INTRODUCTION TO
World Religions & Belief Systems
TEXTBOOK

- Jerome A. Ong
- Mary Dorothy dL. Jose
  Author/Editor

Department of Education • Republic of the Philippines
Preface

As Asians, we should be proud of the fact that the world’s greatest religions originated from Asia. From the arid western frontier began Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. From the vast Indian subcontinent came Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism from South Asia. In the east, originated Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism. The study of world religions is a challenging and worthwhile endeavour. With this in mind, we offer you the textbook *Introduction to World Religions and Belief Systems* to help you comprehensively learn not only about the fundamental teachings and ritualistic practices, but also the historical background, geographical context, and cultural milieu of these profound Asian religions. The title of the book clearly suggests that religion and belief system are two different concepts: ‘belief system’ is also known as worldview or a particular way of ordering the realities of one’s world, while ‘religion’ is the pursuit of transformation guided by a sacred belief system. This textbook, as our contribution to the insightful study of religion, is based on the objectives and competencies of the K-12 Basic Education Program.

We have divided the book into four parts. The first part will discuss the key concepts in religion and belief systems which serve as framework in the study of religions; the geographical and cultural contexts of these religions as they originated; and the effects of religion on followers and adherents. The second part will explore the nature of the Abrahamic religions from West Asia (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). The third part will examine the features of the Dharmic religions from South Asia (Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism). The fourth part will look into the attributes of the Daoic religions from East Asia (Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism). Each chapter ends with a comparative analysis of these religions with focus on their origin, purpose, morality, destiny, and views on women. The final lesson attempts to determine the religious landscape of the 21st century by way of assessing the uniqueness of each world religion and its impact on humanity.

Apart from understanding key concepts in religion, it is also imperative to learn the historical and geographical circumstances of world religions in order to appreciate their distinctive characteristics. This endeavor aims to promote mutual understanding among adherents of various belief systems. At the end of the semester, students are expected not only to understand world religions, but more importantly, to demonstrate an appreciation and respect for their own faith and that of others.

Aside from the objective of deepening your understanding of world religions and developing appreciation of various belief systems, this book also aims to cultivate your critical thinking skills through challenging activities based on the learner-centered approach. This textbook comes with a teacher’s manual and additional resource materials to help teachers in facilitating a more effective study of world religions.

The Authors
ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

From the frontiers of West Asia developed the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, known as the first monotheistic religions of the north. They are called Abrahamic religions because they all trace their origin to the great patriarch Abraham and his descendants. Abraham is believed to be the father of the Jewish people, the father of the Ishmaelites of Islam, and the forefather of the Christian faith. The Abrahamic religions believe that Abraham was called by God to be the Father of Nations, and that his son Ishmael was called to be the Father of Islam. The Abrahamic religions believe that Abraham and his family played a significant role in the shaping of their respective faiths. These three religions came from the same region, it is not surprising that they share common beliefs, foremost of which is the belief that they share common roots to the patriarch Abraham. Aside from this, they also share certain similarities such as belief in one God. They also believe in the afterlife, with regards to the concept of heaven and hell. This serves as the focus of what the lesson is all about; this contains the question which you need to think about with regards to the topic being discussed.

LESSON OPENER

This gives an overview of the topics to be discussed in the lesson.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING

This serves as the focus of what the lesson is all about; this contains the question which you need to think about with regards to the topic being discussed.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

This gives an overview of the lessons that will be discussed which will give you an idea on what to expect in the chapter.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

Engaging activity that will catch your interest in the lesson.

CONCEPT MAP

This gives you an idea of the topic and subtopics that will be discussed in the lesson; this serves as your guide in studying the lesson.
However, God told David that it would be one of his sons who will have the privilege of accomplishing this task. Around 1003 B.C.E., David was able to conquer Jerusalem and make it his capital. Bringing with him the “Ark of the Covenant,” David intended to build a temple to become the first and fixed place of worship for the Jews.

**The Temple**

- The Temple of Jerusalem (Braswell 1994).
- The Ark of the Covenant contained the commandments, stones, and the golden calf. It was the portable throne of Yahweh during the time of Moses. It also housed a bird that may have been the portable “Ark of the Covenant” is a sacred relic of Judaism.

The Ark
- Did you know that the “Ark of the Covenant” kept the Ten Commandments inside it? Visit the weblink for additional information and activity on the content of the lesson.

**WEBLINK**

Visit the weblink for additional information and activity on the content of the lesson.

**GUIDE QUESTION**

While reading the lesson, you can use the guide questions for you to get the most significant ideas you should learn from the lesson.

**TRIVIA**

Concepts or ideas related to the topic which will enrich your knowledge.

**WEBLINK**

Visit the weblink for additional information and activity on the content of the lesson.

**GUIDE QUESTION**

While reading the lesson, you can use the guide questions for you to get the most significant ideas you should learn from the lesson.

**TRIVIA**

Concepts or ideas related to the topic which will enrich your knowledge.

**WEBLINK**

Visit the weblink for additional information and activity on the content of the lesson.

**GUIDE QUESTION**

While reading the lesson, you can use the guide questions for you to get the most significant ideas you should learn from the lesson.

**TRIVIA**

Concepts or ideas related to the topic which will enrich your knowledge.
Contents

CHAPTER I
WORLD RELIGIONS IN FOCUS 2
Lesson 1: Understanding the Nature of Religion 3
Lesson 2: Origin of World Religions 14
Lesson 3: Positive and Negative Effects of Religion 32

CHAPTER II
ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS 46
Lesson 4: Judaism 47
Lesson 5: Christianity 68
Lesson 6: Islam 84
Lesson 7: Comparative Analysis of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam 104

CHAPTER III
DHARMIC RELIGIONS 118
Lesson 8: Hinduism 119
Lesson 9: Theravada Buddhism 134
Lesson 10: Mahayana Buddhism 150
Lesson 11: Comparative Analysis of Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism 167

CHAPTER IV
DAOIC RELIGIONS 178
Lesson 12: Confucianism 179
Lesson 13: Daoism 198
Lesson 14: Shintoism 212
Lesson 15: Comparative Analysis of Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism 232

CHAPTER V
RELIGION IN THE 21ST CENTURY 244

GLOSSARY
INDEX
BIBLIOGRAPHY
PHOTO CREDITS
INTRODUCTION TO

World Religions & Belief Systems

TEXTBOOK
CHAPTER ONE
WORLD RELIGIONS IN FOCUS

Why is there a need to study religion? Religion has been in existence since the earliest time of humankind. Wherever humankind inhabits, religion too exists. Presently, we are all witness as to how religion continues to play crucial roles in world politics in the twenty-first century as can be seen from the various political conflicts that have their roots in religious differences. This particular chapter will introduce you to various concepts related to religion, expound on the origin of religion, and evaluate the many roles played by religion in people’s everyday lives.

In all parts of the world, religious ideas have helped inflame animosity and discord that shape conflicts and give rise to oppression and tyranny. Conversely, religious traditions have also created a strong backbone that helped shape the importance of peace, justice, equality, toleration, and brotherhood.
LESSON ONE
Understanding the Nature of Religion

What does it mean to be religious and spiritual? Why is religion linked to humankind’s quest to search for the real meaning of life and death? As we all know, when one prays, he or she actively seeks an affinity to divine beings or supernatural entities that are beyond the purely natural world. The picture below is a clear depiction of an act of prayer. Majority of world religions follow a set of prayers in the form of chants, mantras, or creed. Whether you pray or not, you may have witnessed the influential roles being played by religions all over the world.

Understanding the nature of religion enlightens learners about the common grounds that bind believers into examining the questions of life and death and why or how persons yearn for spiritual inspiration. Recognizing the inherent characteristics of religion provides the opportunity to deeply grasp the many beliefs and practices that mold humankind's spiritual needs.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
1. Religion is the pursuit of transformation guided by a sacred belief system.
2. Spirituality reflects one’s integrative view of life while affecting the human soul.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
1. How do religions come about?
2. How does religion differ from spirituality?

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2014).
MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

In the context of religion, list down 10 things that you believe in by completing the following statements. What have you observed in your own belief system?

1. I believe in/that ________________________________
2. I believe in/that ________________________________
3. I believe in/that ________________________________
4. I believe in/that ________________________________
5. I believe in/that ________________________________
6. I believe in/that ________________________________
7. I believe in/that ________________________________
8. I believe in/that ________________________________
9. I believe in/that ________________________________
10. I believe in/that ________________________________

CONCEPT MAP

RELIGION

- Monistic
- Monotheistic
- Polytheistic
- Agnostic
- Atheistic

UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS AND WORLDVIEWS

Every individual sees and interprets the world quite differently from one another. This overall perspective is also termed worldview which is a collection of beliefs about life and the universe being held by people (The Free Dictionary 2014). For a certain individual, social environment and upbringing are critical in the development of a religious life. All these factors have an effect on how people organize their beliefs and ideas while eventually creating a comprehensive narrative through which they look at the world and interrelate with it.

Belief in god or gods is found in almost all religions. There is a good reason to presuppose that religion had existed during prehistoric times and this has continued to the modern day. Human life may have produced hundreds of religions and belief systems. There could be more unknown than known religions in the world since recorded history covers only several thousand years of human existence.
Likewise, many may have lived and died within just a short period of time. Table 1.1 enumerates the different kinds of belief systems or worldviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monism</td>
<td>there is no real distinction between god and the universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytheism</td>
<td>the belief and worship of many gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monotheism</td>
<td>the doctrine or belief in one supreme god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheism</td>
<td>disbelief in or denial of the existence of a personal god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnosticism</td>
<td>god cannot be known</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Kinds of Belief System

*Derived from http://www.newadvent.org/*

*Theism*, often used as a synonym to monotheism, is defined as “a belief in the existence of one god viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2014). *Monotheistic religions* claim that there is only one God who could have designed and created the universe or may have directed all events that led to the creation of everything. There is one supreme God who is both personal and moral, and who seeks a total and unqualified response from humans (Hick 1990). Modern-day examples of monotheistic religions include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. On the other hand, *polytheistic religions* that are common among early people recognize many principal gods among whom no one is supreme. These include the ancient religions of Egypt, Greece, and Rome wherein people worship a multitude of personal gods.

Meanwhile, *monism* asserts that there is no genuine distinction between God and the universe. Two implications arise from this belief. Firstly, it contends that God is dwelling in the universe as part of it. Secondly, the universe does not exist at all as a reality but only as a manifestation of God.

Furthermore, while *atheists* deny the existence of God, *agnostics* deny the possibility for man to acquire knowledge of the existence of God.

**DEFINITION AND NATURE OF RELIGION**

Religion may be defined as “an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2014). The Latin word *religio* refers to “something done with overanxious or scrupulous attention to detail” (Bowker 1997). This term may have probably been derived from the Latin verb *religare* which means “to tie together, to bind fast.”

In its original sense, the word refers to expression of proper piety, that is, binding to god (Grassie 2010). Quite later, *religion* was used to designate formal belief systems and tenets. The term was eventually applied to what we now call as religion because of the manner in which people performed rituals during those days. While religion may be universal in all stages of human history, it does not follow that all individuals are religious or even religious to some degree (Parrinder 1971).
Table 1.2 below summarizes the various definitions forwarded by several social scientists on the nature of religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Social Scientist</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>View on Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward Burnett Taylor (1832-1917)</td>
<td>English anthropologist; founding figure of the science of social anthropology</td>
<td>the belief in spiritual beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James George Frazer (1854-1941)</td>
<td>Scottish social anthropologist; one of the founding figures of modern anthropology</td>
<td>a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to control and direct the course of nature and of human life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski (1884-1942)</td>
<td>an eminent 20th-century Polish anthropologist</td>
<td>a body of self-contained acts being themselves the fulfilment of their purpose; an affair of all, in which everyone takes an active and equivalent part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)</td>
<td>French sociologist; father of sociology</td>
<td>a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Joy Hendry, Other People’s Worlds: An Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology, pp. 116-199.

Figure 1 illustrates the different characteristics that are common to most major religions. Can you give some concrete examples?
ORIGINS OF RELIGION

Since the nineteenth century, people began to show great interest in explaining the origins of religion. In fact, numerous theories have been postulated to explain the origin of religion while looking at primitive societies for ideas concerning the development of belief systems (Hendry 1999).

Archaeologists believe that they have discovered elements of religious belief practised by *Homo sapiens* almost 60,000 years ago. Apart from burying the dead, various items such as foods, tools, and other objects were placed inside the site. All these rituals imply reverence to their loved ones and perhaps the thought that the dead will utilize these materials in the afterlife. While they believe in the presence of supernatural entities, they also try to communicate with them (Ember & Ember 1996).

Various explanations have surfaced that somehow tend to simplify or even denigrate primitive religions. Others maintain that since early humans are weak and ignorant of the different forces of nature, they had to invent religion to explain the seemingly unexplainable mystery and fury of nature. In the process, they had to create a scheme of deities and spirits. Still others contend that religion was conceived by the few to stifle and repress the ideals of the masses (Hopfe 1983).

The nineteenth century witnessed the development of the fields of the social sciences that enabled scholars to apply a more scientific way of explaining phenomena rather than speculate on matters concerning the origin of religion. Through field research, observations, and analysis of historical documents, scholars formulated a number of theories that have endured well into the present time.

Table 1.3 summarizes the different theories on the origin of religion and the major proponents of these theories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Theory</th>
<th>Proponent</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animistic Theories</td>
<td>Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), English anthropologist</td>
<td>Primitive people believed in souls or <em>anima</em> found in people (seen in dreams) and in all of nature. Since spirits could be helpful or harmful to human beings, early people had to pray to these spirits, offer sacrifices, and appease or avoid them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Henry Codrington (1830-1922), Anglican priest and anthropologist</td>
<td>In his investigation, he found out that the Melanesian people believed in <em>mana</em>, a mysterious force that inhabited all of nature. All early people began their religion in cognizance of such force; the destructiveness of the <em>mana</em> can be avoided by establishing taboos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature-Worship Theory</td>
<td>HUMAN BEINGS first developed their religions from their observations of the forces of nature. Early people became aware of the regularity of the seasons, the tides and the phases of the moon, and began personalizing them by giving them names, describing their activities with tales that transformed into mythology. Primitive people identified the forces in nature, personified them, created myths, and developed religions around them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**GUIDE QUESTION**
What was the use of religion to early humans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory of Original Monotheism</th>
<th>Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954), Austrian anthropologist and ethnologist</th>
<th>In Australia and Africa, basic cultures held a common belief in a distant high god, that originally there had been one great god above all others, and that he may have been the creator of the world or the father of the many lesser deities. This high god went away and had little contact with the world that resulted in majority of attention and worship to local deities. Primitive societies were originally monotheistic, but because it was difficult to worship just one god, religion was corrupted to polytheism.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magic Theory</td>
<td>James George Frazer (1854-1941), Scottish social anthropologist</td>
<td>People had gone three phases of development concerning the spirit world: (1) primitive magic (wherein people attempted to control nature in the hope that nature will cooperate if rituals are done properly); (2) religion (wherein people implored nature to cooperate since they have realized that nature can not be coerced); and (3) science (wherein a rational understanding of nature is operative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish Fulfilment Theory</td>
<td>Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804-1872), German philosopher and anthropologist</td>
<td>There were no gods and that belief in gods was simply wish fulfilment. Troubled people who could not cope with the difficulties in life projected their wishes and developed gods and religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), German philosopher and sociologist</td>
<td>Religions were developed by the few as a means to control the masses and suppress revolution as a result of the continuing struggle between classes. Rulers and allied priests wished to control all wealth so they had to create a scheme of gods, heavens, and hell. Masses were persuaded to accept poverty and be obedient to inherit bliss in another life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Austrian neurologist and founder father of psychoanalysis</td>
<td>Religion originated from the guilt that individuals supposedly feel in hating their fathers. All males possess a similar tendency to desire our mothers and hate our fathers. As a result of this subconscious hatred and ensuing guilt, a great father image was projected in the sky called God. A healthy mature person can face problems without the need for gods or religions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lewis M. Hopfe. Religions of the World (Third Edition), pp. 5-9
EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY

A comparative analysis of major religions reveals that an important characteristic of their belief system focuses on the longing for value in life (Parrinder 1971). For thousands of years, people have been searching and yearning to understand the mystery of life and the universe. There may come a point in time when an individual realizes that life is not entirely accidental and meaningless (Parrinder 1971). This is where the concept of spirituality comes in with the term “spiritual” being defined as “relating or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things” (Oxford Dictionaries 2014). One author points out that it is quite common for people to say that they are “spiritual, not religious” (Grassie 2010). Spirituality may be manifested in quite a number of ways. For example, a person may believe in the presence of an overwhelming power greater than oneself or perhaps a person can be fully mindful of one’s purpose in life. That person can also have a feeling of oneness or a bond with other living beings.

While spirituality is derived from the Latin word spiritus, its verb root is spirare which means “to breathe” literally. There is an impression that people are surrounded by a “divine reality as pervasive, intimate, necessary, and invisible as the air we breathe” which is similar to Hindu prana and Chinese chi. (Grassie 2010).

While religions are frequently viewed as set of ideals practiced and followed by organized groups, “spirituality is something an individual can have without being implicated in the ambivalent complexity of human societies and institutions” (Grassie 2010). Although traditional spirituality is frequently associated with religiosity, many people assert that personal spirituality can grow separately from religion. One may find inner peace, satisfaction, and contentment in life that are truly independent of religious dogmas and tenets.

In the study of religion, there are basic concepts that need to be understood such as theology, philosophy of religion, and spirituality. While religion refers to any set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices concerning a supernatural power—theology involves the systematic study of the existence and nature of the divine. It deals with the study of the nature and purpose of god that may be undertaken using a particular perspective. Theology is a study, not a formulation of religious beliefs.

On the other hand, philosophy of religion deals primarily with issues concerning religion, which includes analysis on the existence of a divine being or on sacred texts. It may involve studying the “concepts and belief systems of the religions as well as the prior phenomena of religious experience and the activities of worship and meditation on which these belief systems rest and out of which they have arisen” (Hick 1990). It seeks to analyze various concepts such as god, spirit, karma, creation, immortality, heaven, hell, and purgatory among others. Philosophy of religion is not a branch of theology but a branch of philosophy. It is said that this particular study need not be undertaken from a religious perspective at all because atheists, agnostics, and the person of faith can and do philosophize about religion (Hick 1990).
Meanwhile, spirituality is something an individual can have without being implicated in the ambivalent complexity of human societies and institutions (Grassie 2010). Thus, spirituality can be described as one's integrative view of life and involves a quest for the meaning and ultimate value of life as opposed to an instrumentalist or materialistic attitude to life. Hence, one can be spiritual without being religious.

Summary

- Religion may refer to any set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices aimed at communicating or propitiating with supernatural beings. Humans may recognize a superhuman being controlling power (such as a god or spirit) that seeks worship and obedience from them.
- Various theories have been formulated that try to explain the origin of religions. Religion may have originated in response to human's need to explain their dreams and experiences as well as the need to understand the different forces of nature, especially so that humans may have faced pain and ignorance in their daily struggle for existence in early times.
- While religions are frequently viewed as sets of ideals practiced and followed by organized groups, spirituality involves one's integrative view of life that is more personal while affecting the human soul.

Critical Thinking

1. How does your conception of a divine or supreme being compare with the supernatural beings found in other religious beliefs?
2. Do you agree with specific theory of religion? Defend your answer.
3. Do you consider yourself religious, or spiritual? Explain.

Assessment

A. Match Column A with Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
<td>a. theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. a belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world</td>
<td>b. agnosticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
<td>c. polytheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. relating or affecting the human spirit or soul that is one's personal integrative view on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
<td>d. theism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the belief that there is only one God who could have designed and created the universe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. the belief in many principal gods among whom no one is supreme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Answer the following questions.
1. How does religion help explain man's existence and role in the world?
2. How did religion originate? Cite key theories to support your answer.
3. What are the common characteristics of religions?
4. Do you agree that the universe is designed and created by a single divine being or God? Explain your answer.
5. How can an individual lead a spiritual life? Cite some examples.

C. Write a two-page essay on the topic “Religion: What Does It Mean to Me?” guided by the following questions:
   a. What different values have your religion instilled in you?
   b. What various guiding principles which may have been influenced by your religion do you adhere to in your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RUBRIC FOR ESSAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRITERIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 20**

On to the Next Lesson

You have learned in this opening lesson the nature of religion and other concepts related to belief systems. You have familiarized yourself with the different theories on the origin of religions as humans continue their endless search to find meanings and explanations in their everyday existence relative to the world around them. The next lesson will take you into the historical, geographical, and cultural contexts of various world religions of today.
Sources

BOOKS


INTERNET SOURCES
LESSON TWO

Origin of World Religions

Simlar to living organisms, religions are born in history and they gradually develop into living traditions and affect the lives of their followers. Belief systems originate in certain localities within the context of culture and even geography. From their rudimentary forms, religions continually evolved into complicated systems replete with rites and practices that made recruitment of members necessary. Quite unfortunately, other religions also decline as in the case of Zoroastrianism that once flourished in South Asia but is now only confined to Iran, India, and Central Asia. They may also give impetus to establish new movements within religious groups, such as in the case of Buddhism that may be viewed as a reaction to the overly ritualistic beliefs and the exclusivity of Hinduism. They may also contribute to the foundation of other religions, such as those themes Christianity borrowed from Judaism, and themes Islam borrowed from both Christianity and Judaism (Brasswell 1994). This lesson will deal with the origin of religions along with the geographical context and cultural milieu that have impacted the establishment of world religions and belief systems.

A painting by Jozsef Molnar depicting Abraham’s journey from Ur to Canaan. Abraham’s story is one of the highlights in Abrahamic religions.
**CONCEPT MAP**

**WORLD RELIGIONS**

- Historical Foundation
- Geographical Context
- Cultural Milieu

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Scholars hold the view that religion is universal and can be found in all known contemporary societies (Ember & Ember 1997). Even the most fundamental of belief systems can be seen to a greater or lesser degree in all religions (Hopfe 1983). Various theories have been formulated to explain the origin of religion. Even prehistoric humans, such as the Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons, have practiced a set of belief systems in one way or another, including burying their dead, painting on the walls of caves, and carving images from stones.

The existence of humankind for so long a time has resulted in the formation of religion and belief system. It is certain that many religions may have been unrecorded in the past. Others may have gradually died down. This lesson will deal primarily with religions that are still active until the present time. The succeeding table illustrates some significant dates in the history of the establishment of several world religions.
### TABLE 2.1
Important Dates on the Origin of World Religions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (circa)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 2000 B.C.E.</td>
<td>time of Abraham, the patriarch of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1200 B.C.E.</td>
<td>time of Moses, the Hebrew leader of the Exodus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1100 – 500 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Hindus compiled their holy texts, the Vedas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 563 – 83 B.C.E.</td>
<td>time of the Buddha, founder of Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 551 – 479 B.C.E.</td>
<td>time of Confucius, founder of Confucianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 200 B.C.E.</td>
<td>the Hindu book, Bhagavad Gita, was written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 2 to 4 B.C.E – 32 C.E.</td>
<td>time of Jesus Christ, the Messiah and founder of Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 32 C.E.</td>
<td>the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 40 – 90 C.E.</td>
<td>the New Testament was written by the followers of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 100 C.E.</td>
<td>Beginnings of Shintoism (no known founder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 500-580 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Time of Lao Tze, founder of Daoism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 570 – 632 C.E.</td>
<td>time of Muhammad, who recorded the Q’uran as the basis of Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.allaboutreligion.org/origin-of-religion.htm](http://www.allaboutreligion.org/origin-of-religion.htm)

### GUIDE QUESTION

**Why is Abraham important to the development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?**

The **Patriarch Abraham**

The prophet and patriarch Abraham played a major role in the establishment of the three monotheistic religions: namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which account for more than half of the world’s total population at present. As such, these organized religions are collectively known as Abrahamic religions. The Jewish people regard Abraham as the ancestor of the Israelites, through his descendants Isaac and Jacob. The Muslims consider Abraham’s son Ishmael as the ancestor of the Arabs. The Christians view Abraham as ‘father in faith’ as narrated in the Bible and the ancestor of Jesus Christ. Notable religious personalities trace their origin in Abraham’s sons from different wives through their descendants. The importance of Abraham in these three religions lies in the fact that the patriarch appears as an elemental figure for a monotheistic belief system and a paragon of extreme devotion.

Derived from a common source, it is but natural that the three monotheistic religions share some commonalities in their basic tenets. For one, they all worship one supreme being. The ancient Hebrews call their God *Elohim, Adonai,* or *Yahweh.* Present-day Judaism uses the names “Lord” and “God.” For the Muslims, they call their God as *Allah.* In addition, prophets and apostles play major roles in these religions. Judaism has 48 prophets and seven prophetesses. Early prophets include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Joshua to name a few. In Christianity, the 12 apostles were the primary disciples of Jesus Christ, some of whom wrote parts of the New Testament. For the Muslims, they believe that Muhammad is the final prophet or the “Seal of the Prophets.”

Prior to their establishment as organized religions, the role of divine revelation or intervention is associated among their progenitors. For instance, God instructed Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac at Mount Moriah. God presented the Ten Commandments to Moses at Mount Sinai. God sacri-
faced his son Jesus Christ through crucifixion as the plan to salvation. God commanded Muhammad to establish a new religion at a cave in Mount Hira. Then and now, followers of the three Abrahamic religions are presented with a choice between good and evil.

**ACTIVITY**

Familiarize yourself with the diagram below showing the genealogy of Abraham. Can you identify some of the listed names based on your knowledge of your religion?

### The Genealogy of Abraham

- **Abraham**
  - Hagar
    - Ishmael
      - Ishmaelites
      - Muhammad
    - Sarah
      - Isaac and Rebbecca
      - Jacob
      - Israelites
        - David
        - Solomon
        - Jesus
      - Edouards
  - Keturah
    - Zimran
    - Jokshan
    - Medon
    - Midian
    - Ishbak
    - Shurah

---

**The Indian Mosaic**

With its history dating back to at least 6500 B.C.E., India is one of the world’s oldest surviving civilizations. The many conquerors that came to India were gradually absorbed into the native Indian religions. With great movements of various people in the past came their customs, arts, languages, literature, beliefs, and many more facets of their culture. The Harappan civilization, the Aryan influence, the local dynasties, and the Muslim conquest all had their fair share in building the intricate Indian mosaic. As a result, variety and complexity characterize Indian culture.

Religion is an essential part of the Indian tradition. Four great religions originated in India – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism – and a myriad of minor cults and local sects. Even Muslims and Christians have found their way into the Indian heartland along with the Jews and Zoroastrians. Hinduism perfectly reflects Indian heterogeneity with its eclectic, diversified, and assorted ways of religious expressions that are quite confusing to outsiders. It has no specific founder, no one sacred book, and
with innumerable gods and goddesses that any Hindu can venerate. As such, Hinduism can be considered as a ‘museum of religions’ (Israel and Grewal 1989). It was during the Vedic Period that Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma became systematized as a religion that preached order and purpose to the cosmos and human life. During this period, universal order became equated with a stable society as evidenced by the establishment of a centralized government and the integration of collective traditions into Indian lives.

On the other hand, whereas many religions focus on the worship of one god, many gods, or a celestial being, Buddhism centers its attention on the figure of the Buddha. He was not a god but a human being who came to discover how to terminate sufferings in order to escape the painful and continuous cycle of rebirth (Coogan 2005). Buddhist followers revere Buddha in the same way that members of other world religions worship their gods. The Mahayana sect of Buddhism differs from the Theravada school because of its rich array of buddhas and bodhisattvas who have attained spiritual enlightenment. These beings are already eligible to enter nirvana but choose to delay this glorious path to guide others to the path of salvation.

Born near the end of the 6th century B.C.E., Siddhartha Gautama’s life is closely linked with the historical and religious development of Buddhism in India. Gaining new converts due to its mass appeal as compared to the exclusivity of Hindu beliefs, Buddhism spread far and wide from India to Sri Lanka and to Southeast Asia. The religion was transported to China and gained much headway as it reached Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Across the Himalayas, it reached the Tibetan lands. Presently, Buddhism has become more popular outside its place of origin while Hinduism has remained entrenched in India throughout many centuries.
The Way of the Dao

Chinese civilization is one of the world’s oldest, dating back almost 4,000 years ago. Even during the olden days, the Chinese had already endeavoured to establish and attain good governance (Perry 1988). China adopted Kung Fu-Tzu's (Confucius) ideals and ethics as the nation developed meritocracy as a basis for government officials. Confucius is regarded as China’s greatest philosopher and teacher who lived at the same time as Siddhartha Gautama in India (Perry 1988).

Confucian ideals aspire to harmonize human relations and serve as guide to social behavior. Providing a backdrop for traditional Chinese values, Chinese dynasties used Confucian morals and political ideals that became influential among the Chinese people. The Confucian principles can be applied at the levels of individual, community, and state. It is no wonder that Confucian values can be seen in the Chinese method of governance, the merit of one’s education, and importance of order in the society (Rozman 1991). An ideal human society is of utmost concern for Confucian followers.

Meanwhile, mysteries abound the birth and personal life of Laozi (Lao-tzu) who may have written *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching or The Book of the Way and its Power*) around the 6th century B.C.E. Other sources indicate that he lived during the period of the Warring States around the 5th or 4th century B.C.E. Believed to be a contemporary of Confucius, he once worked as government archivist or record keeper at the time of the Zhou Dynasty but soon left the service due to his frustration with corruption. Around 142 C.E., Daoism began as an organized religion with the establishment of the *Way of the Celestial Masters* sect by Zhang Daoling during the Han Dynasty. This group along with other later Daoist sects devised intricate rituals, venerated heavenly beings, and wrote numerous religious texts. The writings of Daoism centers on the concept of *Dao* as a *way* or *path* signifying appropriateness of one’s behavior to lead other people.

Similar with Daoism, the writings of Confucius frequently dwell upon the theme of the *Dao* understood as being the *truth* or *way* things ought to be done concordant with a specific view to life, politics, and customs. This Confucian view is somehow close to the meaning of Dao in Daoism which means a *road*, *path*, or *way* in which one does something. The Confucian *Dao* principally concerns human affairs while the Daoist *Dao* means the way the universe works.

Both Confucius and Lao-tzu were followers of the *Dao*. With regard to the art of leadership, try to compare the following passages as lifted from the sacred texts of the *Analects* of Confucius and the *Dao De Jing* by Lao-tzu.

"When the empire is well-ordered," said Confucius, "it is from the emperor that edicts regarding ceremonial, music, and expeditions to quell rebellion go forth. When it is being ill governed, such edicts emanate from the feudal lords; and when the latter is the case, it will be strange if in ten generations there is not a collapse. If they emanate merely from the high officials, it will be strange if the collapse..."
do not come in five generations. When the State-edicts are in the hands of the subsidiary ministers, it will be strange if in three generations there is no collapse.
Source: http://www.confucius-1.com/analects/analects-16.html

The greatest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are hardly aware. Next best is a leader who is loved and praised. Next comes the one who is feared. The worst is the one who is despised. When a leader doesn’t trust the people, they will become untrustworthy. The best leader speaks little. He never speaks carelessly. He works without self interest and leaves no trace. When the work is accomplished, the people say: “Amazing: we did it all by ourselves.”
Source: http://beyondthedream.co.uk/2013/06/10/tao-te-ching-17-the-art-of-leadership/

On the other hand, Shintoism is a loosely organized local belief of Japan, somewhat an ardent religious form of Japanese patriotism (Hopfe 1893). Its mythology highlights the superiority of Japan over other lands. Shrines celebrate great heroes and important events in Japan’s history. Japanese people believed that their emperors literally descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu. Conscious effort is being done to revere the beauty of Japan’s lands, especially mountains. The term ‘Shinto’ was coined around the sixteenth century C.E. to distinguish native belief system from the imported religions of China and Korea, including Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. The term actually originated from the Chinese words shen and tao roughly translated as the ‘way of the gods’. Of primal importance were the kami that were often defined as gods but could also refer to deities of heaven and earth, or even spirits in human beings, animals, trees, seas, and mountains (Hopfe 1983).

GEOGRAPHY OF FAITH
Laws and social norms vary by region and localities. The study about geography of religion may reveal some fascinating truths why a certain country is predominated by one particular religion or why a specific region became homeland of great religions.

The Western Frontier
West Asia is home of three great religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Comprising the area bordered on the west by the fertile coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and on the east by the arid deserts of Arabia, the history of these religions is closely linked with this region.

Countries closest to the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea north of the Arabian Sea and south of Turkey, sometimes called the Levant, have experi-
enced numerous religious cataclysms in their existence as nation-states. These include Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Syria, and Palestine. Gaining independence in 1944, Lebanon has undergone a protracted civil war from 1975 to 1990 between Christians and Muslims. During that time, while the Christians controlled wealth and power, majority of Muslims felt discriminated. Around 250,000 lives were lost as a result of the conflict.

After 1917, many Jews migrated from Europe to their ancient homeland, Palestine. In 1948, Israel was established after driving away the Palestinian Arabs who had been living in the area for centuries. The long drawn-out war between Israel and Arab countries has resulted in the deaths of many Jews and Muslims from both sides. Israel remains the only country in the world with a Jewish-majority population comprising almost 75% of its citizens. Within Israel are Muslims that constitute 16% of the population. There is a continuing unrest among the Palestinian population as a result of Israeli policies that run counter to their nationalist ideals. Needless to say, religions have increasingly become involved in the domestic politics of nation-states and between nations as well (Brasswell 1994).

The Arabian Peninsula, the world’s largest peninsula, consists of countries that are predominantly Islamic in character. These countries include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Oman. Most West Asian countries follow the Shi’a and Sunni denominations of Islam. Majority of Muslims in Iraq and Iran associate themselves with the Shi’a sect. Meanwhile, majority of Muslims in Saudi Arabia belong to the Sunni branch.

What geographical features of this arid land could have influenced the growth, evolution, and expansion of these religions from the time of the
great patriarch Abraham until the rise of the prophet Muhammad? Located
directly south of Eastern Europe, West Asia contains some of the world’s
most desolate environments. The Arabian Peninsula situated on the
northeastern part of Africa is almost completely a baking hot desert where no
plants can thrive.

The topography of West Asia is characterized by vast areas of mountainous
terrains. Mountains play significant roles in many religious beliefs as these
landforms provide ideal settings where gods live or where gods and mortals
meet. In the Judeo-Christian region of West Asia and Egypt, there are four
sacred mountains listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holy Mountains</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mount Ararat</td>
<td>Eastern part of Turkey</td>
<td>Traditional landing place of Noah’s Ark as narrated in the Book of Genesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>Sinai Peninsula in Egypt</td>
<td>The peak where Moses received the Ten Commandments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Zion/Mount Moriah</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>Known as the city of David and Temple Mount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Tabor</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Site of transfiguration of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Temple Mount is one of the most sacred sites in the world revered by
the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Three structures are found in the present
site that include the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, and the Dome
of the Chain. The Jewish people consider the Temple Mount as their holiest
shrine. Mount Moriah is also believed to be the site of sacrifice of Isaac by
Abraham.

Meanwhile, vast expanse of deserts and bodies of water in West Asia also
figure significantly in biblical history. From the Book of Exodus, it narrates
Yam Suph being crossed by the Israelites as they escaped from Egyptian
lands. Yam Suph is believed to be the present-day Red Sea which is an exten-
sion of the Indian Ocean located between Africa and Asia. The modern-day
translation of Yam Suph is “Sea of Reeds.” For many years, the Israelites
lived in the wilderness at the Sinai Desert en route to the Promised Land. It
is believed that the spiritual cleansing of one’s self transpires in the desert.
Another body of water mentioned in the Bible is the Dead Sea along with
the dwelling caves near it at the time of David. The Dead Sea is a landlocked
salt lake between Israel and Jordan.

Presently, followers of the three Abrahamic religions place high regard
on the city of Jerusalem in Israel because of the numerous sites that are
central to their belief system. In Jerusalem, there are more than a thousand
synagogues, more than a hundred churches, and more than 70 mosques.
Jerusalem has been sacred for the Jews almost three thousand years now
with the city being the site of the First Temple (King Solomon’s Temple)
and the Second Temple. The Western Wall (Wailing Wall or Kotel), one of
the four remaining walls that surrounded the Temple Mount, is the second
holiest shrine for the Jews. Meanwhile, the city has been revered by the
Christians for almost two thousand years now. Important Christian sites
include Mount Zion and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is the site
of the Golgotha (or the place of crucifixion) and the empty tomb of Jesus.

ACTIVITY
Find a picture or map of Jerusalem using books or Internet sources.
Try to identify the different religious structures erected in this sacred
city. Present this in front of the class.
Christ. Lastly, the city has been held sacred by the Muslims for almost 1400 years now. For the Sunni Muslims, it is their third holiest city. Located at the Temple Mount, the Islamic Dome of the Rock is the most recognizable structure in Jerusalem. It is believed that the rock is the spot from which Muhammad ascended to heaven. Likewise, the First and Second Temples is believed to lie beneath or near the shrine. Another Islamic structure at the Temple Mount is the Al-Aqsa Mosque associated with the “night journey” undertaken by Muhammad.

The Indian Subcontinent
The subcontinent of South Asia covers an area of more than one and a half million square miles stretching from the Hindu Kush and Baluchi Hills on the west and the Great Himalayan mountain range on the north, to the Burmese mountain on the east and the Indian Ocean on the south (Wolpert 1993). More than 4000 years ago, a civilization emerged along the Indus River that developed a unique and exceptional culture long before the dawn of the Christian era. Invasions from people originating in Macedonia and Central Asia have added diversity to India’s population and complexity to its culture (Wolpert 1993).

Because sweltering heat is one major feature of India’s ecological setting, it is no wonder that Hindus revere the sun (Surya) and fire (Agni). Likewise, water also plays a major role in the Indian psyche as evidenced by Hindus venerating a god of water and celestial oceans (Varuna). The South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh depend mightily on the rivers Indus, Ganga-Yamuna, and Brahmaputra. Traversing the great plains of north India, the Ganga (Ganges) is the holiest river for the Hindus. From its point of origin to its confluence with the ocean, many ancient pilgrimage sites and cities line up along the Ganga that include Rishikesh, Haridwar, Prayag, and Varanasi.

Even Buddhists consider Varanasi an important religious site. During the olden days, there was once a deer park in Samath which is now a residential area in Varanasi. Here, Siddhartha Gautama gave his first sermon about the principles of Buddhism. It is presently marked by the Dhammek Stupa shrine. The Buddha also met his first disciples at this place which is now commemorated by the Chaukhandi Stupa monument (Douglas 2007). It is worth noting, however, that Buddhism is not widely held in India but rather in the neighboring countries located in South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.

The Eastern End
At the eastern end of the great Asian continent one finds the cultural and political dominance of China. Stretching more than 5,000 kilometers across the Asian landmass, it is bordered by various bodies of water in the east and land borders in all other directions. China’s population is concentrated primarily in the eastern and southern parts where agricultural activities flourish. Deserts (such as the Gobi and Taklamakan) and plateaus dominate the northern and western territory of China that served as natural barriers
from foreign invaders coming from that front. As such, the great Chinese civilization developed entirely on its own without interference from outside forces.

Chinese culture practically influenced all other countries at its outskirts, including Japan and Korea. The supremacy of China on the eastern front can be explained by the role of its environment and geography that includes vast alluvial plains, extensive fertile valleys, and a pleasant climate. The location of China proper in the valleys of two great bodies of water, the Huang He and Yangtze, is quite favorable because of the support these streams provide to the Chinese people that made historic China the center of culture. Geographically speaking, the farming people of the river valley were isolated from the rest of Asia because of deserts and mountains. From these river valleys emerged small states now controlled by the first recorded dynasties in China, the Shang and the Zhou. Soon after, states began to centralize, established a taxation system, organized military organizations, and imposed codes of law (Perry 1989). Public officials and bureaucrats who were also scholars, philosophers, and teachers gained prominence because of their interest in politics and government. It is within this context that the great teacher Confucius became fascinated with ethical questions and morality in government affairs.

Confucius, the main person behind this emerging social philosophy, did not intend to start a new religion but rather expound on the nature of order and stability in the society. For Confucius, this was not the result of stringent laws but of the rituals and ceremonies undertaken by people who have become civilized through time. Only a refined society can achieve lasting social order. With the growth of Confucianism and the development of urban Chinese culture, the ecstatic and religious nature of shamanism began to decline in China.

It was only during the second millennium after the death of Confucius in 479 B.C.E. that the teachings and ideals identified with his philosophy spread in China (Rozman 1991). By the time of the Han Dynasty, Confucian teachings had become the state religion (Palmer 1996). In Korea, it began to be disseminated extensively around the 15th century. In Japan, it was accepted by the majority during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Meanwhile, Daoism emerged in response to the widespread warfare and social turmoil that besieged the Zhou Dynasty. It served as the guiding principle to abandon and withdraw from the disorder brought about by incessant struggle for power, wealth, and prestige. The common people began to oppose the rising authoritarian rule and the rigidity of the moralists who were Confucian supporters. Daoist followers aspired for autonomy in the midst of social adversities and for conformity to social patterns with the aim of attaining social harmony.

Korea experienced a great deal of exposure to Chinese culture with the Han and Tang Dynasties maintaining close ties with the Koreans. As the three kingdoms of Goguryeo, Silla, and Baekje were being influenced by China, Korea also adopted Buddhism and Confucianism from the mainland.
A small country compared to China, Korea had to adopt the Confucian model of harmonious family relations. Eventually, Korea was able to guarantee its sovereignty from China and develop its own culture that is uniquely Korean in style. Relatively distant from China when compared to Korea, Japan also had a fair share of China’s influence that became entrenched in Japanese culture. Japanese envoys to China picked the useful aspects of Chinese culture, imported and adapted these elements to their own genius and need (Latourette 1964). The Japanese feudal system embraced the ideals of Confucianism. Ancestor worship complemented elements of Confucianism and Daoism that underscored the concept of filial piety. Between the 4th and 8th centuries, Japan experienced major cultural change. The entry of Buddhism in Japan had a direct effect in the religious traditions of Japan and its reaction was fourfold. Firstly, the name ‘Shinto’ was introduced to differentiate the native belief from the new foreign religions. Secondly, local Shinto followers acknowledged that the numerous buddhas and bodhisattvas were revelations of the kami. Buddhists reversed this notion and considered kami as Japanese revelations of these celestial beings. Thirdly, there came a fusion or syncretism between Shintoism and Buddhism and for 10 centuries they lived side by side in Japan while serving the spiritual needs of the people. Lastly, Japan developed a unique form of Buddhism taking its fullest meditative form under Zen. (Hopfe 1983).

