

Major World Religions

An Apostolic Perspective

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A Global Association of Theological Studies Publication

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Burk, Dorsey, 1949-

Major world religions / Dorsey L. Burk.

pages cm

"A Global Association of Theological Studies Publication."

ISBN 978-0-7577-4235-4

1. Religions. I. Title.

BL80.3.B867 2012

200--dc23

2012041908



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Introduction

Genesis in the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible opens with the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, the fall of man, and the murder of Abel. Sandwiched between the Fall and the first recorded murder is the story of Cain and Abel offering sacrifices to God. Their sacrifices appear to be humankind's first record of a religious act.

According to Genesis, Adam and Eve had an intimate relationship with God prior to their disobedience. God's communing and walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden during the cool of the day illustrates this relationship. However, Adam and Eve's disobedience broke that fellowship, for they hid from the presence of God. So the biblical story goes from Adam and Eve hiding from God to their sons bringing sacrifices to Him.

How did the young men know to bring a sacrifice? Who instructed them in the proper worship of God? How long had they been offering sacrifices? The Bible gives no answer to these questions. However, Cain and Abel's sacrifices point to humanity's innate desire or need to worship.

Dictionary.reference.com defines *religion* as:

1. a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.
2. a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects: *the Christian religion; the Buddhist religion.*
3. the body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices: *a world council of religions.*
4. the life or state of a monk, nun, etc.: *to enter religion.*

5. the practice of religious beliefs; ritual observance of faith.¹

Some scholars claim *religion* comes from the Latin *religare*, which means “to bind, to have union with, to be tied to.” Consequently, humans throughout history have been seeking union with God. This longing for connection to God, to worship God, is innate in most all human beings.

The author wrote this book to introduce the Bible student to the five major religions of the world: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. In no way is it an exhaustive study. Many other books go into greater depth concerning the religions, such as those that appear in the Recommended References list and in the footnotes.

One thing that sets this book apart from others is that it is written from an Apostolic perspective and includes testimonies of converts to the Apostolic experience and doctrine.

May your study of the world’s major religions affirm your Apostolic understanding of Scripture and solidify your union with God.

¹ Dictionary.reference.com/browse/religion, (accessed September 11, 2012).



Golden Buddha at Golden Temple, Dambulla, Sri Lanka

Photo by Dorsey Burk

BUDDHISM

Buddhism is a religion without a God. It is a human search for nirvana or enlightenment, which when achieved will dispel the illusion of human existence and result in total emptiness or nothingness.

Buddhism had its origins about 2,500 years ago when Siddhartha Gautama [also spelled Gotama] “awakened” or “became enlightened” at the age of thirty-five. *Buddhism* is derived from the Sanskrit *budh*, which means “to awaken.” Thus, Gautama became the Buddha when he “awakened.” Now about 500 million people worldwide follow his teachings.²

² Susan Meredith and Clare Hickman, *The Usborne Encyclopedia of World Religions* (London: Usborne Publishing, 2005), 36.

Overview

Founder	Siddhartha Gautama
Date of founding	c. 528 BC
Worldwide adherents	478 million ³
God	Buddhism has no room for God in the sense of an eternal, almighty being. Buddha taught that devotion to any god—no matter how noble the spiritual pursuit—leads to disappointment, confusion, and sorrow. ⁴
Salvation	By obedience to the eightfold path, the individual achieves nirvana where all illusion of human existence (self) is eliminated.
Soul	Humans have no soul (<i>anatta</i>) but are trapped in a continuing cycle of death and rebirth until reaching nirvana.
Sacred Writings	<i>Pali Tripitaka</i> or “Triple Basket”
Afterlife	Afterlife for a Buddhist is the state when one is released from both karma and the continual cycle of death and rebirth. This is when the delusion of selfhood is dispelled. It is a state of emptiness or nothingness—state of nonexistence.

SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

Between 623 and 565 BC,⁵ Queen Maha Maya, the wife of warrior-king □uddhodana, gave birth to Siddhartha Gautama. □uddhodana ruled over the Shakya people from his capital Kapilavastu, in the Himalayan foothills of present-day southern Nepal.

Raised within the palace walls, Gautama lived a sheltered existence in extravagant luxury. Seeking to protect Gautama from the harsh realities of life, his father provided beautiful women, dancers, singers, and musicians, who used their charms and abilities day and night to please him. By providing such diversions and indulgence, the king hoped Gautama would never desire to leave the palace. At the age of sixteen, Gautama married Yasodhara, a princess. Together they had a son.

³ *10 Questions & Answers on Buddhism*, (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, Inc., 2008), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ <http://www.aboutbuddha.org/english/life-of-buddha.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012); <http://www.crystalinks.com/buddha.html> (accessed September 11, 2012).

The prince grew restless and refused to be isolated within the palace walls. He rode into the capital to see the real world. On his first trip, he saw an old man and realized that everyone would age. On the second trip, he saw a sick man and comprehended that everyone will become ill. On the third trip, he saw a corpse and understood that everyone will die. On his fourth trip, he saw a monk who appeared happy and contented. The “Four Sights” disturbed Gautama and he determined to leave the confines of the palace and seek to help others find peace and happiness.

At the age of twenty-nine, Gautama rode out of the palace one last time, leaving his wife and newborn baby asleep. Dismounting from his horse, he stripped off his princely robes and gave them to the servant to return to the king, then he put on the robes of a monk.

As a penniless monk, Gautama became a disciple of the wisest Hindu teachers of the age. For six years he practiced severe asceticism. He sat in deep meditation, eating only roots, leaves, and fruit. Sometimes he would fast or eat only one grain of rice a day for long periods.⁶ His body wasted away until there was only a layer of thin skin covering his bones. Birds reportedly made nests in his matted hair while layers of dust covered his shriveled body. Yet Gautama sat completely still, not even brushing away insects. He slept on a bed of thorns. He endured more hardships than anyone else. But he did not learn the cause or cure for suffering and therefore renounced asceticism.

When his five companions who had faithfully taken care of Gautama saw him eating, they assumed he had given up his quest for understanding and left him.

Palace life taught Siddhartha Gautama that the answers to life’s problems do not come through extravagance. Likewise, six years of extreme self-denial showed that those answers cannot be found in asceticism. He determined to find the “middle way,” a path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.⁷

Still seeking a way to understand the meaning of life, Gautama sat down under a huge Bodhi tree. He sat there for forty-nine days. He was determined to discover the source of all pain and suffering in the world and vowed he would not leave that place until he found a way to end all sorrow—even if his flesh and blood were to dry up, leaving only skin and bones.

According to Buddhist tradition, during this period—although greatly hindered by the evil spirit Mara—Gautama saw things as they actually were.

⁶ <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/lifebuddha/14lbud.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

⁷ http://www.buddhanet.net/cbp2_f4.htm (accessed September 11, 2012).

He discovered the cause of suffering is greed, selfishness, and stupidity. To find happiness, people must rid themselves of these negative emotions. Thus, during a full-moon night in May, Siddhartha went into deep meditation. As the morning star appeared in the eastern sky, he became an enlightened one, a Buddha. He was thirty-five years old.

Siddhartha Gautama spent the rest of his life teaching others how to achieve enlightenment.

Teaching the Dharma (Truth)

The foundation of Buddha's teaching is The Four Noble Truths.

The first noble truth is *dukkha*, usually translated, "life is suffering." The Pali—a variation of Sanskrit—word *dukkha* also refers to anything that is temporary, conditional, or compounded of other things. Even something precious and enjoyable is *dukkha*, because it will end.

Buddha's use of *dukkha* transcends the typical English usage of *suffering*. Ordinary suffering, as defined by the English word, is one form of *dukkha* – *Dukkha-dukkha*). This includes physical, emotional, and mental pain. Second, *Viparinama-dukkha* is impermanence or change. Anything not permanent—anything subject to change—is *dukkha*. Thus, happiness is *dukkha*, because it is not permanent. The natural ebb and flow of life is *dukkha*, because it is ever changing. Great success, which fades with the passing of time, is *dukkha*. Even the purest state of bliss experienced in spiritual practice is *dukkha*. This doesn't mean that happiness, success, and bliss are bad, or that it's wrong to enjoy them. If a person feels happy, he should enjoy his happiness. But he shouldn't cling to it. Third, *Samkhara-dukkha* refers to conditioned states. To be conditioned is to be dependent on or affected by something else. All phenomena are conditioned; everything affects everything else.⁸

The second noble truth is that thirst or cravings cause suffering. People continue to suffer because they look for things beyond themselves to satisfy.

The Buddha taught that this thirst grows from ignorance of the self. We go through life grabbing one thing after another to get a sense of security about ourselves. We attach not only to physical things, but also to ideas and opinions about ourselves and the world around us. Then we grow frustrated when the world

⁸ <http://buddhism.about.com/od/thefournobletruths/a/dukkhaexplain.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

doesn't behave the way we think it should and our lives don't conform to our expectations.⁹

The third truth is the end of suffering (*nirhodha*). If one thinks of Buddha's teaching as a medical diagnosis, then the first truth is the diagnosis itself, the second truth is the cause of the disease, and the third truth is the treatment leading to a cure. According to Buddha, the cure comes only by diligent practice to end the craving.

The fourth truth is that following the eightfold path will end suffering and bring one to enlightenment. The eightfold path is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development with the goal of freeing the individual from attachments and delusions; and it finally leads to understanding the truth about all things and being free from all desires and attachments.

The Eightfold Path

The first two paths refer to the wisdom that purifies the mind and allows it to see the true nature of all things.

1. Right View

Right view is the beginning and the end of the path. To have the right view simply means to see and to understand things as they really are and to realize the Four Noble Truths. As such, the right view is the rational aspect of wisdom. It means to see things through, to perceive the impermanent and imperfect nature of worldly objects and ideas and to understand the law of karma and karmic conditioning. Right view is reached, continued, and improved through all abilities of the mind. It begins with the inborn awareness that all beings are subject to suffering and it ends with total comprehension of the true nature of all things. Since our view of the world forms our thoughts and our actions, the right view produces right thoughts and right actions.

2. Right Intention

While right view refers to the intellectual aspect of wisdom, right intention refers to the willful aspect, the kind of mental energy that controls our actions. Right intention is commitment to ethical and mental

⁹ <http://buddhism.about.com/od/thefournobletruths/a/fournobletruth> (accessed September 11, 2012).

self-improvement. Buddha distinguished three types of right intentions: (1) the intention of renunciation, which means resisting the pull of desire; (2) the intention of good will, which means resisting feelings of anger and aversion; and (3) the intention of harmlessness, which means not thinking or acting cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and developing compassion.

The next three paths (3, 4, and 5) concern ethics or morality.

3. Right Speech

Right speech is the first principle of ethical conduct in the eightfold path. Ethical conduct is a guideline to moral discipline, which supports the other principles of the path. The importance of speech in the context of Buddhist ethics is obvious: words can break or save lives, make enemies or friends, start war, or create peace. Buddha explained right speech as follows: (1) to abstain from false speech, especially not to tell deliberate lies and not to speak deceitfully; (2) to abstain from slanderous speech and not to use words maliciously against others; (3) to abstain from harsh words that offend or hurt others; and (4) to abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth. Thus right speech means to tell the truth, to speak in a friendly, warm, and gentle manner, and to talk only when necessary.

Apostolics should desire right speech. James cautioned the early church:

“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:2-8).

4. Right Action

Right action is the second ethical principle. It refers to deeds that involve the body. Harmful actions lead to unhealthy states of mind, while wholesome deeds lead to sound states of mind. Right action means (1) abstaining from harming conscious beings, especially to abstain from taking life (including suicide) and doing harm intentionally or delinquently; (2) abstaining from taking what is not given, which includes stealing, robbery, fraud, deceitfulness, and dishonesty; and (3) abstaining from sexual misconduct. Thus, right action means acting kindly and compassionately, being honest, respecting the belongings of others, and avoiding abusive sexual relationships.

5. Right Livelihood

Right livelihood means that one should earn his or her living in a honorable way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully. The Buddha mentions four specific activities that one should avoid because they harm other beings: (1) dealing in weapons; (2) dealing in living beings (including raising animals for slaughter as well as slave trade and prostitution); (3) working in meat production and butchery; and (4) selling intoxicants and poisons, such as alcohol and drugs. Likewise, one should avoid any other occupation that would violate the principles of right speech and right action.

The last three paths (6, 7, and 8) concern the mental discipline needed to master one's mind.

6. Right Effort

Right effort is required for the other principles of the eightfold path. Nothing can be achieved without an act of the will. Nevertheless, misguided effort distracts the mind from its task and results in confusion. Mental energy is the force behind right effort; it can occur in either wholesome or unhealthy states. The same motivation that fuels desire, envy, aggression, and violence can, on the other side, promote self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness. Four types of right efforts, in ascending order of perfection are: (1) preventing unwholesome states from developing, (2) abandoning unhealthy states that have already developed, (3) arousing wholesome states that have not yet developed, and (4) maintaining and perfecting healthy states already developed.

7. Right Mindfulness

Right mindfulness is the rational ability to see things as they are, with unmistakable consciousness. It is anchored in clear perception and it penetrates impressions without getting carried away. Right mindfulness enables us to process thoughts and ideas so that we actively observe and control the way our thoughts go. Buddha accounted for this as the *four foundations of mindfulness*: (1) contemplation of the body; (2) contemplation of feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral); (3) contemplation of the state of mind; and (4) contemplation of the phenomena.

8. Right Concentration

The eighth principle of the path is right concentration. For the purpose of the eightfold path, this means *wholesome concentration*; that is, concentration on wholesome thoughts and actions. The Buddhist method of choice to develop right concentration is through meditation. The meditating mind focuses on a selected object. It first directs itself onto it, then sustains concentration, and finally intensifies concentration step by step. Through this practice, it becomes natural to apply elevated levels of concentration also in everyday situations.¹⁰

Similarly, apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Most Christians can see shared concepts between Buddhism and Christianity. However, while the eightfold path may include qualities desired in mature Christians, it is powerless to enable one to follow the path. (In similar fashion, the Mosaic law showed the holiness of God but lacked the power to help one live by the requirements of the Law.) To follow the eightfold path and achieve nirvana, the would-be Buddha must find inner strength to eradicate the natural cravings of life to live in a realm devoid of passion, desire, disappointment, want, emotion, material substance, flesh, impulse, perception, consciousness, relationships, and so on. According to Buddhism, to be free from these hindrances—whether innately good and pleasant or vile and painful—is to reach a state of total emptiness or nirvana and thus end the continual cycle of rebirth.¹¹

Apostolic Pentecostals can appreciate the moral teachings in the eightfold path. More important, they can rejoice because their new birth of the water and Spirit empowers them to live a godly and righteous life. If they

¹⁰ <http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/eightfoldpath.html> (accessed September 11, 2012).

¹¹ <http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

should sin, they can repent and find forgiveness in the arms of a loving and merciful God. Apostolic Pentecostals know they are saved by the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus paid the penalty of sin and now freely offers salvation. Salvation is something to be received from God; it is not something to be earned by man.

Karma

To Buddhists, karma refers to the good and bad actions that one chooses in life, whether mental, verbal, or physical. In this world, nothing happens to a person that he does not deserve for some reason or other, possibly the result of choices made in previous existences. Consequently, the definite invisible causes of the visible effects are not necessarily confined to the present life, but they may be traced to remote past rebirths. Thus, we ourselves are responsible for our own happiness and misery – our own salvation. We create our own heaven. We create our own hell. We design and build our own fate.¹² In short, “Karma is the universal law of cause and effect by which one’s deeds in past states of existence determine future existence.”¹³

Such deeds influence the cycle of rebirth (reincarnation). A living being can be reborn into one of six realms. An individual with bad karma is reborn in the realm of animals, the realm of ghosts, or the realm of hell. Those with good karma advance into the realm of demigods, the realm of gods, or the realm of men. The realm of man is the highest realm of rebirth, for it offers opportunity to achieve enlightenment or nirvana, an aspect missing in the other five.

