

# Belief Comparisons of the World's Major Religions

Compiled by Meredith J. Sprunger

[Table 1: Dominant Values, Explanation for Evil, Salvation, Afterlife](#)

[Table 2: Dominant Emphasis, Scripture and Revelation, Founder and Origin, Ultimate Reality--God](#)

Table 1

Religion (Date of origin)	Dominant Values	Explanation for Evil	Salvation	Afterlife
<b>Buddhism</b> (Sixth Century, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Buddhism</a>	Right knowledge, aspiration, speech, behavior, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, contemplation, control of one's mind, kindness	Insatiable desires are the cause of evil and suffering	Nonattachment to the world; Follow the eight-fold path; Self-effort; Salvation is through reincarnation and working with the laws of karma; Mahayana Buddhism has deities which function as saviors.	Nirvana is the highest destiny of the human spirit--a state of indescribable bliss. In Mahayana Buddhism there are afterlife states referred to as heavens and hells.
<b>Christianity</b> (First Century, A.D.) <a href="#">Introduction to Christianity</a>	Love of God and man; Ten commandments; Service, truth, beauty, goodness, justice, humility, learning.	Satan; Fall of man; Imperfection of creation; egocentricity; alienation from God.	Evangelicals: Salvation comes from faith in blood atonement of Jesus; Mainline: Faith in Jesus as mediator-Savior.	Judgment: heaven and hell; Modern: Growth and service in heaven; fading of belief in an eternal hell.
<b>Confucianism</b> (Fifth Century, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Confucianism</a>	Balance authority and obedience with goodness and love; Respect, courtesy and peace.	Man basically good; Lack of filial piety is the root of evil in society.	Following social propriety and offering sacrifices. In later stages some groups offered sacrifices to Confucius.	Not other-worldly; Accept vague ideas of heaven and hell; Humanistic values relative to the present life.
<b>Hinduism</b> (Second millennium, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Hinduism</a>	Diverse and tolerant; Hereditary caste system, truthfulness, honesty, nonirritability, self-control.	Pleasure, wealth and worldly success are illusions, the pursuit of which result in evil.	Path of renunciation; Commitment to Atman-Brahman; Growth toward perfection by reincarnation	Nirvana; Extinction of personality in Brahman or totally indescribable state
<b>Islam</b> (Sixth Century, A.D.) <a href="#">Introduction to Islam</a>	Five Pillars: creed, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage; Predestination; Specific rules of conduct.	Satan; Not submitting to the will of Allah; Allah beyond human questioning; Accept life as is.	Submission to the will of Allah; Living by the Five Pillars	Judgment: heaven and hell; Sensual description of afterlife.
<b>Jainism</b> (Sixth Century, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Jainism</a>	Nonresistance, nonattachment, truthfulness, honesty, renunciation of sexual pleasure, monastic ideals	Attachment to the evil material body	Liberating soul from matter through law of karma and reincarnation; this is possible only by individual effort.	Nirvana; Extinction of personality or totally indescribable state
<b>Judaism</b> (Second millennium, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Judaism</a>	Ten commandments; justice, righteousness, truth, loving-kindness, humility, learning, kosher food.	Satan; Unfaithfulness to the will of God; choosing egocentric self, false gods, or evil.	Early: Animal sacrifice; Later: Faith and righteous living; Messianic deliverance.	Not other-worldly; Early: She'ol--land of the dead; Later: Judgment, heaven and hell.
<b>Shinto</b> (Seventh Century, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Shinto</a>	Personal cleanliness; Sense of communal guilt; Bushido: honor, loyalty, courage, truth, justice	Man and nature essentially good; Suicide encouraged to avoid dishonor, defeat or to protest.	Salvation comes from being a part of the chosen Japanese people and living with honor and purity.	Shinto largely adopted Mahayana Buddhist beliefs of heaven and hell.
<b>Sikhism</b> (16th century A.D.) <a href="#">Introduction to Sikhism</a>	Pure motives and actions; Love of spouse and family; service, humility, learning; forsaking evil company	The illusion that matter is real is the source of evil; Man is helpless and is dependent on divine action	Become one with God; Salvation results from worship of the true name; faith, love and devotion are essential.	Nirvana; extinguishing absorption of individuality in God. There is also mention of heaven and hell.
<b>Taoism</b> (Sixth Century, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Taoism</a>	Recompense injury with kindness; quiet humility; simplicity in living; attain fullness of life.	Egocentricity is the source of evil and suffering; Man's way vs. God's way; Worldly things are worthless.	Oneness with Tao; Pomp and glory are to be despised.	Early: All goes back to Tao; Later: Heavens and hells.
<b>Zoroastrianism</b> (Sixth Century, B.C.) <a href="#">Introduction to Zoroastrianism</a>	Good thoughts, words and deeds; Being truthful, compassionate, just; Learning, service	Angra mainyu or Satan; Man born sinless--chooses between good and evil.	Choosing good over evil; Living a righteous life.	Judgment: heaven and hell; Ultimate triumph of good and eradication of evil.

Table 2

Religion	Dominant Emphasis	Scripture and Revelation	Founder and Origin	Ultimate Reality--God
<b>Buddhism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Buddhism</a>	Ethical self-culture; Four Noble Truths; Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment	Tripitaka	Siddhartha Gautama	No personal God; no soul; Buddha Deified
<b>Christianity</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Christianity</a>	Jesus as Lord; Fatherhood of God; Brotherhood of man; Kingdom of God; Church	Bible; Roman Catholics also accept church tradition as authoritative	Jesus of Nazareth; Paul: Expediter of church development.	God as Heavenly Father
<b>Confucianism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Confucianism</a>	Social propriety; The Middle Way ( li )	The Five Classics and Four Books are used as touchstones of conduct and wisdom.	Kung-Confucius	Early: Shang Ti Later: Confucius deified Today: Humanistic
<b>Hinduism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Hinduism</a>	Divine immanence and spiritual growth governed by karma and reincarnation	The Vedas, Upanishads, Code of Manu, Bhagavad-Gita	Early Aryans from Persia	Impersonal Brahman
<b>Islam</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Islam</a>	Submission to God; Teachings of Muhammed	Quran-Koran; Twenty-eight prophets of Allah (Abraham, Moses, Jesus, others.)	Muhammed	Allah
<b>Jainism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Jainism</a>	Asceticism; Ahimsa--noninjury to any living thing	Aganas, Siddhantas	Mahavira	Various gods; unimportant Mahavira taught that there is no personal God; Mahavira deified
<b>Judaism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Judaism</a>	Ethical monotheism; God is active in social/historical processes	Torah-Old Testament; The Talmud (comprised of the Mishnah and Gemara)	Semitic Patriarchs; Abraham and Moses	Ei Elyon; Elohim; Jehovah;Yahweh
<b>Shinto</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Shinto</a>	Nature worship; Emperor worship; Patriotism; Purity	Kojiki, Nihongi	Sun Goddess Amaterasu; Grandson, Ninigi, first emperor	Kami: Izanagi and Izanami (Sun Goddess Amaterasu)
<b>Sikhism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Sikhism</a>	Syncretic unity between Hinduism and Islam	Granth	Guru Nanak	God--The True Name
<b>Taoism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Taoism</a>	The divine way (Tao); Simplicity in living; Following nature.	Tao Te Ching	Lao-tzu	The Tao--Supreme Being; The Ultimate All-Father; Absolutes which are unknowable.
<b>Zoroastrianism</b> <a href="#">Introduction to Zoroastrianism</a>	The struggle between good and evil.	Avesta	Zarathustra Spitama-Zoroaster	Ahura Mazda; Seven sources of reality who are both masculine and feminine.

# An Introduction to Buddhism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief historical overview of Buddhism, the life of Siddhartha Gautama, a description of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, a description of basic beliefs and an outline of Buddhism in today's world.

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## III. BUDDHISM

### The Religion of Peaceful, Ethical Self-culture

Buddhism began in India in the sixth century B. C. as a reform movement in Hinduism. It was the first religion of the world to become international and today (1982) has a membership of 254,867,450. The founder of Buddhism was Siddhartha Gautama, the son of a rich ruler of the Kshatriya caste. There are legends of his non-human conception, supernatural birth, and of his future greatness prophesied by a Hindu saint. Gautama married at the age of nineteen and later had a son. He lived a luxurious and sheltered life but while riding outside the royal compound he saw a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a corpse, and an ascetic monk. He became obsessed with the fact that all must face age, sickness, and death and he determined to find an answer to this anxiety and suffering.

Leaving his wife, son, family, and inheritance Gautama clipped his hair and beard, exchanged clothes with a beggar and began his quest. For years he tried to solve the problem of suffering first through philosophy and then by extreme asceticism but found no inner peace.

Finally, around the age of thirty-five he sat down under the shade of a fig or bo tree to meditate; he determined to meditate until he received enlightenment. After seven weeks he received the Great Enlightenment; The Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path. Henceforth he became known as the Buddha (enlightened one). This Middle Way is a psychological-philosophical insight into the cause and cure of suffering and evil.

The First Noble Truth points out that the human condition is steeped in suffering, that in some way life has become estranged from reality. The Second Noble Truth tells us the cause of life's dislocation. Anxiety and suffering are caused by indulging in inherently insatiable desires. All forms of selfishness tend to separate us from others, life, and reality. The Third Noble Truth states a logical conclusion: suffering will cease when we suppress, overcome, and master these cravings and desires. We must develop non attachment to the things of the world. The Fourth Noble Truth tells us how this cure is accomplished--by following the Noble Eight-fold Path.

Buddha's analysis of the problems of life in the Four Noble Truths is essentially that of a therapist; and the Eight-fold Path is the course of treatment through training. First one needs to have right knowledge in order to have the facts, principles, and values to establish a wise life plan. Second, right aspirations are required to give power to this plan. The heart as well as the head must be dedicated to our goals. Third, right speech is needed to take hold of what is in our consciousness which controls our thinking. We need to change our speech and thinking toward truth and charity. Fourth, right behavior should be initiated to further change and control our lives. We must follow the Five Precepts: do not kill, steal, lie, be unchaste, or drink intoxicants. Fifth, we should engage in a right livelihood. Spiritual progress is difficult if one's occupation pulls in the opposite direction. One should not take work which weakens or destroys life but serve in those occupations that promote life. Sixth, right effort is needed to keep us growing in spiritual attainment. Buddha laid great stress on the importance of the will in determining our destiny. He had more confidence in the long steady pull than in quick spurts of activity. Seventh., we need right mindfulness to sustain our growth. Few teachers have equaled Buddha's emphasis on the mind as the shaper and determiner of the course of human life. The Damma-pada opens with the words, "All we are is the result of what we have thought." We should wisely control our state of consciousness. Eighth, right contemplation and absorption finally brings the aspirant into a transmutation of consciousness which transcends the worldly preoccupation with things, desires, and suffering. Those who have followed the eight-fold path and arrived at the point of achieving Nirvana are called arhat, or "saint."

Gautama Buddha taught a way of life devoid of authority, ritual, speculation, tradition, and the supernatural. He stressed intense self-effort. His last words before he died at the age of eighty were, "Work out your own salvation with diligence." Gautama accepted the law of karma and reincarnation. He saw Nirvana not as a state of extinction or annihilation but as "the highest destiny of the human spirit." It is so totally different that it is "incomprehensible, indescribably, inconceivable, unutterable...bliss."

Buddha did not believe in the existence of a personal God; nor did he believe that man had a soul. He tended to deny the existence of substance of every kind and saw the transitoriness of all finite things and beings; he stressed impermanence. Man's life after achieving Nirvana is unfathomable - "reborn does not belong to him nor not-born, or any combination of such terms." some scholars have pointed out that Buddhism in its earliest form was not a religion but a system of psychological-ethical discipline based on a pessimistic philosophy of life. Although there is some truth in this evaluation, there is much that is positive in Buddha's teaching.

The scripture of Buddhism is the Tripitaka (Three Baskets of Wisdom), made up of the Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline Basket), the Sutta Pitaka (Teaching Basket), and the Abhidhamma Pitaka (Higher Doctrine Basket). Parts of the Tripitaka such as the Dhamma-pada and the Sutta-Nipata are among the most expressive religious books in the world. Some of Buddha's parables are very similar to those used by Jesus.

Buddhism has been divided into two major branches which have in turn been subdivided into numerous sects. Today one may find in this one family of religions nearly every form of religious belief and expression on the planet.

Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) or Theravada Buddhism concentrated in Southeast Asia is conservative and more closely follows the original teachings of Buddha. It sees man as entirely dependent on self-effort, teaches wisdom as the key virtue and regards religion as a full-time job, primarily for monks. They regard Buddha as a saint, eschew metaphysics and ritual, and limit prayer to meditation. Their ideal is arhat (sainthood).

Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism has spread throughout the world and rests on the principle that Buddha taught many things in secret to the elect who could properly interpret them. It sees man as involved with others and saved by grace. It teaches compassion as the key virtue and believes its religion is relevant to life in the world; therefore, it is a religion for laymen as well as monks. The Mahayana branch sees Buddha as a savior, welcomes metaphysics and ritual, and engages in petitionary prayer. Their ideal is the Bodhisattva--a mortal who has achieved enlightenment and after death postpones Nirvana attainment to serve in heaven answering prayers and helping mortals who are in need. Mahayana Buddhism regards Buddha as a divine savior--pre-existent, planfully incarnate, supernaturally conceived, miraculously born, sinless, with a redemptive purpose, all knowing, and everlasting. Buddha has been made a member of the Buddhist Trinity.

Buddhism received its greatest impetus from the Indian emperor, Asoka, who was converted in 297 B. C. and became convinced that Buddhism was a religion for all of the peoples of the world. Accordingly, he sent missionaries throughout the known world. Asoka also called the third council of Buddhism in 247 B. C. for the purpose of determining the true canon of Buddhist scriptures.

The main branches of Mahayana Buddhism are the Pure Land Sect, the Intuitive Sects, the Rationalist Sects, the Sociopolitical Sects, and the Tibetan Sect. The Pure Land Sect seeks to achieve salvation and life after death in the "pure land of Western Paradise." They believe in Dhyani Buddhas who are lesser deities who help human beings. Their priests may marry and their worship practices parallel the church and Sunday school services of Christianity.

The Intuitive Sects such as Ch'an and Zen emphasize that the truths of religion do not come through rational thought processes but through a sudden flash of insight. They believe the externals of religion are unnecessary. Reason is to be distrusted more than anything else; therefore riddles and various techniques of irrationality are used to confuse reason and trigger an intuitive flash. Zen is so concerned with the limitations of language and reason that it makes their transcendence the central intent of its method. Experience, not words are important. So they sit hour after hour, day after day, year after year seeking to develop their intuitive powers.

The Rationalist Sects believe that in addition to meditation one should utilize reason and a study of the scriptures in order to find the truth. All approaches to enlightenment may be useful at times but in reality there is only one true Buddhist teaching and one must study the scriptures of Buddhism in order to know this truth. The Chih-i sect in China and the Tendai sect in Japan stress the importance of the rational approach.

The Sociopolitical Sects such as the Japanese Nichiren sect have had great effect on the social and political dynamics of various nations. The founder of Nichiren thought that all of the sects of Buddhism were a perversion of the true teachings of Buddha and were leading peoples to hell. He came to believe the only scripture one needed to study was the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren teaches a simplified form of Buddhism and uncompromising patriotism.

Tibetan Buddhism is representative of sects that emphasize the use of magic words or formulae to achieve various goals. Tibetan people traditionally have used incantations, spells, and magic to protect themselves from demons. Tibetan monks or lamas invented the prayer wheel to augment their defenses against evil. By the 14th century monastery leaders became more powerful than kings and for all practical purposes the country was ruled by Buddhist priests. The lamas of Tibetan Buddhism have been divided into two orders, the Red Hats and the Yellow Hats. The leader of the larger Yellow Hat group is known as the Dalai Lama who was virtually ruler of Tibet. China in 1950 set up a puppet government in Tibet and when the Dalai Lama attempted to overthrow Chinese rule in 1959 the rebellion was crushed. The Dalai Lama and a few of his followers escaped to India.

