic cultural diversity, further enriched the Muslim heritage. In contrast to the legal-minded approach to Islam, Sufis emphasized spirituality as a way of knowing God. During the 9th century Sufism developed into a mystical doctrine, with direct communion or even ecstatic union with God as its ideal. One of the vehicles for this experience is the ecstatic dance of the Sufi whirling dervishes. Eventually Sufism later developed into a complex popular movement and was institutionalized in the form of collective, hierarchical Sufi orders.

The Sufi emphasis on intuitive knowledge and the love of God increased the appeal of Islam to the masses and largely made possible its extension beyond the Middle East into Africa and East Asia. Sufi brotherhoods multiplied rapidly from the Atlantic coast to Indonesia; some spanned the entire Islamic world, others were regional or local. The tremendous success of these fraternities was due primarily to the abilities and humanitarianism of their founders and leaders, who not only ministered to the spiritual needs of their followers but also helped the poor of all faiths and frequently served as intermediaries between the people and the government.

E. The Abbasid Dynasty

Islamic culture started to evolve under the Umayyads, but it grew to maturity in the first century of the Abbasid

dynasty. The Abbasids came to power in AD 750 when armies originating from Khorasan, in eastern Iran, finally defeated the Umayyad armies. The Islamic capital shifted to Iraq under the Abbasids. After trying several other cities, the Abbasid rulers chose a site on the Tigris River on which the City of Peace, Baghdad, was built in 762. Baghdad remained the political and cultural capital of the Islamic world from that time until the [Mongol](#) invasion in 1258, and for a good part of this time it was the center of one of the great flowerings of human knowledge. The Abbasids were Arabs descended from the Prophet's uncle, but the movement they led involved Arabs and non-Arabs, including many Persians, who had converted to Islam and who demanded the equality to which they were entitled in Islam.

The Abbasids distributed power more evenly among the different ethnicities and regions than the Umayyads had, and they demonstrated the universal inclusiveness of Islamic civilization. They achieved this by incorporating the fruits of other civilizations into Islamic political and intellectual culture and by marking these external influences with a distinctly Islamic imprint.

As time passed, the central control of the Abbasids was reduced and independent local leaders and groups took over in the remote provinces. Eventually the rival Shia Fatimid caliphate was established in Egypt, and the Baghdad caliphate came under the control of expanding provincial dynasties. The office of the caliph was nonetheless maintained as a symbol of the unity of Islam, and several later Abbasid caliphs tried to revive the power of the office.

In 1258, however, a grandson of Mongol ruler [Genghis Khan](#) named Hulagu, encouraged by the kings of

Europe, led his armies across the Zagros Mountains of Iran and destroyed Baghdad. According to some estimates, about 1 million Muslims were murdered in this massacre. In 1259 and 1260 Hulagu's forces marched into Syria, but they were finally defeated by the Mamluks of Egypt, who had taken over the Nile Valley. For the next two centuries, centers of Islamic power shifted to Egypt and Syria and to a number of local dynasties. Iraq became an impoverished, depopulated province where the people took up a transitory nomadic lifestyle. Iraq did not finally experience a major cultural and political revival until the 20th century.

X. The Presence of Islam in the 20th Century

Many of the accepted Islamic religious and cultural traditions were established between the 7th and 10th centuries, during the classical period of Islamic history. However, Islamic culture continued to develop as Islam spread into new regions and mixed with diverse cultures. The 19th-century occupation of most Muslim lands by European colonial powers was a main turning point in Muslim history. The traditional Islamic systems of governance, social organization, and education were undermined by the colonial regimes. Nation-states with independent governments divided the Muslim community along new ethnic and political lines.

Today about 1 billion Muslims are spread over 40 Muslim countries and 5 continents, and their numbers are growing at a rate unmatched by that of any other religion in the world. Despite the political and ethnic diversity of Muslim countries, a core set of beliefs continues to provide the basis for a shared identity and affinity among Muslims. Yet the radically different

political, economic, and cultural conditions under which contemporary Muslims live make it difficult to identify what constitutes standard Islamic practice in the modern world. Many contemporary Muslims draw on the historical legacy of Islam as they confront the challenges of modern life. Islam is a significant, growing, and dynamic presence in the world. Its modern expressions are as diverse as the world in which Muslims live.

58. Links and Attributions

Related Sites:

What Are the 'Five Pillars' of Islam?

<http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-1-a.htm>

The Quran on Human Embryonic Development:

<http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-1-a.htm>

The Quran on the Origin of the Universe

<http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-1-a.htm>

Scientists' Comments on the Scientific Miracles in the Holy Quran:

<http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-1-a.htm>

What Does Islam Say about Terrorism?