Becoming a Buddhist

To become a Buddhist is simply to make a commitment to live one’s life by the principles embodied in the “Three Refuges” and the “Five Precepts.” The Three Refuges refers to “taking refuge in the Three Jewels” of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

Taking refuge in Buddha is saying “I trust that this enlightenment is possible and that I will make an effort to be ‘awake’ (not daydreaming or heedless) as I live my life.” . . . When we take refuge in Dharma, we take refuge in the teachings of the Buddha – which is refuge in the truth and purity of our own true nature. . . . Part of taking refuge in the Sangha, therefore, includes the exhortation to “right action” which is based on the Buddhist

¹² <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/karma.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

¹³ *10 Questions & Answers*, 8.

moral code of behaviour. In its basic form this is “The Five Precepts”:

- Not killing or harming living beings – This is being kind.
- Not taking what is not given (not stealing) – This is being honest.
- Not being unfaithful in relationships – This is being trustworthy.
- Not using wrong speech – This is being truthful.
- Not taking intoxicating drink or drugs – This is being clear minded.¹⁴

Buddhist Theology

The concept of an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, supreme God who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and Redeemer of all humanity has no place in Buddhism. However, Buddhists have an untold number of demigods and gods, some good, some evil. These spiritual beings are viewed as inferior to humanity. As John Bowker states,

Gods are prominent in ordinary Buddhist life, but they are not permanent, let alone eternal; they are themselves subject to rebirth and must seek enlightenment. At the lowest level [of the cosmos] is the realm of desire. This consists of the heavens, where the 33 Vedic gods of Hinduism dwell, including Indra, known as Sakka, who is protector of Buddhism.¹⁵

The Buddha never claimed to be divine and denied the existence of a supreme deity. So when Buddhists bow before a statue of Buddha, they do so in reverential respect, not in prayer in the sense of petitioning a deity to grant a request. Instead, Buddhists meditate to awaken their inner strength, compassion, and wisdom.

Sacred Writings

Originally, Buddha’s teachings were passed on by word of mouth as his disciples taught others. These teachings were not written down until about three hundred years after his death. One important collection is called

¹⁴ <http://www.buddhamind.info/leftside/sumaries/q-a/being-is.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

¹⁵ John Bowker, *World Religions*, 70.

Tripitaka, which means “three baskets.” The teachings were written on palm leaves and collected in baskets.

John Bowker states:

Buddhism does not have a collection of texts constituting a “Bible,” but early collections were made especially for the *Sangha* [any community of Buddhist monks or nuns]. The *Pali Tripitaka*, or “Triple Basket,” is among the earliest. Different areas of Buddhism produced their own canons or collections. Those of Tibet and China are notable. According to tradition, the canon began at the Council of Rajagrha after the Buddha was cremated, when Ananda and Upali recited his discourses and the regulations for monks, which became the *Suttapitaka* and the *Vinayapitaka*. The origin of a third collection, the *Abbidhammapitaka* (further teaching and analysis), is disputed. In Mahayana Buddhism, what is claimed to be more developed teaching of Buddha is preserved in *sutras*.¹⁶

Forms of Buddhism

Buddhism has divided into two main schools: Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism.

Theravada means “The Way of the Elders” in Pali. Theravada Buddhists are the conservative Buddhists and claim to follow the Buddha’s original teachings more closely than other groups. They admire the Buddha as an extraordinary and remarkable person, but they do not pray to him. Theravada Buddhism teaches that each individual must make his own way by following the teachings in the Tripitaka. Theravada Buddhism tends to be more monastic, strict, and world-renouncing than Mahayana Buddhism, and its approach is more philosophical than religious. Theravada Buddhists strive to become *arhats*, or perfected saints who have attained enlightenment and nirvana. This is considered to be possible only for monks and nuns, who devote their entire lives to the task.

Mahayana Buddhists consider Siddhartha Gautama to be one of many Buddhas of the past, present, and future. They are of the liberal school.

Mahayana Buddhists, on the other hand, hope to become not *arhats* but *boddhisatvas*, saints who have become enlightened but

¹⁶ Ibid., 72.

who unselfishly delay nirvana to help others attain it as well, as the Buddha did. Perhaps more significantly for one who would choose between the paths, Mahayana Buddhists teach that enlightenment can be attained in a single lifetime, and this can be accomplished even by a layperson. The various subdivisions within the Mahayana tradition, such as Zen, Nichiren, and Pure Land, promote different ways of attaining this goal, but all are agreed that it can be attained in a single lifetime by anyone who puts his or her mind (and sometimes body) to it.

The Mahayana form of Buddhism tends to be more religious in nature than its Theravadan counterpart. It often includes veneration of celestial beings, Buddhas and bodhisattvas, ceremonies, religious rituals, magical rites, and the use of icons, images, and other sacred objects. The role of such religious elements varies, however: it is central to Tibetan/Tantric Buddhism, but is highly discouraged by Zen practitioners, who have been known to burn statues of the Buddha to demonstrate their unimportance.¹⁷

Theravada Buddhism is predominant in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Mahayana Buddhism, along with its cultural mutations such as Zen, Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), and Pure Land, is followed in China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.

The unifying factor in Buddhism is “taking refuge in the Three Jewels.”

In *The Lotus and the Cross*, Ravi Zacharias contrasts Buddhism and Christianity by using an imaginary boat ride with Jesus, Buddha, and Priya, a young, HIV-infected prostitute, as passengers. During the ride, Jesus and Buddha discuss their philosophies and relate them to Priya’s condition. Buddha tells Priya that she deserves her illness because of her poor choices—even the choices made in previous existences. Buddha says,

Woman, you don’t realize it, but everything you’ve lived through is the fruit of all that you yourself have sown. You were not free from debt when you were born, and you won’t be free from debt when you die. You were born with a cup half full; you have to fill it the rest of the way. And your every act, word, and deed has to be paid for.¹⁸

Toward the end of the cruise, Jesus says to Priya:

¹⁷ <http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/sects/mahayana.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

¹⁸ Ravi Zacharias, *The Lotus and the Cross*, (Portland, OR: Multnomah Books, 2001), 21-22.

Buddha said that you filled your cup with your choices and so you alone must drink it. I say to you something different.

Read my Word, Priya. Shortly before those who wanted me crucified came to take me, I was alone in prayer, in communion with my heavenly Father. As I prayed, I knew that the cup of suffering and death that I was to drink from was for all mankind. I knew it was a bitter cup. It contained the sins and the shame of the whole world. In agreeing to drink from that cup I knew it would even separate me for a moment from my Father. That desolation was the most fearsome thing that I was called upon to do. But in drinking from that cup, I was able to offer the gift of eternal life to all who would accept it.

I offer my cup for yours, Priya. At the Cross I drank your cup. Now I give you a fresh cup of eternal life. You can drink from it.

This is your chance, Priya. Take it freely.¹⁹

Conclusion

Buddhism is man's attempt to solve the age-old problem of suffering and death without God. Without a Creator God, Buddhism offers no answers to the origin of man or the origin of desires that lead to suffering. The three jewels, the four truths, the five precepts, and the eight paths point to one existence free from the cycle of rebirth. However, man is left alone to take refuge and then to walk the pathway to nirvana – but only if the karma of his former lives allows it.

Buddhism offers little hope to the person who is seeking escape from the suffering of life. If Siddhartha Gautama had truly found the “middle way,” it would have led him to the middle cross on Calvary.

Study Questions

1. Who is the founder of Buddhism? _____

¹⁹ Ibid., 86-87.

2. When was Buddhism founded? _____
3. *Buddhism* is derived from the Sanskrit *budh*, which means _____

4. Describe Siddhartha Gautama's childhood. _____

5. What four sights did Siddhartha Gautama see that influenced him to seek the cause of and an end to suffering?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
6. What did Siddhartha Gautama conclude was the cause of suffering?

7. According to Buddha, how does one end suffering? _____

8. Define nirvana. _____

9. What are the four truths of Buddhism?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

- D. _____
10. What is the eightfold path? _____

11. What are the eight pathways?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____
G. _____
H. _____
12. What does “taking refuge in the three jewels” mean? _____

13. What are the three jewels of Buddhism?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
14. What are the five precepts of Buddhism?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
15. What is reincarnation? _____

16. Into what six realms may an individual be reincarnated?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____

17. What is karma? _____

18. According to Buddhism, how do one's present actions affect one's future? _____

19. Explain how one becomes a Buddhist. _____

20. What are the sacred writings of Buddhism? _____

21. What are the two main divisions or schools of thought in Buddhism?
A. _____
B. _____

22. How do the two schools of thought differ? _____

23. How does the concept of an eternally present, omnipotent God fit in the theology of Buddhism? _____

24. Where is Mahayana Buddhism predominant? _____

25. Where is Theravadan Buddhism predominant? _____

Personal Study Notes



Eight-year-old Samara Burk received the infilling of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, June 24, 2012, at New Life Pentecostal Church, Bridgeton, Missouri.

Photo by Dorsey Burk

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity began in the life, ministry, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus, a Jew whom Christians believe to be the Son of God. Its roots lie farther back in the Jewish tradition, with Christianity understanding itself as the New Covenant, or Testament, between Man and God, building on the Old Covenant. The story and early interpretation of Jesus' life are recorded in the New Testament, which includes Gospels, Epistles or letters, and other early writings; here he is portrayed as the Christ, or Messiah, and all these writings recognize that Jesus was, and is, the personal action of God in restoring his power and effect to the world.²⁰

²⁰ John Bowker, *World Religions*, 150.

Overview

Founder	Jesus Christ
Date of founding	c. AD 30
Worldwide adherents	2.1 billion ²¹
View of God	The Bible teaches absolute monotheism. Moses declared, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD." ²² Accepting biblical monotheism, Apostolics reject church councils' teaching of one God in three persons. Paul stated, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." ²³
Salvation	All men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus Christ died on the cross to provide atonement for humanity's sins. We are saved by faith through the grace of God. (See Romans 3:23; 5:1-2; Hebrews 12:2; Acts 2:38.)
Soul	Every person has an eternal soul that will be judged according to the Word of God.
Sacred Writings	The sixty-six books of the Holy Bible are regarded as the sacred writings of the Christian community. Apostolics consider the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.
Afterlife	It is appointed unto men once to die and after death comes the judgment. The soul will spend eternity either in Heaven with the redeemed and blessed or in Hell with the wicked and damned. (See Hebrews 9:27.)

Jesus Christ

²¹ <http://www.numberof.net/number-of-christians-in-the-world-2/> (accessed April 14, 2012).

²² Deuteronomy 6:4.

²³ I Timothy 3:16.

Over two thousand years ago in Bethlehem of Judea, a virgin named Mary gave birth to a Baby conceived of the Holy Ghost. As instructed by an angel, she named Him Jesus. As a twelve-year-old lad, Jesus confounded the teachers and scholars in the Temple in Jerusalem with His understanding of Scripture.²⁴ Eighteen years later, Jesus Christ, began an earthly ministry. His teachings often conflicted with the religious traditions of Judaism as well as the paganism of the Roman Empire.

Jesus summarized His teaching in two commandments. He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."²⁵

Jesus also taught:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.²⁶

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

²⁴ Luke 2:46-47.

²⁵ Matthew 22:37-40.

²⁶ Matthew 5:3-12.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.²⁷

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.²⁸

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.²⁹

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.³⁰

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.³¹

Throughout His ministry, Jesus performed miracles that testified to His divine nature. He multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand men plus women and children.³² He calmed a raging storm by simply saying, "Peace be still."³³ He raised the dead,³⁴ healed the sick,³⁵ and forgave sin.³⁶

²⁷ Matthew 6:19-21, 24-25, 33.

²⁸ John 3:16-18.

²⁹ John 14:6.

³⁰ Acts 1:8.

³¹ Mark 16:15-18.

³² Matthew 14.

³³ Mark 4.

³⁴ John 11.

³⁵ John 5.

When Jesus was thirty-three years old, the Romans crucified Him on a cross. In doing so, Jesus became the Lamb of God of prophecy whose blood would atone for the sins of all humankind. Three days later, He arose from the dead, indeed proving that He was the Son of God. Over five hundred people witnessed His appearances after the Resurrection.³⁷ Forty days later, He ascended bodily into Heaven.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost gave birth to the Christian church as He filled 120 disciples in an upper room with His Spirit.³⁸ The miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers brought new power and purpose to the believers.

Development of the Christian Church

The Christian church was born on the Day of Pentecost when the 120 in the upper room and another three thousand people received the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This early church consisted of many congregations that met in homes. They knew that these various groups comprised the church, the one mystical body of Christ, with Jesus Christ the head. Often a minister would be appointed bishop over congregations within a city or local area. For example, Titus served as the first bishop of Crete.³⁹

With the Jewish Christians steeped in the traditions of the Law and the Gentile Christians coming out of paganism, it should not be surprising that doctrinal differences marked the early church. The first great controversy was whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised. A council in Jerusalem decided they did not. (See Acts 15.) The letters from Peter and Paul repeatedly warned against false doctrines that tried to take root in the churches.

As decades and then centuries passed, the bishop of Rome assumed more and more power and seized the leadership of the organized church. In AD 313 Emperor Constantine gave citizens freedom to choose their religion through the Edict of Milan, thus elevating Christianity's role in the empire. Prior to this, Roman emperors often persecuted Christians.

³⁶ Matthew 9.

³⁷ I Corinthians 15.

³⁸ Acts 2.

³⁹ Titus 1:5.

In AD 325, the first ecumenical council at Nicea was called to clarify how Jesus was divine. Arianism, which taught that Jesus was semi-divine, was rejected by the council. In AD 381 a council at Constantinople added an article about the Holy Spirit. The resulting creed, often called the Nicene Creed, became the primary Trinitarian creed of the western church.

The Nicene Creed states:

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. ⁴⁰

Apostolics also believe in God the Father, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. However, they affirm the statement of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD." As such, Apostolics reject the doctrine of the Trinity and adhere to the strict monotheism taught by the Bible. Jehovah God of the Old Testament came in human flesh as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of mankind. Now He empowers His church as the Holy Ghost.

⁴⁰ <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

Through the succeeding centuries, Christians have never agreed on faith and practice. New controversies continued to arise, some leading to splits in the church. For example, at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, the Assyrian church separated from the main body that refused to accept Nestorianism, which declared Jesus was one person in two distinct and inseparable natures: divine and human. In AD 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, the Oriental Church refused to accept the Chalcedonian Creed that describes the “full humanity and full divinity” of Jesus. In 1054, the church further split along doctrinal, theological, linguistic, political, and geographical lines into the eastern Orthodox Church and the western Roman Catholic Church.

The Renaissance opened the floodgate of new ideas in Europe. The masses were becoming educated and eager to read the books freshly printed by Gutenberg and his colleagues. As humanism placed an emphasis on the dignity of man, secularism eroded the power of the church. As the corruption within the church became more apparent, the rites of the church were no longer as meaningful to the faithful. It was as if society was on shifting sand. Martyrs such as John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, and Girolamo Savonarola spoke out against immorality and spiritual abuse in the church, pleaded for a return to the Scriptures and holiness, and thus planted seeds of ecclesiastical reform.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, a Catholic priest and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, nailed ninety-five theses or propositions to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The theses called for reformation within the Catholic church. They focused upon the sale of indulgences and doctrinal policies about purgatory, particular judgment, Mariology, the intercession of and devotion to the saints, and most of the sacraments. Also included were mandatory clerical celibacy—including monasticism—and the authority of the Pope.

The reform efforts, however, were resisted and the leaders were excommunicated. As a result, new “Protestant” churches arose such as Lutheran and Reformed.

Other early leaders of the Reformation were John Calvin, a French theologian who pastored in Geneva, Switzerland, and Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss scholar and pastor. The views of Calvin and Zwingli differed from Luther’s and created a schism within the movement. Luther taught that salvation could not be earned by good deeds, but was received only as a free gift of God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ as redeemer from sin. Calvin and Zwingli, on the other hand, preached predestination of the soul and God’s absolute sovereignty in the

salvation of mankind. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches look to Calvin and Zwingli as their founders while Baptists, Congregationalists, and Anglicans draw from Calvin's theology.