During the twentieth century Buddhism is experiencing a revival. This new awakening may have been augmented by Christian missionaries who translated the ancient Buddhist texts and made them available for all to study and by the rise of Asian nationalism. Buddhism today is once more a missionary religion.

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# An Introduction to Hinduism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This Document contains an overview of the history and basic beliefs of Hinduism, information about the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, including the origins of Jainism and Buddhism.

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## I. HINDUISM

### The Religion of Divine Immanence and An Hereditary Graded Social Structure

Hinduism, dating from around 1500 B. C., is the oldest living religion having a membership (1982) of 477,991,300 confined largely to India. It is the most complex, diverse, and tolerant of the world's religions. One can find within Hinduism almost any form of religion--from simple animism to elaborate philosophical systems--which has ever been conceived or practiced by mankind. Hinduism has met the challenge of other religions, primarily, by absorbing them and their practices and beliefs into the mainstream of Hindu religious expression.

The Aryans (noble ones) invaded the Indus valley from Persia in the second millennium B.C. They were basically wandering nomads who spoke an Indo-European language which became the basis for Sanskrit. This early Aryan society developed into three basic socio-economic classes. The priests or Brahmins became the ruling class. The tribal chieftains and their warriors or Kshatriyas were next in line, with the commoners and merchants or Vaishyas rounding out the Aryan society. A fourth group, the conquered pre-Aryan people or Shudras, were at the bottom of society. Eventually these divisions developed into a religiously supported caste system.

The Vedas are the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. The four basic Vedic books are the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda, and the Atharva-Veda. Each of the Vedic books is divided into four parts. Each contains a section of hymns to the gods (Mantras), a section of ritual materials (Brahmanas), a section of guidance for hermits (Aranyakas), and a fourth section of philosophical treatises (Upanishads). The Mantra and Brahmana sections are the oldest materials with the Aranyakas and Upanishads added later. This Vedic literature evolved during the classical period of Hinduism.

The fourteen principal Upanishads form the basis of Hindu philosophy. They assume there is one reality, the impersonal god-being called Brahman. All things and beings are an expression of Brahman. Everything in the world and experience which is not Brahman is illusion (maya). All phenomenal existence (pleasure, worldly success, wealth) is illusion arising from ignorance of the true nature of reality. Those who continue in this ignorance are bound to life by the law of karma which keeps them endlessly in the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. When man discovers the Path of Desire is not fulfilling he is ready to start on the Path of Renunciation. Here he recognizes his duty to others, family and community, and dedicates himself to a life of service. This is rewarding but he still yearns for infinite being, infinite awareness, and infinite joy.

To achieve these ultimates of experience we must realize the basic purpose of life is to pass beyond imperfection. That which is beyond the limitations and imperfections of life can be found within. Underlying our physical existence and personality is an infinite reservoir of reality. This infinite center of every life, this hidden authentic self or Atman is no less than Brahman, the Godhead. By detachment from the finite, illusory self and commitment to Atman-Brahman, we achieve infinite being, infinite awareness, and infinite joy.

This philosophy of the Upanishads is a reaction to the sacrificial, priestly form of worship in Hinduism. It emphasizes meditation as a means of worship and teaches that ignorance is man's basic plight. Historically, the priestly sections of the Vedas have directed the religion of the masses in India while the Upanishads have attracted a relatively small number of Indian intellectuals. Contemporary Western people who are attracted to Eastern thought tend to identify Hinduism with the philosophy of the Upanishads.

Classical Hinduism also produced the ethical Code of Manu which teaches that the caste system is divinely ordained. The first three castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas) are "twice born" people while the Shudras are "once born" manual laborers. The only upward mobility through this caste system is by means of repeated incarnations. Although the caste system is outlawed in contemporary India, its social influence is still strong.

The Code of Manu also teaches the various stages through which a man is expected to pass in a successful life: student, householder, hermit, and wandering beggar. These stages are only for twice born men. Women should stay in the home under the protection and control of the chief male in the household. The code requires the cultivation of pleasantness, patience, control of mind, non-stealing, purity, control of senses., intelligence, knowledge, truthfulness, and non irritability. The killing of cows is listed among the greatest of sins.

The composition of the great epic poem, the Bhagavad-Gita, sometime between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D. marks the end of the period of classical Hinduism. The Bhagavad-Gita is found within the text of a much longer poem and is probably the most highly esteemed scripture of Hinduism. In the poem Arjuna, a Hindu knight, for the first time in the recorded history of Hinduism, raises the question of the propriety of killing people. He is answered by his charioteer, Krishna, who turns out to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Arjuna is told he must be loyal to his duty as a warrior and kill. The Gita also teaches a variety of means of personal salvation. One may achieve release from life (Nirvana) through asceticism, through meditation, through devotion to and worship of the gods, or through obedience to the rules of his caste,

After the close of the classical period subtle changes gradually appear in Hinduism. Out of the millions of major and minor gods, worship tended to center around the Trimurti: Brahma, the creator; Shiva, the destroyer; and Vishnu, the preserver. Among this trinity, Brahma receives the least attention. Shiva is the most popular probably because he is the god of sex and reproduction and appeals to the deprivation experienced by the masses. His various goddess consorts such as Kali are equally revered. According to mythology, Vishnu has appeared on earth in nine forms and will come a tenth time to bring the world to an end. Among his appearances are Krishna; Gautama, the Buddha; Matsya, the fish who saved Manu from the great flood; and Christ.

The majority of the people of India seek salvation through devotion to the gods while many of the wealthy and educated seek salvation through the way of knowledge. This intellectual Hinduism centers around six systems of philosophy: Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta, Vaisesika, and Nyana. All claim to be based on the Vedas and revolve about common themes. The only basic difference among them is their view of ultimate reality. The Vedanta system is monistic and asserts that the only essence in the universe is Brahman; all else is illusion. The Samkhya, Yoga, Vaisesika, and Nyana systems are dualistic and assert that the universe is composed of two forces, matter and spirit. The Mimamsa system is basically atheistic and teaches that salvation comes through the correct observance of Vedic rituals.

Jainism and Buddhism began as reform movements in Hinduism and it has absorbed much of their thinking. During the Middle Ages Hinduism and Islam competed for followers in India. The two religions are in many ways opposites and there has been much bloodshed in their struggles. Sikhism arose in an attempt to bring reconciliation between the two. Tradition credits the disciple Thomas for bringing Christianity to India. During the three centuries of British rule Christianity had considerable influence on the growing edge of Hinduism.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought three main reform movements in Hinduism. Ram Mohan Roy, called the Father of Modern India, was a monotheist who tended to agree with Christian missionaries in their attempt to suppress the suttee, child marriage, polytheism, and idolatry in Hinduism. The greatest reformer was Sri Ramakrishna, a follower of non dualistic Vedanta, who believed there was one single reality, God, behind all religions and that truth is essentially one. His disciple, Dutt, later known as Vivekananda, became the first Hindu missionary to the modern world. He described Vedanta Hinduism as the mother of all other religions. The best known Indian reformer is Mohandas K. Gandhi who was influenced by the teachings of Jesus and the Jain doctrine of non injury (ahimsa) espoused civil disobedience and nonviolence which were largely responsible for bringing India freedom from British rule. Gandhi, in turn, became a major influence in the political thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr. and many of the leaders of the "peace movement" in Western Civilization.

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# An Introduction to Jainism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains an historical overview of Jainism, Mahavira, and the relationship of Jainism to Hinduism and Buddhism. Basic scriptures are described as well as current day sects.

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## II. JAINISM

### The Religion of Asceticism

Jainism, founded by Mahavira in the sixth century, has around two million adherents in India most of whom are business people who have wealth and social importance far beyond their numerical significance. Mahavira was part of a great creative period of history which produced Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tzu, Zoroaster, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Thales, Anaximander, Xenophanes, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus.

Jainism (conqueror) began as a reformed movement in Hinduism. Both Jainism and Buddhism denied the validity of the Vedas as inspired scripture and rejected the religious implications of the Indian caste system.

Mahavira was the son of a minor ruler in northeast India. Before his birth his mother is said to have had fourteen marvelous dreams and their family suddenly prospered. Mahavira married and was the father of a daughter. Despite his position and wealth, he was not happy. At the age of thirty, after the death of his parents, Mahavira bade farewell to his family and his wife and child, turned his back on wealth and luxury and went off to join the ascetics in the pursuit of salvation.

Not finding salvation among ordinary ascetics, he went off on his own path of extreme asceticism. He believed one should not injure any form of life (ahimsa) and swept the path where he walked and strained all the water he drank. To torment his body Mahavira went naked and sought the coldest spots in winter and the hottest climates in summer. He begged for his food, preferring that which was left over from the meals of others. When beaten or attacked by dogs he did not resist. Legend tells of a time when he was meditating and some people built a fire under him to see if he would resist; he did not. So as not to become attached to people or things he never stayed more than one night at the same place. He became indifferent to all things. During the thirteenth year, squatting in the sun, he achieved release (moksha) and reached Nirvana.

After he felt he had gained complete control over his body, Mahavira changed from being a solitary ascetic to a leader and teacher of monks. He taught that the world is made up of two substances, soul and matter. The cause of all misery is the connection of the vile material body with the pure eternal spirit. Salvation is liberating the soul from matter. The law of karma and reincarnation are closely linked with this drama of the flesh and the spirit.

Salvation of the soul must be accomplished by the individual himself; therefore, there should be no worship or prayer. The gods are of little consequence; they are simply beings living on a different plane from mankind who are busy working out their own salvation. Although Mahavira taught that there is no personal God and forbid worship and prayer, his followers worship him and pray to him. They believe he was sinless, omniscient, pre-existent, and incarnate--the last of a series of twenty-four saviors of men.

The scriptures of Jainism are Agana (precepts) or Siddhantas-(treatises). The language of these scriptures is one of the Prakrit vernaculars. Early commentaries were written in Sanskrit. A few documents have been translated into contemporary languages but most Jains are largely ignorant of their own scriptures. The devout Jain is ascetic, humble, inoffensive, and unvindictive.

By 80 A. D. the Jains were divided into two sects. The Svetambara or "white clad" live mainly in northern India today. They are more liberal in their interpretation of Mahavira's teaching regarding nudity and allow their monks to wear a white garment. Women are also allowed in their religion and monasteries accepting the possibility that they may find salvation.

The Digambara or "sky clad" live mainly in southern India. They adhere to the old ideals that require their monks to go about naked; however, civil authorities sometimes have required them to wear loin-cloths. The Digambara sect believe women have no chance of achieving salvation until they are reborn as men. Consequently women are prohibited from entering monasteries and temples.

Jains practice their religion in two distinct groups: common citizens and monks. Monks lead the ideal life for a Jain and have the best chance for salvation. They take five vows: non injury to life, to speak the truth, to not steal, to renounce sexual pleasure and women in general, and to renounce all attachments. Mahavira declared, "Women are the greatest temptation in the world." Generally all Jains seek to follow the first three vows as much as possible. The Jain doctrine of ahimsa was a potent influence in the lives of Mohandas Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer.

Today Jainism is sometimes regarded as a minority sect of Hinduism. Jains are forbidden from entering all occupations that take life or profit from taking life. This has forced them into the commercial field. Their reputation for honesty and high moral principles has made them excellent businessmen. It is a paradox that a sect which began with the ideal of asceticism and poverty has become one of the wealthiest classes in India!

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# An Introduction to Sikhism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a short historical overview of Sikhism and its founder, Guru Nanak. The relationship between Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam is briefly described.

**Related Documents in this archive:**

[The Social Problems of Religion](#)

[Religion in Human Experience](#)

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## IV. SIKHISM

### The Religion of Syncretism

Sikhism is the youngest of the world religions. It was founded by Nanak in the sixteenth century and has approximately 6,000,000 adherents located chiefly in the Punjab region of India. In a sense Sikhism may be regarded as yet another reform movement in Hinduism. Nanak attempted to integrate the best in Hinduism and Islam into a new inclusive religion. Nanak stands in a tradition of reformers. An older contemporary, Kabir, is especially noted for his attempt to bring Hinduism and Islam together.

Nanak was born of common Hindu parents of the Khati (Kshatriya) caste in 1469. He was a precocious youth who loved poetry and religion but was a failure at a variety of occupations. He married at nineteen and was the father of two sons. Later he left his wife and sons and went to the city of Sultanpur where he was a little more successful in business pursuits.

Around the age of thirty Nanak had a vision of God while meditating in the forest. He was told he had been singled out as a prophet of the true religion. His message was to be, "There is no Muslim and there is no Hindu." Following this visionary experience, he became an evangelist of the gospel of unity between these two religions.

Along with his constant companion, the minstrel Mardana, Nanak traveled widely throughout India preaching the essential unity of Islam and Hinduism. He wore a mixed costume made up of both Hindu and Muslim clothing. They even made a pilgrimage to Mecca. Wherever he went he tried to organize groups who accepted his teachings. Nanak is reported to have performed miracles. His followers were known as Sikhs (disciples). Toward the end of his life Nanak appointed his disciple, Angad, as his successor.

In October, 1538 Nanak was about to die. His Muslim converts wanted to bury him and his Hindu converts wished to cremate him after death. To settle the argument Nanak told each group to place flowers on either side of him and the group whose flowers were still fresh in the morning could have his body. He then drew the sheet over his head and became still. When the sheet was removed the next morning both bouquets of flowers were in bloom but the body of Nanak was gone. Thus, according to this legend, even in death the peaceful and loving Nanak sought to bring harmony between Muslims and Hindus.

Nanak, like Kabir and others, tried to synthesize the best elements of Islam and Hinduism. He taught a devotional monotheism, referring to God as "The True Name." Nanak rejected ahimsa thus allowing Sikhs to kill and eat animals. He accepted the principle of reincarnation and the law of karma but eliminated ceremonialism and ritual. Nanak also accepted the Hindu doctrine of Maya or illusion. God created matter by drawing a veil of illusion over himself producing all of the diverse forms of creation: the finite gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva; the heavens, the hells, the earth, men, animals, and plants. Salvation consists in becoming one with God. But salvation is not going to Paradise after the last judgment but absorption in Nirvana--individuality extinguished in absorption in God, the True Name.

The scripture of Sikhism is the Granth (book) which is an anthology of many poems somewhat like the Hebrew Psalms and wisdom literature. The Granth has many authors and the Sikhs ascribe absolute authority to it. The first two sentences of the Granth is prescribed as the first utterance for every Sikh each day, "There is but one God, whose name is True, Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent, great and bountiful. The True One is, was, and also shall be." The main method of worship is meditation on God. The need for a teacher and the Pure Congregation of disciples are important in Sikhism. The good Sikh is pure in motive and action, serves others, honors those who can teach him, and craves the Guru's word; loves his wife and renounces all other women; avoids quarrelsome topics, is not arrogant, does not trample on others and forsakes evil company.

The first four of the ten gurus of Sikhism followed the teachings of Nanak. The fifth guru, Arjan Des, turned from the pacificism of Nanak to a militant stance. Under the persecution of Islam rulers Sikhism grew more defensive. Gobin Singh, the tenth guru, introduced a ritual, the baptism of the sword, and prepared the Sikhs for self-defense and war. He developed an elite class of Sikhs known as Singhs (lions) who were distinguished from their fellows by wearing long hair, beards, a comb, short trousers, a steel bracelet, and a dagger. They were not allowed to use wine, tobacco, or any other stimulant. The Singhs were incredible warriors and later the British used them as soldiers and policemen throughout India and many other parts of the world.

