



# INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

## MODULE 4: WORLD RELIGIONS (PART 1) JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM,



### Subject Objectives

Prepares a multimedia presentation on the perceptions of people from all walks of life on the doctrines of each of the three religions and compares them in the aspects of individual, family, society, government and nature.



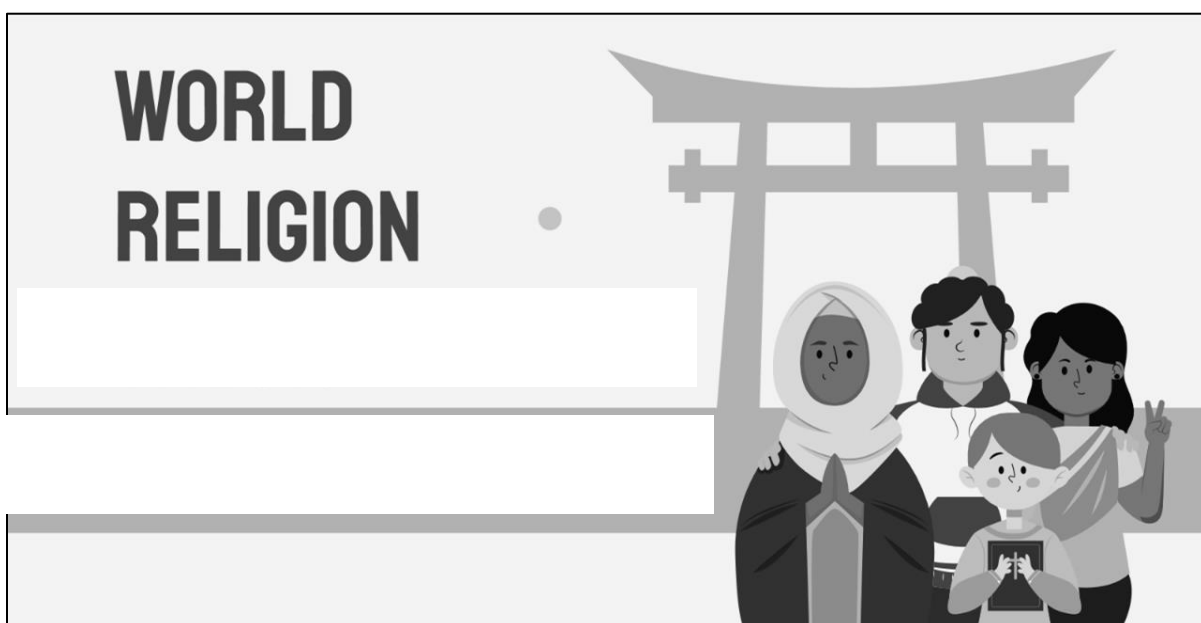
### Start-up Activity

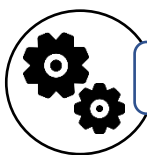
#### **World Religions (Part 1): Multimedia Presentation**

**Objective:** This activity helps students develop essential communication and collaboration skills.

#### **Group Activity**

**Instructions:** Prepare a multimedia presentation on the perceptions of people from all walks of life on the doctrines of each of the three religions and compares them in the aspects of individual, family, society, government and nature.





**WORLD RELIGIONS (PART 1)**  
**JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM,**

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**JUDAISM**

**The Beginning of Judaism**

The origins of Jewish faith are explained throughout the Torah. According to the text, God first revealed himself to a Hebrew man named Abraham, who became known as the founder of Judaism.

Jews believe that God made a special covenant with Abraham and that he and his descendants were chosen people who would create a great nation.

Abraham's son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, also became central figures in ancient Jewish history. Jacob took the name Israel, and his children and future generations became known as Israelites.

More than 1,000 years after Abraham, the prophet Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt after being enslaved for hundreds of years.

According to scriptures, God revealed his laws, known as the Ten Commandments, to Moses at Mt. Sinai

**The Torah as Sacred Text**

The importance of Judaism's sacred texts extends far beyond their religious significance. These ancient documents embody not only Judaism's religious precepts, but also the historical, cultural and social heritage of the Jewish people. In Israel, where attitudes towards tradition range from the ultra-orthodox to the secular, sacred texts carry a variety of meanings - from a spiritual, moral and practical guide to everyday life.

At the basis of all Jewish sacred texts is the Torah. In its most basic sense, the Torah is the Pentateuch - the five books of Moses, which tell the story of the Creation of the world, God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants, the Exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Mt. Sinai (where God enunciated the Ten Commandments), the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, and a recapitulation of that experience shortly before the entrance to the Promised Land.

The principal message of the Torah is the absolute unity of God, His creation of the world and His concern for it, and His everlasting covenant

with the people of Israel. The Pentateuch both embodies the heritage of the Jewish people - retelling its history, setting forth its guiding precepts and foretelling its destiny - and carries universal messages of monotheism and social conduct, which have had tremendous impact on western civilization. Thus, the Torah is also the origin of certain non-Jewish traditions, among them the recognition of the Sabbath as a day of rest.

Torah also signifies teaching. The Pentateuch itself uses the word Torah to denote a specific body of statutes; in this sense, Torah means "law," and is often so translated generally.

While Jewish tradition has throughout the centuries ascribed divine authorship to the Torah, many scholars and modern Jewish thinkers hold that the Torah was compiled incrementally by various authors over a long period of time, making it not only the shaper of Jewish history but also its product.

