

# Christianity and Religions: Eastern Religions

	Buddhism	Confucianism	Hinduism	Taoism	Shintoism
Founder, date, location, and key information	Gautama Siddhartha (“the Buddha” or “Enlightened One”), ca. 500 BC, southern Nepal	Confucius, sixth century BC, China	between 1800 and 1000 BC, India	Lao Tzu, around the same time Confucianism started in the sixth century BC, China	500 BC or earlier, Japan
Key writings	Various groups of Buddhists have their own scripture collections, which they claim are sayings of Buddha that have been passed down.	The Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, Mencius, Book of Filial Piety, the Five Classics	Bhagavad-Gita, Vedas  There are many writings, but these are the most important. The Vedas are the oldest.	Tao Te Ching, Zhuangzi, the Daozang	Kojiki, Jinno Shotoki, as well as the Rikkokushi, containing Shoku Nihongi and Nihon Shoki
Who is God?	Gautama Siddhartha (the Buddha) did not believe in God; however, some Buddhists consider Buddha a god.	Confucius did not talk about God, but he and his disciples and wise men are worshiped in temples today.	Brahman is the great god, the world spirit. Brahman is a universal spirit that every person is a part of, but most people do not realize that. Brahman is manifested in many different gods and goddesses, which people worship.  Hinduism is a combination of pantheism and polytheism.	Some Taoists are atheists, while others worship many gods, including the Jade Emperor and Lao Tzu.	God is not personal but is the force that is in all spirits. All nature has these spirits (kami) in them.  Shintoism combines pantheism and polytheism.  Shintoists also believe the emperor descended from one of the gods.
Who is Jesus?	Jesus is not part of the historic Buddhist worldview. Modern-day Buddhists usually think Jesus was a good teacher or an avatar, but not God.	Jesus is not part of Confucianism.	Jesus was a son of God just as some others are. He was a guru (teacher). He did not rise from the dead, and His death does not pay for the world’s sins.	Jesus is not part of Taoism.	Jesus is not part of Shintoism.
Who is the Holy Spirit?	Spirits exist, but there is no Holy Spirit.	The Holy Spirit is not part of Confucianism.	The Holy Spirit is not part of Hinduism.	The Holy Spirit is not part of Taoism.	The Holy Spirit is not part of Shintoism.

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Salvation	The goal of life is nirvana, the state of complete enlightenment and freedom from all desires. This is an escape from suffering. Following the Eightfold Path helps one get rid of desires.	Salvation is not discussed in Confucianism.	A person continues to be reincarnated over and over until he is set free by meditation, yoga, and good works. Final salvation and release from reincarnation is being absorbed into Brahman.	Some Taoists believe immortality may be obtained through prayer, good works, and other rituals.	Salvation is not discussed in Shintoism. Being moral is the purpose of life.
What happens after death?	After death, a person is reincarnated into a different person or life form.	Many Confucians would follow Buddhism on this point. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are compatible, and many people hold to all three. Confucius spoke about “heaven,” but only as a spiritual idea.	If a person has been good, he will be reincarnated into a better person and good things will happen to him. If a person has been bad, he will be reincarnated and will pay for past sins by suffering in his next life.	Some Taoists believe in reincarnation, and some have other ideas, such as an afterlife on earth sustained by ancestor worship. Others do not believe in life after death.	A person is transformed into a kami.
How do people know right from wrong?	There is no ultimate source, but the sayings of Buddha are important, as are the Five Virtues.  In general Buddhists seek to do that which minimizes suffering.	Right and wrong are learned from examples of the ancient sages and from individuals and societies that try to live loving and good lives and try to do what is fitting.	Right and wrong are revealed in the Vedas, traditions, teachings of virtuous people, and the conscience.	Right and wrong become known when individuals stop striving.	Shintoism is not concerned with ethics. It is concerned with maintaining harmony with nature and with the kami. Shintoists may follow Buddhism or Confucianism in ethical matters.
Truth	Truth is found through meditation, which brings about clear thinking.	Confucius was very interested in learning and wisdom, but he did not enter into metaphysical discussions of truth.	Whatever the Vedas say is truth.		Shintoism does not tend to deal with philosophical issues like the nature of truth.
Evil	Evil is the pain and suffering that exists in the world and whatever causes this pain.	Evil is not acting in ways that are fitting, good, or righteous.	Evil is anything that goes against the Vedas or other sacred writings. A person’s evil will result in his being reincarnated as a lower life form (such as a worm or a bug) or being reincarnated into a lower caste.	Evil is separation from the Tao through custom and reason.	Evil results from mistakes made in ignorance.
Where do laws come from?	Law is not a major Buddhist concept. The Five Virtues sound like commandments, but they are actually promises a Buddhist makes to himself.	Confucius did not propose an external set of laws. Rather what is fitting might differ with the circumstances.	Laws come from the Vedas and higher caste members, such as priests or rulers.	Taoism is not law oriented.	Shintoism is not concerned with ethics, but laws concerning government and ritual are found in the Engishiki.
Can miracles happen?	Yes, but they are not highly valued.		yes		