<http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-1-a.htm>

Life after death, the Day of Judgment, Paradise, and Hellfire

<http://www.orst.edu/groups/msa/books/life.html> <http://www.iad.org/books/WAMY>

What is the Purpose of Life?

A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam, and more (from E-BOOK)

<http://www.islam-guide.com/>

Jesus in Islam

<http://www.irshad.org/idara/qadiani/monthly/071999.htm>

Human Rights In Islam

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/humanrelations/humanrights/>

Following the Messenger of Allah is a must

Sunna the second book that has to follow:

<http://www.uh.edu/campus/msa/>

<http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/islamic> **University at Buffalo** <http://wings.buffalo.edu>

About prayer

<http://www.muslim.org/islam/int-is35.htm> **Women in Islam**

<http://www.muslim.org/islam/int-is41.htm>

<http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-1-a.htm>

<http://www.iad.org/books/GEI.html> <http://www.muslim-answers.org/w-status.htm>

<http://www.jamaat.org/islam/WomanPolygamy.html> <http://www.orst.edu/groups/m>

On Charity <http://www.muslim.org/islam/int-is44.htm>

On Allah: God <http://www.muslim.org/islam/int-is31.htm>

Related Sites:

<http://www.academicinfo.net/Islam.html>

[Indexes & Directories](#) [Law](#)

[Reference Desk](#) [Muslims in China](#)

[Digital Library](#) [Arabic Study](#)

Women in Islam

Al-Islam

“Our objectives are to digitise and present on the Internet quality Islamic resources, related to the Ahlul Bayt (a.s).
A very well organized Shiite site with ‘icon keys’ to indicate whether the listing is for beginners or advanced.
By the Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project

Al-Islam – Women

“This link focuses on misconceptions about women and Islam.”

[Al-Muntazar Islamic Web Center](#)

“A collection of Islamic Articles, Islamic Screen Savers, Wallpapers, Islamic Images, Doas o
By Azhar Ajani & Ejaz Ajani

About Al-Islam and Muslims

“The aims of this page are to provide accurate information about Islamic Beliefs, history and a large practice oriented subject listing”

[Ar-Refai Islamic Website](#)

A well organized and extensive collection of general and academic resources.

[Belfast Mosque & BICNews](#)

“Our Web site contains useful information on Islam and Q&A by the late Shaykh Dr. Darsh

Articles Published

Sans Serif

"This site features the Life of Imam Reza (A.S.), the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (A.S.), Historic sites,"

The Foundation of Islam and Dialogue

“Mission Statement To emphasize that Islam is based on principles such as affection, com

Institute of Islamic Studies – London

“...aims to examine, facilitate and co-ordinate research in the fields of Islamic history, literature and culture.”

Islam Guide

A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam

“This Islamic site is for non-Muslims who would like to understand Islam, Muslims (Mosle

The Islam Page

Both practice and academic selections. Includes sections on Islamic movements, history

A wonderful Resource

Produced by Ibrahim S

Islam: Empire of Faith

Sections include Faith ; Culture ; Innovation ; Profiles ; Timeline ; Educational Resources.
PBS Online

[Islamic Studies, Arabic, and Religion Web Page](#)

An important academic site that includes language aids, maps, art, music, history, texts, a
Maintained by Alan Godlas, Associate Professor of Religion, University of Georgia

[Islamic Studies Pathways](#)

A useful collection of religious & political links with ratings

By Gary R. Bunt, Dept. of Theology, Religious Studies & Islamic Studies, University of Wales

[Islamic Texts and Resources Metapage](#)

“An Attempt to Provide a ‘Springboard’ for Exploring Texts and Resources on Islamic Thought
Includes introductory texts, scriptures and prophetic traditions, and Islamic language and

Maintained by MSA @ University of Buffalo

[Musalman.com](#)

The Islamic Portal

An Islam Start Page and Islamic Search Engine

Includes Muslim News and Multi Media Gateway, Direct Link to US Congress, Current News

A professional layout with a broad depth of coverage.