### **The Ten Commandments – Judaism**

#### First Commandment (Exodus 20:2)

I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

#### Second Commandment (Exodus 20:3-6)

You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself any graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them, for I, the Lord Your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

#### Third Commandment (Exodus 20:7)

You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

#### Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11)

Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord Your God, in it you shall not do any manner of work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

#### Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12)

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord God gives you.

Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13)

You shall not murder.

Seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:13)

You shall not commit adultery.

Eighth Commandment (Exodus 20:13)

You shall not steal.

Ninth Commandment (Exodus 20:13)

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:14)

You shall not covet your neighbor's house, nor his wife, his man-servant, his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

**The Pentateuch (Five Books)**

The content of the Pentateuch is our Jewish background and also the beginning of our Christian story. Today, when families get together for a holiday, often they sit around the table or around the fire and they tell—and retell—their story. This is particularly the case when a new member of the family—a new husband or wife, for example—is brought into the family for the first time. The new member needs to hear and to absorb the family's story, going back through generations.

Genesis

God creates the physical world and all living inhabitants in six days, including Adam and Eve. Sin is brought into Eden by Satan, who is responsible for the Fall. The patriarchs and the matriarchs are introduced. God reveals that He can become fed-up with human evil, and He destroys most humans and other living creatures during the flood. Then, later, God promises His chosen people that they will inhabit Canaan. For a time, they do inhabit Canaan, but later they suffer from an extended famine, so they move to Egypt where food is available.

Exodus

The People Israel exist in Egypt as slaves during many generations and their numbers mightily increase. Moses, a Jew, is born among them. To preserve him from being executed by royal decree, Moses is adopted by the princess of Egypt and raised to manhood as an Egyptian prince. Having murdered an Egyptian slave master who was harming a Jew, Moses escapes into the Median desert, becomes a shepherd, and marries. At the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses encounters God in the burning bush. By God, Moses is sent back into Egypt to tell Pharaoh to "Set My people free." Eventually, six hundred thousand enslaved men escape from Egypt, along with their wives and children, by following Moses. They cross the Red Sea and camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses climbs Mount Sinai and meets with God again.

God covenants with the People Israel. He will guide and protect them and keep them from harm if they will have no other gods before Him. God gives Moses the Ten Commandments (in Hebrew their title is *Asceret Hadevarim*—or “Ten Utterances”). Moses brings the tablets down from the mountain to show the Israelites. However, in the meantime, while Moses was away, the People Israel—who are fractious and impatient and self-centered—have built for themselves a golden calf to worship instead of God. Furious, Moses smashes the tablets and climbs back up the mountain to carve a new set of God’s “Utterances.” The rest of Exodus describes the building of the Tabernacle, which is where the new tablets (and thus the dicta of God Himself) are to be housed.

### Leviticus

This book is about how the People Israel are to use the Tabernacle which they built, and it focuses on the laws of holy living. There may be only ten Commandments—that’s one thing—but of the laws of holy living—there are 613! In Hebrew, they’re called the *mitzvot*. The laws are specific, urgent, plain, covenantal—not to be dodged. Among other definitions and actions, they cover clean versus unclean animals, ritual slaughter, sacrificial practices, cooking instructions, proper and improper use of fire, Shabbat practices, purification from human defilement, human relationships, sexual practices to enjoy or to revile, and so on. Leviticus is about rewards and punishments.

### Numbers

Numbers takes up the story again by following Israel’s wandering in the desert, as God’s Chosen stomp onward toward the land formerly promised to them by God, toward Canaan. However, due to further rebellions against God and repeated times of unbelief, the Israelites are condemned to wander for forty more years before they arrive.

### Deuteronomy

Having arrived at the border of Canaan, across the plain from Jericho, this book mostly contains speeches by Moses in which he warns the recalcitrant People Israel to stop wavering in their faith about God. God has performed His side of the covenant. Israel needs to do the same. It needs to relinquish its taste for idolatry. It needs to refrain from imitating the worship practices of the Canaanites. Then Moses is taken by God up to the top of Mount Pisgah. From there, he is allowed to see the Promised Land, although—because of his own sins—Moses is not allowed to enter there. And then Moses dies.

## **The Jewish view of Salvation**

This is an important question. It is important to look at the questions that religions ask, as well as the ones they don’t ask. In this case, one must start with the awareness that salvation is not a Jewish concept, as it implies a focus on the afterlife, which is not significant focus of Judaism. In

particular, the Christian view of the question just doesn't work, for it implies a notion of "hell" for those that aren't saved. Jews believe that people are supposed to do the best they can at being good. We do this because it is the right thing to do—any personal gain is a side-effect. In fact, focussing on issues of reward and punishment to some extent mitigates the good one is doing by tainting it with selfish motives.

Note also that Jews do not assume that God assesses people on some absolute scale. Jews believe that God expects you to do the best you have with what you have— including upbringing, innate abilities, and the situations you find yourself in—and you have the power to perfect yourself. Even on this relative scale, though, no one wastes their entire potential, or fully utilizes every opportunity. So, to whatever extent one does what they can, they enjoy its effects in the World to Come.

But again, Judaism is about being good to be good and to have a healthy relationship with God, man, and oneself—not to be saved. The role of Jewish law is to provide tools to learn how to do that, and values that one ought acquire. Judaism teaches that God gave us these laws because there are subtleties to the ideal that can not be conveyed in broader strokes. We therefore learn from the subtleties of the ritual, and the nuances of the inter-personal laws. Often very fundamental ideas about Jewish values can emerge from same arcane bit that one would think would never have found application in practice.

