

World Religions and their Prophets

Compiled By Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org



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To the Prophets, Saints, Mystics
and Sages from every Religion and
Throughout time . . . That They
Might Have Voice!

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For more information!

Hinduism



Hindu Prophet Krishna.

*("The Path of Yoga," By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1995)*



Prophet Krishna's Mother, Devaki.

*("KRSNA," By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1970)*

**Principal Scriptures: Bhagavad-
Gita, Upanishads, Srimad
Bhagavatam, the Vedas.**

We don't know the exact year of the Prophet Krishna's birth, but we do know that Hinduism began about 3,000 B.C.E. (Before Christian Era). Krishna was born into a Royal Family and his mother's name was Devaki. According to accounts of his life, he received his calling in early childhood and underwent great difficulty and persecution from the minute he was born.

Krishna taught many very powerful things to the people of his time and culture. He taught that we must continue being reborn or reincarnating into this world until we were to free ourselves from 'karma' which was a term to denote sins; things like lying, stealing, hurting others, being jealous, etc.

Krishna taught that liberation from sin came from detachment to the deeds of others and a transcendental focus on God alone. This contemplation on God was to help us to purify ourselves of our inclination to do things we know are not right.

From the Hindu Scripture the Bhagavad Gita:

A portion of the Vedas deals with three modes – goodness, passion, and ignorance – of material Nature. Become free from pairs of opposites, be ever balanced and unconcerned with the thoughts of acquisition and preservation. Rise above these three modes, and be Self-conscious, O Arjuna. (2.45)

You have control over doing your respective duty only, but no control or claim over the results. The fruits of work should not be your motive, and you should never be inactive. (2.47)

Do your duty to the best of your ability, O Arjuna, with your mind attached to the Lord, abandoning worry and selfish attachment to the results, and remaining calm in both success and failure. The selfless service is a yogic practice that brings peace and equanimity of mind. (2.48)

Hindu Beliefs and Rituals

5 PRINCIPLES

1. God Exists: One Absolute OM.
One Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara (Shiva)
Several divine forms
2. All human beings are divine
3. Unity of existence through love
4. Religious harmony
5. Knowledge of 3 Gs: Ganga (sacred river),
Gita (sacred script), Gayatri (sacred mantra)

10 DISCIPLINES

1. *Satya* (Truth)
2. *Ahimsa* (Non-violence)
3. *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy, non-adultery)
4. *Asteya* (No desire to possess or steal)
5. *Aparighara* (Non-corrupt)
6. *Shaucha* (Cleanliness)
7. *Santosh* (Contentment)
8. *Swadhyaya* (Reading of scriptures)
9. *Tapas* (Austerity, perseverance, penance)
10. *Ishwarpranidhan* (Regular prayers)

Hindu Om or Aum Mantra

Aum -Let us meditate on this syllable, which is the foundation of prayer.

The earth emerges from the waters; plants emerge from the earth; human beings emerge from plants; speech comes from human beings; and Aum comes from speech. Aum is the essence of all essences. It is the highest of the high. It is the ultimate.

Speech and breath combine to form Aum. Speech and breath are like a couple in coitus, and Aum is their offspring. Aum is the fulfillment of their desires.

The syllable Aum signifies assent, for we say it when we assent to something. And assent is nothing but fulfillment.

The syllable Aum is the call to knowledge. We sing the praises of this syllable, which is the key to every kind of knowledge.

Hindu Gayatri Mantra

Oh God! Thou art the Giver of Life,
 Remover of pain and sorrow,
 The Bestower of happiness,
 Oh! Creator of the Universe,
 May we receive thy supreme sin-destroying
 light,
 May Thou guide our intellect in the right
 direction.

Hindu Prayer for Peace

Oh God, lead us from the
 unreal to the Real.
 Oh God, lead us from darkness to light.
 Oh God, lead us from death to immortality.
 Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
 Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in
 celestial regions.
 May there be peace on Earth.
 May the waters be appeasing.
 May herbs be wholesome, and may trees
 plants bring peace to all. May all beneficent
 beings bring peace to us.
 May thy Vedic Law propogate peace all
 through the world.

May all things be a source of peace to us.
And may thy peace itself, bestow peace on all
and may that peace come to me also.

OM



HINDU

**Sanskrit for the sacred word 'OM' or 'AUM' which is
considered in Hinduism to be the sound of the Lord
of all Creation, a Universal sound heard within
every living thing.**



Hindu Shrine, Lop Buri.

Sikhism



Guru Nanak.

*("Religions of the World" By Lewis M. Hopfe, Section on Sikhism,
Prentice Hall, 1994)*

**Principal Scriptures: Sri Guru
Granth Sahib.**

At the age of 30, Nanak received his divine call. One day he failed to return from his morning bath in the river. Thinking that Nanak might have died, his friends looked for him everywhere. Appearing again three days later, at first he would not speak. But later, he described an amazing vision he had where God had told him that all people should love one another and consider every person of whatever religion, race or creed as one of God's children, rather than look upon other people with the distinction to religion or race. "There is no Hindu or Muslim," God said to Nanak, letting him know that all were equal in God's eyes. (Nanak was born in India, a country where there are a large amount of Hindu's and Muslims.)

From the Sikh Scripture the Sri Guru Granth Sahib:

Listening and believing with love and
humility in your mind,
cleanse yourself with the Name, at the sacred
shrine deep within.
All virtues are Yours, Lord, I have none at all.
Without virtue, there is no devotional

worship.

I bow to the Lord of the World, to His Word,
to Brahma the Creator.

He is Beautiful, True and Eternally Joyful.

What was that time, and what was that
moment? What was that day, and what was
that date?

What was that season, and what was that
month, when the Universe was created?

The Pandits, the religious scholars, cannot
find that time, even if it is written in the
Puraanas.

That time is not known to the Qazis, who
study the Koran.

The day and the date are not known to the
Yogis, nor is the month or the season.

The Creator who created this creation-only He
Himself knows.

How can we speak of Him? How can we
praise Him? How can we describe Him? How
can we know Him?

Sikh Beliefs and Rituals

1. The Sikhs worship only one Almighty God in his abstract form. They are not allowed to worship any images or photographs or graves

or objects. (Compare this with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism)

2. Like other World religion, they respect their prophets and show extreme type of affection and honour for them, but they are not allowed to elevate them to the status of God. It is a blasphemy to give the status of God to the prophets.

Guru Gobind Singh in one of his hymns has categorically said, "Whosoever will dare to equate me with God, he/she will be thrown in the cauldron of hell".

3. The Sikhs bow to Guru Granth Sahib and other Sikh scriptures. This is an act of reverence and not worship.

4. Like most of the world religions, the Sikhs recite/listen to the holy hymns from their scriptures and also say their prayers.

5. A Sikh prayer can be either an individual prayer or a community prayer. An individual prayer can be said at any place. It can be said when a person is walking or commuting to his/her work or doing gardening or swimming or doing early morning exercises.

There are no set formalities or rituals to say individual prayers. The set individual prayers are the **Japji Sahib, Jap Sahib, Sudha Swayas, Rehras Sahib, Kirtan Sohila**

Sikh Prayer

Ode to the daily by the Tenth King :

1. Having first remembered God the Almighty, think of Guru Nanak.
2. Then of Angad Guru and Amar Das, and Ram Das, may help us.
3. Remember Guru Arjan, Guru Har Gobind and the holy Guru Har Rai.
4. Let us think of holy Har Krishan whose sight dispels all sorrows.
5. Let us remember Tegh Bahadur and the nine treasures shall come hastening to our homes.
6. May they all assist us everywhere.
7. May the tenth King holy Guru Gobind Singh the lord of hosts and protector of the faith assist us everywhere:

8. Turn your thoughts. O, Khalsa to the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib and call on God. (Wonderful Lord !)
9. The five Beloved Ones and Master's four sons, the forty Saved Ones and other righteous steadfast and longsuffering souls : think of their deeds and call on God. (Wonderful Lord !)
10. Those men and women who keeping the name in their hearts shared their earnings with others; who piled the sword and practiced charity; who saw other's faults; but overlooked them : think of their deeds and call on God. (Wonderful Lord !)
11. Those who for their religion allowed themselves to be cut up limb by limb had, their scalps scraped off, were broken on the wheel, were sawn of flayed alive : think of their sweet resignation are call on God. (Wonderful Lord !)
12. Those who to purge the Gurdwaras of longstanding evils, suffered themselves to be ruthlessly beaten or to imprisoned to be shot, cut up or

burnt alive with kerosene oil, but did not make any resistance or utter even a sigh or complaint : think of their patient faith and call on God. (Wonderful Lord !)