[Sufi and ‘Irfan Links](#)

“Links to sites concerning Islamic mysticism, whether organized as orders (Sufism) or taken

By Juan R.I. Cole, Dept. of History, University of Michigan

[Sufism, Sufis, and Sufi Orders](#)

Sufism’s Many Paths

A well organized academic site including a useful introduction, selected Sufis, Sufi Orders

By Dr. Alan Godlas, University of Georgia

[Talk Islam](#)

Islamic Directory and Search Engine

“...a library of Islam-related and general websites and links on the Internet categorized according

[Understanding Islam](#)

“This site epitomizes a movement. A movement to reform intellectual stagnation. This is a
However, it would be appropriate to mention two additional features of the site. Firstly, the

[The Way to Truth](#)

Understanding Islamic Religion

This well designed site includes a lengthy index of categories to choose from as well as several

Additional Sites of Interest

[Adab Islami](#)

Literature of Islamic Writers

[Allama Mashriqi – Scholar and Founder of the Khaksar Movement](#)

“Allama Mashriqi was a Scholar and Founder of the KHAKSAR MOVEMENT in Indo-Pakistan

[Canadian Society of Muslims](#)

[Center for Arabic Language & Eastern Studies \(CALES\)](#)

“Devoted to teaching Arabic as a foreign language to non-native speakers, the Center (aka
University of Science & Technology, Sana’a, Republic of Yemen

[Centre for Contemporary Islam](#)

University of Cape Town

[Centre for Islamic Studies](#)

University of Wales

[Haqqani Foundation Home Page](#)

[Harun Yahya Series](#)

HARUN YAHYA (Istanbul) is the author of numerous books on Quranic topics, on the marriage

Includes Topics on Faith

[Hijab](#)

The Institute of Islamic Information and Education

[In Memory of Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan](#)

“Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan: A Social Scientist. Millions benefited from his Orangi Pilot Project

[International Muslimah Artist Net](#)

An International Organization Created By and For Muslim Women Artists

[International Institute of Islamic Thought](#)

[International Society for Islamic Secularization](#)

[Islam 101](#)

“...is an educational site on Islam, its way of life, civilization and culture. It includes an intro

The Sabr Foundation

[Islamic Center of America](#)

[The Islamic Gallery](#)

Sights 'n' Sounds of Islam

[Islamic Interlink](#)

The Directory of Islam on the Internet

Sections include: Belief & Practice ; The Qur'an ; The Prophet ; Muslim World ; Islam and .

[M.T.O. Shahmaghsoudi \(School of Islamic Sufism\)](#)

A nonprofit religious and educational organization.

Topics include About Sufism, History, Principles, Genealogy, Sufi Master, Teachings, Public

A beautiful site.

[Moonsighting with Astronomy](#)

On Moon-sighting, Islamic Calendar, Prayer Schedule, and Qibla Direction.

Maintained by Khalid Shaukat

[Muslim Scientists, Mathematicians and Astronomers](#)

Before European Renaissance, 700-1500 C.E.

By A. Zahoor

[Prophet Muhammad](#)

Biography, Mission and the Message of Muhammad – the Prophet of Islam

The Sabr Foundation

[Totally Tessellated](#)

“Included is an extensive historical gallery which draws images from many sources. Math

Includes a large selection of Islamic patterns.

[Who is Our Savior?](#)

By Mohamed Ghounem & Abdur Rahman

[Women in Islam](#)

From the Islamic Center of Southern California

[Women in Islamic Society](#)

By Prof. Abdur Rahman I. Doi Professor and Director, Center for Islamic Legal Studies, Ah

[Women in the Quran and the Sunnah](#)

By Prof. Abdur Rahman I. Doi Professor and Director, Center for Islamic Legal Studies, Ah

[World Council of Muslim Women Foundation](#)

SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/index.htm>

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/sa/muslim/isl/texts.html>

Links and Sites Contributors: Md a alam (2001)

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Web Surfer's Caveat: These are class notes, intended to comment on readings and amplify cl

PART XI

SECTION 12: SIKHISM

59. Sikhism: Overview

For those who wish to listen to information on the world's religions here is a listing of **PODCASTS on RELIGIONS** by Cynthia Eller. If you have iTunes on your computer just click and you will be led to the listings.

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=117762189&s=143441> Here is a link to the site for the textbook REVEALING WORLD RELIGIONS related to which these podcasts were made. <http://thinkingstrings.com/Product/WR/index.html>

About 2% of India's population are Sikhs. Even so they because of their unique appearance, sometimes stand for India. Traditionally the men keep their hair and do not shave their beard or moustache. They gather their head hair in a turban. Sikhism is comparatively a new religion in India. This religion was established by Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in the Punjab region of north India. Guru Nanak was a Hindu and he loved to travel and learn. He developed a new religion and included in it what he thought were the good beliefs of the two dominant religions in the Punjab region, [Hinduism](#) and [Islam](#). And Sikhism indeed has beliefs from these two religions. From Islam it adopted the belief in the existence of one invisible God. From Hinduism it adopted the belief in Karma and reincarnation, meaning your actions in this life will decide your fate in the next incarnation. The Sikhs also cremate their dead ones as is done in Hinduism.