THE CULTURAL MILIEU
World religions can be regarded along the lines of their exclusivity or non-exclusivity. Exclusive religions are oftentimes monotheistic with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as examples. Meanwhile, non-exclusive religions are often polytheistic in nature. Examples of non-exclusive religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism.

On Monotheism and Universality
Monotheism or the belief in one God is an ancient idea that predated the establishment of Abrahamic religions. From the three Abrahamic religions, however, Christianity has somewhat differed based on its concept of the trinitarian creed in contrast to the unitarian creed. While Judaism and Islam affirm the presence of one god, Christianity acknowledges one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God having three persons could also mean three persons and one substance as forwarded by the Church Father Tertullian (c. 155 – 240 C.E.).

The basic principles of the Muslim faith are reflected in the “Five Pillars of Islam.” The first pillar as the profession of the Muslim faith succinctly states that “there is no God but Allah.” Simply put, there are no gods, but only Allah. Allah is eternal, creator, omnipotent, infinitely good, merciful, but harsh on those who oppose his will (Jomier 1999). Muslims are urged to worship Allah alone and avoid veneration of transitory things of the world (Frager 2002).
Both Christianity and Islam are considered universalizing religions because they attempt to operate on a global scale and are not inextricably linked to any nation, ethnicity, or place as opposed to ethnic religions that attract one group of people residing in one locality. Universalizing religions have a variety of means to transmit their principles and their followers believe that what they think is appropriate for humankind. Because these religions originated from a certain founder, they are relatively younger than ethnic religions, such as Hinduism, Confucianism, or Daoism. These types of religions actively seek out new recruits, hence, conversion here is quite easy. They have many members who belong to diverse groups of people because everyone is a welcome addition to these religions.

On the other hand, Judaism can be considered an ethnic religion because it draws members from a specific group of people from a definite locality with most of its practices and rituals performed continuously throughout generations. Rituals and holidays belonging to the ethnic religions are based on the cycle of harvest that are quite different in the celebrations for universalizing religions that are often anchored upon the life stories of their originators. It may be hard to convert to an ethnic religion because members come principally from the same ethnicity.

On the Concept of Dharma

Majority of Indians are Hindus. Buddhism, which originated in India, has been absorbed into the Hindu worldview (Kolanad 1994). Hindu religions foster tolerance as they coexisted peacefully for many generations in most parts of India. The concept of dharma is integral in religions that emerged in India, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

In Hinduism, dharma could mean duty, righteousness, and ethics. In all humanity, this is common and evident in virtues such as peacefulness, empathy, and kindness. Dharma is also found in one’s caste in the present life and toward another life that could lead to liberation from the cycle of rebirth (Coogan 2005). For Buddhism, it means cosmic law and order, or the teachings of the Buddha and the truth of the way things are. For the Theravada sect, dharma is sometimes used to indicate all the factors of existence. As the Buddha himself explained, “This Dharma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise.”

Dharmic religions do not compel their adherents to profess their devotion to be a believer or a practitioner. For the followers of dharmic religions, meditational and yoga rituals lead to right behavior and ultimate understanding of the universe. The final spiritual truth is beyond all delusions of the physical world where pain and sufferings exist because of extreme attachment to people and material things.

While the Hindus and Buddhists share similarities on some of their basic tenets, such as ideas concerning enlightenment and liberation, there are palpable differences between the two dharmic religions. For one, while the Hindus believe in the trimurti or the three forms of god, Buddhists
do not believe in the existence of any god. As such, intermediaries for humans and gods are not necessary along with the many rituals that go with venerating them.

**On Nature and Ancestors**

The elements of cult of heaven and ancestor worship are features of ancient Chinese culture integrated into the Confucian philosophy and belief. Apart from Confucianism, lesser deities are also apparent in Daoism with the presence of atmospheric gods, gods of locality, and functional gods. Chinese belief systems soon arrived in Japan and influenced the local culture and the indigenous polytheistic religion Shintoism.

In Shintoism, divinities are closely linked to nature and natural forces. The sacred Mount Fuji, an abode of Japanese gods, is surrounded by temples and shrines. It is one of the three holy mountains along with Mount Tate and Mount Haku. Shrines are erected to venerate or remember ancestors, an occurrence, and natural phenomena, such as mountains, rivers, rocks, and trees. Shinto followers carry out ritualistic practices conscientiously in order to establish union with the present society and the nation’s past. Shintoism serves as a guide and way that somehow run contrary to established world religions. Majority of its followers also practice Buddhism.

Meanwhile, Confucius had a firm conviction in a natural order that was also a moral order. The Confucian stance on the world is basically encapsulated about an individual’s understanding of heaven and the people’s relationships with heaven. Everyone had significant roles to play in society that could very well affect heaven and earth despite their seeming immensity as compared to humankind. Apart from having a harmonious relationship between humans and heaven, the establishment of an ideal human society is also key to Confucian followers. Central to this objective concerns family relations as emphasized in the concept of filial piety being the major pillar of Confucian ethics. Confucius outlined the five basic social relationships: (1) ruler and subjects, (2) father and son, (3) husband and wife, (4) older and younger brothers, and (5) friends or members of a community (Perry 1989). All human relationships had a set of definite responsibilities and obligations with participants conforming to and accepting their roles. With all this mechanism in mind, a perfect society is attainable. Quite similarly, Daoism promotes harmonious relationship between humankind and nature. Appropriateness of one’s behavior is also integral in the Daoist teachings.
Summary

• Religion is considered universal and it can be found in all known contemporary societies.
• The prophet and patriarch Abraham played a major role in the establishment of three monotheistic religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
• Religion is an essential part of Indian tradition as four main religions originated here, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.
• Both Confucius and Laozi were followers of the Dao. The Confucian Dao principally concerns human affairs while the Daoist Dao means the way the universe works.
• West Asia is home of three great religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
• Heat and water are major features of India’s ecological setting. As a result, deities of sun, fire, and water are venerated in India.
• Chinese culture practically influenced all other nations at its outskirts, including Japan and Korea.
• Monotheism or the belief in one god is an ancient idea that predated the establishment of Abrahamic religions.
• The concept of dharma is integral in religions that emerged in India, most especially Hinduism and Buddhism.
• Chinese belief system arrived in Japan and influenced the local culture and the indigenous polytheistic religion Shinto.

Critical Thinking

1. How important is the role of Abraham in the development of monotheistic religions?
2. In what ways are Confucianism and Taoism more of a social philosophy rather than organized religions?
3. How did geography affect religious events and development in West Asia, in the Indian subcontinent, and in China?
4. What are the major points of difference between dharmic religions and Abrahamic religions?
5. Why are natural forces and environment integral in the Shinto religion?

Assessment

A. Write TRUE if the statement is correct. Write FALSE if the statement is incorrect.

_____ 1. The term ‘Shinto’ came from two Indian words.
_____ 2. The Hindu god of fire is Agni.
_____ 3. Judaism has 48 prophets and seven prophetesses.
_____ 4. The concept of filial piety is integral in Islam.
_____ 5. The Arabian Peninsula consists of countries that are predominantly Buddhist in character.
_____ 6. God instructed Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac at Mount Hira.
_____ 7. The Analects and Dao De Jing are sacred texts in Chinese religions.
_____ 8. The Ganga is the holiest river for the Muslims.
9. Saudi Arabia experienced a bloody civil war from 1975 to 1990 between Christians and Muslims.
10. The Hindus believe in the trimurti or the three forms of their god.
11. Bodhisattvas have gained spiritual enlightenment but opted to postpone their entry to nirvana to assist other being in their path to salvation.
12. The holy mountains in Japan are Mount Fuji, Mount Tate, and Mount Moriah.
13. Meritocracy became the basis of government officials during the time of Confucius.
14. The Dome of the Rock is located in Mount Ararat.
15. The teachings of Confucius became the state religion during the Han Dynasty.

B. Match Column A with Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

Column A
1. Type of Buddhism that developed in Japan
2. The Hindu god of water and celestial oceans
3. Prehistoric species of humans
4. Term for the teachings of the Buddha
5. Forwarded the idea of ‘three persons, one substance’
6. A name given by the Hebrews to their god
7. Considered as the “Seal of the Prophets”
8. A pilgrimage site along the river Ganga
9. Believed to be the ancestor of the Arab people
10. One of the three kingdoms in Korea

Column B
a. Neanderthals
b. Muhammad
c. Yahweh
d. Varuna
e. Dharma
f. Baekje
g. Ishmael
h. Zen
i. Varanasi
j. Tertullian

C. Make a table illustrating the differences between a universalizing religion and an ethnic religion. Formulate your own set of criteria as you evaluate these religions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Universalizing Religion</th>
<th>Ethnic Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Make a poster presentation illustrating the unity of world religions. Explain your work in front of the class. Your poster will be graded based on the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Important concepts were highlighted and explained.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the poster illustration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 20

On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, you have discovered how religions originated and developed into living traditions that affect the lives of their followers. You have found out how geography and culture could have an effect on the establishment and development of religions. In the next lesson we will study the positive and negative effects religion has on the societies at some points in history.

Sources

BOOKS


INTERNET SOURCES


Lesson Three
Positive and Negative Effects of Religion

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
Religion can have positive and negative effects on society.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
What role does religion play in the occurrence of particular historical events?

The lines in the picture, taken from John Lennon’s song entitled “Imagine,” encourage the listener to think of a world where nationalities and religions do not exist, for history has shown us that so many wars have been fought in the name of nationality and religion. The song suggests that instead of being caught up in the barriers and divisiveness brought by nationality or religion, we should consider the possibility of living in a world at peace.

Religion has become a very important aspect in the development of civilizations and cultures. In fact, most ancient societies based their worldviews on religion, and it has been proven to be beneficial to the attainment and maintenance of social stability and cohesiveness. However, as time went by, religion has also become the basis of conflicts between societies, even within societies. While religion has promoted solidarity among societies, it has also been the reason behind the outbreak of particular wars in history. In this lesson, we will discuss the positive and negative effects of religion, as well as examples of historical events caused primarily by religion.
**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**

Divide the class into four groups. Let the class listen to John Lennon’s song “Imagine.” Give them 10-15 minutes to discuss the possible consequences if a society has no religion. Make each group list at least five possible consequences. Allow one representative from each group five minutes to discuss their output in class.

**CONCEPT MAP**

**RELIGION**

**POSITIVE EFFECTS**

- Promotes Social Harmony
- Provides Moral Values
- Provides Social Change
- Explains the Unknown
- Gives Positive Goal in Life
- Gives People a Sense of Belonging

**NEGATIVE EFFECTS**

- Affirms Social Hierarchy
- Causes Discrimination
- Triggers Conflicts and Fights
- Serves as an Economic Tool for Controlling the Masses
- Impedes Scientific Success and Development
- Obstructs the Use of Reason
Dating back to the emergence of ancient societies, religion has already played an important role in the lives of our ancestors. In Mesopotamia, for example, the Sumerians organized their settlement into temple communities, wherein the temple was found at the center of their communities and the veneration of their gods and goddesses govern their daily lives. They believed that the lands which they tilled were owned by the deities that is why they offered part of their harvest to their priest, who was also their leader and who was seen as people’s intermediary to higher beings. In the absence of an organized religion, their concept of morality was based on the belief that right actions earn the approval of the gods and goddesses and wrong actions may cause punishment. Hence, the importance of ritual practices to appease the supernatural beings whom they considered as having control over their lives.

**POSITIVE EFFECTS OF RELIGION**

There is no doubt that religion has an important role in society. In fact, it has become so closely intertwined with other institutions such as political and economic systems that religious beliefs sometimes became the basis of political legitimacy. This is the very reason why the principle of separation of state and religion was established in many countries.

However, religion has served purposes beneficial to society in general. In one way or another, it inspires values that cultivate peace, compassion and kindness. Religion upholds traditions of shaping human's spirituality and embracing the goodness in each individual.

**Religion Promotes Social Harmony**

Religion believes in supernatural beings and powers. It practices a set of rituals and ceremonious rites of passage and rites of intensification. It also regards religious leaders such as priests, priestesses and shamans in high esteem. These characteristics help advance social harmony by assimilating and stabilizing cultures and nations. Religion provides divine authority to ethical and moral principles which also help promote unity among people. Common participation in rituals together with basic uniformity of beliefs help promote social cohesiveness.

Belief in supernatural beings and the supposed divine powers they can wield to reward and punish people have been a major concept in religion since ancient times. It helps lessen the feeling of helplessness among people who believe that they are not alone in this world, that they need not rely on their capabilities alone, and that everybody else is on the same boat, so to speak. Whenever people are afflicted with crisis, they tend to think that a greater force or high being is there to help them, a belief people tend to share with others.

Equally important is the belief in religious leaders whose function was to mediate between the deities and the people. In ancient Philippine society for example, spiritual leaders were called **babaylanes** or **catalones**, whose functions were to intercede between the deities and people; to continue the rituals; to play as healers; and to act as cultural leaders of the community. Most of the
spiritual leaders were women; and if men wanted to become one, they had to
give up their sexuality to perform the prestigious role of being a babaylan.
People from ancient societies (to date) have a common belief in the need
for intermediaries to communicate with the deities and the supernaturals.
Thus, this reinforced the call for spiritual leaders in every society, and the
authority and respect people bestowed upon them. These intercessors can be
considered as one source of social solidarity. They provide crucial guidance to
people in their religious efforts, thereby maintaining group unity.

Another important characteristic of religion is the performance of common
rituals and practices on a regular basis. Such religious activities can be
considered as one component which helps bind people together and reinforce
their identification with a particular group. Ritual participation often creates
an atmosphere stimulated with emotions. The elated feelings people may
experience in such situations serve as a positive reinforcement because
they feel good as a result. Take the case of the Sufi Dervishes’ practice of
whirling or spinning, wherein the aim is to reach the source of all perfection
by abandoning one’s ego or personal desires through listening to music,
focusing on God, and spinning one’s body in repetitive circles. This kind of
ritual provides people of a particular religion with a positive feeling by doing
something together for a common purpose—that is, the glorification of god.
Furthermore, even attendance in Masses provides people with a common
ground, despite differences in social statuses and political ideologies.

Xiao, or filial piety, on the other hand, is a significant aspect of Confucianism
which promotes social harmony. Filial piety refers to the attitude of obedience,
devotion, and care of one’s parents and elder family members. It serves as
the basis of moral conduct which, in effect, leads to social harmony. Since
political and social harmony were the primary concerns of Confucianism,
filial piety helps achieve this goal by maintaining order in society. Children
are expected not only to obey but defer to parents’ judgments, as well as to
perform the proper rituals for them. In this way, social harmony is achieved
since conflicts are avoided.

Jainism also has a key concept which helps promotes social solidarity,
which is called ahimsa, or the concept of non-violence. For the followers
of Jainism, ahimsa is not only a worldview but a way of life. The killing
and consumption of animals is strictly prohibited, for it is central to
the idea of ahimsa that they must minimize their violent impact on the
environment. Treating other people with respect is also a way of practicing
ahimsa. Followers of Jainism have a particular stand on issues, such as
international conflict, economic equality, abortion, and even civil rights.
They make sure that they live their lives without doing any form of violence
to other life forms, especially to humans.

Religion Provides Moral Values
Perhaps one of the most significant functions of religion is that it encourages
moral values. It provides a systematic model of the universe, which in effect
determines organized human behavior. By providing moral values, one is able
to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil. It also provides a system of reward and punishment that administers and standardizes people’s behavior in society. Some people believe that it is sometimes more effective than the laws implemented by the state, since most people give more importance to the reward and punishment in the afterlife.

In ancient societies, notions of right and wrong were not yet as clear-cut as the morality imposed by organized religions. People then acted according to what they thought would please or displease the gods and goddesses. During those times, rituals were very important because it is through these that they invoke the pleasure or wrath of the deities. For example, before planting, farmers would perform a kind of ritual, led by their spiritual leaders, to ask for blessings from the deities so that their harvest would be bountiful. When calamity destroyed their crops, they would interpret it as a sign that they must have done something which displeased the deities, and would again perform a ritual to appease them. When they had a productive harvest, they would again perform a ritual to extend their gratitude to the deities whom they believed to be responsible for their good fortune.

Religion Provides Social Change
Since religion is a source of moral values, religion provides social change. It can be very effective in lobbying and campaigning for certain social issues using its own moral teachings as the basis of argument. For example, the Church in the US has been active in the campaign for civil liberties as well as the antislavery movement. In the Philippines, much credit has been given to the Catholic Church for the success of the People Power Revolution in 1986 when Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin urged the people to join the protest rally to oust the dictator, former president Ferdinand Marcos. Another example would be Gandhi’s *satyagraha*, or passive resistance, which paved the way for India’s independence from the British in the 20th century. *Satyagraha* advocates the belief that nonviolence of the mind can lead to the realization of the real nature of an evil situation and that by refusing to cooperate with evil, truth can be asserted. This concept employed by Gandhi in the early 20th century became instrumental in the Indian struggle against the British and became a model for other protest actions in other countries. In general, religion has the potential to institute social change, especially in the issues concerning poverty, reproductive health, gender equality, and religious discrimination.

Religion Reduces Fear of the Unknown
Religion was developed from man’s need to have a sense of origin and destination; to discover where they came from and where they are bound to go to when they die. Religion provides answers for phenomena and questions that science or reason cannot explain. Myths about the origin of people abound with stories of groups of people being created by gods and goddesses, perpetuating the notion that people came from supreme beings and will eventually go back to them in the afterlife. More importantly, religion has
provided assurances as to where spirits will go when people die, reducing people’s fear of death as something undesirable. The belief in the afterlife has become very important in most religions because it has become the basis for their daily conduct or how they live their lives. For the Hindus, for example, how they follow their dharma (moral and social obligation) determines what will happen to them in the afterlife: as long as they follow their dharma, they will reap good karma (karma refers to moral consequences of one’s act) which will eventually liberate their souls from bad karma, leading them to attain moksha, or the reunion of Brahman or universal soul and atman or individual soul (this will be further discussed in the lesson on Hinduism). Hence, following the duties and obligations of the caste where a Hindu belongs became the basis for what will supposedly happen to their soul in the afterlife. Among the Christians, obeying the Ten Commandments and being good to others will earn a reward of eternal life in heaven; doing the opposite will lead to eternal damnation in hell. Among the Muslims, there are certain circumstances which will guarantee them a place in heaven, like dying in jihad (a struggle against unbelievers) or performing the hajj (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca). On the other hand, early Filipino animists believed that the afterlife is but a continuation of life on earth; in some parts of the Philippines, there were pieces of evidence that when a datu or chieftain dies, he was buried in a ship called balanghay, together with his slaves and most precious belongings which he would still need in the afterlife.

In general, religion has provided people with answers to the unknown such as the origin of life and the concept of afterlife. Explanations provided by religions have reduced fears and anxieties among individuals and some religions have even made death a better alternative to living in uncertainty.

Religion Gives Positive Goals in Life
People were inspired by the stories of different prophets from their own religious affiliations, like that of Moses, Siddharta Gautama, and Muhammad. These people showed how ordinary people like them were given important missions in life, and how they struggled to carry out their respective missions. Moses was ordered to liberate the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and lead them back to the promised land; Mohammed was chosen to challenge the supremacy of the ruling class in the desert by preaching equality and founding the Islamic religion; while Siddharta Gautama gave up his wealth and power to find the solution for sickness, poverty, old age, and death. Their narratives—perpetuated through religion—may give people a sense of meaning in life; that they are not placed in this world without a purpose; that each and everyone has a mission to fulfill and it is up to them to fathom what their missions in life are.

Religion Gives People a Sense of Belonging
Just as family, ethnicity, or nationality give people a sense of belonging, so does religion. For some, religion provides people with personal identity as part of a group with similar worldviews, beliefs, values, practices, and

WEBLINK
Go to http://iras.org and look for the positive effects of religion that you can identify. Discuss your answers in class.
lifestyles. It provides communities with prospects to recognize and offer vital action and service to provide the needs of the larger community. Belonging to a particular religion—whose members share the same beliefs, practice the same rituals, and worship the same god—gives individuals a sense of being in the right place with the right people. It also provides them with a sense of security because other people who belong to the same religious group will tend to support and help each other in times of crisis. A religious group or community can provide counsel, help the sick and underprivileged, and give other services on a more personal level than the government. Members of a religious community can have the assurance that they can rely on other people’s help in times of need. They can also expect to have other people rejoice with them in times of success. Religion can provide a sense of personal identity and belonging.

A good example of religion giving people a sense of belonging is the Sikh principle of Seva, also known as Sewa, from the word Karseva which means “selfless service.” Sikhs are expected to perform work or service without expecting anything in return. They are encouraged by their Guru (Guru Granth Saib) to perform selfless service with the belief that by so doing, they are not only promoting good community relations but also paving the way for the moral uplifting of a person, thus strengthening his or her sense of belonging to the community. They are taught to reach out to serve and uplift all of humanity to show their devotion to their god.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF RELIGION
Religion has often been named as the culprit behind divisiveness and conflicts among people. There is also a belief that religion can be dangerous to society when used to advance the interests of a group of people at the expense of other people especially those with different religious beliefs. Religious fundamentalism or the demand for a strict adherence to orthodox theological doctrines is often considered as the reason behind most religious conflicts. Some of the negative effects of religion which we will discuss in this lesson are: affirmation of social hierarchy; reason why people fight each other; promotion of discrimination; obstruction of scientific success and development; and hindrance to the use of reason.

Religion Affirms Social Hierarchy
Some religions affirm social hierarchy often favoring men and as a result, perpetuate the notions of class or gender discrimination and oppression. Another example of religion reflecting the hierarchy of political structures would be the Confucian emphasis on the relations between the ruler and the subject, with the former exercising authority over the latter. The traditional caste system in India would also reflect how religion reflects political and social structures since it propagated the idea that people had to be subdivided into certain social classes with particular social roles and that the attainment of moksha (union of universal soul and individual soul) would depend on how they performed their duties based on their designated class.

TRIVIA
Sewa or selfless sacrifice is an aspect of Sikhism that gives people a sense of belonging, one of the positive effects of religion. An example of sewa would be the feeding program being undertaken by the Sikh people.
Religion Causes Discrimination
There are some who say that religion, after turning people against themselves, turn people against each other. This happens when people do not tolerate religious ideologies different from the one they follow. Religious fanaticism can lead to feelings of hatred, which could lead to racism, and eventually violence. Throughout history, religion has been used by colonizers to justify their forcible occupation of territories. In a way, religion has made this world a more complicated place to live in.

Religion can also be a source of discrimination, or the prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the basis of race, religion, age, or sex. In Islam, the practice of wearing the *hijab* (a head covering worn in public by Muslim women) is considered by many critics as a form of suppression against Muslim women. Women have to cover their body, from head to toe, so as not to attract the attention of men—perpetuating the notion that women are temptations that men should avoid. There are also religions which discriminate against other religions on the basis of claiming to be the “right religion” and that only their followers will be saved in the afterlife. Still, there are religions which discriminate against people from the lower class who they consider to be sinful and dirty, just like the outcast or *pariahs* in India.

Religion Triggers Conflicts and Fights
Religion also has some aspects which make it susceptible to be a source of conflict and war. History witnessed numerous lives sacrificed and lost in the name of religion. Wars have been fought in the name of religion, and this phenomenon continues up to the present time. In Palestine, the Jews are in conflict with the Muslims; in Kashmir, it is the Muslims against Hindus; in Sudan, it is the Muslims opposite Christians and animists; in Sri Lanka, it is the Sinhalese Buddhists against the Tamil Hindus; in Indonesia, it is Muslims contra Timorese Christians. These are only some of so many wars being fought in the name of religion, which means that so many resources are being wasted and millions of lives are being lost.

Religion As An Economic Tool for Exploiting the Masses
According to the German philosopher Karl Marx, “religion is the opium of the masses.” This is in relation to his critical approach to religion in which he proposed that the bourgeoisie keeps the proletariat in control through religion. According to Marx, it maintains social inequality by propagating a worldview that justifies oppression. He believed that religion can be effectively used by the ruling class to maintain a social order that is more favorable to them. Whether one is Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, religious teachings justifying one’s acceptance of oppression as a normal part of life on earth and as a means to get an everlasting reward in the afterlife can be seen as a bourgeois tactic to maintain the status quo where they reap more resources and power in society. Thus, in Marx’s conflict theory, the abolition of religion is also needed to liberate the masses from their oppressive state.
Religion Impedes Scientific Success and Development
Throughout history, religion has proven to impede scientific development. For example, it has often been said that the Catholic Church used to teach that the world is flat and warned people against going to faraway places if they do not wish to fall off the edge of the earth. Another example would be the claim that the earth is the center of the solar system, also known as the Ptolemaic theory. Aristarchus, and later on, Nicolas Copernicus, proved that the sun is the center of the solar system and all other planets move around it, hence advancing the heliocentric model.

Aside from these, some of the moral teachings of other religions are deemed by secular communities to be detrimental to development. For example, some religions express their disapproval against reproductive health programs that aim to empower couples in responsible family planning through education and access to legal and medically safe birth control, claiming that such programs defies their religious doctrine and are, therefore, immoral.

Religion-based mortuary practices can also be detrimental to public health and sanitation. For example, during the cholera outbreak in the Philippines in the nineteenth century, the Catholic practice of having the dead body of cholera victims be brought first to the church for a Mass was seen as one reason why the cholera epidemic continued to spread rapidly. Liberal-minded individuals during that time believed it would be much safer and hygienic to immediately bury the dead instead of letting a lot of people be exposed to the dead body by observing religious practices. The same dilemma can also be seen in the outbreak of the Ebola virus in Africa. The Muslim practice of washing the dead’s body by relatives of the same gender is seen as contributory to the rapid spread of the Ebola virus which can be transmitted through direct contact with the victim.

Religion Obstructs the Use of Reason
Many question the suitability of religious doctrines to the needs of the present and future generations. In order to put these dogma to practice, religion should, therefore, evolve and learn to adapt to the ever changing world. Ancient religious beliefs and practices which have proven to be inhuman should be replaced with sensible ones. Take the case of the trepanning, or the ancient practice of boring holes in the human skull, a surgical procedure performed on epileptics and the mentally ill, with the belief that through the hole the evil spirit will leave the person. During those days they regard it as an attempt at exorcism, but at present the procedure is just unthinkable.

HISTORICAL EVENTS CAUSED BY RELIGION
In some regions in the world, religion has become very influential in almost every aspect of human activity—from personal routines to diplomatic relations. Furthermore, in each country there are majority and minority religious groups and sometimes the power struggle between these two groups escalate into historical developments which oftentimes shock the world. Here are some of the historical events that are caused by religion.
Self-Immolation of a Buddhist Monk in Vietnam

Self-immolation, or the killing of oneself as a form of sacrifice, originally referred to as the act of setting oneself on fire. But now it refers to a much wider range of suicidal choices such as leaping off a cliff, starvation, or ritual removing of the guts (also known as seppuku). It is used as a form of political protest or martyrdom.

The case of self-immolation reported by the Western media was that of a Buddhist monk named Thich Quang Duc in Vietnam in 1963, who set himself on fire in the middle of a street in South Vietnam. This was done in protest against the religious discrimination being experienced by the Buddhists in Vietnam by the Roman Catholic regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. Under his dictatorial regime, the minority Catholics enjoyed majority status and privileges while the majority Buddhists were prohibited from practicing their religion in public. Prior to this, Buddhist monks were shot dead after attempting to fly a Buddhist flag on Phat Dan, the birthday of Gautama Buddha, in South Vietnam. They were allegedly killed by the dictator’s Catholic Army, but Diem put the blame on the Viet-Cong (Vietnamese communists). This led to civil disobedience and major protests among the Buddhists. When Thich Quang Duc failed to achieve reforms for the Buddhist population, he set himself on fire. According to the Buddhists, after this incident and even after his cremation his heart remained intact, which they interpreted as a sign of his great compassion. This event served as an important catalyst in overthrowing Diem’s government and the assassination of Diem and his brother.

Widow Burning Among the Hindus in India

Sati, or the practice of self-immolation of a widow on her husband’s funeral pyre, is said to have originated 700 years ago in India. It is believed to have started among the ruling class or rajputs in India, when the rajput women burnt themselves to death after their men were defeated in battles to avoid being taken by the conquerors. Later on, it has become a manifestation of wifely devotion. It has been outlawed by the British rulers in 1829 but rare cases still continue to occur. In 2006, a Hindu woman was reported to have committed sati in Tuslipar village in the central state of Madhya Pradesh. The woman, whose name was Janakrani, was said to have burnt herself to death on the funeral pyre of her husband Prem Narayan. According to the villagers, after the cremation, the widow told them she had to attend to some work, but when they went looking for her they found her dead on the pyre. Reports said that nobody forced her to commit the act.

The Inquisition

Inquisition refers to the Roman Catholic Church groups charged with subduing heresy from around 1184, which includes the Episcopal Inquisition (1184-1230s) and the Papal Inquisition (1230s). The Inquisition was a response to large popular movements in Europe considered heretical or profane to Christianity, particularly Catharism (a Christian dualist movement which espoused
the idea of two gods, one being good and the other evil) and Waldensians (a Protestant Christian movement which advocated that apostolic poverty is the way to perfection) in southern France and southern Italy.

The word “inquisition,” has somehow become associated with the word “torture.” This is because after 1252, torture was used to punish the heretics. On May 15, a papal bull was issued by Pope Innocent IV, the Ad exstir-panda, which authorized the use of torture by inquisitors. One common form of torture was the strappado, wherein the hands were bound behind the back with a rope, and the accused was suspended this way, dislocating the joints painfully in both arms.

THE GODHRA TRAIN INCIDENT IN 2002

In February 2002, a train was set on fire in which 59 people, including 25 women and 15 children, were killed. The fire happened inside the Sabarmati Express train near the Godhra railway station in the Indian state of Gujarat. Those who died inside the train were mostly Hindu pilgrims and activists returning from the holy city of Ayodhya after a religious ceremony at the disputed Babri Masjid site. It took six years for the commission appointed to investigate the said incident to conclude that the fire was committed by a mob of 1000-2000 people. Thirty-one Muslims were convicted by the court for the incident and conspiracy for the crime.

The Babri Masjid site was a source of the Ayodhya dispute, which was centered on access to the site traditionally regarded by the Hindus as the birthplace of the Hindu deity Rama. Hindus accuse the Muslims of demolishing a previous Hindu temple on the site to create the Babri mosque, which was destroyed by radical Hindu activists during a political rally that turned into a riot on December 6, 1992. The Godhra train incident in 2002 was seen as a Muslim retaliation for the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992. The discovery in 2003 of Buddhist ruins underlying the Hindu and Muslim layers at Ayodhya only made matters more complicated.

Although so many atrocities have been committed in the name of religion, we should bear in mind that more often than not, there are other factors at play. Politics and economics often play a key role in religious conflicts. Sadly, some political parties take advantage of religious conflicts to pursue their own interests, and that is winning in the next elections. In India, for example, political parties have been accused of using Hindu-Muslim conflict to advance their own interests by ruling in favor of those who will give them the highest votes.

Summary

- Religion can be described as a double-edged sword: it can have both positive and negative effects on society. It has played a very important role in the development of societies by integrating and stabilizing them; however, it has also created conflicts.
• Some of its positive effects are: it promotes social solidarity; it is a source of moral values; it nurtures positive goals in life; it gives people a sense of belonging; and it fosters social change.
• Some of religion’s negative effects include: it affirms social hierarchy; it triggers conflicts and fights; it promotes discrimination; it impedes scientific success and development; and it hinders the use of reason.
• Some of the world’s atrocities and conflicts were caused by religion such as the self-immolation of a Buddhist monk in Vietnam; the practice of sati or widow burning in India; the Inquisition of the Catholic Church; and the Godhra train incident in India.

Critical Thinking

1. Can you think of other cases of religious conflicts aside from the ones mentioned?
2. Do you agree that sometimes religious conflicts are being used for political reasons? Why or why not?
3. In your own opinion, can religious conflicts be avoided? If yes, how?
4. Do you think religious groups should have a say in political affairs? Why or why not?

Assessment

A. Identification. Choose from the list below. Write the correct answer on the blank.
   a. Babri Masjid
   b. Trepanning
   c. Devaraja
   d. Mount Meru
   e. Self-immolation
   f. Indianization
   g. Sati
   h. Strappado
   i. Babaylan or catalan
   j. Ayodhya

   1. Hindu concept of god-king
   2. The process of spreading Hindu-Buddhist influences from India to Southeast Asia
   3. Place where the Hindu deities live according to Hindu cosmology
   4. Spiritual leaders in ancient Philippine society who were mostly women
   5. Name of the mosque destroyed by Hindu activists in India
   6. Birthplace of Rama according to the Hindus
   7. A form of torture used during the Inquisition
   8. The Hindu practice of widow burning
   9. The killing of oneself as a sacrifice
   10. The ancient practice of boring holes in the human skull

B. Which effect of religion is referred to in the following sentences? Write the letter of the correct answer.

   Choices:
   a. Religion promotes discrimination.
   b. Religion promotes social solidarity.
   c. Religion affirms hierarchy.
d. Religion sets positive goals in life.
e. Religion obstructs scientific success and development.
f. Religion reduces fear of the unknown.
g. Religion obstructs the use of reason.
h. Religion gives people a sense of belonging.
i. Religion makes people fight each other.
j. Religion provides moral values.

1. Religion integrates and stabilizes cultures as well as nations.
2. Religion should be susceptible to progress.
3. Religion sets notions of right and wrong.
4. Religion promotes obscurantism.
5. Religion gives a sense of origin and destination.
6. Religion is a source of discrimination.
7. Religion gives a sense of purpose in life.
8. Religion makes good people do evil things.
9. Religion provides personal identity to individuals as part of a group with similar world views, beliefs, values, practices and lifestyles.
10. Religion perpetuates notions of class or gender discrimination and oppression.

C. Choose three positive effects and three negative effects of religion and give specific examples of each based on your personal experience or knowledge. Cut pictures from magazines or newspapers which reflect the said effects and make a collage on a 1/8 illustration board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The pictures were appropriate to the theme.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the pictures and words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. On the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc: Did you think the incident could have been avoided? Discuss your thoughts about it by writing a one-page reflection paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The activity was able to answer the question posted on the student.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The paper was well-written with ideas easily conveyed to readers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analysis was clear and concise based on the data presented.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, we have discussed how religion can have positive as well as negative effects on society. We have also cited cases wherein religion played a key role in the atrocities committed or conflicts that transpired between religious groups in certain countries. In the next lesson we will study the world religions that have originated from the region we now call West Asia, where Abrahamic religions or religions that originated from the prophet Abraham began.

Sources

BOOKS

INTERNET SOURCES
From the frontiers of West Asia developed the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, known as the first monotheistic religions of the world. They are called Abrahamic religions because they all trace their origins to the great patriarch Abraham and his descendants. Followers of these religions, namely the Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe that Abraham and his family played a significant role in the beginnings of their respective faiths. Since these religions came from the same region, it is not surprising that they share common beliefs, foremost of which is the belief that they share common roots to the patriarch Abraham. Aside from this, they also share certain similarities such as belief in one god. They also believe in heaven and hell; in prophets as instruments of god in propagating his words to the people; in angels as messengers of god to humanity; and in judgment day, among others. Today, Christianity is considered as the most popular religion in the world based on the number of adherents, followed by Islam. Indeed, these Abrahamic religions have largely influenced the world today.
Judaism is an ancient monotheistic religion that traces its origin as an organized belief system during the Bronze Age in West Asia. The religion of the Jewish people, Judaism is one of three Abrahamic religions that also include Christianity and Islam. It is the religion professed by the Jews known as the “people of the Book” in reference to their sacred text written covering nearly a thousand years and formalized as a canon of teaching by the end of the first century C.E. The picture below is the Torah which is the most important text of the Jewish people. It contains the “Five Books of Moses” and many sacred laws. The Jews consider themselves as the people chosen by God to serve as an exemplar of devotion and purity to humankind.

It is quite difficult to study key events in the historical foundation of Judaism without discussing the history of the Jewish people from the time of the Hebrews’ mass departure from Egypt or the Exodus. During the 20th century, the growth in their population has remained sluggish for quite a long time as it grew to only 25% after the catastrophic event called Holocaust.

According to a 2014 report, there were around 14 million Jewish people representing 0.2% of the entire world population. The largest concentration of Jews can be found in Israel, North America (United States and Canada), and Central Europe. Other countries with sizable Jewish population include France, United Kingdom, Russia, Argentina, Germany, and Australia.

**LESSON FOUR**

**Judaism**

**ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING**

1. Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world that originated in West Asia.
2. The Jewish people consider themselves as the chosen people of God as they must provide an example to the world of their moral behavior.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

1. What is the role of Abraham in the foundation of the Jewish beliefs?
2. Why are the Jewish people considered as the “people of the Book”?

Torah which in the **hif’il** conjugation means “to guide/teach,” is the central reference of the religious Judaic tradition.
MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY
Challenge yourself by arranging the jumbled letter words.

2. B H R A A M A 7. S O M E S
3. C N A N A A 8. I S I A N

CONCEPT MAP

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
It is quite difficult to separate the history of Judaism from the history of the Jews themselves (Parrinder 1971). The ancestors of the Jews were groups of Semites called Hebrews whose origin can be traced in the desert lands of Arabia (Brown 1975). The origin of the Jewish people and the beginning of Judaism are recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch. As a religion and culture, Judaism has three notable founding figures or patriarchs, namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These biblical patriarchs are the physical and spiritual forebears of the Jewish people and their narratives can be found in Genesis 12-50 of their scripture.

Judaism is anchored upon God’s revelation to Abraham that He is the creator and ruler of the universe, and that He loves His creatures and demands righteousness from them (Losch 2001). God chose Abraham and his family from all the people living on earth as recorded in Genesis 12. After a series of tragic events involving humankind, God entered into a covenant with Abraham promising him that he would become the father of a great nation and would possess vast tracts of land. Abraham, in return, must remain
devoted to the covenant. He would become the embodiment of uprightness and holiness to the world. Later on, he was succeeded by his son Isaac, his grandson Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons (Hopfe 1983).

These patriarchs are depicted as nomads in biblical stories. According to tradition, Abraham’s original name was “Abram” who was born in the city of Ur of the Chaldeas around 1800 B.C.E. Questioning the folly of idol worship, Abram left his home and family to heed the call of God en route to Canaan situated on the western side of the Fertile Crescent. The Jewish people believe that they descended from a tribe in Canaan located in the eastern Mediterranean presently occupied by Israel, Jordan, and Syria (Bowker 1997).

A covenant has been established between God and Abram, and Abram must prove his worth to this agreement by way of tests of faith throughout his lifetime. While Abram and his wife Sarai were initially childless, Abram bore a son to Sarai’s Egyptian handmaid Hagar. He was named Ishmael who is considered as the ancestor of the Arabs. However, Ishmael was not the heir to God’s promise. God changed Sarai’s name to “Sarah,” meaning “princess” or “noblewoman.” Later in life, the old Abram and Sarah had a son named Isaac, the heir to God’s covenant and the ancestor of the Jewish people. Abram’s name was changed to “Abraham” or the “father of many nations.” Abraham’s story is narrated in Genesis 11-25 of the Hebrew Bible.

The most difficult trial given to Abraham came when God commanded that he sacrifice his own son Isaac at an altar in Mount Moriah. Abraham obeyed by building a fire and tying up Isaac. With Abraham’s obedience being put to the test, an angel stopped him and he was eventually reunited with his son. A ram was instead sacrificed in place of Isaac.

Later on, Isaac married Rebecca who bore him twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Always in constant strife, the younger Jacob bought Esau’s birthright and tricked his father Isaac into giving him Esau’s blessing as the eldest son (Bowker 1997). Jacob fled to his uncle’s house to escape Esau’s fury. Later on, Jacob returned home and reconciled with Esau. A close encounter with an angel merited him a change of name from Jacob to “Israel” which means “the one who wrestled with God.” The Jewish people are referred to as the “children of Israel.” Among four different women, Jacob fathered twelve sons and one daughter. The twelve sons who became the ancestors of the tribes in Israel were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin. After being sold to slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph was brought to Egypt where his ability to see and interpret visions earned him a place in the court as a vizier, a position next only to the pharaoh. As famine struck Canaan, Jacob and his family were forced to settle in Egypt.

While the book of Genesis ends with a great nation emerging from Abraham’s descendants, the book of Exodus begins with them crying out for deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Hopfe 1983). They were not in Canaan as initially promised but were under enslavement in Egypt. As centuries passed and the descendants of Israel grew in number, the alarmed pharaoh decreed that all male children be put to death by throwing them to the river.
A woman from Levi’s tribe, Jochebed, secretly placed her youngest child in a woven basket and sent him down the Nile River. The pharaoh’s daughter, Bithia, found the child, rescued him, and reared him as her own. Jochebed volunteered to nurse the child, now named Moses, who was raised within the Egyptian royal family.

At the age of forty, Moses killed an Egyptian in defense of a slave and fled to the Sinai desert where he spent the next forty years as a shepherd (Hopfe 1983). On Mount Horeb, Abraham’s God revealed himself to Moses as he spoke through a burning bush that was not consumed. Revealing God’s name as “Yahweh,” he commanded Moses to return to Egypt and demand the release of Israelites from slavery. After his initial refusal, the Egyptian pharaoh conceded after the ten miraculous and horrific plagues were inflicted by God upon Egypt and its people, most especially the plague on the first-born. While the firstborn sons of every Egyptian household would die, sons of Israelites would be saved if they marked their door posts with the blood of lamb killed in sacrifice. In that fated night, the lamb must be cooked and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. This is known as the Passover, an important Jewish festival.