Last, there are two sorts of law: there is the covenant at Sinai, which God made with the Jews (and the other Israelites, the ancestors of the Northern Kingdom) to define the role of Jews in His plan. All Judaism asks of Jews is to follow the teachings of God as given in that covenant (as understood by their particular movement)—for the traditional Jew, this means to follow the laws given in the written and oral Torah. The other law is the covenant God made with Noah and his descendents. We believe that this is simpler law that non-Jews are expected to follow as well.

## **The Prophets**

A prophet is a spokesperson for God. The prophet admonishes, warns, directs, encourages, intercedes, teaches and counsels. They bring the word of God to the people of God and call the people to respond.

The prophetic ministry begins in the presence of the Lord. This aspect of the ministry is well described in Jeremiah's challenge to the false prophets.

Which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear his word? If they had stood in his council they would have proclaimed his words to his people and they would have turned from their evil ways and from their evil deeds (Jer 23:18,22).

When the prophets know the heart and mind of the Lord, they speak the word of the Lord to his people. They stand before the people as one who has stood before God. Because their words come from the heart of God they are powerful and effective.

A prophet can undertake a huge variety of roles. This is an expression of the creativity of God. A prophet may act in every role occasionally, but mostly they will move in one or two of these roles. Prayer will be important for every ministry. No two prophets should be the same, but each should be a reflection of God's creativity and calling.

The call of a prophet usually but not always includes his job description (John and Paula Sanford - The Elijah Task p.42).

Some of the roles that a prophet can function in are outlined in the following sections.

### 1. Prayer

An important part of the prophets' task is prayer. Because they know the mind of the Lord, they are in a position to pray effectively. They have a clear picture of what God is doing, so he knows where prayer is needed most. The prophets watch over the word of the Lord and pray it into being. They must not rest until God has fulfilled his word (Isaiah 62:6).

### 2. Receiving the Word of the Lord

A key role of the prophet is waiting in the presence of God to receive the word of God. God is sovereign so we cannot tell him when he should speak. Hearing will always require waiting.

### 3. Suffering

A prophet is often called to suffering. Deep dealing at the hand of God will often be needed to prepare the prophet for receiving the word of God. Sometimes he may actually have to experience beforehand, something of what his people will experience. Jeremiah spent many years in captivity before his people went into captivity. He was often rejected and ostracised; he was even accused of being a traitor. Ezekiel had to lie on his side for 390 days to symbolise the judgement that would come upon his nation. This suffering made the prophets extremely aware of their human frailty (Jer 20:7-10). It also equipped the prophet to give what was often a very harsh message in a spirit of compassion. A true message is nullified if it is spoken in the wrong spirit. Suffering softens the prophet's spirit, so that he can give the hardest word, in a spirit of love. Suffering contributed to Jeremiah's compassion.

### 4. Worship

The prophetic ministry can often play an important part in worship. In the temple, there were people whose role was to prophesy as part of the

worship. They were professional worshippers and prophets, responsible for leading the worship in the house of God.

#### 5. Encouragement

Encouragement of the brethren is an important aspect of the prophetic ministry. The words of the prophets will build up and strengthen the church. This will be especially important in times of trial and tribulation. Silas and Judas were two prophets who encouraged the church in Antioch. The scriptures give a number of examples of prophets who encouraged the leaders of their nation to act boldly.

#### 6. Foretelling the Future

Prediction of the future is part of the prophetic ministry. Almost every prophet in the Old Testament appeared first as a foreteller. Through his fellowship with the eternal God, the prophet has access to the future. He is the seer who has insight into God's purposes for history. However, whatever he sees for the future is always related to the present. He warns of future judgements so that people will change their behaviour now. He speaks of future blessing to give hope for the present.

#### 7. Direction and Guidance

Prophets bring the word of the Lord to the church. Christians can get so caught up in the events of the world that they do not see what God is doing. This is particularly true in tumultuous times, when it can be very hard to see the hand of God at work. Prophets will give direction and vision in these situations, so that God's people know what is happening, and what they should do. For example, the prophet Gad provided guidance to David and showed him how to avoid trouble.

#### 8. Interpreting Dreams and Visions

An important aspect of the prophetic ministry is interpreting dreams and visions. God often speaks in dreams to people who are not listening. We must learn to interpret these to understand what he is saying. Prophets are sometimes skilled in interpreting dreams.

#### 9. Warning without Judgment

Some Christian prophets like to announce the judgments of God on peoples and nations, but this is a misunderstanding of their role. The common view that the Old Testament prophets announced God's judgment on the children of Israel, or the surrounding nations is not quite right. The Hebrew word for "judgment" is mishpat. It means a judicial judgment or verdict. It is never used to describe the message of the Old Testament prophecies.

The Old Testament prophets only rarely used this word to describe the message they were proclaiming. They spoke frequently about the failure of kings and judges to give wise judgment (mishpat) (Isaiah 42:3 and Jer 21:9 are examples), and they spoke of God's verdict (mishpat) on Israel's



behaviour, but they never referred to the events they were announcing as God's judgments.

The prophets were actually warning of the consequences of rejecting God and his law. The law provided Israel with protection from the spiritual powers of evil. When they rejected God and stopped applying his law, they lost their spiritual protection. This enabled the spiritual powers of evil to attack them and wreak havoc on their land. God's verdict on Israel's behaviour gave the evil powers authority to act and bring harm to the nation.

## **Jewish Holidays Or Festivals**

### **Shabbat**

The Jewish Sabbath—*Shabbat* in Hebrew, *Shabbos* in Yiddish—is observed every week beginning at sunset on Friday evening and ending after dark on Saturday evening. For religiously observant Jews, Shabbat is as important as any other holy day. Orthodox Jews do not work or travel on Shabbat. Consequently, Friday evening or Saturday classes or exams will generally pose a conflict for Orthodox Jewish students.