13. Think of all the different Gurdwaras, thrones of religious authority and other places hallowed by the touch of the Guru's feet and call on God. (Wonderful Lord !)
14. Now the whole Khalsa offers his prayer.
15. Let the whole Khalsa bring to his mind the Name of the Wonderful Lord.
16. And as he thinks of Him, may he feel completely blessed.
17. May God's protection and grace extend to all the bodies of the Khalsa wherever they are.
18. May the Lord's glory be fulfilled and His dispensation prevail.
19. May victory attend our charity and our Arms.
20. May God's sword help us.
21. May the Khalsa always triumph.

22. May the Sikh choirs, banners,
mansions abide for ever and ever.
23. The Kingdom of justice come.
24. May the Sikhs be united in love.
25. May the hearts of the Sikhs be
humble, but their wisdom exalted -
their wisdom in the keeping of the
Lord O Khalsa. Say the Lord is
wonderful. (Wonderful Lord !)
26. O true King ! O loved Father ! In
these ambrosial hours of the morn we
have sung. Thy sweet hymns heard
They life giving Word and have
discoursed on They manifold
blessings May these things find a
loving place in our hearts and serve
to draw our souls towards Thee.
27. Save us, O Father, from lust, wrath
greed, undue attachment and pride :
and keeping us always attached to
Thy feet.
28. Grant to they Sikhs the gift of
Sikhism. The gift of They name, the
gift of faith, the gift of confidence in
Thee, and the gift of reading and
understanding They Holy Word.

29. O kind Father, loving Father through.
The mercy we have spent the night in
peace and happiness : May Thy grace
extend to our labors of the day, too,
so that we may according to Thy will,
do what is right.
30. Give us light, give us understanding,
so that we may know what pleaseth
Thee.
31. We offer this prayer in presence, O
wonderful Lord.
32. Forgive up our sins. Help us keeping
ourselves pure.
33. Bring us into the fellowship of only
those men of love. In whose
company, we may remember they
name.
34. Through Nanak may Thy name for
ever be on the increase.
35. And may all men prosper by the
grace.

The Khalsa belongs to the Wonderful Lord,
who is always victorious.



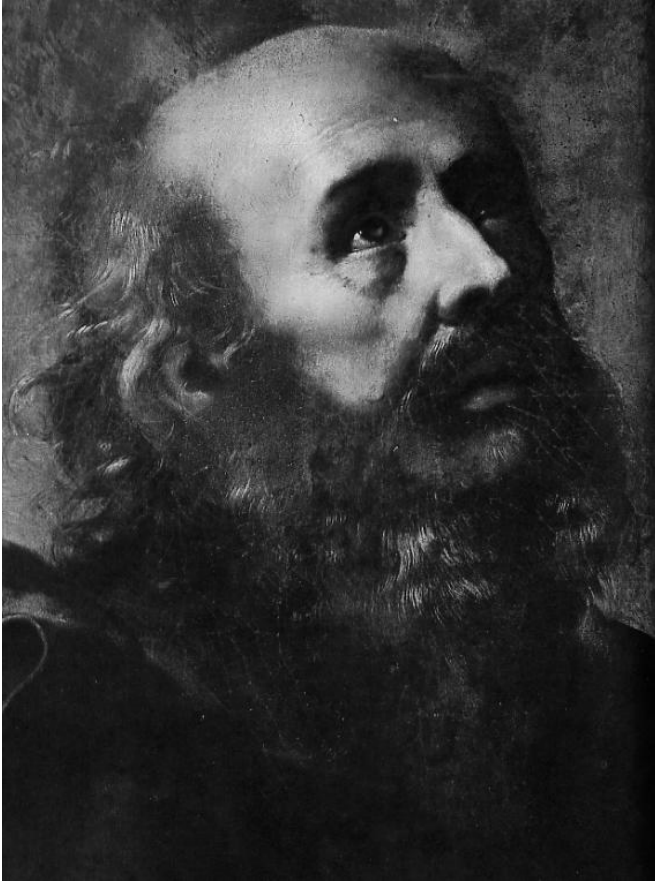
SIKH

**Script for 'Wahiguru' which means 'Hail to the
Greatest Beyond Man's Comprehension.'**



Sikh Temple, Sri Keshgarh Sahib.

Judaism



Prophet Moses.

("The Law and the Prophets," Carlo Dolci - Artist, Pitti Palace, Florence, Page 166, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.)

**Principal Scriptures: Torah,
Tanakh, Talmud, Quabbalah,
Pseudopigrepha.**

Moses is thought to have lived sometime around 1500 B.C.E. (Before Christian Era). Moses was born to a Hebrew slave family during a time of great persecution placed upon the backs of the Jewish people.

Stories had been told of a great prophet to be born among them, and fearing this prophecy, the Egyptian rulers ordered that all Hebrew babies be killed. Moses' Mother placed him in a small basket and on the river to float away to safety.

Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and wished to raise him as her own son. As a result, Moses was raised in the royal family of Egypt.

Later, when Moses was older and found out he was a Hebrew, the son of slaves; he defended his people and was later exiled from his homeland for going against the Pharaoh, his adopted father.

But God called him one day far out in the desert on Mount Sinai, telling him he must return to Egypt to free the Hebrew people who were still living as slaves under Egyptian rule. So, he returned.

Moses returned to Mount Sinai many years later with the Hebrew people whom he helped to free, and it was at that time that he received the Ten Commandments from God on the Mountain.

You may know these commandments. They are guidance for us on how to live our lives. They instruct us to love God and our neighbors, and by so doing, not to steal, lie or be jealous of what other people have. They also tell us that it is gravely sinful to intentionally cause harm to another living thing or to misuse our sexuality which is something to be honored and treasured.

From the Jewish Scripture the Book of Proverbs:

3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither spurn thou His correction;

3:12 For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth,
even as a father the son in whom he
delighteth.

3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
and the man that obtaineth understanding.

Jewish Beliefs and Rituals

BRIT MILAH AND NAMING

The first Jewish life-cycle celebration for the male baby is *Brit Milah*, circumcision. Through this symbolic act, which according to the Bible began with Abraham and Isaac, Jewish males are brought into the community of Israel, marked for life as Jews, and given a Hebrew name.

BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

Around the time of their thirteenth birthday, boys and girls are initiated into adulthood in the Jewish community. The ceremony is called *Bar Mitzvah* for boys and *Bat Mitzvah* for girls—the terms are identical, one being masculine and the other feminine; both mean “Child of the Commandment(s).” It is at the age of twelve and a half for girls and thirteen for boys that young people become adults according to Jewish law.

THE JEWISH WEDDING

Like members of other religious groups, Jewish parents encourage their children to marry other Jews. The Jewish wedding ceremony is called *Kiddushin*, which means "holiness."

JUDAISM AND DEATH

Judaism teaches that the soul lives on after a person dies. Still, death is a sad time for Jews, as it is for all peoples. Jewish belief does not require a final rite while a person is dying. There is a brief *Viddui* or confession, provided that the dying person is able to speak and wishes to recite it. But if the dying person does not speak the words of the *viddui*, or if a rabbi is not present, no Jew feels that the soul of the deceased is endangered in any way.