The Israelites were banished from Egypt with Moses leading them across the Red Sea (Yam Suph or “Sea of Reeds” in some accounts). When the pharaoh changed his mind and began to pursue the fleeing Israelites, Moses parted the Red Sea that allowed them to cross the water and reach the dry lands of Sinai. Meanwhile, the pursuing Egyptian chariots were drowned after the waters receded. This event called Exodus became part of Jewish history that manifested Yahweh’s intervention to deliver his chosen people (Hopfe 1983).

Another significant event in Jewish history was the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. These supreme laws, which are basic to the Jewish people, were communicated to the Israelites through Moses during their time in the wilderness. Moses eventually united the different tribes into one group and consecrated to the worship of the one living god (Brown 1975). Forty years after the Exodus, Moses died in the desert within reach of the “Promised Land.”

SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF JUDAISM
The Old Testament gives us ideas on socio-political dynamics of Judaism. Understanding the Jewish concepts on politics and society would help us understand the historical development of Judaism as one of the world’s religions and see its relevance in contemporary times.

The Jewish concept of leadership based on the Old Testament directs us to certain types of leadership, one of which is kingship as the ideal form of government. This can be deduced from the chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah, as well as in the Book of Deuteronomy, which stated, “Let me put a king over me like all the nations that are around me” (Deut. 17: 14-15). In relation to the idea of kingship, the concept of “covenant” between the ruler and the ruled is equally important as well in Judaism. Just as God the Father

TRIVIA
Did you know that the “Ark of the Covenant” is a sacred relic of Judaism said to have originated from the time of the Exodus? It is a coffin-like, ornate, gilded case that may have been the portable throne of Yahweh during the time of Moses. It also housed the stone tablets of the “Ten Commandments.” Learn more about the ark by visiting http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/archaeology/ark-covenant/ and share your insights about its provenance and historicity.
entered into a covenant with His people (such as the covenant between God and Abraham), the same should also be true for the King and his subjects. Thus, socio-political dynamics can also be described as following the model of tribal federation in which various tribes and institutions shared political power. Although they practice communal living, there were certain people who hold important positions in society with regard to their roles in Judaism, such as the rabbi who functions as a teacher and interpreter of the Jewish law and customs. Thus, it can be deduced that for the Jews, politics, society, culture and religion are all interconnected, thus Judaism is not only considered as a religion but as a way of life as well.

MOVIE REVIEW
Watch one of these films: Exodus: Gods and Kings, Ten Commandments, Prince of Egypt, and Moses. Write a movie review based on your knowledge about the story of Moses. Was the film biblically accurate? Discuss the movie and share your insights.

SACRED SCRIPTURES
The Jewish people have been called the “people of the Book” in reference to the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh or Mikra) that has been the authority, guide, and inspiration of the many forms of Judaism that have evolved throughout the different periods of time and in various places (Parrinder 1971). Composed over a period of almost a thousand years, collections within the Bible became established in its full canonical form by the end of the first century C.E. (Parrinder 1971).

According to the Jewish tradition, the Hebrew Bible is divided into three principal sections, namely the Torah, Nevi’im, and Ketuvim. The foundational text Torah (“Teaching”) is composed of the first “Five Books” or the Pentateuch traditionally believed to have been authored by Moses through divine instruction in Sinai. These include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Apart from containing basic laws for Jewish self-understanding, the Pentateuch also narrates the history, religious statues, and moral regulations for individuals and society, ceremonial rites and creation stories by Yahweh, and the origin and growth of mankind (Braswell 1994). Meanwhile, the Nevi’im (“Prophets”) is subdivided into Earlier Prophets, Later Prophets, and twelve minor prophets. Prophets served as spokespersons who criticize the hypocritical practices of Jewish rituals. They were specifically chosen by God to preach his message to the people. Lastly, the Ketuvim (“Writings”) form the third section of the Tanakh that contains works on poetry, temple ritual, private prayer, philosophical explorations, and other canonical works.

In the strictest sense, Torah refers to the “Five Books of Moses.” However, it can also pertain to the entire Hebrew Bible known as the Old Testament to non-Jews but Tanakh (or the “Written Torah”) to the Jews. Broadly speaking, Torah could mean the whole body of Jewish laws and teachings.
Another sacred writing of Judaism is the *Talmud* (or the “Oral Torah”) which means “study.” All studies and interpretations done by Jewish rabbis or teachers of the *Torah* are contained in the *Talmud*. In short, the *Talmud* is an authoritative collection of rabbinic interpretations of the sacred scriptures. It contains materials of law and moral codes. Around the second century C.E., this oral law was compiled and written down as *Mishnah* or a restatement of the law by a respected opinion. The next few centuries witnessed the writing of an additional strand of commentaries in Jerusalem and Babylonia about the *Mishnah*. Known as *Gemara*, it includes legends, folklores, and sayings (Brasswell 1994). The *Mishnah* and *Gemara* comprise the *Talmud* that was completed in the 5th century C.E. Serving as the foundation for all Jewish laws codes, the whole *Talmud* contains 63 tractates that is often printed over 6,200 pages long. Apart from being a book of law, the *Talmud* is also a fountain of religious thought and inspiration similar to the *Pentateuch* (Jurji 1946).

The *Pentateuch* is the single most important scripture for the Jewish people that became the source of their inspiration and direction for centuries. It became the foundation of other essential Jewish writings, such as the *Talmud* and *Mishnah*. With all these codified laws and legal materials, Judaism has become a religion of the law and the Jews as the chosen people have shown obedience to God’s covenant throughout their long and tumultuous history (Hopfe 1983).

**BELIEFS AND DOCTRINES**

In Judaism, actions are more significant than beliefs. However, while Judaism has no dogma, there is definitely a place for belief within the religion since it focuses on the worship of one god, the practice of good deeds, and the love of learning (Brasswell 1994). For the Jews, there is one everlasting god who created the universe in its entirety and remains the master of it (Parrinder 1971).

Human beings were created by God who provided them the capacity to decide what is right and wrong, and gave them the freedom and responsibility for their own actions (Losch 2001). Humans have the ability to restrain their evil intentions because of their propensities for both good and evil (Parrinder 1971). For Jews, all human beings are created equal. While God can communicate with humans through revelations, humans can also commune to him by means of prayers and meditations.

With regard one’s Jewishness, a Jew is someone whose mother is a Jew, although some sectors recognize the children of Jewish fathers as Jews, too. While a Jew may not lose one’s technical status as a Jew by converting to another religion, he or she loses the religiosity emanating from his or her Jewish identity. A person may also convert to Judaism, but he or she has to undergo numerous rituals.

**WEBLINK**

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Perhaps the closest approach in having an acceptable creed in Judaism was proposed by the eminent medieval Jewish philosopher Moshe ben Maimon (also known as Rambam or Moses Maimonides) during the latter part of twelfth century C.E as an appendix to his commentary on the *Mishnah*. According to Moshe ben Maimon, the minimum requirements of Jewish belief as listed in his thirteen principles of faith are as follows:

**Jewish Principles of Faith**

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

These statements of belief were eventually constructed as credo with every article beginning with “I believe” and then later versified, set to music, and included in prayer books (Jurji 1946). Though controversial when first formulated and evoked much criticism or even disregarded for many centuries, these principles are generally accepted nowadays by the Jewish community.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are a set of absolute laws given by God to Moses at the biblical Mount Sinai that shall govern the life of every Israelite. Most scholars consider this period as the official beginning of Judaism as an organized and structured belief system. These laws are twice mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, particularly, in Exodus and in Deuteronomy.

**The 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:2-17**

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in 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 to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

“Honor your father and your mother; that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

The 10 Commandments in Deuteronomy 5:6-21

“I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in 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 to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Inscribed on two stone tablets, these commandments present God’s complete and enduring standard for morality. These include instructions to venerate only one god, to honor one’s parents, and to observe the Sabbath as a holy day. Meanwhile, some proscribed acts that are pointed out in the commandments include idolatry, infidelity, murder, theft, and deceit. For more than three thousand years, the Ten Commandments have been embraced by almost two thirds of the entire world population.

Apart from the Ten Commandments that form the theological basis of other commandments, there are also 613 mitzvot or laws found within the Torah (as identified by Rambam) that guide the Jewish people in their daily living. Traditionally, there are 248 positive and 365 negative commandments within the Torah (Parrinder 1971). These include laws about the family, personal hygiene, diet, as well as duties and responsibilities to the community.

WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES
The Jewish community utilizes a lunar calendar with twelve months, each beginning at the new moon of 29 or 30 days. Every festival and Sabbath commences and terminates at dusk (or sunset) rather than midnight in adherence to the biblical pattern. The Jewish calendar is followed in observance of festivities, holidays, and community and family celebrations (Brasswell 1994). Jewish holidays are special days observed to commemorate key events in Jewish history and other events that depict the special connections with the world, such as creation, revelation, and redemption.

Sabbath
The most important day in the Jewish calendar is the Sabbath (or Shabbat) which commemorates God’s completion of the creation of the universe and his rest after the six-day toil (Parrinder 1971). This is the fourth law within the Ten Commandments. It begins a few minutes before sunset on Friday and runs until an hour after sunset on Saturday or almost 25 hours to be precise. At Friday sundown, Sabbath candles are lighted and kiddush (“sanctification”) is recited over wine or grape juice. Children are then blessed by their parents. Jews must abstain from work and must study the Torah. Some work prohibitions include lighting fires, using money, and writing. The Sabbath ends through the symbolic ritual of havdalah (“division”) done by dousing wine on candles and smelling sweet spices.

The Days of Awe
Tishri is the seventh month in the ecclesiastical year of the Jewish calendar. The first ten days of Tishri are called the “Days of Awe” (Yamim Noraim) wherein the first two days comprise the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and the tenth day as the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the ten-day period of penitence leading to the Yom Kippur and is distinguished from other days by blowing a ram’s horn trumpet (shofar) in the synagogue and eating apples dipped in honey which is symbolic for a sweet new year. Using the shofar, a total of one hundred notes are sounded
each day. All Jews must undergo self-reflection and make amends for all the sins they have committed. Rosh Hashanah is also a day of judgement wherein God assesses one’s deeds and decides what lies ahead of him or her in the following year. These deeds are recorded in the “Book of Life” and sealed on Yom Kippur. Work is not permitted during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is the most sacred and solemn day in the Jewish calendar that brings the period of repentance to its conclusion. The eve of the day is called Kol Nidrei (“all vows”) which are the opening words of a prayer. The words and music of the Kol Nidrei are said to be the most powerful single item in the Jewish liturgy. A day of fasting and praying for absolution of one’s sins, it provides every Jew an opportunity for both personal and communal repentance (Parrinder 1971). One must also refrain from eating and drinking, even water. Additional restrictions include washing and bathing, using perfumes, wearing leather shoes, and engaging in sexual relations. Symbolizing purity, it is customary for the Jews to wear white during the holiday. An entire day must be spent in the synagogue while reciting prayers. Another blowing of the ram’s horn ends the final prayer service.

Pilgrimage Festivals

During the olden days, the Torah commanded the ancient Israelites to go to Jerusalem on three pilgrimage festivals and participate in the worship at the Temple. Also called the Shalosh Regalim, these are Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles). These festivals spiritualize human life and merge nature and history in a divine pattern (Jurji 1946).

Pesach is an eight-day festival that originally marked the beginning of the barley harvest (Parrinder 1971). Its principal purpose is to commemorate and recreate the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. A festive meal (seder) is celebrated wherein the story of Exodus is narrated by the heads of the family to the children.

Shavuot is a two-day festival that was originally a celebration of the wheat harvest. Presently, it is now being held to commemorate the revelation of the Torah to Moses at Mount Sinai.

Sukkot is a nine-day festival commemorating the autumn harvest and the forty years of the Israelites’ stay in the desert wilderness subsisting solely on the bounty of God. Temporary booths or structures (sukkah) are built in homes with a roof through which one can see the stars in the sky. This is an attempt to recreate Israelite life in the desert.

Other Important Days

There are many feasts and festivals celebrated by the Jewish people. The family assumes the principal responsibility for worship, religious education, and moral behavior (Braswell 1994). Rituals and ceremonies are done both at home and in the synagogue.

Other important events in the Jewish calendar include the Hanukkah, Purim, and the Independence Day of the State of Israel. Hanukkah ("Festival
of Lights” or “Feast of Dedication”) is a celebration to commemorate the victory of Jewish fighters against the Seleucid Empire in 165 B.C.E. *Purim* ("Feast of Esther") celebrates the deliverance of the Jews during the Persian Empire, specifically from the vizier Haman who wanted to annihilate all Persian Jews as recorded in the Book of Esther.

A brief outline of important dates and holy days in the Jewish calendar is presented below with their approximation in the Gregorian calendar.

### Jewish Months and Festivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish Months</th>
<th>Holy Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nisan (March or April)</td>
<td>14 – Passover Eve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-21 Passover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iyyar (April or May)</td>
<td>5 – Israel’s Independence Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivan (May or June)</td>
<td>6, 7 – Shavuot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tishri (September or October)</td>
<td>1 – Rosh Hashanah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 – Yom Kippur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 – Sukkot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 – Hanukkah Rabbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 – Shemini Atzeret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23 – Simchat Torah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kislev (November or December)</td>
<td>25 – Hanukkah begins up to the second of Tebet (December or January)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adar (February or March)</td>
<td>14 – Purim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: George W. Braswell, Jr., *Understanding World Religions*, p. 89.

### Halakha

Because Judaism is also a comprehensive way of life, Jewish people follow a set of rules and practices that govern their everyday living. Collectively called *halakha* which translates as “the path that one walks,” these are Jewish religious laws derived from the “Written Torah” and “Oral Torah” including the 613 *mitzvot*. Jewish laws contain directions on how to revere God and treat other people and animals. *Halakha* instructs Jews what to do as they wake up in the morning, what foods to eat, what clothes to wear, who to marry, and how to observe *Sabbath* and holy days. When properly observed, *halakha* increases one’s spirituality as even mundane acts become essential to his or her existence.

### Synagogues

Synagogues are Jewish temples of worship, instruction, and community fellowship that contain separate rooms designed for specific activities, such as

**WEBLINK**

Quickly scan the 613 mitzvot at [http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm](http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm) and have a debate in class between the pros and cons of having a large number of religious laws.
praying and studying. In Orthodox Judaism, men and women sit separately at the synagogues; in Reform Judaism, they sit altogether in temples.

Similar to a Christian church, synagogues have seats facing an elevated platform with one or two lecterns or chair. The central feature at the platform (bimah or tebah) and the holiest spot inside a synagogue is the ark where the Torah scrolls are kept. Reminiscent of the original Ark of the Covenant, an ark inside a temple is normally placed in a manner that when people face the ark, they are facing in the direction of Jerusalem. An ornate curtain (parochet) veils the ark while a lamp or lantern (ner tamid) burns before it symbolizing the constantly lit six-branched lampstand (menorah) in the Temple of Jerusalem (Braswell 1994).

While a Jewish layman may lead a prayer service during Sabbath if there are 10 adult males present (minyan), the religious leader is oftentimes a trained rabbi. He delivers sermon and interprets the Torah. The rabbi serves as a pastor, administrator, and counselor.

The Temple
Around 1003 B.C.E., David conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital. Bringing with him the “Ark of the Covenant,” David intended to build a temple to become the first and fixed place of worship for the Jews. However, God told David that it would be one of his sons who will have the privilege of accomplishing this task.

The Hebrew Bible acknowledged Solomon, David’s son, as the builder of the First Temple in Jerusalem around 1000 B.C.E. which was also known as Solomon’s Temple. Within the temple, the most important room was the “Holy of Holies” where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The ark contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the Pentateuch. The First Temple became the focus of Jewish worship for four hundred years until Nebuchadnezzar II and the Babylonians completely destroyed the structure in 587 B.C.E during the siege of Jerusalem. Allegedly located in Temple Mount or Mount Zion, the remains of the First Temple have never been found and the “Ark of the Covenant” has continually been shrouded in mystery.

In 353 B.C.E., the Jews began to rebuild their temple under the Persian king Darius who ratified their effort. The Second Temple was completed in 349 B.C.E. and was substantially altered under Herod around 20 B.C.E. (Douglas 2007). This Second Temple lasted for about 420 years until the Romans razed Jerusalem in 70 C.E. All but a portion in the western section was completely destroyed. Presently, this is the famous “Western Wall” (“Wailing Wall” or Kotel) that has been a popular site of prayer and pilgrimage for the Jews throughout many centuries.

For Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, a Third Temple will be established before the coming of the messiah. Prophesied in the Book of Ezekiel, it will be known as “Ezekiel’s Temple” that will become a lasting structure and serve as permanent abode of the God of Israel. The concept of messiah or mashiach (“anointed one”) in Judaism pertains to a great political human

TRIVIA
Did you know that based on Jewish dietary law (kashrut), ox and sheep are ritually clean animals while camel and pig are ritually impure? Foods that conform to the kashrut are called kosher (“fit”) while those that do not are called treif (“torn”). To see the entire list of 613 mitzvot, you may visit http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm and share your discoveries in class.
leader descended from David who shall accomplish prearranged things in the coming future, such as bringing of Jews to Israel, rebuilding a new temple in Jerusalem, and establishing Jewish law as the law of the land (Jurji 1946).

SUBDIVISIONS

Being one of the oldest religions in the world, Judaism has undergone various changes in response to changing times and cultures brought about by key historical events or philosophical upheavals. While there are certain beliefs shared by most adherents, differences and diversity in faith also abound among Jewish denominations and sects. Within Judaism are three present-day movements that emerged in response to the modern and secular culture of Europe and America. These are Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaism. Two other smaller sects, namely Hasidism and Kabbalah, are mystical approaches to the Jewish religion that emphasize spiritual experiences over rational knowledge.

Orthodox Judaism is the most traditional of modern Judaism that adheres to the authority of the entire Torah as given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai. The Torah is the sole authority that must be strictly followed until the present time. As it considers itself the sole and genuine heir to the Jewish tradition, it rejects all other Jewish movements as undesirable deviations from the original Jewish religion.

Reform Judaism (Liberal or Progressive Judaism) is considered the most liberal expression of Judaism that subjects religious laws and customs to human judgment. To a certain extent, it developed due to internal changes in Judaism as well as other factors operating within society. Members of this denomination sought to adhere to the original teachings of Judaism while allowing some changes in their traditions. For example, services were permitted to be conducted in mixed Hebrew and English, no longer conducted solely in the Hebrew language. Moreover, women were also accorded equality in terms of sitting together with men in synagogues and allowing them to become rabbis unlike in other denominations.

Largely developed in the 20th century, Conservative Judaism seeks to conserve the traditional elements of Judaism while at the same time allowing for modernization that is less radical than Reform Judaism. The application of new historical methods of study in the light of contemporary knowledge but within the limits of Jewish law may be applied to safeguard Jewish traditions. Gradual change in law and practice is allowed only if such occurrence is in harmony with Jewish traditions. Because Conservative Judaism falls halfway between the two other major Jewish denominations, it is sometimes described as traditional Judaism without fundamentalism.

Hasidism or Hasidic Judaism emerged in Germany during the twelfth century. It was largely a spiritual movement that gives prime importance to asceticism and experience as a result of love and humility before God. During the eighteenth century, a modern Hasidic movement was started in Poland by Baal Shem Toy (“Master of the Good Name”) as a reaction to the excessive legalistic nature of Judaism during that time.
Lastly, Kabbalah is another mystical form of Judaism that attempts to penetrate deeper into God’s essence itself. While Kabbalists believe that God moves in mysterious ways, they also hold that genuine knowledge and understanding of that inner process is achievable. In the end, the most fulfilling relationship with God can be accomplished. One important commentary on the Torah that underpinned Kabbalah is the Zohar (“Splendor” or “Radiance”) that first appeared in Spain in the thirteenth century.

**ACTIVITY**

Interview 10 people from your school and ask them several questions below regarding Judaism. What common misconceptions did you find out? Complete the table and present your findings in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>What are some of the things you associate with Judaism?</th>
<th>What are some of the things you associate with the Jews?</th>
<th>Do you personally know anyone who is a Jew?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SELECTED ISSUES

Women in Judaism

Women’s role in the Jewish religion is determined by the Tanakh, the “Oral Torah,” and Jewish customs. Mishnah instructs that women must follow nearly all the negative commandments except trimming the beard and viewing a dead body. Women must also follow all positive commandments not structured by time but are exempted from those that are restricted by time. The reason here is quite simple, that is, to release women from laws that they find difficult or impossible to perform given their traditional domestic roles, such as giving birth, taking care of the family, and accomplishing household chores. In addition, women have the right to be consulted on matters concerning marriage. Judaism offers tremendous respect to roles given to women as wives and mothers. Even Jewishness or the question of Jewish self-identification is passed down through the mother.

For Orthodox Judaism, there exist different roles for men and women in their religious lives. For example, it is sufficient for any woman to understand the practical nature of the Torah, but she is traditionally excused from furthering her education beyond that knowledge. In addition, she is dissuaded from studying the Talmud and other complex Jewish writings up until the twentieth century. However, provision for education for Jewish women has progressed rapidly in the past century. One interesting phenomenon in Judaism is the concept of agunot or married women who wish to divorce their husbands but whose husbands decline to do so. In Orthodox Judaism, only the husbands are given this privilege.
Meanwhile, Conservative Judaism has acted upon several areas that enable women to actively participate in Jewish rituals thereby minimizing legal disparity between men and women. For example, women can now read the Torah in public and be counted as part of a minyan.

Lastly, Reform Judaism affirms that men and women should be equal in terms of performing their duties within the Jewish community. Prayer books have been revised in order to avoid words and pronouns that appear male in character. Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs must be placed side by side whenever they are mentioned in prayer books. While men and women generally sit separately in most synagogues, Reform Judaism has allowed women to sit together with men.

It is also worth mentioning that in Judaism, God is neither male nor female. The Talmud likewise mentions both positive and negative remarks about women. The presence of women in the Hebrew Bible is also noticeable. For example, Miriam, the elder sister of Moses and Aaron, is considered one of the liberators of the children of Israel. In addition, Deborah, being one of the judges, is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible. Finally, seven out of the 55 prophets of the Bible were women, namely, Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther. Numerous feminist leaders of the twentieth century are also Jewish, including the two American activists Gloria Marie Steinem and Betty Friedan. Respect to women has always been part of the Jewish culture.

Jewish Diaspora and Zionist Movement

In the 16th and 17th centuries, there had been calls to persuade the Jews to return to Palestine. During the late 18th century, the Haskalah ("Jewish Enlightenment") movement promoted Jewish assimilation to Western secular culture (Parrinder 1971). In the early 19th century, the idea of Jewish returning to Palestine was kept alive by Christian millenarians or believers of divine intervention that will ultimately bring a new world order. However, these movements failed in their objectives. In 1881, a state-supported mob attack or pogrom against the Jews occurred in Ukraine. While a pogrom was aimed to persecute religious, racial or national minorities, this violent riot became frequently directed at Jews. From 1881 to 1884, over 200 pogroms occurred in the Russian Empire. As a result, Russian Jews emigrated to the US and Western Europe (Perry 1988).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Hungarian journalist and political activist Theodor Herzl founded the Zionist movement that advocated the return of Jews to Eretz Yisrael or "Land of Israel." The term zion, also a Jewish synonym for Jerusalem, came from the name of a mountain where Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem was located. Originally secular in nature, supporters of this movement are called Zionists.

The Zionists believed that Jews as the chosen people of God will be reunited from dispersion or exile back to their rightful homeland. The dispersion of Jewish communities outside Israel that have continually occurred since ancient
history is called diaspora. Leon Pinsker, another Zionist pioneer and activist, published his work Auto-Emancipation in 1882 that urged the Jewish people to strive for independence and appealed for the establishment of a Jewish colony in Palestine.

Eventually, Zionist activities in the US became influential in garnering American congressional and presidential support that led to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Since that time of establishment, the Zionist movement has come to promote the development and protection of Israel.

Holocaust
The term Holocaust is of Greek origin that means “sacrifice by fire.” In history, Holocaust pertains to the methodical, bureaucratic, and state-sponsored persecution and execution of around six million Jews undertaken by the Nazi regime and its collaborators from 1933 to 1945. For the Hitler-led Nazis, the Germans were racially superior and considered themselves as the master race as compared to the Jews who were seen as inferior people. Hitler’s police chief, Heinrich Himmler, also believed in Aryan superiority leading to the enslavement and extermination of “non-Aryans” and the inferior race (Perry 1988). He was one of the German officials directly responsible for the holocaust.

Another high-ranking German official, Reinhard Heydrich, became the chief planner of the Nazis to wipe out the Jews in Europe (Perry 1988). Other groups that were considered inferior were the Romani (or gypsies), some Slavic peoples (such as the Poles and Russians), and even the physically and mentally handicapped. Nonetheless, the Jews were perceived as the major threat to the German racial community that had to be exterminated en masse especially since there were over nine million Jews in Europe by 1933.

Hungarian Jews being selected by Nazis to be sent to the gas chamber at Auschwitz concentration camp.
From 1941 up until 1945, Heydrich’s plan called the “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem” was implemented by the Nazis with the main objective of annihilating European Jews through genocide or murder of an entire group of people (Parrinder 1971). It came to be known as holocaust. Jews were arrested, brought to death camps, became victims of mass shootings, and placed in gas chambers, while others were beaten, starved, and tortured to death. Still others became subjects of ruthless medical experiments (Perry 1988). Apart from the six million Jews who lost their lives, around 200,000 Romani and 200,000 disabled patients became victims of Nazi policies. The Nazis also targeted Jewish children for extermination to create a biologically pure Aryan society. The killing of Jewish children aimed to prevent the emergence of a new generation of European Jews. As a result, about one and a half million children were murdered all across Europe.

Anti-Semitism

The term anti-Semitism pertains to hostility towards and discrimination against the Jewish people that was strongly felt in France, Germany, Poland, and Russia in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The term was popularized in Germany around 1870s. The most common manifestations of anti-Semitism were the many violent riots or pogroms undertaken against the Jews. The planned extermination of the entire Jewish race during the time of the holocaust was the most extreme form of anti-Semitism. Other forms of anti-Semitic activities include the persecution and massacre of Jews throughout history.

Political parties that were anti-Semitic in character were founded in Germany, France, and Austria. Quite notable was the Nazi Party formed in 1919 that provided political articulation to theories of racism and achieved popularity through dissemination of anti-Jewish propaganda. Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf (My Struggle) called for the removal of Jews from Germany. These deplorable activities continued with the Nazi’s rise to power as the party that called for economic boycotts against the Jews, burned Jewish books and enacted laws that were anti-Jew. On the night of November 9, 1938, coordinated deadly attacks were carried out by the Nazis that destroyed synagogues and shop windows of Jewish-owned stores throughout Germany and Austria. More than a thousand synagogues were burned and over seven thousand Jewish businesses were destroyed or damaged. The event was known as Kristallnacht or “Night of Broken Glass,” referring to the shards of broken glass that littered the streets.
Summary

• The origin of the Jewish people and the beginning of Judaism are recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the *Pentateuch*.
• Judaism has three notable founding figures or patriarchs, namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These biblical patriarchs are the physical and spiritual forebears of the Jewish people.
• Judaism is anchored upon God’s revelation to Abraham that he is the creator and ruler of the universe, and that he loves his creatures and demands righteousness from them.
• The Jewish people have been called the “people of the Book” in reference to the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh* or *Mikra*) that is divided into three principal sections, namely the *Torah*, *Nevi’im*, and *Ketuvim*.
• Jewish beliefs and doctrines are manifested in the Articles of Faith, in the Ten Commandments, and in the 613 *mitzvot* or laws.
• Jewish holidays are special days observed to commemorate key events in Jewish history and other events that depict the special connections with the world, such as creation, revelation, and redemption. These include *Sabbath*, *Days of Awe*, and pilgrimage festivals.
• Synagogues are Jewish temples of worship, instruction, and community fellowship.
• At present, the three major denominations of Judaism are Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaism.

Critical Thinking

1. How does Judaism embody the importance of actions over beliefs?
2. How is Jewish history reflected in the observances and holidays of Judaism?
3. How do the various denominations of Judaism differ from one another?
4. What is the greatest lesson that you learned from the Holocaust? How can we prevent such acts of brutality in world history?

Assessment

A. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

1. The rabbinic interpretation of the sacred scriptures a. Anti-Semitism
   ______ 2. Philosopher who formulated the “13 Principles of Faith” b. Heinrich Himmler
   ______ 3. Eve of the *Day of Atonement* c. Sukkot
   ______ 4. Form of discrimination against Jewish people d. Rambam
   ______ 5. The police chief of Adolf Hitler during the Holocaust e. Torah
   ______ 6. The most important scripture of Jewish people f. Pentateuch
B. Present a stage-play of Exodus. You will be graded using the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity/Resourcefulness</td>
<td>The costume, props, and back-drops were masterfully executed using recyclable or cheap materials only.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The story of Moses including the timeline and characters was accurate.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The story was clearly presented and mastered.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 25**

On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, you have learned how Judaism traces its origin as an organized belief system during the Bronze Age in West Asia. We also found out how it paved the way for other religions to spring—Christianity and Islam. In the next lesson, we will specifically discuss Christianity and how it became one of the most popular religions in the world.

Sources

**BOOKS**


INTERNET SOURCES


Christianity is considered the most popular religion in the world with the most number of adherents among all religions. Starting around the 1st century C.E., it developed out of Judaism during the reign of the Roman Empire in West Asia. It centers on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is considered the Messiah or Savior of humanity. The most common symbol for Christianity is the cross, for Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross to save humanity from their sins and to restore people’s relationship with God the Father. Christians also believe in the Holy Trinity, which means God has three aspects—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is believed that God the Father sent His only Son, Jesus, to earth to redeem humanity from their sins for them to avoid the eternal flames of hell.

Although there has been a prophesy in Judaism that God the Father will send His only Son to redeem humanity from their sins and to restore relationship with God, the Jews do not accept that Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise. Instead, the Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to be sent by God the Father. Christians, on the other hand, have accepted that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise. Nonetheless, Christianity is considered one of the first monotheistic religions in the world and shares many similarities with Judaism in terms of belief in prophets, angels, judgement day, among others. Together with Judaism and Islam, Christianity is considered one of the world religions which traces its origins to the patriarch Abraham.
MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

Christianity is embedded in Filipino culture as our country became predominantly Catholic since the Spanish period. Thus, stories from the Old Testament and New Testament are something that most students have become familiar with. In this activity, summarize two Bible stories that you love and explain why you like those tales. Also, share the lessons you have learned from the stories that you selected. Be ready to share your Bible tales and insights in class.

CONCEPT MAP

Christianity is a religion that is very familiar to Filipinos because the Philippines has become predominantly Catholic since the Spaniards occupied the country from the 16th to the 19th centuries, with the spread of Catholicism as one of their enduring legacies to the Filipino people. It is considered the world’s largest religion, a religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ who is considered the Son of God and the Messiah or Savior.

Followers of Christianity are called Christians. As of 2010, there are more than 2 billion Christians all over the world, which make up more than 30% of the world’s population of 6.9 billion. According to the Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population (2011), 10 countries with the largest number of Christians are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Estimated 2010 Christian Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Population that is Christian</th>
<th>Percentage of World Christian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>246,780,000</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>175,770,000</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>107,780,000</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The symbols shown above are the most common symbols associated with Christianity. The cross serves as a symbol of Jesus Christ’s victory over sins when He died on the cross for humanity’s redemption and salvation. Christ died on the cross and the cross serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by God in order for humanity to live. In Roman Catholic churches, the crucifix is a regular feature, with the image of Christ nailed on the cross. This aims to emphasize Christ’s sufferings for humanity. Meanwhile, Protestant churches often feature only the cross without the image of the body of Christ, to emphasize Christ’s resurrection and not His suffering.

Meanwhile, the fish symbol is as old as Christianity itself, for it was used by persecuted Christians as a secret sign when meeting other Christians. Because Christians were threatened by the Romans during the time, they had to make a secret code to avoid persecution. Thus, when meeting strangers on the way, a Christian would draw one arc of the fish outline, and if the stranger drew the other half it means they are both Christians and therefore safe in each other’s company. The word “fish” also has a secret meaning, for Christians made an acrostic from the Greek word for fish, which is *ichtys: Iseous Christos Theou Yios Soter*, meaning Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Christianity developed in Palestine around 100 C.E. It was founded by Jesus, considered to be the Son of God and Messiah or Savior. Regarded as an offshoot of Judaism, Christianity has survived and even surpassed Judaism and other religions in terms of number of adherents. Today Christianity is divided into three major sects—Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodox Church, and Protestantism. These major Christian sects are further subdivided by Christian denominations that differ in certain beliefs and practices but are united in worshipping Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

**Historical Context**

Judea, the mountainous southern part of Palestine, was the home of Christianity. During that time, Judaism was the dominant religion in Palestine.
and it was considered by the Jews as land promised to them by God. However, historical developments in the region we now call West Asia have shown that successive powers have dominated Mesopotamia and nearby territories, including Palestine which is considered to have a desirable location. Thus, it was conquered by the Assyrian Empire, then by the Babylonian Empire which enslaved the Jews, then the Achaemenid or Persian Empire under Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to their land. Soon the Greeks under the leadership of Alexander the Great conquered West Asia including Palestine around 400 B.C. Then the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C. When Jesus was born, Palestine was still under Roman rule.

Thus, Christianity was born in an era when Palestine was ruled by a foreign power, the Romans. Conditions were ripe for the beginning of a new religion. Since the concept of Messiah (which was promised in Judaism as the one who will liberate them from the evils of the world) proved to be very attractive for a group of people being colonized by a foreign power. Social conditions cooperated with the relatively free atmosphere created by Augustus’ Pax Romana or Roman Peace. Also, the birth of a man who was considered as the fulfillment of the prophecy among the Jews that God will send His Son to liberate the people from sufferings and sins paved the way for the development and spread of a new religion called Christianity.

Jesus as the Founder of Christianity
It was in this backdrop that Jesus, founder of Christianity, lived and preached teachings that served as criticisms of Judaism, although he himself was a Jew. His ministry began when he was in his early thirties. Preaching and healing in the villages, he started to preach teachings which were considered revolutionary at that time. For example, He criticized the uprightness and insincerity of religious officials and emphasized that God values service and love. He also taught about the new covenant that God will bring to humanity: that of sending His begotten son to save humanity from their sins and restore the people’s relationship with Him. Jesus preached that he was sent by God to fulfill this goal by dying on the cross, then resurrecting to life after three days to prove that God’s plan had succeeded. Hearing these messages, Jesus soon attracted a group of followers who became his disciples and who called Him their teacher. Thus, Christianity started with a prophecy in the Old Testament: that God will send his only begotten Son to save humanity from eternal damnation. Jesus was seen by his followers to be the Messiah they were waiting for. Meanwhile, Jews did not accept this to be true; instead, they are still waiting for the promise to be fulfilled.

Religious Leaders
The Catholic Church follows a certain hierarchy based on the Canon Law of the Catholic Church. At the top of the hierarchy is the pope, considered as Peter’s successor. The hierarchy also includes the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, and deacons. Each member of the hierarchy has his own function for the efficiency of the church.
The Pope serves as the head of the Catholic Church, the inheritor of Peter. He has his headquarters in the Vatican, an independent state in Rome. He is responsible for the general supervision of the church. He is the head of the Catholic Church and the head of the Vatican. He also has the authority to appoint administrative and religious officials in the Vatican.

Next to the Pope are the cardinals, who are also appointed by the Pope. The cardinals represent the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in different parts of the world. They serve as advisers to the Pope and elect a new pope as the need arises, thus they have the power to choose the successor of the outgoing pope. The body comprising the cardinals is called the College of Cardinals.

The bishops also form part of the hierarchy. Bishops are teachers of the doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of church government. They provide pastoral supervision for a diocese and serve as representatives of the Church. The Pope himself is a bishop. A bishop is ordained to his station, just like priests.

Next to the hierarchy are the priests, who are ordained ministers responsible for the administering of the sacraments, such as the Eucharist, Marriage, Baptism, and Confirmation. They may belong to particular religious order, such as Jesuits, Dominicans, Augustinians, among others, or they may be committed to serve a certain congregation.

At the bottom of the hierarchy are the deacons, who are classified into two types: the transitional deacon is a seminarian who is studying for the priesthood and the other one is a permanent deacon, who can get married and serve as a priest’s assistant in administering some of the sacraments.

Deity/God

Christians believe in one God, therefore Christianity is a monotheistic religion. God is seen as the creator and maintainer of the universe, and is believed to be omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (all-present), and omnibenevolent (all-good). God is also sacred, moral, unchangeable, compassionate, graceful, and timeless.

Holy Trinity

Christians believe in the Holy Trinity, which means that God is composed of three persons: God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. This doctrine of the Holy Trinity was affirmed at the Council of Nicea in 25 C.E. where it was agreed upon that the Son has the same substance with the Father, therefore they are both eternal. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity was Christianity’s way to end the controversy generated by Arianism, a teaching by Arius which claimed that Jesus Christ was not actually a God.

The concept of the Holy Trinity was never mentioned in the Old Testament. The New Testament, although it never implicitly mentioned the term, gives some references to it. In Matthew 28:19, it is stated that:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
In 2 Corinthians 13:1:
“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

For some Christians, the concept of the Holy Trinity is not easy to understand. Although it is central to most Christian denominations, some Christian churches rejected it, such as The Church of the Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Unitarians, the Unification Church, the Christadelphians, and Oneness Pentecostals, among others.

SACRED SCRIPTURES
The Bible is considered the sacred scripture of Christianity. It is a collection of songs, stories, poetry, letters, history, as well as literature. It is composed of two books, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is considered the original Hebrew Bible, written between 1200 and 165 B.C.E. The New Testament was written by Christians around 100 C.E.

The Old Testament
The Old Testament, also called the Hebrew Bible, is composed of 39 books which are arranged in three parts: The first five books (Genesis to Deuteronomy) are considered “The Law” or Torah which may refer to guidance or instruction. They are called as such because they serve as guidelines on how people should live their everyday lives, as well as other legal necessities. Later these books were called the Pentateuch, which were attributed to Moses. Meanwhile, the second part of the Old Testament is called “The Prophets” which is divided into two parts, the earlier prophets and the latter prophets. The book of former prophets is considered historical while the book of latter prophets contain sayings and stories of the prophets. The third part is called “The Writings,” which include Psalms (songs, prayers, and worship liturgies), Proverbs (wise sayings), Job (a drama that explores the nature of suffering), and the five scrolls (Megiloth) which were grouped together for their associations with a particular religious festival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book of the Earlier Prophets</th>
<th>Book of The Latter Prophets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings</td>
<td>Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The New Testament
The New Testament is composed of 27 books written around 50 to 100 C.E. and is composed of two sections: The Gospels which tell the story of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John); and the Letters (or Epistles), written by various Christian leaders to serve as guide to the early Christian communities. They were written to tell the life and teachings of Jesus. The Acts of Apostles and Luke tell how Christianity developed from a small group of Jewish believers to becoming one of the world’s major religions. Revelation is the last book of the New Testament, traditionally attributed to the apostle John, which is considered an epistle and an apocalypse.

GUIDE QUESTION
Why is the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) included in Christianity’s sacred scriptures?
BELIEFS/DOCTRINES
Christianity has certain beliefs and doctrines that serve as moral guidelines for its followers. As much as possible, Christians should follow these teachings strictly if they want to redeem God’s promise of eternal life. These teachings are essential to their belief system as Christians and not following them would lessen their chances of being called true Christians and reduces their chances of salvation in the afterlife.

Ten Commandments
Also called the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments are a set of laws given by God to the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai through Moses. In Exodus, God gave Moses the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, which Moses smashed into pieces because of extreme anger when he saw the golden calf idol created and worshipped by the Hebrews. God gave Moses another set to replace the broken one.

The Ten Commandments are said to appear twice in the Bible, in Exodus 20:1-17, and at Deuteronomy 5:1-21. They are meant to guide Christians on how to behave within the family, society, and most especially with respect to God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten Commandments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in 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 on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work; nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.
   For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” |
| 5. “Honor your father and your mother; that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord Your God is giving you.” |
| 6. “You shall not murder.” |
| 7. “You shall not commit adultery.” |
| 8. “You shall not steal.” |
| 9. “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” |
| 10. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” |
Seven Sacraments
The Catholic Church has seven sacraments which are considered signs of inner kindness given by God for Christians to live a genuine human life. The seven sacraments include Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick. The first three sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion, which are considered the sacraments of initiation. Baptism is meant to remove the guilt and effects of Original Sin and welcome the baptized to the Church. Confirmation, which should be administered right after Baptism, is meant to complete Baptism and bring the baptized the graces of the Holy Spirit that were given the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday. Holy Communion entails the reception of Christ’s body and blood which helps Christians grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Confession is considered the fourth sacrament, which is meant to reconcile Christians with God by confessing their sins. The Sacrament of Marriage comes next, with the union of a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and mutual support. It also reflects the union of Jesus Christ with His Church. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is considered the continuation of Christ’s priesthood which He passed on to His apostles. And the last sacrament is the Anointing of the Sick, also known as Extreme Unction or Last Rites, which is administered to those who are on the verge of death or are seriously ill, or about to undergo a serious operation, for physical and moral strength.

Eight Beatitudes
The Beatitudes comprise what is known as the “Sermon on the Mount” recorded in Matthew 5-7. The Beatitudes refer to the eight sayings of Jesus at the beginning of the “Sermon on the Mount.” Here are the Eight Beatitudes mentioned in Matthew 5-7:

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

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

Matthew 5:1-12, New Testament King James Version
Apostles’ Creed
The Apostles’ Creed is believed to have developed in the 100 or 200 C.E. and was influenced later by the Nicene Creed. A letter written by the Council of Milan in 390 C.E. is the earliest historical evidence of the existence of the Apostles’ Creed. It is not written by the apostles themselves but it serves as a summary of their basic teachings.

