




## Comparative Religions

Prince of Peace

Deacon Greg Ollick, M.A.  
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### Why Study World Religions?

- Understanding
- Peace and Love
- All World Religions offer Enduring Truths and Insights into the Transcendent.
- By understanding other World Religions, we can come to a greater appreciation of Christianity.



### Does God Exist? What is God like?

- Atheist
- Agnostic
- Deist
- Theist
- Polytheist
- Pantheist




### Religion

- Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices that unite into a moral **community** called Church.
- Religion can be expressed as a desire for wholeness, man's longing for an encounter with the Sacred, for a **relationship** with the transcendent (God); religion defines the spiritual journey of the human soul.


### The Ultimate Purpose/Mission of Religion = **Relationship**

- To help people to come to know God.
- To help them develop a **relationship** with God
- To help them grow that **relationship**
- Authentic Love of God and neighbor
- It's all about **relationship!**



### **FAITH**

- **Faith** is a **relationship** of absolute trust, a fundamental confidence in the power and the goodness of God.

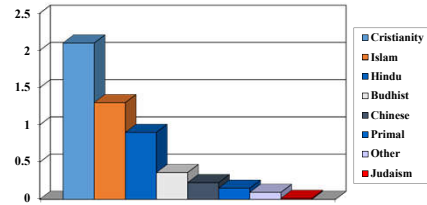


### The Essentials

- Prayer
- Study
- Community
- Service



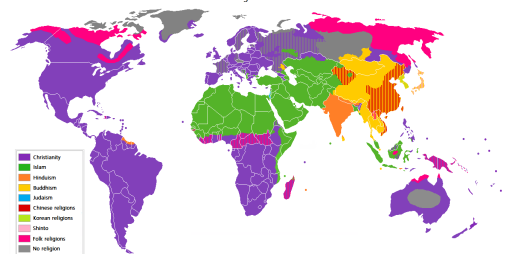
### World Religions



World Religions by percentage



The Religions of the World



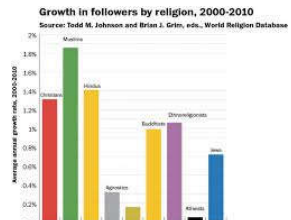
Jewish Population (2014)

Rank	Country	Population	% of Jewry
1	Israel	6,103,200	42.9%
2	United States	5,700,000	40.1%
3	France	475,000	3.3%
4	Canada	385,300	2.7%
5	U.K.	290,000	2.0%
6	Russia	186,000	1.3%
7	Argentina	181,300	1.3%
8	Germany	118,000	0.8%
9	Australia	112,500	0.8%
10	Brazil	95,000	0.7%
11	Ukraine	63,000	0.4%
12	South Africa	70,000	0.5%
13	Hungary	47,900	0.3%
14	Mexico	40,000	0.3%
15	Belgium	30,000	0.2%

Historic Jewish Population

Year	Population
1880	7,800,000
1900	10,600,000
1922	14,400,000
1925	14,800,000
1939	16,728,000
1945	11,000,000
1950	11,297,000
1955	11,800,000
1960	12,079,000
1970	12,585,000
1980	12,819,000
1990	12,868,000
2000	12,900,000
2010	13,428,300
2014	13,900,000

Islam has the highest rate of growth of all world religions.



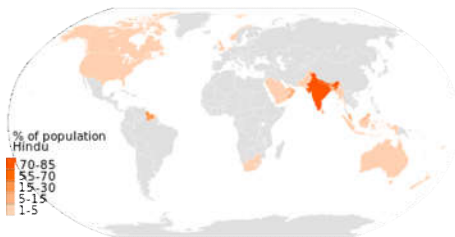
Order of truth (core beliefs) - relative to the early creeds/teachings of the Church:

- Catholicism
- Orthodoxy
- Protestantism
- Judaism
- Islam
- **Hinduism**
- **Buddhism**
- Materialism/Naturalism



## Hinduism

- Hindu means Indian (Indus River)
- 900,000,000
- Cannot be traced to an individual, event or a special revelation. Emerged in its current form approx. 1,500 BCE.
- Worship of animals – Orthodox Hindus regard cattle and peacocks as sacred.