The following graphs show the development of and in the Christian church:

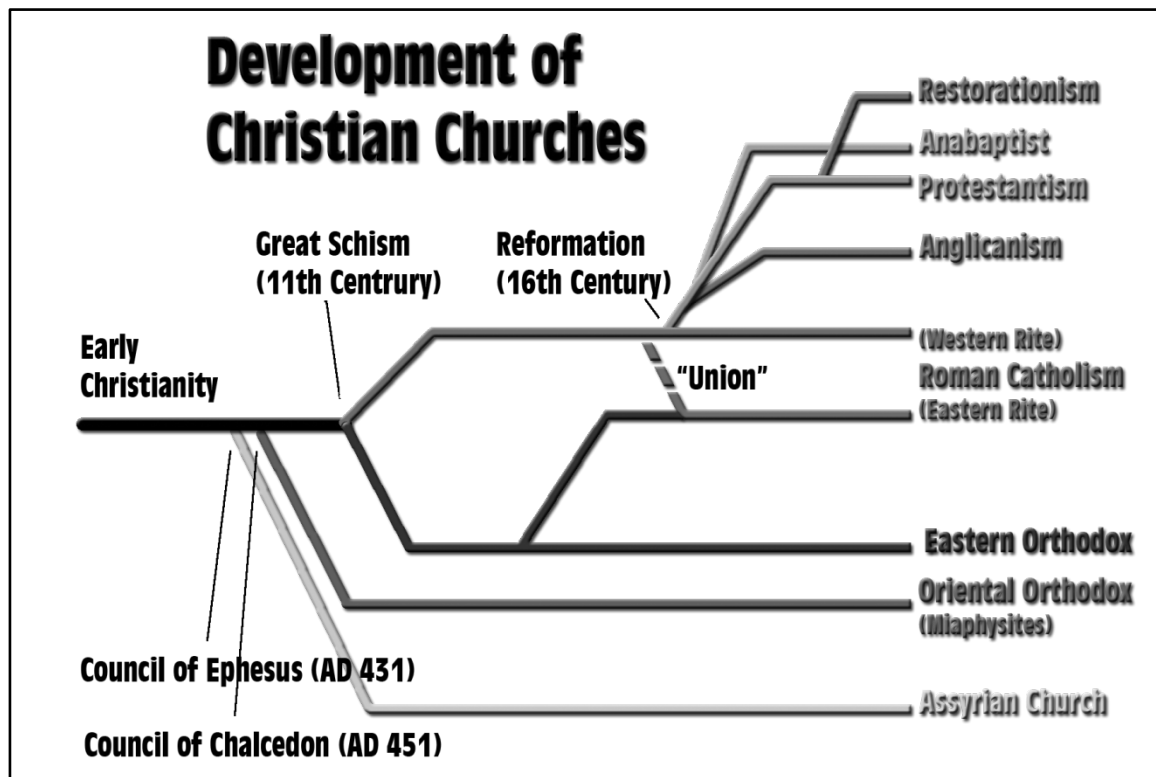


Chart adapted from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity

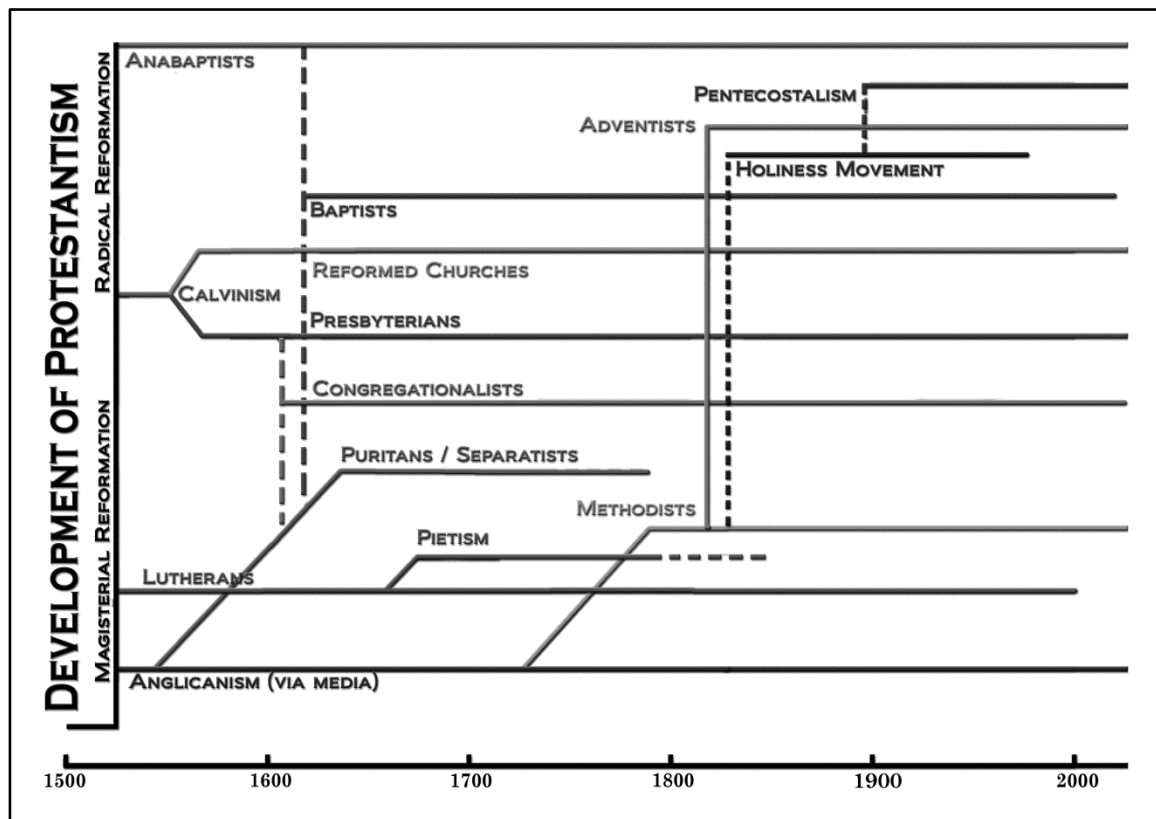


Chart adapted from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformation

While some mainline Protestant churches traveled a path to skepticism and liberalism, others desired spiritual awakening and gave rise to the Holiness movement of the late nineteenth century. This religious fervor led to the Pentecostal revival of the early twentieth century.

With thousands enjoying the thrill of a personal Pentecost and speaking in other tongues just like the 120 in an upper room on the Day of Pentecost, God began to reveal more truth to men such as Frank Ewart and G. T. Haywood. These men began to understand that the Bible explicitly teaches that baptism should be administered in the name of Jesus. (See Acts 2:38; 4:12; 10:48; 19:5.) Their stand for the revelation and power of the name of Jesus and the absolute oneness of God led to their expulsion from the mainline, Trinitarian-led Pentecostal movement. Today, Apostolic believers number twenty-four million worldwide⁴¹ with the United Pentecostal Church International being the largest organization.

Nature of God

⁴¹ http://www.apostolic-pentecostal-churches.com/oneness_pentecostalism.htm (accessed January 27, 2012).

As one of the three major Abrahamic religions, Christianity is monotheistic. The vast majority of Christendom defines *monotheism* as the Trinity.

On January 23, 2006, Matt Perlman stated in his article “What Is the Doctrine of the Trinity?”:

The doctrine of the Trinity is foundational to the Christian faith. It is crucial for properly understanding what God is like, how He relates to us, and how we should relate to Him. But it also raises many difficult questions. How can God be both one and three? Is the Trinity a contradiction? If Jesus is God, why do the Gospels record instances where He prayed to God?

While we cannot fully understand everything about the Trinity (or anything else), it is possible to answer questions like these and come to a solid grasp of what it means for God to be three in one.

What Does It Mean that God Is a Trinity?

The doctrine of the Trinity means that there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Stated differently, God is one in essence and three in person. These definitions express three crucial truths: (1) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, (2) each Person is fully God, (3) there is only one God.⁴²

Whereas Trinitarians adhere to a doctrine that they say cannot be explained and is labeled a mystery, the Bible states:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.⁴³

Instead of three separate, distinct persons that make up one God, the Bible teaches emphatically that the eternal God manifested Himself in flesh—the man

⁴² <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/what-is-the-doctrine-of-the-trinity> (accessed February 4, 2012).

⁴³ 1 Timothy 3:16.

Christ Jesus. Jesus stated, “I and my Father are one.”⁴⁴ To the Jews such a declaration was blasphemy. They did not understand that almighty God—Jehovah God of the Old Testament—incarnated Himself in flesh and was born of a virgin.

After Jesus Christ died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, the same eternal God manifested Himself as the Holy Ghost that filled the 120 on the Day of Pentecost and continues to indwell believers today.

Paul stated:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.⁴⁵

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.⁴⁶

The apostles did not consider the nature of God to be a mystery. Instead they fully understood what was declared in Deuteronomy 6:4: “The LORD our God is one LORD.” Jesus Christ was the fleshly embodiment of Jehovah God of the Old Testament who now lives within His church as the Holy Ghost.

Sacraments

Rituals constitute an important part of most of the world’s religions. Christianity is no exception. Most Christian churches accept baptism and communion (also called the Eucharist or the Lord’s Supper) as Christ-ordained sacraments or ordinances. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy consider confirmation, penance (confession), anointing of the sick (formerly known as extreme unction or last rites), holy orders (ordination), and matrimony also as sacraments. A few groups such as Anabaptists and the True Jesus Church add footwashing as a sacrament. Some Christian denominations such as the Salvation Army and Quakers do not recognize any sacramental rites.

Sacred Books

⁴⁴ John 10:30.

⁴⁵ Romans 1:20.

⁴⁶ Colossians 2:9.

The sixty-six books of the Holy Bible are universally accepted by Christians everywhere as forming the Christian canon, “an exclusive list of books written during the formative period of the Jewish or Christian faiths. The leaders of these communities believed these books to be inspired by God or to express the authoritative history of the relationship between God and his people.”⁴⁷

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament contain:

- The five “books of Moses” begin at Creation and continue through the stories of the patriarchs to Israel’s camping on the banks of the Jordan River, poised to enter the Promised Land.
 - Genesis
 - Exodus
 - Leviticus
 - Numbers
 - Deuteronomy
- Twelve books that record the history of Israel.
 - Joshua
 - Judges
 - Ruth
 - I and II Samuel
 - I and II Kings
 - I and II Chronicles
 - Ezra
 - Nehemiah
 - Esther
- Five books of poetry extolling the might and glory of God.
 - Job
 - Psalms
 - Proverbs
 - Ecclesiastes
 - Song of Solomon
- Seventeen books that record the prophetic voice of Jehovah to the children of Israel.
 - Isaiah
 - Jeremiah
 - Lamentations
 - Ezekiel

⁴⁷ http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Biblical_canon (accessed January 27, 2012).

- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

These books correspond to the twenty-four books of the Jewish Masoretic Text or Tanakh, for Jews do not divide the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Also they combine Ezra and Nehemiah and group the twelve minor prophets into one book.

The New Testament has twenty-seven books. Athanasius of Alexandria listed these books in AD 365 as the “only source of salvation and of the authentic teaching of the religion of the Gospel” in his Easter letter.⁴⁸ They include:

- The four Gospels.
 - Matthew
 - Mark
 - Luke
 - John
- One book of history.
 - Acts
- Twenty-one epistles, which are letters written to churches and individuals.
 - Romans
 - I and II Corinthians
 - Galatians
 - Ephesians
 - Philippians
 - Colossians
 - I and II Thessalonians

⁴⁸ Don Closson, www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/xn-canon.html (accessed January 27, 2012).

- I and II Timothy
 - Titus
 - Philemon
 - Hebrews
 - James
 - I and II Peter
 - I, II, and III John
 - Jude
- One apocalyptic book.
 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Conservative Christians—including Apostolics—believe explicitly in Peter’s declaration in II Peter 1:21: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” That is to say, the Bible is the infallible, inspired Word of God. Some churches have downgraded the Bible to simply being a book containing the Word of God. Others go even further to consider it only as a book with good moral teaching.

The Roman Catholic Church, as well as Greek, Russian, and Eastern Orthodox churches, include the Apocrypha as canonical. Among the various books included are Tobit, Judith, Baruch, and the Maccabees as well as Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. Most Protestant churches—if not all—reject the apocryphal books, citing a lack of divine inspiration.

Salvation

The Bible teaches that humanity is sinful and in need of a savior. It also teaches that God sent His only begotten Son to pay the penalty for the sins of all men, women, boys, and girls, on the cross of Calvary. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provide the means that all humanity can be saved through the grace of God.

Varying beliefs about how a person receives that grace separates Christians into numerous camps. Catholicism says that grace comes through the Roman church.⁴⁹ Calvinism teaches that some men and women are predestined to grace. Arminianism proclaims that whosoever will may accept the grace of

⁴⁹ “What the Roman Catholic Church Teaches about Salvation,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/d3f4ce309ece48630-fd18b986e40c1eb-69.html> (accessed February 4, 2012).

God. Some believe that one must do certain works or meet certain standards before they can receive grace.

Apostolic Pentecostals teach that the free grace of God is available to everyone who will receive and embrace it. The good news of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which provides God's grace. Believers appropriate that grace by obeying the gospel through repentance of sin (death), baptism by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ (burial), and receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in other tongues (resurrection). (See Act 2.)

Conclusion

Christianity traces its roots back to the first promise of a savior in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, fulfilled the messianic prophecy to Adam and Eve and provides salvation to all men, women, boys, and girls who will accept the free grace of God. The message of Christianity supersedes its moral teachings and declares that almighty God—Jehovah God of the Old Testament—has provided atonement for all who will obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Personal Testimony of Jackson Coolbaugh, PhD

By Reverend Jack Coolbaugh

"There is only One up here!" This inaudible statement, which somehow resounded from above throughout my entire soul with unmistakable clarity, stunned me. I slowly brought down the Bible I was holding to the ceiling and said to myself, "There aren't two or three persons in the Godhead, but only one!" Thus began a complete transformation of my life and that of my lovely Japanese wife.

As a boy, I was reared in a denominational, Trinitarian church and had always "seen" two "persons" in Heaven when I used to pray, the Father and the Son, because this was what I had been taught. I became very interested in the Bible as a teenager, but not finding anyone fully living in accordance with the precepts in the Word, I became convinced the Bible was a mythical book and the God of the Bible a myth. I then put Christianity out of my life.

Having left Christianity, I turned to science for answers to the questions of where we came from and what happens after death. For many years at university, I studied physics and engineering, ultimately obtaining a PhD in nuclear engineering. However, science had no provable answers for the ultimate questions of life, not even for how everything all began. The answer that science has can be paraphrased as "In the beginning was nothing, and that 'nothing' exploded in a 'Big Bang' and brought forth all of the matter in the universe." That "answer" science has is empty of meaning and is not "science" but simply a statement of unprovable belief. My years of study yielding such a meaningless answer left me with strong emptiness of soul, which I tried to fill with the pleasures and bustle of life, as so many do.

While working for a Japanese-owned company, I met Michiko, a young lady that captured my heart in one hour. She was like a "breath of fresh air" to my soul and my heaviness of spirit departed for a time as we dated, and then married in 1974. Michiko was Japanese, brought up on a Japanese traditional rice farm until eighteen years of age, and then living and working in Tokyo, Japan, where I met her. She was a very happy-spirited person and strong in her Japanese religion, which was a combination of Buddhism, Shintoism, and magic (fortune-telling, palm-reading, amulets to give protection and similar.) Being in love with her and seeing her apparent happiness, I tried following some of the precepts of her religion for a time. But that also left me with an emptiness of spirit so strong that I wondered if life was even worth living to the end.

That emptiness led me one day, in desperation to know if there was any absolute truth at all, to raise a borrowed Bible to the ceiling and give this challenge: "If there is a God up there who is the God of this Bible, if You will do two things, I will serve you with all of my heart and soul. If you will make Yourself real to me and help me find Your real followers, I will do whatever You require."

I didn't realize at the time that I was, in fact, repenting—being willing to turn from my old ways and follow fully the will of God, but that was what was happening. I was holding that Bible to the ceiling, not knowing if there was any "God" at all, but thinking that if there was a "God" of the Bible, then there were two or three "persons," at the very least a "Father" and "Son." But God made Himself real to me in an instant by the miraculous answering, "There is only ONE up here!" And I had never heard that in my life! He blessed me with my first request and became genuinely real to me.

But how to find His "real" followers? I had never found a group of people fully committed to living according to the precepts in the Bible, and I felt that I could spend the rest of my life knocking on the doors of "Christian" churches and perhaps never find such people. But again the Lord blessed me by having me hear a testimony of a miraculous healing through the prayers of some "Pentecostal" people. I had never heard that word before either, but the very next evening, Sunday, I found myself edging into the back of a United Pentecostal Church service, and the pastor was preaching "There is only ONE up there!" The very same words the Lord had given me the day before. My heart blossomed with joy at now knowing there is a God and finding His true followers, and that joy has never left these past thirty-five years!

This joy of the Lord was all that sustained me through several years of sadness between my wife and myself. She would not leave her Japanese beliefs and come to the Lord, and I would not go back to my former lifestyle. The Bible states, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" and now our lifestyles were no longer in agreement. We still deeply loved each other, but could not "walk together" and loneliness fell heavily upon both of us in our marriage.

Michiko returned to Japan to consider divorce because of her loneliness, but came back after nine months. While she was gone I purchased a Japanese Bible and put it in the house, but she responded angrily that she would never look at it. Blessedly, however, after a few months, she began to read it secretly. While she was reading in the Book of Deuteronomy, God spoke to her through His Word and she repented of idol worship, ancestor worship, and every sort of spiritism and magic. The power in the Word of God in Michiko's native language brought her to Him, when nothing else ever did. Thank God for the Word!