Today there are three main branches of Sikhism and many minor groups. The first sect is called the Udasis which is basically an order of ascetics and holy men. They frequently shave their heads and beards and are often active as missionaries. The second sect is the Sahajdharis who reject militarism and prefer to be clean shaven. The third sect is the Singhs already described. In temples the central object of worship is a copy of the sacred Granth. Congregational worship involves prayer, hymns, a sermon, and a communion meal. Since there are no Sikh priests, group meetings may be led by any member of the community. All Sikhs give special attention to the Takht (throne) of Sikhism with its golden temple at Amritsar.

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# An Introduction to Taoism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief overview of Taoism and a description of basic Taoist beliefs.

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## V. TAOISM

### The Religion of the Divine Way

The religions of China are rooted in ancient religious concepts. The Chinese people recognized many gods and spirits. The good spirits were known as Shen and the evil spirits were called Kwei. The common people performed sacrifices and rituals. They believed the universe was composed of the negative force of nature, Yin, and the positive force of nature, Yang. Filial piety and ancestor worship were practiced. They predicted the future by divination through the methodology of I Ching. Following the eleventh century the Chou rulers for political reasons promoted a belief in Shang Ti, the one supreme God who controlled the destiny of men and rulers.

The origins of Taoism are unclear. Traditionally, Lao-tzu who lived in the sixth century is regarded as its founder. Its early philosophic foundations and its later beliefs and rituals are two completely different ways of life. Today (1982) Taoism claims 31,286,000 followers.

Legend says that Lao-tzu was immaculately conceived by a shooting star; carried in his mother's womb for eighty-two years; and born a full grown wise old man. It is said that he was the keeper of the royal archives but tired of the artificial court life and retired. Lao-tzu traveled west into the mountains and sought to leave the country at the Hankao Pass. The guard at the gate recognized the wise old man and refused to allow him to leave until he had committed to writing the sum of his wisdom. He retired for three days and returned with a slim manuscript entitled Tao Te Ching (The Way and Its Power). After leaving he was never seen again.

Except for the Analects of Confucius, the Tao Te Chin is the most influential book in Chinese literature. It has been the object of at least a thousand commentaries and has been translated into English more than forty times. The book was probably developed over the centuries and evolved into its present form around the fourth century B. C.

The chief religious teaching of the Tao Te Ching is concerning one eternal Supreme Being: "Original, primeval, the Ultimate... sustaining source of all things ... an All-Father ... Makes its knower fearless, invulnerable, immortal." The ethical ideal of the Tao Te Ching is to recompense injury with kindness and achieve a quiet, restful, humble simplicity in living. The teachings of early Taoism center around the following themes:

1. The basic unity behind the universe is a mysterious and undefinable force called the Tao. Tao produces all things and all things go back to their common origin and blend into one. Absolute truth and absolute good are unknowable.
2. Life is the greatest of all possessions. The chief aim of human existence is to attain fullness of life by attunement with the Tao. When man seeks his own plan rather than the eternal plan of the great Tao, he precipitates ills, suffering, and evil.
3. Live in primitive simplicity. Leave all things take their natural course. Education, wealth, power, and family ties are worthless impediments to living. The sage can know the whole world without going out of his door. The further one travels, the less one knows. The Tao is characterized by its quietude of power, its production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination. "Aim at extreme disinterestedness and maintain the utmost possible calm ... There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition ... Only quiet non-striving is successful." Kindness, sincerity, and humility should be cultivated.
4. Pomp and glory are to be despised. The tree which stands higher than its neighbors is the first to be felled by the woodsman. The weak and humble overcome the strong and proud. The highest goodness is like water, it seeks the lower levels; therefore it is near to Tao. The least government is the best government. Weapons are instruments of ill omen; he who has Tao will have nothing to do with them.

This early Taoism was more a philosophy than a religion. it was concerned about the quality of life and had little interest in the heavens, gods, rituals, or life after death. During the fourth and third centuries B.C., in addition to Taoism, three major schools of thought struggled for dominance in China.- The Confucians believed in an idealized feudal system characterized by social propriety. The Legalists were tough-minded realists who believed human nature is wicked and lazy and must be ruled with a strong hand. The Mohists taught the values of the traditional religions, especially that men should love one another. They were pacifists who recognized the necessity of self defense.

Later Taosim became a religion of the masses and deteriorated into polytheism, demonology, witchcraft, magic, and occultism. It borrowed from Mahayana Buddhism and its teaching of an afterlife with heavens, hells, and judgment and developed a monasticism after the Buddhist pattern. The upper classes and intellectuals of twentieth century China continued reading the classics of philosophical Taoism but regarded the religion as only fit for the ignorant masses. The current Chinese government look upon it, and all forms of religion, as superstition.

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# An Introduction to Confucianism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

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## VI. CONFUCIANISM

### The Religion of Social Propriety

Confucianism has been the chief cultural influence of China for centuries. The teachings of Confucius were never intended to be a religion. It has no revelatory sacred writings, no priesthood, no doctrine of an afterlife, and frowned on asceticism and monasticism. Later Confucius was deified and raised to the rank of Emperor and Co-assessor with the deities in Heaven and Earth. Official animal sacrifices were made at the tomb of Confucius for centuries. In 1982 Confucianism claims 156,070,100 adherents.

The Chinese name of Confucius was Kung. His disciples called him Kung, the master (Kung Fu-tse) which western missionaries Latinized to "Confucius." He was born in 551 B. C. of an aristocratic family who had lost their wealth and position. His father, who died before Confucius was three, is said to have been a famous warrior of gigantic size and strength who was seventy years old when Confucius was conceived. Confucius was the youngest of eleven children. He grew up in poverty but received a good education. In his teens he accepted a minor government position, married and fathered a son but the marriage ended in divorce.

In his twenties, following his mother's death, Confucius set himself up as a teacher. He taught the traditional Six Disciplines: history, poetry, government, propriety (ethics), music, and divination. Confucius became one of the great teachers of history but aspired to public office. He had supreme confidence in his ability to reorder society.

Legend has it that at the age of fifty Confucius ascended through the offices of Minister of Public Works and Minister of Justice to Prime Minister. His government was ideal. Enemies, however, conspired against him and he was forced to retire at the age of fifty-five. In reality, scholarly speculation has assumed that contemporary rulers were much too afraid of Confucius' candor and integrity to appoint him to any position involving power.

During the next twelve years Confucius wandered from place to place with a few of his disciples. He was jeered at and even placed in jail. At the age of sixty-seven a position was found for him as an advisor to the Duke of Ai. During the next years he spent his time teaching and compiling some of the classic Chinese texts. He died in 479 B. C. Confucius was not only a wise man, he was an incorruptible, human-hearted man. Although largely defeated in his purpose of reforming society, he died with courage, saying, "There is not one in the empire that will make me his master!"

Li (social propriety) is the greatest principle of living. When society lives by li it moves smoothly. Confucius saw the embodiment of this society in the idealized form of feudalistic government, illustrated by the Five Relationships: kindness in the father, filial piety in the son; gentility in the eldest brother, humility and respect in the younger; righteousness behavior in the husband, obedience in the wife; humane consideration in elders, deference in juniors; benevolence in rulers, loyalty in ministers and subjects. Li may also refer to the "middle way" in all things.

Just as li is the outward expression of the superior man, jen (goodness, humaneness, love) is the inner ideal. Confucius taught that men should love one another and practice respect and courtesy. If li and jen were operative in a person, the end product would be the Confucian goal: the superior man. Confucius believed in the natural goodness or at least the natural perfectibility of man. He stressed government by virtue (Te) and the arts of peace (Wen). Since filial piety is the root of all virtue this concern for parental respect is seen in the veneration of age and ancestor worship. Confucius was a pragmatic man who thought one should respect the spirits but keep them at a distance.

Confucius regarded himself as a transmitter, not the originator, of social values and wisdom. Although Confucianism does not claim revelatory scriptures, the Five Classics and the Four Books are regarded as the touch-stone of Confucian conduct and wisdom. Mencius and Hsun Tzu were the great expositors of Confucius in the fourth and third centuries B.C. and did much to popularize and spread his teachings. During the Han Dynasty there developed a cult of Confucius himself. By the sixth century A.D. every prefecture in China had a temple to honor Confucius.

The Confucian cult was checked in 1503 when the images of Confucius were ordered removed from the temples and replaced with wooden tablets inscribed with his teachings. All titles were removed and he was spoken of simply as "Master Kung, the perfect teacher of antiquity." In 1906 there was an attempt to revive the Confucian cult but with the birth of the People's Republic of China all sacrifices to Confucius and other religious observances were officially abandoned.

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# An Introduction to Shinto

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief introduction to Shinto and a description of its influence in shaping Buddhism in Japan. Basic beliefs of Shintoism are described as well as a brief outline of present day Shinto.

## Related Documents in this archive:

[The Social Problems of Religion](#)

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[The Urantia Book's synopsis of Shinto](#)

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## VII. SHINTO

### The Religion of Nature Worship, Emperor Worship, and Purity

Shinto (the way of the gods), traditionally dating back to 660 B. C., is a loosely organized religion of the Japanese people embracing a wide variety of beliefs and practices. In its most basic sense Shinto is a religious form of Japanese patriotism. The mythology of Shintoism teaches that Japan and the Japanese people were brought into being by special divine creation and that their emperors were literally descendants of the Sun Goddess. In Japan a person may in good conscience be a Buddhist, a Confucian, and a member of a Shinto sect at the same time. Today (1982) Shintoism reports 57,154,200 members.

The two most important sacred books of Shintoism are the Kojiki (Chronicles of Ancient Events) and the Nihongi (Chronicles of Japan). The Kojiki mythology reports that in the beginning were the kami (gods, mana, occult force). Two of these primeval kami or deities were Izanagi (male-who-invites) and Izanami (female who-invites). After giving birth to the land of Japan they produced many other kami.

Izanami died after giving birth to the kami of fire. Izanagi journeyed to Hades to find her. Finding her decayed body crawling with maggots he fled in horror back to the land of the living. To purify himself he entered a body of water and when he washed his left eye there came into existence the Sun Goddess, the Great Kami Amaterasu; and when he washed his right eye Tsukiyom the Moon Kami, emerged. After years of struggle the Japanese people were warring against each other and the Sun Goddess sent her grandson, Ninigi, to become the first emperor of Japan. Shinto is unique among the religions of the world in representing the Supreme Being as feminine in gender.

Although mythological tradition has the first Japanese emperor enthroned in the seventh century B.C., modern scholars think the actual history of Japan did not begin until the third century A. D. After the fourth century A. D. the Japanese came under the influence of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. By the end of the sixth century Mahayana Buddhism had taken a firm foothold on Japan. It was at this time that the term "Shinto" was introduced to distinguish the native Japanese religion from the new foreign religion.

Little by little the boundaries between Buddhism and Shintoism were obliterated. The concerns of day-to-day life became the domain of the Shinto side of religion while the concerns of the afterlife were served by the Buddhists.. The Japanese developed distinctive forms of Buddhism such as Zen, Pure Land, and Nichiren.

Shinto almost died out as a viable religion but in the seventeenth century it was revitalized by tough-minded military leaders. A combination of Shinto and Confucianism was used to develop the warrior code of Bushido. The samurai (knights) who followed this code emphasized loyalty, gratitude, courage, justice, truthfulness, politeness, reserve, and honor. In Japan suicide has often been encouraged to avoid dishonor, escape from a bad life situation, or as a means of protest. When dishonored the Bushido warrior was expected to kill himself by hara-kiri (disembowelment).

Shinto teaches the importance of personal cleanliness and the sense of communal guilt. Apart from subservience to the Emperor, Shintoism has no definite set of theological beliefs or code of morality. Morality and theology are naturalistic. Motoori (1730-1801), one of the most important scholars in the history of Shintoism, explains the lack of ethics in Shintoism: "It is because the Japanese were truly moral in their practice that they require no theory of morals."

After Commodore Perry in the mid nineteenth century opened Japan to outside influence sweeping changes have occurred in the country. The Constitution of 1889 established a state supported Shinto but other religions were allowed to exist and propagate. State Shinto supported thousands of shrines and priests. The grand imperial shrine at Ise was dedicated to the mother goddess of Japan, Amaterasu. Every loyal Japanese citizen wishes to visit the Ise Shrine at least once in their life time.

There are many Shinto sects which tend to be oriented in three major categories. First, those whose emphasis is on mountain or nature worship. Second, those who stress shamanism, divination, and faith healing such as the Tenri-kyo (Teachings of Divine Reason) sect. The third type of sectarian Shinto is more in tune with historic Shinto, reviving the myths of the origin of Japan, stressing purification rites, fasting, breath control, and other techniques similar to the Yoga cults of Hinduism. Domestic Shinto is practiced in many homes. The kami-dana (god shelf) is found in residences. Flowers or food may be placed before this altar daily or brief prayers and devotions may take place.

Shinto had become such an inseparable part of Japanese militarism the American occupation forces felt it necessary to direct the abolition of state support of Shinto in December of 1945. New Year's Day 1946 Emperor Hirohito disavowed the belief in his divine nature and complete religious freedom was guaranteed to every citizen.

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# An Introduction to Zoroastrianism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

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## VIII. ZOROASTRIANISM

### The Religion of the Free Will Choice Between Good and Evil

Zoroastrianism is closely related to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Concepts of Satan, angelology, demonology, a deliverer, future life, Paradise and judgment in these religions may have been directly or indirectly derived from Zoroastrianism. Although it started with the intent of being a voluntarily accepted and universally adopted religion, today it is largely a hereditary faith reporting (1982) 271,000 followers living mostly in India and Iran.

The origins of Zoroastrian religion are shrouded in mystery. ' The ancient inhabitants of the Persian region were Aryan nature worshipers who venerated a series of deities known as daevas. Above these minor deities were higher gods among which the most important and popular was Mitra, the god of light, benefactor of cattle and upholder of loyalty and obedience. Part of these Aryans migrated into India which explains why many of the gods and practices of Vedic Hinduism and the ancient Persians are the same.

Zoroaster's birth date is uncertain. Tradition says he was pre-existent and born of a fifteen year old virgin in 660 B.C. Many marvels accompanied his birth. His name, Zarathustra Spitama, indicates he was born into a warrior clan that was connected with the royal family of ancient Persia. At fifteen he put on the kusti, a sacred string belt symbolic of his passage into manhood as a member of his religion. He spent years, partially in solitude, searching for answers to religious questions. At the age of thirty Zoroaster had a vision of the angel Vohu Mana,, who appeared nine times the size of a man. The angel told him there was only one true God, Ahura Mazda, and that he was to become the prophet of Ahura Mazda. During the next ten years Zoroaster had other visions in which each of the archangels of Ahura Mazda appeared and revealed further truth to him.

He began preaching this new revelation but with no success. In ten years the only convert he won was a cousin. The turning point came when he met the Aryan King Vishtaspa. In a struggle with local priests he was thrown in jail but after two years won Vishtaspa to his faith, tradition says, by his wondrous cure of Vishtaspa's favorite black horse. The king put all of his power behind the propagation of the faith. Zoroaster became a leader in the nation and married three wives and was the father of six children.

The next twenty years was spent vigorously promulgating the faith among Persians and fighting two holy wars in its defense. During a war with the Turanians an enemy soldier found the seventy-seven year old prophet tending the sacred flame in a fire temple and killed him.

Zoroaster taught that Ahura Mazda (Who is also given many other names) was the one true God and the nature gods or daevas (devils) his people worshipped were false gods. Ahura Mazda reveals himself to man through six modes (called archangels by Western scholars). Three were masculine and three were feminine in nature. Together with Ahura Mazda they compose seven sources of reality. The masculine immortals are Asha (knowledge of the law of God), Vohu-Mana (love), and Kshathra (loving service). The three feminine immortals are Armaiti (piety), Haurvatat (wholeness or perfection) and Ameretat (immortality).