### **Rosh Hashanah**

The Jewish New Year, the beginning of ten days of penitence or *teshuvah* culminating on Yom Kippur. Traditionally celebrated with sweet or round foods such as apples and honey, and the blowing of the *shofar*, a hollowed-out ram's horn, during religious services. A customary greeting is *shanah tovah* or "happy new year!"

### **Yom Kippur**

The Day of Atonement; a very solemn day devoted to fasting, prayer, and repentance. Observant Jews do not eat, drink (including water), bathe, engage in sexual activity, or wear anything made of leather on this day of awe.

### **Sukkot**

The week-long harvest festival of Sukkot, or "Feast of Tabernacles," commemorates the dwelling of the Israelites in temporary booths (*sukkot* in Hebrew) during their 40-year sojourn in the Sinai desert. Many families build their own *sukkah* in which it is customary to eat meals and sleep, and to shake the *lulav*, a palm frond bound together with myrtle and willow branches, and the *etrog*, a kind of citrus (pictured here, growing in the Smith College greenhouse, where it is identified as a "Moroccan citrus").

### **Shemini Atzeret**

Although technically a separate holiday, Shemini Atzeret (or the "Eighth Day of Assembly") is in effect the final day of Sukkot. The last portion of the

Torah is read on this day. Observant Jews do not work or travel on this *yom tov* or "holy day."

### **Simchat Torah**

Shemini Atzeret is immediately followed by the joyous holiday of Simchat Torah—or "rejoicing of the Law"—which is traditionally celebrated by dancing with Torah scrolls and singing *hakafot*, songs of praise and gratitude.

### **Hanukkah**

The eight-day festival of Hanukkah—or "Festival of Lights"—commemorates the miraculous victory of the Maccabees and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. Hanukkah is NOT the Jewish equivalent of Christmas!! In fact, it is a relatively minor Jewish holiday (in religious terms) which unlike most other Jewish holidays, has no restrictions whatsoever on work or travel—although many Jewish families and communities get together to celebrate this festive holiday. It is customary to eat fried foods such as potato *latkes* or jelly doughnuts.

### **Purim**

This carnival-like holiday celebrates the defeat of a plot to destroy the Jews of Persia. It is customary to dress in costumes (similar to Halloween or Mardi Gras), and to give gifts of food to friends and the needy, particularly *hamantashen*, triangular pastries filled with fruit or poppy seeds.

### **Passover** (or *Pesach* in Hebrew)

The week-long spring festival of Pesach commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from bondage in ancient Egypt. The Passover Seder on the first two nights—an elaborate and ritualized meal—recounts the story of Exodus using ritual foods, prayers, stories and songs. Only the first two and last two days of Passover are observed as full holy days, with restrictions on work and travel. However, many extended Jewish families gather for the holiday, and consequently some Jewish students may miss the entire week of classes. (In Israel, schools are always closed for Passover.)

### **Shavuot**

Feast of Weeks; marks the giving of the Law (Torah) at Mt Sinai.

## **The Four Sects Of Judaism According To Josephus**

### Essenes

Jewish religious sect, which, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, flourished during the last two centuries B.C.E. and up to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The origin of the name: some scholars have derived it from the Syriac *hasya* meaning pious. They were an exclusive people who abstained from Temple worship in Jerusalem and believed in the soul living on in the after life. The Essenes were also known for voluntarily living in

poverty and performing water purification rituals. The Essenes devoted much of their time to studying and were stricter than the Pharisees in regards to the Sabbath. This group was reported to have avoided marriage and often led a celibate life. Immersion and joining the sect proved to be very difficult and required an extensive trial period along with many vows, oaths and pledges. They were also opposed to the current corrupt Temple in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Temple, the Essenes seemed to have disappeared.

#### Pharisees

Along with the Sadducees, they were one of the two largest sects in Israel during the two centuries prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 C.E. The Pharisees were the most popular sect in Judea. They were involved in government, in community and in the religious practices. This was a sect that was supported by the masses as a whole. They believed in a combination of fate and free will and that the soul is indestructible. In the afterlife, the Pharisees believed that the evil would be punished for their sins and the good be rewarded and so acted accordingly. As community members they focused on fellowship meals and followed the written and oral of Torah. This group did not live peacefully with the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the only group to recover from the events in the years of 66-70 C.E. and developed the rabbinic movement which eventually became the normative tradition of Judaism.

#### Sadducees

The word Sadducee is thought to be derived from Zadok, Solomon's High Priest. The sect was drawn from priestly, aristocratic, and military circles. Were often accused of being boorish and rude at times in their pursuit of wealth and higher social standing. Most Hellenized of all the sects. Believed that God is not actively involved with the world and far removed from evil. This group believed that human beings have complete free will. They dismissed the idea of a soul living after death and punishment in the next world. They rejected Oral law and focused instead on Temple worship.

#### Zealots (also known as the Fourth Philosophy)

The most important trait for this group was their passion for liberty. They also showed real zeal for God. The Zealot must act on behalf of God or the Lord will punish the whole nation. Zealots will kill or root out all offenders! Some of the so-called Sicarii, a sub-group of the Zealots, were famous for doing their killing with a dagger. Josephus described them as a bunch of bandits and robbers. He opposed this group and the feeling was mutual. The Zealots spoke of Josephus as being a traitor. The most famous story involving the Fourth Philosophy was their stand atop the mountain of Masada. In this story, eight hundred Jews committed suicide rather than being taken alive by the Romans.