Jewish Prayer

MOURNER'S KADDISH

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He establish His

kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

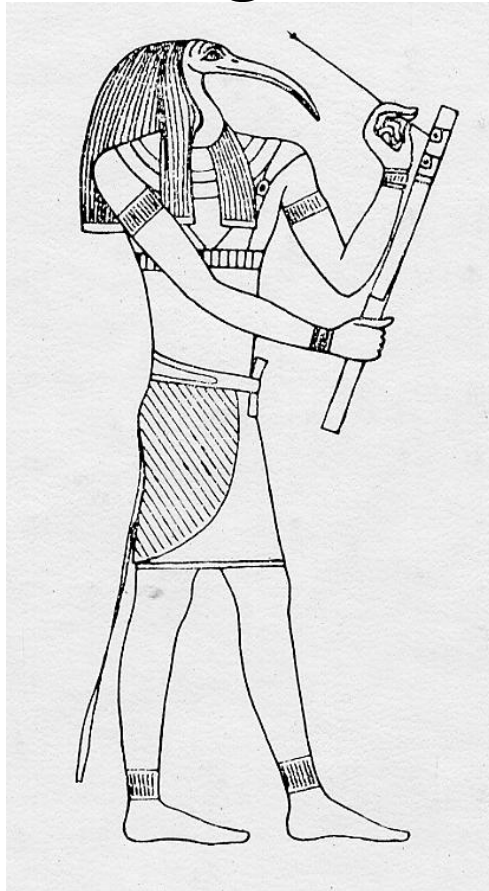
He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.



JEWISH

The Star of David. The two triangles intersecting represent the descent of the Holy Spirit and the aspiration of other men.

Mystery Religions



Prophet Thoth/Hermes.

("Lexicon Universal Encyclopedia, From the Tomb of Ramses I, Volume 7, Page 84, Lexicon Publications 1987) AND ("The Divine Pyramider of Hermes," Translated by Dr. Everard, Cover, Wizard Books, 1978)



Queen Nefertiti.

("Tutankhamen," By E. Wallis Budge, Page ii, Limestone Head in the Museum at Berlin, Bell Publishing Co., 1923)

**Principal Scriptures: Divine
Pymander of Hermes, Emerald
Tablets of Thoth, Egyptian Book of
the Dead, Corpus Hermeticum,
and Many More.**

The Prophet Thoth/Hermes is said to have been born and reborn for thousands of years beginning about 4,000 years ago in Ancient Egypt. They say he was reborn because most Mystery Religions believe in a concept known as Reincarnation, which teaches that the soul must be reborn on earth many times before it learns all that there is for it to know and is purified and ready to go onto the next world or sphere of existence.

It is not known at what age Thoth/Hermes were at the time they received their call.

Queen Nefertiti was so adored that she ended up being venerated as somewhat of a 'holy mother,' although in reality she was a Queen of Egypt; not unlike Isis (The more greatly venerated Holy Mother and Queen of Egypt) and Osiris (The Egyptian Perception of the Savior and King of Egypt). Osiris and Isis were married to one another and Osiris is mythologized to have been raised from the dead after suffering a very heinous death.

In the writings of Hermes, you will find a profound mystical focus, because Hermes was a Mystic in every sense of the word. Visions of heaven and hell were a profound part of his life.

As a result, his mystical experiences focused on what he called the light worlds and the worlds of darkness. These were very similar to what many of us know as heaven and hell in our day.

Hermes taught that there was a hidden path to interior wisdom, and it was this way of the mystic that he had followed and that he tried to lead. In the inner chamber of the secrets, Hermes seemed to convey, the truth of God could be revealed to every one of us.

But in the end, Hermes learned that the truth was very simple. We are to live good lives, doing good to one another and loving our neighbors. We are not to seek out quarrels, but to be bearers of peace at all times. In this way, we too, could enter the light worlds and learn from the school of God.

From the Mystery Religion Scripture the Divine Pymander of Hermes:

6. For never, O my Son, shall, or can that soul, which, while it is in the body, lightens and lifts up itself to know and comprehend that which is good and true, slide back to the contrary. For it is infinitely enamoured thereof, and forgetteth all evils; and when it hath learned and known its *Father* and *Progenitor*, it can no more apostatize or depart from that good.

7. And let this, O Son, be the end of Religion and Piety; whereunto thou art once arrived, thou shalt both live well and die blessedly, whilst thy soul is not ignorant wither it must return, and fly back again.

8. For this only, O Son, is the way to *Truth*, which our *Progenitors* travelled in; and by which making their journey, they at length attained to the good. It is a venerable way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body.

Mystery Religion Beliefs and Rituals

There are many different Mystery Religion orders, but the Rosicrucians is one of the better known among them. Dating from the 15th or 17th Century, the Rosicrucians consider themselves and 'inner worlds' order comprised of what they call 'adepts.' Adepts would be people who have spent a great deal of time in study, prayer and mystical experience who have learned some of what the Mystery Religions term 'inner wisdom,' the wisdom that comes to us from God. These adepts belong to what is termed 'The College of the Invisibles.'

Many modern societies exist who study the teachings of this order, but many researchers on the history of the order say that modern Rosicrucianists do not have ties to the 'Brethren of the Rose Cross' founded in the 1600's, although they may be followers.

There are many secret and hidden initiations in Rosicrucianism and other Mystery Religions. Many of the Mystery Religions are no longer practiced today.

Mystery Religion Prayers

A Hymn to All Father God By the Prophet Hermes

WHO, then, may sing Thee praise of Thee, or
praise to thee?

WHITHER, again, am I to turn my eyes to
sing

Thy praise; above, below, within, without?
There is no way, no place is there about Thee
nor any other thing of things that are.

All are in Thee; all are from Thee; O Thou
Who givest all and takest naught, for Thou
hast all and naught is there Thou hast not.
And WHEN, O Father, shall I hymn Thee? For
none can seize Thy hour or time.

For WHAT, again, shall I sing hymn? For
things that Thou hast made, or things Thou
hast not? For things Thou hast made manifest,
or things Thou hast concealed?

HOW, further, shall I hymn Thee? As being of myself? As having something of mine own?

As being other?

For that Thou art whatever I may be; Thou art whatever I may do; Thou art whatever I may speak.

For Thou art all, and there is nothing else which Thou art not. Thou art all that which doth exist, and Thou art what doth not exist, - Mind when Thou thinkest, and Father when thou makest and God when Thou dost energize, and Good and Maker of all things.



Group of World Religions. If you look closely you will see symbols of all the religions.

(From a reproduction of a Painting by Lenoir - La Franche
Maconnerie, J. Augustus Knapp)



Egyptian Temple at Karnak.



Rosicrucian Temple, Temple of the Rosy Cross.

Zoroastrianism



Zarathustra.

*("Religions of the World," Reconstruction by D.F. Karaka, Page 59,
From the Bettman Archives, St. Martin's Press, 1993)*

**Principal Scriptures: Avesta,
Pahlavi Texts.**

The Prophet Zarathustra is said to have been born around the 630 B.C.E., (Before Christian Era) in Rhages, a town near present day Tehran, Iran. Zarathustra received his call when he was 30 years of age.

Zarathustra had a mystical experience where he was taken up to the court of heaven. In his vision, Zarathustra was told about the battle that was going on between good and evil on earth, and he received messages from six archangels for the remainder of his life to guide him in his mission.

From the Zoroastrian Scripture the Pahlavi Text the Menog-i-Khrad:

45.

And they spoke, through the statement from revelation, (46) thus: 'Of the benefit which happens to men wisdom is good; (47) because it is possible to manage the worldly existence through wisdom, (48) and it is possible to provide also the

spiritual existence for oneself through the power of wisdom.

Zoroastrian Teachings and Rituals

Sacred Fire of the Zoroastrian Faith

Fire has been revered and worshipped in ancient cultures worldwide. In Greek mythology, the Titan Prometheus, out of his great love for mankind, disobeys Zeus and steals fire from heaven and brings it down to earth for human use. As punishment, Zeus chains Prometheus to the Caucasus mountain since mankind was not yet considered to be ready for this great gift of the gods.

Fire is the son of Ahura Mazda, the Spirit of the Sun - "atash Ahure Mazdao puthra". Fire is the purest of all elements on earth, indeed, it transcends all other elements. It is the seventh and final creation of Ahura Mazda, after the creation of the human being.