The inclusive name of Zoroastrian scriptures is Avesta (knowledge) and it is divided into five main parts: Yasna (worship) Gathas (Psalms), Vendidad (law against demons), Yashts (worship hymns), and the Khorda-Avesta (litanies and prayers). In Zoroastrianism there are a limitless number of angels. Two angels are said to record each person's good and evil deeds. Mithra is the strongest of these heavenly beings and the ideal of soldiers. Zoroaster approached the problem of evil more systematically than do other world religions. His position is often referred to as a dualism but this is incorrect. He taught there were two spirits emanating from Ahura Mazda. One is Spenta Mainyu, the Beneficent Spirit; the other is Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit (sometimes known as Ahriman or Satan). These spirits or forces exist and operate much like the yin and yang of Taoism.

Zoroaster saw the forces of good struggling with the forces of evil in the world. Man is born in a pure and sinless state and has complete freedom of will to co-operate with good or evil and shape his destiny. It is possible for man to choose the path of righteousness and achieve perfection in this life. He believed in a law of retribution which is called karma in Hinduism and is stated by St. Paul as, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Man is entirely responsible for his destiny

In Zoroaster's eschatology the soul stays with the body for three days. On the fourth day the soul journeys to the place of judgment. If the preponderance of his life has been good the soul goes to Paradise; if evil it is sentenced to hell. The descriptions of hell by Zoroastrianism is suited to the sins of the person and filled with revolting horrors. These souls will abide in heaven or in hell until the final consummation of the world established by Ahura Mazda. Before the end of the world there will be three saviors who will come at intervals of one thousand years. At the end of the age Ahura Mazda will wipe out every trace of the evil work of Angra Mainyu. The souls from hell will be brought up and purified and will join the resurrected souls of the righteous and the world will enter a new cycle of perfection where no one will grow old or decay and Ahura Mazda will reign supreme.

Zoroastrianism teaches concern for good thought, good word, and good deed as expressed in truthfulness, chastity, justice, compassion, care of the soil and natural elements,, charity, education, and service. Their worship consists mainly in prayers requesting assistance in living righteous lives. They may offer sandalwood to be burned in the sacred fire which burns eternally in their temples. At the age of seven in India and ten in Iran the young Zoroastrian is received into his faith with the investiture of a sacred shirt (sade) and the sacred thread (kusti) and he must wear them the rest of his life except when bathing. There are ceremonies for all of the important points of life. At death the body dare not contaminate ground, fire, or water so it is placed in a Dakhma (tower of silence) where it is eaten by vultures or beasts of prey--or may be buried in a stone casket lined with lead.

The Persian empire was conquered by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B. C. Mithraic cults were established throughout the entire Mediterranean world and were a major rival of early Christianity. There was a revival of Zoroastrianism in the third century A. D. under the Sassanid rulers of Persia. When they were conquered by Muslim warriors in the seventh century followers of Zoroastrianism were eventually forced to convert to Islam or flee the country. Many followed their ancient kinsmen to India where they were known as Parsees. When the British arrived they favored the Parsee because they were not encumbered with the caste system or food taboos and because they valued education. The Parsee became leaders in education, business, and finance. Today they make up a small minority in India and an even smaller minority in Iran known as Gabars (infidels).

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# An Introduction to Judaism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief overview of Judaism, basic beliefs, and a description of current day movements within Judaism.

**Related Documents in this archive:**

[The Social Problems of Religion](#)

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[The Urantia Book's synopsis of Judaism](#)

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## IX. JUDAISM

### The Religion of Ethical Monotheism

Judaism is among the oldest of the world's major living religions. Its members have been frequently persecuted and scattered throughout the world yet have kept their identity. In 1982 Judaism reports 14,336,520 followers. Judaism believes that God is active in the social and historical process. The amazing achievement of Judaism is that it has developed the concept of God from that of a primitive tribal deity to the God of all nations.

The patriarchs of Judaism lived in the Fertile Crescent at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. The Biblical report speaks of the calling of Abraham in which he is promised that he will become the father of a great nation through which all the world will be blessed. The early Hebrews practiced animal sacrifice and circumcision. The generic name for God among the Semites was El. He is referred to variously as El Shaddai (God of the mountains or God Almighty), El Elyon (God Most High), El Olam (God everlasting), and Elohim (Gods). The Hebrews regarded themselves as God's chosen people.

The exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt where they served as slaves is the most important event in Judaism. Their miraculous delivery from the Egyptians under the leadership of Moses, the reception of the Ten Commandments, their forty years in the wilderness, and their conquest of the promised land are central factors in their religious consciousness, holidays and observances. The Ark of the Covenant and the Tent of Meeting were also important in the early days of Judaism.

With the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy under David and Solomon the religion of Israel took on a more formal character. David captured Jerusalem and Solomon built the first temple. Although animal sacrifice remained the main form of worship, prophets added a new dimension to Judaism. Amos proclaimed the need for personal and national obedience to a righteous God. Hosea declared that Yahweh was a God of mercy and love. Isaiah caught a vision of God's holy majesty and righteousness. Micah's summary of religious duty was "to do justly, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God."

In 922 B. C. the Hebrews were split into two nations. The northern kingdom, Israel, was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B. C. and the ten tribes which made up this nation disappeared from history. The southern kingdom, Judah, survived the Assyrian years but were conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B. C. Solomon's temple was torn down and the people were carried into captivity.

During the period of captivity Ezekiel gave the Hebrews hope by pointing out that they could worship Yahweh in Babylon as well as Jerusalem and pictured the rise of a new nation in the future. Second Isaiah described Yahweh as the God of the universe and promised a messiah to redeem the entire world.

When the Persians captured Babylon in 538 B. C. many Jews under the leadership of Ezra were allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The reading of the law in book form took on new significance. The second temple was built (520 B. C.) and greatly enhanced much later (37-34 B.C.). The Romans destroyed it in 70 A.D. Following the Babylon captivity the Priestly Code was developed and legalistic Judaism was established. Later apocalyptic writers like Daniel and Enoch spoke of the coming of divine deliverance and an idealized future.

The Babylonian captivity was also the beginning of the long history of the Diaspora. All of the cities in the Roman empire had a Jewish population. The Jews of the Diaspora developed the institutional synagogue and the office of rabbi. Following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Hebrew scholars gathered and after much debate established the canon of the Torah--The Law, The Prophets, and the Writings (Old Testament) as we have it today. Later the Mishnah, (commentaries on the law) was compiled.

The center of Jewish learning then shifted to Babylon where the Gemara (sermonic material on all areas of Jewish life) was brought together. When the Gemara was added to the Mishnah the resultant product was called the Talmud. There was a Palestinian Talmud and a Babylonian Talmud; both are written in Aramaic, while the Mishnah texts are entirely in Hebrew. During the medieval period Jewish and Muslim scholars worked together translating Greek and Latin philosophers into Arabic. Baghdad became the center of Jewish religious authority during this period.

Renewed persecution of the Jews by Muslim rulers began in 847 and with the decline of the Babylonian community Spanish Jews became the leaders of worldwide Judaism. The greatest figure in Spanish Judaism was the philosopher, talmudist, and physician, Maimonides (1135-1204). He attempted to harmonize Judaism with the philosophy of Aristotle. In 1391 there was a massacre of thousands of Jews and in 1492 the Jews and the Moors were expelled from Spain.

Mysticism--the concern for angels, demons, charms, dream interpretation, messiah predictions, and numerology--in Judaism is lumped under the heading of Cabala (tradition). The most outstanding compilation of cabalistic material was the sefer Hazahar or Zohar attributed to a second century A.D. leader, Yohai; however, scholars believe Moses de Leon, a thirteenth century Spanish mystic, is the author. Cabalistic literature appeals to those who are oppressed and discouraged. These writings have been popular. This aspiration for deliverance is also reflected in that many in Jewish history have claimed to be the expected Messiah.

By the tenth century Europe had become the major location for Jewish life. The Jews frequently became money lenders to the Christian nobility. The Christian Crusades set off widespread attacks on Jews in Europe. Many fled to Poland or Islamic countries where rulers were more tolerant. By the end of the sixteenth century Poland had the largest concentration of Jews in the world. Their language was Yiddish, a combination of German and Hebrew. Jews in European cities were forced into restricted sections known as Ghettos, which were the worst parts of the city. The Lateran Council in 1215 decreed that Jews must wear a yellow badge and in some communities distinctive hats were required. A revolt in Poland resulted in the slaughter of from 300,000 to 500,000 Jews.

In the mid 1700's Moses Mendelssohn, a learned Jew, began writing essays in German and was accepted by the literary people and leaders of his day. He encouraged the Jews to come out of the ghettos and enter the modern world. About the same time Baal Shem Tov began preaching that God was not found in scholarly research in the Bible or the Talmud but in simple heartfelt faith. His followers became known as the Hasidim (pious ones).

By the nineteenth century Christian nations began making declarations that people of all faiths had equal rights. In 1848 Jews were first admitted to European universities. The Alfred Dreyfus trial in France, however, caused Theodore Herzl and others to realize that Jewish people would never be treated fairly until they had a land of their own. This resulted in the birth of the Zionist movement. The Nazi holocaust in which an estimated six million Jews were killed intensified this aspiration. Jews in increasing numbers migrated to Palestine. They were encouraged by the British and when the British left Palestine in May of 1948, Israel immediately proclaimed statehood.

The following beliefs are central to Judaism: (1) Ethical monotheism, this doctrine of the one universal God is the central teaching of Judaism and its gift to the world. (2) The one true God has revealed his sovereign will through the Prophets. Here Abraham and Moses are especially important but revelation is progressive and is continued through the scholars and rabbis. (3) God has chosen Israel to be his servant to bring men to a true knowledge of God. Israel has a mission to all mankind. This does not endow the Jews with special privileges but it does give them special responsibilities. (4) God's will for man effects all of life. It applies to all people and to all times and places. Religious duties are especially emphasized in connection with the family and the welfare of society. The ideals of truth, justice, humility, faithfulness, and loving-kindness are held in high regard. Jews are noted for their love of learning.

There are three divisions within modern Judaism. Orthodox Judaism is rigorous about ritual observances, the dietary laws, and keeping the Sabbath. It stresses the absolute authority of revealed Law and looks for the coming of the Messiah. Conservative Judaism, while continuing rabbinical Judaism, claims the right to adopt the traditions to the conditions of the modern world. It is less rigid in the formulation of requirements than Orthodox Judaism. Reformed Judaism stresses the ethical teachings of the prophets and the growth of an age of justice, truth, and peace. Judaism is regarded as an evolving religious experience that is subject to change. (H. H. Titus - Living Issues of Philosophy)

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# An Introduction to Christianity

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief history of Christianity, from its inception, through the middle ages and into the twentieth century.

**Related Documents in this archive:**

[The Social Problems of Religion](#)  
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## X. CHRISTIANITY

### **The Religion of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man Mediated by Jesus Christ**

Christianity, stemming out of Judaism and developing primarily in the West, has become the largest religion of the world even though, except for Islam, it is the youngest major world religion. Approximately one in every three persons on earth is identified with Christianity.

A religion practiced by so many people naturally encompasses a wide variety of beliefs and practices. In general Christians share a common belief in the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth as a truly divine and truly human incarnate Son of God who is the savior of mankind. They believe each individual by their faith and life determine their eternal destiny--either in heaven or in hell.

Scholars believe that Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was born between 4 and 7 B. C. at Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth of Galilee. His contemporaries regarded him as the eldest son of Joseph, a carpenter, and his wife, Mary; but Matthew and Luke report that Jesus was born of a virgin. He grew up in a family of at least six other children. Roman Catholics maintain these were children of Joseph by an earlier marriage.

Since Jesus' parents were common people, it is assumed he attended the local synagogue school and was trained as a carpenter. The story of his discussion with the teachers of the law in Jerusalem when he was twelve suggests that he had an unusual interest and knowledge in religious matters. The next eighteen years are often called the silent years. Since Joseph drops out of the records at this point, it is assumed that he died during this period and that Jesus took over the management of the carpenter business along with the help of his brothers.

When Jesus was about thirty he began his ministry. The first public act was his baptism by his cousin, John the Baptist, in the Jordan river. Following his baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the Judean wilderness pondering the nature of his ministry. When he returned Jesus selected twelve apostles and spent three years preaching and teaching in Galilee, Judea, and Perea. His ministry was a balanced portrayal of the nature of God and service to man. Many were benefited by his miracles of healing. Peter described his life succinctly: "He went about doing good."

Both the form and content of Jesus' teachings are recognized and respected as outstanding among the great religious pioneers and innovators of the world. Jesus believed he was sent by God and accepted Peter's description of him as "the Christ" (Messiah). The basic teaching of Jesus was the love of God and the love of man. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is the essence of his gospel. This fellowship of the sons and daughters of God with each other and with their Heavenly Father Jesus referred to as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. We see in his life and teachings the centrality of the religious point of view. His primary concern was that he and all mankind should be completely dedicated to doing the will of God. Jesus saw the Kingdom of God as a progressive growth of the individual and society--a mustard seed phenomenon. Jesus emphasized the worth of human personality. Evil was to be opposed with vigor but persons must be loved unendingly. Ethically Jesus taught principles rather than rules. The spirit, the motivation, is the heart of behavior; external action or appearances are secondary. He saw body, mind, and spirit as a functional whole which is essentially good and capable of growth and improvement, striving toward the perfection of the Heavenly Father. Much of Jesus' most profound teaching is given in parables. Through his life and teachings he achieved a new synthesis of religious insights which has attracted people of all religions and has resulted in more books being written about him than about any person who has ever lived on our planet.

The leaders of Judaism increasingly threatened by his appeal to the common people and by his unorthodox teaching and behavior contrived to have him condemned by the Jewish high court and with the co-operation of the Roman Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate, had him crucified. The third day following his death the Gospels report his resurrection and after forty days, in which Jesus appeared to various groups of disciples, he ascended into heaven.

At Pentecost (Shavout, fifty days after Passover) his followers in Jerusalem experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit and they began preaching the gospel of their risen Lord with great enthusiasm and dedication. Peter and James assumed leadership of the Jerusalem Church until its destruction along with the city in 70 A.D.

Paul of Tarsus is often called "the second founder of Christianity." He was a Jewish scholar convert who is traditionally considered to be the author of fourteen books of the New Testament. Paul was the first to state systematically the beliefs of Christianity and is largely responsible for transforming a sect of Judaism into the early Christian Church where gentiles were welcome. John B. Noss says, "He brought intact the religion of Jesus in the vehicle of a religion about Jesus."

The Bible, made up of the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the scripture of Christianity. The New Testament began in the early Christian Church as a series of papers and letters written by numerous people. Over the years there was much discussion about which books should be officially recognized. In 367 Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in an Easter letter discusses the books he considered canonical. This is the first list which includes all of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament as we now have it. Various church councils in the years that followed adopted this list.

The early Christian Church was not a highly organized body with an established creed; therefore, it encompassed a wide variety of beliefs. The most famous heresy of the early church centered around a widespread and diverse group known as Gnostics. They believed the spirit was good and that flesh was evil. Consequently, they denied that Christ could have been truly human. Jesus was not really born of the flesh and there was no resurrection of the flesh. The Gnostics also regarded Jehovah as an inferior being and rejected the Old Testament. Gnosticism was a syncretistic movement which incorporated beliefs of many Middle East religions and philosophies.

Marcionism was a closely related heresy. Marcion, the son of the Bishop of Pontus, declared that the God of the Old Testament was a cruelly legalistic and merciless deity and that Christians should discard the Old Testament and follow Paul in asceticism, celibacy, and scorn the physical world.

A third heresy, Montanism, was a theology preached by Montanus in the middle of the second century. Montanus taught that the Holy Spirit was not to be stifled by dogma but should be free to move in the hearts of Christians, causing them to speak in tongues and engage in other charismatic activities. He taught that the end of the world was coming soon.