## CHRISTIANITY

### The Origin of Christianity

The Christian community is called the “church.” The word in Greek was *ecclesia*, those who were “called out.” They were called out of their former lives into a new community. The Book of Acts (2:44- 47) describes the life of the first Christian community: “All who believed were together and shared all things in common, sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day attending temple together, breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

In its largest sense, the church is universal—the community of all people who profess faith in Christ. This is what is meant by the term “catholic,” with a lowercase “c,” which simply means “universal.” In its most intimate sense, the church is “wherever two or three are gathered” in the name of Christ (Matthew 18:20). Whether universal or a gathering of two or three, the church is a community of people. The images of community in the New Testament are powerful, organic images of belonging. Most important, the church is described as “the body of Christ.” As Paul puts it, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (I Corinthians 12:12). Not all parts of the body of Christ, the church, have the same function, but all are members one of another, suffering together, rejoicing together. This powerful metaphor is extended through the central ritual of the community, the blessing and sharing of bread and wine. The bread is called the “body of Christ,” and the wine “the cup of the new covenant.” As the bread and wine are one, so do those who share them affirm their oneness (I Corinthians 11:23-25).

Through the preaching of Paul and other missionaries, the new Christian faith grew quickly, spreading throughout the Mediterranean world. Its primary competitor was neither the sects nor mysterious religions of ancient Greece and Rome, but the cult of the emperor, to whom all were required to honor. For Christians, the “Lord” was Christ alone, and worshipping the emperor as Lord was impossible. The new Christian community was seen as subversive because of its refusal to participate in the cult of the emperor. Christians were persecuted and martyred for their faith throughout the Roman empire. Thus, it was a new landscape entirely when, early in the 4th century, the Emperor Constantine himself became a Christian. Beginning with his reign, Christianity was not only made legal, but would become the official religion of the Empire.

## **Sacred Text**

The sacred text of Christianity, the Bible, is a collection of many different books and letters that include many types of literature. The books that are accepted as scripture are often referred to as the “canon”.

In addition to the 39 books of the Old Testament, all Christian churches accept the 27 books and letters of the New Testament as scripture. These include 4 Gospel accounts of the life of Christ, 1 historical account of the early church, 13 letters written by or attributed to the Apostle Paul, 8 general letters, and The Revelation of John, an apocalyptic book. The writings of the New Testament were composed within a century of Christ's death, although it took much longer for the church identify which works in circulation during this period were canonical.

The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tell the story of the teaching and ministry of Jesus and of his death and resurrection. The book of Acts narrates the establishment and growth of the church after Christ's ascension. It describes some of the early challenges and controversies the church faced. The letters of Paul provide a window onto the life of local congregations when the church was in its infancy. He addresses questions about whether Gentiles must become Jewish to be accepted as Christian, how the Lord's Supper ought to be administered, and how soon Christians might expect Jesus to return to establish the Kingdom of God. The general letters and the book of Revelation provide theological lessons, encouragement to Christians who are suffering persecution, instruction about how to treat the poor, and a vision of God's coming reign.

All of the writings of the New Testament interpret the meaning of human life and history in light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. They often offer fresh interpretations of the Old Testament in light of the life of Christ, but always remain grounded in the central affirmations of Jewish faith that there is only one God, that God acts in human history (and has acted in the history of Israel in particular), and that God makes a moral claim on human life.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches also accept certain “deutero-canonical” books that are not part of the traditional Hebrew Bible. Protestants often regard these works as edifying, but do not regard them as having the authority of scripture. These works were largely composed during the period between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament, and some of them, such as the books of the Maccabees, provide an account of that period.

These include 7 books of history, poetry, and prophecy, as well as additions to the books of Esther and Daniel that are found in the Greek, but not the Hebrew, texts of these books. The Eastern Orthodox canon also includes a

few other works, such as the 151st Psalm, not recognized by either Protestants or Roman Catholics.

## **Doctrines**

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the anointed saviour of the world and that his presence on earth was the fulfilment of the prophecies made in the Old Testament about the Messiah who was to come and save humanity from their sins.

This was achieved for Christians, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby he defeated Satan and paid the price for all the sin in the world. The consequence of this is, that anyone who accepts this belief, receives eternal life and freedom from sin. Christians hold that Jesus will return on Judgment Day to fulfill any outstanding Old Testament prophecies, judge the living and the dead and establish God's kingdom in the new creation.

According to the Gospels, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Not much is said about Jesus' childhood, but his last years on earth were heavily documented in the Gospels. Christians consider Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to be the most important doctrines in their faith. This is because Jesus shows his omnipotence over death and ultimately is the most convincing evidence for Christians that he is fully God.

The Bible itself is not debated within Christianity, only its interpretation. Many believe that it was intended only to be read as a story book, full of myths and moral messages. Others contend that the whole Bible is supposed to be read literally and then there are those who read the different types of books in the Bible differently, for example the Psalms as illustrative poems and the Gospels as facts.

Although Christianity is a monotheistic religion, Christians also believe that Jesus was God's Son and that He, and the Holy Spirit, are both also fully God, as well as being separate entities entirely. This is a concept many find hard to grasp, and some Christians choose not to accept, but the majority of Christians see it as an essential part of their faith. The Bible does not specifically refer to the Trinity, but it is a common doctrine and is included in the Nicene Creed which serves to outline the core beliefs of Christianity.

## **God**

A Christian understanding of God is unique, distinct, and unlike any other concept of God. It is different from the Jewish understanding of Jehovah, and unlike the Islamic understanding of Allah, even though these theological concepts are also monotheistic.