Apostles’ Creed
I believe in God, the Father almighty, 
Creator of heaven and earth. 
I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, 
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, 
Born of the Virgin Mary, 
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, 
Was crucified, died, and was buried; 
He descended to the dead. 
On the third day he rose again; 
He ascended to heaven, 
He is seated at the right hand of the Father; 
And he will 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 the life everlasting. Amen.

Story of Creation and Big Bang Theory
The Story of Creation, which narrates how God created the universe in six days, is found in Genesis 1 of the Old Testament. It narrates how God created light and darkness on the first day; the sky and the ocean on the second day; the earth and plants on the third day; the sun, moon, and the stars on the fourth day; sea creatures, land animals, and birds on the fifth day; and finally the first man and woman on the sixth day, after which He rested on the seventh day. This story has often been attributed as the one which explains the origin of the universe from a Christian point of view. Other religions would offer their own explanations on the origin of the universe. Science also has its own theories on how the universe began. The most accepted among scientists is the Big Bang Theory, which states that the universe began as an incredibly hot, very dense point in space about 14 billion years ago. It then underwent rapid expansion in no time and, as it cooled, led to the creation of stars, galaxies and planets.

WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES
Christians have certain religious observances in which they commemorate particular events in the history of Christianity. Some of the most important Christian observances are Advent, Lent, and Pentecost.
Advent
Advent refers to the season of waiting for the birth of the Messiah, hence its celebration lasts for four weeks, beginning four Sundays before Christmas and ending on Christmas eve. It is meant as an opportunity to reflect on the significance of the birth of Jesus who was sent by God the Father to restore humanity’s relationship with God. During Advent, it is not only the birth of Christ which is anticipated but the Second Coming of the Savior as well. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word adventus, which means “coming” or “visit.” Advent also features certain colors, such as purple/dark blue, which symbolizes seriousness, repentance, and royalty; and pink, which signifies joy.

Lent
Lent refers to the season observed by Christians in preparation for Easter, a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. Ash Wednesday signals the start of the season of Lent, which begins 40 days before Easter. It is a time for Christians to prepare for Easter by following certain rituals, such as fasting, repentance, moderation, and self-discipline. This is a time to reflect on the suffering, sacrifice, life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ. It is a time for prayer, penance, sacrifice, and good works as a way of remembering the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon words lencten, meaning “Spring”, and lenctenid, which means “Springtide” and also the word for “March,” the month when Easter is usually celebrated.

Pentecost
Pentecost is celebrated as a holiday to commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the early Christians. Thus, Pentecost is also celebrated as the birthday of the Church. The word Pentecost comes from the Greek word pentekostos, which means “fifty,” pertaining to the Jewish holiday celebrated every fifty days from the end of Passover to the beginning of the next holiday (also known as Shavuot). The event was recorded in the New Testament, in The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, which narrates how the first Christians came together in one place when suddenly they heard a sound coming from heaven and tongues of fire rested on their heads. They were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit which enabled them to speak other languages, after which Peter stood up and delivered his first sermon.

SUBDIVISIONS
Prior to the reign of Emperor Constantine who declared himself a Christian in 312 C.E., Christians were persecuted under Roman emperors. Christianity was only legalized in 313 C.E. upon Constantine’s declaration of the Edict of Milan, which declared equality among all religions. After defeating his opponents and becoming the sole leader of the Roman Empire in 324 C.E., Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the empire and sought to end all doctrinal arguments on Christianity. In 325 C.E., he
Abrahamic Religions

The First Ecumenical Council was convened at Nicea in Asia Minor. The council was attended by bishops from the eastern and western regions of the empire. In 330 CE, the capital of the Roman Empire was transferred from Rome to Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul) and renamed Constantinople.

As time went by, conflicts arose between the Roman Empire and the Byzantium Empire, resulting in the inevitable split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. The conflict was further heightened when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, King of the Franks, the Holy Roman Emperor in 800 without consulting the Byzantine Empire. The official split happened in 105 with the “Great Schism” which divided the Western Latin Roman Christianity from the Eastern Greek Byzantine Christianity.

Abuses and corruption in the church led another sect to be formed around the 16th century. Martin Luther, a teacher and a monk, posted his list of ninety-five propositions to the door of the church at Wittenberg in Saxony in 1517, which signalled the beginnings of another Christian sect called Protestantism. The Protestant Reformation is considered the second greatest split in Christianity. Luther’s timing was perfect, for the printing press was just recently invented thus he was able to reprint numerous copies of his theses, which led to a wider dissemination of his ideas. One of the things he opposed was the selling of indulgences (indulgence refers to the pardon granted by the Pope to purgatorial punishment to Christians who pay a certain amount for the absolution of their sins) of the Catholic Church, which was meant to save the soul in the afterlife. His ideas spread to England, with King Henry VIII severing his ties from Rome, creating the Church of England and Lutheranism in 1555. As a result, the Catholic Church initiated its own reformation to address the issues raised by Luther.

SELECTED ISSUES

We have discussed how the Christian Church was subdivided into different sects. In order to address the issue of disunity among Christians, the concept of ecumenism was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, ecumenism is one important issue in Christianity. Still, there are some issues which are in conflict with Christian teachings, concerning sexuality (especially issues of contraception, abortion, and homosexuality); divorce; capital punishment and euthanasia.

Ecumenism

Ecumenism refers to the effort of the Catholic Church to sponsor activities and initiatives to promote mutual understanding and unity among all Christians. Ecumenism can also be described as the promotion of worldwide Christian unity (Brodd 2003). It is based on Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism which states that:

“The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church

WEBLINKS
Read Martin Luther’s The 95 Theses at http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html. Which among his theses are concerned about the issue of indulgence? Explain your answer.
only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the only cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."

Ecumenism is based on three principles, which states that: 1) Christ established the Church on the Apostles and their successors, whose head became Peter and his successor the Bishop of Rome; 2) since the first century there have been divisions in Christianity, but many persons now separated from visible unity with the successors of the Apostles under Peter are nevertheless Christians who possess more or less the fullness of grace available in the Roman Catholic Church; and 3) Catholics are to do everything possible to foster the ecumenical movement, which comprehends all “the initiatives and activities, planned and undertaken to promote Christian unity, according to the Church’s various needs and opportunities” (Decree on Ecumenism, I,4).

Ecumenism was emphasized and intensely propagated by the Catholic Church through a series of addresses, homilies, and regular audiences with the goal of achieving unity among all Christians and non-Christians.

Sexuality
The issue of sexuality has always been controversial for the Catholic Church. Due to its conservative view of human sexuality, it has often found itself in conflict with progressive and liberal ideas with regard to certain issues connected to sexuality such as artificial contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. In general, sexuality refers to sexual orientation, sexual activity, and sexual feelings.
Christianity advocates that the goal of sexual union between men and women is procreation, thus anything that might hinder this is considered immoral. Having sexual pleasure from such union is not necessary, thus when people use artificial contraceptives, such as condoms, birth control pills, IUDs (intrauterine contraceptive devices), and the like, they are committing a sin because they are engaging in sexual acts without procreation in mind. Instead, Christianity advocates natural family planning methods such as the rhythm method, wherein couples will engage in sexual acts only during days when the woman is not fertile and cannot conceive a baby. In this light, abortion is also considered as immoral by the Catholic Church since it entails the killing of life. For the Catholic Church, life begins at fertilization, when the sperm and ovum meet to form a single cell, hence abortion is already considered as taking away the life of a person.

Another issue with regard to sexuality is that of homosexuality. It refers to attraction to members of the same sex. Males who are attracted to males are called gays, while females attracted to females are called lesbians. The Catholic Church states that homosexual orientation itself is not a sin, it is nevertheless a tendency towards the "moral evil" of homosexual sexual activity. It also states that when God created humans He created male and female only, and that their union is meant for procreation. Thus, in the Christian line of thinking, homosexuality should not be practiced since it is not in accordance with God’s plan. The Church does not allow same-sex marriage and is vocal in opposing homosexual relationships. Nevertheless, while the Church condemns homosexual acts (sexual activity), being homosexual (orientation) is not wrong or sinful in itself. It also states that homosexual persons must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.

Family and Divorce
The Christian view on marriage is based on Matthew 19:-6, “He who made man from the beginning, made them male and female. And he said: For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” Thus, divorce is not allowed in the Catholic Church, since it believes in the sanctity of marriage, which should be a lifetime bond between a man and a woman, and is considered a legal bond on earth and a spiritual bond in heaven.

If couples wish to separate, they could seek an annulment, also known as Decree of Nullity, in which it is declared that the marriage was never valid in the first place. But unlike divorce, annulment entails a long, tedious, and expensive process, in which a partner has to prove that his/her partner is psychologically incapacitated to understand the commitment marriage entails, or one of the partners has deliberately hid some information, such as previous marriage, impotence, or infertility.

As of today, every country in the world has a divorce law except the Philippines. Although some lawmakers have been pushing for the divorce bill, the
strong opposition of the Catholic Church as well as the devout Catholics in the Congress and the Senate have made it difficult for the divorce bill to be passed.

**Capital Punishment and Euthanasia**

Capital punishment or death penalty wherein a person is punished by death for his or her capital crime goes against the Christian belief that life is given by God and should not be taken away by any person. It is illegal in most Christian countries such as the Philippines, but some push for capital punishment as a way of deterring crime.

Since Christianity advocates the belief that life is given by God, euthanasia or mercy killing is also considered immoral since it entails taking away what has been given by God, and that human beings should not interfere with the natural process of death. Even if a person is extremely suffering from his/her illness, he/she has no right to take away what God has given him/her. Also, human beings are made in the image of God so people have a unique capacity to become rational which enables them to see what is good and to want what is good, that is why they have no right to end this gift from God. Another reason why the Church is against euthanasia is the belief that people have no right to interrupt the natural process of dying, and that the period just before death is a reflective spiritual moment. In Christianity, all human lives are equally valuable and no one, even the person himself/herself who wants to end his/her life, has the right to assume that his or her life is no longer valuable.

**Summary**

- Christianity is one of the first monotheistic religions in the world. It considers God as the creator and maintainer of the universe—omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent.
- The Bible is considered the sacred scripture of Christianity and is the basis of the religion’s teachings.
- According to Christianity, since human beings are created in the likeness of God, they are intrinsically good; but they are also given free will so they are considered prone to sin and in need of grace.
- The goal of every individual is to have eternal life of the soul after death.
- For those who have become good Christians, the reward is eternal life in heaven; for those who lived a life full of sins, the punishment is eternal damnation in hell.

**Critical Thinking**

1. Why is the concept of Holy Trinity confusing for some Christians and non-Christians alike?
2. Despite the split in Christianity into numerous sects, what bind these religious sects together?
3. What does Christianity share with Judaism in terms of beliefs and practices?
Assessment

A. Modified True or False. Write the word TRUE if the statement is true. Otherwise, write the word FALSE and change the underlined word to make the statement correct.

1. Christianity is considered the world’s largest religion. 
2. Followers of Christianity are called Catholics. 
3. Christianity started in the 2nd century CE in a land called Palestine. 
4. According to a 2010 survey, Brazil is the country with the largest number of Christians in the world. 
5. Christianity was born in an era when Palestine was colonized by the Muslims. 
6. Pontius Pilate was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. 
7. Martin Luther King formed a Christian sect named Protestantism as a reaction to the abuses of the Catholic Church. 
8. Christianity believes in the Holy Trinity but remains a monotheistic religion. 
9. The Sacrament of Confirmation is considered the continuation of Christ’s priesthood which He passed on to His apostles. 
10. The Big Bang Theory narrates the origin of the universe and humanity according to the Bible.

B. Matching Type. Match the terms in Column A to their equivalent meanings in Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Season in preparation for Easter</td>
<td>a. Messiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Successor of Christ as head of the Church</td>
<td>b. Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Split between Roman Catholicism and Greek</td>
<td>c. Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Basic beliefs</td>
<td>d. Ecumenism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Coming of the Holy Spirit on the early Christians</td>
<td>e. Pentecost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Savior</td>
<td>f. Euthanasia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Self-flagellation</td>
<td>g. Great Schism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mercy killing</td>
<td>h. Penitensiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mutual understanding among all Christians</td>
<td>i. Lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>j. Creed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Timeline. Make a timeline of important events in the history of Christianity and explain briefly the significance of each event.
D. Poster-making. Make a poster depicting the set of laws given by God to people of Israel at Mt. Sinai through Moses or the Ten Commandments. Use the rubric below as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The illustrations were appropriate to the theme.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the pictures and words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 20</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, we have studied the core teaching of Christianity which is the message that a loving God sent His begotten Son to redeem humanity from eternal damnation. In the next chapter, we will learn about the core teaching of another Abrahamic religion, which is Islam.

Sources

BOOKS

INTERNET SOURCES
Established around seventh century C.E., Islam is the youngest among the world’s major religions. With more than 1.5 billion adherents comprising almost one-fourth of the entire world population, Islam is the second largest group and one of the fastest growing religions in the world. Majority of Muslims, the followers of Islam, live in Asia and Africa. There are 49 countries in the world that are Muslim-majority or comprise 50% of the population. The 1.2 billion Muslims in these countries equivalent to 74% of the entire Muslim population worldwide. More than 60% of the world’s Muslims can be found in Asia, including Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Turkey, and Iran. Indonesia is the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country with almost 87% of the population practicing the Islam religion. In Africa, sizeable Muslim communities are found in Egypt and Nigeria.
MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY
Did you know that there are numerous celebrities in Hollywood that are practicing the Islamic faith? Can you identify some of these popular stars that you know?

Mike Tyson  Dave Chapelle  Jemima Khan  Shaquille O’Neal  Janet Jackson

CONCEPT MAP

ISLAM

Sacred Scriptures  Worship and Observances  Beliefs and Doctrines  Subdivisions

SYMBOLS
The star and crescent has become the acknowledged representation of the Islamic faith. The symbol can be seen in the national flags of states that came about following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the 20th century. Around the 1970s, it was adopted by movements that advocated Arab nationalism. Traditionally, the crescent moon or the *hilal* has early connections with royalty. It is also closely linked to the lunar calendar that orders the religious life of the Muslims (Bowker 1997).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
Islam began with the Arabian desert people around early seventh century C.E. These people had developed their own set of beliefs prior to the formal establishment of Islam and had been influenced by other religions for a long period of time, including Byzantine Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

Judea, the home of Christianity, was not too far away from Arabia, and the great cities of Damascus, Antioch, and Alexandria were neighbors to Mecca and Medina (Hopfe 1983). Byzantine rulers, however, antagonized
Abrahamic Religions

Arab Christians that provided an impetus for their acceptance of a new Arab religion that started with the establishment of Islam. On the other hand, the Arabian people were also familiar with Judaism. For one, several desert tribes were Jewish in origin. When the Muslim forces entered Medina in 622 C.E., many citizens of the city were Jewish (Hopfe 1983). Lastly, the Muslims may have been in contact with the Persian Zoroastrians though its influence may be not as strong compared to Christianity and Judaism.

Perhaps the single most important factor that accelerated the development of a new religion in the Arabian interior was the native religion practiced by the Arabs. Pre-Islamic people worshipped a variety of gods. While they recognize the existence of one supreme god, local and tribal gods were mostly venerated by the people. Carved images were done to represent these gods that were often revered and given blood sacrifices (Hopfe 1983). Apart from the presence of these gods, there were also angels, fairies, demonic creatures, and evil spirits in pre-Islam religion.

Apart from worshipping a pantheon of gods, pre-Islamic religion was also animistic in character. Spirits found in rocks, trees, and wells had to be revered at their sanctuaries and placated for assistance. In time, the city of Mecca became a sacred shrine because of these animistic associations (Hopfe 1983). A meteoric stone that had fallen in Mecca centuries before became an object of veneration to the animistic people. Pilgrims then built an enclosure around the stone and called it Kaaba. Various images and relics gradually filled the Kaaba, including a painting of Jesus and Mary. Pilgrims travelled to Mecca to worship at the shrine. The “Black Stone,” which according to Muslim tradition dates back to the time of Adam and Eve,
eventually became a very important object for the Meccans at the time when various clans struggled to control the *Kaaba*. Mecca, situated on the central western coast of Arabia is positioned on the major north-south caravan route (Hopfe 1983).

**The Life of Muhammad**

Around the year 570 C.E., Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in the oasis town of Mecca just off the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula (Karabell 2007). Muhammad’s father died before he was born while his mother died before he was six years old. He belonged to the clan of Hashim of the Quraysh tribe that controlled the *Kaaba* and the camel trade that passed through Mecca. Following the tradition, he was sent to be reared among the Bedouins. When his mother died, Muhammad was raised by his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib (Renard 1992).

Later on, Muhammad was taken into custody by his paternal uncle, Abu Talib, who was chief of the Quraysh tribe. Life must have been very difficult for the young Muhammad. With no formal schooling, Muhammad worked as a caravan worker travelling across the Arabian Peninsula as a camel driver. From his travels in the Arabian Peninsula to the different Byzantine cities, he may have met and conversed with Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians alike. Muhammad soon learned the various ways and means of their belief system that may have led him to question the faith of his own people, especially with regard their animistic practices and reverence given to numerous gods and idols (Hopfe 1983). He used to retreat to Mount Hira near Mecca in search of truth about God.

Muhammad later married an older wealthy widow named Khadija, fifteen years his senior. Muhammad was twenty-five years old when he married Khadija who was about forty years old at the time. Khadija managed her own caravan and Muhammad was working for her. He was married only to Khadija as long as she lived even though it was acceptable for men to have multiple wives then. Khadija became his staunch supporter and one of his first converts to the new religion he founded.

Around the year 610 C.E., Muhammad began hearing the voice of God in a cave on the summit of Mount Hira, just outside Mecca in the Arabian Hijaz. God was speaking to Muhammad in the Arabic language (Armstrong 2000; Karabell 2007). Mostly auditory but occasionally in visual form, he began to experience divine revelations delivered by the angel Gabriel (Renard 1992). Muhammad first disclosed these revelations only to his wife since revealing these messages to his tribe could disturb the social order that was primarily anchored on clan and kinship. He was preaching a new order built upon God’s will and human submission to this belief.

The term “Islam” originated from an Arabic word meaning “submit.” In other words, Islam means to “surrender or submit oneself for obedience to God” or to “enter into a condition of peace and security with God through allegiance and surrender to him” (Armstrong 2000; Bowker 1997). On the other hand, the word “Muslim” is the Arabic word for a person who submits.
A Muslim, therefore, is a “person who surrenders or submits himself to obey God” (Brown 1975). In Arabic, the word “Allah” is a compound of al (the definite article, the) and ilah (god or deity). Joined together, the words signify “god” (Renard 1993). Henceforth, he is called Allah or “the one who is God.” Muhammad was preaching that there can only be one God.

Beginning 613 C.E., Muhammad began to impart these sacred messages to his closest relatives and friends. However, the polytheistic people of Mecca gave him a tepid response. As the revelations became known to members of his clan, the Qurasyh tribe began to consider Muhammad and his radical view of submission to one god as one major threat to the long established tradition and absoluteness of tribal authority. While god and deities (known as jinn) were revered, tribes and clan reigned supreme on all societal issues (Karabell 2007). Quite evidently, Muhammad was challenging the supremacy of the Qurasyh system.

The Muslims consider Muhammad as a messenger and the last prophet sent by God to humankind who was visited by the angel Gabriel. While he gained the loyalty of several followers who were convinced by his religious ideals, the Meccan tribes eventually grew hostile to Muhammad’s emerging faction. The radical teachings of Muhammad angered local tribes so they began persecuting him and his loyal followers.

In 622 C.E., Muhammad and his group moved to Medina (then known as Yathrib, 200 miles north of Mecca) to escape persecution from the Meccans. The flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina is known as hijra which marked the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Mired in frequent gridlock, Medinian tribes wanted Muhammad to become their leader (Karabell 2007). The Muslims who follow Muhammad in his journey are known as Muhajirun (“those who made the hijra”) while those who supported him in Medina are known as Ansar (“the helpers”). Their descendants are honored in the Islam religion (Bowker 1997). With local tribes involved in frequent internal strife, Muhammad restored peace and order in Medina. Shortly after his arrival in 622 C.E, he united the Medinian tribes under one constitution.

Muhammad and his followers waged a constant battle against Meccan tribes until 630 C.E. Finally, after almost eight years of struggle, Muhammad and his troops of around ten thousand converts marched to Mecca and took over the city almost unopposed. In Kaaba, he tore down the three hundred sixty pagan idols displayed at the holy shrine.

In 632 C.E., Muhammad died at the age of 62 but his newly founded religion had spread across the entire Arabian Peninsula and the Muslims had been united as one religious community. He was a classic example of a just, compassionate, honest, and brave human being far removed from all evil deeds. Muhammad’s actions were solely for the sake of Allah as he is ever mindful and fearful of his one true god (Ibrahim 1997). God has made all revelations to Muhammad, the last of the prophets and the seal of the prophecy.
SACRED SCRIPTURES

The Quran

The sacred writing of the Muslims is called Quran (or Koran in English) that literally means “recitation” or “reading.” The Quran is the revelation from God of his speech (kalam) and is the foundation of the Islam religion (Bowker 1997). It is the supreme authority in all matters of faith, theology, and law (Parrinder 1971).

In 610 C.E., when Muhammad received the first revelations, he was commanded by angel Gabriel to “iqra” or “recite.” All Muslims believe that the Quran is a copy of the eternal scripture written in heaven but made known to Muhammad chapter by chapter (Hopfe 1983). As such, the Quran is the word of God that is binding, continuous, and supreme. The same message became known to earlier prophets like Moses and Jesus but people gradually altered the revelation entrusted to them by God (Bowker 1997). Any translation of the Quran, either in English or in any other language, is neither a Quran nor a version of the Quran; rather, it is only a translation of the meaning of the Quran (Ibrahim 1997). The Quran in Arabic, the only language in which it was revealed, is considered the perfect word of God.

For about twenty-three years, God revealed these messages through Muhammad who initially memorized these lines because he was illiterate. The revelation spanned from about 609 to 632 C.E., the year of the prophet’s death. Muhammad relayed these messages to his companion and secretary Zayd ibn Thabit (c.610-c.660 C.E.) who wrote them on leather scraps, stone pieces, ribs of palm leaves, shoulder blades of animals, and parchments (Parrinder 1971; Hopfe 1983). At that time, the art of papermaking was still unknown to the Arab people. Zayd became one of the first converts of Muhammad to the Islam fold. Twenty years after the death of Muhammad, the Quran had officially come to the form that was disseminated throughout the centers of the Islamic world.

The Quran has remained virtually unaltered since the time of Muhammad. To the Meccan townspeople, Muhammad preached the messages which were short and quite easy to remember as these lines rhymed with one another (Brown 1975). The Muslims recite and memorize the Quran reflecting the profound influence of the scripture on the daily lives of all followers. Muhammad wanted the Muslims to recite their scripture aloud similar to the manner done by the Jews and Christians. As time went on, the messages increased as Muhammad kept on receiving new revelations. The Quran guides all Muslims in every stage of their lives.

In comparison, the Quran has almost the same length as the New Testament, the Christian biblical canon (Parrinder 1971). The chapters that compose the Quran are called surahs while the verses are called ayahs which mean “evidence” or “sign.” There are 114 chapters in the Quran, 86 of which are classified as Meccan while 28 are Medinian. The hijra or the journey of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina serves as a pivot point in the division of the Quran

GUIDE QUESTION

How do Muslims regard Quran?
of the Quranic verses that belong before or after the said emigration in 622 C.E. (Cragg 2004). The Meccan verses generally pertain to religious ideals while the Medinian verses deal with the organization of the Muslim community. While the chapters are of varying lengths, the Quran is also divided into thirty almost equal parts (with each part known as *juz*) so as to enable a reader to complete the reading of the scripture in one month (Aziz 1993).

Neither thematic nor chronological, the Quran is arranged based on the length of the *surah* in descending order. The longest *surah* has about 286 *ayahs*, the *Al-Baqarah* (“The Heifer”). The shortest *surah* has only three *ayahs*, the *Al-Kawthar* (“Abundance”). The first of all the *surah* is called *Fatihah* (“The Opening”) that is in the form of a prayer to God for guidance. The *Fatihah*, written below, is the most frequently recited segment of the Koran.

“In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful
Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;
Most Gracious, Most Merciful;
Master of the Day of Judgement.
You do we worship and Your aid we seek.
Show us the straight way,
The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.”


A person who is able to memorize the Quran in its entirety is called *hafiz* (“guardian”). The female counterpart is called *hafiza*. Whatever denomination Muslims may belong to, they always have the same Quran written in Arabic similar to the early days of Islam’s founding. No two copies of the Quran anywhere in the world differ in any way (Aziz 1993).

The Hadith
The *hadith* is the collection of the deeds and sayings of Muhammad and his followers (“traditional reports or sayings”) and is the second source of *shari’a* law (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Unlike the Quran that was officially compiled under the auspices of a central authority (as initiated by the first caliph Abu Bakr), the *hadiths* were collected generations after the death of Muhammad. The *hadiths* are recognized today as second in authority after the Koran (Parrinder 1971).

Around the ninth century C.E., Muslim scholars undertook a number of great systematic collections of *hadiths* that are known as *Kutub al-Sittah* or the *Six Sahih* (“Authentic”) Books. The collections of Persian scholars Muhammad al-Bukhari (810-870) and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (c.815-875) are the most respected and most often cited among the said collections (Parrinder 1971). Imam Bukhari authored the Sahih al-Bukhari while Imam Muslim compiled the *Sahih Muslim*. From the six books, these *hadith* records are the two most authentic collections.
The word *sahih* in these titles indicates that the authors of these books sifted the authentic reports about Muhammad from other unsubstantiated narratives (Aziz 1993). The various rituals and obligations embedded in the so-called “Five Pillars of Islam” as well as majority of criminal laws originate from the *hadiths* (Horrie & Chippindale 2003).

**BELIEFS/DOCTRINES**

Islam began as a way of life (*din*) for its followers which God intended for his creation from the very beginning (Bowker 1997). In time, God had to send several prophets, including Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus), to summon people back to the *din* as a result of human rebellion and transgression. Ultimately, all prophets were rejected, persecuted, or killed except for Muhammad.

While some religions may have room for subjective or personal discernment regarding matters of conduct, Islamic beliefs are more dominantly social in character. Islamic religious laws cover the daily life of all Muslims—from education, dress, marriage, sexual relations, justice, punishments, economics, diet, and even rules of hospitality. While Islam’s approach to life and death, origins of the universe, and the nature of mankind is simple, it is also rigid and uncompromising (Horrie & Chippindale 2003).

For all Muslims, there is only one compassionate, everlasting, and omnipotent God, being the lord of everything in existence, including humans. Around eight thousand years ago, God created the universe and may terminate it when he wills it so. A “Day of Judgment” shall ensue wherein all humankind will be resurrected and individually accounted for. Everyone will be fully awakened and raised to a higher spiritual life (Aziz 1193). Based on their own deeds and fully aware of the effects of these deeds in this life, everyone will then be sent to either paradise or hell for perpetuity (Aziz 1993; Horrie & Chippindale 2003). All these knowledge had been revealed by God to Muhammad and written down in the Quran.

Since all people originate from God and return to him after death, there can never be contending religions that may divide people from one another. As such, Islam advocates for the establishment of one single community or *ummah* (Armstrong 2000; Bowker 1997). During Muhammad’s time, the *ummah* was a community bigger than the tribe, demanding a loyalty which came before loyalty to kinsfolk (Fletcher 2003). In the end, a Muslim must not fight a fellow Muslim.

**FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM**

The basic obligations of Muslims are called the Five Pillars of Islam or *arkan al-din*. While differences may occur in the interpretation of Islamic law, all Muslims believe and accept the entirety of these obligations that must be strictly observed to avoid being sent to hell on the “Day of Judgment.” The Five Pillars give structure and unity to all believers of Islam.

Foremost among all Muslims’ obligations is the declaration of their statement of belief called *shahada* (“witness”) that is recited during prayers and rituals. Apart from *shahada*, the four other duties that must be performed
by all Muslims are collectively called as *ibadah* (“state of submission”). The *ibadah* aims to discipline the adherents and eliminate impostors to the Islamic faith. The *ibadah* is composed of praying five times a day, fasting during the time of Ramadan, giving of annual charity, and undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a Muslim’s lifetime.

**The Creed (Shahada)**

The basic creed of Islam that “there is no God but Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” is known as *shahada*. In Arabic, the *shahada* is recited as “La ilaha illa Allah; Muhammadon rasul Allah.” These are the very first words uttered into an infant’s ear and perhaps the last words given to a dying Muslim. The *shahada* asserts that Allah is the only divinity and that he has relayed his will through Muhammad (Bowker 1997).

To be accepted into the Islam fold, one must recite the *kalima* or phrase with two witnesses. The first half of the *kalima* is known as *tawheed* (“the unity”) which is the most important statement of Muslim faith. The second half is called *risallah* (“acceptance of prophethood”) which implies acceptance of prophets as messengers of god (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). For a Muslim to deny any part of the *shahada* is tantamount to the crime of reversion to Islam that is punishable under Quranic law.

**Obligatory Prayer (Salat)**

Just as the body requires food for its daily sustenance, prayers are done for spiritual development so that a Muslim’s character and conduct remain sound and healthy (Aziz 1993). Facing in the direction of Mecca or *qiblah*, Muslims must offer prayers or *salat* five times each and every day—before sunrise (*as-subh*), noon (*az-zuhr*), mid-afternoon (*al-asr*), immediately after sunset (*al-maghreb*), and before midnight (*al-isha*) (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). In a mosque or *masjid* (“place of prostration”) where Muslims offer prayers in congregation, men and women pray separately. A structure of *masjid* can range from a simple desert prayer ground (*musalla*) or just any space whereby rules of ritual purity are properly observed.

Each prayer session begins when the strong-voiced *muezzin* or caller recites the call to prayer (*adhan*) from the tallest point of a mosque, often a *minaret*. A *minaret* is a tall structure or thin tower that is used to call the people to prayer. The *adhan*, composed of rhythmic Arabic phrases devised by Muhammad himself, is often recorded and broadcast through speakers (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Quite regrettably, *muezzins* have been slowly replaced by amplified voices and tape recordings (Jomier 1999).

Before any prayer commences, an elaborate ritual washing (*wudu*) must be performed to remove any impurities and unclean substances from the body or clothes of the faithful. Most mosques are frequently equipped with facilities for washing hands, feet, and face before prayer (Hopfe 12983). Clean and potable water must be given to any person who comes to a mosque (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Muslim men often pray in mosques while women pray at their homes.
To pray, a Muslim stands on clean ground without shoes or wearing clean ones (Jomier 1999). A special carpet may be provided to provide the person a clean surface. Nevertheless, aside from salat, a Muslim can address a prayer to Allah at any given time in any circumstance using any words one chooses (Aziz 1993).

**Poor Tax (Zakat)**

Muslims who live above the subsistence level must pay zakat or the poor tax to aid the underprivileged Muslims. Affluent Muslims must share their wealth to the unfortunate ones. Originally, almsgiving was for the benefit of the poor, widows, and orphans through an act of charity. Later on, it became mandatory amounting to a certain percentage of a Muslim’s total resources. Islam has never viewed begging as dishonorable (Hopfe 1983).

Zakat is not charity but an annual wealth tax that serves as just and lawful claim of the poor against the affluent ones. The zakat is payable the moment a Muslim has accumulated sufficient resources starting with a basic rate which is fortieth (2.5 percent) of a person’s entire asset, including savings, jewels, and land (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). A kind of tithe intended to support the needy, zakat has been a contributory factor of solidarity and unity for the Muslim people (Jomier 1999). It is a religious duty done out of obedience to Allah and compassion to poor Muslims. The spirit of self-sacrifice is developed by paying zakat that somehow curtails the feeling of greed (Aziz 1993).

The Quran states that all worldly wealth is unclean unless utilized in the service of Allah and Islam. A horrible fortune awaits those people who became wealthy as a result of usurious activities and those who neglect the welfare of poor Muslims. By fulfilling to pay zakat, well-off Muslims cleanse their material possessions and can liberally enjoy their fortunes with Allah’s approval (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Hence, zakat is viewed as purification of one’s resources (Frager 2002).

**Fasting (Sawm)**

Fasting or sawm during the entire 30 days of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, must be performed by all Muslims every year. The Ramadan is believed to be the month when Muhammad received the first surah of the Quran. The sawm is done by all Muslims to express obedience to Allah and the readiness to relinquish pleasures in their lives. By undertaking sawm, Muslims observe discipline and experience the deprivations of the poor (Bowker 1997). During this time, a Muslim must refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and engaging in any sexual intimacy from dusk until dawn. By resisting the demands of the body during sawm, the Muslims strengthen their will. Muslims are reminded that they have the capacity to ignore the longing of the body or material gratification (Frager 2002).

The sawm culminates with the “Feast of Breaking the Fast” (‘Id al-Fitr) wherein Muslims may celebrate and partake in festivities. They hold congregational prayers and exchange presents. Unlike the Jews or Catholics who fast for a brief period of time in observance of holy days, the Muslims are obligated to fast the longest and strictest of all.
Any Muslim who has reached puberty and is healthy must undertake sawm. Muslims who are exempted from performing sawm include small children, those who are on a journey, sick persons, and mothers nursing infants. For those who are temporarily unable to observe sawm, they must perform the missed fast after Ramadan. For those who are permanently unable to fast, such as the very old or persons those with long-term illness, they can give charity to poor Muslims instead (Aziz 1993).

Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)
All Muslims must attempt to undertake a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca or hajj (“visitation of Holy Places”) at least once in their lifetime during the twelfth Islamic month. The “Grand Mosque” (Al-Masjid al-Haram) in Mecca houses the most sacred site of Islam, the Kaaba (“House of Allah”). The Kaaba is a cube-shaped ancient stone building that dates back to the time of Adam and Eve according to Muslim tradition. Muslims believe that the Kaaba was originally built for the worship of God by Abraham and his son Ishmael (Belt 2001). The Kaaba represents the end of a journey because it is the symbolic point of origin of all creation wherein all things turn around it and from it all things radiate (Renard 1992).

Inside the Kaaba is the “Black Stone,” twelve inches in diameter, located on the eastern cornerstone of the building that was set intact into the wall by Muhammad himself in 605 C.E. A fragmented dark rock often described as meteorite, the “Black Stone” has been polished smooth by the pilgrims through time. Broken into a number of fragments, it is now cemented into a silver frame on the eastern corner of the Kaaba. Some poets consider Muhammad himself as the Kaaba of prophetic revelation while the Kaaba is the “seal of his prophethood” (Renard 1992).
For Muslim men to participate in hajj, they must be sound, physically able, and able to provide for their dependents while they are on pilgrimage to Mecca. On the other hand, Muslim women may also take part in hajj subject to a number of restrictions. For example, women must be accompanied by a male chaperon (mahram) who must be a man they are legally unable to marry, such as their father or brother (Horrie & Chippindale 2003).

Before travelling to Mecca, pilgrims (hajji) pray incessantly and perform extended washing rituals. Pilgrims also shave and cut their hair and nails. For men, they wear a special ihram outfit that consists of two large pieces of white, unhemmed clothes. One piece wraps around the waist and the other goes over the right shoulder. For women, they wear simple white dresses (Frager 2002). They also wear additional garments to completely cover their face and legs (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Men and women pilgrims wear sandals instead of shoes.

Clad in simple pilgrim’s garment with no head covering, one cannot distinguish a rich Muslim from a poor one simply by looking at their apparel (Hopfe 1983). Once pilgrims are wearing their ihram, they are prohibited from removing this ritual dress, even when sleeping. They are also forbidden from clipping their nails, hunting, arguing, or engaging in any sexual activity (Belt 2001). In ihram, Muslims cannot shave, wash themselves, shampoo their hair, scratch themselves, kill anything (even a fly or mosquito), walk on grass, or injure any living thing (Frager 2002).

Central to the pilgrimage is a full day spent in the desert on the Arafat plain considered sacred by the Muslims. The mountain of Arafat was the site of Muhammad’s last sermon (Frager 2002). For many people located in regions distant from the Arabian Peninsula, the hajj serves as the pinnacle of years of yearning to be with God (Parrinder 1971).

**WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES**

The Islamic calendar is composed of 12 lunar months of between 29 and 30 days. A year in the Islamic calendar constitutes a total of 354 days. The difference between the solar and lunar calendar is adjusted by adding one day to the last month of the year 11 times each 30 years. Nonetheless, 103 Islamic years are the equivalent of 100 solar years despite the periodic modifications done on the calendar (Hopfe 1983). Table 6.1 lists some of the most important festivals celebrated by Muslims worldwide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Festivities/Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Month 1: Muharram (“The Sacred Month”) | • The Islamic year starts in the day of the hijra, Muhammad’s journey from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E.  
• Ashura: The assassination of the Imam Husayn at Karbala’in 680 C.E. is commemorated on the 10th by Shi’ite Muslims |
| Month 3: Rabi al-Awai (“The Spring”) | • **Birth of the Prophet:** Muhammad’s birthday is celebrated on the 12th. |
| Month 9: Ramadan (“The Month of Great Heat”) | • Muslims do not eat or drink during daylight hours throughout the month.  
• **Laylat al-Qadr:** The commemoration of the first revelation to the prophet is often celebrated on the 27th. |

*Table 6.1*

The Festival Calendar
Month 10: Shawwal (“The Month of Hunting”)  
- ‘Id al-Fitr: The Festival of Breaking the Fast at the beginning of Shawwal concludes the fasting season.

Month 12: Dhu al-Hijja (“The Month of Hajj”)  
- Month of pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca.  
- Yawn Arafat: On the 9th, fasting pilgrims perform the wuquf, standing before God on Mount Arafat.  
- ‘Id al-Adha: The Festival of Sacrifice on the 10th recalls the sacrificial ram God gave to Abraham in place of his son, and coincides with the end of Hajj.


Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar wherein Muslims are expected to observe sawm. Muslims may not eat, drink, or have sex during daylight hours. The last 10 days of the month may be spent by continuous prayers of the most devoted Muslims. Finally, the sawm ends with ‘Id al-Fitr or the Festival of Breaking the Fast marked by popular rejoicing and festal prayer (Jomier 1999).

Dhu al-Hijja is the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar wherein able-bodied Muslims perform the hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. Poor Muslims sometimes use their entire savings just to fulfill this obligation. The sick and the elderly may begin their pilgrimage without the certainty of accomplishing this sacred duty.

Upon entering the Grand Mosque, the hajji performs the tawaf which involves circling the Kaaba seven times in a counter-clockwise direction. Most pilgrims attempt to touch or kiss the sacred Black Stone. However, the sheer number of pilgrims inside the mosque prevents them from touching the relic. They may instead raise their arm and point in its direction. These rites are known as umrah. Once the tawaf is completed, most pilgrims drink from the well of Zamzam that was established by Hagar and Ishmael. With its rich mineral water, Ishmael and Muhammad quenched their thirst here as the tradition goes (Belt 2001). The stream flows through the basement of the Grand Mosque (Horrie & Chippindale 2003).

‘Id al-Adha or the Feast of Sacrifice is the most important festival in the Muslim calendar marking the end of the pilgrimage season. On the tenth day of the hajj, Muslims are required to slaughter a live animal (a sheep or goat) to commemorate Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael and his obedience to God. In the process, a ram was substituted in place of Ishmael, thus, allowing him and his offspring to live, including his descendant Muhammad (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). After their arduous journey in Mecca, pilgrims may now visit other holy cities, such as Medina or Jerusalem. Returning home, the title hajj can now be affixed to their names to indicate completion of this religious responsibility (Hopfe 1983).

Friday is the special day of worship for the Muslims as commanded by Muhammad. In mosques, Muslims are required to pray with his fellows and prayers are led by an imam. An imam is a member of the community selected to lead the congregation due to the devoutness and religiosity he manifests to the people (Hopfe 1983).
Islamic Law
The concept of law and justice in Islam, or the *shari'a* (“the road to the watering place”), is based upon the Quranic verses as revealed by God to Muhammad. The universal laws passed down by God govern both the affairs of human and laws of nature (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Apart from the Quran, the teachings of Muhammad or the *hadiths* form the basis of Islamic legal system.

The *shari'a* is a path of conduct that must be followed by all Muslims. It concerns almost the totality of a Muslim’s life – from home life, business interests, marital relations, inheritance, and various duties to the state and community (Brown 1975).

Islamic Jurisprudence
Islamic jurisprudence or the science of Islamic law is called *fiqh*. All aspects of Muslim way of life and actions are covered through *fiqh*. Human behavior may be classified into five categories: forbidden (*haram*), discouraged (*makruh*), neutral (*mubah*), recommended (*mandub*), and obligatory (*fard*).

Forbidden actions are both sinful and criminal under pain of punishment. Accordingly, it is forbidden for all Muslims to eat animals that have died from natural causes or those animals that were not ritually slaughtered. Pork is considered as the most unclean of all meats and must not be eaten no matter how the pig meat was produced. Other *haram* behaviors include drinking blood, eating dried blood, and taking liquors.

The Five Pillars is an example of an obligatory category. These practices, such as almsgiving, daily prayers, and ritual fasting, are compulsory to all Muslims. Failure to observe these obligations is sinful and punishable as crime.

The three other categories (*makruh*, *mandub*, and *mubah*) concern chiefly on things, such as etiquette, donations, personal habits, and social life (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Reprehended actions but not subject to punishments belong to *makruh*. Meritorious or recommended deeds fall under *mandub*. Permitted behaviors that are neither good nor bad but neutral are classified as *mubah*. The *hadith* collections can be consulted to resolve these matters.

SUBDIVISIONS
Similar to most major religions, Islam also has sects, which vary primarily as to how these sects interpret some aspects of the Islamic faith and of the Quran. Inasmuch as Muslims agree on the fundamental tenets of the Islam religion, variations do occur in many of their beliefs and practices (Hopfe 1983).