To counter these and other heretical groups Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote against the Heresies around 185 A. D. Later the Apostles Creed was adopted and the New Testament was canonized in an attempt to control religious beliefs. Modern scholars are finding the struggle with these deviant groups was much more complex than official records show. At times political and economic factors may have been more important in determining actions than the theological issues.

Early Christians, in addition to being torn by internal problems, were persecuted in the Roman empire. They were accused of being atheists who committed sexual atrocities and engaged in cannibalism. In such an environment gradually the Bishop of Rome for a variety of social, political, and ecclesiastical reasons came to be recognized as the most important bishop of Christendom and was finally designated Pope. The Emperor Constantine whose wife and mother were Christians brought persecution to a close. In 325 he called the Church Council of Nicea to stop the warring within Christianity over the nature of Christ. Just before dying Constantine accepted baptism and officially became a Christian.

The writings of St. Augustine (354-430) formulating the doctrines of original sin, the fall of man, and predestination along with the rise of the monastic movement had a great influence on Christianity. Theological differences and deteriorating relationships between East and West finally resulted in a complete break in 1054 when the pope excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople and precipitated the formation of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The medieval papacy developed power, gathered lands, wealth, and went to war like any other feudal fiefdom. The moral leadership of the papacy was at its lowest ebb between 1309 and 1377. It was a time of luxury, moral laxity, and abuse. The papacy was moved from Rome to Avignon. In 1378 the Avignon cardinals elected a new pope, Urban VI, who refused to return to Avignon. The cardinals declared Urban's election void and elected another pope to rule from Avignon. Urban retaliated by selecting another college of cardinals who were stationed at Rome. The Council of Pisa called in 1409 to settle the issue resulted instead in electing a third pope who also claimed to be Christ's vicar on earth. The Great Schism was finally resolved at the Council of Constance which met from 1414 to 1418. Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274), a Dominican monk, who lived in this medieval historical period was one of the greatest thinkers the church ever produced. In his Summa Theologiae he applied Aristotelian philosophy to the formation of Christian theology in an attempt to bring faith and reason together.

The Renaissance, the rise of European nationalism, and the decline of the papacy set the stage for the Protestant Reformation. Forerunners like John Wyclif in England, John Huss in Bohemia, and Girolamo Savonarola in Italy helped prepare Europe for the Reformation initiated by Martin Luther when he nailed ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church as grounds for debate. Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin in Switzerland and John Knox in Scotland were the originators of the Reformed-Presbyterian churches. The marital problems of Henry VIII were instrumental in founding the Church of England, establishing the heritage of the Episcopal Church, and later the Methodist Church under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley.

The most radical of the Protestant groups were the Anabaptists in Switzerland and the Netherlands. They attempted to discard everything that was not expressly found in the New Testament. These nonconformists laid the foundation for the emergence of the Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Unitarians. Later social concerns resulted in the advent of the Salvation Army, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Sunday School movement.

The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation at the Council of Trent in 1545 declared that Catholic tradition was co-equal with scripture as a source of truth; and that the Roman Catholic Church had the sole right to interpret scripture. They reaffirmed the seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Marriage, and Ordination. (The Protestant churches recognize only Baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments.) Later the Catholic Church established the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854) and the bodily assumption of Mary (1950). The Vatican Council of 1869 declared the dogma of papal infallibility when the pope speaks ex cathedra. The Second Vatican Council called by John XXIII in 1958 and at meetings between 1962 and 1965 effected the most sweeping changes ever made in the Roman Catholic Church. It recognized Non-Catholics as true Christians; allowed the vernacular in the mass and more congregational participation in worship; declared Jews were not responsible for the death of Jesus; and took steps toward reconciliation with Orthodox and Protestant groups.

The nineteenth century was characterized by a strong missionary movement; and the twentieth century has given birth to the ecumenical movement. Churches all over the world are beginning to initiate fellowship and unite. The World Council of Churches was organized in Amsterdam in 1948. Denominations like the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the United Presbyterian Church illustrate this trend.

With the rise of modern science and the ecumenical movement the mainline churches of Christianity became less doctrinaire and began utilizing scientific knowledge in their religious views. Many accepted evolution as the methodology which God used in creation and had no trouble with the possibility that there may be millions of inhabited planets in the universe.

There was a sharp reaction to this "modernism" by conservative churchmen who became known as fundamentalists. They denounced the National Council of Churches, evolution, and "worldliness." Fundamentalism stressed the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible; the deity and virgin birth of Christ; the necessity of the substitutionary blood atonement doctrine; the physical or bodily resurrection of Christ; and the bodily second coming of Christ. These churches now prefer to be called "evangelicals." They have become quite militant in their evangelism and have a much larger missionary program than the mainline churches.

On the other extreme, liberal Christianity believes that Christianity is a dynamic and growing religion; that revelation is progressive and continuous; that God is personal and each person's religious experience is unique; that emphasis should be placed on man's inherent worth, dignity, and potentials as a child of God; and that the struggle against evil is both personal and social. Christianity must be thought out, deeply experienced, and lived in all of life.

John Noss sums up Christianity by saying, "Christianity is not a way of looking into the past, but a way of going forward into the future; not an escape from the world into solitariness, but a way of spending one's life in order to find it; not a retreat into ultimate truth, but a redemptive mission, a way of salvation leading into the world and through the world, in the love of God and man."

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# An Introduction to Islam

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief overview of Islam, its development and history, its basic beliefs, and a brief account of the activities of Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

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## XI. ISLAM

### The Religion of Submission to God

Islam is the youngest of the major religions of the world. It is the dominant religion of the third-world nations of the Middle East and Africa and the second largest of the world's religions with 589,143,400 followers. Muslim philosophy is a blend of Arabic, Jewish, and Christian elements and one of the simplest and least complicated of the world's religions.

The basic belief of Islam is that there is only one God, Allah, who is the sole and sovereign ruler of the universe. Allah has made himself known through other prophets at other times; but his best and final revelation was to the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century. The central demand of Muslims (submitters) is submission to the will of Allah.

Pre-Islamic Arab religion was an animistic polytheism. Images to these gods were carved and cherished and blood sacrifices were made to them. They recognized one supreme high god whom they called Allah (the God). They venerated a black meteoric stone at Mecca. Legend says the stone fell from heaven during the time of Adam and Eve and that Abraham and Ishmael built the Kaaba around it.

Muhammad was born around 570 A. D. at Mecca. His father died before he was born and his mother died before he was six years old. He was reared by an uncle and had no opportunity for any kind of formal education. He was an illiterate caravan worker and camel driver. In his travels he met Christians, Jews, and perhaps Zoroastrians. Around the age of twenty-five he married a wealthy widow caravan owner, Khadija. During their twenty-five years of marriage she bore him two sons and four daughters; but only one daughter, Fatima, survived him.

In the years following his marriage he began to go into the hills surrounding Mecca to contemplate the fate of his people. Muhammad entered a period of spiritual stress. He was concerned about the idolatry of his people and their fate on the judgment day at the end of the world. As time passed he became agitated with the thought that the Last Day and Last Judgment might be near at hand. According to Muslim tradition he visited a cave near the base of Mt. Hira north of Mecca for days at a time. Here one night when he was around the age of forty the archangel Gabriel appeared to him. After a series of revelations extending over many years Muhammad became convinced that there was only one God, Allah; and that he was the last and the greatest in a series of prophets (28) of this God--which included Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

Muhammad began to preach but was met with rejection and hostility. His first converts were from the younger and poorer classes in Mecca. As opposition mounted Muhammad received protection from his uncle; however, some of his followers took refuge in Abyssinia. In 619 both his wife and his uncle died. Muhammad tried to move out of Mecca to a nearby town but was rejected.

A fortuitous event took place in 620. Men from Yathrib (Medina) came to seek Muhammad as an impartial judge to settle disputes within the city. It was 622 before Muhammad could leave Mecca. A group of assassins had pledged to kill him but finally Muhammad and his friend and successor, Abu Bakr, escaped to a cave on Mt. Thaur and thence to Medina. The Hijrah (migration) normally took eleven days but they made it in eight. Muslims date their calendars from the Hijrah (A.H.)

At Medina Muhammad set up a theocracy and directed Muslims to pray toward Jerusalem but when he was opposed by the Jews he commanded his followers to pray toward Mecca. The final break with the Jews came when a Jewess, Zainab invited the Prophet and his friends to dinner and fed them poisoned lamb. The Jewish tribes were either expelled from Muslim territory or offered the choice of conversion or death.

Although Muhammad greatly improved the treatment of women, they were still under the rulership of men. Muslims were allowed four wives if all of them were treated the same. A man could divorce his wife by repeating three times, "I divorce you." Muhammad, through special dispensation married eleven wives. When he married his cousin, Zaynab, who had been the wife of his adopted son, Zayd, he was not criticized so much for taking another man's wife as for marrying a cousin which was considered incestuous in the Arab culture.

Muhammad launched military campaigns to consolidate their position. At the battle of Badr in 624 the Muslims defeated the Meccans. In another battle the following year the Muslims lost more men than the Meccans. A force of 10,000 Meccans attacked Medina in 627 but no decisive battles were fought and the Meccans withdrew. A peace treaty was worked out which allowed Muslims to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. In 630 Muhammad entered Mecca with an army of 10,000 men as its complete conqueror. He went to the Kaaba and destroyed all of the idols and images. With this symbolic act the Prophet became the sole leader of the Arabian people. At the age of sixty-two in 632 Muhammad led another pilgrimage to Mecca. When he returned he gave a farewell message to Muslims and died in the arms of his wife Aishah. His last words were, "Lord grant me pardon! Join me to the companionship on high! Eternity in Paradise! Pardon! The blessed companionship on high!" Muhammad was a man of unquestioned religious experience, a man of prayer, one utterly devoted to the religious ideal as he saw it. He was an attractive leader and an efficient organizer. At times he was vindictive and autocratic; yet he could say, "There is no compulsion in religion."

Muhammad made no provision for succession. The first four caliphs (deputies) were chosen by election and are often referred to as the "orthodox caliphs" because they were selected from the circle of the friends of the Prophet. Alip the last of the orthodox caliphs, had the caliphate usurped by those who formed the Umayyad dynasty in 661. The Umayyad caliphs ruled from Damascus, Syria from 661 to 750. They were succeeded by the Abbasid dynasty which ruled from Baghdad, Persia between 750 and 1258. This was the golden age of Islam. The Abbasids were replaced by the Mamelukan Turks who ruled from Egypt. They were succeeded in the sixteenth century by the Ottoman Turks who made the caliph title synonymous with that of the sultan of Turkey. When the Ottoman-Empire was broken up after World War I the caliphate ceased to be.

Islam is not a temple-oriented religion; however, Muhammad decreed that Muslims were required to pray together at a mosque on Friday. There an imam leads in prayer; the imam is not a priest but a pious man. The scripture of Islam is the Quran (reading) which is made up of 114 surahs (chapters) arranged according to the length of the surah. The Quran is the Word of God; it is eternal, absolute, and irrevocable. Muhammad acted only as a stenographer for Allah. Probably no scripture has influenced its people more than the Quran. It is dutifully read by Muslims and memorized in its entirety by many. The Quran has twenty-five references to Jesus Christ and represents Jesus as predicting the coming of the founder of Islam.

Essential beliefs of Islam include: (1) The one God, Allah, who is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient creator and ruler of the universe. He has ninety-nine names which are suggestive of his infinite nature. Allah in referring to himself uses a plural pronoun, "we," like the Hebrew plural "Elohim." (2) Angels of various kinds which are both good and evil. The leader of the demons is Iblis (devil) who was responsible for the fall of Adam and Eve. (3) The Quran and other books such as the Hebrew Law and Psalms and the Evangel to Jesus, (4) Prophets of Allah-- twenty-eight are mentioned in the Quran and Muhammad is the last and the greatest of the prophets. (5) Judgment, Paradise, and Hell--the Islamic Paradise has abundant pleasures such as beautiful gardens with flowing water, large-eyed maidens, and wine with no headaches. Hell is a horrid place filled with scalding winds, black smoke, and brackish water. (6) Divine decrees--things are predestined by the will of Allah. This emphasis gives Islam an atmosphere of fatalism. The most frequent statement among devout Muslims is "if God wills it."

Every Muslim must perform "the five pillars of Islam:" (1) Repeat the creed, "There is no God but Allah; and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah." (2) Prayer--the Quran says three times a day but in later years it was raised to five times each day. The muezzins climb the minarets of mosques five times a day to cry out that it is time for prayer. The Muslim must cleanse himself and face Mecca in a prostrate position for prayer. (3) Almsgiving--a Muslim is expected to share his possessions with the poor of his community. Later almsgiving became obligatory and was assessed as a tax amounting to two or three percent of one's wealth. (4) Fasting is required during the month of Ramadan. Between daylight and dark Muslims are expected to abstain from all food, drink, smoking, and sexual relations. Exceptions are made for those who are sick, nursing mothers, small children, and those who are traveling. Pork, wine, and gambling are also forbidden to Muslims. (5) Pilgrimage (hajj)--once in a lifetime every Muslim is expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. Wearing seamless white garments, they will make seven trips around the Kaaba and kiss the sacred black stone. On the tenth day of the hajj they will sacrifice a sheep or goat. They may also visit Medina and perhaps Jerusalem. When the pilgrim returns home he may have the title "hajj" attached to his name.

Islam became the unifying force for Arab people. It conquered all of the Middle East and moved into India, China, Indonesia, and some of the Pacific Islands. In 711 the Muslims entered Spain where they were dominant for the next seven centuries. Europe was saved from further conquest by Charles Martel in 732 at the Battle of Tours. Muslims made real contributions to philosophic thinking during the early Middle Ages. They translated and discussed Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek thinkers and helped preserve this literature during the Dark Ages. Toward the end of the nineteenth century missionary activity began to spread into Africa.

Islam in the modern era has been characterized by extreme conservatism. The Wahhabi movement founded in 1744 opposed all forms of change. They suppressed the Sufis and others who were seeking to grow in the modern world. The isolation of the Muslim world came to an end in the early part of the twentieth century due to involvement in World War I and the need for Arab oil. They achieved wealth and political power almost overnight. This revolutionary upheaval preempting evolutionary development is causing many problems in the Middle East

Like all religious movements Islam is divided into various sects. Around eighty-five percent of all Muslims are classified as Sunnis (traditionalists). They practice their religion exactly as it was established by the Prophet. Certain Quran instructions have presented problems--all thieves, for instance, are to have their hands cut off. To wrestle with these difficulties four schools of thought have developed within the Sunnis group which differ in the interpretations of the life of Islam.

The Shi'ite sect constitutes the second largest group in Islam, making up around fourteen percent of the Muslim world. The Shi'ites live mostly in Iran and Iraq. They believe the descendants of Ali, who was murdered by those establishing the Umayyad dynasty, are the only true claimants to the caliphate. The twelve descendants of Ali are called Imans. The twelfth Iman disappeared in 878 and Shi'ites believe he will return again to lead Islam into a golden age. This messianic figure is called Mahdi. There are many minor sects among the Shi'ites. One group of interest founded by Hasan ibn-al-Sabbah used hashish to psych up followers and while thus intoxicated they were sent out to murder selected victims. They became known as Assassins, and this word was eventually added to the European languages.

Islam, like Judaism, has always been a "this worldly" religion; nevertheless there have always been some Muslim mystics. They are known as Sufis (wool-wearers). They became an organized movement around the ninth century and have produced some of the finest mystic literature of the world. At times the Sufi movement has gone underground and taught its more unorthodox beliefs in secret. During the twelfth century the Sufis began to organize themselves into monastic orders. When a convert came to join the order he was known as a fakir or a dervish (poor man). Sufi monastic practices emphasize discipline, poverty, abstinence, and sometimes celibacy. Some dervishes gained notoriety for their whirling about in ecstasy. Other Sufis became known for their practice of walking on live coals and similar feats. The important contribution of the Sufi movement to religious thought is that union with God may be an authentic inner experience.