The creators of Sikhism tried to abolish some of the Indian customs such as the [caste system](#) and [Sati](#) – burning of the widow. In Sikhism everyone has equal rights irrespective of caste, creed, color, race, sex or religion. Sikhism rejects pilgrimage, fasting, superstitions and other such rituals. Sikhism does not have a clergy class as it considers this as a gateway to corruption. However they have readers and singers in their temples.

A Sikh place of worship is called Gurdwara. Sikhism does not support pilgrimage to holy sites because according to Sikhism, God is everywhere and not in any certain place. But Sikhism has a few important sites, of which, the Hari Mandir, also known as the 'Golden Temple' in Amritsar in Punjab is the most important site and is considered the holiest shrine of Sikhism.

Sikhism emphasis community services and helping the needy. One of the distinct features of Sikhism is the common kitchen called Langar. In every Gurdwara there is a Langar.

Every Sikh is supposed to contribute in preparing the meals in the free kitchen. The meals are served to all and are eaten sitting on the floor and this is to emphasize the point that all are equals. Sikhism does not believe in holding fasts for body is God's present to human being and therefore humans must foster, maintain and preserve it in good sound condition, unless fasting is done to foster the human body like healthy diets.

Guru Nanak who established Sikhism was its first Guru. After him there were nine more Gurus who were the highest religious authority. The last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, proclaimed that after him the Guru of the Sikhs would be the holy book of Sikhism, Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Granth Sahib is written in Gurumukhi script. It includes the writings of the Sikh Gurus and the writings of Hindu and Muslims saints. But out of humility Guru Gobind Singh did not include his own writings in the book, which he proclaimed as the permanent Guru of the Sikhs. His writings appear in a separate book called Dasam Granth. Guru Gobind Singh is also the Guru behind the unique appearance of Sikh men.

During Guru Gobind's term as the Guru of the Sikhs and also before him, the ruling empire of Punjab region was the Moghul Empire. The Moghuls were Muslims. Some of the Moghul emperors, like Aurangzeb were fanatic Muslims who harassed the non- Muslims, including the Sikhs. Some of the Guru Sikhs were even executed by the Moghul emperors. In order to stop their persecutions, Guru Gobind decided to make his followers a community of fighters. He changed his surname to Singh, which means lion. His followers also changed their surname to Singh. Since then a ceremony of baptizing was established among the Sikhs in which the boys were given the title Singh and the girls were titled Kaur meaning princess. In those days "Singh" as a surname was

very popular among a famous warrior caste of north India, the Rajputs. Some of the first Sikhs were also Rajputs.

In order to make it easier for his followers to recognize each other, Gobind Singh, chose five marks, some of which even today symbolize the Sikhs. The five signs were, uncut hair; comb; sword or dagger; bracelet on the right wrist and shorts. The religious Sikhs dress according to Guru Gobind Singh's order, carrying a sword. Most of the Sikhs even today have uncut hair and gather it in a turban. But some easygoing Sikhs cut their hair or they do not gather their uncut hair in a turban.

The emphasis on militant tradition and community service in Sikhism continues even today and many Sikhs serve in the Indian army or police.

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6o. Introduction, Beliefs and Practices, and History

I. Introduction

Sikhs, followers of the Sikh religion, centered in Punjab State, in northwestern India. Sikhism is an ethical monotheism fusing elements of [Hinduism](#) and [Islam](#). It was founded by Nanak (1469-1539), a mystic who believed that God transcends religious distinctions.

II. Beliefs and Practices

Influenced by the devotional emphasis of *bhakti* Hinduism and Sufi Islam, Sikhism stresses the unity, truth, and creativity of a personal God and urges union with him through meditation on his title, the Name (*Nam*), and surrender to his will. It also advocates active service rather than the Hindu ideal of ascetic withdrawal. Loyalty and justice are admired, smoking and intoxicants forbidden. Sikhism also rejects the Hindu caste system, priesthood, image worship, and pilgrimage, although it retains the Hindu doctrines of transmigration and karma. The ultimate spiritual authority is the *Adi Granth*, consisting of hymns by the ten Sikh gurus (Hindi for “teachers”) and Hindu and Muslim devotional poetry in several languages. All Sikhs may read the *Adi Granth*, which is the focus of devotion at the Golden Temple in [Amritsar](#), the Sikh religious center.