Fire dispels darkness, which is the realm of Ahriman, the evil spirit. When the sun has

set, and the cold, dark night begins its reign, then the fire/light is lit. This warmth and light giving fire represents the sun on earth. As warmth, it permeates all living creations of Ahura Mazda.

Fire is an enigmatic element; it is elusive, striving ever upwards, compassionate when controlled, but merciless in destruction when out of control. Moreover, it is the most human of all elements - fire is used in the service of the human being, an animal has no use of fire.

Fire has first to be kindled and then put to use; no human culture is possible without fire. It is used in cooking, in forging ploughs and swords, in kilns for building houses, and in a host of trades, which make human cultural evolution on earth at all possible. Many noble, positive traits of human beings are likened to fire: warmth of the heart, light of thinking, fire of enthusiasm, zeal, courage, etc.

In many world religions, fire is taken as witness in ceremonies. The sacred fire was never allowed to die out. There was also the practice of trial by fire, in which the innocent

would be unharmed, while the guilty would perish. Fire is a symbol of justice, truth and purity.

Aban Bana

Zoroastrian Prayers

God Is Love

With bended knees, with hands outstretched,
do I yearn for the effective
expression of the holy spirit working within
me:

For this love and understanding, truth and
justice; for wisdom to know the
apparent from the real that I might alleviate
the sufferings of men on earth....

God is love, understanding, wisdom, and
virtue. Let us love one another,
let us practice mercy and forgiveness, let us
have peace, born of fellow-feeling...

Let my joy be of altruistic living, of doing
good to others. Happiness is unto
him from who happiness proceeds to any

other human being.

If I Have Offended You

Zoroaster (6th century BC, Persia)

If I have offended you, O Wise Lord, whether by thought or word or deed, whether intentionally or inadvertently, I earnestly seek to make amends by offering you praise.

If I have reduced the honor in which you are held, I proclaim your glory with even greater fervor.

May your will rule in the hearts of all your creatures.

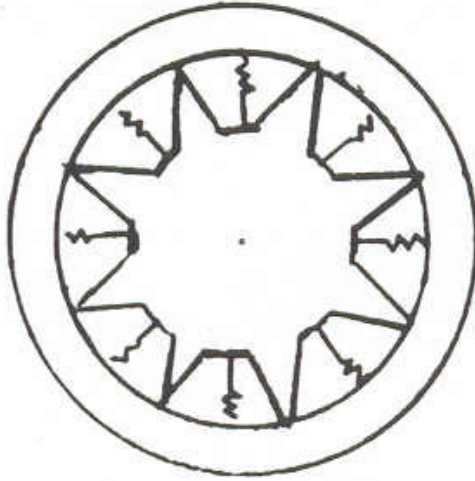
May every animal and plant, as well as every man and woman, live according to your laws, for the seed of righteousness lives in every living thing.

A Zoroastrian Prayer for Peace

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world:

that understanding triumph over ignorance,
that generosity triumph over indifference,
that trust triumph over contempt, and

that truth triumph over falsehood.



ZOROASTRIAN

The Sun was a symbol of 'Ahura Mazda,' the Zoroastrian name for God. As the sun represents light and heat, it also represented light of knowledge within the minds of the people to the Zoroastrians.



Zoroastrian Temple, Pir-e-Naraki near Yazd.

Buddhism



Prophet Buddha.

*("The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha," Edited by E.A. Burtt,
Cover, Mentor Religion, 1955)*



Avalokiteswara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.
(A Monk from Shasta Abbey, Mt. Shasta, California)

**Principal Scriptures: Pali Canon,
 Mahayana Texts, Dhammapada,
 Lotus Sutra and Many More.**

The Prophet Buddha is said to have been born around 563 B.C.E. (Before Christian Era) in the Northeastern Indian subcontinent to a wealthy royal family. The Buddha himself was a prince (Prince Siddhartha), the son of a king. Although an exact age is not known, the Buddha received his call quite early when he was about 19 years of age. He renounced his royal title and entered the life of a mendicant, which was a person who gave up everything including food and shelter to contemplate the Universe, Reality and Truth.

After years of meditation and study, the Buddha was credited with discovering the Middle Way. He discovered that giving up everything to find God did not work for him, and neither did living a life of opulence in a castle. He chose to follow a way of moderation which led to many profound realizations within himself which he shares in his writings with us today.

The Prophetess Avalokiteswara is considered much like the holy mother of Hindu and Christian tradition, although he/she was not the mother of the prophet, but rather a transcendental manifestation of the supreme

Bodhisattva - the mother of compassion.

A 'Bodhisattva' is one who renounces the opportunity to go to heaven until all living beings are liberated from their earthly existence and enter into what Buddhists call Nirvana, a state of mind representing the freedom of soul. Because Buddhists believe in a concept called reincarnation, a bodhisattva who made such a vow would be promising to continue coming back to earth (and foregoing heaven) until all living beings had achieved liberation. This was a profound sacrifice to make.

(Avalokiteswara is perceived as being both male and female, in some images carrying characteristics of both sexes.)

From the Buddhist Scripture the Dhammapada:

5. For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.

6. The world does not know that we must all come to an end here;--but those who know it, their quarrels cease at once.

7. He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle, and weak, Mâra (the tempter) will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree.

8. He who lives without looking for pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him Mâra will certainly not overthrow, any more than the wind throws down a rocky mountain.

Buddhist Beliefs and Rituals

The Four Noble Truths

1. Life means suffering.

To live means to suffer, because the human nature is not perfect and neither is the world we live in. During our lifetime, we inevitably have to endure physical suffering such as pain, sickness, injury, tiredness, old age, and eventually death; and we have to endure psychological suffering like sadness, fear, frustration, disappointment, and depression. Although there are different degrees of suffering and there are also positive experiences in life that we perceive as the opposite of suffering, such as ease, comfort and happiness, life in its totality is imperfect and incomplete, because our world is subject to impermanence. This means we are never able to keep permanently what we strive for, and just as happy moments pass by, we ourselves and our loved ones will pass away one day, too.

2. The origin of suffering is attachment.

The origin of suffering is attachment to transient things and the ignorance thereof. Transient things do not only include the physical objects that surround us, but also ideas, and -in a greater sense- all objects of our perception. Ignorance is the lack of

understanding of how our mind is attached to impermanent things. The reasons for suffering are desire, passion, ardour, pursue of wealth and prestige, striving for fame and popularity, or in short: *craving* and *clinging*. Because the objects of our attachment are transient, their loss is inevitable, thus suffering will necessarily follow. Objects of attachment also include the idea of a "self" which is a delusion, because there is no abiding self. What we call "self" is just an imagined entity, and we are merely a part of the ceaseless becoming of the universe.

3. The cessation of suffering is attainable.

The cessation of suffering can be attained through *nirodha*. Nirodha means the unmaking of sensual craving and conceptual attachment. The third noble truth expresses the idea that suffering can be ended by attaining dispassion. Nirodha extinguishes all forms of clinging and attachment. This means that suffering can be overcome through human activity, simply by removing the cause of suffering. Attaining and perfecting dispassion is a process of many levels that ultimately results in the state of *Nirvana*.

Nirvana means freedom from all worries, troubles, complexes, fabrications and ideas. Nirvana is not comprehensible for those who have not attained it.

4. The path to the cessation of suffering.

There is a path to the end of suffering - a gradual path of self-improvement, which is described more detailed in the Eightfold Path. It is the middle way between the two extremes of excessive self-indulgence (hedonism) and excessive self-mortification (asceticism); and it leads to the end of the cycle of rebirth. The latter quality discerns it from other paths which are merely "wandering on the wheel of becoming", because these do not have a final object. The path to the end of suffering can extend over many lifetimes, throughout which every individual rebirth is subject to karmic conditioning. Craving, ignorance, delusions, and its effects will disappear gradually, as progress is made on the path.

1. Right View	Wisdom
2. Right Intention	

3. Right Speech	Ethical Conduct
4. Right Action	
5. Right Livelihood	
6. Right Effort	Mental Development
7. Right Mindfulness	
8. Right Concentration	

Buddhist Prayers

By the power and the truth of this practice,
may all beings have happiness, and the causes
of happiness.

May all be free from sorrow, and the causes of
sorrow.