## What is Hinduism?



- ❏ One of the oldest religions of humanity
- ❏ The religion of the Indian people
- ❏ Gave birth to Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism
- ❏ Tolerance and diversity: "Truth is one, paths are many"
- ❏ Many deities but a single, impersonal Ultimate Reality
- ❏ A philosophy and a way of life – focused both on this world and beyond

## How does Hinduism direct life in this world?




- ❏ Respect for all life – vegetarian
- ❏ Human life as supreme:
  - ◆ Four "stations" of life (Caste) - priests & teachers, nobles & warriors, merchant class, servant class
  - ◆ Four stages of life – student, householder, retired, renunciant
  - ◆ Four duties of life – pleasure, success, social responsibilities, religious responsibilities (moks ha)

## Hinduism

- The **Vedic Traditions** are the heart of Hinduism – from early Indian culture.
- Religious Text – **Vedas** – "a body of knowledge"
- Sacrifice and Ritual Hymns called **Mantras**
- A universal force called **Brahman**




### The Essence of Brahman or God




Brahman is eternal, above ignorance and knowledge. He is the One who rules over the root causes and the primal forms of all things... He is the Lord who created the lords of creation (Tattis), the supreme Soul who rules over all. Even as the radiance of the sun sheds light in all regions. So does that glorious Lord, single and adored, rule over all His creation... He is the One, the only God, who rules over the whole universe. Svetasvatara Upanishad 5:1-14

But that Essence of Essences, that Invisible of Invisibles, is sanctified above all human speculation, and never to be overtaken by the mind of man. Never shall that immemorial Reality lodge within the compass of a contingent being. His is another realm, and of that realm no understanding can be won. No access can be gained thereto; all entry is forbidden there. The utmost one can say is that its existence can be proved, but the conditions of its existence are unknown. Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 53

### Hinduism



- **Polytheistic Religion:**  
Gods of creation, earth, sky, life, energy, etc.
- Rudra (the hunter)
- Krishna (supreme god)
- Shiva (destroyer)
- Vishnu (protector)
- Agni (fire and sacrifice)




### Hinduism

- **Sacrificial Worldview**
- Primordial creation myth
- Purusha – creative self-sacrifice
- Body parts formed the universe and the four classes of Vedic Indian society
- Sacrifice is needed to maintain the universe
- Priests – grandest sacrifice = horse


### The Reform of Hinduism

- **Upanishads** - 1000 B.C. – a deeper understanding of the relationship of the Self (Atman) to the driving force of the universe, the power of the **sacrifice** and the **mantras** (Brahman)
- A redirection of religious energies inward toward salvation by insight and knowledge rather than reliance on ritual alone.




### A Shift in the Hindu Worldview

- Shift from domination of sacrifice to seeking to realize and actualize one's true **Self** as central.
- **Reincarnation** (recycling of the universe)
- **Karma** (cause and effect)
- **Awareness** of Atman and Brahman
- If one gains enough knowledge of the true Self, they follow the path of the gods and merge with Brahman and are released from the **cycle of death and rebirth**.
- Study, meditation and self-control (yoga)



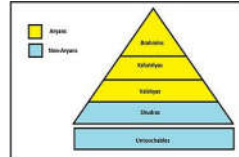
### Main Beliefs of Hinduism

- **Karma:** all the actions of a person's life that affects his or her fate in the next life;
  - People who earn a good karma are reborn at a higher level of existence;
- **Dharma:** the religious and moral duties of an individual; duties vary according to class, occupation, gender or age;
  - by obeying one's dharma, a person acquires merit for the next life.



### Hindu Caste System

- Brahmins – the scholarly elite associated with the priesthood.
- Ruling and Military Class
- Merchants and Farmers
- Peasants
- Untouchables



### Which Hindu beliefs are similar to those of Christianity?

- Sanctity of Life
- Study, Prayer and Self-Control
- Moral Law & Spiritual Discipline (dharma)
- Love As the Primary Virtue
- Devotion
- Sacrifice
- Concept of Death and Rebirth
- Personal Responsibility
- Tolerance & Diversity



### Which Hindu beliefs are different than those of Christianity?

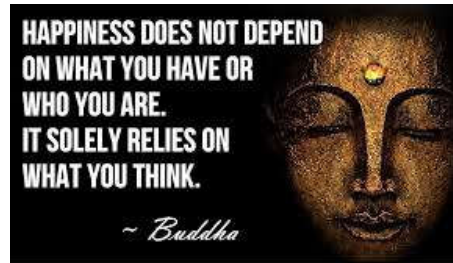
- Polytheism
- Caste System
- Many Paths to Truth
- Reincarnation/Karma
- Nature of God vs Brahmin
- Man's Relationship with God