Life was good: good job, both of us living for God, having a small house in the country, and helping in the local church by leading worship and teaching the adult Sunday school class. Then, one night in prayer at home, God spoke to me a second time in exactly the same manner as when He said, "There is only ONE up here!" But this time He totally shocked me by saying, "Go to Thailand!" meaning leave my job, sell out, and go to Thailand to minister. But I wasn't even a minister, nor had I ever considered entering the ministry. And Thailand!—news report images from the war in Vietnam of jungles, tigers, snakes, and strange language, food, and lifestyle flooded my mind. Life was good as it was, and I was beneficial to the local church. I responded to God that "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" and that I would wait for absolute confirmation before I would even consider such a totally major life change. I absolutely knew God had spoken, but I determined to tell no one, not even my wife, and just wait for confirmation.

Months passed by and the experience was not in my mind any longer, when, again in prayer at home before going to a mid-week church service, God spoke to me a third time. This time I was tremendously excited because he "said" inaudibly, "Tonight you will get your confirmation about going to Thailand." I could hardly wait to get to church, but there was nothing said by anyone about Thailand, nor afterwards during fellowship over a meal. I was very, very confused as I drove home with my wife, because it absolutely was God that spoke.

It was fifteen minutes before midnight as I pulled into our garage at home, and my wife said to me, "I had a strange dream last night." She had never said anything about dreams before, and I was not at all interested in what she was saying. But she related, "In my dream there were three young ladies with white blouses and black skirts and I was praying for them. They looked like they were students, but somehow I knew that they were not students but actually were Thai dancers." THAI DANCERS!? To her utter shock I began to shake her with joy and said, "We're going to Thailand!" She had known nothing about my earlier experience with God's call to Thailand but wonderfully supported the call once she knew the entire sequence of events. With her deep

faith and special ministry of prayer and fasting, she was comfortable following wherever the Lord might lead us.

God had confirmed his call, and our lives were never the same. I entered the ministry and prepared and five years later, at the age of fifty-two, I left my job, we sold our home, and we moved to Thailand to minister for over twenty years. A "center" has been built in Thailand to bring young men and women out of their lives of sin and to prepare them as ministers to reach the sixty-five million lost souls of Thailand. What a blessing to see the hand of God reach out to a nation that has been held in the chains of darkness of an oriental religion for thousands of years! And this revival will now never stop until the Lord comes.

Epilogue: In the UPCI General Conference in 2013 I was stunned by a minister saying to me, "In 1989 God called me to go to Thailand to minister, but I declined that call." I was so moved by his comment that I said nothing in reply and didn't even get his name. But God called me to go to Thailand in 1989. I am certain that God did call him, and perhaps others, and kept calling until someone finally responded to that call. The Lord is going to save people of this world, but what a blessing we miss if we don't say, "Here I am Lord, send me." It has been a blessed twenty years in Thailand. May everyone have a similarly blessed life in the Lord!

Study Questions

1. Whose life and teachings form the basis of Christianity? _____

2. Jesus was born of a _____ in _____.
3. At what age did Jesus begin His ministry? _____
4. What is the first great commandment? _____

5. What is the second great commandment? _____

6. Complete the following statements.
 - A. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for _____
 - B. Blessed are the meek: for _____
 - C. Blessed are the merciful: for _____
 - D. Blessed are the peacemakers: for _____
 - E. Blessed are the pure in heart: for _____
7. The miracles Jesus performed testified to His _____
8. How many people witnessed Jesus' personal appearances after the Resurrection? _____
9. How many people were filled with the Holy Ghost in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost? _____
10. In the early church following the Day of Pentecost, where did the congregations meet? _____
11. Who served as the bishop of Crete? _____
12. Which Roman emperor gave the people the freedom to choose their religion? _____
13. What is the Nicene Creed? _____

14. Name three martyrs during the Middle Ages.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

15. What did Martin Luther hope to do in posting his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg church? _____

16. Who was John Calvin? _____

17. How many Apostolic believers are presently in the world? _____

18. What does the Bible teach about the nature of God? _____

19. Define *sacrament*. List three examples. _____

20. Define *Christian canon*. _____

21. How many books are in the Old Testament? _____
How many books are in the New Testament? _____
22. What is the Apocrypha? _____

23. What does the Bible teach regarding the salvation of humanity? _____

24. What is the scriptural mode of baptism? _____

25. How do believers appropriate the grace of God? _____

Personal Study Notes



Small Hindu temple in Sri Lanka.

Photo by J. Prince Mathaisz

HINDUISM

Transcendental meditation. Yoga. New Age religions. Karma. Music of the Beatles. Hollywood stars. All of these are directly influenced by Hinduism, a religion of the East that has greatly affected the Western world.

Hinduism is the world's oldest extant religion, with a billion followers, which makes it the world's third largest religion. Hinduism is a conglomeration of religious, philosophical, and cultural ideas and practices that originated in India, characterized by the belief in reincarnation, one absolute being of multiple manifestations, the law of cause and effect, following the path of

righteousness, and the desire for liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.⁵⁰

Hinduism lacks any unified system of beliefs and ideas. It is a phenomenon and represents a broad spectrum of beliefs and practices which on one hand are akin to paganism, pantheism and the like, and on the other very profound, abstract, metaphysical ideas.

Since religion and culture are nearly interchangeable terms in Hinduism, emotive expressions like 'bhakti' (devotion) or 'dharma' (what is right) and 'yoga' (discipline) are used to depict essential aspects of the religion.

Hinduism believes in idol worship, reincarnation, karma, dharma and moksha. Some moral ideals in Hinduism include non-violence, truthfulness, friendship, compassion, fortitude, self-control, purity and generosity.⁵¹

Overview

Founder	"There is no single founder of Hinduism as Hinduism was not founded as a religion. It was a culture basically flourished in India, which later took the form of a great religion." ⁵²
Date of Founding	Hinduism grew out of the Indus Valley Civilization that flourished between 3300-1700 BC. ⁵³
Worldwide Adherents	Seven hundred fifty million to one billion people □ primarily in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka □ practice Hinduism.
View of God	Hindus believe in one supreme being, Brahman, but they worship thousands of gods and goddesses who are manifestations of Brahman's manifold aspects.
Salvation	Moksha is the liberation from samsara, the

⁵⁰ Subhamoy Das, <http://Hinduism.about.com/od/basics/p/hinduismbasics.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012).

⁵¹ Subhamoy Das, <http://Hinduism.about.com/od/hinduism101/a/tenets.htm> (accessed November 15, 2011).

⁵² <http://hinduismfacts.org/founder-of-hinduism/> (accessed April 21, 2012).

⁵³ <http://www.sanskrit.org/www/Hindu%20Primer/induscivilization.html> (accessed September 18, 2012).

	continual cycle of repeated death and rebirth. It is the release from suffering involved in death and reincarnation.
Soul	Each living being has a soul called Atman.
Sacred Writings	The Four Vedas, the Mahabhart, the Upanishads, the Ramayana
Afterlife	Death only leads to another reincarnation—one of the continuous cycle of death and rebirth—until the soul achieves Moksha and is liberated.

Hinduism grew out of the Indus Valley Civilization that flourished between 3300-1700 BC. The word *Hindu* is derived from the Indus River, which has its source in the Tibetan Plateau of western China and flows through India and Pakistan and into the Arabian Sea. The ancient Persians called the river Sindhu. They referred to the people living across the Indus River as “Hindus” and the religion the Hindus practiced as “Hinduism.” (The Hindus themselves call it *Sanatana Dharma*—the “eternal virtue” or the “eternal religion.”)

Divisions in Hinduism

Although Hinduism lacks a codified set of doctrines, it embraces a wide range of philosophies and practices that divides Hinduism into four main branches. The divisions are based on the main god or goddess worshiped within the sect. Shaivism worships Shiva; Vaishnavism, Vishnu; Shaktism, the female aspect of god (Shakti); and Smartism worships six primary gods: Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesh, Murugan, and Surya.

Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism, and Smartism share rituals, beliefs, tradition, and gods. However, each sect has a different philosophy on how one should reach life’s ultimate goal of liberation from the continual cycle of death and rebirth. Their beliefs about the gods also vary. Even though each group teaches different methods of self-realization and different aspects of the one supreme God, each sect respects and accepts the others. Conflict between the four factions is rare.

Gods and Goddesses:

Polytheistic Monotheism or Monotheistic Polytheism

Hinduism is both monotheistic as well as polytheistic.

It is monotheistic because Hindus believe in one supreme being, Brahman. He occupies the highest place as the creator. Brahman is the Absolute, the supreme being that sustains the universe.

Dr. Frank Morales states:

Brahman, as understood by the scriptures of Hinduism, as well as by the '*acharyas*' of the Vedanta school, is a very specific conception of the Absolute. This unique conception has not been replicated by any other religion on earth, and is exclusive to Hinduism. Thus to even call this conception of Brahman "God" is, in a sense, somewhat imprecise. This is the case because Brahman does not refer to the anthropomorphic concept of God of the Abrahamic religions. When we speak of Brahman, we are referring neither to the "old man in the sky" concept, nor to the idea of the Absolute as even capable of being vengeful, fearful or engaging in choosing a favorite people from among His creatures. For that matter, Brahman is not a "He" at all, but rather transcends all empirically discernable categories, limitations and dualities.⁵⁴

Morales further states that Brahman is *panentheistic*. Whereas *pantheism* teaches that God is in everything, panentheism teaches—very simplistically—that everything is in God. Brahman is the source of everything material and metaphysical.⁵⁵

Jayaram V states:

Brahman is the indescribable, inexhaustible, omniscient, omnipresent, original, first, eternal and absolute principle who is without a beginning, without an end, who is hidden in all and who is the cause source, material and effect of all creation known, unknown and yet to happen in the entire universe. . . . He is incomprehensible even to almost all the gods. And He chooses not to be worshipped in the temples and other places of worship but in

⁵⁴ Frank Morales, "Brahman of the Vedas," <http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/brahman.htm> (accessed April 25, 2012).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

one's heart and mind as the indweller of the material body and master of the senses, the charioteer. He is too remote and incomprehensible to be revered and approached with personal supplications although He is the deepest and the highest vision mankind could ever conceive or attain.⁵⁶

Hinduism is also polytheistic because while Brahman is supreme, thousands of gods and goddesses exist. They are manifestations of the manifold aspects of the Absolute. Sri RamaKrishna states, "There can really be as many Hindu gods as there are devotees to suit the moods, feelings, emotions and social background of the devotees."⁵⁷

Among the more popular gods and goddesses are:

Brahma

- The Creator
- Rides on a swan
- Has four heads, four arms, and a reddish complexion
- Not commonly worshiped
- Not to be confused with Brahman (the ground of all being) or Brahmin (priestly caste)
- Forms the Hindu Trinity (Trimurti) with Vishnu and Shiva

Vishnu

- The Preserver, the "All-pervading"
- Rides on a garuda, a bird
- Has four arms, a bluish complexion, and rests on a snake
- Was incarnated (born as an animal or human nine times with one more still to come)
- In the main god of Vaishnavism
- Restores moral order (dharma)
- Forms the Hindu Trinity (Trimurti) with Brahma and Shiva

Shiva

- The Destroyer/Transformer
- Rides on a bull
- Has matted hair, a third eye, a blue throat, and trident in his hand

⁵⁶ Jayaram V, <http://hinduwebsite.com/brahman.asp> (accessed April 25, 2012).

⁵⁷ Sri Rama Krishna, http://lotussculpture.com/bronze_sculpture_the_gods.htm (accessed November 15, 2011).

- Often worshiped in the featureless lingam form
- Is the main god of Salvism
- Name means “Auspicious One”
- Forms the Hindu Trinity (Trimurti) with Brahma and Vishnu

Sarawati

- Goddess of knowledge, music, and the arts
- Rides on a swan
- Wife of Brahma
- Sits on a white lotus playing a veena

Lakshmi

- Goddess of wealth and prosperity
- Rides on an owl
- Wife of Vishnu
- Usually shown bestowing coins and flanked by elephants

Parvati

- The divine mother
- Rides on a lion
- The reincarnation of Shiva’s first wife
- Has many forms, such as the popular Durga and Kali (see below); often shown together with Saraswati and Lakshmi as the Tridevi (“triple goddess”)

Other Gods

Ganesh

- God of the intellect and the remover of obstacles
- Rides on a mouse
- Is the son of Shiva and Parvati
- Has an elephant head

Murugan

- God of war
- Rides on a peacock
- Son of Shiva and Parvati
- Popular in Tamil areas

- Also known as Skanda

Durga

- A fiercer form of Parvati
- Rides on a tiger
- Has ten arms holding many weapons

Kali

- Goddess of time and death
- Rides on a donkey
- Usually portrayed as dark and violent

Rama

- The seventh avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu
- The central figure in the epic story Ramayana

Krishna

- The eighth avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu
- Usually portrayed as a child and a prankster, often shown playing a flute

Hanuman

- An ape-like god known for assisting Rama

Surya

- God of the Sun
- Pulled on a chariot by horses

Apostolics reject the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses. They worship instead the one true and living God, the Creator of the universe, who took upon Himself the form of man. As a man, Jesus Christ offered His sinless life as atonement for the sins of every man, woman, boy, and girl. Whoever receives Him will find forgiveness of all past sins and a new life filled with blessings, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Four Goals

For all Hindus, life presents four goals: *dharma*, the practice of virtue; *artha*, the pursuit of legitimate worldly success; *kama*, the pursuit of legitimate pleasure; and *moksha*, the release from rebirth. The first three reaffirm the goodness of life, while the fourth acknowledges the undesirable aspect of life.

The three “goodness goals” may be pursued either simultaneously or separately. Some goals may be more suited to different stages of life than others.

Dharma is the practice of virtue, the living of an ethical and ritually correct life. The definition of what is virtuous, however, varies, depending on a person’s caste and jati membership. The primary virtue is to fulfill the duties assigned to one’s caste. Thus a Brahmin should offer sacrifices and do them to the best of his ability, while a Vaishya silversmith should create his plates and bowls as strong and beautiful as possible. If either person tried to do the other’s job, that would be seen as violating their caste duty. The dharma a person is expected to fulfill also varies depending on their stage of life. A student, for instance, becomes virtuous through a different set of actions than a householder.

Artha is the working for and achieving of success, in terms of both wealth and power. This means it is religiously important to be a successful businessman, to sell a lot of carpets for instance, or to manage a successful restaurant. It also means that it is religiously good to serve on the city council, to be active in civic organizations, or even to become a politician. This kind of success is most easily achieved at the householder stage of life.

Kama is pleasure, usually understood as aesthetic pleasure of all kinds. This includes: the producing and enjoyment of art, music, dance, drama, literature, poetry, and sex. . . . It is thus religiously praiseworthy to take part, to support, or just to appreciate any form of pleasure. This should always be done, of course, within the realm of dharma (i.e., in a virtuous manner).

The “life is bad” goal is *moksha*. It is the striving for release from life (since, after all, life is bad). To achieve this, a person must turn their back on life and strive to live without the things that make up life. At first, it requires the turning away from the first three goals, of rejecting family, comforts, pleasure, education, and so on. It also requires one to become an ascetic, a hermit, and to spend one’s time in contemplation. This contemplation should be directed towards overcoming the *maya* [illusion] that clouds human perception of

reality and towards realizing the true nature of the cosmos and one's place in it (that atman [soul] and Brahman are one).⁵⁸

Central Doctrines

Reincarnation

Hinduism teaches that life is a continual cycle of birth, death, and rebirth known as *samsara*. How one acts and reacts in this present life—and has acted in previous existences—determines his future existence. If he has been a loving and upright person, then he may emerge as a higher form in his next incarnation. If he is mean spirited and evil, then he may be reborn as a lower life form. As in an eternal bank account, the good (credits) and bad (debits) from the former lives are carried forward into the future life and determine one's existence. If one is born into a favorable situation, it is because his karma has a positive balance.

Depending on one's karma, a living being will be reborn into one of six realms. Those with good karma are reborn into the realm of demigods, the realm of gods, or the realm of men. The realm of men is considered the highest realm of rebirth, for it offers the opportunity to achieve moksha, release from the continual cycle of death and rebirth. Those with bad karma go to the realm of animals, the realm of ghosts, or the realm of hell.

Karma

In his letter to the Christians in Galatia, Paul stated that people reap what they sow. With their own twists, Hindus call this *karma*. Karma is the moral law of action and reaction. According to the Hindu law of karma:

1. Your decisions in previous incarnations have determined your present condition. You have created your own heaven or hell. You have made yourself what you presently are.
2. Your present thoughts, decisions, and actions are determining your future incarnations. For good or bad, karma can be altered through natural and moral decisions and actions.
3. Chance does not exist in the universe. Every person gets what he

⁵⁸ uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/religionet/er/hinduism/HRLIFE.HTM (accessed September 11, 2012).

deserves based on karma—even upon decisions and actions made in ages of the remote past.