Theology is not a bad word! Some people have an aversion to theology, considering it to be the endless speculations of lofty ideologues fine-tuning their epistemological doctrines with ever more obfuscated semantics. There has admittedly been too much theological hair-splitting, but “theology”, by definition, is simply “the study of God” whereby we arrive at “an understanding of God.” Theology, proper, is limited to the consideration of God Himself. Theology, in general, includes all subjects pertaining to God – His historical actions, His objectives, His projected future actions, etc.

It is incumbent upon mankind to engage in some form of theological consideration. As we seek to explain reality, the world around us, and ourselves, man is forced to confront some understanding of God, even if it is a concept of God that he subsequently rejects and repudiates. Even the atheist has some concept of God that he denies. The development of an understanding of God is a necessary starting-point for the cosmic consideration of human understanding.

God can only be known to the extent that He reveals Himself. “No man has seen God at any time” (John. 1:18), but God has revealed Himself in His natural creation (cf. Rom. 1:20), as a Personal God to His people (cf. Exodus 3:14), and subsequently revealed Himself supernaturally in the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:14; 14:9; Luke 10:22). Our understanding of God is not a result of independent human reasoning having set out to find God and figure Him out. Our knowledge of God comes only by means of, and must be derived out of, His own Self-revelation. We must allow God to determine our understanding of Himself, and that by His own Self-revelation.

Human understanding of God is further limited by the finite faculties that man has been created with. Our knowledge of God cannot be exhaustive, for the finite is attempting to understand the Infinite who has revealed Himself. If we had an infinite and completely comprehensive understanding of God, we, too, would be God, having omniscience. God ever remains somewhat of an inexplicable “mystery” to the finite understanding of man.

## **Christian Religions**

### **1. Lutheranism**

The Lutheran Church is the oldest Protestant Christian tradition, dating back to the Protestant Reformation and the person of Martin Luther. Lutherans are those Christians who choose to accept Martin Luther's teachings. On October 31, 1517, Luther, a Catholic monk, posted his 95 Theses as a challenge to the doctrine and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, hoping to reform the practices he felt were inconsistent with scripture. When the conflict escalated to a distinct separation with the Roman Catholic Church, those who accepted Luther's reforms became "Lutherans." Based on Luther's own writings, Lutherans still uphold Luther's theological teachings such as *sola scriptura* (scripture as the primary authority for faith and life), justification by the grace of God

alone, and salvation through faith in Christ alone. Luther's many theological ideas have since been collected into the Book of Concord, which is still an authority in Lutheran doctrine and practice. Because of its initial grounding in the Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran worship, more than many other Protestant traditions, has many elements similar to the Catholic style of worship. Lutheranism spread from Germany to most countries across the globe and has become one of the largest Protestant denominations.

2. **Anglicanism-** Anglicans believe in one God manifested in three "persons": the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Anglicans believe these three are of "one substance, power and eternity." This is known as the doctrine of the Trinity, which is common to all Christian denominations. God is infinite in goodness, power and wisdom, according to Anglicans. They believe Jesus Christ had both divine and human natures, and that he died and rose again. They believe the Holy Ghost participates in the life of the Church, and is equal with the Father and the Son.
3. **Latter Day Saints-** The founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith, wrote, "The fundamental principles of our religion are ... concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 49).

In addition to the above, Latter-day Saints believe unequivocally that:

- Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and the Son of our loving Heavenly Father.
  - Christ's Atonement allows humankind to be saved from their sins and return to live with God and their families forever.
  - Christ's original Church as described in the New Testament has been restored in modern times.
4. **Presbyterian-** The word "Presbyterian" comes from the Bible, from the Greek word for "elder." The Presbyterian denomination takes its name from its form of church government, which is to be governed by elders. The roots of the Presbyterian Church go all the way back to Protestant Reformation, led by Martin Luther. In 1517, Martin Luther nailed 95 "theses" or questions for discussion on the church door (the town bulletin board) of his town in Wittenburg, Germany. Because of the recent invention of the printing press, within two weeks Luther's disagreements with existing church doctrine were circulating all over Europe. The Protestant Reformation had begun.

The new reforms within the church soon attracted a bright young student in France, named John Calvin. Calvin, a lawyer by trade, wrote a brilliant articulation of this "reformed" faith, at age 29. He called it, The Institutes of the Christian Religion. People now refer to it as Calvin's Institutes. His work attracted great attention because of its insight, depth, and clarity. Calvin eventually would settle in the town of Geneva, Switzerland and become an important figure in the new reformation of



the church. The Presbyterian Church today finds its theological roots in the writings of John Calvin.

The first Presbyterian Church was organized in America in the early 1700's in Philadelphia. Just preceding the Civil War, the church broke into two separate denominations, which reunited in 1983. Our denomination's official name is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). This is the "mainline" Presbyterian denomination a body of 2.6 million believers in 11,000 congregations.

Martin Luther thought the greatest danger to the Christian's life was legalism. John Calvin believed the greatest danger was idolatry, the pursuit of, longing for, and trust in things and persons in place of God.

5. **Calvinism-** also known as reformed theology, is a movement within orthodox Protestantism that was developed by John Calvin (1509-1564), a French theologian. John Calvin was eight years old when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses. Calvin and Luther never met.

Basically, Calvinism is best known by an acronym: T.U.L.I.P.

- ✓ Total Depravity (also known as Total Inability and Original Sin)
- ✓ Unconditional Election
- ✓ Limited Atonement (also known as Particular Atonement)
- ✓ Irresistible Grace
- ✓ Perseverance of the Saints (also known as Once Saved Always Saved)
- ✓ These five categories do not comprise Calvinism in totality. They simply represent some of its main points.