Some of the reform efforts in Islam have been syncretistic such as the Baha'i movement. Baha'i began as a sect of Islam but is now a separate religion. The central themes of Baha'i are that all religions of the world spring from the same source, that there is a basic unity in all religious truth, and that all the prophets have had a partial message of this one God. They believe religion must work in harmony with science and education to build a peaceful world order.

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## THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF RELIGION

99:0.1 RELIGION achieves its highest social ministry when it has least connection with the secular institutions of society. In past ages, since social reforms were largely confined to the moral realms, religion did not have to adjust its attitude to extensive changes in economic and political systems. The chief problem of religion was the endeavor to replace evil with good within the existing social order of political and economic culture. Religion has thus indirectly tended to perpetuate the established order of society, to foster the maintenance of the existent type of civilization.

99:0.2 But religion should not be directly concerned either with the creation of new social orders or with the preservation of old ones. True religion does oppose violence as a technique of social evolution, but it does not oppose the intelligent efforts of society to adapt its usages and adjust its institutions to new economic conditions and cultural requirements.

99:0.3 Religion did approve the occasional social reforms of past centuries, but in the twentieth century it is of necessity called upon to face adjustment to extensive and continuing social reconstruction. Conditions of living alter so rapidly that institutional modifications must be greatly accelerated, and religion must accordingly quicken its adaptation to this new and ever-changing social order.

## 1. RELIGION AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

99:1.1 Mechanical inventions and the dissemination of knowledge are modifying civilization; certain economic adjustments and social changes are imperative if cultural disaster is to be avoided. This new and oncoming social order will not settle down complacently for a millennium. The human race must become reconciled to a procession of changes, adjustments, and readjustments. Mankind is on the march toward a new and unrevealed planetary destiny.

99:1.2 Religion must become a forceful influence for moral stability and spiritual progression functioning dynamically in the midst of these ever-changing conditions and never-ending economic adjustments.

99:1.3 Urantia society can never hope to settle down as in past ages. The social ship has steamed out of the sheltered bays of established tradition and has begun its cruise upon the high seas of evolutionary destiny; and the soul of man, as never before in the world's history, needs carefully to scrutinize its charts of morality and painstakingly to observe the compass of religious guidance. The paramount mission of religion as a social influence is to stabilize the ideals of mankind during these dangerous times of transition from one phase of civilization to another, from one level of culture to another.

99:1.4 Religion has no new duties to perform, but it is urgently called upon to function as a wise guide and experienced counselor in all of these new and rapidly changing human situations. Society is becoming more mechanical, more compact, more complex, and more critically interdependent. Religion must function to prevent these new and intimate interassociations from becoming mutually retrogressive or even destructive. Religion must act as the cosmic salt which prevents the ferments of progression from destroying the cultural savor of civilization. These new social relations and economic upheavals can result in lasting brotherhood only by the ministry of religion.

99:1.5 A godless humanitarianism is, humanly speaking, a noble gesture, but true religion is the only power which can lastingly increase the responsiveness of one social group to the needs and sufferings of other groups. In the past, institutional religion could remain passive while the upper strata of society turned a deaf ear to the sufferings and oppression of the helpless lower strata, but in modern times these lower social orders are no longer so abjectly ignorant nor so politically helpless.

99:1.6 Religion must not become organically involved in the secular work of social reconstruction and economic reorganization. But it must actively keep pace with all these advances in civilization by making clear-cut and vigorous restatements of its moral mandates and spiritual precepts, its progressive philosophy of human living and transcendent survival. The spirit of religion is eternal, but the form of its expression must be restated every time the dictionary of human language is revised.

## 2. WEAKNESS OF INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION

99:2.1 Institutional religion cannot afford inspiration and provide leadership in this impending world-wide social reconstruction and economic reorganization because it has unfortunately become more or less an organic part of the social order and the economic system which is destined to undergo reconstruction. Only the real religion of personal spiritual experience can function helpfully and creatively in the present crisis of civilization.

99:2.2 Institutional religion is now caught in the stalemate of a vicious circle. It cannot reconstruct society without first reconstructing itself; and being so much an integral part of the established order, it cannot reconstruct itself until society has been radically reconstructed.

99:2.3 Religionists must function in society, in industry, and in politics as individuals, not as groups, parties, or institutions. A religious group which presumes to function as such, apart from religious activities, immediately becomes a political party, an economic organization, or a social institution. Religious collectivism must confine its efforts to the furtherance of religious causes.

99:2.4 Religionists are of no more value in the tasks of social reconstruction than nonreligionists except in so far as their religion has conferred upon them enhanced cosmic foresight and endowed them with that superior social wisdom which is born of the sincere desire to love God supremely and to love every man as a brother in the heavenly kingdom. An ideal social order is that in which every man loves his neighbor as he loves himself.

99:2.5 The institutionalized church may have appeared to serve society in the past by glorifying the established political and economic orders, but it must speedily cease such action if it is to survive. Its only proper attitude consists in the teaching of nonviolence, the doctrine of peaceful evolution in the place of violent revolution -- peace on earth and good will among all men.

99:2.6 Modern religion finds it difficult to adjust its attitude toward the rapidly shifting social changes only because it has permitted itself to become so thoroughly traditionalized, dogmatized, and institutionalized. The religion of living experience finds no difficulty in keeping ahead of all these social developments and economic upheavals, amid which it ever functions as a moral stabilizer, social guide, and spiritual pilot. True religion carries over from one age to another the worth-while culture and that wisdom which is born of the experience of knowing God and striving to be like him.

## 3. RELIGION AND THE RELIGIONIST

99:3.1 Early Christianity was entirely free from all civil entanglements, social commitments, and economic alliances. Only did later institutionalized Christianity become an organic part of the political and social structure of Occidental civilization.

99:3.2 The kingdom of heaven is neither a social nor economic order; it is an exclusively spiritual brotherhood of God-knowing individuals. True, such a brotherhood is in itself a new and amazing social phenomenon attended by astounding political and economic repercussions.

99:3.3 The religionist is not unsympathetic with social suffering, not unmindful of civil injustice, not insulated from economic thinking, neither insensible to political tyranny. Religion influences social reconstruction directly because it spiritualizes and idealizes the individual citizen. Indirectly, cultural civilization is influenced by the attitude of these individual religionists as they become active and influential members of various social, moral, economic, and political groups.

99:3.4 The attainment of a high cultural civilization demands, first, the ideal type of citizen and, then, ideal and adequate social mechanisms wherewith such a citizenry may control the economic and political institutions of such an advanced human society.

99:3.5 The church, because of overmuch false sentiment, has long ministered to the underprivileged and the unfortunate, and this has all been well, but this same sentiment has led to the unwise perpetuation of racially degenerate stocks which have tremendously retarded the progress of civilization.

99:3.6 Many individual social reconstructionists, while vehemently repudiating institutionalized religion, are, after all, zealously religious in the propagation of their social reforms. And so it is that religious motivation, personal and more or less unrecognized, is playing a great part in the present-day program of social reconstruction.

99:3.7 The great weakness of all this unrecognized and unconscious type of religious activity is that it is unable to profit from open religious criticism and thereby attain to profitable levels of self-correction. It is a fact that religion does not grow unless it is disciplined by constructive criticism, amplified by philosophy, purified by science, and nourished by loyal fellowship.

99:3.8 There is always the great danger that religion will become distorted and perverted into the pursuit of false goals, as when in times of war each contending nation prostitutes its religion into military propaganda. Loveless zeal is always harmful to religion, while persecution diverts the activities of religion into the achievement of some sociologic or theologic drive.

99:3.9 Religion can be kept free from unholy secular alliances only by:

1. A critically corrective philosophy.
2. Freedom from all social, economic, and political alliances.
3. Creative, comforting, and love-expanding fellowships.
4. Progressive enhancement of spiritual insight and the appreciation of cosmic values.
5. Prevention of fanaticism by the compensations of the scientific mental attitude.

99:3.10 Religionists, as a group, must never concern themselves with anything but *religion*, albeit any one such religionist, as an individual citizen, may become the outstanding leader of some social, economic, or political reconstruction movement.

99:3.11 It is the business of religion to create, sustain, and inspire such a cosmic loyalty in the individual citizen as will direct him to the achievement of success in the advancement of all these difficult but desirable social services.

## 4. TRANSITION DIFFICULTIES

99:4.1 Genuine religion renders the religionist socially fragrant and creates insights into human fellowship. But the formalization of religious groups many times dulls the very values for the promotion of which the group was organized. Human friendship and divine religion are mutually helpful and significantly illuminating if the growth in each is equalized and harmonized. Religion puts new meaning into all group associations -- families, schools, and clubs. It imparts new values to play and exalts all true humor.

99:4.2 Social leadership is transformed by spiritual insight; religion prevents all collective movements from losing sight of their true objectives. Together with children, religion is the great unifier of family life, provided it is a living and growing faith. Family life cannot be had without children; it can be lived without religion, but such a handicap enormously multiplies the difficulties of this intimate human association. During the early decades of the twentieth century, family life, next to personal religious experience, suffers most from the decadence consequent upon the transition from old religious loyalties to the emerging new meanings and values.

99:4.3 True religion is a meaningful way of living dynamically face to face with the commonplace realities of everyday life. But if religion is to stimulate individual development of character and augment integration of personality, it must not be standardized. If it is to stimulate evaluation of experience and serve as a value-lure, it must not be stereotyped. If religion is to promote supreme loyalties, it must not be formalized.

99:4.4 No matter what upheavals may attend the social and economic growth of civilization, religion is genuine and worth while if it fosters in the individual an experience in which the sovereignty of truth, beauty, and goodness prevails, for such is the true spiritual concept of supreme reality. And through love and worship this becomes meaningful as fellowship with man and sonship with God.

99:4.5 After all, it is what one believes rather than what one knows that determines conduct and dominates personal performances. Purely factual knowledge exerts very little influence upon the average man unless it becomes emotionally activated. But the activation of religion is superemotional, unifying the entire human experience on transcendent levels through contact with, and release of, spiritual energies in the mortal life.

99:4.6 During the psychologically unsettled times of the twentieth century, amid the economic upheavals, the moral crosscurrents, and the sociologic rip tides of the cyclonic transitions of a scientific era, thousands upon thousands of men and women have become humanly dislocated; they are anxious, restless, fearful, uncertain, and unsettled; as never before in the world's history they need the consolation and stabilization of sound religion. In the face of unprecedented scientific achievement and mechanical development there is spiritual stagnation and philosophic chaos.

99:4.7 There is no danger in religion's becoming more and more of a private matter -- a personal experience -- provided it does not lose its motivation for unselfish and loving social service. Religion has suffered from many secondary influences: sudden mixing of cultures, intermingling of creeds, diminution of ecclesiastical authority, changing of family life, together with urbanization and mechanization.

99:4.8 Man's greatest spiritual jeopardy consists in partial progress, the predicament of unfinished growth: forsaking the evolutionary religions of fear without immediately grasping the revelatory religion of love. Modern science, particularly psychology, has weakened only those religions which are so largely dependent upon fear, superstition, and emotion.

99:4.9 Transition is always accompanied by confusion, and there will be little tranquility in the religious world until the great struggle between the three contending philosophies of religion is ended:

1. The spiritistic belief (in a providential Deity) of many religions.
2. The humanistic and idealistic belief of many philosophies.
3. The mechanistic and naturalistic conceptions of many sciences.

99:4.10 And these three partial approaches to the reality of the cosmos must eventually become harmonized by the revelatory presentation of religion, philosophy, and cosmology which portrays the triune existence of spirit, mind, and energy proceeding from the Trinity of Paradise and attaining time-space unification within the Deity of the Supreme.

## 5. SOCIAL ASPECTS OF RELIGION

99:5.1 While religion is exclusively a personal spiritual experience -- knowing God as a Father -- the corollary of this experience -- knowing man as a brother -- entails the adjustment of the self to other selves, and that involves the social or group aspect of religious life. Religion is first an inner or personal adjustment, and then it becomes a matter of social service or group adjustment. The fact of man's gregariousness perforce determines that religious groups will come into existence. What happens to these religious groups depends very much on intelligent leadership. In primitive society the religious group is not always very different from economic or political groups. Religion has always been a conservator of morals and a stabilizer of society. And this is still true, notwithstanding the contrary teaching of many modern socialists and humanists.

99:5.2 Always keep in mind: True religion is to know God as your Father and man as your brother. Religion is not a slavish belief in threats of punishment or magical promises of future mystical rewards.

99:5.3 The religion of Jesus is the most dynamic influence ever to activate the human race. Jesus shattered tradition, destroyed dogma, and called mankind to the achievement of its highest ideals in time and eternity -- to be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect.

99:5.4 Religion has little chance to function until the religious group becomes separated from all other groups -- the social association of the spiritual membership of the kingdom of heaven.

99:5.5 The doctrine of the total depravity of man destroyed much of the potential of religion for effecting social repercussions of an uplifting nature and of inspirational value. Jesus sought to restore man's dignity when he declared that all men are the children of God.

99:5.6 Any religious belief which is effective in spiritualizing the believer is certain to have powerful repercussions in the social life of such a religionist. Religious experience unfailingly yields the "fruits of the spirit" in the daily life of the spirit-led mortal.

99:5.7 Just as certainly as men share their religious beliefs, they create a religious group of some sort which eventually creates common goals. Someday religionists will get together and actually effect co-operation on the basis of unity of ideals and purposes rather than attempting to do so on the basis of psychological opinions and theological beliefs. Goals rather than creeds should unify religionists. Since true religion is a matter of personal spiritual experience, it is inevitable that each individual religionist must have his own and personal interpretation of the realization of that spiritual experience. Let the term "faith" stand for the individual's relation to God rather than for the creedal formulation of what some group of mortals have been able to agree upon as a common religious attitude. "Have you faith? Then have it to yourself."

99:5.8 That faith is concerned only with the grasp of ideal values is shown by the New Testament definition which declares that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

99:5.9 Primitive man made little effort to put his religious convictions into words. His religion was danced out rather than thought out. Modern men have thought out many creeds and created many tests of religious faith. Future religionists must live out their religion, dedicate themselves to the wholehearted service of the brotherhood of man. It is high time that man had a religious experience so personal and so sublime that it could be realized and expressed only by "feelings that lie too deep for words."

99:5.10 Jesus did not require of his followers that they should periodically assemble and recite a form of words indicative of their common beliefs. He only ordained that they should gather together to actually *do something* -- partake of the communal supper of the remembrance of his bestowal life on Urantia.

99:5.11 What a mistake for Christians to make when, in presenting Christ as the supreme ideal of spiritual leadership, they dare to require God-conscious men and women to reject the historic leadership of the God-knowing men who have contributed to their particular national or racial illumination during past ages.

## 6. INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION

99:6.1 Sectarianism is a disease of institutional religion, and dogmatism is an enslavement of the spiritual nature. It is far better to have a religion without a church than a church without religion. The religious turmoil of the twentieth century does not, in and of itself, betoken spiritual decadence. Confusion goes before growth as well as before destruction.

99:6.2 There is a real purpose in the socialization of religion. It is the purpose of group religious activities to dramatize the loyalties of religion; to magnify the lures of truth, beauty, and goodness; to foster the attractions of supreme values; to enhance the service of unselfish fellowship; to glorify the potentials of family life; to promote religious education; to provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance; and to encourage group worship. And all live religions encourage human friendship, conserve morality, promote neighborhood welfare, and facilitate the spread of the essential gospel of their respective messages of eternal salvation.