4. The world is the training ground for atman (soul) and Brahman. The individual will not change it in any significant way.
5. Randomness or accident does not exist in the universe. Karma is not fate or strict causality.⁵⁹

Many people believe in the principle of karma but don't apply its laws to their daily life. During times of personal crisis, one has a tendency to cry, "Why has God done this to me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" While God is the creator and sustainer of the cosmic law of karma, he does not dispense individual karma. He does not produce cancer in one person's body and develop Olympic athletic prowess in another's. Instead, we create our own experiences by our decisions.

Therefore, karma is the best spiritual teacher. We learn and grow spiritually as our actions return to us to be resolved and dissolved. In this highest sense, there is no good and bad karma; instead, self-created experiences present opportunities for spiritual advancement. If we can't draw lessons from the karma, then we resist and/or resent it, lashing out with mental, emotional, or physical force. The original substance of that karmic event is spent and no longer exists, but the current reaction creates a new condition of harsh karma.⁶⁰

Karma literally means "deed or act," but more broadly describes the principle of cause and effect. Simply stated, karma is the law of action and reaction that governs consciousness. In physics, Sir Isaac Newton postulated that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Push against a wall and its material is molecularly pushing back with a force exactly equal to yours. In metaphysics, karma is the law that states that every mental, emotional, and physical act, no matter how insignificant, is projected out into the psychic mind and substance and eventually returns to the individual with equal impact.

Caste

An outgrowth of karma is the caste system that stratifies and divides Hindu society into four main castes and many sub-castes. The highest born are the Brahmins, the class of priests and teachers, the middle men between the gods and men. The second highest caste is the Kshatriyas, the warrior and ruler class.

⁵⁹ philosophy.lander.edu/oriental/caste.html (accessed September 11, 2012).

⁶⁰ himalayanacademy.com/resources/pamphlets/KarmaReincarnation.html (accessed November 18, 2011).

They are followed by the Vaishyas, who are the farmers, merchants, and peasants. The lowest caste is the Shudras, the laborers who are destined to serve the other three castes. The lowest of the Shudras are the Chandalas, the impure ones who in ancient times were forbidden even to enter the villages during the day or walk in the same street as members of the higher castes.

One is born into his caste based on karma. If he is a Brahmin, he was good in his previous existence and deserves his elevated status. If he is low born as an “untouchable,” it is because he earned his position by his misdeeds in his previous life. The caste determines occupations, potential marriage partners, and other aspects of life. And because one’s status is based on karma, he should be content and enjoy his life and not try to better himself.

Jayaram V states:

Caste System has been the bane of Hindu society for centuries. . . . The Hindu caste system was a clever invention by the later Vedic society, justified by a few law makers. The upper castes found it convenient to retain and perpetuate their social and religious distinction and political and economic advantage. . . . They wrongfully created human stereotypes to justify a social structure that favored a few at the expense of many, denying a vast majority of people opportunities to use their inborn talents and pursue their own dreams and aspirations.⁶¹

Moksha

In Hinduism—as well as Jainism—*moksha* is the liberation from samsara or the continual cycle of repeated death and rebirth. Moksha is life’s highest goal, for it is the release from the suffering involved in death and reincarnation. Moksha is achieved when one overcomes ignorance and desire—even the desire for moksha—and becomes one with Brahman.

In higher Hindu philosophy, it [moksha] is seen as a transcendence of phenomenal being, and an escape from all limitations entailed in embodied worldly existence, including any sense of consciousness of time, space, and causation (karma). It signifies the dissolution of the sense of self as an egoistic personality—the undoing of conditioned mentality-materiality or *nama-rupa* (name-form). During moksha, one allegedly gains self-

⁶¹ Jayaram V, www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/h_caste.asp (accessed May 1, 2012).

realization and complete awareness of ultimate reality.

Hinduism provides a number of spiritual paths for a practitioner to attain moksha, allowing such diversity for various types of people. However, attainment of moksha is very rare and countless reincarnations are required for a person to reach this state of spiritual perfection. Some Hindu schools restrict the attainment of moksha to males only, while others claim that moksha is available to anyone who demonstrates the requisite effort and/or devotion. In some ways the Hindu concept of moksha resembles the Christian idea of salvation but the two concepts are incommensurate because they are based on different underlying presuppositions about reality.⁶²

The major paths to moksha are known as margas. They are *jnana-marga*, the way of knowledge or insight; *karma-marga*, the way of action or appropriate works; and *bhakti-marga*, the way of devotion to God.⁶³

Yoga

Hinduism offers four main ways to reach toward the “divine reality.” These ways are called *yoga*. *Yoga* is a Sanskrit word literally meaning “yoke,” and as in the English *yoke*, it implies a burden or discipline. Each form of yoga gives its followers a set of actions designed to lead them to their goal.

Jnana Yoga

Janana means “knowledge,” and this yoga leads to understanding ultimate reality through knowledge. Of course, the yogi—a practitioner of yoga—is trying to discern the identity of his own soul with Brahman, the creator and essence of the cosmos. The awareness of this identity must happen not only on an intellectual level, but with every fiber of a person’s being. . . . The ultimate aim is complete detachment of the eternal Self from the temporary one. Once this is achieved, then there is nothing that separates the Self (the *atman*) from Brahman.⁶⁴

Bhakti Yoga

⁶² newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Moksha (accessed November 19, 2011).

⁶³ Bowker, *World Religions*, 20.

⁶⁴ uwacadweb.uwo.edu/religionet/er/hinduism/HRLIFE.HTM (accessed November 20, 2011).

Bhakti yoga is the avenue of devotion to a god. Individuals thus focus on a god or goddess, such as Vishnu, Parvati, or Ganesha, and expresses their love for him or her. The goal is not to just say “I love Shiva” or “I love Kali” or just to perform acts of worship, but to actually love them, to devote oneself to them as if they were a lover, a parent, or one’s child.⁶⁵

Karma Yoga

Karma yoga seeks to reverse the natural order workings of karma. Every action a person performs during their lives generates karma. The working out of karma requires rebirth after death. So, karma yoga reasons, if a person could live without generating karma, then nothing would cause rebirth.

A person avoids producing karma by detaching one’s Self (one’s atman) from one’s actions by removing all involvement, including one’s intent, from their activity. “This can be accomplished either through the knowledge of one’s true Self (like Jnana yoga) or by putting all the actions onto one’s god (following a path similar to Bhakti yoga).”⁶⁶

Raja Yoga

Raja means “royal,” so raja yoga is the royal yoga. It is essentially striving to remove one’s own consciousness from its awareness of this world of illusion and to focus only on the ultimate reality of the universe’s unity through meditation. This is quite difficult to accomplish. The simplest path of raja yoga has eight stages. The struggle is to overcome one’s awareness first of their surroundings, and then of their own body and its activities, such as breathing and the pumping of the heart. When a person is no longer aware of his surrounding and body, then the individual must take control of his or her mind and focus it on one thing only, Brahman. The goal is achieved when through concentration and meditation, all separateness of the world of maya disappears and the unity of atman and Brahman appears.⁶⁷

Holy Writings

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The Hindu scriptures are written in Sanskrit, one of the oldest of the Indo-European languages. Sanskrit is the liturgical language of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

Vedas

The oldest Hindu scriptures are the four Vedas. (*Veda* means “wisdom” or “knowledge.”) The Rig Veda, the oldest of the four, was written between 1400-1200 BC. It was followed by the Atharva Veda, the Sama Veda, and the Yajur Veda. The Vedas were passed on orally for centuries before finally being written down. The Vedas contain hymns, prayers, formulas and spells, and ritual instructions.

The Mahabharata

The Mahabharata is probably the world’s longest poem. Its 100,000-plus verses tell of the lifelong war between the two lines of princes of the house of Bharata. Included in the Mahabharata is the Bhagavad Gita, “the Song of the Lord,” which is famous for the dialog between Krishna and his charioteer.

The Upanishads

The Upanishads is a collection of writing composed between 800-600 BC that centers around mystical ideas about man and the universe, about the atman (soul) and Brahman (God).

The Ramayana

Written by Valmiki, the Ramayana is an epic about Rama, a righteous king who was supposedly an incarnation of the god Vishnu, and Sita. The Ramayana consists of 24,000 couplets based upon the life of Rama.

Worship

Hindu worship (*darshan*) involves *murtis* (images of the gods and goddesses), prayers and chanting mantras, and *yantras* (diagrams of the universe). The most important part of Hindu worship is the adoration of the murtis and may be performed at a temple or at the family’s shrine in the home. Hindu worship is usually the offering of water, fruit, flowers, and incense to the idol as a daily personal sacrifice by the individual. It also involves repeating the names of the favorite gods and goddesses, chanting mantras, and meditation.

Visiting and worshipping in temples are integral parts of Hindu worship.

The temple is regarded as the home of the god or goddess, but it also represents the universe and Brahman. The central figure in the center of the temple is said to emit a force field or sacred power that affects the worshipers during their darshan.

The religious rites may be classified as:

- *Nitya*: Daily rituals of offerings made to the god or goddess at a temple or at the home shrine.
- *Naimittika*: Rituals and festivals occurring only at certain times of the year.
- *Kanya*: Pilgrimages to holy places such as the river Ganges, a temple, or a sacred site.

An important part of daily Hindu worship is chanting mantras.

The sacred utterances or chanting of Sanskrit Mantras provide us with the power to attain our goals and lift ourselves from the ordinary to the higher level of consciousness. They give us the power to cure diseases; ward off evils; gain wealth; acquire supernatural powers; worship a deity for exalted communion and for attaining blissful state and attain liberation.

Mantras are Vedic in origin. The teachings of the Vedas consist of various Mantric chants or hymns cognized by different seers or Rishis from the Cosmic Mind. Since the Vedas are impersonal and eternal, the exact historical date of the origin of Mantra chanting is hard to arrive at. For example, every Mantra in the Vedas, Upanishads and various religious traditions (sampradayas) within Hindu religion begin with Om or Aum—the primordial sound, the sound that is said to have its origins at the time of the creation of the cosmos—also referred to as the ‘Big Bang’. . . . Om is the most important of all mantras. All mantras generally begin and often also end with Om.⁶⁸

Conclusion

About one billion people—primarily in India, Nepal, and Sri

⁶⁸ <http://www.hinduism.about.com/od/prayersmantras/a/mantrachanting.htm> (accessed November 21, 2011).

Lanka practice Hinduism, based on the teachings of the Vedas and other sacred writings. They worship gods and goddesses who are manifestations of Brahman, the eternal Absolute. Celebrities such as the Beatles and several Hollywood movie stars have embraced the religion and popularized it in the West. Many New Age religions are rooted in Hinduism.

The belief in karma and reincarnation brings to each Hindu inner peace and self-assurance. The Hindu knows that the maturing of the soul takes many lives, and that if the soul is immature in the present birth, then there is hope, for there will be many opportunities for learning and growing in future lives. Yes, these beliefs and the attitudes they produce eliminate anxiety, giving the serene perception that everything is all right as it is. And, there is also a keen insight into the human condition and appreciation for people in all stages of spiritual unfoldment.⁶⁹

Unlike Hindus who find inner peace, self-assurance, and hope in a karmic existence that *may* lead to moksha in hundreds or thousands of lifetimes, Apostolics find hope in Jesus Christ. They know that because of His sacrifice on Calvary, they can have complete forgiveness of their sins by repenting of their sins and being baptized in Jesus' name. The shed blood of Jesus Christ washes away every sin stain and provides peace and joy in the Holy Ghost in this present life and eternal life after death.

Personal Testimony of Bobby Adhikari

By Reverend Bobby Adhikari, Secretary/Treasurer, United Pentecostal Church of Nepal

I was born in the Hindu kingdom of Nepal, nearby the Everest region. My parents had always worshiped idols and observed rituals, fasts, and holy days on the Hindu calendar. The Hindu concept of salvation is liberation from this supposed chain of rebirths and the sufferings of life. On important religious days, we would go as a family to Nepal's most renowned Hindu shrine, the Temple, where we bowed down to idols. As any other Hindu boy, I had grown up fascinated with the stories of Ram, the hero of the Hindu epic Ramayana, and Krishna, the hero of the other great Hindu epic Mahabharata. While I was a young boy, my parents taught me that we have thirty-five billion gods. I had big doubts that we had thirty-five billion gods, so I was so thirsty and kept searching for the one true God who created the universe, Heaven, and people.

⁶⁹ <http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/pamphlets/KarmaReincarnation.html> (accessed September 11, 2012).

I came to the capital city for higher education. During a school break, a Christian friend invited me to church and I went with him. During the church service, they sang a song and started to pray and preach the Word of God. I thought *crazy people are here*, so I walked out from the church service.

The next day, they invited me again, but I felt the same thing—that a group of crazy people are here. When I first heard about Jesus, I hesitated to accept the message because of the hurt and shame it would bring my family name. Later on, when the Christians talked about sin, they proved that I was a sinner, that Jesus Christ died for my sin, and that He is the one and only God who can forgive my sin. I began to realize I was a sinner and that none of these thirty-five billion gods died for my sin. This was the turning point of my life. For three years, I observed the Bible but refused to take baptism because I was so afraid of my family. However, one day the Lord spoke to me that I should be baptized. From this first step I began a journey that would lead me to become a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal.

Personal Testimony of Kash Nathan

Rev. Kash Nathan

Born Hindu in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, now living born again in America!

My name is Kash Nathan, I was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I am the youngest of four children. My parents were noble, honest, hard-working, and caring. They strived to provide a safe, loving home environment, teaching us to observe the traditions and respect the gods. We were raised in a very strong Hindu family. My mother is Brahmin (the Hindu priesthood lineage). When I was born my parents vowed to dedicate me to the god Muragan by the age of twelve. I played the Tabla drums in the temples as a child while dancers performed for the gods. We attended festivals such as Thaipusam and Diwali. Witch doctors, polytheistic beliefs, demon possession, walking on coals of fire, and piercings of the flesh were 'normal' common practices in our culture.

Around the age of fifteen, I continued visiting the temples out of honor for my parents, but the rituals did not mean anything to me. There was no significant change in my life, so I stopped believing. I devoted myself fully to satisfying a new desire, the god of money, drugs, and alcohol. By age sixteen I began using and selling a variety of drugs and was recruited into a gang. Very quickly I learned to make lots of money and became popular. Before long I owned a beer garden and a night club. I had found fulfillment, because instead of following external rituals, I made the rules now.

I sacrificed many friends on the altar of this new god. Suicides, murder, gang fights, overdoses, and car wrecks occurred almost weekly. I also entertained thoughts of suicide while

having anywhere from three to four different drugs in my system on top of alcohol nearly every day. I travelled to Germany, Ireland, London, Paris, Thailand, Singapore, and many other places, living there for months or weeks at a time looking for a new life or the next new thing.

I eventually lost everything that I had earned serving this god: money, friends, health, self-respect. I just wanted to run away or die. I moved in with my parents and barely scraped together enough money to get high or drunk as often as possible. The room I stayed in was shared with the Hindu shrine, altar, incense, and idols. Many times I stood in front of the Hindu altar where several gods are placed in front of me and I cried and prayed for help to get my life back together and to be free from the addiction, anger, depression, and hopelessness.

On one occasion—one that is burned forever in my memory—I came home around 6:00 AM from an ecstasy party. I immediately walked up to my bedroom, where I started listening to some techno music until I could sober up. Around 8:00 AM my sister, Vani Marshall, knocked on my door requesting me to take her to church right away. After much hesitation, I agreed to drop her off and wait in the car. I knew nothing of Christianity or what happened inside the building. Nevertheless, I knew they were good people and I knew we had nothing in common. Upon arriving, I told my sister to take her time and that I would sleep in the car until she was done.

About thirty minutes passed and there was a knock at my window. A man from the church was there to let me know my sister needed me. I was so tired and irritated, I told him to give me five minutes then I would be up, but I fell back asleep. Another persistent knock came again fifteen minutes later, so reluctantly I got out of my car, lit up a cigarette, and walked toward the building. Before entering the building, I flicked my cigarette on the ground and walked in, blowing smoke into the church as I made my way to the back seat.

When I walked in I saw people jumping, clapping, singing, dancing, and waving their hands. Loud music was playing and I thought to myself, the clubs are supposed to close at 6:00 AM. That day I don't remember anything my sister preached, but the brother that knocked on my window came and asked if he could pray for me. I said, sure. I closed my eyes out of respect and felt a warmth come over me. I began to cry. Not understanding what I was feeling, I ran out the back door and tried to regain my composure. Then I came back into the church and my sister motioned for me to come down front. Several people gathered around me and started praying again. And again, I felt it—a warm sensation of love from all the people around me—and I started to cry uncontrollably. I broke down, fell to my knees, and prayed. I didn't know what I was feeling, but I remember thinking that this place has the answers I need. For the first time in my life, I felt true joy!