Sunni Muslims (The Sunnis)
Majority of Muslims, around 87% to 90% of the entirety of Islam believers, belong to the Sunni denomination. The Sunnis (“Followers of the Smooth Path”) are traditionalists and are considered the orthodox of Islam as they endeavor to follow the original religion established by Muhammad and guided
by the first four righteous caliphs (Hopfe 1983). These Muslims follow the 
sunnah (“customary practice”) of Muhammad from which their name origina-
ted. Sunnah pertains to the orally transmitted record of wisdom, conduct, 
and sayings attributed to Muhammad and his earliest companions as recorded in hadith.

The Sunnis believe that any Muslim can be a ruler and he does not need 
to prove his lineage to Muhammad as long as he gets the approval and confi-
dence of the ummah or community. He can be an elected ruler or a hereditary 
monarch that should enjoy the support of the ummah. All Sunnis shall abide 
by his actions unquestioningly regardless of whether he is a fair or cruel ruler 
(Horrie & Chippindale 2003).

Within the Sunni sect of Islam are groups of Muslims that also differ 
in views and exercise of their faith. Religious factions are often the result 
of national or social differences (Brown1975). Every Muslim country has a 
Sunnia majority except Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Yemen, and some of the Gulf 
States (Horrie & Chippindale 2003).

Shi’a (The Shi’ites)
The Shi’ite Muslims are the largest faction within the Islam religion that 
separated from the rest of the community (Brown 1975). Historically 
speaking, three close associates of Muhammad became successive leaders or caliphs of Islam with the death of the founder in 632 C.E. The caliphate acted 
as a central unifying agency in Islamic history. Initially, caliphs were friends 
of Muhammad that acted as virtuous leaders of the believers. They may be 
chosen by election or general consent. Later on, the position became heredi-
tary resembling that of a king (Hopfe 1983).

Some Muslims believed that Muhammad should have been immediately succeeded by his direct relative, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was his cousin. Ali was 
also Muhammad’s son-in-law who married his daughter Fatima. In 656 C.E., 
Ali became the fourth caliph but steadily lost control of the Muslim world 
that culminated in the takeover of the caliphate by the Umayyad Dynasty at 
the time of Ali’s assassination in a mosque at Kufa and his eventual death in 

Known as rashiduns (“rightly-guided caliphs”), the Sunnis accepted the legitimacy of the first four successors of Muhammad: Abu Bakr (632-634 
C.E.), Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644 C.E.), Uthman ibn Affan (644-656 
C.E.), and Ali ibn Abi Talib (656-661 C.E.). Other Muslims, however, 
believed that Ali’s descendants should become head of the religious commu-
nity. These Muslims were called “Alids” that became known as “Shia Ali” or 
“the party of Ali.” In time, they came to be called “Shi’ites” (Hopfe 1983). 
For the Shi’ites, Ali was the first imam and the rightful spiritual and politi-
cal successor of Muhammad. Ali’s youngest son, Husayn, challenged the 
Umayyad caliph Yazid I but was later killed and beheaded at the battle of 
Karbala in 680 C.E. This event, called Ashura or the tenth day of Muharram, 
is commemorated each year as a day of mourning for all Shi’ites.
The main Shi’ite sects are the Seveners, Twelvers, and ‘Ibadis. The Seveners believe that there were seven imams. They are mostly found in India, Yemen, and parts of Africa. Meanwhile, the Twelvers claim that there are twelve imams with most believers located in Iran. Finally, the ‘Ibadis believe that the community may elect any appropriate Muslim as imam. They are mostly found in Oman (Brown 1975).

Sufi

Muslims whose concern mainly dwell for a mystical union with God are collectively called Sufis. Their name originate from the word suf that means “woolen” since they wore coarse wool garments or robes to symbolize poverty and denunciation of worldly pleasures (Hopfe 1983). A Sufi can be a Sunni or Shi’ite Muslim. The Sufi movement may have started around the ninth century C.E. at the time when there came a clarion call to live a simpler and austere life far from the splendor and grandeur that characterized the Abbasid Dynasty.

Around the twelfth century, monastic orders were established within the Sufi movement that focused around a saint. A convert who joins the order were called fakir (“a poor man”) or dervish (“one who comes to the door”). The new recruits studied under their master to develop their heightened sense of spirituality. Most Sufi practitioners practice discipline, poverty, abstinence, and celibacy in some instances. They insist that it is possible to have union with God through mystical experience (Hopfe 1983).

SELECTED ISSUES

Islam has gone through two principal periods of growth in its relatively young history: first, at the onset of its founding, and second, during the twentieth century. As one of the fastest growing religions in the world, Islam has affected every facet of human society.

Islam and Women

The role of women in Muslim societies is a complicated subject since their rights vary greatly throughout Islamic nations. While they may experience harsh restrictions in terms of legal rights and employment opportunities, women rulers have emerged in the twentieth century to lead Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Turkey (Frager 2002).

Women in Islam must accept that their roles in society vary greatly when compared to men. Foremost, they must remain obedient to their fathers and husband. A surah in the Quran depicts a woman’s father or husband as master and portrays the superiority of men on women.

All Muslims are required to observe the Five Pillars of Islam. However, congregational prayers tend to be dominated by men while this activity remains optional for women. It is prohibited for any woman to lead prayers. When a woman is having her usual menstrual period, she must not enter any mosque. In some countries, Muslim women are required to cover their face and bodies when in company with men other than their immediate kin.
Meanwhile, with so many restrictions imposed by society upon Muslim women, the Quran assures women the right to own, dispose, and inherit properties and earnings, to participate in political exercise, and to sue for divorce. In other words, a complete, legal identity is guaranteed by the Quran to Muslim women (Horrie & Chippindale 2003). Husbands are also encouraged to treat their wives well. Mothers must be treated in the best way possible as stated in Quranic teachings.

While the West has labeled Islam as anti-woman, the opposite may be true because of the religion’s pro-equality stance on many issues. For example, traditional Islamic law holds that women cannot be denied of education, cannot be forced into marriage, can divorce their husbands, and can vote and hold office. Unfortunately, there are Muslim societies that do not always measure up to Islamic standards (Frager 2002).

The Quran views women as spiritually equal to men. As both shall be assessed during the “Day of Judgment,” they must both perform good deeds. Nevertheless, despite the elevation in the status of women in Muslim society, they remain seemingly inferior to men. The Quran mentions the following with regard to the position of women:

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband’s) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) chastise them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for Allah is Most High, Great (above you all) (Quran 4:34).”


The Holy War (Jihad)
One controversial requirement placed upon Muslims by their faith concerns holy war or jihad. A frequently mistranslated term, jihad means “effort” or “struggle” to convince unbelievers to pursue the Muslim way of life (Fletcher 2003). Strictly speaking, it could mean a Muslim going to war to wipe out the infidels in the name of Allah (Hopfe 1983). However, the method of a jihadist can be a peaceful one, such as living a pious life or observing the required obligations to his faith, or through violent means, especially if the infidels are obstinate (Fletcher 2003). Presently, jihad has remained a vague issue especially now that Arab nations have been less than apprehensive to commit to war as unified Muslims versus non-Muslims (Hopfe 1983). Likewise, Islamic law opposes all violent means except in cases of war or legally sanctioned punishment of criminals (Frager 2002). The Quran contains the following verse in reference to Islam’s opposition to violence:
“Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors. (Quran 2:190)”


Militancy and Terrorism
Islam is a religion of mercy that prohibits terrorism. During Muhammad’s time, he proscribed his soldiers to kill women and children, and even listed murder as the second of the major sins (Ibrahim 1997). Punishment through the use of fire was also forbidden by Muhammad.

Since Islam is a religion of peace and mercy, terrorism in all its forms are abhorred by Muslims. Destruction of human lives, buildings, infrastructures, shrines, and other properties are despicable in the light of various Islamic texts (Ibrahim 1997). Muslims who promote terrorism and mass slaughter of innocent and helpless civilians do not embody Islamic ideals. Their blatant disregard of Quranic teachings distorts the very essence of Islam as a peaceful religion. The presence of violence in Islamic society cannot be attributed to the teachings of Islam but to the failings of human adherents of the religion (Frager 2002). A person committing an act of terrorism is guilty of violating Islamic laws for that matter.

Migration
The late nineteenth century saw a significant migration of Muslims from Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan to the US. After the Second World War, European countries encouraged emigration from former colonies to augment manpower shortages. United Kingdom today is home to more than two million Muslims; France between four to five million Muslims; and Germany four million Muslims (Frager 2002). In 2010, there were about 44 million Muslims in Europe, excluding Turkey.

The Muslim population in the US and Europe continues to rise in the present century. Islam has now become an American religion with around six million Muslims in population. Muslim immigrants and their American-born children number about four million in total. Meanwhile, almost two million are American converts that are mainly African American (Frager 2002).

Summary
• The history of Islam is closely bound with the life story of Muhammad who is recognized by the Muslims as the last of the prophets.
• The sacred writing of the Muslims is called Quran (or Koran in English) that literally means "recitation" or "reading."
• The basic obligations of Muslims are called the Five Pillars of Islam or arkan al-din and all Muslims believe and accept the entirety of these obligations. The Five Pillars give structure and unity to all believers of the Islamic religion.
• The major denominations of Islam include Sunni, Shi’a, and Sufi.
Critical Thinking

1. In what way is Islam similar to Christianity?
2. How do the Five Pillars of Islam give a sense of unity and structure to the religion as followed by all Muslims worldwide?
3. How do you think global terrorism affected Islam as a religion in the eyes of the world? What negative effects did it have on innocent Muslims in their everyday lives?

Assessment

A. True or False. Write T if the statement is true and F if the statement is false.

1. Muhammad ibn Abdullah worked as a camel driver across the Arabian Peninsula.
2. The longest surah has 268 ayahs.
3. Zayd ibn Thabit wrote on leather scraps, stone pieces, ribs of palm leaves, shoulder blades of animals, and paper.
4. The zakat must be 2.5% of a person’s entire asset.
5. Ritual washing or wudu is required before prayer.
6. The Quran is binding, continuous and supreme.
7. Muslims whose concern mainly dwell for a mystical union with God belong to Sunni Islam.
8. According to figh, human behavior may be classified into four categories.
9. Jihad means “effort” or “struggle” to convince unbelievers to pursue the Muslim way of life.
10. Salat is done before sunset, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset, and after midnight.

B. Match Column A with Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. known as the start of the Islam Calendar</td>
<td>a. Hadith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. declaration of belief</td>
<td>b. Kaaba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. annual wealth tax</td>
<td>c. &quot;Guardian&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. collective term for the remaining four duties</td>
<td>d. Shahada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “black stone”</td>
<td>e. Hijra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. direction of Mecca</td>
<td>f. Zakat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. authored the Sahih al-Bukhari</td>
<td>g. Ibadah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. those who memorized the Quran</td>
<td>h. Giblah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. traditional reports or sayings of Muhammad and his followers</td>
<td>i. Imam Bukhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. circling the Kaaba seven times in a counter-clockwise direction</td>
<td>j. Tawaf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Undertake a poster-making contest to spread awareness on Islam. You will be graded using the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The illustrations were appropriate to the theme.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the pictures and words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On to the Next Lesson**

In this lesson, you have been introduced to the teachings and core beliefs of the second largest group and one of the fastest growing religions in the world—Islam. You have learned how and why Muslims adhere strictly to their faith as they universally follow the “Five Pillars of Islam.” In the next lesson, we will study how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam manifest uniqueness and similarities—as well as their relevance in the world today.

**Sources**

**BOOKS**


**INTERNET SOURCES**


LESSON SEVEN
Comparative Analysis of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
To understand that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are unique religions but share similarities such as monotheism and tracing their common roots to Abraham.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
1. What are the manifestations of the uniqueness and similarities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?
2. Why do the three Abrahamic religions trace their common roots to the Patriarch Abraham?
3. How relevant are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the world today, with Christianity and Islam being the world’s most popular religions in terms of number of adherents?

The illustration below shows Abraham, the first of the three prophets and revered by the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) as a prophet of God. Both the Jews and Christians believe that he was ordered by God to leave the land of Ur in Mesopotamia and establish a new nation which was later called Canaan. He would eventually be considered as the “Father of Many Nations” both by the Jews and Christians. Meanwhile, Muslims view Abraham as a prophet of God and patriarch of many people, and father of Ishmael, known in Islam as a prophet and ancestor to Muhammad. Abraham is also the father of Isaac, considered as the physical and spiritual ancestor of Judaism, together with his son Jacob. The three monotheistic religions clearly trace their common roots from the Patriarch Abraham, hence the label Abrahamic religions.

Abraham was the tenth in descent from Noah. He was commanded by God to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in the land of Moriah.
**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are known as the Abrahamic religions. Using the ideas that you have learned from the previous lessons, list down four similarities and differences of the three Abrahamic religions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abrahamic Religions</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCEPT MAP**

The three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all originated from a region we now call Southwest Asia. They are also called Semitic religions since they came from an area where people speak the Semitic languages, particularly Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. Judaism originated from a land called Canaan; Christianity began in Palestine while Islam developed in Arabia. Looking back at the history of the three religions, we can see that they share commonalities in certain beliefs such as belief in the same Patriarch and other prophets; angels as messengers of God; heaven and hell; and judgment day, among others.
ORIGIN

Judaism is the oldest among the three Abrahamic religions, beginning at around 3,500 B.C.E. According to the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible, the ancient Israelites trace the origin of their nation and their religion as well to one family distinct from other groups of people in Southwest Asia by virtue of belief in one God. The patriarch of this family was Abraham, a nomadic shepherd who entered into a covenant with God—that being the “Father of All Nations” and heir to the Promised Land, which was Canaan. (Patriarchy is a system of society wherein the father or eldest male is considered the head of family and lineage is traced through the male line.) According to the narratives, Abraham and his wife Sarah took a long time before having a child, who was Isaac. Meanwhile, before Isaac was born Abraham had a son with Sarah’s lady-in-waiting, Hagar. They named their child Ishmael. Isaac married Rebecca and they had two children, Esau and Jacob, and from Jacob (who acquires the name Israel) came the 12 tribes of Israel. Ishmael, on the other hand, became the ancestor of the Arabs who later became Muslims. The Hebrew Bible further narrates how the 12 tribes of Israel founded the nation of Israel and Jacob, being the heir to the covenant, made a pact with God that they will be liberated from Egyptian enslavement if they will continue to follow God’s commandments.

The second oldest religion, Christianity, was formed around 33 C.E. in an area called Palestine. Christians trace their origins to Jesus Christ, born around 4 B.C.E. while the area was under the Roman Empire. It was a time characterized by social disorder, political turmoil, uprisings, poverty, heavy taxation, food shortage, and epidemics. To quell the rebellion and implement a semblance of order, those who participated in armed uprisings were crucified, which incidentally was how Jesus Christ was punished as well. In the midst of these sufferings, the Jewish people were secretly hoping and waiting for God to fulfil His promise—that of sending His Son to redeem them from their oppressive state. It was in this context that Jesus Christ was born and in his late twenties, started to preach about the coming of the Kingdom of God. He was baptized by another prophet, John the Baptist, and had 12 men as his disciples. His public ministry was considered a threat to Roman authority so he was arrested, whipped, and crucified as a penalty for what he did. According to the New Testament, Jesus was resurrected after three days and he ascended to the heavens but promised that he will come back in the same way that his disciples saw him go into heaven.

Islam, the youngest of the Abrahamic religions, started around 622 C.E., considered as the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The word Islam is an Arabic word which means “submission” or “surrender” and is also related to salaam, the Arabic word for “peace.” It originated from Mecca, which is found in the Arabian Peninsula, with Muhammad, considered the last prophet or “Seal of the Prophet.” It was in Mecca where Muhammad was born and raised by his uncle Abu Talib, worked as an assistant to a rich widow Khadija whom he later married, and meditated on certain social issues such as unequal distribution of wealth, leading to a great divide between the
rich and the poor, as well as the possession of slaves. It was during one of his visits to a cave that the angel Gabriel appeared before him, delivering the message of Allah that he was chosen to found a new religion and preach that Allah is the only God that should be worshipped. At first he thought he was just having a hallucination, but later on he was convinced that he was indeed chosen by God to spread his words so he began preaching in Mecca, where he won some converts. But his teaching of equality and brotherhood threatened the power of the rich Quraysh tribe so he was forced to escape to Medina to avoid persecution. This happened in 622 C.E. and was known as Hegira. From then on Islam gained followers and became one of the dominant religions in the world.

If we compare the origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, we can see that they share more commonalities than differences. For one, they all developed during a time of political turmoil and social inequalities (Egyptian enslavement of the Jews, Roman colonization of Christians, and the economic dominance of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca). The conditions in society were ripe for the birth of religions which would serve as the liberating force that would provide the people with hope for a better life. It is also noteworthy that all three religions developed belief in one God, or monotheism, with Judaism being the first monotheistic religion in the world. The first two religions, Judaism and Christianity, also emphasized the importance of having a covenant with God, and in a way we can say that it is also true with Islam because in the Quran, even though Adam and his wife were banished from paradise, Allah promised that they will have no reason to feel fear or grief if they will just follow God’s will, foremost of which was to worship only one God, Allah. The role of angels as messengers of God was also evident among the three religions, especially in Christianity when Angel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin Mary to tell her that she would bear the Messiah, and in Islam when Allah sent Angel Gabriel to tell Muhammad that he was chosen to be God’s last prophet. The story of creation was also shared by the three religions, with the universe and the first man and woman being created by God, but then they were tempted by evil and were banished from paradise, hence the need to follow God’s commandments to restore humanity’s relationship with God. Lastly, one of the most important commonalities is the belief in Abraham as the patriarch of the three religions—the “Father of Many Nations” for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He was the ideal follower of God for the three religions, for he followed God’s will unconditionally, even to the extent of sacrificing his own son when God ordered him to do so. In short, Jews, Christians, and Muslims trace their common ancestry to Abraham.

MORALITY
In Judaism, morality and ethics are based on the covenant between the Jews and God: that they are God’s chosen people and in return they should follow His commandments, specifically the Ten Commandments found in the Torah. Although there are around 613 commandments (mitzvoth) in the

WEBLINK
For a more comprehensive comparison on the origin of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, go to www.religionfacts.com/christianity-islam-judaism.
Torah, the Ten Commandments serve as a summary of all the laws found in the Torah. Hence, based on the Ten Commandments, murder, adultery, and theft, are prohibited, which are also forbidden in Christianity and Islam as well. Judaism also espouses retribution, or the philosophy “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” which served as the guiding principle of the famous Code of Hammurabi in ancient Babylon. This philosophy can be found in Exodus 21:2, but according to scholars, this should not be confused with belief in vengeance but equal compensation for damage or loss, often in the form of money and not physical harm. Treating others as you would have yourself treated by others also serves as a basis for Jewish morality and ethics. This stems from the belief that people were created in the likeness of God, therefore we all have goodness in ourselves that is why we should treat each other well. Lastly, morality and ethics in Judaism are also based in the Halakhah, a religious law that provides prescribed rules in everyday living, such as eating, praying, wedding and funeral rites, etc. Like the Ten Commandments, its essence also came from the 613 commandments found in the Torah.

Christianity shares a lot in common with Judaism since both religions use the Hebrew Bible, where the Ten Commandments were listed. Thus, in Christianity, murder, adultery, and theft are also considered evil and should be avoided if one wants to live a moral life. Aside from the Ten Commandments, Christianity also considers following in Jesus Christ’s footsteps as basis of morality. Since Jesus lived a life for others and even died on the cross for the salvation of humanity, Christians are also expected to live a life for others. After all, they were created in God’s image therefore people have an intrinsic goodness in them. Even in the Ten Commandments, what was emphasized was to love God above all else and to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Hence, living an exemplary life means following how Jesus lived. When one is led astray from God’s teachings, the Sacraments will help in reconciling oneself to God. For example, the Sacrament of Confession gives an opportunity for Christians to confess their sins to God through the priest and perform the necessary atonement for the forgiveness of their sins. Certain observances such as Lent also give Christians an opportunity to reflect on their lives and help them become better Christians. Unlike Judaism, Christianity does not advocate for retribution since Christians are advised to love their enemies.

Islamic concept of morality and ethics is based on having faith in one God, which is manifested in exhibiting righteousness and piety. A strong relationship with God is the key to achieving virtue and right conduct. Since Islam is considered not only as a religion but as a way of life as well, moral righteousness is expected of Muslims in their everyday lives. The following passage from the Quran explains the Islamic concept of morality:

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness—to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spread of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for your orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be
steadfast in your prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (and suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing (Al Quran 2:177).”

Hence, Islam values holiness, humility, and accountability to God, who is all-knowing. Charity is considered important, and this is reflected in one of the Five Pillars of Islam, the Zakat, in which Muslims are obliged to give alms to the less fortunate. Vanity is also discouraged, for it is a trait that is not pleasing to God, alongside attachment to material possessions on earth. Being accountable to God is also important for nothing can be hidden from Him, and He will be the one to judge people of their sins when the judgment day comes. Acts that contribute to the welfare of the individual in particular and of society in general are considered morally good, while acts that harm the individual and society are immoral.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a lot in terms of morality and ethics. First, emphasis on the worship of one God as the basis of morality. Second, concern for others as a manifestation of one’s love of God. Judaism and Christianity share the Ten Commandments as the written code of morality, with emphasis on the avoidance of committing murder, adultery, and theft. Meanwhile, based on the Quran, Islam emphasized the need to possess traits such as holiness and righteousness as guidelines in becoming morally good. Adherence to religious laws is also important and may pave the way for the eternal salvation or damnation of the soul, with emphasis on the judgment day as a way of ensuring that people obey the will of God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe that God is the only source of forgiveness for humanity and only those who follow the righteous path will go to heaven, while those who lived a life away from God will go to hell.

**PURPOSE**

Life’s purpose for Judaism is also based on the covenant between God and the people, particularly the Jewish people who were considered the “Chosen People of God.” And because they were chosen by God and created according to God’s image, Jews should strive to become god-like and possess the attributes and traits of God by being holy. Only when people achieve holiness, primarily by following the Ten Commandments, can they perform acts emulating God such as helping the needy and the oppressed. Thus, the ultimate purpose in life for the Jews was to praise God as the Creator of the universe and imitate God or become God-like. As God-like creatures, they have certain purposes in the world, the community, to themselves, to their families, and to God Himself. One’s purpose is to realize one’s full potential and realize who one is meant to be. Living in the likeness of God will guide Jews on how to treat themselves, their families, communities, and the world.

In Christianity, the purpose of life is to love and serve God, who created the universe purposefully so it is basically good. Since the creation was purposeful, everything and everyone is naturally important. Just like in Judaism, Christianity also advocates the belief that human beings were created in God’s image and this enables them to have some understanding of God and His

**TRIVIA**

Among the three Abrahamic religions, only Christianity has the concept of original sin, which humanity inherited from Adam and Eve when they disobeyed the order of God not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. All three religions believe, however, that although human beings are intrinsically good, they have the capacity to commit sins, but this does not diminish their chances of attaining salvation in the afterlife.
Abrahamic Religions

divine plan. God granted human beings with reason and free will, which they can use to have a glimpse of God’s divine plan but can also be used for selfish reasons. Since human beings are capable of committing sins, they can decide to follow God’s will or live a life of sins. But a person’s sin does not devalue a person in the eyes of God, for in Christianity it is believed that everyone is capable of redemption, including sinners.

As with Judaism and Christianity, the purpose of life according to Islam is to love and serve God. The fact that Islam means “surrender” means that a Muslim must submit to Allah and recognize that Mohammad is His prophet. This concept of submission can be literally observed in the way the Muslims worship: with their foreheads touching the ground in worship of Allah. God created the universe on purpose so that everyone and everything on it will serve God. When God created the first human beings, he gave them three divine gifts: intelligence, free will, and speech. The first is so human beings can distinguish between good and evil; the second is to be able to choose between good and evil; and the third is to have the capacity to worship God. But even though people are basically good, they can be tempted to commit sins. But since God is merciful and compassionate, people can be forgiven. Living a life in accordance to God’s plan will help people assist God in achieving His divine plan. They become worthy followers of God by doing good deeds, being honest, and obeying God’s will contained in the Quran and the law. Thus for Muslims, practicing Islam not only as a religion but as a way of life will bring a blissful life on earth and eternal salvation in the afterlife.

As we can see, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have commonalities with regard the purpose of life. All three religions believe that the main purpose of life is to worship and serve God, follow God’s will, and show this love of God by sharing with other people and helping the ones in need. Since we are all created in God’s image, our purpose is to live according to God’s ways, and even though we cannot imitate Him absolutely, we need not worry for He is always willing to forgive us of our sins. We should all strive to become worthy caretakers of everything God created and assist in implementing God’s divine plan.

DESTINY

Judaism believes in predetermination, which means that it is God who decides on a person’s basic lifespan, wealth, and opportunities, but it is still humanity’s free will that is the deciding factor. A person’s duty is to overcome evil by choosing goodness in everything he or she does. To allow people to choose goodness over evil, God allowed people into different stations in life. The main reason why God puts people in certain situations in life is for them to serve God according to their destiny. In that sense, God allows certain people to be rich and some to be poor, for this challenges the poor to rise above the economic challenges to do good and to serve God, while this puts the rich in an easier situation to serve God, and if they fail to serve God despite their advantageous circumstances, all the more will they be punished. In short,
God places each and everyone in different situations to challenge us to do our best in serving Him no matter what our circumstances are. Similarly, one’s lifespan is predetermined by God, but one’s lifestyle will be the deciding factor on whether God’s plan will succeed or not. God may prolong a wicked person’s life to give him/her more time to repent, or He may take it away even before his/her predestined time of death in order for him/her to stop doing wicked things. Similarly, a good person’s time on earth may be taken away earlier than God’s plan so that he/she will no longer fight the evil in himself/herself, or He may prolong his/her life so that he/she will continue to do good things for others. In the Hebrew Bible, it is written that, “There was the righteous man who perished in his righteousness, and there was the wicked man who lived long in his evil doing” (Ecclesiastes 7:15).

Christianity has a similar concept of destiny. God wanted all of humanity to be saved, for God created hell not for humans but for Satan and his demons (2 Peter 2:4). Therefore, it is humanity’s predestiny to be saved. (Predestination refers to the belief that all events are determined in advance by divine will or fate.) But since God also gave us free will, it is up to us to claim that salvation. For Roman Catholics, doing good deeds will merit salvation, while for Protestants, faith in Jesus Christ and accepting Him as his/her Savior will earn us eternal life. In the story of creation, Adam and Eve were predestined by God to live in paradise forever. But their free will made them choose the path of disobedience. Therefore, in Christianity, God may have the best plans for us, but our actions and decisions determine whether God’s plans will materialize or not. Salvation lies in our own hands because of free will. Parents set the rules for their children, but it is the children’s choice if they will follow their parents or not. And even if we are led astray because of not following them, they are always willing to accept and forgive us until we make the right choices in life. Similarly, God may have planned the best for us but even if we do not follow His plan, He is always willing to forgive us and give us another chance to start anew, until we discover the right path to righteousness and salvation.

In Islam, predestination is more emphasized than in Judaism and Christianity. We have mentioned in the previous subtopic that the three Abrahamic religions are unanimous in their belief that humanity was created to serve and love God. In fact, this is the reason why Islam is considered not only as a religion but as a way of life, and the life of a Muslim revolves around the worship of Allah. Just like in Judaism and Christianity, Muslims believe they are given free will by God which allows them to live their lives as they wish. But unlike Judaism and Christianity wherein free will might lead people to disobey God’s plan, in Islam even the decision they make out of free will is governed by God’s will. Muslims believe that if something is not meant by God to happen, it will not happen no matter how hard we try to make it happen. And if something is willed by God to happen, it will happen no matter how hard we try to prevent it from happening. Everything, even bad things such as massacre, torture, and disease, although not created by God, are allowed by God to happen for a certain purpose which only He compre-
hends; it may be to teach people a lesson, or to punish them for their wrong-
doings, or to serve as a warning for other people to repent. Belief in predes-
tiny also encourages humility, which is one of the traits valued in Islam. The
notion that everything is attributed to God hinders one from bragging about
one’s achievements in life by attributing it to God’s divine plan for him/her.

VIEWS ON WOMEN
It is equally important to look at how the Abrahamic religions view women.
After all, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all came from places where patri-
archy or the rule of the father is the norm. In the Hebrew Bible, there are
passages which show low regard for women, such as the passage wherein
women were viewed as unclean or impure for 40 days after giving birth to
a baby boy, and 80 days for the birth of a baby girl. Christianity, although
it traces its roots to the patriarch Abraham, tends to have a higher regard
for women, as shown by Jesus’ use of women as positive examples in most
parables. Islam, with its belief in Ummah or the community of believers that
is supposed to promote equality among all races, ethnicities, and genders, is
supposed to have a high regard for women. Let us now take a look at how
these religions view women.

Judaism, originating from a patriarchal society, propagates an unequal view
of men and women. Because of the belief that men are superior to women,
women were excluded from the priesthood and from numerous religious
duties. This is also because of their “natural” child-rearing functions (http://
www.patheos.com/Library/Judaism/Ethics-Morality-Community/Gender-
and-Sexuality.html). Aside from the impure state attributed to women when
giving birth especially to a girl, women are considered impure for about half
of each month because of menstruation. Divorce is also allowed in Judaism,
with men easily divorcing their wives.

Christianity is supposed to have a more positive regard for women, if we
are to analyze how Jesus treated women. In the New Testament, Jesus spoke
frequently to women and allowed them to be included in his followers. He also
preached that men and women have the equal capacity of eternal salvation
of the soul, and advised that everybody, regardless of sex, should not let
domestic chores hinder them from serving God. Historical developments
after the death and resurrection of Jesus, however, changed the course of
Christianity’s positive view of women, for after the conversion of the Roman
Emperor Constantine, it was the Roman Empire that became responsible for
the formation of the Christian Church, using the Roman political structures
as its model, which were very hierarchical and patriarchal. Thus, the role of
women in the Catholic Church was downplayed, to the extent of excluding
women from priesthood.

In theory, Islam treats men and women equally, for it is stated in the
Quran that men and women are equal in the eyes of God and are expected
to fulfill the same duties, such as prayer, worship, almsgiving, fasting, and
pilgrimage to Mecca. It is also stated in Islamic law that women should be
given dowry or property given by the husband upon marriage, and that

WEBLINK
Visit www.patheos.com/blogs/
friendlyatheist/201001/11/religions-
oppression-of-women and discuss
how the Abrahamic religions treat
women.
they have the right of inheritance and property ownership. There were also women political leaders in the history of Muslim expansion in West Asia and even in Europe. However, certain Islamic practices contradict the claim that Islam has a high regard for women. Some of these practices are the limited access to education, seclusion, strict veiling, polygyny (polygyny refers to a partnership wherein a man has many wives. This Islamic practice originated from Muhammad who decided that men should be allowed to have more than one wife to accommodate the widows and orphans of those who died in the wars participated by the Muslims), slavery, and concubinage, or the practice of having mistresses. In Islam, men are allowed to have up to four wives as long as they can support them financially and guarantee that they be treated equally. Meanwhile, women are allowed only one husband and if they are caught with another man, in some societies the punishment is public execution by stoning to death. It is also a practice in some Islamic societies that when a woman is raped, she must produce four witnesses to prove that she was indeed raped, and failure to do so would invalidate her case and penalize her by lashing in public. Strict veiling is also an issue raised by feminists against Islam—some societies require only the hijab or head covering worn in public by Muslim women; some require the burka, or a long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet. The practice of purdah or strict veiling of women in Islam is symbolic of their subordination and literally inhibits their social mobility.

In general, women are treated as subordinate to men in the three Abrahamic religions; they only differ in the levels of women subordination. It is ironic
that religions that have claimed to liberate people from oppression but fail to do so with their own women. Feminists have been critical of this low status accorded to women in religions and there are clamors for the status of women in religions to be reformed.

CONCLUSION
It goes without saying that the major world religions discussed in this chapter have become influential in the world up to the present time. Two of these monotheistic religions remain the most popular religions in the world in terms of number of adherents, with Christianity as the most popular, followed by Islam. Thus, the cultures which developed in these societies are heavily influenced by their religious doctrines and beliefs, especially since these religions are not only treated as religions but as ways of life. In fact, it has even been predicted that the conflict among civilizations would be based primarily on religion (Huntington 1996). Aside from this, these religions provide societies with public morality, which aids the state in maintaining peace and order among its citizens. Political configurations in certain regions of the world are also based on religion, such as countries in West Asia which are predominantly Islamic. Certain historical developments such as the holocaust, crusades, and holy wars have also been attributed to religion.

Summary

- Judaism originated from Israel; Christianity from Palestine; and Islam from Arabia. All three places are found in West Asia and the three religions developed at a time of oppression—the Jews from Egyptian enslavement; Christians from Roman colonization; and the Muslims from the inequality between the rich and the poor in Arabia.
- The three religions believe in: the laws of God as basis of their morality; the worship of God; and living a life emulating God’s ways which could reward them with eternal life.
- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe that the purpose of life is to serve and love God, for it is the primary purpose for which we are created in the first place.
- All three religions believe in predestination; with Judaism and Christianity emphasizing that although God has laid down His plans for us, it is free will that will dictate if that plan will materialize; meanwhile, Islam has a stronger sense of predestination, with the belief that everything that happens is according to God’s will in spite of free will given to humanity.
- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, coming from patriarchal societies, do not accord to women the same rights accorded to men. All three religions do not share religious leadership with women and have certain practices which show that women are subordinate to men.
Critical Thinking

1. What role did political structures play in the spread of Christianity and Islam in the world?
2. What is meant by being morally righteous in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? What is the reward for being morally upright in the three Abrahamic religions?
3. What is the purpose of existence for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?
4. How does the concept of predestiny in Christianity and Judaism differ from that of Islam?
5. What can be done to elevate the status of women in the three Abrahamic religions?

Assessment

A. Modified True or False. Write the word TRUE if the sentence is true. If not, write the word FALSE and replace the underlined word to make the sentence true.

_____ 1. Polygamy refers to a partnership wherein a man has many wives.
_____ 2. The exclusion of women in priesthood is a proof of Roman Catholicism's patriarchal nature.
_____ 3. Punishment for concubinage in some Islamic societies is stoning to death.
_____ 4. It was the Roman Empire which became responsible for the formation of the Catholic Church that is why it took the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of the government.
_____ 5. In Islam, the concept of ummah encourages humility because it reminds Muslims that everything happens according to God's plan.
_____ 6. Christians believe that because of predestiny, people are partly responsible for their salvation.
_____ 7. In Judaism, God allowed people into different stations in life to enable them to choose goodness over evil.
_____ 8. The New Testament narrates how the 12 tribes of Israel founded the nation of Israel.
_____ 9. Charity is important in Islam that is why Muslims practice Salat, or alms-giving.
_____ 10. Yom Kippur is Jewish religious law that provides normative rules in everyday living.

B. Identification. Write the letter of the correct answer.

a. Jews  
   f. Burka
b. Patriarchy  
   g. Hijab
c. Yom Kippur  
   h. Polygyny
d. Insha’Allah  
   i. Predestiny
e. Purdah  
   j. Ummah

_____ 1. Islamic practice of strict veiling
_____ 2. Long and loose covering used by Muslim women to hide their body, including the face
_____ 3. Head covering used by Muslim women
_____ 4. Belief that all events are determined in advance by divine will or fate
1. Concept of equality among all races, ethnicities, and genders
2. A partnership wherein a man has many wives
3. An expression which shows the Muslims’ belief that everything that happens is willed by God
4. Day of Atonement for the Jews
5. Chosen people of God
6. A system of society wherein the father or eldest male is considered the head of family and lineage is traced through the male line

C. Matching Type. Match the items in Column A with their corresponding answers in Column B. Write only the letter of the correct answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 one of Abraham’s wives</td>
<td>a. shmail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Last Prophet</td>
<td>b. Sarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Father of Israel</td>
<td>c. Muhammad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sarah’s lady in waiting</td>
<td>d. Rebecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Father of the Arab people</td>
<td>e. Jacob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mohammed’s uncle</td>
<td>f. Khadija</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Patriarch</td>
<td>g. Isaac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Abraham’s second son</td>
<td>h. Abu Talib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Wife of Isaac</td>
<td>i. Hagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Muhammad’s first wife</td>
<td>j. Abraham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Essay. Write an essay on how the position of women in the three Abrahamic religions may be improved. Use the rubric below as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Concepts are clearly used and explained.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Poster-making. Make a poster showing the commonalities among the three Abrahamic religions. Use the rubric below as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The illustrations were appropriate to the theme.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the pictures and words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, we have studied the comparative analysis of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). We will now turn our focus on the Dharmic religions (Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism) in the next chapter.

Sources

BOOKS

INTERNET SOURCES
One major commonality of dharmic religions is that they all emerged from the vast subcontinent of India, a land of complexity and diversity in terms of people, culture, practices, customs, and traditions. These religions include Hinduism and the two branches of Buddhism, the Theravada and Mahayana schools of thought. Central to their fundamental teachings are the belief in the dharma with each religion having their own special meaning for the term. Interestingly, the word dharma has no exact and specific translation in the western languages. For the Hindus, it could mean an individual’s appropriate behavior or duty to be fulfilled in observance of a custom or law. For the Buddhists, it could mean universal law and order, or the Buddha’s teaching itself. The unique character of each dharmic religion fascinates a great multitude of faithful followers all over the world. With its one billion adherents, most notably in India, Hinduism is the third world’s largest religion. On the other hand, Buddhism has a very strong following in Asian countries, most especially in East and Southeast Asia. This chapter will enable you to study the origins of these great religions, their fundamental teachings, the many challenges they confront at present, and the relevance of these religions in modern times.
Hinduism is the world’s third largest religion with around 15% of the entire population practicing the Hindu faith. Hindu followers in India comprise the major bulk with almost 80% of the country’s population adhering to the religion. Other Asian countries with considerable Hindu faithfuls include Nepal (23 million), Bangladesh (15 million), and Indonesia (3.9 million in Bali). There are also substantial number of Hindus in Mauritius, Guyana, Fiji, Bhutan, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and Sri Lanka. Hinduism was never a missionary religion unlike Christianity or Islam (Brown 1975). With the changing times, however, there have been proselytizing activities by Hindu missionaries in some Western cities.

Three other religions that sprung in India have their origins in Hinduism. Around sixth century B.C.E., Jainism and Buddhism appeared to challenge traditional Indian beliefs and practices. In the fifteenth century C.E., Sikhism arose that featured Hindu and Islamic influences.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
1. Hinduism is the world’s oldest organized religion that began on the Indian subcontinent with no specific moment of origin and no specific founder.
2. Hindu followers vary in their set of beliefs and practices as they accept the pluralistic nature of their traditions.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
1. Why is Hinduism considered a diverse and complex religion?
2. How do the Hindus manifest their spirituality amidst the variety of their traditions and freedom of beliefs?

Ramakrishna Paramhansa was an Indian mystic and yogi during the 19th-century. He was one of the foremost Hindu spiritual leaders of India.
MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

Hinduism is also known for its belief in different gods and goddesses. Draw a Hindu god or goddess. Write a four-sentence description of your chosen Hindu god or goddess and explain why you selected that god or goddess. Present your work to the class.

CONCEPT MAP

HINDUISM

- Sacred Scriptures
- Worship and Observances
- Beliefs and Doctrines
- Subdivisions

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hinduism is oftentimes considered as the oldest and most complex of all world religions. While the most active religions of the modern times may have started around the sixth century B.C.E. onward, elements and themes of Hindu belief may have begun around the third millennium B.C.E. In addition, unlike other major religions, Hinduism had no one identifiable founder (Hopfe 1983).

The term *Hindu* originated from the Persian word *hindu* (in Sanskrit *sindhu*) which means “river.” It also refers to the people of the Indus Valley—the Indians (Bowker 1997). The name *Hinduism* was given in the nineteenth century to describe the wide array of belief systems in India. Hinduism was originally known as “Arya Dharma” or the “Aryan Way.”

As early as 3000 B.C.E., there were already thriving civilizations in India, such as those discovered in the ancient Punjab city of Harappa and in Mohenjo-Daro along the Indus. However, we know very little about the belief system of these early people (Brown 1975). Historically, the foundations of Hinduism may have originated from the customs of the early peoples of the Indus valley around 2500 B.C.E. to 1500 B.C.E., in the more advanced culture of the Dravidians, and from the Aryans who invaded northwest India around 1500 B.C.E. (Bowker 1997).

In the 1920s, archaeological excavations in the two pre-Aryan cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro revealed that the natives already had a flourishing civilization with their agricultural cities characterized by well-planned streets with drainage systems. Unfortunately, despite having a written language, it has not yet been deciphered. As a result, vital information concerning
the pre-Aryan life and religious beliefs has been elusive. Our knowledge of pre-Aryan belief can be seen from the numerous statues and amulets recovered by archaeologists. Images of fertility gods and goddesses are noticeable from these artefacts while some figures appear in the lotus position which was later absorbed by yoga Hinduism and other sects. Later elements of Hinduism may have taken shape from the practices of pre-Aryan people who were already civilized city dwellers (Hopfe 1983).

Between 1750 B.C.E. and 1200 B.C.E., Aryan conquerors moved to the Indus Valley and brought with them their own set of beliefs that eventually mingled with the religion of the natives. Classical Hinduism resulted in the amalgamation of their faiths. Around sixth century B.C.E., they began to settle into cities while local leaders started organizing small kingdoms for themselves (Hopfe 1983).

Aryans brought with them their set of beliefs based on oral texts known as Vedas. This Vedic literature, however, was chiefly composed at the time the Aryans had already settled in India and blended with the natives. Admittedly, there is much difficulty in identifying elements in the Vedas that are genuinely pre-Aryan or Aryan influenced. However, certain fundamental assumptions about the Aryan religion can be stated here. Firstly, the Aryans brought with them a polytheistic religion similar to that of other Indo-European peoples. The sun, the moon and storms, are personified in reference to the pantheon of gods and goddesses worshipped by the Aryans. Secondly, sacrifice was the principal form of worship to the Aryan gods. Offerings to gods include animals and dairy products performed on altars in open spaces. Since Aryans were nomadic, they had no temples (Hopfe 1983). In general, Hinduism has pre-Aryan and Aryan elements that date back to ancient times.