6. **The Seventh-day Adventist church-** traces its roots to American preacher William Miller (1782–1849), a Baptist who predicted the Second Coming would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. Because he and his followers proclaimed Christ's imminent advent, they were known as "Adventists."

When Christ failed to appear, Miller reluctantly endorsed the position of a group of his followers known as the "seventh-month movement," who claimed Christ would return on October 22, 1844 (in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar).

When this didn't happen either, Miller forswore predicting the date of the Second Coming, and his followers broke up into a number of competing factions. Miller would have nothing to do with the new theories his followers produced, including ones that attempted to save part of his 1844 doctrine.

Miller had claimed, based on his interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, that Christ would return in 1843–44 to cleanse "the sanctuary" (Dan. 8:11–14, 9:26), which he interpreted as the earth. After the disappointments of 1844, several of his followers proposed an alternative

theory. While walking in a cornfield on the morning of October 23, 1844, the day after Christ failed to return, Hiram Edson felt he received a spiritual revelation that indicated that Miller had misidentified the sanctuary. It was not the earth, but the Holy of Holies in God's heavenly temple. Instead of coming out of the heavenly temple to cleanse the sanctuary of the earth, in 1844 Christ, for the first time, went into the heavenly Holy of Holies to cleanse it instead.

Another group of Millerites was influenced by Joseph Bates, who in 1846 and 1849 issued pamphlets insisting that Christians observe the Jewish Sabbath—Saturday—instead of worshipping on Sunday. This helped feed the intense anti-Catholicism of Seventh-day Adventism, since they blamed the Catholic Church for changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.

These two streams of thought—Christ entering the heavenly sanctuary and the need to keep the Jewish Sabbath—were combined by Ellen Gould White, who claimed to have received many visions confirming these doctrines. Together with Edson and Bates, she formed the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, which officially received its name in 1860.

Today the denomination reports that it has 780,000 members in the United States and 7.8 million members elsewhere, many in Catholic countries.

### **Christian Idea of Salvation**

Salvation is deliverance from danger or suffering. To save is to deliver or protect. The word carries the idea of victory, health, or preservation. Sometimes, the Bible uses the words saved or salvation to refer to temporal, physical deliverance, such as Paul's deliverance from prison (Philippians 1:19).

More often, the word "salvation" concerns an eternal, spiritual deliverance. When Paul told the Philippian jailer what he must do to be saved, he was referring to the jailer's eternal destiny (Acts 16:30-31). Jesus equated being saved with entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24-25).

What are we saved *from*? In the Christian doctrine of salvation, we are saved from "wrath," that is, from God's judgment of sin (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Our sin has separated us from God, and the consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Biblical salvation refers to our deliverance from the consequence of sin and therefore involves the removal of sin.

Who does the saving? Only God can remove sin and deliver us from sin's penalty (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5).

How does God save? In the Christian doctrine of salvation, God has rescued us through Christ (John 3:17). Specifically, it was Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection that achieved our salvation (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:7). Scripture is clear that salvation is the gracious, undeserved gift of God (Ephesians 2:5, 8) and is only available through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

How do we receive salvation? We are saved by *faith*. First, we must *hear* the gospel—the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection (Ephesians 1:13). Then, we must *believe*—fully trust the Lord Jesus (Romans 1:16). This involves repentance, a changing of mind about sin and Christ (Acts 3:19), and calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:9-10, 13).

A definition of the Christian doctrine of salvation would be “The deliverance, by the grace of God, from eternal punishment for sin which is granted to those who accept by faith God's conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.” Salvation is available in Jesus alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) and is dependent on God alone for provision, assurance, and security.

## ISLAM

### The Origin of Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion tradition that developed in the Middle East in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islam, which means “surrender or submission, was founded on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as an expression of surrender to the will of creator, and sustainer of the world. The Quran, the sacred text of Islam, contains the messages of the Prophet that were revealed to him from Allah. Essential to Islam is the belief that Allah is the one and true God with no partner or equal.

Islam has several branches and much variety within those branches. The two divisions within the tradition are the Sunni and Shi'a, each of which claims different means of maintaining religious authority. One of the unifying characteristics of Islam is the Five fundamental practices of Islam. These five practices include a ritual profession of faith, ritual prayer, the zakat (charity), fasting, and the Hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca).

Many Muslims are characterized by their commitment to praying to Allah five times a day. One of the defining characteristics of Islam is the primacy of sacred places including Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Muslims gather at mosques to worship Allah, pray, and study scripture. There is not a sharp distinction between the religious and secular aspects of life in Islam; all aspects of a Muslim's life are to be oriented to serving Allah. Islam expanded almost immediately beyond its birthplace in the Arabian Peninsula, and now has significant influence in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

## **Sacred Texts**

In Islam, there are two main sacred texts: the Quran (also spelled "Koran") and the Hadith (or Hadeeth). These books teach and illustrate Islamic beliefs, values, and practices. They are also important historical documents (especially the Quran), which tell the story of the origins of the Islamic faith.

### **Quran**

The word "Quran" means "recitation" in Arabic. This book is the sacred text of Islam and the highest authority in both religious and legal matters. Muslims believe the Quran to be a flawless record of the angel Gabriel's revelations to Muhammad from 610 until his death in 632 AD. It is also believed to be a perfect copy of a heavenly Qur'an that has existed eternally.

### **Hadith**

The word "Hadith" means "narrative" or "report" in Arabic. The book is a record of the words and deeds of the Muhammad, his family, and his companions. Although not regarded as the spoken Word of God like the Quran, Hadith is an important source of doctrine, law, and practice.