Sikhs are expected to join the *Khalsa* (Punjabi for

“pure”), a religious and military order. Initiates are “baptized” by drinking sweetened water stirred with a sword, after which Sikh men take the surname Singh (“lion”) and women take the surname Kaur (“prince,” or here, “princess”). Members of the Khalsa are instructed to observe the five *k*’s: They must wear four symbols of the Sikh faith—soldiers’ shorts (*kaccha*), an iron bangle (*kara*), a steel sword (*kirpan*), and a comb (*khanga*)—and they must not cut their hair (*kes*).

III. History

Nanak, the saintly first guru, wandered over India seeking converts. He was succeeded by nine gurus, the office staying within the family line of the fourth guru, Ram Das. Ram Das was also the founder of the Golden Temple. The fifth, Arjan Dev, compiled the *Adi Granth* in 1604. As the Sikhs became a distinct religious community, they took up arms against persecution by Hindus and by Muslim rulers of the Mughal Empire. Opposing Mughal tyranny, the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, formed the Khalsa in 1699. During the decline of the Mughals, the Sikhs, led by the warrior Ranjit Singh, created a powerful state in the Punjab about 1800 that eventually threatened British-controlled India. After internal dissension and two wars the Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849.

The British governed the Sikhs fairly and, in return for their loyalty during the Sepoy Rebellion of (1857-1859), gave them preferential land grants. The Sikhs gained wealth and a great reputation as soldiers and policemen. During the creation of an independent India in 1947, the Sikhs lost their privileges and found that Punjab was to be divided between India and Pakistan. Many Sikhs

migrated east to be on the Indian side of the partition. In response to years of agitation, the Indian government created Punjab as a single Punjabi-speaking state in 1966; it remains the home of most of India's more than 16 million Sikhs. Terrorism by Sikh separatists demanding greater autonomy led the Indian government in June 1984 to send in troops to seize the Golden Temple from Sikh extremists, who vowed to avenge the violence. Sikh members of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's personal guard were implicated in her assassination on October 31. In 1985 an accord was finally reached with the Indian government on expanding Punjab. Sikh terrorists then stepped up their activities, demanding the establishment of a Sikh state, Khalistan. In 1992 the government sent in police and army reinforcements and reestablished its authority in Punjab.

61. Links and Attributions

Special thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for their contribution to our site. The information above came from Microsoft Encarta. Here is a hyperlink to the Microsoft Encarta home page. <http://www.encarta.msn.com>

Related Sites: **Internet Sites:** <http://www.academicinfo.net/sikhism.html>

History of the Sikhs

"This site is roughly divided into Six Categories which are, Sikh Gurus, Sikh Martyrs, Sikh Warriors, Historical Events, Modern Sikh Personalities and Sikh institutes."

Proud to Be Sikh

"We carry complete audio of Siri Guru Granth Sahib ji – Sikh holy bible And numerous sikh internet radios, sikh jukeboxes."

Sikhism

"True essence of Sikhism in rare flashes of Light, Divine Wisdom, Quotations, Saakhis, Video and Audio."

By Parminder Singh

The Sikhism Home Page

A beautiful and well put together page – the focus is mostly devotional but does include information on the Sikh alphabet Gurmukhi, essays, audio taped prayers to download, a bibliography as well as links to other online resources

Maintained by Sandeep Singh Brar

Sikhnet

The Sikh Network

A well designed portal for world wide Sikh community. Includes Live Chat ; Discussion ; Current News ; Radio ; Hukamnama ; Matrimonials ; Directories ; Calendar and more.

The Sikh-Faith Question Answer and Philosophy

Includes An Outline of Sikh Doctrines, Questions & Answers in Punjabi and in English, Links, more.

By Makhan Singh Purewal

Understanding Sikhism

Sections include: The Research Journal ; Current News ; Other Articles ; Glossary.

By Devinder Singh Chahal, Ph.D.

Religion and Philosophy Research Guides – Boston University

http://web.bu.edu/STH/Library/asian_guide.html

This page is part of a larger Web site, 'Religion and Philosophy Resources on the Internet.' It contains lists of reference books and bibliographies on Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Chinese and Japanese religions.

Non-Christian Faith Groups – ReligiousTolerance.org

http://www.religioustolerance.org/var_rel.htm

Find comparative descriptions of dozens of world religions, pagan faiths, cults and ethical groups, from Asatru to Zoroastrianism.

SACRED TEXTS: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/skh/index.htm>

<http://www.sikhs.org/transl.htm>

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