May all never be separated from the sacred
happiness which is sorrowless.

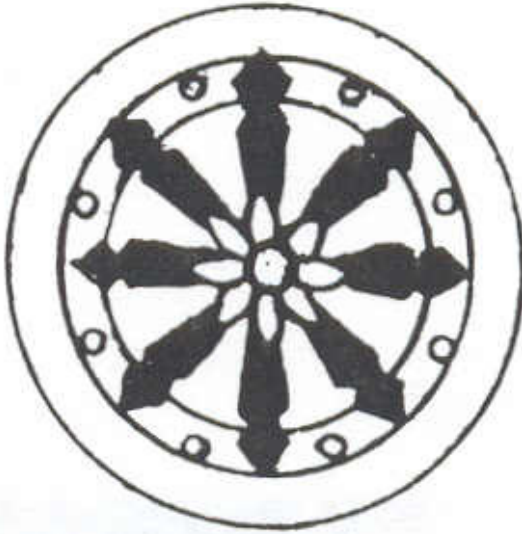
And may all live in equanimity,
without too much attachment and too much
aversion,

And live believing in the equality of all that
lives.

May all beings be filled with joy and peace.

May all beings everywhere,
The strong and the weak,
The great and the small,

Sutta Nipata
Buddha's Discourse on Good Will



BUDDHIST

The Buddhist Wheel of Rebirth or Cycle of Transformations where human beings learn the laws of cause and effect in their actions.



Buddhist Shrine, The Shewedong Pagoda.

Confucianism



Prophet Confucius.

("Religions of the World," Page 231, The Granger Collection, By St. Martin's Press, 1993)

Principal Scriptures: Analects of Confucius, Doctrine of the Mean, Writings of Mencius.

Confucius was known as a prophet **and** philosopher. He was responsible for the creation of many of the foundational principals of organized society. In the writings that he left us, he always spoke of doing good and not evil. "The Master said, 'If out of the three hundred Songs I had to take one phrase to cover all my teaching, I would say 'Let there be no evil in your thoughts.'"

The Analects of Confucius, Book II, No. 2, Translated by Arthur Waley, Vintage Books, 1989, (Buddhism: Confucianism)

From the Confucian Scripture the Analects:

Tsze-kung said, "Suppose the case of a man extensively conferring benefits on the people, and able to assist all, what would you say of him? Might he be called perfectly virtuous?" The Master said, "Why speak only of virtue in connection with him? Must he not have the qualities of a sage? Even Yao and Shun were still solicitous about this.

"Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself,

seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others.

"To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves;-this may be called the art of virtue."

Confucian Beliefs and Rituals

Confucian ethical teachings include the following values:

Li: includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.

Hsiao: love within the family: love of parents for their children and of children for their parents.

Yi: righteousness.

Xin: honesty and trustworthiness.

Jen: benevolence, humaneness towards others; the highest Confucian virtue.

Chung: loyalty to the state, etc.

Practices:

Confucianism does not contain all of the elements of some other religions, like Christianity and Islam. It is primarily an ethical system to which rituals at important times during one's lifetime have been added.

Since the time of the Han dynasty (206 CE) four life passages have been recognized and regulated by Confucian tradition:

Birth: The **T'ai-shen** (spirit of the fetus) protects the expectant woman and deals harshly with anyone who harasses the mother to be. A special procedure is followed when the placenta is disposed of. The mother is given a special diet and is allowed rest for a month after delivery. The mother's family of origin supplies all the items required by the baby on the first, fourth and twelfth monthly anniversary of the birth.

Reaching Maturity: This life passage is no longer being celebrated, except in traditional families. It takes the form of a group meal in which the young adult is served chicken.

Marriage: This is performed in six stages:

Proposal: the couple exchange the **eight characters**: the year, month, day and hour of each of their births. If any unpropitious event occurs within the bride-to-be's family during the next three days, then the woman is believed to have rejected the proposal.

Engagement: after the wedding day is chosen, the bride announces the wedding with invitations and a gift of cookies made in the shape of the moon.

Dowry: This is carried to the groom's home in a solemn procession. The bride-price is then sent to the bride by the groom's parents. Gifts by the groom to the bride, equal in value to the dowry, are sent to her.

Procession: The groom visits the bride's home and brings her back to his place, with much fanfare.

Marriage and Reception: The couple recite their vows, toast each other with wine, and then take center stage at a banquet.

Morning after: The bride serves breakfast to the groom's parents, who then reciprocate.

Death: At death, the relatives cry out aloud to inform the neighbors. The family starts mourning and puts on clothes made of a coarse material. The corpse is washed and placed in a coffin. Mourners bring incense and money to offset the cost of the funeral. Food and significant objects of the deceased are placed into the coffin. A Buddhist or Taoist priest (or even a Christian minister) performs the burial ritual. Friends and family follow the coffin to the cemetery, along with a willow branch which symbolizes the soul of the person who has died. The latter is carried back to the family altar where it is used to "install" the spirit of the deceased. Liturgies are performed on the 7th, 9th, 49th day after the burial and on the first and third anniversaries of the death.

Confucian Prayers

Things being understood, knowledge became complete.

Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere.

Their thoughts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.

Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated.

Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed.

Their states being rightly governed, their whole empire was made happy.

From the Emperor to the masses, all must consider the cultivation of the person, the root of everything."

"To put the world in order, we must put the nation in order.

To put the nation in order, we must put the family in order.

To put the family in order, we must nurture our personal life.

To cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right."

To achieve order:

"Plant a thought, reap an act.

Plant an act, reap a habit.

Plant a habit, reap a character.

Plant a character, reap a destiny."

"The man who, in the view of gain, thinks of righteousness;
who, in the view of danger, is prepared to give up his life;
and who does not forget an old agreement however far back it extends;
such a man may be judged to be a complete man."

"One joy dispels a hundred cares."

"Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart."

"Study the past if you would divine the future."

"Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves."

"Do not treat others as you yourself would not be treated."



CONFUCIAN

'Harmony' in Chinese.



Confucian Shrine, Nagasaki's Koshi-Byo.

Taoism



Prophet Lao Tzu.

*("Great Religions of the World," By the National Geographic Society,
1971)*

**Principal Scriptures: Tao Te
Ching, Wen Tzu, Chuang Tsu.**

Lao Tzu was a contemporary of Confucius, and there are legends that have been handed down of a meeting between the two men on one occasion where they discussed the proper laws for the creation of government and order in society.

As a result, Lao Tzu also had a great deal to do with laying down the foundations of societal laws and norms in his time and in subsequent generations.

Like his predecessors, Lao Tzu taught that we all had the choice between good and evil. In his writings, he describes these paths also as the path of light and the path of darkness.

The symbol of Taoism carries on to this day. It is a complete circle made up of an upper white portion (good, light) and a lower black portion (bad, darkness).

Lao Tzu believed that a balance existed in our world between these forces of good and evil (within ourselves and all around us) that was demonstrated in the symbol of Taoism, the Circle, the Yang Yin. This balance was completed and fulfilled by acknowledging

both good and evil within ourselves and those around us.

Lao Tzu directed people to participate in detachment from worldly things and focus on those things which are eternal and lasting; those things we take with us when we leave this earth - knowledge, wisdom and love.

From the Taoist Scripture the Tao Te Ching:

Act through nonaction,
Handle affairs through noninterference,
Taste what has no taste,
regard the small as great, the few as many,
Repay resentment with integrity.
Undertake difficult tasks

By approaching what is easy in them;
Do great deeds
By focusing on their minute aspects
All difficulties under heaven arise from what
is easy.
All great things under heaven arise from what
is minute.

Taoist Beliefs and Rituals

The principle focus of Taoism is the Tao (meaning "Way" or "path"), which refers to a nameless, formless, all-pervasive power which brings all things into being and reverts them back into non-being in an eternal cycle.

The tradition stresses the importance of following the way of the Tao - that is, of taking no action that is contrary to nature, and of finding one's place in the natural order of things.