After the service we were invited to fellowship with the pastor and his family. We stayed with them until 1:00 AM! We talked the entire day. Not one time did they discriminate against me because of my appearance or how bad I smelled from the alcohol and partying. I felt hope for my life, I felt encouraged, and felt like I had something to live for. I had a new passion driving me to know more about the one true living God. My brother-in-law became my first pastor and began teaching and discipling me. The Lord led me to the waters of baptism in His name and delivered

me in three days of all chemicals that had me bound! Shortly after I was filled with His Spirit and began my journey of healing, freedom, and restoration of the broken relationships in my life.

Before my baptism, I moved with my sister and brother-in-law, Vani and Marshall Xavier, to Auckland, New Zealand, to be with them as they were establishing a foreign missions work. I worked in the sound booth, drove the church van, and served in any way that was needed.

A few years later, we moved to the United States to the small town of Alexandria, Louisiana. There we began to serve under the leadership of Pastor Anthony Mangun. God had given me a new purpose and destiny. I received my call of an evangelist and we evangelized for four years.

Recently, I was appointed as a North American missionary, working with Multicultural Ministries reaching out to the Asian immigrants and refugees living in the States. I am married and have three children, with one on the way. We are continually seeking to fulfill the purpose of God and striving to build a foundation that one day our children can stand firm on, in faith and love towards Jesus Christ!

Personal Testimony of Vani Marshall Xavier

BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED

By Vani Marshall Xavier, MA, BCPC

I was born and raised in an orthodox Hindu family. On my maternal side, I come from the Brahmin priesthood caste, the highest social caste among Hindus. My grandfather and several uncles and cousins served as Hindu priests. It was unthinkable for anyone in my family to believe in or practice another religion. I became a deeply committed Hindu and yet, even as a child, I always had a deep hunger for the one true God. Although the "Vedas," Hindu "sacred books," contained great philosophies and lofty concepts, they did not point me to the identity of the Creator God. I had heard of Jesus and knew the basic story of Christ. However, from my vantage point of upbringing, I dismissed Him as nothing more than a good man.

I was afflicted with an illness that the doctors could not identify and therefore could not cure. In spite of my physical condition, my pursuit of God never diminished. One night while I was in terrible physical pain, I cried out: "Jesus! I am a Hindu and I worship many gods! If You are the one true God, then heal my body! Take this pain away and give me peace!" Suddenly, a very real and powerful presence entered my room. I knew without a doubt it was the manifest presence of Almighty God. I heard a voice say clearly: "I am Jesus. I am God." I fell on my face weeping. I knew the voice I heard was the voice of the One I had searched for and finally found! The debilitating pain left my body; I was completely healed! Peace like I had never known filled my heart and mind.

I decided then and there to follow Jesus Christ, surrendering to Him wholly. I knew I had been forever changed.

I soon found an Apostolic church where I was baptized in the name of Jesus and was filled with the Holy Ghost. To say my life changed dramatically is the grandest of understatement. However, with this change came persecution. When one is rejected for doing what is right, Scripture admonishes us to accept it and even take pleasure in it. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10).

I had been surrounded by a loving family. My parents had always generously provided for me. But due to my new found allegiance to Christ, I was suddenly subjected to a great deal of hostility and rejection from my family who did not understand the significance of what I had experienced. When I refused to worship other gods, my relatives turned away from me. Author John Piper wrote, "There is such a tension between the message and way of life of Christians on the one hand and the mindset and way of life of the world on the other that conflict is inevitable . . . Sooner or later a deeply God-centered Christian will be mistreated for the things he believes in or the life he lives." Although this hostility hurt me, I was determined not to back down. In fact Jesus admonished us to "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:12).

The Holy Ghost gave me the strength to continue to love my family despite the rejection. I clung to the power of God's Word and its ability to heal and strengthen in times of trouble. As I did my heart was strangely filled with joy and a great calm. God's promises gave me focus and a determination to persevere no matter what. I learned that if we have a made-up mind to love and serve Jesus, then although we may be troubled on every side, we will not be distressed, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. (See II Corinthians 4:8-9.) Not only had I found the One my soul longed for, He directed my steps. When one faces trials, there is a temptation to give up or back down. The Bible exhorts us "not to grow weary in well doing, for in due season we will reap if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

I kept reaching out to my family. I kept inviting my father to church services. He was unwilling to come, but soon he did. By the time the service was over, he was filled with the Holy Ghost and was baptized in Jesus' name. In the following months, I connected with both my younger brothers. I spoke to them about the love of God and the power of the Holy Ghost. It took many months for them to respond. I did not give up and instead relentlessly reached out to them. Both my brothers received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and were baptized. The Lord fulfilled His promise to me for the salvation of my household!

There is no other name given to man by which we must be saved. There is but one God and His name is Jesus.

Self Help Test

1. What is the world's oldest religion still in existence? _____

2. Who founded Hinduism? _____

3. Define *reincarnation*. _____

4. Define *moksha*. _____

5. What is *dharma*? _____

6. How many people worldwide are followers of Hinduism? _____

7. List five moral ideals taught in Hinduism.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
8. List the four main branches of Hinduism.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____

9. What is the basis of the divisions within Hinduism? _____

10. Who is Brahman? _____

11. List six Hindu gods or goddesses.
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____
12. How many Hindu gods and goddesses exist? _____

13. Which gods form the Hindu "Trinity"?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
14. What is the Tridevi? _____

15. Who forms the Tridevi? _____

16. List the four goals of every Hindu and define the goals.
- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
17. What determines one's present status in life and also what his future existence will be? _____
18. What is Atman? _____
19. A Hindu may be reborn into one of six realms. What are these realms?
- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
20. What are margas? _____
21. What is yoga? _____

22. What is a mantra? _____

23. What are murtis? _____

24. What are the primary holy writings of the Hindus? _____

25. Describe Hindu worship. _____



Taj Mahal, the “jewel of Muslim art in India”

Photo by James Corbin

Islam

Introduction

A veiled woman in a black burka, a call to prayer from an ornate minaret, and a gleaming scimitar are only a few things that evoke thoughts of Islam. Islam is one of the three great religions that are monotheistic and venerate Abraham. (The other two are Judaism and Christianity.) “Islam . . . comes from an Arabic root word meaning ‘peace’ and ‘submission,’ . . . [and] teaches that one can only find peace in one’s life by submitting to Almighty God (Allah) in heart, soul and deed. The same Arabic root word gives us ‘Salaam alaykum,’ (‘Peace be with you’), the universal Muslim greeting.”⁷⁰

For centuries Westerners called Islam *Mohammedism*. Muslims reject the term and consider it offensive, believing that *Mohammedism* infers the worship of Mohammed just as Christians worship Jesus Christ.

John Bowker stated in *World Religions*, “According to its own teachings, Islam began as the way of life, or *din* (often translated as ‘religion’), which God intended for his creation from the start.”⁷¹ Because of man’s rebellion and sin, God sent prophets, such as Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus), to call the people back to the proper *din*. Finally, the prophet Mohammed was sent with the full and final revelation of God in the seventh century.

Mohammed

Mohammed was born in Mecca in AD 570. He was orphaned as a young boy and reared by his uncle, Abu Talib. He worked as a merchant and shepherd and first married around the age of twenty-five. Fifteen years later, dissatisfied with life, he took refuge in a cave on Mount Hira near Mecca to meditate and reflect on life.

During this period, in the month of Ramadan, Mohammed had his first revelation from God. Three years later he started to publically preach that “God

⁷⁰ <http://islam.about.com/od/basicbeliefs/p/intro.htm> (accessed December 28, 2011).

⁷¹ John Bowker, *World Religions*, 176.

is one” and that only a life completely submitted to the will of God is acceptable to God. He declared that he himself was a prophet sent from God. His radical teachings on the oneness of God angered the polytheistic people of Mecca, who persecuted Mohammed and his followers. He and his followers then moved north to Medina.

During his retreat in the mountain, the angel Jibrill (Gabriel) appeared to Mohammed with revelations from God. These revelations were eventually collected into the Qur’an, the Islamic holy book, which the “Muslims believe is God’s actual utterances and has been with him in heaven from eternity.”⁷²

Mohammed died in 632 and the Muslim community split on his successor. Those who thought that the best qualified man should succeed him chose Abu Bakr; these became the Sunni Muslims. Others thought that Mohammed’s cousin or son-in-law should succeed him; they became the Shi’a Muslims. The Shi’as exalt the imans, whom they regard as a line of inspired teachers. Although little separates the Shi’as and Sunnis as far as doctrine and practice, their bitter political divisions continue to result in deadly sectarian violence.

Spread of Islam

Within 100 years Islam had swept over the known world, reaching from the Atlantic to the borders of China. It has remained a rapidly expanding religion, with about a quarter of the world’s population being Muslims. They form nearly total majorities in countries in the Middle East, northern Africa, parts of central Asia and Indonesia.⁷³

Contrary to its name, the spread of Islam has not always been peaceful. Hoards of Muslim military forced many to convert. (See section on jihad.) The Qur’an states:

And fight them until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and polytheism: i.e. worshipping others besides Allah) and the religion (worship) will all be for Allah Alone [in the whole of the world]. But if they cease (worshipping others besides Allah), then certainly, Allah is All-Seer of what they do.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Bowker, 177.

⁷⁴ Quran 8:39, Translation from the *Noble Quran*.

“Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued” (9:29). Suras 9 and 5 are the last “revelations” that Muhammad handed down—hence abrogating what came before, which includes the oft-quoted verse 2:256—“Let there be no compulsion in religion. . . .”⁷⁵

Following his flirtation with preaching relative peace and tolerance at Mecca—a 13-year disaster that netted less than 100 followers (mostly friends and family)—Muhammad changed tactics during his last ten years. Once he obtained the power to do so, he began forcing others into accepting his claims about himself at the point of a sword. In many places in the Hadith, he tells his followers that he has been commanded by Allah to fight unbelievers until they profess their faith in Islam (the *Shahada*). . .

Down through the centuries Muslims have forced Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, pagans and others to accept Islam, either by bluntly offering them death as an alternative, or by making their lives so miserable (i.e., taxes, denial of rights) that the conquered convert to Islam under the strain.

Forced conversions persist among extremists. Recently in Egypt, a Christian girl was kidnapped and told that she would be raped if she did not convert. In 2010, an 11-year-old Christian boy in Pakistan was kept enslaved in chains by his Muslim landlord, who proudly told the world that he would liberate the lad if he embraced Islam.⁷⁶

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is Islam's holy book. It contains the revelations that were first given to Mohammed. According to Bowker, “Only the Arabic Qur'an expresses without fault the Word of God. This is why the Qur'an cannot be translated into any other language—it can only be paraphrased or interpreted—and the reason

⁷⁵ <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/Quran/013-forced-conversion.htm> (accessed December 30, 2011).

⁷⁶ <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/Quran/013-forced-conversion.htm> (accessed December 30, 2011).

why calligraphy is so important to Islam. To make beautiful the Word of God is an act of worship and thanksgiving.”⁷⁷ The Qur’an has 114 *suras* or chapters.

In addition to the Qur’an, Muslims accept the words and actions of the Prophet and his companions as a living commentary on the meaning of the Qur’an and how it should be applied to daily living. These acts and comments have been gathered into the six collections of the Hadith or Sunna.

Five Pillars of Islam

The “Five Pillars of Islam” are the five basic acts that Sunni Muslims consider obligatory. The acts form a framework for worship and give structure to Muslim life. They also demonstrate commitment to Islam.

The first pillar is the *Shahadah*, the affirmation that God is one. The faithful repeat, “There is no god except ALLAH and Muhammad is the Messenger of ALLAH.” The significance of this declaration is the belief that the only purpose of life is to serve and obey God, and this is achieved through the teachings and practices of the Last Prophet, Mohammed. Bowker states:

From his profound experience in the cave on Mount Hira, Muhammad realized that if God does indeed exist, it is God who exists. There can only be what God is—there cannot be difference or rival gods (for example, a god of the Jews, a god of the Christians, or the many gods of the polytheists). From this tremendous insight into the oneness of God, or *tawhid*, the whole of Islam flows forth.⁷⁸

While Apostolic Pentecostals agree wholeheartedly that God is one, their view of the nature of God differs from Muslims. Apostolics worship an eternal God of love and mercy, who willingly took on human form (Jesus Christ) to provide atonement for the sins of a lost world through His sacrificial death on the Cross. While Apostolics acknowledge Jesus Christ as the son of God—Jehovah God in flesh—the Muslims only consider Him to be a good man and prophet (‘Isa).

⁷⁷ Bowker, 182.

⁷⁸ Bowker, 178.

The second pillar is *Salat*, the set of prayers that Muslims must say in the direction of Mecca—actually, toward the sacred shrine of Ka’bah at the center of the mosque in Mecca—five times a day. The prayers

are a direct link between the worshipper and God. There is no hierarchical authority in Islam and there are no priests. Prayers are led by a learned person who knows the Qur’an and is generally chosen by the congregation.

Prayers are said at dawn, mid-day, late-afternoon, sunset and nightfall, and thus determine the rhythm of the entire day. These five prescribed prayers contain verses from the Qur’an, and are said in Arabic, the language of the Revelation. Personal supplications, however, can be offered in one’s own language and at any time.

Although it is preferable to worship together in a mosque, a Muslim may pray almost anywhere, such as in fields, offices, factories and universities. Oftentimes visitors to the Muslim world are struck by the centrality of prayers in daily life.⁷⁹

A devout Muslim carries a prayer mat with him to insure he prays on a clean spot. In the center of the mat is a compass set toward Mecca, so the worshiper will know the right direction to face as he prays.

The third pillar is *Sawm*, the daily fast throughout the month of Ramadan. During Ramadan, all Muslims fast from dawn until sundown, abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations with their spouses. The sick; elderly; menstruating, nursing, and pregnant women; and those on a journey may break the fast and make up an equal number of days later in the year—provided their health permits and they are able.

While beneficial to one’s health, fasting is primarily for self-purification and self-restraint. Qur’an 2:183 says, “O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint.”

The fourth pillar is *Zakat*, almsgiving. An important principle of Islam is that everything belongs to God and wealth is to be held in trust by humans. (This is akin to Christian stewardship.)

⁷⁹ <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> (accessed December 27, 2011).

All adult Muslims of sound mind and body with a set level of income and assets are expected to pay *zakat*. *Zakat* is due yearly on certain types of property and is distributed to eight categories of individuals specified by the Qur'an. These categories are usually defined to include orphans, the poor, travelers, beggars, debtors, slaves, and the efforts to propagate Islam. *Zakat* is payable, at different rates, on crops, harvests, herds, gold and silver, and merchandise. For gold and silver, which is understood to include all liquid assets, the rate is 2.5%. Being religiously prescribed, *zakat* is distinct from charity (*sadaqa*) which is voluntary. *Zakat* is essentially a personal exercise with no intermediary control, and could be given directly to its recipients, although a central treasury often collects it. In recent times, Pakistan, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia have enacted legislation to enforce the *zakat*.⁸⁰

The fifth pillar is Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca in the twelfth Islamic month. This pilgrimage is obligatory only for those who are physically and financially able to make it. Nevertheless, over two million people make the trip annually. They come from every corner of the globe.

The annual hajj begins in the twelfth month of the Islamic year (which is lunar, not solar, so that hajj and Ramada-n fall sometimes in summer, sometimes in winter). Pilgrims wear special clothes: simple garments that strip away distinctions of class and culture, so that all stand equal before God.

The rites of the hajj, which are of Abrahamic origin, include going around the Ka'bah seven times, and going seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa as did Hagar (Hajir, Abraham's wife) during her search for water. The pilgrims later stand together on the wide plains of 'Arafat (a large expanse of desert outside Makkah) and join in prayer for God's forgiveness, in what is often thought as a preview of the Day of Judgment.

The close of the hajj is marked by a festival, the *'Id al Adha*, which is celebrated with prayers and the exchange of gifts in Muslim communities everywhere. This and the *'Id al Fitr*, a festive day celebrating the end of Ramada-n, are the two holidays of the Islamic calendar.⁸¹

⁸⁰ <http://www.answers.com/topic/zakat#ixzz1iWJHppUY> (accessed January 4, 2012).

⁸¹ <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> (accessed December 28, 2011).

Nature of Man and Salvation

Islam teaches that humanity is born in a state of innocence and has an innate ability to know the true god. Therefore, Islam has no room for the Christian concepts of “the fall of man” and “original sin” –or need for a savior. “For a Muslim, the purpose of life is to live in a way that is pleasing to Allah so that one may gain Paradise. It is believed that at puberty, an account of each person’s deeds is opened, and this will be used at the Day of Judgment to determine his eternal fate.”⁸²

Consequently, if one wishes to enter Heaven and avoid the fire of Hell, he must believe in the “One God” and obey his message. Qur’an 3:85 states, “If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).”