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<b>What is the meaning of human history?</b>		Confucius did not address this question, but he respected wise men of the past and traditions.	Hindus regard space and time as things that should be escaped. They do not necessarily have meaning.		
<b>How does man get to know God?</b>	Buddhists are agnostic about God, so they do not attempt to know Him.		Yoga unites the human with the divine (Brahman).	Many Taoists do not believe in gods.	Shintoists communicate with the kami, but they do not come to know their gods personally.
<b>What is a human being?</b>	a chimera—a mere emotional, mental, and physical event (In the last analysis there is no such thing as a person.)	not a concern of Confucianism Many followers hold to Buddhist ideas.	an emanation of Brahman like the rest of the universe	an individual self Some Taoists believe the individual is subsumed into the Tao at death.	a part of nature that may become a kami but has little of the kami nature to begin with
<b>Are humans basically good or evil? How bad is the flaw?</b>	Despite surface differences of good or bad, all persons are pure deep down and thus have the potential to transform to goodness.	Humans have flaws, and they need to cultivate virtues.	Humans can be good or evil, but there is no major flaw. If a person does evil in this life, he will be punished in the next. If he does good things in this life, he will be rewarded in the next.	Religious Taoists say that human nature is evil and must be redeemed. Philosophical Taoists teach that humans are already one with the Tao and therefore are good.	Humans are basically good; but the kami is not great in them, and they may not be in harmony with nature.
<b>Is it possible to know anything at all?</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes  However, Shintoism does not concern itself with epistemology (the study of knowledge).
<b>What is real?</b>	reality viewed as a constantly changing process	not a concern of Confucianism	Brahman	the Tao	nature and the kami
<b>Origin of what is real</b>			The physical world emerged from Brahman, who reentered it as the world soul.  Hinduism contains many creation stories and views creation in a cyclical fashion.		Most of the kami and visible world were created through the procreation and other actions of the goddess Izanami and the god Izanagi.
<b>Other facts, beliefs, or practices</b>	The Eightfold Path includes right knowledge, intentions, speech, conduct, livelihood, right effort, mindfulness, and meditation as ways to free oneself from desires.  Some say that all religions are blended into Buddhism, meaning all religions are basically the same.	Confucius emphasized loving and honoring one's parents and ancestors.	Some Hindus shave their heads, wear orange robes, and beg for money or food in the streets as a way of atoning for sins. Many Hindus still worship false gods made of wood or stone in their temples. Yoga is important as a means of meditation.  Hinduism is the basis of New Age religions and transcendental meditation.	During the Qingming Festival, a yearly festival held in April, people offer food to spirits of the dead and celebrate the renewal of nature.	Even today international Japanese companies, such as Toyota, will perform rituals on their buildings and cars to cleanse them from evil spirits.