## **The God of Islam**

The doctrine about God in the Qur'ān is rigorously monotheistic: God is one and unique; he has no partner and no equal. Trinitarianism, the Christian belief that God is three persons in one substance, is vigorously repudiated.

This picture of God—wherein the attributes of power, justice, and mercy interpenetrate—is related to the concept of God shared by Judaism and Christianity and also differs radically from the concepts of pagan Arabia, to which it provided an effective answer. The pagan Arabs believed in a blind and inexorable fate over which humans had no control. For this powerful but insensible fate the Qur'ān substituted a powerful but provident and merciful God. The Qur'ān carried through its uncompromising monotheism by rejecting all forms of idolatry and eliminating all gods and Odivities that the Arabs worshipped in their sanctuaries (*ḥarams*), the most prominent of which was the Ka'bah sanctuary in Mecca itself.

Muslims believe that there are no intermediaries between God and the creation that he brought into being by his sheer command, "Be." Although his presence is believed to be everywhere, he is not incarnated in anything. He is the sole creator and sustainer of the universe, wherein every creature bears witness to his unity and lordship. But he is also just and merciful: his justice ensures order in his creation, in which nothing is believed to be out of place, and his mercy is unbounded and encompasses everything. His creating and ordering the universe is viewed as the act of prime mercy for which all things sing his glories.

The God of the Qur'ān, described as majestic and sovereign, is also a personal God; he is viewed as being nearer to one than one's own jugular vein, and, whenever a person in need or distress calls him, he responds. Above all, he is the God of guidance and shows everything, particularly humanity, the right way, "the straight path."

### **The Five Pillars of Islam**

The **Shahada** is the fundamental statement of faith and commitment made by Muslims: "There is no God but God (*Allah*), and Muhammad is His Messenger." It distinguishes Muslims from those of other faiths. The *Shahada* is perhaps better known in the West as the Arabic phrase on the flags of ISIS, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. However, the *Shahada* is by no means the preserve of violent groups, in fact reciting it three times in front of witnesses is a requirement of becoming a Muslim.

**Salah** is the ritual prayer of Islam through which all Muslims conform to the will of Allah. Prayer is performed in the direction of Mecca five times a day. Friday is set aside as the day for congregational prayer (*Jum'a*). The ready knowledge that large numbers of Muslims will be gathered together for communal prayer has frequently been exploited by terrorist networks such as Islamic State. In 2015 and 2016, Shi'a mosques were bombed in Kuwait, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Boko Haram has also attacked mosques in northern Nigeria. Places of worship full of people at prayer represent easy symbolic targets for suicide bombers, where maximum damage and loss of life can be achieved.

The term **zakat** refers to the obligatory donation of a portion of a Muslim's surplus wealth. Islamic charities encourage donors to use their services to relieve suffering and to help refugees, victims of environmental disasters, the urban poor and those in conflict zones and in recent years relief has been provided in Gaza, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Whilst the majority of charities operate within the law, some have been banned following allegations that they have used their resources to fund terrorist activities.

**Sawm** – Muslims are expected to fast during *Ramadan* – the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. During daylight hours (which vary depending on the time of year in which Ramadan falls), they abstain from food and drink, sexual activity and smoking, breaking the fast with a meal after sunset. Those who are elderly, ill, pregnant or breast-feeding are exempt, and children are not required to participate.

Completing the **Hajj**, the pilgrimage to Mecca, is a duty that every Muslim should perform during their lifetime. All pilgrims should be in good physical and spiritual health before they make the journey. Whilst in Mecca, they complete a series of individual and collective actions on the various days of their visit, following a pattern set by Muhammad.

Some two million Muslims from around the world went on Hajj in 2015. The 25,000 pilgrims who travelled from the UK joined thousands of Muslims from many other countries, all performing the same rituals irrespective of their many differences.

Knowing something about the five pillars and their significance for Muslims isn't just important to correct misunderstandings about what Muslims believe, it is also important in the work environment and for good working relations. For example, Muslim colleagues may request breaks and a space for prayer as well as support whilst fasting during Ramadan or annual leave at the time of the Hajj. These are important issues for all Muslims, and not markers of fundamentalism. Understanding this better can help overcome prejudices about Muslims.



Self-Reflection

Encircle  
your  
answer

I Can...  
Assess Myself

I can do this! I'm ready to move on or explain to a friend.

I'm almost there! I may need more practice or help.

I don't understand. I need more work or help on this.

FORM

Read each statement and check (✓) the box that reflects your work today.

Name:		Date:			
Section:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1. I found this work interesting.					
2. I make a strong effort.					
3. I am proud of the results.					
4. I understood all the instructions.					
5. I followed all the steps.					
6. I learned something new.					
7. I feel ready for the next assignment.					

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Self-Assessment

Match It!

**Instructions:** Match the following words with the world religions.

HINDU	TRIPITAKA	JESUS CHRIST	MOSQUE
SIKH	QURAN	PROPHET MOHAMMAD	CHURCH
CHRISTIAN	GURU GRANTH SAHIB	LORD KRISHNA	MONASTERY
MUSLIM	BIBLE	GURU NANAK	TEMPLE
BUDDHIST	BHAGWAD GITA	BUDDHA	GURUDWARA

 1) ..... 2) ..... 3) ..... 4) .....	 1) ..... 2) ..... 3) ..... 4) .....	 1) ..... 2) ..... 3) ..... 4) .....	 1) ..... 2) ..... 3) ..... 4) .....	 1) ..... 2) ..... 3) ..... 4) .....
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References

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