According to the Qur’an, on Judgment Day, Allah will judge the deeds of every individual. If the person believes in the “One God,” if he is truly repentant of his sins, if his righteous acts outweigh his evil deeds, and if Allah wills it, then that person may be permitted to enter paradise. As a result, a Muslim can never be assured of future salvation since it is based on his works. Only Allah can determine if the good deeds surpass the bad.

The Qur’an states:

- “To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward” (5:9).
- “And He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and gives them more out of His grace; and (as for) the unbelievers, they shall have a severe punishment” (42:26).
- “O you who believe! If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah, He will grant you a distinction and do away with your evils and forgive you; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace” (8:29).
- “O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and speak the right word, He will put your deeds into a right state for you, and forgive you your faults; and whoever obeys Allah and His Apostle, he indeed achieves a mighty success” (33:70-71).

⁸² <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/beliefs/salvation.htm> (accessed December 30, 2011).

- “But if ye obey Allah and his messenger, he will not belittle aught of your deeds: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (49:14).

So not only do Muslims reject the Christian concept of original sin, they also reject the biblical truth that the grace of God is available to everyone who believes and accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior. For them, salvation—entrance into Paradise following death—is earned only by good works.

Mosques

A Muslim house of worship is called a mosque. *Mosque* is derived from the Arabic *masjid* with a definite French influence and means “place of prostration.” The earliest mosques were probably simple shelters made from palm trunks and fiber roofing. The two basic forms of modern mosques are *hypostyle*, in which the roof is supported by pillars, and *domical*, in which the walls are surrounded by a dome. The mosques provide space for worship, prayer, teaching, and study.

Muslims pray facing Mecca. Within the mosque, the direction to Mecca is usually indicated by an empty alcove. Most mosques also contain minarets, towers from which the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. The minaret is a symbol of God’s supremacy and oneness.

Jihad

Since September 11, 2001, many people in the West have learned the meaning of *jihad*. George Braswell wrote in *What You Need to Know about Islam & Muslims*:

There are two understandings of jihad. The basic meaning is “to struggle” or “to strive.” Greater jihad is the warfare against sin and all that is against God and the teachings of the Quran. It is the personal struggle each Muslim wages to be a true believer and follower. The Quran urges one to stay on the straight path and to strive in Allah’s cause (22:78; 49:15).

Lesser jihad is the traditional holy war launched in the name of God against the enemies of God and Islam. Thus, jihad is both a

personal and community commitment to defend and spread the religion of Islam.

Muslims popularly refer to four expressions of jihad:

- Jihad of the Tongue: speaking about their faith
- Jihad of the Hand: expressing their faith in good works
- Jihad of the Heart: making their faith a force for good
- Jihad of the Sword: defending their faith when under attack

Both non-Muslims and Muslim writers have used the phrase “holy war” with reference to jihad. Muslim scholars, however, write that Islam teaches it is unholy to start war although some wars are inevitable and justifiable.

The Quran urges those who fight for the cause of Allah and kill pagans wherever they are found. Whenever believers meet unbelievers, Muslims are encouraged to smite their neck and to fight those who believe not in Allah and the last day (2:244; 47:4; 9:5; 9:29).

Tradition approves of violence against infidels and those who leave Islam as their native or chosen religion. Fighting and killing are described as beloved activities. Apostacy is punished by death . . .

The Quran and the traditions present jihad as coercive and violent. Muslims understand it to be an effort or struggle to bring righteousness and peace on the earth.⁸³

Conclusion

Islam is the youngest of the world’s five great religions. It was founded in the seventh century by the prophet Mohammed, who received a series of revelations from the one true god. Within a hundred years of its founding, Islam encompassed northern Africa, the Middle East, and much of Asia—thanks to the evangelistic zeal of Islamic armies who offered their conquered foes conversion to Islam or death. Salvation for a Muslim—entrance into Heaven—is obtained by

⁸³ George W. Braswell, *What You Need to Know About Islam & Muslims*, 38.
<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/j16.html> (accessed January 4, 2012).

good works and the will of Allah. The Five Pillars of Islam—*Shahadah*, the affirmation that God is one; *Salat*, the set of daily prayers; *Sawm*, the daily fast during Ramadan; *Zakat*, almsgiving; and *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca in the twelfth Islamic month—give structure to Islamic life.

What Is the Potential of a Gospel Tract?

By G. Randy Adams

Israel was born in Burkina Faso into a prominent Muslim family, grew up under the teachings and influence of Islam, attended school and was in training to become a cleric. One day he found a gospel tract on the ground that someone had discarded. The subject of the tract was baptism in Jesus' name. Israel read the tract and became interested enough to purchase a Bible to further study the subject.

After a careful study of the subject of baptism in Jesus' name, he decided to get alone and pray rather than going to the local mosque. When he prayed, he asked God, "God, I want to know who your true people are. Are your true people the Muslim people among whom I have lived all my life? Or are your true people the people of the name of Jesus?"

Israel says that he heard an audible voice reply to him, saying, "My people are not the Muslim people, but my true people are the people of the name of Jesus."

Today Israel is an Apostolic pastor in the nation of Benin.

Testimony of the wife of a UPC pastor in Niger, West Africa

Coming from a Muslim family, I came to know the Lord through one of my sisters, who knew Him and ceased not to testify of the wonderful works of God. She invited me to church several times, but I refused to go.

One day she offered me a small book, which at first I refused, but then took. One night I opened the book to see what it was about. I did not know that the words contained in the book would prove to be so powerful. I came to realize right away that all of my life up to that point had been wasted. I had done nothing that would help me go to Heaven. I saw all my sins pass before me and spent the entire night weeping and asking God to not let me go to Hell and to place me on the right path.

There was an intense struggle inside of me between the religion of my parents and that which I had just read in the small book. I asked myself, "Where is the truth?" I cried out in the night, "Oh, God, help me. Save me!" Then I decided to memorize the prayer of repentance that I found in

the little book. I asked Jesus if it is really He who can save me, to come into my heart, to take control of my life, and to forgive all my sin.

After this prayer, I had peace in my heart and was full of joy. The next day, I took all of the amulets and powders that I had been given by the Muslim witchdoctors and flushed them all down the toilet. Sunday morning I went to church.

When my parents learned that I had gone to church, they began to persecute my sister more than ever, accusing her of having turned me away from the Muslim way. As for me, at work as well as in my neighborhood, I was treated as an infidel and abandoned by all. "You, a Muslim, have abandoned the religion of your parents. You know that you are going to Hell and there will be no one who will bury you the day that you die." This is what I heard every day.

Finally, I gave in to the devil and stopped going to church. This was the unhappiest time of my life. I lost all peace and joy, and decided to go back to the witchdoctors, who were known to be very powerful, and to the religion of my parents. I spent all of my salary on them but was nothing bettered. With every passing day, I became more burdened and was almost to the point of losing my mind. The devil gives a pound of good for every ton of bad. He is especially ready to destroy the child of God who removes himself from the hand of the Lord. But God is love. Did not Jesus say that He will never leave us nor forsake us, and that even if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful?

In the meantime, my daughter, who had also come to know the Lord through my sister, ceased not to pray for me. She would throw all of the amulets and trinkets that I received from the witchdoctors in the garbage.

There was much confusion in my spirit. I could no longer pray my Muslim prayers. Each time I tried, I would forget the verses of the Koran that before had been easily recited and even written. As I sat on my Muslim prayer mat, I could not quote a single verse. I began to weep instead of pray, and I again asked God to not let me go to Hell.

At this time, a pastor came into our neighborhood and opened a new work. Upon the insistence of a particular person who knew my situation, I went back to church. The pastor prayed for me and I again found the peace and joy that I had lost.

I became persistent in my church attendance and on October 15, 1995, I was baptized in water in the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and received the Holy Ghost. I then realized that only the Lord Jesus can give peace and joy, and that outside of Him, there is no life. He sought for me this time and placed His hand again on my life. But the Lord was not finished with me.

The Lord revealed to both my husband and me the wonderful truth of the oneness of God and baptism in Jesus' name. We saw that Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that when we are baptized in Jesus' name, we receive the forgiveness and

remission of sins. We understood that baptism using the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost does not save.

On December 22, 1999, my husband and I, along with another pastor and his wife, were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Today, we are teaching and preaching this glorious message to our people in Niger and many are turning to the truth to be saved. I give all glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, who looked mercifully upon a sinner such as I, and searched for me at a time when I denied Him.

May His name be blessed for all He has done in my life and for the ministry that He has entrusted to my husband and me in the Muslim nation of Niger in West Africa.

Study Questions

1. What does *Islam* mean? _____

2. Who is the founder of Islam? _____

3. Describe the founder's revelation of one god. _____

4. When and where was Islam founded? _____

5. How do Muslims view Jesus Christ? _____

6. What is the difference between Sunnis and Shi'as? _____

7. What led to the rapid spread of Islam throughout the Middle East and North Africa? _____

8. What were Mohammed's instructions concerning non-Muslims? _____

9. What is the holy book of Islam? _____
10. What are the five pillars of Islam?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
11. How does Islamic monotheism differ from monotheism as taught by Apostolics? _____

12. Define *salvation* as taught by Islam. _____

13. How do the doctrines of *original sin* and *the fall of man* fit into Islam? _____

14. What is Ramada-n? _____

15. According to the Qur'an, what will happen on Judgment Day? _____

16. When are Muslims assured of eternal salvation? _____

17. What is the Muslim place of worship? _____

18. What is jihad? _____

19. What are the four forms of jihad?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
20. When, where, and how do Muslims pray? _____

21. What does Islam teach concerning the nature of man? _____

22. What is the universal Muslim greeting? What does it mean? _____

23. Can the Qur'an be translated? Why? _____

24. Contrast the nature of the God of the Bible with the god of Islam. _____

25. How does Islam define *sin*? _____



A Bar Mitzvah at Western Wall in Jerusalem.

Photo by Dorsey Burk

JUDAISM

Introduction

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3).

Jehovah God’s covenant with Abraham, as cited in Genesis 12:1-3, is the foundation of Judaism, the world’s most ancient monotheistic religion. Jehovah later reaffirmed the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham’s son Isaac; Isaac’s son

Jacob, also known as Israel; Jacob's twelve sons; and to their descendants. (See Genesis 17:19-21; 35:12.)

Overview

Founder	Abraham
Date of founding	c. 2000 BC
Worldwide adherents	13,191,500 ⁸⁴
View of God	Absolute monotheism. Moses declared, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Apostolics whole-heartedly agree.
Salvation	The Jewish concept sees salvation in earthly, historical terms. ⁸⁵ Salvation is seen on a national level instead of individual.
Soul	Every person has an eternal soul that will be judged according to the law of God.
Sacred Writings	The twenty-four books of the Masoretic Text or Tanakh form the Jewish canon.
Afterlife	Judaism does believe in an afterlife, but it is not the primary focus of their religion and there is a lot of room for personal opinion about the nature of the afterlife. ⁸⁶

Historic Overview

Around 2000 BC, Jehovah God appeared to Abram and told him to leave his country and his people and to go to the land God would show him. (See Acts 7:2). In partial obedience, Abram left Ur with his father Terah and his brother Nahor and their families—including Lot, the son of Abram's deceased brother—and their possessions and settled in Haran. Haran is now in southeastern Turkey. Genesis 12:4-7 records:

So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they

⁸⁴ http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html (accessed May 29, 2012).

⁸⁵ <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/7574> (assessed June 1, 2012).

⁸⁶ <http://www.jewfaq.org/beliefs.htm> (accessed June 1, 2012).

set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD (NIV).

The remainder of the Book of Genesis describes events in the lives of Abraham, his son Isaac, Isaac’s son Jacob; and Jacob’s twelve sons, including Joseph. The Book of Exodus picks up the story of the descendants of Jacob’s twelve sons in slavery in Egypt and Moses’ leading the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity to the Promised Land of Canaan. Early in the decades of their wandering in the wilderness, God gave Moses the Law, which governed every aspect of Israelite life. (See Leviticus.) After forty years of wandering through the wilderness, Joshua led the tribes into the Promised Land, driving out the Canaanites through a series of military battles. (See the Old Testament books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua.)

The twelve tribes of Israel became a nation under the prophet Samuel. When the people demanded to be a kingdom instead of a theocracy, God chose Saul to be the first king. He was followed by David, the psalm-writing shepherd boy who killed the giant Goliath, and by David’s son Solomon, who was the wisest man on earth and who built the first Temple in Jerusalem.

Shortly after Solomon’s son Rehoboam ascended to the throne, the kingdom split into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. While Judah had a few godly kings, pagan tyrants ruled Israel and allowed—even encouraged—idolatry to flourish throughout the nation. Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah in 605 BC and took captives, such as Daniel and his friends, to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-4). The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 597 BC and took Jehoiakim and the most distinguished men of the land, including Ezekiel, captive (II Kings 24:14-16). In response to Zedekiah’s insurrection against Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC, Babylonian troops returned to Jerusalem and destroyed the city and Temple (II Kings 25:9-10).

Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, allowed some Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple in 538 BC. This ended the seventy years of captivity. Alexander the Great invaded the area in 332 BC. From circa 300 to 63 BC, Greek

became the language of commerce, and Greek culture had a major influence on Judaism. In 63 BC, the Roman Empire took control of Judea and Israel.

Through the succeeding centuries, Jews throughout the world have suffered extreme persecution. They have been exiled, crowded into ghettos, and executed. The persecution reached its zenith under the Nazis during World War II. Six million Jews were exterminated in the many concentration camps.

In 1948 Jews in Palestine declared Israel to be an independent nation. They have fought several wars since then to protect their freedom.

Jewish Beliefs

As Tracey R. Rich, a Jewish scholar and blogger, stated on his website *Judaism 101*, “Judaism is more concerned about actions than beliefs.”⁸⁷ Consequently, Judaism does not have a lot of abstract cosmological concepts as do Buddhism and Hinduism or catechisms and delineated dogmas as Christians do. Instead Judaism has general concepts regarding such things as the nature of God, man, universe, life, and afterlife. These concepts allow for a wide spectrum of personal opinion.

Consider for example, the general Jewish teaching regarding God.

- God is.
- God is one – indivisible, without parts.
- God is incorporeal – a spirit without a body.
- God is eternal.
- God is omnipotent.
- God is omniscient.
- God is the Creator of everything.
- God is holy and just.

These are concepts that all Apostolics heartily endorse.

Instead of focusing on theological concepts, Judaism centers on relationships, such as:

- Between God and mankind

⁸⁷ www.jewfaq.org/beliefs.htm (accessed June 1, 2012).

- Between God and the Jewish people
- Between one another

These relationships are emphasized throughout the Old Testament beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve when God walked with them in the cool of the day. They extend through the call of Abraham, the “friend of God,” to leave his homeland and kindred and go to a land that God would show him. They include God choosing Jacob and his twelve sons to be the progenitors of the Israelites and the recipients of the covenant promises. The Mosaic law defined the obligations of these relationships and set forth principles of daily living—and hence the emphasis on action above doctrine. For orthodox Jews, these actions include 613 commandments given by God in the Torah as well as laws instituted by rabbis and long-standing customs.

While Judaism allows room for personal opinion, Rabbi Moses bin-Maimon, called Maimonides, compiled a list of basic tenets that most Jews accept. Maimonides was a preeminent Jewish philosopher and one of the greatest Torah scholars and physicians of the Middle Ages. He considered the following thirteen principles of faith to be the minimum requirement for Jewish belief:

1. God exists.
2. God is one and unique.
3. God is incorporeal.
4. God is eternal.
5. Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other.
6. The words of the prophets are true.
7. Moses’ prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
8. The Written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses.
9. There will be no other Torah.
10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
12. The Messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Tracey Rich, <http://www.jewfaq.org/beliefs.htm> (accessed January 20, 2012).

Instead of a series of doctrinal points, Judaism is more concerned about actions.

Tracey R. Rich wrote:

Judaism is not just a set of beliefs about G-d, man and the universe. Judaism is a comprehensive way of life, filled with rules and practices that affect every aspect of life: what you do when you wake up in the morning, what you can and cannot eat, what you can and cannot wear, how to groom yourself, how to conduct business, who you can marry, how to observe the holidays and Shabbat, and perhaps most important, how to treat G-d, other people, and animals. This set of rules and practices is known as halakhah. . . .

Some non-Jews and non-observant Jews criticize this legalistic aspect of traditional Judaism, saying that it reduces the religion to a set of rituals devoid of spirituality. While there are certainly some Jews who observe halakhah in this way, that is not the intention of halakhah, and it is not even the correct way to observe halakhah.