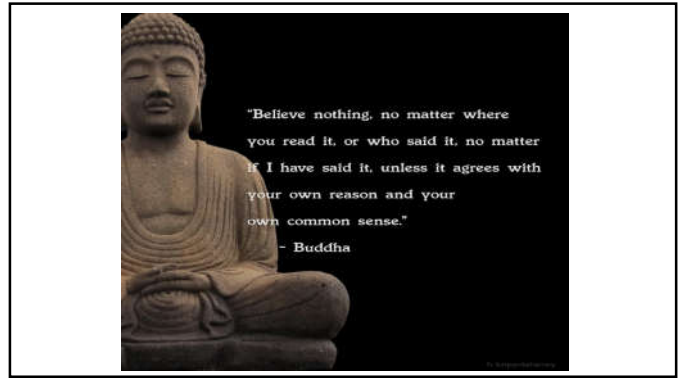
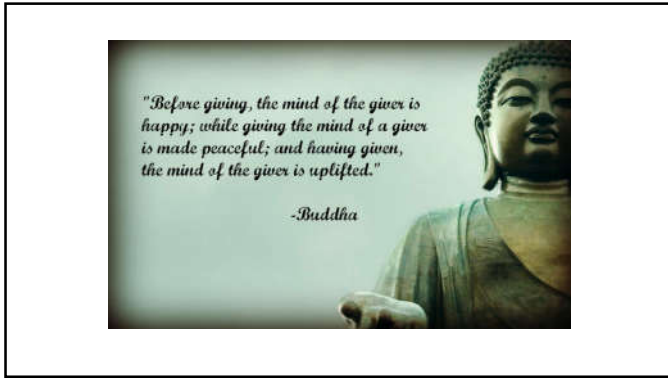


### Buddhism

- Siddhartha Gautama – the **Buddha** (one who has achieved Enlightenment or Nirvana)(6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E.)
- Human Condition
- One could rise above the condition through spiritual/meditative practice.
- The summit of which is called **Enlightenment**, Awakening or **Nirvana**.
- Ministry in India – love, tenderness, inclusiveness, spiritual wisdom and selflessness


There are approx. 500,000,000 Buddhists in the world today.





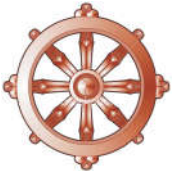
### Buddha – a Religious Reformer

- Hinduism did nothing to address real life issues except to blame them on karma.
- The Buddha preached a better path, a counter-culture with no place for the Indian caste system.
- His path to Enlightenment was available to all.



### Buddha

- "The cure lies in overcoming craving (trishna)...being released from the narrow limits of self-interest into the expanse of universal life." (Smith 103)
- This is accomplished via the **"Eightfold Path."**




### Buddhism – The Eightfold Path

- Right Views
- Right Intent
- Right Speech
- Right Conduct
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration



### Common Precepts

- Not to kill
- Not to steal
- Not to act in an unchaste manner
- Not to speak falsely
- Not to take intoxicants



## Buddhist Schism

- **Theravada** – the Way of the Elders
- Progress in the spiritual life is **solely dependent on the individual**. There is **no grace or God to offer assistance**. Self-reliance is one's only asset. (Sri Lanka, Thailand and Cambodia)
- **Mahayanists** – Grace abounds and everyone has access. **Grace leads and compassion takes priority** over wisdom and seeks to aid others.
- Prayer, self-sacrifice, an afterlife, liturgy and calling on the name of Buddha for strength. (China, Korea, Japan and Tibet)

## Which Buddhist beliefs are consistent with Christianity?

- Salvation is available to all.
- Selfish desire is the root of evil.
- Morality Responsibility
- Prayer and Self-Sacrifice (**Mahayanists**)
- Grace (**Mahayanists**)
- Self-Control
- Meditation
- Charity & Compassion



## Which Buddhist Beliefs are Inconsistent with Christianity?

- Reincarnation/Karma
- The Lack of Grace (**Theravada**)
- Excessive Self-Reliance (**Theravada**)
- Image of God
- Lack of Redemption



## History of Islam

- Muhammad – 570 A.D. Mecca (Saudi Arabia)
- Arabian culture – nomad, violent lawless and warlike
- Father died before his birth.
- Mother died when he was 2.
- Lived in the desert until he was 5 years old.
- Raised by his uncle, Talib.
- Marriage - 595
- 610 – spiritual quest – disturbed by the idolatry of paganism