SACRED SCRIPTURES
The sacred texts of Hinduism have been principally passed down throughout generations by way of music, recitation, dance, and drama. Sanskrit has been the language of the earliest writings (Coogan 2005). The sacred writings of the Hindus are categorized into two classes, the shruti and smriti.

SHRUTI
Shruti literally means “that which is heard.” They are regarded as eternal truths that were passed orally until the beginning of the present age wherein there came the need to write them down (Bowker 1997). The four collections of texts of the Vedas form the shruti and are considered primary sources and the most authoritative texts of the Hindu faith. Other writings that form part of shruti include the Samhitas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and a few Sutras.

Vedas
The four basic Vedic books, which are sacrificial hymns compiled from an earlier oral tradition, are composed of Rig-veda, Sama-veda, Yajur-veda, and Atharva-veda. The word Veda means “knowledge” or “sacred lore.”
The *Vedas* are the earliest known Sanskrit literature from the Brahmanic period and oldest scriptures of Hinduism. Scholars disagree as to when the Vedas were first written. The earliest hymns may have been written around 2000 B.C.E. or before the arrival of the Aryans in the Indus Valley area. They may also have been written down between 1500 B.C.E. to 400 B.C.E. Ascertaining the exact period is difficult because these books may have been composed and passed orally for so many generations before they were first written down and eventually completed. In the great epic *Mahabharata*, Brahma was said to have created the *Vedas*.

Among the four *Vedas*, the *Rig-Veda* is the most important and oldest book that dates back to around 1500 B.C.E. to 1200 B.C.E. Apart from being the oldest work of literature in an Indo-European language, it is also the oldest living religious literature of the world (Parrinder 1971). The book is a collection of over a thousand hymns and more than thousand verses dedicated to the Aryan pantheon of gods. Table 8.1 lists some of the names of these deities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gods and Goddesses</th>
<th>Personifications or Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indra</td>
<td>leader of the devas or gods; the lord of heaven in Hinduism; god of rain and thunderstorms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agni</td>
<td>god of fire; messenger of the gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adityas</td>
<td>sun-gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitra</td>
<td>deity for honesty, friendship, contracts, and meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varuna</td>
<td>god of the water; god of law of the underwater world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ushas</td>
<td>deity of dawns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savitri</td>
<td>solar deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudra</td>
<td>deity of wind or storm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushan</td>
<td>solar deity; god of meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brihaspati</td>
<td>deity and religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surya</td>
<td>chief solar deity; the sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vayu</td>
<td>lord of the winds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apas</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parjanya</td>
<td>thunder and rain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 8.1**

*Names of Indian Gods and Goddesses*

*Yajur-Veda* or the “knowledge of rites” is the second book. Composed between 1200 B.C.E. to 1000 B.C.E., this book is a compilation of materials recited during rituals and sacrifices to deities.

The third book is *Sama-Veda* or the “knowledge of chants.” Dating back almost the same time as the *Yajur-Veda*, this book is a collection of verses from the basic hymns recited by priests during sacrifices.
Lastly, the fourth book is *Atharva-Veda* or “knowledge given by the sage Atharva” that date back around 1500 B.C.E. to 1000 B.C.E. This book contains rituals used in homes and popular prayers to gods. Seldom used in solemn ceremonies unlike the other three Vedas, the Atharva-Veda contains numerous spells and incantations for medicinal purposes and magical aids to victory in battle among others (Parrinder 1971).

Each *Vedas* consists of four main parts, the *Mantras, Brahmanas, Aranyakas*, and *Upanishads*. *Mantras* are hymns and chants for praising god. *Brahmanas* are explanations of the *Mantras* with detailed descriptions of the sacrificial ceremonies related to them. *Aranyakas* are meditations that explicate their meaning. *Upanishads* or secret teachings transcend rituals to elucidate the nature of the universe and human’s connectedness to it. The many teachings embedded in the *Upanishads* are called *Vedanta*, and these are teeming with spiritual truths (Brown 1987).

**Upanishads**

Forming the fourth part of the Vedas, the term *Upanishad* literally translates as “sitting down near” or “sitting close to” as it implies listening intently to the mystic teachings of a spiritual teacher who has fully understood the universal truths. It could also mean “brahma-knowledge” whereby ignorance is totally eliminated.

Within these amazing collection of writings that were transmitted orally through generations, one can find early philosophical statements that form the basis for all later Hindu philosophy. The great Indian nationalist and philosopher Sri Aurobindo described the *Upanishads* as the “supreme work of the Indian mind.” Varying in length from one page to over fifty pages, all fundamental teachings and concepts about Hinduism are found in these profound treatises—such as *karma* (action), *samsara* (reincarnation), *moksha* (nirvana), *atman* (soul), and *Brahman* (Absolute Almighty). Of the two hundred *Upanishads*, fourteen of these are considered principal writings. The earliest of the *Upanishads* may have originated in the ninth century B.C.E. while the most recent around the sixth century B.C.E. (Hopfe 1983).

**SMRITI**

*Smrīti* literally means “that which has been remembered.” These writings serve to reinforce *shruti* and are interpreted by sages and scholars alike. Most of these texts are sectarian in nature and considered of lesser importance compared to *shruti*, such as stories and legends, codes of conduct for the society, and guidebooks for worship. The great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, which contains the philosophical poem *Bhagavad Gita*, are part of *smrīti*. These are national epics of India and considered to be the sacred texts of the masses where they draw their values and ideals (Brown 1975).

**Ramayana**

The *Ramayana*, translated as the “Story of Rama” or “Rama’s Journey,” is a Sanskrit epic poem written by the poet Valmiki consisting of 24,000 verses in
seven books and 500 cantos. This great epic was written between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. Central to the story is Rama, a prince and later portrayed as avatar or incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, who was born in Ayodhya. Rama was exiled by his father on the eve of his coronation. Meanwhile, in the forest, Rama’s consort, Sita, was abducted by Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka. Rama struggles mightily to win Sita back. After a battle, Rama kills Ravana and reunites again with Sita. Returning to Ayodhya, they are crowned with Rama portrayed as the ideal king. Rama and Sita are the epitome of perfect man and woman. Meanwhile, Ravana symbolizes ambition and greed resulting in cosmic disorder and degradation of women and family (Bowker 1997).

Presently, this story is danced out and acted in Southeast Asia where Hindu influence is observable. Most characters are popular in Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia (Coogan 2005).

**Mahabharata**

Another major Sanskrit literature of old India is *Mahabharata* which is composed of around one hundred thousand verses making it the word’s longest poem. Written around 500 B.C.E., this magnificent work is attributed to the author Vyasa who is also considered to be the scribe of the *Vedas*.

The Mahabharata tells of a great struggle among the descendants of a king called Bharata, a name used by many Indians to mean “India” (Coogan 2005). Two families are at war, the Pandavas who represent good and the Kauravas who embody evil (Brown 1975). The hundred Kaurava brothers try to cheat their five cousins, the Pandavas, out of their share of the kingdom. As intense battle ensued, every kingdom had to take sides. With the help of
Krishna, another incarnation of Vishnu, the Pandavas emerged triumphant but lost all their sons and closest kin in battle (Coogan 2005).

With about 100,000 couplets and 1.8 million words in total, this poem is about four times longer than the Ramayana, eight times longer than the Iliad and the Odyssey put together, and fifteen times longer than the Bible. Along with the Bible and the Quran, the Mahabharata ranks in importance among the sacred writings of various world religions. It is an epic vision of the human condition, such as intrigue, romance, duplicity, moral collapse, dishonour, and lamentations (Kolanad 1994).

Bhagavad Gita
A celebrated episode within the Mahabharata is the Bhagavad Gita (or simply Gita) which is translated as “the Lord’s Song.” It is believed to have been written between the second century B.C.E. and third century C.E.

Considered as one of the holiest books by the Hindus, the Gita is a 700-verse narrative of a dialogue between the Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide-cousin Krishna. Just as the war is about to commence at Kurukshetra, Arjuna is troubled at the thought of having to fight his relatives and contemplates his fate and struggles set before him. He then seeks the opinion of his charioteer Krishna who asserts the righteousness of the act while expounding the moral and philosophical consequences of human actions. Their conversations in the battlefield, found between chapters 25 and 42, comprise about eighteen chapters and constitute the Bhagavad Gita.

The Gita instructs any person that one may reach god through devotion, knowledge, or selfless action (Coogan 2005). Humans must do their duty or dharma whatever it may be and whatever results it could produce. The Gita is considered the layman’s Upanishads because the difficult teachings of the Upanishads are presented here in a manner that commoners can understand (Brown 1975).

BELIEFS AND DOCTRINES
The Hindu faith offers its followers many paths to salvation. They may find liberation from the cycle of life through devotion to one or more gods. Gods and goddesses can be worshipped at their temples. In temples, devotees can pray and offer sacrifices so that they can gain favor from deities and assist them in their struggle for salvation. Bhakti stands for the soul’s longing for and clinging to god (Brown 1975).

Devotion to the Trimurti
Central to Hinduism is the Brahma who is the ultimate reality, one and undivided (Hopfe 1983). The Brahma is often seen in three forms or functions. Called the Trimurti, these are creation, preservation, and destruction. These functions are expressed in god forms, namely, Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the destroyer.

Though widely respected and recognized as the creator of the universe, Brahma receives the least attention among the trimurti. In fact, only two
temples are dedicated to him in India and he has no cult of devotees (Hopfe 1983). He is not worshiped in the same way as other gods because he has done his task and will not come into his own until the next creation of the universe (Bowker 1997). When depicted, Brahma has four heads and eight hands. His chief consort is Saraswati, the goddess of science and wisdom. Brahma’s vehicle is a swan or goose which symbolizes knowledge.

Known as a god of love, benevolence, and forgiveness, Vishnu’s primary concern is humanity itself. As the preserver, the creation is withdrawn to a seed whenever he sleeps but rises again as he wakes up. He is worshiped in various forms of his incarnations or avatars. Based on mythology, Vishnu has appeared on earth in nine different forms and will come a tenth time to end the present era or kalpa, to bring the world to an end, and then recreate it. These manifestations of Vishnu are intended to help humanity with his preserving, restoring, and protecting powers. Table 8.2 lists the 10 avatars of Vishnu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incarnation</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>fish</td>
<td>saved humanity and the sacred Veda texts from flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurma</td>
<td>turtle</td>
<td>helped create the world by supporting it on his back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varaha</td>
<td>boar</td>
<td>raised the earth out of water with his tusks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narasimha</td>
<td>half-man, half-lion</td>
<td>destroyed a tyrant king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamana</td>
<td>dwarf</td>
<td>subdued king Bali, a powerful demon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parshurama</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>destroyed the warrior class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rama</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>rescued his wife Sita and killed the demon Ravana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>told the epic poem Bhagavad Gita to the warrior Arjuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>the enlightened man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalki</td>
<td>horse</td>
<td>yet to come to earth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Hindu sacred writings, Vishnu is depicted as having four arms and with a dark complexion. His most popular manifestation is Krishna who is blue, the color of infinity, and plays the flute (Kolanad 1994). Vishnu’s consort is Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, who is seated on a lotus between two elephants with their trunks raised above her. Both Vishnu and Lakshmi ride the eagle mount or kite Garuda, the symbol of the sky and the sun. The snake in Garuda’s claws represents water.

As the destroyer and the god of death, destruction, and disease, Shiva is the third in the Trimurti. His functions are many. He is also god of dance, vegetable, animal, and human reproduction (Hopfe 1983). In Hindu belief, death is but a prelude to birth, hence, the god of death is also the god often revered through the lingam, the male energy surrounded by the yoni, the female source of energy (Bowker 1997). In mythology, he is described as having a constantly erect penis and sexually alert at all times (Hopfe 1983).
Equally popular as Shiva are his many consorts that express the differing elements of his character. Perhaps the most terrifying of his consorts is Kali depicted as wearing a garland of human skulls, tearing the flesh of sacrificed victims, and drinking blood. Although wild and violent, Kali is frequently the subject of intense devotion. Kali is also the ferocious form of consorts Durga and Parvati. Durga is a powerful goddess created from the combined forces of the anger of several gods. Meanwhile, Parvati, the daughter of the sacred mountain Himalaya and the goddess of love, fertility, and devotion, is the most modest, conservative, and benign of Shiva’s consorts (Bowker 1997). Her sons with Shiva include Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity revered as the remover of obstacles, and Kartikeya, the Hindu god of war.

Routes to Moksha

From the Upanishads one may find the three principal and inter-related doctrines within the Indian religion. Firstly, every soul dies and is reborn anew in new form (this cycle is called samsara). Second, one’s deeds have an effect in this or a future life. Lastly, one may escape the weary round of death and birth (Parrinder 1971).

Within every human is an eternal soul or atman that is being reborn many times and in various forms in accordance to the moral law or karma (Bowker 1997). A soul may escape the cycle of rebirth and attain moksha. This particular liberation can be achieved through the four yogas that involve a system of practices aimed at producing spiritual enlightenment. The word yoga is derived from the root word yuj which translates as “to yoke” or “to join.” The philosophy of yoga was developed by the sage Patanjali who lived in the second century B.C.E. He is considered as the “father of modern yoga” as he codified the teachings of yoga in his Yoga Sutra (Hopfe 1983). Table 8.3 lists down the four yogas with their corresponding practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Four Yogas</th>
<th>Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jnana Yoga (The Way of Knowledge)</td>
<td>The path of knowledge, wisdom, introspection, and contemplation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhakti Yoga (The Way of Love)</td>
<td>The path of devotion, emotion, love, compassion, and service to God and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma Yoga (The Way of Work)</td>
<td>The path of action, service to others, mindfulness, and remembering the levels of our being while fulfilling our actions or karma in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raja Yoga (The Way of Meditation)</td>
<td>The path of meditation that directly deals with the encountering and transcending thoughts of the mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


For all Hindus, there are four desirable goals of life or purushartha. These are dharma (appropriate behavior), artha (the pursuit of legitimate worldly success), kama (the pursuit of legitimate pleasure), and moksha (release from rebirth). The terminal stage involves the liberation from the bonds of flesh and the limitations of death-bound life (Brown 1975). By faithfully performing duties in social and family life, this involves one person pursuing artha or appropriate worldly prosperity and material well-being. A person...
must also rightfully satisfy the demand for enjoyment and pleasure or *kama*. In all goals, one must be guided by righteousness or *dharma* toward achieving *moksha*. A person who achieves *moksha* while in life is a free soul or *jivan-mukta*.

**WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES**

Hindu scriptures state that there are 330 million gods or *devas* (Kolanad 1994). These include manifestations of natural phenomena, evil forces, and even illnesses. Others are venerated humans or town deities. Hindu worship or *puja* involves images (*murtis*), prayers (*mantras*), and diagrams of the universe (*yantras*) (Bowker 1997). Integral to Hindu worship are the sacred images and temples believed to house and represent the deities. These images can be revered in homes or temples with a host of intermediary priests, holy men, and religious teachers (Kolanad 1994).

However, most Hindus worship individually involving *mantras* or vibrating sounds that summon the deity and the *prasad* or gift offerings (Bowker 1997). Vital to Hindu worship is *darshan* that pertaining to seeing and being in the presence of deity. In temples, ceremonies may be in the form of offering a flame, milk, or honey, and even reciting chants and music. While worship may be undertaken any day of the week, Thursday is considered to be the most opportune day.

Hindus celebrate a number of festivals that are based on the Hindu calendar and often related to seasonal changes. Main festivals include *Holi*, *Diwali*, and *Dusserah*. The *Diwali* or “Festival of Lights” is India’s biggest and most important holiday of the year held in October or November that is similar to the Christmas holiday of the Christians. Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that safeguards the people from evil forces.

Meanwhile, there are also many local and regional festivals, such as harvest and deity festivals, marked by colourful processions and performances. Table 8.4 lists down several festivals celebrated by Hindus in a year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Name of Festival</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Lohri</td>
<td>Celebrated in the Punjab, this marks the end of winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Pongal-Sankranti</td>
<td>A feast held in south India to celebrate the rice harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Holi</td>
<td>The national celebration of spring and the New Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Shivaratri</td>
<td>A national honoring of Shiva; Worshippers fast during the day, and an all-night vigil is held at Shiva temples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Sri Vaishnavas</td>
<td>An honouring of Vishnu and his consort Sri, celebrated in Madras at the beginning of the hot season; Images of Vishnu are taken from the temples to the seashore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Rathyatra</td>
<td>The birthday of Lord Jagannath, celebrated with chariots in Puri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>The birthday of Krishna, celebrated nationally; Worshippers fast during the day and break the fast in the evening, following a special puja, or worship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 8.4**

Hindu Festivals
Pilgrimages are also undertaken by Hindus throughout India to visit the sacred shrines of their deities. These include rivers, mountains, and temples. The city of Varanasi, also called Benares, is the most important and sacred pilgrimage site in India and is considered as the home of Shiva. Many people come and live in the city until they die to manifest their exceptional devotion. Other popular sites include Kurukshetra (the place of the great war in Mahabharata), Ayodhya (the old capital of Rama), and Mathura (Krishna’s birthplace).

SUBDIVISIONS
Followers of Hinduism vary in their set of beliefs and practices, including reverence to a particular god. Presently, there are four principal denominations within the Hindu faith. These are Shaivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, and Smartism. It is important to note, however, that while these gods have different names, Hindus all worship one supreme being.

Each sect has its own religious leaders, sacred texts, schools, and temples. While there is indeed variety and key differences among sects, adherents of these denominations share the pervading beliefs concerning karma, dharma, reincarnation, and other key Hindu concepts and philosophy.

Shaivism
Lord Shiva, the Compassionate One, is God for the Saivites. Followers of Shaivism value self-discipline and philosophy. They worship in temples and practice yoga.

Shaktism
The Goddess Shakti is supreme for Shaktas. She is the divine mother and assumes many forms, be it a gentle one or a fierce deity. Believers use chants, magic, and yoga to summon cosmic forces.

Vaishnavism
Lord Vishnu is God for the Vaishnavites, especially in his incarnations Krishna and Rama. Adherents have multitudes of saints, temples, and sacred texts.

Smartism
For the Smartas, devotees are left to choose their own deity in one of six manifestations, namely, Ganesha, Siva, Shakti, Vishnu, Surya, and Skanda. Smartas are known as liberals as they embrace all major Hindu gods.
SELECTED ISSUES
Hinduism continues to be the religion of almost 80% of the Indian people. While mostly comprised of Hindu followers, India is a secular state that remains neutral in issues involving religious convictions and practices of its citizenry. All Indians are allowed to follow and propagate their own set of beliefs. Being a country with the largest adherents of Hinduism, India is presently facing numerous challenges that are religious in character, some of which are below.

Hinduism and Women
Even though the *Manusmriti* or the “Laws of Manu” states that women should be honored in Hindu society, women have always been considered inferior to men in almost all aspects of life. A woman’s life revolves around the men in her life, to be taken care of by her father in childhood, by her husband in married life, and by her sons upon old age. Thus, women are relegated to performing household chores and are expected to become loyal to their husbands, even after their husbands die. In traditional society, women are expected to perform *sati* or suttee wherein widowed women are expected to jump on the funeral pyre of their husbands to prove their loyalty and help save the soul of their husbands in the afterlife. In spite of the fact that *sati* was already demolished by the British in India, there are still cases of *sati* being reported in modern times.

Caste System
The caste system is one major distinguishing feature of Indian culture that still affects modern-day society. A system of social class composed of the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*, opportunities are based upon family origin. One person belongs to a caste by being born to parents of that particular caste (Hopfe 1983).

This has been an issue of distinctive concern for the reformers of the caste system. While full-blown divisions are relatively a modern development, the caste system began to divide into thousands of castes that are sometimes based on occupations. A person’s diet, vocation, and residence are dictated by the caste where he or she belongs. There can be more than 3,000 separate castes in India (Hopfe 1983).

However, the most deplorable group are those persons that do not belong to any group—those that are disparagingly called as “outcasts” or “untouchables.” Also known as *dalits*, they are highly ostracized in society. They perform the most menial of jobs, such as street sweepers, latrine cleaners, and handlers of the dead. These jobs receive the lowest wages and have the most appalling living conditions (Hopfe 1983).

The teachings of Hinduism may have justified the status of the outcastes. Their present condition may have been caused by their accumulated *karma* from the past. By fulfilling their duties and accepting their *dharma*, they may be born to a better caste in their next lives.
Despite the negative backlash on the caste system, India has been receptive in enacting legislation aimed at eradicating inherent social evils. For example, untouchability has been banned and the caste system is no longer rigid. The Indian constitution has provided that it is unlawful to discriminate against lower castes. Lower caste members are now being elected to key government positions, including Kocherii R. Narayanan, a dalit who became the tenth president of India from 1997 to 2002.

Summary

• Hinduism is oftentimes considered as the oldest and most complex of all world religions. Hinduism has no single founder, no specific theological system, and no single sacred text.
• The concept of dharma is closely linked to the Hindu religion. It is the power that preserves the society.
• The sacred writings of the Hindus are categorized into shruti and smriti. Shruti literally means “that which is heard” and are regarded as eternal truths that were passed orally. The four books of Vedas are part of the shruti. Meanwhile, smriti literally means “that which has been remembered” and these are writings that serve to reinforce shruti.
• Fundamental to Hindu teachings are the doctrines of samsara (the cycle of rebirth) and karma (the universal law of causality).
• Apart from recognizing a vast assortment of Indian deities, the Hindus believe in the trimurti (trinity) composed of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Integral to Hindu worship are the sacred images and temples believed to house and represent the deities.

Critical Thinking

1. What makes Hinduism’s beliefs, particularly its polytheistic nature, complex for other people?
2. Why do you think Hinduism is mainly concentrated on India?
3. How did Hinduism strengthen the caste system? Do you think the caste system will exist in countries that embrace a different religion? Why or why not?

Assessment

A. True or False. Write T if the statement is true and F if the statement is false.

1. In Hinduism, one may skip the cycle of rebirth or incarnation.  ____
2. There are over 500 million devas or gods in Hinduism.  ____
3. The Ramayana contains 24000 verses in 6 books.  ____
4. Vishnu is the god of love, benevolence, and forgiveness.  ____
5. Kocherii R. Narayanan is a dalit who became the tenth president of India from 1997 to 2002.  ____
6. Brahma is the founder of Hinduism.  ____
7. The ‘Festival of Lights’ is held annually around August or September.
8. Those who practice Shaivism value self-discipline and philosophy.
9. The Vedas were passed down through written texts.
10. Bhagavad Gita is also known as “the Lord’s Song.”

B. Fill in the blanks with the correct answer.
1. The **Upanishads** include fundamental teachings in Hinduism such as **karma** (action), **reincarnation**, **moksha** (nirvana), **atman** (soul), and **Brahman** (Absolute Almighty).
2. Hinduism is the world’s third largest religion with around _______% of the entire population practicing the Hindu faith.
3. _______ is also known as the “layman’s Upanishad”.
4. Brahma’s chief consort is _______, the goddess of science and wisdom.
5. The word **yoga** is derived from the root word ________, which translates as “to yoke” or “to join”.
6. _______ city is the most sacred pilgrimage site in India which is considered the home of Shiva.
7. _______ teaches to choose one’s own deity and embrace all Hindu gods.
8. Hinduism was originally known as “_________” or the “Aryan Way”.
9. Among the four Vedas, the _______ is the most important and oldest book that dates back to around 1500 B.C.E. to 1200 B.C.E.
10. For all Hindus, there are four desirable goals of life or _______.

C. Divide the class into four groups. Report about one of the four yogas. Grade using the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The different practices were thoroughly explained and examples were provided.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the words used.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 20**

**On to the Next Lesson**

In this lesson, you have learned what Hinduism is all about, and how this world’s oldest religion is considered a diverse and complex religion. We have also discussed how Hindus manifest their spirituality amidst the variety of their traditions and freedom of beliefs. In the next lesson, we will study Theravada Buddhism and how its followers strictly adhere to the original practices and doctrines preached by Siddharta Gautama, a sage on whose teachings Buddhism was founded.
Sources

INTERNET SOURCES

LESSON NINE

Theravada Buddhism

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
1. Theravada Buddhism is a major Buddhist sect that adheres to the original practices and doctrines preached by Siddhartha Gautama.
2. Attainment of salvation for any Buddhist is by way of one’s own action without the assistance of any supreme or supernatural being.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
1. How is the life-story of Siddhartha Gautama incorporated into the teachings of Buddhism?
2. How is one’s salvation attained in Buddhism?

Buddhism is one of the most practical among the world’s great religions because its belief system intends to meet basic human needs and solve humankind’s spiritual problem without depending on supernatural forces (Brown 1975). The two main divisions of the religion are Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. With around 360 million followers, Mahayana Buddhism is practiced in China, Japan, and Mongolia. Meanwhile, Theravada Buddhism, with 150 million adherents, is followed in Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Buddhism is the religion of around 500 million people or about 7% to 8% of the world’s population. Buddhist followers are mostly found in the Asian continent, with China having the largest population at around 244 million or 18% of its total population. Asian countries that have the highest Buddhist majority in terms of population include Cambodia (97%), Thailand (93%), Myanmar (80%), Bhutan (75%), Sri Lanka (69%), and Laos (66%). Buddhism has two main divisions and many sects.

A major branch of the religion, Theravada Buddhism (“school of elder monks” or “school of the ancients”) or the “Southern School of Buddhism” draws on the collected teachings of the oldest recorded texts of Buddhist texts to become its central precept, the Pali Canon. This school claims to have preserved the original teachings of Siddhartha with pristine purity (Clasper 1992). Theravada Buddhism has gained considerable following in the West in modern times.
**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**

Divide the class into four groups. Each group will get a copy of the “Ten Commandments” and the “Noble Eightfold Path.” Using a Venn diagram, each group will illustrate the similarities and differences of the “Ten Commandments” and “Noble Eightfold Path.”

**CONCEPT MAP**

![Concept Map]

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Buddhism has been in existence for over 2,500 years and has never experienced any drastic or radical schisms in its evolution (Toula-Breysse 2001). As the disciples of Siddhartha Gautama spread his word and preached throughout various communities, there came a need for them to adapt to local culture, politics, and economic context. Emerging branches of Buddhism had become adjusted to the milieu of the place. They may differ on the doctrines of Buddhism but their relationships with other subgroups are generally good (Toula-Breysse 2001). The basic tenets of both major schools of thought originate from Siddhartha Gautama whose life has become a constant source of inspiration to others (Brown 1975).

**Life of the Buddha**

The sage Siddhartha Gautama may have been born between 563 B.C.E. to 480 B.C.E. into the Sakya tribe in Lumbini (in present-day Nepal) near the town of Kapilavastu (the capital city of the Sakya state) in the foothills of the Nepalese Himalayas (Kulananda 2001). Born into the Kshatriya caste, his father was Suddhodana, an aristocratic Hindu chieftain, and his mother was Mahamaya, a Koliyan princess. The Buddha’s family name was Gautama or Gotama. According to tradition, at the time when Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Mahamaya dreamt of a brilliant white light shining down on her from the sky. In the rays of the light was a magnificent white elephant with six large tusks. The elephant moved closer to the queen and melted into her body.

Ten months later, Siddhartha was born. He emerged from the side of the queen, took seven steps, and said, “I have been born to achieve awakening
Mahamaya died shortly after giving birth to Siddhartha, also known as Sakyamuni or the "sage of the Sakya clan." The name ‘Siddhartha’ means “he who achieves his aim.” He was reared by Mahamaya’s younger sister Mahapajapati who became his father’s second wife and the first woman to request ordination from the Buddha. The word “Buddha” means “the awakened one” or the “enlightened one.”

At the time of his birth, the seer Asita predicted that the child was destined for either political or spiritual ascendancy (Skilton 1994; Kulananda 2001). Since Suddhodana wanted Siddhartha to choose the life of a great king, he made sure that the young boy experienced the comfort of wealth and power. In effect, Suddhodana kept his child shielded from the harsh realities of human suffering outside the luxurious palace. He was given noble education and instruction in science, horsemanship, and archery (Toula-Breysse 2001).

At the age of sixteen, Suddhodana arranged Siddhartha’s marriage to a beautiful and refined young woman, Yasodhara (also Siddhartha’s cousin), who later gave birth to their son Rahula. Siddhartha spent 29 years as a prince in Kapilavastu and he began to develop a keen sense of discontent. As he felt constant emptiness despite living a life of luxury and ease, he sought answers to his questions by leaving his comfortable abode without the knowledge or approval of his family. He left his wife, child, and social status as he began to search for truth and liberation (Kulananda 2001).

Siddhartha’s venture outside the comfort of the palace led him to encounter four suffering people that eventually transformed his outlook on life (Brown 1975). The four encounters or the “Four Signs” that occurred made him realize the inevitability of misery in people’s lives. First, meeting an old man made him accept that old age was an unavoidable circumstance no matter how unwelcome it is to a person. Second, a crippled man reflected upon him that illness is inescapable despite a person’s relentless effort to avoid any disease. Third, a decaying corpse made him understand that death was the inevitable end of all. Last, an ascetic monk or shramana impressed upon him the person’s tranquillity and the possibility of renouncing worldly pleasures in exchange for utter quietude. All these distressing manifestations convinced him that worldly and material possessions could not satisfy one’s need. Taking his finest horse, he rode off into the night. He cut his hair and beard, and sent them back with the horse through his charioteer (Hopfe 1983). Ultimately, he renounced the members of his caste despite his father’s resistance and he resolved to become a mendicant, a beggar of alms. Also known as the “Great Renunciation,” he lived as an ascetic with homeless existence (Bowker 1997). He went to the forest and clothed himself in the yellow robes of a hermit (Brown 1975).

Siddhartha practiced asceticism in search of a way to escape suffering. Far withdrawn from his accustomed environment, he lived at the outskirts of society and associated himself with religious masters, such as Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta (Skilton 1994). As he became dissatisfied with their teachings, however, he went on his own way to subject himself to inexorable
asceticism through self-mortification and fasting that reached a point of living on a single grain of rice per day (Toula-Breysse 2001; Hopfe 1983). For the next six years, he practiced religious strictness, wore no clothes, and did not wash (Kulananda 2001). Food and sleep became scarce. Naturally, he became emaciated and feeble as a result of long periods of starvation, to the point that he almost died. Five ascetics came to join him as his companions. All these actions made him realize the absurdity of excessive asceticism and that the life of deprivation was no better than a life of pleasure. As he began to take normal foods once more, his ascetic companions felt scandalized by his backsliding and deserted him. In the end, Siddhartha advocated the avoidance of two extremes, namely, self-indulgence and self-denial, and taught the way toward the “Middle Path” that was a life of self-discipline and introspection but not self-flagellation (Losch 2001).

Seated beneath a pípal tree, now known as the bo or bodhi tree, near the Indian village of Bodh Gaya in Bihar, Siddhartha finally obtained his enlightenment after years of searching as he passed the four stages of meditative trance or dhyanā/jhāna. Buddhist legend recounts his triumph over the devil Mara who personified evil forces that torment the minds of humankind, including greed, hatred, ignorance, jealousy, and doubt. Despite the many attempts of Mara to disturb Siddhartha’s firm meditation, appearing as storms and rains, the devil was vanquished and faded like a bad dream. Mara failed to tempt Siddhartha with wealth and flesh; he could not break the calm determination of the seeker of the truth. After 49 days of meditation, Siddhartha emerged victorious and attained the state of absolute awakening. He became a “Buddha” or the “awakened one” whose every action from thereon would be motivated only by generosity, compassion, and wisdom (Toula-Breysse 2001). He had visions of the endless cycle of birth and death that was the fate of humankind (Hopfe 1983). Siddhartha was 35 years old when he attained enlightenment.

Walking more than a hundred miles to Sarnath near the ancient city of Varanasi, he met his former disciples whom he was able to convince about the truth of his teachings. A new spiritual community or sangha sprang forth and soon there were sixty enlightened beings in the world (Kulananda 2001). Siddhartha preached throughout the regions of India, such as Magadha and Kosala. For 45 years, he travelled northern India to the cities and towns of the central Ganges basin, and preached a message of hope and happiness while winning many new converts to his fold (Brown 1975; Skilton 1994).

Siddhartha lived and preached during the reign of Bimbisara, the ruler of the Magadha Empire from 542 B.C.E. to 492 B.C.E. The king, a great friend and protector of Siddhartha, established the city of Rajgir that became well-known because of Buddhist writings. With only about two hours of sleep at night, he scarcely had any rest in his mission to propagate his teachings to the people.

At age 80 and on a full moon, Siddhartha died in Kushinagar between 483 B.C.E. to 400 B.C.E. during the early years of Ajasatru (Bimbisara’s successor) who ruled around 492 B.C.E. to 460 B.C.E. Tradition has it that
his final words were, “Subject to decay are all component things. Strive earnestly to work out your own salvation (Hopfe 1983).” The cause of death was a meal received from a metalworker that led to dysentery. His remains were cremated seven days after and the ashes were divided among eight clan-groups as they built a sacred cairn over their portion of the relic (Parrinder 1971). The memorial mound or stupa became an object of devotion for Buddhists that developed later on as pagoda in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

In 486 B.C.E. five hundred leading and all enlightened disciples of Siddhartha convened in Rajgir to compile the teachings under the guidance of Mahakasyapa, one of his principal disciples (Mizuno1987). Known as the “First Buddhist Council,” the assembly restated and accumulated Siddhartha’s teachings and monastic decrees to be followed by Buddhist communities. The council laid out the groundwork of Buddhist tenets (Coogan 2005).

SACRED SCRIPTURES

The early schools of Buddhism developed their own unique body of sacred texts. Of these, however, only the Pali Canon or the Tipitaka/Tripitaka (“three baskets”) of Theravada Buddhism survives (Coogan 2005). Preserved in the Pali language, this standard collection of scriptures of Theravada Buddhists is the first known, the most conservative, and the most complete extant early canon of Buddhist writings.

Immediately after Siddhartha’s death or parinirvana, the “First Buddhist Council” was called to order to recite the content of his teachings or dhamma/dharma. These teachings were initially passed down orally until they were recorded in palm trees after five centuries during the “Fourth Buddhist Council” held in 29 B.C.E. The monks saw the need to commit into writing the Pali Canon so that in the event that the monks die, important Buddhist teachings would still remain. The council was convened in Tambapanni as a result of poor harvests in Sri Lanka that starved many monks. With the support of the Sri Lankan king, Vattagamani or Valagamba of Anuradhapura, the council lasted for three years. Five hundred monks recited Siddhartha’s teachings as they recorded them in palm trees.

In Pali language, the word pitaka translates as “basket” referring to the receptacles where the palm leaf manuscripts were stored by the monks. The three baskets (tipitaka/tripitaka) and their contents are summarized in Table 9.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tipitaka</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sutta Pitaka (Discourse)</td>
<td>Buddha’s doctrinal discourses; short poems to long prose narratives about Siddhartha’s previous lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline)</td>
<td>Rules of discipline; stories that illustrate Buddhist moral principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhidhamma Pitaka (Ultimate Doctrine)</td>
<td>Systematic analysis of the categories of Buddhist thought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 9.1
The Tipitika

The first basket, the *Sutta Pitaka*, contains the conventional teaching delivered by Siddhartha on different occasions. Discourses of Siddharta’s disciples, such as Sariputta, Mogallana, and Ananda, are also part of the Sutta Pitaka. It is divided into five collections, namely, *Digha Nikaya* (Collection of Long Discourses), *Majjhima Nikaya* (Collection of Middle-length Discourses), *Samyutta Nikaya* (Collection of Kindred Sayings), *Anguttara Nikaya* (Collection of Discourses arranged in accordance with number), and *Khuddaka Nikaya* (Smaller Collection).

The second basket, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, contains the disciplinary code required of Buddhist monks (*bhikkhus*) and nuns (*bhikkunis*). Various rules and regulations must be followed by the monastic community. It consists of five books, namely, *Parajika Pali* (Major Offences), *Pacittiya Pali* (Minor Offences), *Mahavagga Pali* (Greater Section), *Cullavagga Pali* (Smaller Section), and *Parivara Pali* (Epitome of the Vinaya).

The third basket, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, is a work on moral psychology. The reflective philosophies of Siddhartha’s teachings are contained in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* that is strictly a Theravada collection. It is composed of seven works, namely, *Dhamma-Sangani* (Enumeration of Phenomena), *Vibhanga* (The Book of the Treatises), *Katha Vatthu* (Point of Controversy), *Puggala Pannatti* (Description of Individuals), *Dhatu Katha* (Discussion with reference to Elements), *Yamaka* (The Book of Pairs), and *Patthana* (The Book of Relations).

**BELIEFS AND DOCTRINES**

Siddhartha never intended to start a new religion especially, and so his teachings are focused primarily on ethics and self-understanding as people work for their salvation on their own without needing the assistance of any supreme being (Hopfe 1983). Here lies the main difference of Buddhism with other religions—it has no place for God or savior, as salvation entirely lies within anyone’s control (Brown 1975). Siddhartha did not claim to be a savior but a guide and teacher as he pointed the way for others to follow and gain spiritual bliss in doing so.

Another unique feature of Buddhism is the belief that soul or the Hindu *atman* does not exist as people live in a state of nonsoulness or *anatman*/anatta. Buddhism does not preach that humans have an eternal and indestructible soul (Brown 1975). Nothing is permanent in this world, hence, all things change and are impermanent. The mark of impermanence or *anitya/anicca* states that all conditioned things are transitory and passing; they all have beginning and end to their existence (Skilton 1994). Human existence, or what we actually call soul, is a composite of five mental or physical aggregates or *khandas*. These aggregates include the (1) physical form or corporeality, (2) feelings or sensations, (3) understanding or perception, (4) will or mental formation, and (5) consciousness (Hopfe 1983; Toula-Breysse 2001). Hence, humans do not have a permanent, unchanging, real soul that dwells within them (Parrinder 1971). In effect, no soul is being reborn because there is no permanence in anything (Bowker 1997).
Four Noble Truths

The teachings of Siddhartha include discourses on the basic tenets of Buddhism, such as the “Four Noble Truths” and the “Noble Eightfold Path.” Siddhartha’s pursuit for enlightenment was due to the dissatisfaction he continually experienced despite living an opulent life in the palace. The Pali term for unsatisfactoriness or suffering is *dukkha* (Kulananda 2001). *Dukkha* may be manifested in misery, distress, agony, emptiness, or conflict. Outside the real world, Siddhartha began to witness the various manifestations of inescapable suffering—from old age, illness, and eventual death. Siddhartha analyzed the problem of *dukkha* that led him to arrive to the basic law of causation or the “Four Noble Truths.” Perhaps the most well-known among Siddhartha’s teachings, this profound doctrine is the heart of Buddhism, summarized below.

(1) **The First Noble Truth.** This identifies the origin of the problem—the *dukkha*. Suffering can be experienced throughout the different stages of a person’s life—from birth, sickness, old age, to ultimate death. When one clings to one of the previously stated aggregates, this leads to suffering. When one unites with the unpleasant, it causes suffering. When one dissociates from the pleasant, it also results in suffering.

(2) **The Second Noble Truth.** This explains the cause of suffering or the *samodaya*—in craving or desire (or *tanha*), in the perpetual thirst of humans to consume things, experiences, or ideas (Parrinder 1971). People are never satisfied as they always want more or something else, want something
new, or just want to discontinue something. People crave for existence or non-existence and seek sensual pleasures. People search for self-satisfaction from things they believe they can experience. However, since the nature of all these things is impermanent, people become attached to these things due to ignorance that leads to desire and eventual suffering (Brown 1975).

(3) **The Third Noble Truth.** This asserts that there is a cessation or *nirodha* to suffering and bondage by eliminating craving and desire. By dropping the bonds of craving, one gets to be released from the fundamental nature of reality.

(4) **The Fourth Noble Truth.** This directs an individual to the path or *magga* leading to the termination of craving and desire, and to eventual cessation of pain. Likewise, one must avoid self-indulgence and self-torture since both are pointless. This is the path toward moderation or the “Middle Way” aimed at ending suffering. Known as the “Noble Eightfold Path” which is an entirely practical path—and each described as “right” or *samma* — it is divided into three aspects, namely, wisdom, morality, and meditation. For path of wisdom, this includes *Right View* and *Right Intention*. For path of morality, this includes *Right Speech*, *Right Action*, and *Right Livelihood*. For path of meditation, it consists of *Right Effort*, *Right Mindfulness*, and *Right Concentration*. Table 9.2 summarizes the essence of the “Noble Eightfold Path.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eightfold Path</th>
<th>What One Must Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right View</td>
<td>Understand the “Four Noble Truths”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Intention</td>
<td>Free one’s self from ill-will, cruelty, and untruthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Speech</td>
<td>Abstain from untruthfulness, tale-bearing, harsh language, and vain talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Action</td>
<td>Abstain from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Livelihood</td>
<td>Earn a living in a way not harmful to any living thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Effort</td>
<td>Avoid evil thoughts and overcome them, arouse good thoughts and maintain them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Mindfulness</td>
<td>Pay vigilant attention to every state of the body, feeling, and mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Concentration</td>
<td>Concentrate on a single object so as to induce certain special states of consciousness in deep meditation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 9.2**
The Noble Eightfold Path

The mastery of the various truths and observance of the path would lead a person to break the bond that binds him or her to life and obtain release from the eternal cycle of death and rebirth or *samsara*. This cycle is influenced by *karma* which is a law of cause and effect.

**Law of Dependent Origination**
The Law of Dependent Origination or *Paticca-samuppada* is one of the most insightful teachings of Siddhartha. With everything built upon a set of relations, it follows that every effect has a definite cause and every cause has...
a definite effect (Mizuno 1987). In short, nothing comes into being by mere accident and actions do not happen in a random way. A short formula for this principle can be read in four lines as: When this is, that is; This arising, that arises; When this is not, that is not; This ceasing, that ceases. In Buddhism, dependent origination is a twelve-linked chain that explicates how all things are inter-connected, how error and attachment to error occur, and how, if the chain is untangled, nirvana can be achieved (Mizuno 1987; Bowker 1997).