99:6.3 But as religion becomes institutionalized, its power for good is curtailed, while the possibilities for evil are greatly multiplied. The dangers of formalized religion are: fixation of beliefs and crystallization of sentiments; accumulation of vested interests with increase of secularization; tendency to standardize and fossilize truth; diversion of religion from the service of God to the service of the church; inclination of leaders to become administrators instead of ministers; tendency to form sects and competitive divisions; establishment of oppressive ecclesiastical authority; creation of the aristocratic "chosen-people" attitude; fostering of false and exaggerated ideas of sacredness; the routinizing of religion and the petrification of worship; tendency to venerate the past while ignoring present demands; failure to make up-to-date interpretations of religion; entanglement with functions of secular institutions; it creates the evil discrimination of religious castes; it becomes an intolerant judge of orthodoxy; it fails to hold the interest of adventurous youth and gradually loses the saving message of the gospel of eternal salvation.

99:6.4 Formal religion restrains men in their personal spiritual activities instead of releasing them for heightened service as kingdom builders.

## 7. RELIGION'S CONTRIBUTION

99:7.1 Though churches and all other religious groups should stand aloof from all secular activities, at the same time religion must do nothing to hinder or retard the social co-ordination of human institutions. Life must continue to grow in meaningfulness; man must go on with his reformation of philosophy and his clarification of religion.

99:7.2 Political science must effect the reconstruction of economics and industry by the techniques it learns from the social sciences and by the insights and motives supplied by religious living. In all social reconstruction religion provides a stabilizing loyalty to a transcendent object, a steady goal beyond and above the immediate and temporal objective. In the midst of the confusions of a rapidly changing environment mortal man needs the sustenance of a far-flung cosmic perspective.

99:7.3 Religion inspires man to live courageously and joyfully on the face of the earth; it joins patience with passion, insight to zeal, sympathy with power, and ideals with energy.

99:7.4 Man can never wisely decide temporal issues or transcend the selfishness of personal interests unless he meditates in the presence of the sovereignty of God and reckons with the realities of divine meanings and spiritual values.

99:7.5 Economic interdependence and social fraternity will ultimately conduce to brotherhood. Man is naturally a dreamer, but science is sobering him so that religion can presently activate him with far less danger of precipitating fanatical reactions. Economic necessities tie man up with reality, and personal religious experience brings this same man face to face with the eternal realities of an ever-expanding and progressing cosmic citizenship.

RELIGION IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

1009.1 THE experience of dynamic religious living transforms the mediocre individual into a personality of idealistic power. Religion ministers to the progress of all through fostering the progress of each individual, and the progress of each is augmented through the achievement of all.

1009.2 Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists. Love supplies the soil for religious growth -- an objective lure in the place of subjective gratification -- yet it yields the supreme subjective satisfaction. And religion ennobles the commonplace drudgery of daily living.

1. RELIGIOUS GROWTH

1001.1 While religion produces growth of meanings and enhancement of values, evil always results when purely personal evaluations are elevated to the levels of absolutes. A child evaluates experience in accordance with the content of pleasure; maturity is proportional to the substitution of higher meanings for personal pleasure, even loyalties to the highest concepts of diversified life situations and cosmic relations.

1001.2 Some persons are too busy to grow and are therefore in grave danger of spiritual fixation. Provision must be made for growth of meanings at differing ages, in successive cultures, and in the passing stages of advancing civilization. The chief inhibitors of growth are prejudice and ignorance.

1001.3 Give every developing child a chance to grow his own religious experience; do not force a ready-made adult experience upon him. Remember, year-by-year progress through an established educational regime does not necessarily mean intellectual progress, much less spiritual growth. Enlargement of vocabulary does not signify development of character. Growth is not truly indicated by mere products but rather by progress. Real educational growth is indicated by enhancement of ideals, increased appreciation of values, new meanings of values, and augmented loyalty to supreme values.

1001.4 Children are permanently impressed only by the loyalties of their adult associates; precept or even example is not lastingly influential. Loyal persons are growing persons, and growth is an impressive and inspiring reality. Live loyally today -- grow -- and tomorrow will attend to itself. The quickest way for a tadpole to become a frog is to live loyally each moment as a tadpole.

1001.5 The soil essential for religious growth presupposes a progressive life of self-realization, the co-ordination of natural propensities, the exercise of curiosity and the enjoyment of reasonable adventure, the experiencing of feelings of satisfaction, the functioning of the fear stimulus of attention and awareness, the wonder-lure, and a normal consciousness of smallness, humility. Growth is also predicated on the discovery of selfhood accompanied by self-criticism -- conscience, for conscience is really the criticism of oneself by one's own value-habits, personal ideals.

1001.6 Religious experience is markedly influenced by physical health, inherited temperament, and social environment. But these temporal conditions do not inhibit inner spiritual progress by a soul dedicated to the doing of the will of the Father in heaven. There are present in all normal mortals certain innate drives toward growth and self-realization which function if they are not specifically inhibited. The certain technique of fostering this constitutive endowment of the potential of spiritual growth is to maintain an attitude of wholehearted devotion to supreme values.

1001.7 Religion cannot be bestowed, received, loaned, learned, or lost. It is a personal experience which grows proportionally to the growing quest for final values. Cosmic growth thus attends on the accumulation of meanings and the ever-expanding elevation of values. But nobility itself is always an unconscious growth.

1001.8 Religious habits of thinking and acting are contributory to the economy of spiritual growth. One can develop religious predispositions toward favorable reaction to spiritual stimuli, a sort of conditioned spiritual reflex. Habits which favor religious growth embrace cultivated sensitivity to divine values, recognition of religious living in others, reflective meditation on cosmic meanings, worshipful problem solving, sharing one's spiritual life with one's fellows, avoidance of selfishness, refusal to presume on divine mercy, living as in the presence of God. The factors of religious growth may be intentional, but the growth itself is unvaryingly unconscious.

1001.9 The unconscious nature of religious growth does not, however, signify that it is an activity functioning in the supposed subconscious realms of human intellect; rather does it signify creative activities in the superconscious levels of mortal mind. The experience of the realization of the reality of unconscious religious growth is the one positive proof of the functional existence of the superconsciousness.

2. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1002.1 Spiritual development depends, first, on the maintenance of a living spiritual connection with true spiritual forces and, second, on the continuous bearing of spiritual fruit: yielding the ministry to one's fellows of that which has been received from one's spiritual benefactors. Spiritual progress is predicated on intellectual recognition of spiritual poverty coupled with the self-consciousness of perfection-hunger, the desire to know God and be like him, the wholehearted purpose to do the will of the Father in heaven.

1002.2 Spiritual growth is first an awakening to needs, next a discernment of meanings, and then a discovery of values. The evidence of true spiritual development consists in the exhibition of a human personality motivated by love, activated by unselfish ministry, and dominated by the wholehearted worship of the perfection ideals of divinity. And this entire experience constitutes the reality of religion as contrasted with mere theological beliefs.

1002.3 Religion can progress to that level of experience whereon it becomes an enlightened and wise technique of spiritual reaction to the universe. Such a glorified religion can function on three levels of human personality: the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual; upon the mind, in the evolving soul, and with the indwelling spirit.

1002.4 Spirituality becomes at once the indicator of one's nearness to God and the measure of one's usefulness to fellow beings. Spirituality enhances the ability to discover beauty in things, recognize truth in meanings, and discover goodness in values. Spiritual development is determined by capacity thereof and is directly proportional to the elimination of the selfish qualities of love.

1002.5 Actual spiritual status is the measure of Deity attainment. Adjuster attunement. The achievement of finality of spirituality is equivalent to the attainment of the maximum of reality, the maximum of Godlikeness. Eternal life is the endless quest for infinite values.

1002.6 The goal of human self-realization should be spiritual, not material. The only realities worth striving for are divine, spiritual, and eternal. Mortal man is entitled to the enjoyment of physical pleasures and to the satisfaction of human affections; he is benefited by loyalty to human associations and temporal institutions; but these are not the eternal foundations upon which to build the immortal personality which must transcend space, vanquish time, and achieve the eternal destiny of divine perfection and finality service.

1002.7 Jesus portrayed the profound surety of the God-knowing mortal when he said: "To a God-knowing kingdom believer, what does it matter if all things earthly crash?" Temporal securities are vulnerable, but spiritual sureties are impregnable. When the flood tides of human adversity, selfishness, cruelty, hate, malice, and jealousy beat about the mortal soul, you may rest in the assurance that there is one inner bastion, the citadel of the spirit, which is absolutely unassailable; at least this is true of every human being who has dedicated the keeping of his soul to the indwelling spirit of the eternal God.

1002.8 After such spiritual attainment, whether secured by gradual growth or specific crisis, there occurs a new orientation of personality as well as the development of a new standard of values. Such spirit-born individuals are so remotivated in life that they can calmly stand by while their fondest ambitions perish and their keenest hopes crash; they positively know that such catastrophes are but the redirecting cataclysms which wreck one's temporal creations preliminary to the rearing of the more noble and enduring realities of a new and more sublime level of universe attainment.

3. CONCEPTS OF SUPREME VALUE

1003.1 Religion is not a technique for attaining a static and blissful peace of mind; it is an impulse for organizing the soul for dynamic service. It is the enlistment of the totality of selfhood in the loyal service of loving God and serving man. Religion pays any price essential to the attainment of the supreme goal, the eternal prize. There is a consecrated completeness in religious loyalty which is superbly sublime. And these loyalties are socially effective and spiritually progressive.

1003.2 To the religionist the word God becomes a symbol signifying the approach to supreme reality and the recognition of divine value. Human likes and dislikes do not determine good and evil; moral values do not grow out of wish fulfillment or emotional frustration.

1003.3 In the contemplation of values you must distinguish between that which *is* value and that which *has* value. You must recognize the relation between pleasurable activities and their meaningful integration and enhanced realization on ever progressively higher and higher levels of human experience.

1003.4 Meaning is something which experience adds to value; it is the appreciative consciousness of values. An isolated and purely selfish pleasure may connote a virtual devaluation of meanings, a meaningless enjoyment bordering on relative evil. Values are experiential when realities are meaningful and mentally associated, when such relationships are recognized and appreciated by mind.

1003.5 Values can never be static; reality signifies change, growth. Change without growth, expansion of meaning and exaltation of value, is valueless -- is potential evil. The greater the quality of cosmic adaptation, the more of meaning any experience possesses. Values are not conceptual illusions; they are real, but always they depend on the fact of relationships. Values are always both actual and potential -- not what was, but what is and is to be.

1003.6 The association of actuals and potentials equals growth, the experiential realization of values. But growth is not mere progress. Progress is always meaningful, but it is relatively valueless without growth. The supreme value of human life consists in growth of values, progress in meanings, and realization of the cosmic interrelatedness of both of these experiences. And such an experience is the equivalent of God-consciousness. Such a mortal, while not supernatural, is truly becoming superhuman; an immortal soul is evolving.

1003.7 Man cannot cause growth, but he can supply favorable conditions. Growth is always unconscious, be it physical, intellectual, or spiritual. Love thus grows; it cannot be created, manufactured, or purchased; it must grow. Evolution is a cosmic technique of growth. Social growth cannot be secured by legislation, and moral growth is not had by improved administration. Man may manufacture a machine, but its real value must be derived from human culture and personal appreciation. Man's sole contribution to living is the mobilization of the total powers of his personality -- living faith.

4. PROBLEMS OF GROWTH

1004.1 Religious living is devoted living, and devoted living is creative living, original and spontaneous. New religious insights arise out of conflicts which initiate the choosing of new and better reaction habits in the place of older and inferior reaction patterns. New meanings only emerge amid conflict; and conflict persists only in the face of refusal to espouse the higher values connoted in superior meanings.

1004.2 Religious perplexities are inevitable; there can be no growth without psychic conflict and spiritual agitation. The organization of a philosophic standard of living entails considerable commotion in the philosophic realms of the mind. Loyalties are not exercised in behalf of the great, the good, the true, and the noble without a struggle. Effort is attendant upon clarification of spiritual vision and enhancement of cosmic insight. And the human intellect protests against being weaned from subsisting upon the nonspiritual energies of temporal existence. The slothful animal mind rebels at the effort required to wrestle with cosmic problem solving.

1004.3 But the great problem of religious living consists in the task of unifying the soul powers of the personality by the dominance of LOVE. Health, mental efficiency, and happiness arise from the unification of physical systems, mind systems, and spirit systems. Of health and sanity man understands much, but of happiness he has truly realized very little. The highest happiness is indissolubly linked with spiritual progress. Spiritual growth yields lasting joy, peace which passes all understanding.

1004.4 In physical life the senses tell of the existence of things; mind discovers the reality of meanings; but the spiritual experience reveals to the individual the true values of life. These high levels of human living are attained in the supreme love of God and in the unselfish love of man. If you love your fellow men, you must have discovered their values. Jesus loved men so much because he placed such a high value upon them. You can best discover values in your associates by discovering their motivation. If some one irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct. If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and his attitude will grow into friendship and ripen into love.

1004.5 In the mind's eye conjure up a picture of one of your primitive ancestors of cave-dwelling times -- a short, misshapen, filthy, snarling hulk of a man standing, legs spread, club upraised, breathing hate and animosity as he looks fiercely just ahead. Such a picture hardly depicts the divine dignity of man. But allow us to enlarge the picture. In front of this animated human crouches a saber-toothed tiger. Behind him, a woman and two children. Immediately you recognize that such a picture stands for the beginnings of much that is fine and noble in the human race, but the man is the same in both pictures. Only in the second sketch you are favored with a widened horizon. You therein discern the motivation of this evolving mortal. His attitude becomes praiseworthy because you understand him. If you could only fathom the motives of your associates, how much better you would understand them. If you could only know your fellows, you would eventually fall in love with them.

1004.6 It is not so important to love all men today as it is that each day you learn to love one more human being. If each day or each week you achieve an understanding of one more of your fellows, and if this is the limit of your ability, then you are certainly socializing and truly spiritualizing your personality. Love is infectious, and when human devotion is intelligent and wise, love is more catching than hate. But only genuine and unselfish love is truly contagious. If each mortal could only become a focus of dynamic affection, this benign virus of love would soon pervade the sentimental emotion-stream of humanity to such an extent that all civilization would be encompassed by love, and that would be the realization of the brotherhood of man.

5. CONVERSION AND MYSTICISM

1005.1 The world is filled with lost souls, not lost in the theologic sense but lost in the directional meaning, wandering about in confusion among the isms and cults of a frustrated philosophic era. Too few have learned how to install a philosophy of living in the place of religious authority. (The symbols of socialized religion are not to be despised as channels of growth, albeit the river bed is not the river.)

1005.2 The progression of religious growth leads from stagnation through conflict to co-ordination, from insecurity to undoubting faith, from confusion of cosmic consciousness to unification of personality, from the temporal objective to the eternal, from the bondage of fear to the liberty of divine sonship.

1005.3 It should be made clear that professions of loyalty to the supreme ideals -- the psychic, emotional, and spiritual awareness of God-consciousness -- may be a natural and gradual growth or may sometimes be experienced at certain junctures, as in a crisis. The Apostle Paul experienced just such a sudden and spectacular conversion that eventful day on the Damascus road. Gautama Siddhartha had a similar experience the night he sat alone and sought to penetrate the mystery of final truth. Many others have had like experiences, and many true believers have progressed in the spirit without sudden conversion.

1005.4 Most of the spectacular phenomena associated with so-called religious conversions are entirely psychologic in nature, but now and then there do occur experiences which are also spiritual in origin. When the mental mobilization is absolutely total on there any level of the psychic upreach toward spirit attainment, when there exists perfection of the human motivation of loyalties to the divine idea, then there very often occurs a sudden down-grasp of the indwelling spirit to synchronize with the concentrated and consecrated purpose of the superconscious mind of the believing mortal. And it is such experiences of unified intellectual and spiritual phenomena that constitute the conversion which consists in factors over and above purely psychologic involvement.

1005.5 But emotion alone is a false conversion; one must have faith as well as feeling. To the extent that such psychic mobilization is partial, and in so far as such human-loyalty motivation is incomplete, to that extent will the experience of conversion be a blended intellectual, emotional, and spiritual reality.