Taoist Prayers

Memorial-Presenting Rituals are performed in the Taoist Fasting Rituals of the Golden Register, the Jade Register and the Yellow Register. In the rituals, the Taoists' memorials are presented to the heavenly court in order to report to heaven, invite the deities to come to the offering altars, and save the souls of the ancestors. The whole procedure generally consists of three parts, namely Ritual Commencement, Invoking the Sages, and Presenting Memorials. During the ritual commencement, the Ritual Master and the

servants enter the altar to burn incense and kneel down to pray. When invoking the sages, they arrange the deities of the five directions respectfully, invoke the spirits and make the sages descend. The ritual master burns incense before all the Heavenly Lords and prays for their longevity. In presenting memorials, the ritual master and the servants ask the three masters for help and ask them to descend to the Ritual Space. The High Priest recites the "incantations for burning incense" silently, and renders a prayer to the Immortal Official in Charge of Memorials, asking him to send the memorials. He works his spirit to conduct the rituals, sending the spirits to protect the memorials up to heaven. Then the ritual master Seals the Memorials and sends them up. He Paces the Big Dipper on the Big Dipper Diagram. As his Original Spirit flies to the heavenly court, he reads the memorials silently and reports to heaven. Then he takes back his Original Spirit. The ritual master and the servants give thanks to the deities, offer sacrifices, and take leave. Owing to the different lineages of Taoist Skills and the different types of social life, habits, and dialects prevalent in the areas where Daoism spread, the practice of Memorial-Presenting

rituals is slightly different in different regions, but the basic framework is the same.



TAOIST

Yang and Yin, Light and Dark, the Ultimate Principal and Source of all things in Taoism. As the circle shows the unity of the two principles, the line inbetween them shows constant interaction between the two forces in ourselves and our world.



Taoist Shrine.

Christianity



Messiah, Christ and King, Jesus Christ.

(*"Christ and the Fine Arts," The Ascension,* Gottlieb Peter Biermann
- Artist, Page 469, Gramstorff Brothers, Inc., MA Harper & Row,
1938)



Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ.
(*"Christ and the Fine Arts," 'The Sistine Madonna,' Raphael, Page 38,*
Harper & Row, 1938)

**Principal Scriptures: The Holy
Bible - Old and New Testament.**

The Messiah Jesus Christ is said to have been born around 5 B.C. (Before Christ) in Bethlehem to a poor family. Mary and Joseph were the names of his parents. Jesus Christ received his call to public ministry when he was 30 years of age.

Jesus' Mother received a visit from the Archangel Gabriel before Jesus was born telling her that she was 'blessed among women' and was to give birth to a Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. His name would be Jesus Christ, and He was the Son of the Most High God.

Jesus was born nine months later in a manger in Bethlehem. Shepherds were told of his birth and came to pay their respects, as did three wise men, magi, who had seen his star which shone in the heavens leading to his place of birth.

Jesus worked many miracles, healings and taught all men to love one another and to do good not only to those who were nice to you, but even to those who don't like you or who were unkind to you.

Jesus taught a message of love, forgiveness and reconciliation between peoples, and it was His hope that we 'might all be one.' In other words, Jesus wanted us to love each other and to worship God as one Body in Christ.

Christ told us that if we followed the first two commandments: to love God with all of our hearts, souls and minds, and our neighbors as ourselves, that we would 'fulfill all the law and the prophets.'

This means that if we love God and one another it won't even occur to us to lie, steal, cheat, be jealous or think unkindly of our friends or neighbors. Following the moral law written down in the ten commandments would come of itself if we truly understood and followed these first two.

Jesus Christ was crucified for his efforts at the age of 33. But he rose from the dead three days later. This is called the Resurrection, and is one of the most important events and tenets of the Christian faith. Because in rising from death, Jesus showed us He really was God and that He truly was "The Way, the Truth

and the Life, and no one come to the Father but by Me . . ." just as he had said.

From the Christian Scripture the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians:

1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

1:6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

1:7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Christian Beliefs and Rituals

Roman Catholics and Protestants all believe in the Doctrine of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit - One God in Three Persons), the Divinity of Christ (that Jesus Christ was true God and true Man), and the inspiration of the Bible as the true Word of God.

Catholics also believe in the efficacy of Seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance (Confession or Reconciliation), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Catholics also believe in the intercession of the saints, Purgatory (a place of purification where a soul goes before entering heaven), and the doctrine called transubstantiation. This is a big word which means that when the priest elevates the bread and wine during the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass, Catholics hold that the bread and wine become truly and completely the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian Prayers

Our Father

Our Father Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy Kingdom Come
Thy Will be Done
On Earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our Daily Bread
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who have trespassed against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom and the power and
the glory forever and ever, Amen.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty,

whence He shall come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic
church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and life everlasting.

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary Full of Grace the Lord is with Thee.

Blessed art Thou Among Women,

And Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb Jesus.

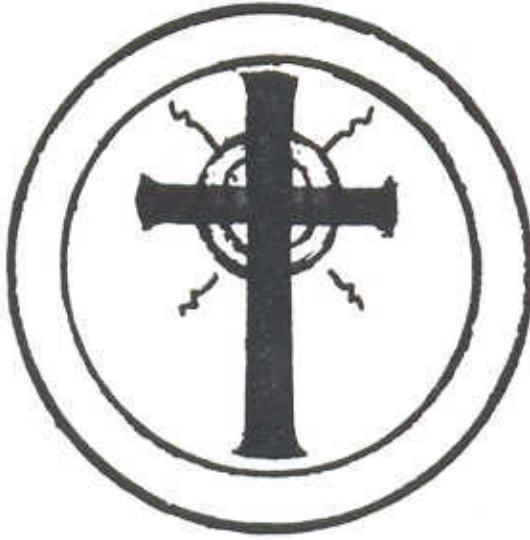
Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for Us
Sinners, Now and at the Hour of Our Death,

Amen.

Portion of the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and
Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly
Beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ in
Atonement for Our Sins and for the Sins of the
Whole World. Amen.

For the Sake of His Sorrowful Passion, Have
Mercy on Us and On the Whole World, Amen.



CHRISTIAN

The Cross represents the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which shows us that we all must suffer in this world but that such suffering, if understood, can be very fruitful to our souls.



**Christian Shrine, The Church of the Holy Sepulchre
(The Tomb of Christ).**

Native American



Prophet Black Elk.

("The Sacred Pipe," Recorded by Joseph Epes Brown, Photograph by J.E. Brown, University of Oklahoma Press, 1953)



White Buffalo Calf Woman.

(Famous Painting, Artist Unknown)

**Principal Scriptures: Popul Vuh,
Wallum Olom and a Huge Number
of Stories and Teachings that Have
Been Handed Down by Word of
Mouth for Many Generations.**

Among Native American and Tribal Religions, there are innumerable prophets and seers, most of which are given fairly equal footing with each other in these religions.

Each of those religions holds different world views and perceptions of life and death. Black Elk was one of those many, who emerged during the early 20th century as a visionary and mystic of the Oglala Sioux.

Tribal religions expand into hundreds of religious systems as you go from Native American to Hawaiian, Australian Aboriginal, African and the many other tribal cultures around the world.

White Buffalo Calf Woman was a prophetess or 'wakan' of some of the Native American tribes, bringing the gift of the Sacred Pipe to the people. Revered as a 'Holy Mother' she is held with great reverence by the Native people of the Americas.

The sacred pipe holds great reverence among native peoples and there is an exciting story of how White Buffalo Calf Woman appeared to two men. They were given the choice to see

her through the eyes of lust (see her only as a beautiful woman in a sexual way), or to see her eternal beauty (the eternal feminine).

The man who saw her with lust immediately began to decay and within moments had become bones and then dust.

The other, who saw her eternal beauty, was given the gift of wisdom in the form of the sacred pipe.

This teaching is very important in that it shows us that we are always asked to honor all life for its eternal nature and beauty, to love and cherish one another without hidden motives . . . to love purely.

From the Native American The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota:

The Shamans should teach these doctrines to

the people and exhort them to practise the four great virtues which, named in the order of their importance, are:--

1. Bravery.
2. Fortitude.
3. Generosity.
4. Fidelity.

The following are four individuals, but they should be considered as only one, the Chief God:

The Sun.
The Moon.
The Buffalo.
The Spirit.