Both the “Four Noble Truths” and the concept of karma can be explained by dependent origination. In the “Four Noble Truths,” there is the arising and cessation of the dukkha. Desire occurs because of combination of existing conditions to support its arising. Craving ends when factors supporting its presence change and ends, and then no longer sustain it. Meanwhile, the law of karma operates as a causal process that explains the problem of suffering and rebirth in samsara. Everything is the result of some prior event or that every action has an effect. Virtuous actions produce good results while bad deeds result in evil ones. Karma operates by itself and nothing can alter this law, not even prayers or rituals. As a result of this law of action, a being will be born and reborn in different states based on one’s accumulated good and bad actions in the past (Brown 1975).

Impermanence of Things
Nothing in this world is fixed and permanent and everything is subject to change and alteration. Impermanence is an unavoidable fact of human existence. Buddhism affirms five processes deemed uncontrollable by any individual: old age, sickness, dying, decay, and death. However, when one is released from samsara, a being escapes all these phenomena. That being has then reached a state called nirvana wherein desire has been extinguished from one’s self. No more unpleasant karma can be created while greed, hatred, and delusion have all been obliterated. When one achieves nirvana, a person’s mind is at perfect peace. Everyone is capable of attaining nirvana in this life just as the saints of Buddhism did in their lives. Those who have achieved nirvana are called arhat or one who is “worthy of honor.”

The Sangha
The Pali word sangha literally means “sharer” that refer to monks who share in the general fund of alms provided by a community. Translated as “association” or “assembly,” sangha pertains to the Buddhist order and monastic community as founded by Siddhartha during the same year that he attained his enlightenment. Kondanna, Siddhartha’s follower and one of the so-called “Five Ascetics,” was the first disciple ordained to the sangha. Later on, the other four ascetics became part of the order, namely, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama, and Assaji. Among the most popular monks in Buddhist history were the “Five Ascetics,” Sariputta, Moggallana, Rahula (Siddhartha’s son), and Ananda. Siddhartha preached and accepted members to the sangha regardless of their rank in society in stark contrast to the Brahmin priest who would not dare converse to members of a lower class (Suriyabongs n.d).
Ordained Buddhist monks are called *bhikkus* while nuns are called *bhikkunis*. During the time of Siddhartha, *bhikkus* were dressed in rags, lived at the foot of the tree, and begged for alms. They likewise abstained from sexual pleasures, stealing, and killing. They constantly meditate and study the teachings of Siddhartha. In short, all *bhikkus* must live a life of poverty and chastity and should strictly follow the codified rules as contained in the *Vinaya Pitaka*. Within the *Vinaya Pitaka* is a list of around 250 items of conduct that must be avoided or suffer the consequences of expulsion, suspension, or reproach depending on the severity of the offence. This particular list is recited regularly and confession is required once a transgression is committed (Parrinder 1971).

To be accepted into the *sangha*, one should at least have taken refuge in Siddhartha. One may become a novice and follow certain vows, including celibacy. To be a fully ordained monk or nun, one must commit to an extensive set of vows. It is worth noting, however, that *bhikkus* and *bhikkunis* may or may not remain in the order since they can return to their usual lay lives if they choose to do so.

Meanwhile, lay people also have duties to perform to the *sangha*. They must provide the monastic community with food and robes, and maintain monasteries and nunneries as needed. In turn, monks provide valuable services to the community, such as giving education to young boys and girls in villages. Finally, members of the *sangha* must ensure that Buddhist teachings are to be preserved and transmitted, whether orally or in written form (Parrinder 1971). The so-called “Three Jewels” or *triratna* summarize the Buddhist faith: I take refuge in the Buddha, in the teaching, and in the *sangha* (Bowker 1997).

**WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES**

Attainment of salvation for any Buddhist is by way of one’s own action without the assistance of any supreme or supernatural being. Followers are guided by the teachings of Siddhartha as lay people offer gifts to Siddhartha and the *sangha* during days of worship and observance.

In Buddhism, *stupas* are commemorative monuments that contain sacred relics associated with Siddhartha himself, and the venerable monks and nuns. These burial mounds predate Buddhism as ancient Indian kings and heroes were housed in *stupas*. With the death of Siddhartha, his body was cremated and his ashes were divided among eight followers and preserved in eight *stupas* (Toula-Breyssse 2001). None of these *stupas* remain fully intact as of today. With a million *stupas* located all over Asia, not all stupas house Siddhartha’s relics. Others contain artefacts of his revered disciples, or his image, writings, or teachings. Nevertheless, *stupas* represent Siddhartha’s body, speech, and mind. The design of the *stupa* depicts the path to enlightenment. In time, *stupas* became pilgrimage sites as they were covered in earth and decorated with Siddhartha’s life. In Tibet, the *stupa* was transformed into a *chorten*. Elsewhere, it became a *pagoda* in Southeast and East Asia.
Most Buddhists aspire to visit many holy shrines as possible during their lifetime for this is an admirable deed. Siddhartha himself pronounced four to which every Buddhist must give high regard. These include his birthplace, the place of his enlightenment, the place of his first sermon, and the place of his parinirvana (Brown 1975). To anyone who undertakes pilgrimage to these sacred places and dies while travelling, this could bring about rebirth beyond death in a blissful world.

In Sri Lanka, many pilgrims visit Adam’s Peak or Sri Pada, a tall conical mountain popular for the mark of the sacred footprint of Siddhartha (for Buddhists) and Adam (for Christians). For several hours, pilgrims climb the mountain amidst arduous paths and thousands of steps. Most pilgrims undertake the journey every month of April.

For Buddhist celebrations, the most important festival occurs every May on the night of the full moon as Buddhist followers around the world commemorate the birth, enlightenment, and death of Siddhartha about 2,500 years ago. Known as Vesak or Vesak, it is also known as “Buddha Purnima” or “Buddha Day.” Vesak refers to the lunar month that falls in May and “Vesak Day” is the holiest day for all Buddhists. Celebrated with immense festivity, Buddhists send out thoughts of affectionate benevolence to the living and to the departed ones. They also perform rituals at stupas.

Most festivals celebrated in the Buddhist tradition are frequently happy occasions. Lay people proceed to the monasteries and offer food to the sangha as they meditate and listen to the sermons. Most Buddhist celebrations are held to commemorate important events in the life of Siddhartha. Apart from Buddhist New Year, other celebrations include Magha Puja Day (Sangha Day), Asalha Puja Day (Dhamma Day), Uposatha (Observance Day), Pavarana Day, Kathina Day, and Bodhi Day (Enlightenment Day).

Magha Puja Day occurs during the full moon of the third lunar month. It commemorates the event where Siddhartha went to Rajgir to meet and ordain the 1250 arhats in Venuvana Monastery. Two of his chief disciples, namely, Sariputta and Moggallana, were present during the assembly. Meanwhile, Asalha Puja Day commemorates Siddhartha’s first teaching (or the turning of the wheel of the dharma) held near Benares. During this time, the monk Kondanna reached the first level of enlightenment.

SUBDIVISIONS

Theravada is the more conservative subdivision of Buddhism than Mahayana. Thus, it is closer to the fundamental teachings of Siddhartha. Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand are predominantly Theravada Buddhists. During the third century B.C.E., the Indian emperor Ashoka Maurya, who ruled between 269 B.C.E. to 232 B.C.E., propagated Buddhism in Sri Lanka that has remained relatively unchanged through time as a result of its rather peaceful history (Mizuno 1987; Hopfe 1983). Ashoka’s son Mahinda and daughter Sanghamitra established Buddhism in then Ceylon.

The subdivisions of Theravada that existed during the early history of Sri Lanka can be traced from the three monasteries of Mahavihara, Abhayagiri
vihara, and Jetavana. The Mahavihara or “Great Monastery” of Anuradhapura was founded by the king Devanampiya Tissa who ruled between 307 B.C.E. to 267 B.C.E. Another major monastery in Sri Lanka was the Abhayagiri vihara where an ancient stupa still stands today, the Abhayagiri Dagaba. The Abhayagiri Dagaba was established by the king Valagamba between 89 B.C.E. and 77 B.C.E. Lastly, Jetavana is another popular monastery founded by the king Mahasena who ruled between 277 B.C.E. and 304 C.E. The layout of the Jetavana monastery is similar to the Abhayagiri vihara though smaller in dimensions.

SELECTED ISSUES

War and Violence
In Buddhism, war is evil or akusala and some scholars state that it has no rationalization in Siddhartha’s teachings. However, there are instances wherein Buddhist monks engaged themselves in open conflict, such as those that occurred in China and Japan. Quite recently, monks have been in the forefront of political and social activism in Asia, such as Myanmar’s “Saffron Revolution” in 2007 and the Tibet demonstrations in 2008. While most monks advocate non-violence, Sri Lankan monks are part of the “Jathika Hela Urumaya” or the National Heritage Party, a political party founded in 2004 that supports military solutions to the country’s ongoing civil war.

When Buddhists defend their nations, home, and family, this may not be necessarily wrong as the religion’s morality is based upon principles, not rules. It is not righteous to ignore a circumstance when innocent civilians are killed and slaughtered. Buddhists are taught not to yield to any form of evil power, whether originating from humans or supernatural beings. They are compelled to go to war when other people do not value the concept of brotherhood as preached by Siddhartha. They may defend and protect their country’s sovereignty and have the duty to join in the struggle for amity and liberty. However, following Siddhartha’s teachings, everyone is encouraged to avoid hostilities and instead find ways to resolve disagreements in a peaceful manner.

Women in Buddhism
Historically speaking, Siddhartha allowed women to participate in the sangha although there were some stipulations. Siddhartha’s outlook is very different when one considers the status of women in ancient India as being viewed as inferior to men. Considered at times belonging to the lowest caste, women’s principal role was to become faithful and devoted housewives subject to the whims of their husbands. In Buddhism, however, both sexes are seen as equally relevant in society as they share equal responsibilities in their family duties. Within the sangha, Siddhartha recognized the potential and value of the bhikkunis who were also experts in teaching the dharma. These include Dhammadina, Khema, and Uppalavanna.
Summary

- The fundamental teachings of Buddhism are closely tied to the life of Siddhartha Gautama who was born between 563 B.C.E. to 480 B.C.E. in Lumbini in the foothills of the Nepalese Himalayas.
- The Theravada sect is the school of Buddhism that draw its scriptural inspiration from the Pali Canon or Tipitaka/Tripitaka (“three baskets”).
- The teachings of Siddhartha include discourses on the “Four Noble Truths,” “Noble Eightfold Path,” “Impermanence of Things,” and “Dependent Origination.”
- The sangha pertains to the Buddhist order and monastic community as founded by Siddhartha during the same year that he attained his enlightenment.
- Most Buddhist festivals are frequently happy celebrations. Most Buddhist festivals are held to commemorate important events in the life of Siddhartha Gautama.
- The subdivisions of Theravada that existed during the early history of Sri Lanka can be traced from the three monasteries of Mahavihara, Abhayagiri vihara, and Jetavana.

Critical Thinking

1. Why is Buddhism considered one of the most practical among the world’s great religions?
2. In what aspects are Buddhism similar to and different from Hinduism?
3. How can Buddhism affect change on powerful countries that use war to gain political and/or economic advantages?
4. Why does Buddha believe that one must truly understand the “Four Noble Truths” and “The Middle Way” before beginning the “Noble Eightfold Path”?

Bhikkunis are fully ordained female monastics in Buddhism. They live a simple life, equal to that of a bhikkhu or monk.
A. Match Column A with Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. people who achieve nirvana</td>
<td>a. Khandas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Siddharta Gautama’s ascetic life in the forest</td>
<td>b. Dukkha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the only surviving most sacred text of Theravada Buddhism</td>
<td>c. Sangha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. mental and physical aggregates of the soul</td>
<td>d. Great Renunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. commemorative monuments that contain sacred relics</td>
<td>e. Law of Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Mahavihara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Pali term for suffering or dissatisfaction</td>
<td>g. Mara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. monks who share in the alms of the community</td>
<td>h. Stupas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. monastery founded by Devanampiya Tissa</td>
<td>i. Tripitaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. “When this is, that is; This arising, that arises; When this is not, that is not; This ceasing, that ceases”</td>
<td>j. Tripitaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. personified evil forces that torment the minds of humankind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Complete the table by filling in the blanks with the correct answer. Choose the answer from the list below.


Eightfold Path What One Must Do

Right View
Understand the “______________________________”.

Right Intention
Free one’s self from ill-will, cruelty, and ____________________________.

Right Speech
Abstain from untruthfulness, ____________________________, harsh language, and vain talk.

Right Action
Abstain from ____________________________________________, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

Right Livelihood
Earn a living in a way not harmful to any ________________________________.

Right Effort
Avoid evil thoughts and ____________________________________________, them, arouse good thoughts and ____________________________, them.

Right Mindfulness
Pay vigilant attention to every state of the body, ____________________________, and mind.

Right Concentration
Concentrate on a ____________________________________________ object so as to induce certain special states of consciousness in deep meditation.
C. Make a timeline exhibit of Siddharta Gautama’s life that can be displayed in the whole school. The project will be evaluated using the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>The exhibit was interactive and inviting to different audiences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The important milestones of his life were highlighted and explained.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the words and pictures used.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong> 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On to the Next Lesson**

In this lesson, you have learned what Theravada Buddhism is about, and how its followers’ belief of salvation is attained without the assistance of any supreme or supernatural being. We have also cited the life story of Siddhartha Gautama and its influence on the teachings of Buddhism. In the next lesson, we will discuss another version of Buddhism called Mahayana Buddhism which sprang out from monastic rule and doctrinal differences within the original form of Buddhism.

**Sources**

**BOOKS**


INTERNET SOURCES
“War and Buddhism,” About Religion. buddhism.about.com/od/basicbuddhistteachings/a/war.htm (accessed August 22, 2015)
Believing itself as the more genuine version of Buddha’s teachings, Mahayana Buddhism has diverged into numerous schools with each developing its own canon and rituals since its founding more than two thousand years ago. Also known as the “Great Vehicle,” Mahayana Buddhism emerged out of monastic rule and doctrinal differences within the original form of Buddhism. While the two major Buddhist schools of Mahayana and Theravada both originated in the foundational teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, their methods and search for liberation from the cycle of reincarnation can be very different. They may be viewed as two different articulations of the original principles of the historical Buddha. For example, in contrast to the Theravada school of thought, Mahayana Buddhism aims to extend religious authority to a larger number of people.

Not a single group but more of an assembly of Buddhist customs, Mahayana Buddhism is widespread in China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. With its openness to more traditional religious views, it has developed a wide appeal to common people and gained tremendous ground in becoming one of the most successful missionary religions in the world (Hopfe 1983).
MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY
Listen to a Buddhist chant that will be provided by your teacher. What are your impressions, insights, and initial thoughts about the practice of Buddhist meditation? Share your experience and feelings after listening to the music.

CONCEPT MAP

MAHAYANA
BUDDHISM

Sacred Scriptures
Worships and Observances
Beliefs and Doctrines
Subdivisions

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
During the third century B.C.E., a number of subtle variations began to take place in Buddhism at a time when the Mauryan king Ashoka was propagating Buddhist gospels through missionary efforts (Hopfe 1983). The Mahasamghika (“of the Great Sangha”), one of the early Buddhist schools, may have been the source for the initial growth of Mahayana Buddhism, especially during the “Second Buddhist Council” that occurred a hundred years after Buddha’s parinirvana. Considered a historical event, a religious schism between the Mahasamghika and Sthavira nikaya (“Sect of the Elders”), another major Buddhist school, transpired during the said council. These new ideas eventually concretized resulting in a new form of Buddhism quite different from the original teachings taught by Siddhartha Gautama and to those accepted by Theravada Buddhists. In short, Mahayana Buddhism practically became a new religion.

These new developments within the newfound Buddhist sect comprise a set of differing notions pertaining to the original founder and great teacher Siddhartha Gautama himself. Firstly, Mahayana Buddhists believed that Siddhartha secretly taught key principles to chosen people, to his most dedicated disciples, or to the most faithful who could completely interpret these teachings in time (Hopfe 1983; Losch 2001). Simply put, any new teaching can now be added to the emerging Buddhist faith. Secondly, Mahayana Buddhists forwarded the concept that Siddhartha Gautama was actually a benevolent celestial being, not just a mere human being. Because of his love for humankind and zeal to help the people, he came to our world in human form. Thirdly, Mahayana Buddhists advanced the radical idea
that Siddhartha Gautama was not the only Buddha. There were other
divine beings that came to our world even before Siddhartha, some of them
came after him, and still others will come in the future. Principally, these
beings came to earth to help lessen people’s sufferings and lead them to
salvation. This unique concept impressed many followers because they can
now revere these beings, study their lives, construct temples, and develop
an innovative belief system replete with rituals and hymns, among others
(Hopfe 1983).

In time, missionaries of Mahayana Buddhism were able to penetrate new
places without fear of reprisal from native religions since deities or local gods
can be treated as manifestations or incarnations of Buddha. Other religions
could be absorbed by Mahayana Buddhism by way of this key principle in
their proselytizing activities. While Theravada was the first to enter China
during the first century C.E., Buddhism did not gain much ground here not
until the arrival of Mahayana in the third century C.E. In time, Mahayana
Buddhism took a major foothold of China while local beliefs were relegated
to lesser stature (Hopfe 1983). Korea was the next territory to be influenced
by Mahayana school around the fourth century C.E. and followed by Japan
in the sixth century C.E. Mahayana Buddhism existed alongside Japan’s
native religion Shintoism. Mongolia and Tibet likewise embraced Mahayana
Buddhism. All these places developed their own versions of Mahayana
Buddhism that exist up until the present day.

Ironically, while Buddhism was being propagated and gaining support in
other countries even to the remotest places, it was steadily dying in India
where it all started. A series of invasions destroyed numerous Buddhist
centers and temples. The rising tide of Islam in India resulted in the forcible
conversion of Buddhists to the Muslim faith. Meanwhile, Hinduism was able
to gradually absorb challenging religions, such as Buddhism and Jainism,
due to its tolerance and openess to other belief systems. The Hindu belief
that Siddhartha Gautama was a manifestation of Vishnu contributed to the
fading influence of Buddhism in India. Mahayana Buddhism disappeared
in India during the eleventh century. Quite expectedly, only a handful of
Indians became truly Buddhists leading to contemporary times. Nonetheless,
Mahayana Buddhism is still the most popular branch of Buddhism in the
world today.

GUIDE QUESTION
What became the new teachings
of the Mahayana sect that became
popular and appealing to common
people?

WEBLINK
You may want to take some
relaxation by listening to soothing
Buddhist songs by visiting
https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=OWXkW3EhYY.YWhat
did you feel after listening to the
music? Share your experience to
the class.

SACRED SCRIPTURES
While the Mahayana branch accepts the canonical texts of the Theravada
school, such as the Tripitaka (Sanskrit word for “Three Baskets”) which is
the collection of Buddha’s teachings, it also has a wide array of philosophical
and devotional texts, especially since Mahayana Buddhism initially became
more receptive to change and to subsequent innovations even from indigenous
culture. Mahayana Buddhism includes many sacred writings which are nearly
identical in content with the Pali Canon of the Theravada sect. The canon
of Mahayana Buddhism also consists of the Tripitaka, namely, Sutra Pitaka
(Discourse), Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline), and Abhidharma Pitaka (Ultimate
Not sure how to answer.
While these *sutras* were assembled years after the death of Siddhartha Gautama, the *Lotus Sutra* may have been authored by more than one writer and compiled between the first and second century C.E. In fact, the oldest portion of the *Lotus Sutra* may have been written between 100 B.C.E. and 100 C.E. A Chinese version was translated from the original Sanskrit in 255 C.E. making it the earliest record of such existence in history.

The *Lotus Sutra* contains the most definitive teachings of the Buddha. Pervading most schools of Buddhism in China, Korea, and Japan by way of the northern transmission, reciting the texts of the *Lotus Sutra* is considered propitious. A key idea within the influential *sutra* is that all people equally and inherently possess the so-called “Buddha nature” or “Buddha-ness” which is the condition of complete happiness and freedom from fear and illusions. In short, the attainment of enlightenment is open to all people regardless of gender, race, social status, and education.

**BELIEFS AND DOCTRINES**

**The Buddha**

Siddhartha Gautama, born in the fifth or sixth century C.E. in present-day Nepal, is considered the historical Buddha in Mahayana Buddhism. After he attained enlightenment at the age of 35, he came to be known as Gautama Buddha and spent the rest of his life preaching across India. He died at the age of 80. For Theravada Buddhism, only the historical Buddha and past Buddhas are accepted. For Mahayana Buddhism, there are other contemporary and popular Buddhas apart from the historical Buddha.

The concept of *trikaya* (“three bodies”) pertains to the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism about the nature of the Buddha and reality. While Theravada Buddhism puts very limited emphasis on *trikaya*, this doctrine is very well-mentioned in Mahayana Buddhism which states that each Buddha has three bodies, namely, *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*. The table below summarizes the nature of the three bodies of Buddha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Body</th>
<th>Nature or Aspect of “Buddha-ness”</th>
<th>Manifestation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dharmakaya</td>
<td>Body of absolute truth; absolute nature of all beings</td>
<td>Buddha is transcendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambhogakaya</td>
<td>Body that experiences bliss of enlightenment</td>
<td>Buddha’s body of bliss, or enjoyment body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirmanakaya</td>
<td>Body that manifests the world; embodiment of dharmakaya in human form</td>
<td>Buddha’s earthly body, just like any other human being’s body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Mahayana Buddhism (The Trikaya – the three bodies of Buddha),” BBC. http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisions/mahayana.shtml

The *dharmakaya* is identical with perfect enlightenment that is absolute and beyond existence or non-existence. Everyone is capable of attaining this special place which is beyond perceptual forms. As a body of bliss, the state of *sambhogakaya* is already enlightened but remains distinctive. Believed to be a remuneration of one’s aggregated positive deeds, it serves as a crossing point between the two other *trikayas* of Buddha. Lastly, *nirmanakaya* is the
physical body that undergoes birth, inhabits the world, and dies in the end. The great teacher Siddhartha Gautama is an example of a Buddha in a state of nirmanakaya.

For Mahayana Buddhists, Buddhas are not individuals who actually lived in this world. In some ways, they are simply expressions of the one Buddha reality, such as that of Siddhartha Gautama (Brown 1975). These great Buddhas are to be found in various heavens enshrined together with other gods and saints. In China, Amitabha is a very popular Buddha. In Japan, Vairocana is the great Buddha.

**Bodhisattvas**

One distinct feature of Mahayana Buddhism concerns its teaching about an enlightened being or bodhisattva (“enlightened existence”) which is the ultimate way for any Buddhist to live in this world. A bodhisattva has generated bodhicitta or the spontaneous desire to achieve the state of being enlightened. The concept of bodhicitta greatly differs between the two main schools of Buddhism. The teachings of Theravada place a great emphasis on self-liberation where there is a total reliance on one’s self to eradicate sufferings. On the other hand, apart from self-liberation, it is also essential for Mahayana adherents to assist other sentient beings in their quest for liberation. The attainment of nirvana is not confined to one’s self as an arhat (“perfected one”) but must be shared to all striving beings (Bowker 1997).

A bodhisattva, who is already eligible to enter final enlightenment by perfecting himself through countless incarnations, opts to forego the right to enter nirvana and decides to be born again into this evil world to assist others in attaining the same state, even descending to the depths of lowest hells to rescue ill-fated victims imprisoned there (Jurji 1946; Murphy 1949). Through skilful ways, a bodhisattva has the capacity to determine the state of mind and emotion of each person thereby facilitating assistance based on the actual needs. The concept of bodhisattva helped in explaining the life of Siddhartha Gautama before he died, as depicted in the jataka tales or birth stories of the historical Buddha.

The path of the bodhisattva can also be taken by any ordinary person, which is a way of selflessness so that one can also be liberated from all forms of suffering in the cycle of rebirth. Frequently depicted as celestial beings who answer the prayers of those who need help, bodhisattvas are embodiment of great compassion. Numerous devotions and meditational texts have been developed that revered these benevolent beings. As a result, Mahayana Buddhism as a polytheistic belief continued to grow in time along with its pantheon of bodhisattvas. Nevertheless, bodhisattvas from those countries that embraced Mahayana Buddhism differ significantly from one another, such as those that were adopted in China and Japan.

While Maitreya (“Buddha of the Future”) is the only accepted bodhisattva in Theravada Buddhism, oriental Mahayana Buddhism has four other principal bodhisattvas, namely, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Ksitigarbha, and Samantabhadra. Avalokiteshvara is the most revered and most popular
Buddhist deity among all bodhisattvas, being the personification of perfect compassion, probably representing in Buddhism the sun-god Vishnu of the older Hinduism (Murphy 1949). Manjushri is the embodiment of wisdom, intelligence, and willpower. Ksitigarbha is the one who helps and liberates all sentient beings residing in hell. Samantabhadra is the representation of love, virtue, and diligence. Mayahana Buddhism encourages everyone to pursue the path of a bodhisattva, assume their vows, and work for the absolute enlightenment of all living beings.

**Bhumis and Paramitas**

Based on the Mahayana tradition, a bodhisattva must pass 10 bhumis (“grounds” of “land”) before attaining the so-called “Buddha-hood.” These are extensions of the “Eightfold Path” as discussed in the previous lesson on Theravada Buddhism. The bhumis are frequently associated with the paramitas (“perfections”). Translated as “to cross over the other shore,” paramitas imply crossing from the “sea of suffering” to the “shore of happiness.” One is lifted from the cycle of rebirth to finally achieve liberation. While the first five paramitas are principally concerned with the accumulation of merits, the sixth paramita involves the attainment of wisdom.

Several Mahayana texts identify 10 bhumis, but many schools list their own path to development. A bodhisattva vow is stated as “May I attain Buddha-hood for the benefit of all sentient beings.” The 10 bhumis as lifted from Avatamsaka Sutra or “Flower Garland Sutra,” one of the most influential sutra of Mahayana Buddhism in East Asia, are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhumis and Paramitas</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Paramita</th>
<th>Nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pramudita-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva starts the journey joyful with the inspiration of enlightenment</td>
<td>Dana Paramita (Generosity)</td>
<td>Perfection of giving or generosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimala-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva is purified of immoral conduct and dispositions</td>
<td>Sila Paramita (Discipline)</td>
<td>Perfection of morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prabhakari-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva is purified of the “Three Poisons,” namely, greed, hate, and ignorance</td>
<td>Ksanti Paramita (Patience)</td>
<td>Perfection of patience or forbearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archismati-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva burns away all false conceptions</td>
<td>Virya Paramita (Diligence)</td>
<td>Perfection of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudurjaya-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva goes deeper into meditation and understands the “Four Noble Truths” and the “Two Truths” which are the conventional and the ultimate truths</td>
<td>Dhyana Paramita (Meditative Concentration)</td>
<td>Perfection of meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhimukhi-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva sees that all phenomena are without self-essence and understands the nature of dependent origination</td>
<td>Prajna Paramita (Wisdom)</td>
<td>Perfection of wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durangama-bhumi</td>
<td>The bodhisattva acquires the power of skilful means (upaya) to help others realize enlightenment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 10.2**
The Ten Bhumis and The Six Paramita

---

**TRIVIA**

Did you know that there are “Five Dhyani Buddhas” (or “Five Meditation Buddhas”) which are important icons in Mahayana Buddhism? These Buddhas represent various aspects of enlightened consciousness to assist people in their spiritual enlightenment. The “Five Dhyani Buddhas” are Vairocana, Aksobhya, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava, and Amoghasiddhi. Visit http://viewonbuddhism.org/5_dhyani_buddhas.html and http://www.summitlighthouse.org/five-dhyani-buddhas/ to learn more about them.
Achala-bhumi (The Immovable Land) | The bodhisattva can no longer be disturbed because “Buddha-hood” is within sight

Sadhumati-bhumi (The Land of Good Thoughts) | The bodhisattva understands all dharmas and is able to teach others

Dharmamegha-bhumi (The Land of Dharma Clouds) | The bodhisattva is confirmed of the “Buddha-hood” and enters “Tushita Heaven” or the heaven of contented gods


WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES

Buddhism integrates an assortment of religious practices and devotional rituals with the objective of aiding worshippers in their journey toward enlightenment and in bringing blessings to each and every one. In Buddhist temples, they pray and chant to pay their respect to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, such as Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Amitabha. They also offer vegetarian food and light incense to pay homage to these important divine beings. Mahayana temples are sacred spaces. While only a simple temple layout can be seen in Theravada Buddhism with an image of Siddhartha Gautama as the focal point of worship, Mahayana rituals can be quite elaborate with the addition of other disciples of Siddhartha Gautama and important bodhisattvas.

Worshippers also recite chants and undertake pilgrimages to sites of Buddhist importance. Meditational activities are fundamental in almost all popular forms of Buddhism. For Theravada Buddhism and Zen Buddhism, the practice of meditation is the only means to attain liberation. With the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism in other places, local culture influenced the development of Mahayana Buddhist practices. The lotus that symbolizes purity, the eight-spoke wheels that represent the dharma, and the different hand gestures (mudras) are important symbols for Mahayana Buddhism.

SUBDIVISIONS

Mahayana Buddhism consists of a variety of schools and family of religions. When the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism spread in many Asian nations, it acquired new concepts from these localities that found articulation in many ritualistic practices and divine figures.

The more philosophical side of Indian Mahayana Buddhism was developed within the context of the two major schools, namely, the Madhyamika and the Yogachara (Adams 1965). The first school to emerge is the Madhyamika (“Intermediate”) whose adherents stress the transformation of human perception to handle the truth of that which is ultimately real beyond any duality. On the other hand, Yogachara (“Practice of Yoga”) thinkers emphasize that the truth a human being perceives does not exist.
The Pure Land Sect

Pure Land Buddhism began in India around the second century B.C.E., spread to China by the second century C.E., and reached Japan around sixth century C.E. When believers die, it is their objective to live in the “Pure Land of the West” or Sukhavati. By simply reciting the name of the Amitabha with utmost attentiveness many times during the day, they may be reborn in this paradise where they can work to achieve enlightenment much easier. Amitabha, the god who supervises over a western paradise, is the focus of this sect. Once in Sukhavati, people can experience the delight in hearing Amitabha teach the dharma in preparation for their entry to nirvana. Aside from meditations, this Buddhist sect utilizes chants and recitations to focus on helpful thoughts (Losch 2001).

In Japan, by simplifying sect practices, such as those done by the monk Honen in the twelfth century, this attracted many followers to the sect Jodo Buddhism or Jodo-shu (“The Pure Land School”) founded in 1175. Those people who are not able to carry out meditational intricacies and the long ritualistic practices can still attain enlightenment by simply reciting the name of Amitabha with utmost and genuine faith. It was a form of Buddhism made accessible to everyone.

An offshoot of Pure Land Buddhism is the Shin Buddhism or Jodo Shin-shu (“True Pure Land School”) founded by another Japanese monk Shinran during the thirteenth century. A disciple of Honen, Shinran preached the primacy of faith and considered the act of chanting having no value at all.

The Intuitive Sects

The establishment of intuitive sects of Buddhism can be traced around sixth century C.E. to the work of an Indian monk named Bodhidharma whose life stories are shrouded with mysteries and numerous legends (Murphy 1949). This concept entered China from India, and then carried onward to Korea and Japan. In China, it came to be known as Ch’an. Ch’an Buddhism has close affinity with Taoist philosophy because both are kinds of mysticism (Jurji 1946). In Japan, it reached its peak with the development of Zen which is a blend of Indian Mahayana Buddhism and Daoism. Followers of this school are called meditative Buddhists. Focusing on meditation as the path to liberation, Zen Buddhism is basically a monastic discipline (Losch 2001). The word for “meditation” in India is dhyana, ch’an in China, and zen in Japan.

The intuitive sects emphasize that salvation is a personal matter and one cannot receive assistance from other entities, such as another person or institution, to realize the inner truths of religion. In short, most elements of religion—from scriptures, temples, statues, prayers, and rituals—are not essential to achieve enlightenment. An individual may be spiritually enlightened by a sudden spark of insight, either through meditation or even by accident, beyond words or thoughts. Modern European thinkers have been attracted to Zen Buddhism because of its concept on simplicity and intuitive inspiration (Brown 1975).

TRIVIA

Did you know that Zen Buddhism strongly influenced Japanese cultural development? Make a simple research about Japanese ink painting (sumi-e), stone gardens (karesansui), and tea ceremony (chanoyu). How does Zen Buddhism influence these popular arts?
The Rationalist Sect
A rationalist Buddhist school of thought called T’ien-t’ai emerged around the sixth century C.E. with its name originating from a mountain in south-eastern China where its founder Chih-I or Zhiyi lived. Apart from meditative practices, this sect taught that one must utilize reason and study the scriptures and doctrines to discover Buddhist truths (Hopfe 1983). Chih-I emphasized that acts of studying and contemplation were both vital for spiritual enlightenment. Apart from instructions on the scriptures and silent meditation, other means to reach this goal include mystical communion with the eternal, ascetic discipline, meritorious deeds, and simple faith in the mercy of the Buddha (Jurji 1946).

There is a need to integrate Buddhist sacred writings to know the truth, with the Lotus Sutra being revered as its ultimate writing. In 806 C.E., the teachings of Chih-I were introduced in Japan by the monk Saicho that came to be known as Tendai. During the eleventh century, the Buddhist monk Uicheon established the Cheontae Buddhist school in Korea.

The Socio-political Sect
A Japanese Buddhist monk by the name of Nichiren Daishonin who lived during the thirteenth century during the Kamakura period began to teach that the path towards attaining enlightenment rested solely on the devotion to the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren (“sun lotus”) Buddhism, which is purely a Japanese phenomenon, perceives itself as the only rightful version of Buddhism.

Nichiren Buddhism teaches that individuals must take responsibility to enhance themselves, or what is called “human revolution,” and, in turn, to improve the world’s lot. Enlightenment is accessible to every individual on earth simply by opening one’s inherent Buddha-nature in this world. A scripture scholar and an activist, Nichiren himself is considered a Buddha.

Nichiren taught that he alone understood Buddhist truths. He believed that other Buddhist sects in Japan were corrupting the people towards hell. As he was living in a degraded stage, Japanese society was also in a state of disarray. For his missionary work and excessive criticism of rival Buddhist sects in Japan, he made many influential enemies. Nichiren also reproached Japanese authority because of its failure to promote the Lotus Sutra and for allowing fraudulent Buddhist sects to flourish in the country. To him, religion and patriotism were one (Jurji 1946). For his staunch belief and frequent government opposition, he was twice exiled and twice condemned to death. Although some of his disciples were executed, he refused to renege in his principles. In 1274, he was given freedom and cleared of his wrongful acts. He died in 1282.

The Nichiren sect of Buddhism is an example of a religious group that came to have an effect in the socio-political dimension of Japan (Hopfe 1983). Present-day schools of Nichiren Buddhism include Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Shoshu, and Nichiren Shu.
Tibetan Buddhism

Buddhism was officially introduced into Tibet around the seventh century C.E. during the reign of Songtsan Gampo, considered the founder of the Tibetan Empire. He was influenced by his Chinese and Indian wives who were both Buddhist followers. Buddhism became a dominant force in the region toward the end of the eighth century C.E. when the king Trisong Detsen decreed it as the official state religion.

While the theological foundation of Tibetan Buddhism is similar to that of Mahayana Buddhism, the isolation of the region allowed for the development of many features that were incorporated into the growing Buddhist school in Tibetan land. Essentially Mahayana in nature, Tibetan Buddhism borrowed tantric and shamanic attributes, as well as elements from Tibet’s native religion called Bon. A pre-Buddhistic religion, Bon was a kind of shamanism where spirits and deities were revered (Parrinder 1971). Ancient Bon rituals were concerned with the performance of magic, incantations, and spells, and in the protection of people from unwanted demons prowling in the dark (Hopfe 1983). Because the people’s lives, innumerable spirits, and fierce demons must be propitiated or controlled by magic spells and formulas out of fear (Jurji 1946). When Buddhism entered Tibet, it adapted to the local belief system thereby producing rituals and practices that were to some extent different from other Mahayana traditions. For example, the most distinct Buddhist symbol is the pagoda or stupa which has a Tibetan form in the chorten (Parrinder 1971; Bowker 1997)

One major distinguishing feature of Tibetan Buddhism is the use of magic as a coping mechanism in the Tibetan way of life (Hopfe 1983). The use of chants and yoga is also part of Tibetan Buddhism. For utilizing manuals (tantra) for one’s magical instructions to handle the unknown, it is also known as Tantric Buddhism. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are also present in the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. Other special features of Tibetan Buddhism include the preoccupation with the relationship between life and death, the important role of rituals and initiations, the use of rich visual symbolisms, and the use of meditation practices. The four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism include Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug.

Tibetan Buddhism has its own set of clergy, the lamas, and they are commonly senior members of the monastic community. In fact, of all the Buddhist sanghas, the Tibetan sect has developed the most elaborate of clergy (Wach 1949). The term lama means “the superior one” and lamas are quite frequently the reincarnations of previous lamas. The Dalai Lama is the most prominent face of Tibetan Buddhism who has been living in exile in India since he fled Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. The term dalai means “ocean” in Mongol referring to the vastness and depth of the person. The current and fourteenth Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso who is the leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism and is believed to be a reincarnation of Avalokisteshvara. Until 1959, the chief residence of the Dalai Lama was a thirteen-storey high
structure called the Potala Palace located at the Red Hill in Lhasa, Tibet. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it has now been transformed into a museum but remains a sacred place for many Tibetans.

SELECTED ISSUES

Tibet Invasion
For centuries, both China and India have been claiming Tibet as part of their territories. Tibet practically enjoyed some degree of independence as none of the claimants pressed their claim. In 1950, however, China annexed Tibet and negotiated the so-called “Seventeen Point Agreement” with the government of the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Rejected repeatedly by the Dalai Lama, this document confirmed China’s authority over Tibet, but the area was granted autonomy. In 1959, the Dalai Lama failed in his bid to oust China’s puppet rule as the Tibetan uprising was defeated by the more powerful Chinese force. The Dalai Lama, together with his followers escaped to India, and are now living there as refugees.

With the implementation of Mao Zedong’s “Great Leap Forward” from 1958 to 1961, or China’s socio-economic campaign to transform the country into a socialist society, between 200,000 to 1,000,000 Tibetans tragically met their death. During Mao Zedong’s “Cultural Revolution,” a socio-political movement from 1966 to 1976 aimed at eliminating capitalism and traditionalism from China, around 6,000 monasteries were destroyed. Tragically, China’s occupation of Tibet has led to countless deaths of many Buddhist monks, nuns, and laiety who wished to continue their religious practices in their native land (Douglas 2007).

Engaged Activism
Ritual suicides led by Buddhist monks have transpired in the twentieth century as a form of protest to governmental actions. For example, a crisis occurred between Buddhists and the South Vietnamese government led by Ngo Dinh Diem in the 1960s that had tremendous effect in politics, militancy, and religious tolerance (Braswell 1994). As a result of persecutions undertaken by the government against Buddhists, monks began to lambast the regime that eventually resulted in the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc, a Vietnamese Mayahana Buddhist monk. He voluntarily burned himself to death in a busy Saigon road intersection in 1963. Later on, several other monks followed his example. The regime tried in vain to suppress Buddhist resistance through
massive retaliation and nation-wide assaults in Buddhist pagodas. Temples were defaced, monks were beaten, and Quang Duc’s cremated remains were confiscated. Eventually, the regime lost support from the US and an army coup brought down Diem. Amid religious protests and non-violent struggle, Diem was assassinated in 1963.

In Japan, a militant and missionary form of Buddhism was founded in 1930 called the Soka Gakkai, a religious movement based on the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism. During the Second World War, the group temporarily disbanded only to emerge mightily after the war. After its hiatus, the members of this group grew rapidly while employing hard-line and contentious recruitment methods, including coercion, fear, intimidation, and the use of threats. A political party was even formed by Soka Gakkai, the Komeito, that became the third most powerful in Japan.

Summary

- The Mahasamghika (“of the Great Sangha”), one of the early Buddhist schools, became the source for the initial growth of Mahayana Buddhism.
- Mahayana Buddhists advanced the radical idea that Siddhartha Gautama was not the only Buddha. There were other divine beings that came to our world even before Siddhartha, some of them came after him, and still others in the future.
- The canon of Mahayana Buddhism consists of the Tripitaka, namely, Sutra Pitaka (Discourse), Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline), and Abhidharma Pitaka (Ultimate Doctrine).
- Mahayana Buddhism adopted the Sanskrit usage rather than the Pali form of common terms strictly used in Theravada Buddhism.
- One of the most popular and prominent Mahayana Buddhist texts (or sutra) is the Lotus Sutra containing the most definitive teachings of the Buddha.
- The concept of trikaya (“three bodies”) pertains to the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism about the nature of the Buddha and reality.
- One distinct feature of Mahayana Buddhism concerns its teaching about an enlightened being or bodhisattva (“enlightened existence”) who is already eligible to enter nirvana but opts to forego this right to assist others attain the same state.
- Buddhism integrates an assortment of religious practices and devotional rituals with the objective of aiding worshippers in their journey toward enlightenment and in bringing blessings to each and every one.
- Mahayana Buddhism consists of a variety of schools and family of religions, including the Pure Land Sect, the Intuitive Sects, Rationalist Sect, Socio-political Sect, and Tibetan Buddhism.
Critical Thinking

1. What aspects of Mahayana Buddhism could make it more appealing than Theravada Buddhism?
2. How did Mahayana Buddhism shape Asian history in terms of activism?
3. How do you think Mahayana Buddhism’s concept of bodhisattva contributed to it being one of the most successful missionary religions in the world?