## History of Islam

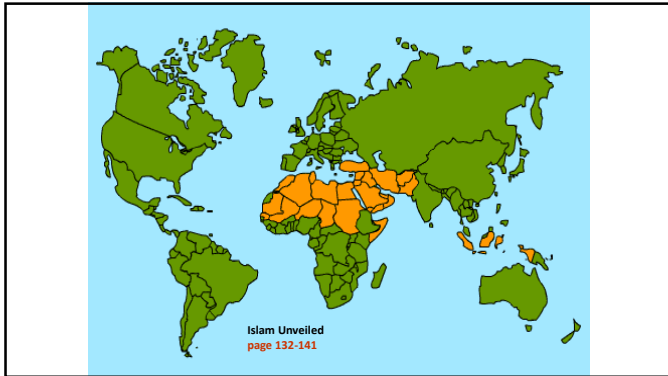
- 613 experience of Allah – started preaching One God & the Last Judgment.
- 619 – death of wife & uncle
- 620 – first converts Medina
- 629 Conquest of Mecca
- Died in 633
- Abu Bakr – 1<sup>st</sup> Caliph



## Pre-Islamic Influence on Muhammad

- Paganism
- Heretical Judaism
- Heretical Christianity (Arianism, Gnosticism)
- Local culture and politics (Arabia in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Like Joseph Smith Muhammad sought purity.





### Islam

- Muhammad 622 A.D. (C.E.)
- 1,200,000,000 adherents
- The largest Muslim nation on earth is Indonesia.
- Approx. 7,000,000 in U.S.

**Muslims have the world's lowest rate of being converted and one of the world's highest rates of converting.**


### Islamic Sects

- **Sunnis** (orthodox) – 85% of Islam – doctrines and practices derived from the “**Sunna**” or Tradition of the Prophet. Sunnis recognize the first four Muslim rulers after Muhammad (Caliphs).
- **Wahhabis** – Muhammad bin al-Wahhab – 1703-1792 – reformer – wanted to rid Islam of everything that developed after the first few centuries and return to a pure and literal read of the **Koran** and **Hadith**.
- **Shi'ites** – Largest non-Sunni sect – Shias recognize only the fourth Caliph and his lineal male heirs (the “Imams”).




### Muslim Creed

- Belief in a single creed - “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”
- Belief in angels
- Belief in revealed books
- Belief in the prophets
- Belief in the day of judgment (fate, destiny)



### Five Pillars of Islam

- Confession of faith in God (Allah) and in Muhammad
- Prayer & Ritual Worship - *Salat* (“Allahu Akbar”)
- Almsgiving (charity for those in need)
- Fasting (during Ramadan for 30 days)
- Pilgrimage (to Mecca)





### How are Islam and Christian similar?

- Both are **monotheistic** (and worship the God of Abraham.)
- Both believe that their **Scriptures** are the inerrant Word of God that contain not only his will but also his prescriptions for moral living.
- Both see **religion as central**, claiming it should influence all areas of one's life.
- Both are **world missionary** religions that have propagated themselves successfully around the world.
- Both have a strong sense of **community**.



### How are Islam and Christianity similar?

- Both promote the practice of **daily prayer and worship**.
- Both teach the emulation of their founder.
- Both are active in strengthening religious values in political life and in encouraging society to accept public expressions of religion.
- Both judge their societies as being immoral.
- Both believe that one is saved through faith, repentance, obedience and good works.



### Holy Books in Islam

- **Koran** (Qur'an) - Dictated Word of Allah (what to believe)
- **Hadith** – Muhammad's Tradition (how to act)
- **Sunna** – the Acts of the Prophet



### How is the Koran different than the Bible?

- The closest books to the Koran in the Bible are the first five books of Moses.
- The Koran makes no attempt at linear history.
- The Koran is shorter than the New Testament.
- A large amount of the Koran is repeated.
- The reader cannot figure out exactly what is being said, or why, without reference to the Hadith.
- The Koran and the NT contradict each other.
- Koranic law cannot be reconciled with the grace of God.
- The Koran denies the crucifixion & resurrection of Jesus.

### Islam Denies:

- The Trinity (Allah, Mary, Jesus)
- The Incarnation (Sura 5:17)
- The Crucifixion (Sura 4:157)
- The Resurrection (pg. 59)
- Christ's claim to divinity



### What do Muslims believe about Jesus?

- Jesus was a great prophet. (pg. 54,55)
- Jesus was born of a virgin.
- Jesus was born without sin. (So was Mary.)
- Jesus was a slave of Allah. (pg. 56-59)
- Jesus was a healer.