The following are four individuals, but they should be considered as only one, the Great Spirit:--

The Sky.
The Wind.
The Bear.
The Ghost.

The following are four individuals, but they should be considered as only one, the Creator God:

The Earth.
The Feminine.
The Four Winds.
The Spirit-like.

The following are four individuals, but they should be considered as only one, the Executive God:--

The Rock.
The Winged.
The Whirlwind.
The Potency.

The following are but as one, and that One is Wakan Tanka, the Great Mysterious:--

The Chief God.
The Great Spirit.
The Creator.
The Executive.

Native American Beliefs and Rituals

First, most of the Native American cultures have cosmologies and creation myths which explained the stories passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth as to how those tribes had been created or come into being.

Second, most native peoples worship a Creator or "Great Spirit" although these manifested in many different ways, some male, others female. Most tribes also recognized an evil god who was at odds with mankind.

Third, most tribes believe in the immortality of the human soul and an afterlife, often called the happy hunting grounds.

Native American Prayers

Great Spirit Prayer

"Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind,

Whose breath gives life to all the world.

Hear me; I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes
ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have
made and my ears sharp to hear your voice

Make me wise so that I may understand the
things you have taught my people.

Help me to remain calm and strong in the face
of all that comes towards me.

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in
every leaf and rock.

Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the
intention of helping others.

Help me find compassion without empathy
overwhelming me.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my
brother, but to fight my greatest enemy

Myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with
clean hands and straight eyes.

So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux

"Grandfather, Great Spirit, once more behold me on earth and lean to hear my feeble voice. You lived first, and you are older than all need, older than all prayer. All things belong to you -- the two-legged, the four-legged, the wings of the air, and all green things that live.

"You have set the powers of the four quarters of the earth to cross each other. You have made me cross the good road and road of difficulties, and where they cross, the place is holy. Day in, day out, forevermore, you are the life of things."

Earth Teach Me to Remember by John Yellow Lark

Earth teach me stillness
as the grasses are stilled with light.

Earth teach me suffering
as old stones suffer with memory.

Earth teach me humility
as blossoms are humble with beginning.

Earth Teach me caring
as the mother who secures her young.

Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands alone.

Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the ground.

Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky.

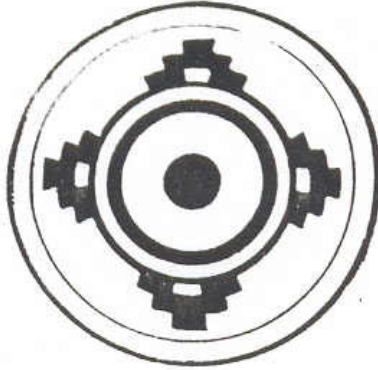
Earth teach me resignation
as the leaves which die in the fall.

Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the spring.

Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.

Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep in the rain.

Ute, North American



AMERICAN INDIAN

The Medicine Wheel. We begin in the South, or the bottom of the wheel which represents Innocence. The West of the wheel or the left side represents Introspection. The East of the wheel or the right represents Illumination. And the North of the wheel or the top represents Wisdom.



MesoAmerican Native Shrine.

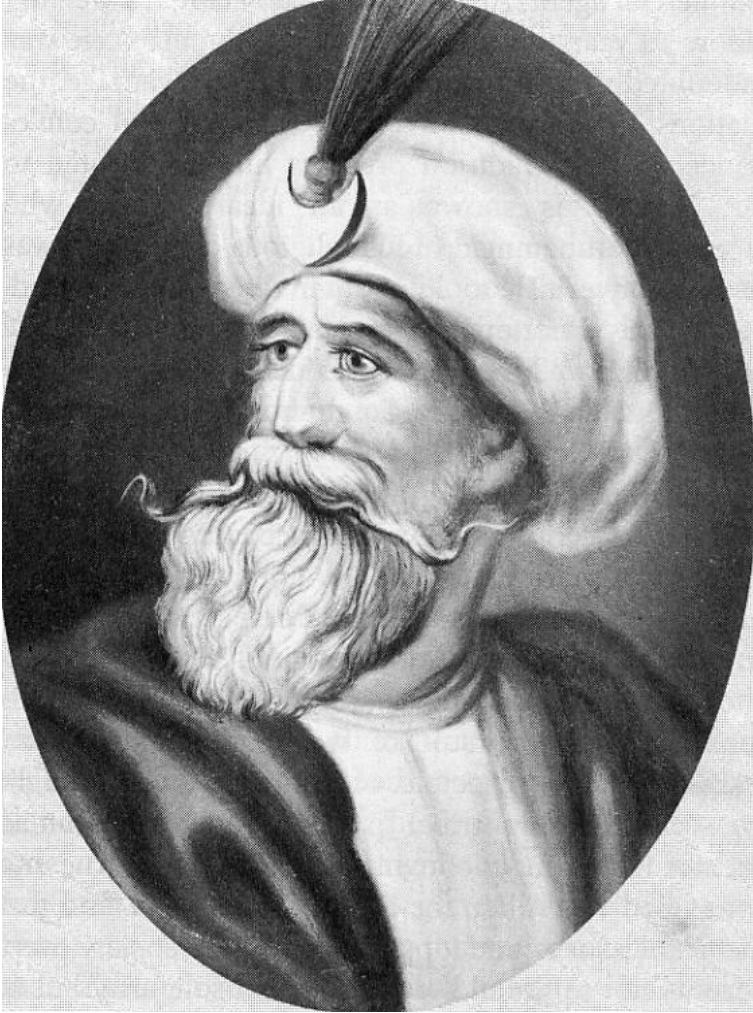


**Native American Holy Mound, Miamisburg, OH,
USA.**



Native American Holy Site, the American Southwest.

Islam



Prophet Mohammed

(*" Religions of the World,"* Page 431, *The Granger Collection*, By St. Martin's Press, 1993)



Prophet Muhammed with Angel

("Great Religions of the World," By the National Geographic Society, 1971)

**Principal Scriptures: The Holy
Qur'an, Nahjul Balagha, The
Hadith, Sirat Rasul Allah.**

The Prophet Muhammed is said to have been born around 570 A.D. (After Death - Death of Jesus Christ) in Quraysh, Mecca to a poor family. His father had died before he was born and his mother in his early childhood. Raised by an Uncle, Abu Talib, Muhammed was not to receive his call until he was 40 years of age.

At that time, the Archangel Gabriel came to him on numerous occasions. It took a while for Muhammad to trust in the vision he was receiving, but when he did, the archangel began to dictate the Holy Qur'an to Him, one Surrah (book or verse) at a time. Later, this would become the Most Holy Book of the Islamic people, the Holy Qur'an.

Muhammad came at a time when Persia was besieged with the belief in many Gods. This belief is called 'pantheism,' and Muhammad's primary mission was to convert the people of the Arab world from 'pantheism,' to 'monotheism,' or the belief in one God. Muhammad brought what is called 'monotheism' to the Arab World.

Muhammad also prescribed for the people

many rules of conduct very similar to the Ten Commandments. He instructed the people to worship God alone.

From the Islamic Scripture the Holy Qur'an:

‘Lord! verily, we heard a crier calling to the faith, "Believe in your Lord," and we did believe. Lord! forgive us our sins and cover our offences, and let us die with the righteous. Lord! and bring us what Thou hast promised us by Thy apostles, and disgrace us not upon the resurrection day; for, verily, Thou dost not break Thy promises!’ And the Lord shall answer them, ‘I waste not the works of a worker amongst you, be it male or female,- one of you is from the other.

Islamic Beliefs and Rituals

The Five Pillars of Islam

- 1.) Confession of faith (Shahada).
- 2.) Ritual Prayer (Salat).
- 3.) Alms Tax (Zakat).
- 4.) Fasting During the Month of Ramadan (Sawm).
- 5.) Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

To be a Muslim, you must recite the Shadada: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet." There are Six Articles of Faith Beyond this that you must believe in order to be a Muslim.