On the contrary, when properly observed, halakhah increases the spirituality in a person's life, because it turns the most trivial, mundane acts, such as eating and getting dressed, into acts of religious significance. . . .

Are these laws sometimes inconvenient? Yes, of course. But if someone you care about—your parent, your child, your spouse—asked you to do something inconvenient or unpleasant, something you didn't feel like doing, you would do it, wouldn't you? It is a very shallow and meaningless kind of love if you aren't willing to do something inconvenient for the one you love. How much more so should we be willing to perform some occasionally inconvenient tasks that were set before us by our Creator, who assigned those tasks to us for our own good?⁸⁹

Messiah and Salvation

⁸⁹ Tracey Rich, <http://www.jewfaq.org/halakhah.htm> (accessed September 12, 2012).

One of the fundamental doctrines of traditional Judaism is that of the coming Messiah. It is a part of Maimonides' thirteen tenets for basic Jewish beliefs. It is recited three times a day in the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer.

According to Jewish interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, the Messiah will be a descendant of King David who will liberate Israel from foreign rule, reestablish the Davidic kingdom, build the Third Temple, and usher in a reign of peace.

Tracey Rich explains:

The mashiach will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5). The mashiach is often referred to as "mashiach ben David" (mashiach, son of David). He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments (Isaiah 11:2-5). He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel. He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15). But above all, he will be a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being.⁹⁰

The Christian idea of the Messiah being a religious savior does not fit with the Jewish perspective of "the Anointed One." They were looking for the son of David, not the Son of God. When Jesus walked the dusty roads in Palestine, many hoped that He would overthrow the Romans and restore the kingdom. Even His disciples shared this dream. Because He did not fulfill their secular, nationalistic aspirations, the Jews rejected Him and led Him to Pilate's judgment hall. Nevertheless, Zechariah 13 points to a day when Israel will recognize the One who was "wounded in the house of my friends."

Jewish Sacred Texts

The twenty-four books of the Masoretic Text or *Tanakh*, an acronym of *Torah*, *Nebi'im* and *Ketuvim* (*Law*, *Prophets*, and *Writings*), form the Jewish canon. They correspond to the thirty-nine books of the Christian Old Testament. The difference is that the Masoretic Text combines books that are separated in the Old Testament. For example, the Jews combine I and II Samuel into one book, I and II Kings into one, I and II Chronicles into one, and Ezra and Nehemiah into one. They group the twelve minor prophets into one book.

⁹⁰Tracey Rich, <http://www.jewfaq.org/mashiach.htm> (accessed June 4, 2012).

Although not canonical, the *Talmud* and *Midrash* are important Jewish writings. The Talmud is the “Oral Torah,” a collection of rabbinical writings that interpret, explain, and apply the “Written Torah” scriptures to daily life. The Midrash is a large body of rabbinical material derived primarily from sermons (*d’rash* in Hebrew).

Branches of Judaism

Within the last two hundred years, Judaism has divided into several branches. Each branch has a different view of principles of belief a Jew should hold and, thus, how he should live. They range from extremely conservative orthodox Judaism to ultra liberal, secular, atheistic Jews.

The *New World Encyclopedia* explains:

- Orthodox Judaism holds that the Torah was written by God and dictated to Moses, and that the laws within it are binding and unchanging. Orthodox Judaism consists of Modern Orthodox Judaism and Haredi Judaism. Hasidic Judaism is a sub-set of Haredi Judaism. Most Jews affirm a form of Jewish theology based on Maimonides’ 13 principles of Jewish faith.
- Reform Judaism formed originally in Germany in response to the Enlightenment. It holds most of the commandments of the Torah are no longer binding and rejects many Jewish customs, emphasizing instead the moral and ethical teachings of the prophets. Reform prayer services are often in the vernacular rather than Hebrew, and Reform rabbis are allowed to perform interfaith marriages.
- Conservative Judaism formed in the United States in the late 1800s through the fusion of two distinct groups: former Reform Jews who were alienated by that movement’s emphatic rejection of Jewish law, and former Orthodox Jews who had come to question traditional beliefs and favored the critical study of sacred Jewish texts. Conservative Jews generally hold that Jewish laws should be retained unless there is good reason to reject them.

- Reconstructionist Judaism started as a stream of philosophy within Conservative Judaism, and later became an independent movement emphasizing reinterpreting Judaism for modern times.
- Secular Judaism. Though not a formal denomination, secular Judaism, also known as cultural Judaism, forms perhaps the largest group of Jews today. Secular Jews do not adhere to any Jewish sect, rarely attend synagogue, and are not observant of most Jewish customs. While the majority of secular Jews believe in God, some are agnostics or atheists, while continuing to identify themselves as ethnic and cultural Jews.
- Humanistic Judaism is a small, non-theistic movement that emphasizes Jewish culture and history as the source of Jewish identity. Founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, it is centered in North America but has adherents in Europe, Latin America, and Israel.⁹¹

Worship

Modern Jewish worship centers around the recitation of prayers. Like the prophet Daniel of old, observant Jews pray three times a day—in the morning (*Shacharit*), in the afternoon (*Mincha*), and at night (*Arvit*). Orthodox and Conservative congregations also recite the *Musaf* on Shabbat, major Jewish holidays, and Rosh Chodesh. The *Neilah* is recited on Yom Kippur.

While private prayers are not discouraged, priority is given to communal worship in local synagogues and temples. “This worship functions as a constant reminder to Jews of their existential situation: they are members of the people Israel, living a life enabled by God in a divinely created and maintained world, corporately heirs to the irrevocable covenants between God and Israel.”⁹²

In ancient days, the worship involved sacrifices at the Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Temple, the traditional worship was impossible. Because of this “the people reinvented themselves and the worship of Yahveh. They redefined what it was to be a child of Abraham under the covenant. The rabbis, inheritors of the Pharisee tradition, began teaching Torah under conditions that would have crushed lesser men. The

⁹¹ <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Judaism> (accessed September 12, 2012).

⁹² <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3424503355/worship-and-devotional-life.html> (accessed June 2, 2012).

Temple at Jerusalem was gone, so in its place grew the tradition of the synagogue, local congregations that sprang into place wherever there were ten men and a copy of the Torah.”⁹³

The study of *Torah*, the revealed will of God, also is considered an act of worship. The *Torah* is read religiously each Sabbath. The Sabbath is spent in prayer, study, rest, and family feasting. Over the course of a year, the entire Torah will be read on Sabbath and festival days.⁹⁴

Feasts

Under the Mosaic law, Leviticus 23 gives instructions concerning the seven “feasts of the LORD” or “holy convocations.”

The first is the Sabbath, which begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. It is a time of rest and worship. The Sabbath meal follows a prescribed ritual.

The next three feasts are Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits. Passover or *Pesach* is celebrated on Nisan 14, Unleavened Bread on Nisan 15, and First Fruits on Nisan 17.

The Passover feast (*Seder*) has precise ritual that recounts events that occurred during the original Passover in Egypt. The Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates the Israelites leaving Egypt in such a hurry the bread did not have time to rise. First Fruits celebrates the harvest in the Promised Land.

Apostolic believers see Jesus Christ in the symbolism of these three feasts. Through His death on the cross, He was our Passover lamb. Through His sinless life and burial, He typified the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Through the Resurrection, He became the firstfruits of the dead.

Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, comes fifty days after First Fruits. This feast is also called Pentecost from the Greek word meaning fifty. To the Jews, it commemorates Jehovah giving the Law to Moses. To Apostolics, it symbolizes the birth of the church and God writing the Law in the hearts of His people through the infilling of the Holy Ghost. (See Jeremiah 31:33; Acts 2:1-4.)

⁹³ <http://www.answers.com/topic/development-of-judaism> (accessed June 4, 2012).

⁹⁴ <http://library.thinkquest.org/28505/judaism/worsh.htm> (accessed June 2, 2012).

The remaining three feasts are Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacle) and they occur in the fall of the year, in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the month of Tishrei. Yom Kippur is on the tenth of Tishrei while Sukkot is celebrated Tishrei 15-21.

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. In Leviticus 23:24 God commanded the blowing of the trumpets on the first day of the seventh month to call the congregation of Israel for a holy convocation. For two days modern Jews celebrate the creation of mankind with sweet foods and blessings. They also remember mankind will be judged according to their deeds. For the next week, they offer prayers for forgiveness, perform acts of charity, and give offerings, leading up to Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is the most solemn day of the Jewish year and is the final day of judgment for the year. Under the Mosaic law, this was the day the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies and offer atonement for the sins of the nation. Leviticus 23:26-32 decrees this to be a day of fasting and prayer.

Sukkot or the Feast of Tabernacle is a joyous time in which the Jews build booths or temporary shelters to remind them of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

These feasts fall on the same days each year in the Jewish lunar calendar. However, they appear on various dates in the western Gregorian calendar, because it follows the solar year.

Summary

Jehovah God revealed Himself to Abraham over four thousand years ago. By faith, Abraham forsook his homeland and family and journeyed to a land that God would show him. In doing so, he became the “father of the faithful” and the founder of the world’s first monotheistic religion.

On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the Law that revealed His holiness and established rules to govern every aspect of life. Moses further declared and instructed:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this

day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Since that time, the Israelites entered the Promised Land, became a rich and prosperous nation under King David and his son Solomon, suffered seventy years of Babylonian captivity, rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, and faced untold persecution. Even now they face the threat of total annihilation as a nation. And yet the faithful cling to the covenant that Jehovah God made with Father Abraham around 2000 BC.

Apostolics can rejoice in the revelation of absolute monotheism. And they can look forward to when the Jews will recognize their Messiah and embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Study Questions

1. Who is the founder of Judaism? _____

2. Describe the founder's call. _____

3. Define *monotheism*. _____

4. Describe the Jewish concept of salvation. _____

5. What are the sacred writings of Judaism? _____

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-
-
6. What is the Abrahamic Covenant? _____
-
-
-
7. Identify:
- A. Isaac _____
 - B. Joseph _____
 - C. Moses _____
 - D. Samuel _____
 - E. David _____
8. List seven of Maimonides' core tenets of Judaism.
- A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
 - F. _____
 - G. _____
9. Define *Messiah*. _____
-
-
-
10. What is the Torah? _____
-
-
-
11. What are the *Talmud* and *Midrash*? _____
-
-
-

12. Describe Jewish worship. _____

13. What are the “seven feasts of the Lord”?
- A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
 - F. _____
 - G. _____
14. What are the differences between Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism? _____

15. What is Shabbat and how does it influence Jewish life? _____

16. Who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem? When? _____

17. Besides monotheistic, how do Jewish people describe God? _____

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-
-
18. According to Orthodox Judaism, how many commandments are listed in the Torah? _____
19. What is halakhah? _____
20. What is Yom Kippur? _____
21. What is a secular Jew? _____
22. What role did the Tabernacle play in ancient Jewish worship? _____
23. What is *seder*? _____
24. What is the importance of Passover? _____

25. What does the Feast of Pentecost symbolize for Apostolics? _____

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Missionary Spotlight: Rev. and Mrs. Edwin E. Judd

While in Shanghai during the summer of 1946, I was trying to sort out my feelings about becoming involved in missionary work. It seemed that I had received much exposure to it during the past year while in India and Burma and now China. Was all of this for a purpose? Was the Pilot steering my vessel in that direction? What was my calling to be? Where was He leading us? Would our future be in India, Burma, China, or elsewhere? These were ever present thoughts as I sought to know His will for our future.



One day while alone in prayer I experienced another encounter as vivid and real as the one received on board that outbound troopship over a year earlier. As I prayed and committed to His will regardless of where it would lead, the Lord of the harvest spoke very clearly to me through His Word. The letters came off the pages of the Bible in bold relief. This is what I read:

For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel; not to many people of strange speech and of a hard language, whose word thou canst not understand" (Ezekiel 3:5-6).

For my immediate future, this influential encounter with the Pilot of my life and His Word answered my questions. This word from the Pilot of my life in the military billet in Shanghai, China, during the summer of 1946, established the course of my ministry.

I did not take it as an exemption from missionary involvement. Surely all of the exposure and influential encounters I had experienced were for a purpose. I concluded that while the Lord did not have "foreign"

involvement on His agenda for our lives, there was a work to be done "at home" in support of the missionary cause. Thus, as my ministry began to unfold, I kept missions always before me and did that which was within my power to be influential in behalf of that which is closest to the heart of God. I became a believer that the challenge to take "The Whole Gospel to the Whole World" should involve the whole church. (Edwin E. Judd, "Influential Encounters," Anchored by the Call, Hazelwood, MO: Foreign Missions Division, 2002, 134-135.)

Without a doubt Edwin E. Judd has fulfilled his call to promote the cause of foreign missions. Arguably, he has been the greatest influence for missions within the United Pentecostal Church in the past sixty years. Through Edwin Judd's influence as a student (1946-1949) and later as the Dean of Faculty (1949-1954), missions became an integral part of student life at Pentecostal Bible Institute in Tupelo, Mississippi. He said, "It was our goal that every student would develop a sense of responsibility for fulfillment of the Great Commission, whether he went as a 'going' missionary or whether it was his role to stay and be among the 'senders.'"

In 1954, when the Judds moved back to Portland, Oregon, to become the dean-registrar of the newly formed Conquerors Bible College, he carried with him the same philosophy about missions exposure and became the faculty advisor to the Student Missionary Committee. Missions was not relegated to Missions 101 but became the lifeblood of the student body. Weekly missions chapel services and visiting missionaries kept the great commission constantly in the minds of the students. Some prospective students chose to attend other schools because they were afraid that God would call them to be a missionary if they attended CBC. At one point, twenty-five percent of all UPCI missionaries under appointment were CBC alumni even though the other UPCI Bible colleges had much larger student bodies.

Years before Faith Promise giving was introduced on a national scale to the United Pentecostal Church, Edwin Judd pioneered the concept at CBC and the churches in the Portland area. Many of CBC's students made their first Faith Promise commitment during the school's annual missions conferences. Realizing the blessing of Faith Promise giving as students, they instituted the practice in their own churches as they became pastors.

In 1963, Edwin Judd was appointed as a pastoral member of the Foreign Missions Board.

In 1968, Edwin Judd began his fulltime foreign missions ministry as the first director of promotion and publications for the Foreign Missions Division. He immediately began to prepare material for publication and distribution in order to give definition and focus to the Faith Promise concept for foreign missions support. He began to publish *Global Witness* to spread missions news and challenge of missions to the local congregations. Partners In Missions became his and Robert Rodenbush's brainchild and was introduced to the General Conference in 1969.

In 1971, Brother Judd became the first regional director for the Latin America/Caribbean Region. Based in Quito, Ecuador, he had the oversight of missionaries and fields from Mexico to the tip of South America and all of the islands of the Caribbean.

Throughout the years, Evelyn Judd had been a vital support of her husband's ministry. They had known each other since early childhood, were in the same fifth and sixth grade classroom, and played in the same church orchestra. She often worked outside the home to help support the family while he pioneered churches and worked in Bible colleges. While in Venezuela in 1975, Sister Judd fell and broke her hip, permanently affecting her mobility. Although often confined to a wheelchair, her quick and radiant smile remained.

In 1976, Edwin Judd became the secretary of Foreign Missions. It was a position he held for twenty-one years. His efficiency and commitment are legendary. Usually he could be found in his office on Saturdays, staying on top of his work. Sister Judd would sit patiently in her wheelchair—sometimes with a cup of coffee—while he worked.

Since Edwin Judd wrote the first *Foreign Missions Manual* in 1972, he knew Foreign Missions policy and operated by it. Although the missionaries may not have liked all of his decisions, they knew he based them on approved policy and that he treated everyone fairly and equally—although some of his former students felt like he expected more from them.

On his seventy-third birthday, he informed the Foreign Missions Board that he would not let his name stand for election at the 1996 General Conference. After he left office December 31, 1996, he moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas, to be near his son Stephen. Immediately Stephen put him to work teaching and ministering in the church. When Stephen and Erma Judd assumed leadership responsibilities at Tupelo Children's Mansion, the elder Judds moved back to

Tupelo to be with them. When Stephen Judd needed someone to oversee the finances of the TCMM, he called on his dad to serve as comptroller.

Evelyn Judd passed from this life on January 17, 2004. Edwin Judd continues to serve as an honorary member of the Foreign Missions board and is a senior advisor for Tupelo Children's Mansion.

As a young GI in Southeast Asia during World War II, Edwin Judd dedicated his life to go wherever the Lord would call him. God called him to be a sender and influencer. Because of that the Judds impacted generations of Bible school students who felt God's call to go or His call to send. Then as the promotion director and secretary of Foreign Missions, Edwin Judd enabled those who did go to fulfill their burden. By staying home, Edwin and Evelyn Judd influenced the whole world.