### What do Muslims believe about Jesus?

- The Koran retells the biblical accounts precisely to correct them since they were corrupted by Jews and Christians.
- The Koran calls Jesus the Son of Mary, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God proceeding from Allah, and the Messiah.
- The Koran condemns anyone who calls Jesus divine. (Sura 5:17)



### Image of God

- How do we envision God?
- What is the nature and attributes of God?
- How does God relate to mankind?



### How is the Islamic Image of Allah consistent with the Christian Image of God?

- There is only one true God. (Sura 57: 1-6)
- (The one true God is the God of Abraham.)
- God is all knowing (omniscient) and all powerful (omnipotent).
- God created the world out of nothing.
- God is the Master of the universe.
- God wants us to worship him and do good while rejecting evil.
- God is a just judge who will judge everyone according to his works.



### How does the Muslim view of Allah differ from the Christian understanding of God?

- Allah is radically different from the God of the Bible. (pg. 80-84)
- Muslims will never "see God as he is."
- Allah can never be known.
- Allah has nothing in common with mankind.
- Allah has no personal relationship with men.
- Allah is not "Father" he is "Master" and we are not his Sons and Daughters but his slaves.
- Allah hates unbelievers.



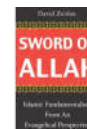
### Does Islam Mean Peace?

- The word **Islam** means "peace for those who submit to the will of Allah" in Arabic.
- The word **Muslim** is translated "one who submits".
- The word "shalom" (peace) and Islam (submission) share the same Arabic root (salam) which means peace, but the terms are by no means synonymous.



### Islamic & Christian Fundamentalism

- Islamic and Christian fundamentalists want to return to the scriptures, to a more "pure" practice of their religion.
- When Christians turn back to the Bible they find the words and example of Jesus.
- When Muslims return to their source texts they find the words and example of Muhammad.



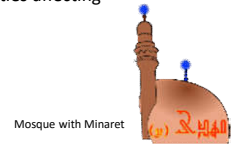
### The Spread of Islamic Fundamentalism

- Increased participation in religious rituals
- Intensive mosque building programs
- Adoption of Islamic dress by women
- Increased segregation of the sexes
- Fundamentalist ideas have come to dominate the media.
- Fundamentalist leaders are immensely popular.
- Fundamentalist have gained control of many professional associations and student unions.



### From Reform to Fundamentalism

- Islamic reform started out as spiritual and intellectual.
- A battle to remove the causes of weakness and decadence from Muslim societies.
- This gave birth to radical fundamentalism which searched for scapegoats on whom to lay blame for the calamities affecting Muslims.
- Western power – especially the United States



### The Demands of Islamic Fundamentalism

- A return to the source texts
- The privilege of reinterpretation
- The reintegration of politics within a total Islamic system (Sharia).
- Infiltration of Western societies
- World domination by Islam



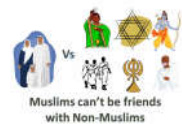
### Why do many Muslims hate the U.S. and the Western democracies?

- American presence & interference in the Middle East
- Somalia (mid-1990s relief mission)
- Saudi Arabia
- Afghanistan
- Iraqi
- Immorality of the West (Western Secularism)
- Resentment of the technological superiority of the West
- The U.S. support of Israel



### Why do many Muslims hate the U.S.?

- Americans are considered part of the West and as such they are considered "crusaders" against Islam.
- The resentment of Western Imperialism and dominance
- The resentment of the Christian Crusades.
- The U.S. support of Israel in the struggle against the Palestinians.



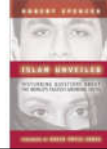
### What is jihad? - Exertion

- To struggle, to strive hard and to fight
- The internal struggle against sin
- Page 125, 126 IMB
- To fight against unbelievers and infidels. (pg. 108)
- "Fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme." (Sura 2:193)



### Do some Muslims still believe in universal jihad?

- If Muslims take the Koran and the Hadith seriously they will fight until everyone on earth is Muslim or at least until all are utterly subdued under Islamic rule.
- "I have been ordered to fight with the People of the Book until they say, 'none has the right to be worshiped but Allah!'"
- Page 34, 35 – Islam Unveiled



### The Christian Response

- Prayer, Prayer, Prayer
- Understanding and compassion
- Dialogue & relationship
- Political awareness
- Missionary support, evangelization
- Christians must know, practice, defend & promote their faith.
- Christian Lifestyle & Worldview
- Promotion of Education in the Middle East
- Hope & Trust



**And, just in case: Military Preparedness and Missal Defense**