- 1.) One God.
- 2.) The angels of God.
- 3.) The books of God, especially the Qur'an.
- 4.) The prophets of God, especially Muhammad.
- 5.) The Day of Judgment or the Afterlife.

6.) The supremacy of God's will or Predestination.

Sometimes the list is shortened to Five, excluding the supremacy of God's will.

Islamic Prayer

Five times a day a Muslim is bound to perform the Salaah, the fixed ritual of the Islamic prayer - worship. He should properly go to the nearest mosque to offer his prayers together with the whole congregation. Each of the five periods is preceded by the adhaan (or azaan - ezan as it is more commonly called). The muezzin (mu'adh-dhin in Arabic) calls out on each occasion:

Allaabu Akbar (four times - "Allah is Most Great").

Ash'hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah (twice - "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah").

Ash'hadu anna Muhammadar-rasulullaah (twice - "I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah").

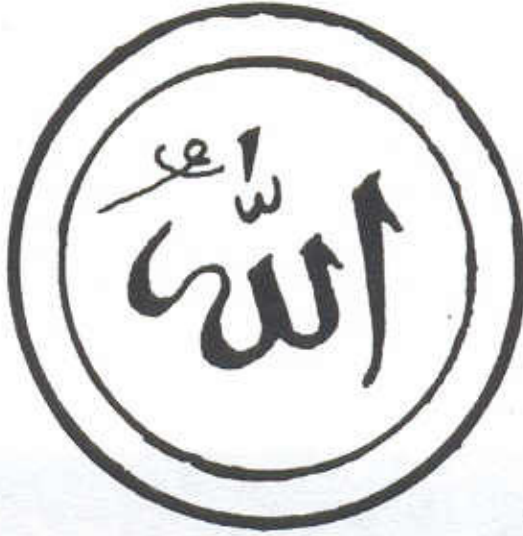
Haya 'alas-salaah (twice - "Come to prayer").

Ilaya 'alal falaah (twice - "Come to the good;").

Allaaku Akbar (twice - "Allah is Most Great").

Laa ilaaha illallaah (once - "There is no god but Allah").

ALLAH



ISLAM

The Islamic name for God, Allah.



Islamic Mosque, The Dome of the Rock

Baha'i



**Son and Successor of the Prophet Baha'u'llah,
Abdu'l Baha**

(Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995)



Abdu'l Baha in Later Years.

(Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995)

Principal Scriptures: The Hidden Words, Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys, The Tablets of Baha'u'llah, The Writings of the Bab and Many More.

The Prophet Baha'u'llah is said to have been born on the 12th of November, 1817 - named Mirza Husayn-'Ali - in the village of Takur in the district of Nur (Light) in the northern province of Mazindran to a fairly well-to-do family. Baha'u'llah received his call when he was 27 years of age.

Baha'u'llah stressed the unity of all religions. It was his teaching that each prophet of God had come to the earth in succession, each bringing with them another and more profound revelation to add to knowledge already revealed.

Baha'u'llah had great respect for all humanity and it was his hope that all people of the earth would unite and love one another, despite whatever faith, creed or culture they chose as their own.

The Baha'i faith teaches this today. Unity is the key teaching of the Baha'i faith, and the mystical writings of Baha'u'llah are among the most beautiful scriptures in the world.

From the Baha'i Scripture the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys:

In sum, the differences in objects have now been made plain. Thus when the wayfarer gazeth only upon the place of appearance--that is, when he seeth only the many-colored globes --he beholdeth yellow and red and white; hence it is that conflict hath prevailed among the creatures, and a darksome dust from limited souls hath hid the world. And some do gaze upon the effulgence of the light; and some have drunk of the wine of oneness and these see nothing but the sun itself. Thus, for that they move on these three differing planes, the understanding and the words of the wayfarers have differed; and hence the sign of conflict doth continually appear on earth. For some there are who dwell upon the plane of oneness and speak of that world, and

some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self, while others are completely veiled. Thus do the ignorant people of the day, who have no portion of the radiance of Divine Beauty, make certain claims, and in every age and cycle inflict on the people of the sea of oneness what they themselves deserve. "Should God punish men for their perverse doings, He would not leave on earth a moving thing! But to an appointed term doth{~ He respite them...." O My Brother! A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine within it and the eternal morning dawn. Then wilt thou clearly see the meaning of "Neither doth My earth nor My heaven contain Me, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me." And thou wilt take up thy life in thine hand, and with infinite longing cast it before the new Beloved One.

Baha'i Beliefs and Rituals

The central tenets of the Baha'i faith are the oneness of God, the oneness of humanity, and the common foundation of all religion.

Baha'ists also believe in the equality of men and women, universal education, world peace, and the creation of a world federal system of government.

Ethics, Morality, Unity, Equality, Justice, Advancement of Human Society, Peace, Education and Prosperity are also central to the themes of Baha'i teachings.

The Bahá'í Fast

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.

"Fasting is the cause of awakening man. The heart becomes tender and the spirituality of man increases. This is produced by the fact that man's thoughts will be confined to the commemoration of God, and through this awakening and stimulation surely ideal advancements follow... Fasting is of two kinds, material and spiritual. The material fasting is abstaining from food or drink, that is, from the appetites of the body. But spiritual, ideal fasting is this, that man abstain from selfish passions, from negligence and from satanic animal traits. Therefore, material fasting is a token of the spiritual fasting. That is: 'O God! As I am fasting from the appetites of the body and not occupied with eating and drinking, even so purify and make holy my heart and my life from aught else save Thy Love, and protect and preserve my soul from self-passions... Thus may the spirit associate with the Fragrances of Holiness and fast from everything else save Thy mention."

Abdu'l Baha

Baha'i Prayers

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Every man of insight confesseth Thy sovereignty and Thy dominion, and every discerning eye perceiveth the greatness of Thy majesty and the compelling power of Thy might. The winds of tests are powerless to hold back them that enjoy near access to Thee from setting their faces towards the horizon of Thy glory, and the tempests of trials must fail to draw away and hinder such as are wholly devoted to Thy will from approaching Thy court.

Methinks, the lamp of Thy love is burning in their hearts, and the light of Thy tenderness is lit within their breasts. Adversities are incapable of estranging them from Thy Cause, and the vicissitudes of fortune can never cause them to stray from Thy pleasure. I beseech Thee, O my God, by them and by the sighs which their hearts utter in their separation from Thee, to keep them safe from the mischief of Thine adversaries, and to nourish their souls with what Thou hast ordained for Thy loved ones on whom shall

come no fear and who shall not be put to grief.

Suffer me, O my God, to draw nigh unto Thee, and to abide within the precincts of Thy court, for remoteness from Thee hath well-nigh consumed me. Cause me to rest under the shadow of the wings of Thy grace, for the flame of my separation from Thee hath melted my heart within me. Draw me nearer unto the river that is life indeed, for my soul burneth with thirst in its ceaseless search after Thee. My sighs, O my God, proclaim the bitterness of mine anguish, and the tears I shed attest my love for Thee.

I beseech Thee, by the praise wherewith Thou praisest Thyself and the glory wherewith Thou glorifiest Thine own Essence, to grant that we may be numbered among them that have recognized Thee and acknowledged Thy sovereignty in Thy days. Help us then to quaff, O my God, from the fingers of mercy the living waters of Thy loving-kindness, that we may utterly forget all else except Thee, and be occupied only with Thy Self. Powerful art Thou to do what Thou wilt. No God is

there beside Thee, the Mighty, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Glorified be Thy name, O Thou Who art the King of all Kings!



BAHÁ'Í

**Symbol from the Baha'i Ring Stone. Top Line -
World of God. Middle Line - World of His
Manifestations. Bottom Line - World of Man.
Central Vertical Line - Divine Messengers of God.
Five Pointed stars represent Bab (a prophet who
came before Baha'u'llah to announce his coming)**

**and Baha'u'llah - individually representing the Gate
and the Glory of God.**



Baha'i World Center Shrine.



Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

Final Word

There is one quality that all of us must engender within ourselves if we are to 'fulfill all the law and all the prophets,' and that is to **love** our neighbor as ourselves . . .

LOVE, it's that easy.

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