1005.6 If one is disposed to recognize a theoretical subconscious mind as a practical working hypothesis in the otherwise unified intellectual life, then, to be consistent, one should postulate a similar and corresponding realm of ascending intellectual activity as the superconscious level, the zone of immediate contact with the indwelling spirit entity, the Thought Adjuster. The great danger in all these psychic speculations is that visions and other so-called mystic experiences, along with extraordinary dreams, may be regarded as divine communications to the human mind. In times past, divine beings have revealed themselves to certain God-knowing persons, not because of their mystic trances or morbid visions, but in spite of all these phenomena.

1005.7 In contrast with conversion-seeking, the better approach to the morontia zones of possible contact with the Thought Adjuster would be through living faith and sincere worship, wholehearted and unselfish prayer. Altogether too much of the uprush of the memories of the unconscious levels of the human mind has been mistaken for divine revelations and spirit leadings.

1005.8 There is great danger associated with the habitual practice of religious daydreaming; mysticism may become a technique of reality avoidance, albeit it has sometimes been a means of genuine spiritual culture. Short seasons of retreat from the busy scenes of life may not be seriously dangerous, but prolonged isolation of personality is most undesirable. Under no circumstances should the trance-like state of visionary consciousness be cultivated as a religious experience.

1005.9 The characteristics of the mystical state are diffusion of consciousness with vivid islands of focal attention operating on a comparatively passive intellect. All of this gravitates consciously toward the subconscious rather than in the direction of the zone of spiritual contact, the superconscious. Many mystics have carried their mental dissociation to the level of abnormal mental manifestations.

1005.10 The more healthy attitude of spiritual meditation is to be found in reflective worship and in the prayer of thanksgiving. The direct communion with one's Thought Adjuster, such as occurred in the later years of Jesus' life in the flesh, should not be confused with these so-called mystical experiences. The factors which contribute to the initiation of mystic communion are indicative of the danger of such psychic states. The mystic status is favored by such things as: physical fatigue, fasting, psychic dissociation, profound aesthetic experiences, vivid sex impulses, fear, anxiety, rage, and wild dancing. Much of the material arising as a result of such preliminary preparation has its origin in the subconscious mind.

1005.11 However favorable may have been the conditions for mystic phenomena, it should be clearly understood that Jesus of Nazareth never resorted to such methods for communion with the Paradise Father. Jesus had no subconscious delusions or superconscious illusions.

6. MARKS OF RELIGIOUS LIVING

1006.1 Evolutionary religions and revelatory religions may differ markedly in method, but in motive there is great similarity. Religion is not a specific function of life; rather is it a mode of living. True religion is a wholehearted devotion to some reality which the religionist deems to be of supreme value to himself and for all mankind. And the outstanding characteristics of all religions are: unquestioning loyalty and wholehearted devotion to supreme values. This religious devotion to supreme values is shown in the relation of the supposedly irreligious mother to her child and in the fervent loyalty of nonreligionists to an espoused cause.

1006.2 The accepted supreme value of the religionist may be base or even false, but it is nevertheless religious. A religion is genuine to just the extent that the value which is held to be supreme is truly a cosmic reality of genuine spiritual worth.

1006.3 The marks of human response to the religious impulse embrace the qualities of nobility and grandeur. The sincere religionist is conscious of universe citizenship and is aware of making contact with sources of superhuman power. He is thrilled and energized with the assurance of the quest for a superior and ennobled fellowship of the sons of God. The consciousness of self-worth has become augmented by the stimulus of the assurance of the highest universe objectives -- supreme goals.

1006.4 The self has surrendered to the intriguing drive of an all-encompassing motivation which imposes heightened self-discipline, lessens emotional conflict, and makes mortal life truly worth living. The morbid recognition of human limitations is changed to the natural consciousness of mortal shortcomings, associated with moral determination and spiritual aspiration to attain the highest universe and superuniverse goals. And this intense striving for the attainment of supermortal ideals is always characterized by increasing patience, forbearance, fortitude, and tolerance.

1006.5 But true religion is a living love, a life of service. The religionist's detachment from much that is purely temporal and trivial never leads to social isolation, and it should not destroy the sense of humor. Genuine religion takes nothing away from human existence, but it does add new meanings to all of life; it generates new types of enthusiasm, zeal, and courage. It may even engender the spirit of the crusader, which is more than dangerous if not controlled by spiritual insight and loyal devotion to the commonplace social obligations of human loyalties.

1006.6 One of the most amazing earmarks of religious living is that dynamic and sublime peace, that peace which passes all human understanding, that cosmic poise which betokens the absence of all doubt and turmoil. Such levels of spiritual stability are immune to disappointment. Such religionists are like the Apostle Paul, who said: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

1006.7 There is a sense of security, associated with the realization of triumphing glory, resident in the consciousness of the religionist who has grasped the reality of the Supreme, and who pursues the goal of the Ultimate.

1006.8 Even evolutionary religion is all of this in loyalty and grandeur because it is a genuine experience. But religious living is *excellent* as well as genuine. The new loyalties of enlarged spiritual vision create new levels of love and devotion, of service and fellowship; and all this enhanced social outlook produces an enlarged consciousness of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

1006.9 The characteristic difference between evolved and revealed religion is a new quality of divine wisdom which is added to purely experiential human wisdom. But it is experience in and with the human religions that develops the capacity for subsequent reception of increased bestowals of divine wisdom and cosmic insight.

7. THE ACME OF RELIGIOUS LIVING

1007.1 Although the average mortal of Urantia cannot hope to attain the high perfection of character which Jesus of Nazareth acquired while sojourning in the flesh, it is altogether possible for every mortal believer to develop a strong and unified personality along the perfected lines of the Jesus personality. The unique feature of the Master's personality was not so much its perfection as its symmetry, its exquisite and balanced unification. The most effective presentation of Jesus consists in following the example of the one who said, as he gestured toward the Master standing before his accusers, "Behold the man!"

1007.2 The unflinching kindness of Jesus touched the hearts of men, but his stalwart strength of character amazed his followers. He was truly sincere; there was nothing of the hypocrite in him. He was free from affectation; he was always so refreshingly genuine. He never stooped to pretense, and he never resorted to shamming. He lived the truth, even as he taught it. He was the truth. He was constrained to proclaim saving truth to his generation, even though such sincerity sometimes caused pain. He was unquestioningly loyal to all truth.

1007.3 But the Master was so reasonable, so approachable. He was so practical in all his ministry, while all his plans were characterized by such sanctified common sense. He was so free from all freakish, erratic, and eccentric tendencies. He was never capricious, whimsical, or hysterical. In all his teaching and in everything he did there was always an exquisite discrimination associated with an extraordinary sense of propriety.

1007.4 The Son of Man was always a well-poised personality. Even his enemies maintained a wholesome respect for him; they even feared his presence. Jesus was unafraid. He was surcharged with divine enthusiasm, but he never became fanatical. He was emotionally active but never flighty. He was imaginative but always practical. He frankly faced the realities of life, but he was never dull or prosaic. He was courageous but never reckless; prudent but never cowardly. He was sympathetic but not sentimental; unique but not eccentric. He was pious but not sanctimonious. And he was so well-poised because he was so perfectly unified.

1007.5 Jesus' originality was unostentatious. He was not bound by tradition or handicapped by enslavement to narrow conventionality. He spoke with undoubted confidence and taught with absolute authority. But his superb originality did not cause him to overlook the gems of truth in the teachings of his predecessors and contemporaries. And the most original of his teachings was the emphasis of love and mercy in the place of fear and sacrifice.

1007.6 Jesus was very broad in his outlook. He exhorted his followers to preach the gospel to all peoples. He was free from all narrow-mindedness. His sympathetic heart embraced all mankind, even a universe. Always his invitation was, "Whosoever will, let him come."

1007.7 Of Jesus it was truly said, "He trusted God." As a man among men he most sublimely trusted the Father in heaven. He trusted his Father as a little child trusts his earthly parent. His faith was perfect but never presumptuous. No matter how cruel nature might appear to be or how indifferent to man's welfare on earth, Jesus never faltered in his faith. He was immune to disappointment and impervious to persecution. He was untouched by apparent failure.

1007.8 He loved men as brothers, at the same time recognizing how they differed in innate endowments and acquired qualities. "He went about doing good."

1007.9 Jesus was an unusually cheerful person, but he was not a blind and unreasoning optimist. His constant word of exhortation was, "Be of good cheer." He could maintain this confident attitude because of his unwavering trust in God and his unshakable confidence in man. He was always touchingly considerate of all men because he loved them and believed in them. Still he was always true to his convictions and magnificently firm in his devotion to the doing of his Father's will.

1007.10 The Master was always generous. He never grew weary of being saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Said he, "Freely you have received, freely give." And yet, with all of his unbounded generosity, he was never wasteful or extravagant. He taught that you must believe to receive salvation. "For every one who seeks shall receive."

1007.11 He was candid, but his ways kind. Said he, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He was frank, but always friendly. He was outspoken in his love for the sinner and in his hatred for sin. But through all this an amazing frankness he was unerringly *fair*.

1007.12 Jesus was consistently cheerful, notwithstanding he sometimes drank deeply of the cup of human sorrow. He fearlessly faced the realities of existence, yet was he filled with enthusiasm for the gospel of the kingdom. But he controlled his enthusiasm; it never controlled him. He was unreservedly dedicated to "the Father's business." This divine enthusiasm led his unspiritual brethren to think he was beside himself, but the onlooking universe appreciated him as the model of sanity and the pattern of supreme moral devotion to the high standards of spiritual living. And his controlled enthusiasm was contagious; his associates were constrained to share his divine optimism.

1007.13 This man of Galilee was not a man of sorrows; he was a soul of gladness. Always was he saying, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." But when duty required, he was willing to walk courageously through the "valley of the shadow of death." He was gladsome but at the same time humble.

1007.14 His courage was equaled only by his patience. When pressed to act prematurely, he would only reply, "My hour has not yet come." He was never in a hurry; his composure was sublime. But he was often indignant at evil, intolerant of sin. He was often mightily moved to resist that which was inimical to the welfare of his children on earth. But his indignation against sin never led to anger at the sinner.

1007.15 His courage was magnificent, but he was never foolhardy. His watchword was, "Fear not." His recklessness was lofty and presumption. He was truly brave but never audacious.

1007.16 The Master was a person of few words. The prayer of even his youth began, "Our Father who is in heaven, be as your name." He was even respectful of the faculty worship of his fellows. But this did not deter him from making attacks on religious traditions or assailing errors of human belief. He was reverential of true holiness, and yet he could justly appeal to his fellows, saying, "Who among you convicts me of sin?"

1007.17 Jesus was great because he was his associates, and yet he fraternized with the little children. He was gentle and unassuming in his personal life, and yet he was the perfect man of a universe. His good, called him Master and his little children.

1007.18 Jesus was the perfectly unified human personality. And today, as in Galilee, he continues to unify mortal experience and to co-ordinate human endeavors. He unifies life, ennobles character, and simplifies experience. He enters the human mind to elevate, transform, and transfigure it. It is literally true: "If any man has Christ Jesus within him, he is a new creature; old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new."

# The Urantia Book -- Part IV. The Life And Teachings Of Jesus

## PAPER 131: Section 3.

### Buddhism

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P1446:3, 131:3.1 Ganid was shocked to discover how near Buddhism came to being a great and beautiful religion without God, without a personal and universal Deity. However, he did find some record of certain earlier beliefs which reflected something of the influence of the teachings of the Melchizedek missionaries who continued their work in India even to the times of Buddha. Jesus and Ganid collected the following statements from the Buddhist literature:

P1446:4, 131:3.2 "Out of a pure heart shall gladness spring forth to the Infinite; all my being shall be at peace with this supermortal rejoicing. My soul is filled with content, and my heart overflows with the bliss of peaceful trust. I have no fear; I am free from anxiety. I dwell in security, and my enemies cannot alarm me. I am satisfied with the fruits of my confidence. I have found the approach to the Immortal easy of access. I pray for faith to sustain me on the long journey; I know that faith from beyond will not fail me. I know my brethren will prosper if they become imbued with the faith of the Immortal, even the faith that creates modesty, uprightness, wisdom, courage, knowledge, and perseverance. Let us forsake sorrow and disown fear. By faith let us lay hold upon true righteousness and genuine manliness. Let us learn to meditate on justice and mercy. Faith is man's true wealth; it is the endowment of virtue and glory.

P1446:5, 131:3.3 "Unrighteousness is contemptible; sin is despicable. Evil is degrading, whether held in thought or wrought out in deeds. Pain and sorrow follow in the path of evil as the dust follows the wind. Happiness and peace of mind follow pure thinking and virtuous living as the shadow follows the substance of material things. Evil is the fruit of wrongly directed thinking. It is evil to see sin where there is no sin; to see no sin where there is sin. Evil is the path of false doctrines. Those who avoid evil by seeing things as they are gain joy by thus embracing the truth. Make an end of your misery by loathing sin. When you look up to the Noble One, turn away from sin with a whole heart. Make no apology for evil; make no excuse for sin. By your efforts to make amends for past sins you acquire strength to resist future tendencies thereto. Restraint is born of repentance. Leave no fault unconfessed to the Noble One.

P1447:1, 131:3.4 "Cheerfulness and gladness are the rewards of deeds well done and to the glory of the Immortal. No man can rob you of the liberty of your own mind. When the faith of your religion has emancipated your heart, when the mind, like a mountain, is settled and immovable, then shall the peace of the soul flow tranquilly like a river of waters. Those who are sure of salvation are forever free from lust, envy, hatred, and the delusions of wealth. While faith is the energy of the better life, nevertheless, must you work out your own salvation with perseverance. If you would be certain of your final salvation, then make sure that you sincerely seek to fulfill all righteousness. Cultivate the assurance of the heart which springs from within and thus come to enjoy the ecstasy of eternal salvation.

P1447:2, 131:3.5 "No religionist may hope to attain the enlightenment of immortal wisdom who persists in being slothful, indolent, feeble, idle, shameless, and selfish. But whoso is thoughtful, prudent, reflective, fervent, and earnest -- even while he yet lives on earth -- may attain the supreme enlightenment of the peace and liberty of divine wisdom. Remember, every act shall receive its reward. Evil results in sorrow and sin ends in pain. Joy and happiness are the outcome of a good life. Even the evildoer enjoys a season of grace before the time of the full ripening of his evil deeds, but inevitably there must come the full harvest of evil-doing. Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart: 'The penalty of wrongdoing shall not come near me.' What you do shall be done to you, in the judgment of wisdom. Injustice done to your fellows shall come back upon you. The creature cannot escape the destiny of his deeds.

P1447:3, 131:3.6 "The fool has said in his heart, 'Evil shall not overtake me'; but safety is found only when the soul craves reproof and the mind seeks wisdom. The wise man is a noble soul who is friendly in the midst of his enemies, tranquil among the turbulent, and generous among the grasping. Love of self is like weeds in a goodly field. Selfishness leads to grief; perpetual care kills. The tamed mind yields happiness. He is the greatest of warriors who overcomes and subdues himself. Restraint in all things is good. He alone is a superior person who esteems virtue and is observant of his duty. Let not anger and hate master you. Speak harshly of no one. Contentment is the greatest wealth. What is given wisely is well saved. Do not to others those things you would not wish done to you. Pay good for evil; overcome evil with the good.

P1447:4, 131:3.7 "A righteous soul is more to be desired than the sovereignty of all the earth. Immortality is the goal of sincerity; death, the end of thoughtless living. Those who are earnest die not; the thoughtless are dead already. Blessed are they who have insight into the deathless state. Those who torture the living will hardly find happiness after death. The unselfish go to heaven, where they rejoice in the bliss of infinite liberality and continue to increase in noble generosity. Every mortal who thinks righteously, speaks nobly, and acts unselfishly shall not only enjoy virtue here during this brief life but shall also, after the dissolution of the body, continue to enjoy the delights of heaven."