Assessment

A. Match Column A with Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. believed that other Japanese sects corrupt people towards hell</td>
<td>a. Mahasamghika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. most prominent text in Mahayana Buddhism that includes discourses by</td>
<td>b. Thich Quang Duc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siddhartha Gautama before he died</td>
<td>c. Lotus Sutra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Buddhist school which was the original source of the Mahayana</td>
<td>d. Pure Land Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monk who voluntarily burned himself</td>
<td>e. Nichiren Daishonin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. pertains to the teaching about the nature of the Buddha and reality</td>
<td>f. Bodhicitta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. popular Buddha in China</td>
<td>g. Seventeen Point Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. spontaneous desire to achieve the state of being enlightened</td>
<td>h. Tenzin Gyatso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. document that confirmed China’s authority over Tibet</td>
<td>i. Trikaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism and is believed to be</td>
<td>j. Amitabha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a reincarnation of Avalokisteshvara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. when believers die, it is their objective to live in Sukhavati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Make a comparison of Mahayana Buddhism from Theravada Buddhism by completing the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mahayana</th>
<th>Theravada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View on Siddhartha Gautama/Buddha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Make an individual report on the Tzu Chi Foundation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RUBRIC FOR REPORT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRITERIA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On to the Next Lesson**

In this lesson, we have discussed the tenets of Mahayana Buddhism and how it paved the way for the establishment and development of a variety of Buddhist schools. You have also come to know how Mahayana Buddhism seems to have an interesting appeal to a vast majority of followers. In the next lesson, we will further discuss the connection among Dharmic religions, and how essential is the concept of dharma in Hinduism and in the two other major sects of Buddhism.

**Sources**

**BOOKS**

INTERNET SOURCES


In Hinduism and Buddhism (Mahayana and Theravada), dharma is an integral concept. In Hinduism, dharma refers to the religious and moral law governing a person’s conduct. It is also one of the four Hindu goals of life. For the two Buddhist schools, it may pertain to the cosmic law and order or to Buddha’s teachings. Apart from the Buddha and the sangha, the dharma is one of the “Three Jewels” to which Buddhist followers go for refuge.

Hinduism and Buddhism both originated in India. Hindu followers comprise 80% of India’s population of more than a billion or about 14% of the world’s population.
population. Meanwhile, there are more than 370 million Buddhists around the world that represent about 6% of the entire population. Quite interestingly, while Buddhism began in India, it almost died out as a living religion in its place of origin (Coogan 2005). Majority of its followers can be found in China, Japan, Korea, and Indochina Peninsula. The major sects of Buddhism include Theravada and Mahayana schools of thought.

**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**

Look at the pictures of gods and goddesses in Hinduism and the various forms of bodhisattvas in Buddhism (to be provided by your teacher). Try completing the table below. Can they be considered the “superheroes” of their respective religion? Share this in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF HINDU GODS AND GODDESS</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE/ POWER/DUTY</th>
<th>NAME OF BODHISATTVA</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE/ POWER/DUTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCEPT MAP**

**DHARMIC RELIGIONS: HINDUISM, MAHAYANA BUDDHISM, THERAVADA BUDDHISM**

- Origin
- Morality
- Purpose
- Destiny
- View on Women
ORIGIN

Both Hinduism and Buddhism, two of the world’s great religions, trace their origin in India. Believed to be the oldest living religion in the world, the early beginnings of Hinduism with its forms and themes may have begun around the third millennium B.C.E. (Hopfe 1983). As the precise time of its founding is very much difficult to determine, Hinduism evolved and developed during the ancient Indus Valley civilization. It is widely regarded that both pre-Aryan and Aryan elements are found in Hinduism (Brown 1975). A timeless religion as it is and a way of life for its adherents, Hinduism has no precise moment of origin and no one specific founder or prophet unlike most other world religions. Throughout its long history, Hinduism became the source of three other religions, namely, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Buddhism also traces its origins in northern India around the sixth century B.C.E. as another interpretation of the Hindu belief. This religion is closely linked to its founder Siddhartha Gautama who is also referred to as the Buddha or the “Enlightened One.” A son of a Kshatriya chief, the once affluent Siddhartha abandoned the comfort of his palace and family as he set to discover the remedy to universal suffering he observed in this world. After long periods of abstinence and meditation, he finally reached enlightenment (nirvana) and became known as the “Buddha” or the “enlightened one.” He preached mainly in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent such as in Magadha and Kosala. About 500 years after Buddha’s enlightenment, a schism within the Buddhist religion resulted in the emergence of two major branches around the first century C.E, namely, the Theravada and Mayahana schools of tradition. Both schools owe their fundamental teachings to the Buddha whose life has become an inspiration to millions of followers all over the world.

Around the third century B.C.E., Buddhism reached neighboring Asian countries as a result of the missionary zeal of Indian rulers. A different outlook to salvation attracted many Asian people to embrace the tenets of Buddhism as it reached China, India, Korea, and Indochina Peninsula. However, while Buddhism was successfully converting people in faraway places, Buddhist fervor gradually waned in native India as a result of resurging Hinduism. The resurgence in Hinduism is due to how Hinduism absorbed the rising challenge of other new religions as it incorporated their elements into the Hindu belief.

MORALITY

Hinduism is said to be the most tolerant of all religions as there are numerous ways to manifest one’s set of Hindu beliefs (Hopfe 1983). In short, the Hindus themselves differ in the manner of practicing their religion. However, while Hinduism may seemingly lack a cohesive system of beliefs and practices, most of its adherents hold several key moral values such as karma and dharma. The concept of karma involves the accumulation of one’s past deeds that have a direct effect on one’s present condition. Karma is closely linked to the Hindu belief of reincarnation (samsara) or the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Bad deeds, including actions and thoughts, may result in one being
born into an unpleasant circumstance in the next life. On the other hand, good deeds generate an enjoyable disposition in one’s next life. In short, \textit{karma} is the universal law of causality.

The notion of balance and order in this universe is integral to the Hindu belief. People are born in this world with specific duties to perform in accordance to their status in society, such as those elements related to gender and caste. This is the concept of \textit{dharma} wherein people must accomplish their tasks so that society can prosper as a whole. Evidently, \textit{dharma} is a complex term that could mean law, duty, order, justice, or norm within Hinduism. To disregard one’s \textit{dharma} is tantamount to reaping bad \textit{karma} that could have an adverse effect in the next life. By performing one’s \textit{dharma} correctly, one gains good \textit{karma}. Essentially, \textit{dharma} brings morality and ethics in the Hindu belief system.

While the Buddha embraced the general framework of Indian ideas, he radically altered many of them (Bowker 1997). Similarly, the cycle of rebirth persists in Buddhism and succeeding lives may be affected by the moral laws of cause and effect or \textit{karma}. Until one has achieved enlightenment, one’s deed in the present lifetime will affect the course of future rebirths.

Buddhist moral thoughts and actions are principally guided by the “Four Noble Truths” formulated by the Buddha, along with the basic guide called the “Eightfold Paths” that are divided into three categories, namely, right view, right conduct, and right practice. Unhappiness of life (\textit{dukkha}) is principally caused by people’s unending desires. People are advised to scrutinize their motivations and ponder upon the outcome of their actions keeping in mind Buddha’s teachings. Anything harmful to others, in deed and in thought, must always be avoided. The two major schools of Buddhism, the Theravada and Mahayana sects, follow the “Four Noble Truths” and the “Noble Eightfold Path.”

\textbf{PURPOSE}

In Hinduism, there are four desirable goals of life (\textit{purusharthra}). All Hindus aim to achieve the four-fold purpose of life that includes \textit{dharma}, \textit{artha}, \textit{kama}, and \textit{moksha}. \textit{Dharma} means to behave appropriately and act righteously. In essence, \textit{dharma} is a path toward a pleasant rebirth through fulfillment of one’s destiny that is often defined by class, family, social status, age, and gender. It also involves paying debts to gods, fellow humans, and other living beings during their lifetime. \textit{Artha} pertains to the pursuit of legitimate worldly prosperity or material well-being. Wealth must be gained by way of lawful measures. As one pursues success, \textit{dharma} must always be kept in mind. \textit{Kama} refers to the pursuit of legitimate pleasure as one obtains enjoyment in life, such as those related to arts, music, and dance. This could also include satisfaction of one’s desire or sexuality. \textit{Moksha} is the final meaning of life that involves enlightenment, self-realization, or union with god. For the Hindus, this is the most difficult goal of life to accomplish. While some can accomplish \textit{moksha} in just one lifetime, others may take several reincarnations in another physical form just to be liberated from the cycle.
of rebirth. While ignorance and illusion hinder the enlightenment of sentient beings, they can still escape these bondages. In essence, the main purpose of their life is to obtain release from the cycle of reincarnation or at least a better rebirth.

In addition to the four goals of life, traditional Hindus often pass the four stages of life (ashramas). The first stage of Hindu life is that of being a student (brahmacarya). As a bachelor, he lives in the house of a guru and studies sacred scriptures under his guidance. The second stage is that of being a householder (grihastha) wherein he takes in a wife, raises children, and contributes to the well-being of society (Brown 1975). During the third stage (vanaprastha), he withdraws to the forest with his wife as he undergoes meditation to understand the meaning of life. Finally, the fourth stage (samnyasin) involves renouncing the world and all its attachments as he now becomes a holy sage. The first three stages are obligatory in nature while the fourth is only optional and not all men attain it.

In Buddhism, the principal purpose of one’s life is to terminate all forms of suffering caused by attachment to impermanent entities, such as material things, friends, and health. All these do not offer enduring happiness but sorrow. When one recognizes the impermanence of all these things, an individual begins to free one’s self from attachment thereby reducing suffering and ending the cycle of rebirth. Buddha’s teachings on the “Four Noble Truths” and the “Noble Eightfold Path” form the basic tenets of all Buddhist sects.

In Theravada Buddhism, the monastic way of life ensures the path toward enlightenment. For the Buddhist laity, they must first be reborn as monks for them to be eligible for enlightenment. As members of the laity perform good deeds, positive karma may bring forth a pleasant condition in the next life.

In contrast, Mahayana Buddhism offers enlightenment to anyone, not only for the members of the monastic order, but also for those with families and secular careers. Moreover, the Mahayana branch of Buddhism attracts followers because it offers a faster route to enlightenment than the Theravada sect.

DESTINY
Simply put, the destiny of all Hindus involves reincarnation until such time they gain ultimate enlightenment. Hinduism believes that within the human is an eternal soul (atman) that is being reborn millions of times and in many forms subject to the moral law of karma (Bowker 1997). While the soul is immortal and naturally blissful, it could plunge into darkness because of ignorance and delusion concerning reality. Moral law enables souls to create their own destiny leading to a pleasurable or repulsive state of existence. Hindu practices to achieve enlightenment involves yoga, meditation, proper worship, rituals, devotion to gods and goddesses, pilgrimage to sacred shrines, and performing one’s duties. For the Hindus, the idea of an eternal heaven or

GUIDE QUESTION
What are the specific goals of Hindus and Buddhists for them to gain spiritual enlightenment?
hell is unfounded as it does not uphold genuine moral behavior. In fact, the concept of heaven and hell can be exploited by religious groups just wanting to lure or scare people.

Meanwhile, Buddhism holds that no soul is being reborn because there is no permanence in anything (Bowker 1997). The Buddha preached to his followers to achieve their own salvation conscientiously because external forces have no control over their life and circumstances. They control their own fate as they are bound to the law of causality. Buddhist destiny, therefore, is the direct result of natural law or dharma and one’s accumulated deeds or karma. Here lies the glaring difference of Buddhism as a dharmic religion when compared to other world religions that teach the concept of fate or predestiny. For Buddhist followers, life and events are not controlled by an all-powerful creator or universal force.

In contrast to Hinduism and other religions, the Buddhist goal is neither absorption into Brahman nor union with God. Instead, Buddhists aspire to reach nirvana or the extinguishing of fires of longing and suffering (Bowker 1997). When one has achieved nirvana, one has attained the state of perfect peace wherein attachment, aversion, and ignorance have ceased once and for all.

In the Theravada school of Buddhism, the trainings on the development of ethical conduct, meditation, and insight assist in eradicating all forms of evil in order to acquire goodness and purify the mind. All worldly things are momentary and impermanent. By following the “Middle Path” and practicing the basic doctrines of Buddhism, there is a realization that desire can be terminated and suffering reduced. In the end, a perfected state of insight can be accomplished. A person who has attained this position is called an arhat or a “worthy person” who must be emulated by Theravada Buddhists. Adherents can reach an enlightened status through their own ways without any assistance from any divine beings, such as gods or goddesses. With the help of Buddha’s teachings, the journey toward nirvana becomes possible.

Meanwhile, the Mahayana sect devotes much attention to the bodhisattvas or “enlightened beings” who delay their own enlightenment for them to benevolently aid other beings to reach their ultimate end. All beings can follow the path of the bodhisattvas which is the ideal way for all Buddhists to live. Well-known bodhisattvas in the Mahayana sect are Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Ksitigarbha, and Samantabhadra. The Theravada sect only accepts Maitreya as bodhisattva.

The vow of a bodhisattva is as follows:

“However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them. However inexhaustible the defilements are, I vow to extinguish them. However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them. However incomparable enlightenment is, I vow to attain it.”

The Four Great Bodhisattva Vows
VIEWS ON WOMEN

The status of women in ancient India leaves much to be desired as they are always seen as inferior to men in all aspects of life. Restrictions abound with regard to their daily activities; tending household chores would be their primary role. Women are to be cared for by their parents in their childhood days, by their husbands when they marry, and by their sons when they reach old age. Religious and educational liberties for women are severely lacking.

Honoring women in Hindu society as a fundamental teaching has been laid down in one of the supplementary arms of the Vedas, the *Manusmriti* or the “Laws of Manu.” Based on this standard book in the Hindu canon, women must attend ritualistic practices despite the fact that they had no roles to play in these activities. According to this basic text, the three-stage pattern for a woman include that a woman child be protected by her father, a wife must be protected by her husband, and an old woman be protected by her sons. As a married woman, she must become a good wife and treat her husband as a god. She must serve and follow him, and pray for him. She often eats when her husband has finished eating. In return, a husband must also revere his wife as a goddess. The sacred text adds that the happiness of the wife is crucial in the stability of the family.

Cases of having several wives also exist in Indian society that naturally breed hatred and jealousies among the wives. More so, women are not allowed to remarry after the death of their husbands. Shaving their head is a requirement to make them unappealing to other interested men. The most difficult chores are given to widows and they are forbidden to eat alongside family members. Widows are personification of all the negative characteristics of a woman, ill-fated and wretched. Widows are brought to the Indian city of Vrindavan by their families who eventually abandon them there.

A widow can opt to commit sati or the act of killing herself by jumping into the funeral pyre of her husband. It is believed that immolating one’s self assures immense rewards for the family and gives a chance to the wife to be with her husband in the next life. The practice of sati has now been banned in India especially with the passage of *Sati* (Prevention) Act of 1988 that criminalized any type of involvement in sati.

On the other hand, women have enjoyed considerable freedom in their religious life in Buddhism as compared to Hinduism. The Buddha himself allowed the full participation of women in all major Buddhist rites and practices. For so long a time when women’s duties were confined to household and kitchen duties, Buddha radically changed this when he allowed women to join the monastic order and attain enlightenment in equal footing with men. In the past, learned women members of sangha include Dhammadinna, Khema, and Uppalavanna. Fully-ordained Buddhist female monastic members are bhikkunis.

For the Buddha, men are not always wise and women can also be wise. In Buddhism, women should not be treated as inferior to men because both are equally valuable in society. Women as wives and mothers have roles to fulfill in the family and society. Husbands and wives must equally share...
responsibilities in the family with the same zeal. Wives must also familiarize themselves in trade and business dealings so that they can also handle these affairs. Men and women have equal status in Buddhist societies.

### Summary

- Both Hinduism and Buddhism, two of the world’s great religions, trace their origin in India. Throughout its long history, Hinduism became the source of three other religions, namely, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.
- Buddhist fervor gradually waned in native India as a result of resurging Hinduism that absorbed the rising challenge of other new religions as it incorporated their elements into the Hindu belief.
- Most Hindu adherents hold several key moral values such as *karma* and *dharma*. Buddhist moral thoughts and actions are principally guided by the “Four Noble Truths” and the “Eight-fold Paths.”
- In Hinduism, there are four desirable goals of life (*purushartha*). All Hindus aim to achieve the four-fold purpose of life that includes *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*.
- In Buddhism, the principal purpose of one’s life is to terminate all forms of suffering caused by attachment to impermanent entities.
- The destiny of all Hindus involves reincarnation until such time they gain ultimate enlightenment. Hinduism believes that within the human is an eternal soul (*atman*) that is being reborn millions of times and in many forms subject to the moral law of *karma*. On the other hand, Buddhism holds that no soul is being reborn because there is no permanence in anything.
- Honoring women in Hindu society as a fundamental teaching has been laid down in one of the supplementary arms of the Vedas, the *Manusmriti* or the “Laws of Manu.” Women have enjoyed considerable freedom in their religious life in Buddhism as compared to Hinduism.

### Critical Thinking

1. Why do you think Buddhism gradually died down in India even though it originated there?
2. How does the concept of reincarnation differ from the concept of heaven and hell in other religions?
3. How does karma affect one’s destiny in both dharmic religions? Explain.

### Assessment

A. Match Column A with Column B. Write the letter of the correct answer on the blanks provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____ 1. comprises 14% of the world’s population</td>
<td>a. Artha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ 2. a widow killing herself to join her dead husband</td>
<td>b. Hindu followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ 3. being a student, living in the house of the guru and studying the sacred scriptures</td>
<td>c. “Laws of Manu”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Compare and contrast Hinduism and Buddhism using the table provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HINDUISM</th>
<th>BUDDHISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 4. pursuit of worldly prosperity
- 5. supplementary arms of the Vedas
- 6. unhappiness in life that is caused by unending desires
- 7. female Buddhist monks
- 8. only accepted *bodhisatva* in the Theravada sect
- 9. believes that no external force or creator controls events in our lives
- 10. universal law of causality
- d. Maitreya
- e. Karma
- f. Buddhism
- g. Sati
- h. Bhikkunis
- i. Dukkha
- j. Brahmacharya
C. Write an essay about the differences in popularity between Hinduism and Buddhism. You will be graded based on the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Concepts are clearly used and explained.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 20</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, you have learned how two dharmic religions—Hinduism and Buddhism—share some similarities with regard their fundamental teachings. We have also talked about how dharmic religions have played significant roles in the lives of their followers and in the society they live in. In the next lesson, we will discuss about religions that emerged just beyond the border of India—in China—which they call Confucianism.

Sources

**BOOKS**


**INTERNET SOURCES**


In the midst of chaotic periods in China, namely the Spring and Autumn period as well as the Warring States period, several schools of thought were born. This is known as the hundred schools of thought, which was characterized by the struggle to impose social order in China through philosophical teachings of great Chinese thinkers. Four of the most influential schools of thought which flourished in China during this period were Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism. These schools of thought, together with elements of Mahayana Buddhism and new religious movements such as Cao Dai, Chen Dao, and Falun Gong, all make up the Daoic religions. These religions are centered on the Chinese philosophy of Dao (or ‘The Way’) which refers to the moral order that permeates the universe or the force behind the natural order. Dao is immanent and it pervades the natural world, the “mother of the universe” which constantly nurtures nature. One’s goal therefore is to live in harmony with the Dao. In this chapter we will discuss the three major East Asian or Daoic religions—Confucianism and Daoism from China, as well as Shintoism from Japan.
LESSON TWELVE
Confucianism

There has always been a debate whether Confucianism should be regarded as a religion or a philosophy. Those who argue that Confucianism is a philosophy assert that when Kung Fuzi founded Confucianism, he never meant to establish a new religion; he merely wanted to interpret and revive the ancient religion of Zhou dynasty. Since Confucianism emphasizes the ethical dimension of the world, it gives primary attention to human relationship, thus advocating social values and ideals which should serve as the foundation of Chinese society. Advocates of Confucianism as a philosophy further argue that Kung Fuzi seldom touched on religious matters, thus branding him as a humanist advancing practical and ethical wisdom.

On the other hand, Confucianism is considered a religion because its ideals were inspirational, not in the supernatural sense but in the sense of aiming for excellence in one’s relationships with others. For Confucius, what happens in everyday life should not be trivialized but should be considered as the realm of moral and spiritual fulfillment. Focus on relationships should be emphasized, for it is often taken for granted that these relationships which we encounter everyday should be the easiest to perfect, but in reality they are the hardest to attain. Moreover, Confucius stressed the importance of rituals which would lead them back to the ideal society of their ancestors when there was harmony between heaven and earth. Confucianism has often been categorized together with Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Daoism as one of the world’s major religions, and has greatly influenced

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
The core teaching of Confucianism is how to be a “gentleman.” To be a gentleman, according to Confucianism, a person should follow the moral way, consisting of the virtues of love, righteousness, wisdom, propriety, and loyalty. Becoming a gentleman promotes harmony in society.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
1. What role does virtue play in achieving harmony in society?
2. Why is hierarchy in relationships important in establishing social order?
3. Why is Confucianism considered both as a philosophy and a religion?

Confucius was a Chinese teacher, editor, politician, and philosopher of the Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history.
the East Asian political and spiritual life. For these reasons, Confucianism may be viewed both as philosophy and as a religion. It has become a practical way of life for so many Chinese for a long time and so has been intensely embedded in the structure of Chinese societies and politics.

As of 2010, the Encyclopaedia Britannica estimates the number of followers of Confucianism at more than six million. This figure is misleading, however, for it is said that people from East Asia may profess themselves to be Buddhists, Taoists, Christians, Muslims, or Shintoists, but rarely do they stop being Confucians. Because of this, the actual figure can rise up to more or less 300 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>Northern America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confucianists (as of 2010)</td>
<td>20,200</td>
<td>6,433,000</td>
<td>15,500</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Adherents of Confucianism are called Confucians or Confucianists. Religions in East Asia are not mutually exclusive, hence one can still be a Confucian/Confucianist while at the same time being a Taoist, Buddhist, Christian or Muslim. This is because, as mentioned earlier, Confucianism has often been debated if it is a religion or philosophy/ethical tradition. It is characterized as having a lot of ritual practice but with little formal worship or meditation. Hence, one can blend belief in the religious elements of Budhhism, Taoism, Shinto, and other religions with the ethical elements of Confucianism.

**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**
List down at least three relationships you are involved in right now and identify the power relations in these relationships by stating if you are a subordinate, superior, or equal position in each relationship. Explain the pros and cons of the said relationships.

**CONCEPT MAP**

![Concept Map](image_url)

CONFUCIANISM

- Sacred Scriptures
- Worships and Observances
- Beliefs and Doctrines
- Development of Confucianism
Symbols

Two symbols which are important to Confucianism are the symbols for scholar and water.

The scholar, as represented by the Chinese symbol above (the ru), is an important symbol in Confucianism. It contains the symbol of a person, as well as the character for need or desire. The foremost need of people is nourishment, then education. When combined, it means “the need of a human being.”

Water is one of the five important elements in Chinese philosophy, alongside wood, fire, earth, and metal. Water is considered as the source of life, valued for its significance in the natural world and for sustaining life. The figure below is the Chinese symbol for water.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proliferation of Chinese classical thought happened within the reign of the Zhou dynasty, the second historical dynasty in China. It was the result of several factors such as technological and economic advancement, stronger political units, political and social improvement, and even military development. Advances in the said realms led to the emergence of competing dynasties who wanted to establish supremacy over other dynasties, hence the

![States of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-771 BCE)](image)
period was marked by social upheaval and chaos. This led to the search for political and social stability through the birth of philosophies and religions which attempted to restore social harmony in China.

The Zhou period was divided into Western Zhou (1122-770 B.C.E.) and Eastern Zhou (770-221 B.C.E.). The Eastern Zhou was further subdivided into the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.E.) and the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.E.). It was during this period of Eastern Zhou, a period of great economic growth, social change, and political development that philosophies would emerge and the Classics would be written.

During the Zhou period, technological growth led to trading development, which led to a remarkable increase in wealth. Iron became common in China in the fifth century B.C.E. and had replaced bronze as material for weapons, as well as agricultural tools such as the ox-drawn plow, which in turn led to agricultural revolution in China. This growth of production coincided with a rapid growth in trade, and, as a consequence, a new class of wealthy merchants emerged. Accordingly, this became a threat to the nobility, which led them to propagate a theory that society is composed of four (4) classes in this order: the warrior-administrator, the peasants, the artisans, and the merchants.

Alongside technological and economic growth was the development of stronger political units, which led to the emergence of four vassal states that competed against each other for political supremacy. These vassal states were Qin in the west, Jin in the north, Yan in the northeast, and Qi in the east. The struggle for supremacy among these vassal states characterized the Warring States period in Chinese history. Their political stability was enhanced by military development. The use of chariots, iron weapons, and the use of cavalry all contributed to the newfound power of the vassal states who tried to overpower each other through the use of warfare.

Amidst the development and chaos, China was faced with a dilemma: the failure of old authority made it necessary for new guiding values to restore social order. It was in this very crucial time that philosophers would try to find solutions to the social problems being faced by society. Incidentally, interest was focused primarily on society and not on the individual. Because of this, these philosophers have often been classified as practical politicians because they were products of the proliferation of literacy and part of the new bureaucracy. They went to different states to offer their services whenever needed. One of them was Confucius.

Among the four rival states which competed for supremacy, the Qin dynasty would emerge as the victor and would establish the first empire of China in the 3rd century B.C.E. The name China would come from the Ch’in, the first to create an imperial Chinese identity.
THE LIFE OF CONFUCIUS
Confucius is the Latinized version of Kongzi and the honorific Kong Fuzi both meaning “Master Kong.” He was born on September 28 on 551 B.C.E. Hence, it is considered a day of celebration in East Asia—an official holiday in Taiwan (Teacher’s Day), and a day of cultural celebration in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Confucius was born in a small feudal state of Lu (now Shantung province) in Qufu. His personal name was Qiu and his family name was Kong. He came from a noble family, but by the time of his birth, they had already lost much of their wealth. His first teacher was his mother, and at the age of 15 he set his heart upon learning, thus love of learning became one of the highest virtues in Confucian ethics. He married at the age of 19 and had a son at the age of 20. At this point in his life he had already served in minor government posts and had already gained a reputation as an all-around scholar. When he was in his 30s he had already started a brilliant teaching career because of his mastery of the arts of ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and arithmetic. He was also familiar with classical tradition, particularly in poetry and history. He is often considered as the first person to devote his whole life to learning and teaching for the purpose of social transformation and improvement. He held several government positions including as arbiter, assistant minister of public works, and minister of justice in the state of Lu. Frustrated that his ideals and policies were brushed off by his superiors, he soon left Lu. For 13 years, he wandered from state to state, trying to put his theories to practice. At 67, he returned home to teach (where he gained more disciples) and to preserve his classical traditions by writing and editing. He died in 479 B.C.E at the age of 73 and he left around 3,000 followers who preserved and put his other teachings to writing.

SACRED SCRIPTURES: THE CONFUCIAN CLASSICS
The Five Classics are a group of books which was regarded as early Confucianism’s basic texts. This includes the Book of Changes, the Book of History, the Book of Poetry, the Classic of Rites, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. The Analects is also considered an important source of Confucian teachings since it contains a record of his conversations with his disciples. Let us now take a look at what these classics are all about.

Confucius has often been considered as the author or editor of the Classics, but contemporary scholarship has shown that even though many of these texts can be traced back to Confucius, they have undergone a long period of development. Moreover, these Classics were burned during the reign of the Qin dynasty and was restored only during the Han dynasty. It was Confucius’ followers who exerted effort in writing and collating his teachings and philosophies.

Book of Changes
Also known as the I-Ching, the Book of Changes is believed to have existed at the time of Confucius and is the oldest of the Classics. It focuses on short predictions following a type of divination called cleromancy wherein
six random numbers are picked and arranged under sixty-four hexagrams. A hexagram is any of a set of sixty-four figures made up of six parallel or broken lines. Later on, commentaries were added to the predictions, the longest of which was the *Hsi-tz’u* or Appended Remarks, which discusses early cosmological and metaphysical assumptions in an obscure language.

**Book of History**

Also known as the Book of Documents or *Shangshu*, the Book of History is conventionally attributed to Confucius by early scholars. It is composed of speeches (or prose) of royalty and ministers mainly from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. It also consists of chronological accounts of imperial achievements and rules of government.

**Book of Poetry**

The Book of Poetry, also known as the Book of Songs/Odes/*Shijing*, is a collection of three hundred and five songs compiled around 600 B.C.E. which includes four sections of various themes such as love, courtship, abandonment and dances. It also includes feast songs or state chants. It was supposedly compiled by Confucius from an ancient repertory of three thousand, and is considered as the oldest existing compilation of Chinese poetry.

**Classic of Rites**

Originally the *Three Li*/Three Rites/*San Li*, the Classic of Rites is a compilation of ceremonial rituals, administration, and social forms of the Zhou Dynasty. It is considered as a complete body of work which includes the Ceremonials (*I-li/Yili*), an early manual of protocol for the nobility, describing such occasions as marriages and funerals, sacrifices and even archery competitions. It also includes the Book of Rites (*Li-chi/Liji*) which is composed of forty-nine sections of ritual and government guidelines, as well as essays on education, the rites, music and philosophy. Also included is the Institutes of Chou (*Chou-li/Zhou Li*) which is supposedly an ultimate depiction of government offices in early Zhou times. These texts were supposedly compiled in the early first century B.C.E. based on earlier materials.

**Analects**

The Analects, or *Lunyu* ("conversations" or "sayings"), is also known as the Analects of Confucius. It is a collection of sayings and ideas attributed to the Chinese philosopher Confucius and his contemporaries, traditionally believed to have been written by Confucius' followers. It is believed to have been written during the Warring States period (475 B.C.E.-221 B.C.E.) and finalized during the middle of the Han dynasty. At first it was considered as merely a commentary on the Five Classics, but later on acquired tremendous significance that it has been classified as one of the Four Books along with *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, and *Book of Mencius*. Among other important Confucian works, it has become an influential canonical resource in Chinese and East Asian philosophy.
CONFUCIAN DOCTRINES/BELIEFS

Perhaps Confucius is more often celebrated for his Golden Rule: “Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.” Found in the Analects, this saying teaches the ethics of mutuality and reciprocity. Thus, it requires people to treat others equal to themselves and in equally the same manner as they would have wanted to be treated. Some of the most important Confucian doctrines include the idea of Tian or heaven; human nature; rectification of names; the five constants; filial piety; and ancestor worship.

Belief in Tian

“When you have offended against Heaven, there is nowhere you can turn to in your prayers.” (Analects 3.13) This is one of the passages in the Analects which shows Kung Fuzi’s idea of Tian or heaven. Although Confucius is well-known to be a practical philosopher who was not much interested in the superhuman realm, he believed in Tian or “heaven,” an all-encompassing god. Tian may also refer to that which is beyond human control. He believed that Tian is analogous with moral order but dependent upon human intervention to bring its will into action. For him, the li or ritual propriety is the way through which the family, the state, and the world may become parallel with Tian’s moral order. He believed that only by performing the ancient rituals, which was done by earlier kings, could harmony between heaven and earth be revived.

Rectification of Names

Confucius believed that to return to the ancient Dao, people must play their assigned roles in society. This was later called the rectification of names, or zhengming. The Five Relationships include: 1) ruler-subject; 2) father-son; 3) husband-wife; 4) elder and younger brother; and 5) friend and friend. The responsibilities originating from these relationships are shared and reciprocal. For example, a minister owes loyalty to his ruler, and a child owes filial respect to the parent. In return, rulers must care for their subjects, and parents must care for their children. The Five Relationships emphasize the upright sense of hierarchy. Among friends, for example, seniority of age requires a certain deference. Zhengming helps bring social order for it advocates the idea that every person has a particular role at a particular time in life, and that by abiding to this particular role, one is able to fulfill one’s social duties and responsibilities, thus creating social harmony.

Human Nature as Originally Good or Evil

Confucius himself was silent on the concept of human nature, but there were two philosophers who had different interpretations on the subject of human nature based on the Analects. They were Mengzi and Xunzi (Hsun tzu). Their views on human nature were opposed to one another. For Mencius, renxing or human nature is naturally disposed toward ren, or virtue of the superior man. Mengzi believed that all human beings are born with innate goodness which, on one hand, can be cultivated through proper education and self-
discipline (\(li\)); or be thrown away through neglect and bad influence, on the other. However, it needs cultivation through \(li\) (ritual propriety) as well as obedience to one’s \(qi\) (vital energy). Human nature may be impeded through negligence or an unfavourable environment naturally organized toward ren. On the other hand, Xunzi believed that human nature is basically evil but can be improved through self-cultivation. Like Mencius, Xunzi considers the \(li\) as the key to the cultivation of human nature.

The Five Constants
The Five Constants, also known as the Five Classical Virtues, or Wuchang, are the five most important Confucian ethics mentioned in the Analects and the Book of Mencius. These include the following: ren or benevolence; yi or righteousness; li or propriety; zhi or knowledge/wisdom; and xin or fidelity.

Ren, or benevolence, can be achieved by returning to li, or the traditional Chinese rituals. It means following the social hierarchy patterned after family relationships. Ren can also be achieved by extending one’s filial love for parents and siblings to fellow human beings. It can also be achieved by avoiding envy or harm. Yi, or righteousness, can be achieved by having the moral disposition to do good, which can only be possible after recognizing what is right and good. It can also be achieved through the ability to feel what is the right thing to do. Li, or propriety, which is considered as the concrete guide to human action and social order, can be achieved by following the guide to human relationships (rectification of names, doctrine of the mean, The Five Relationships); it can also be achieved by following the norms of ren, or righteousness. Zhi, or knowledge/wisdom, can be achieved by knowing what is right and what is wrong, which is innate in people who are basically good according to Mencius. Lastly, xin, or fidelity can be achieved by keeping one’s word and being faithful, for Kung Fuzi believed that only people who are faithful can be trusted with important tasks. Fidelity is also seen as the key to nation-building.

Filial Piety as an Important Virtue
For Confucius, family relations provide a model for social behaviour. Respect for elders, whether your own or others, is emphasized, as well as kindness to your own children and juniors, including those of others. These were said to be instructed by Mencius and have provided inspiration for generations of Confucians. Filial piety is said to have provided China with a strong sense of solidarity not only in the Chinese family, but also in Confucian social organizations and even among Chinese communities in different parts of the world.

Ancestor worship is a manifestation of filial piety, or respect for one’s parents, which is directed toward older relatives and ancestors. The idea of ancestor worship is based on the key Confucian idea that it is expected of children to respect and obey their parents in life, and to continue remembering them after they have died through the proper observance of rituals. One way to remember them is by worshipping ancestral tablets which can be kept at home. These ancestral tablets contain the information regarding the place
where the family originated and the names of the ancestors. Another way to remember ancestors is to worship them in their graves. People occasionally visit the graves of their loved ones, clean the graves, offer food and wine. The ancestors were believed to have tasted the food before the whole family eat the meal being offered. Ancestor worship is an expression of a union between the living and the loved one, clearly a manifestation of filial piety.

The concept of hun-po or soul is important in Chinese cosmology and early concept of dualism. Accordingly, the human being is made up of two souls: an upper or intellectual soul (hun) which becomes the spirit (shen) and climbs to the world above; and a lower soul (po), which becomes the ghost and goes down with the body into the grave. Thus, ancestor worship is important because of the belief that even the bodies of the dead ancestors possess souls which need to be worshipped and revered. According to the Confucian scholar Zhun Xi:

“Consciousness and movement are due to yang, while physical form and body are due to yin. The clear breath (qi) belongs to the heavenly aspect of the soul (hun) and the body is governed by the earthly aspect of the soul (po). A person is born as a result of integration of essence and material force. One possesses this material force only in a certain amount, which in time necessarily becomes exhausted. This is what is meant by physicians when they say that yin or yang no longer rises or falls. When exhaustion takes place, the heavenly aspect of the soul (hun) and the clear breath (qi) return to Heaven, and the earthly aspect of the soul (po) and the body return to the Earth, and the person dies. When a person is about to die, the warm material force leaves the body and rises. This is called the hun rising.
The lower part of the body gradually becomes cold. This is called the po falling. Thus as there is life, there is necessarily death, and as there is beginning, there must be an end.”

**WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES**

The *Book of Rites* recorded the rituals practiced by the Chinese for many centuries. Some of these rituals have been classified under **Family Rituals**, also known as the “Four Rites,” which are rituals or ceremonies that characterize a person’s growth and maturity, namely: coming of age rites, marriage ceremonies, mourning rites, and sacrificial rituals. Many of these rituals are no longer observed, but they offer functional proof of the religious nature of Confucianism.

---

**Four Rites**

**COMING OF AGE RITES** are ceremonies held to signify that a young person has reached the marriageable age and could join the different activities of his/her clan as an adult. Two important coming of age rites among the Chinese are capping and hair pinning ceremonies.

**Capping** refers to doing the male teenager’s hair in a bun/coil and wearing a cap. This is a ritual that male teenagers have to go through sometime between the ages of 15 and 20. In this occasion, a male Chinese receives his formal hat and ceremonial gown, as well as his formal name. Also, a wine libation (a drink poured out as an offering to the deity) is made and the young man is formally introduced to his ancestors.

**Hair Pinning** refers to the gathering of a girl’s hair into a knot, and securing it using a hairpin or a hairclip; often done by 16-year old women after engagement and before their wedding day.

**MOURNING RITES** often involve intricate practices, which include the following steps:

First, there should be public announcement of grief through weeping, and the wearing of white funeral clothes by the family of the deceased. Mourning also constitutes the offering of symbolic goods like money and food from the living to the dead, preparation and setting up of a spirit tablet, payment of ritual experts, the playing of music and chanting of scriptures to accompany the corpse and to pacify the spirit, the sealing of the corpse in a coffin, and the removal of the coffin from the community.

There is also a tradition of exerting effort to recover the deceased, which is being practiced to avoid false death. They do this by trying to call or shout over the wandering soul through the person’s clothes, in case the soul just lost its way back to the body of the person.

**MARRIAGE CEREMONIES** are an important aspect of Chinese culture since marriage is considered as a central feature of society; through marriage, patience and love are cultivated to promote the right virtue.

Traditionally, a marriage is decided by the parents of the couple, with wealth and social status as the primary considerations. Monogamy is preferred, which means married couples should be loyal to their partners for the rest of their lives.

Marriage rituals include giving of gifts and following the necessary etiquettes, from marriage proposal to the wedding ceremony itself, in which the groom and his family meet the bride at her home, after the bride sent the dowry to the groom’s house; on the wedding day, rites include carrying the bride to the sedan and the couple leading the festivity at the bridal chamber; on the wedding night, friends, and relatives are supposed to banter the couple; and on the third
SACRIFICIAL RITUALS are performed regularly by the descendants of the deceased ancestors. Sacrifices are often given at festivals.

One such festival is the Qingming Festival celebrated annually by Chinese all over the world to honor their dead. Qing Ming means “clear and bright” which describes the weather on that particular day of the year. It is observed by visiting the ancestor’s grave to clean and repair it, and through offertories, such as food, fruit, wine, incense, or candles. Descendants of the deceased normally bury their ancestors with belongings that they wanted to be transported to the spirit world with the dead. During ancient times, some royal families put bronze vessels, oracle bones, and human or animal sacrifices in the grave. These were considered as things one may need in the spirit world and as a form of continued filial piety. It is the oldest and most enduring Confucian ritual still observed today.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONFUCIANISM

Mozi’s Mohism
The school of Mozi was considered as Confucianism’s primary early competitor. Mozi was believed to have been born around or soon after the death of Confucius. His teachings can be found in a work entitled Mozi which, like the Analects, contains essays and dialogues compiled by his students. His attacks on Confucianism can be seen in a more extreme stand on matters discussed by Confucius. For example, Mozi believed that hereditary princes should surrender their thrones to their obvious superiors. His belief in utilitarianism was reflected in his advocacy to enrich the country, increase the
population, bring order to the state, and it made him attack anything that
did not contribute to these goals. He advocated that people should only be
given bare necessities in terms of food, clothing, and housing, and did not
concern himself with any artistic expression and advocated that all emotions
be stifled. He also frowned upon the detailed rituals of Confucianism and
considered warfare to be useless. But he did favor sacrifices to the spirits
which would bring worldly blessings. Central to his ideas was his belief in
universal love, that “everyone would love every other person as much as he
loves himself.” Condemning the violence and aggression in society during the
Warring States period, Mozi’s goal was to remove the bad elements or factors
in society in order to achieve peace and harmony.

Mengzi
Mengzi (Mencius) was more successful than Mozi in passing on his teachings
to later generations. Mencius lived around 370-290 B.C.E. in an area near
Lu. Like Kung Fuzi, he went to different states to seek high government office
but failed. A self-proclaimed Confucian, he added other important teachings
to Confucianism as seen in his book Mengzi. One was his claim that human
nature is basically good, and this innate goodness can be further developed
through self-cultivation and education. He also believed that people should
extend their love to those beyond the family circle. He was also of the opinion
that the government was primarily an application of ethics and argued that
the guiding principle of the government should be righteousness. For him, the
right way to rule was when a ruler showed himself to be a fully moral man,
for all of his subjects would move toward him. A true king provides for the
well-being of his people, thus his concept of “Mandate of Heaven” asserts
that the basic justification of a ruler’s power is when he is accepted by his
people. Thus, the “Mandate of Heaven” is synonymous with the mandate
of the people.

Xunzi
Xunzi was a Chinese philosopher who lived around 300-237 B.C.E. and, like
Mengzi, left a profound legacy on Chinese civilization. He became successful
as a politician and teacher, and had an anthology of essays entitled Xunzi.
Some sections of this book were incorporated into the Record of Rituals.
Central to Xunzi’s teachings was the belief that human nature is inherently
evil because it is derived from a distant, unethical heaven. Human nature can
be improved, however, through education; hence the teacher has a very signif-
ificant role and must be considered sacred. For Xunzi, learning “begins with
reciting the Classics and ends in learning the li,” which he viewed as the repos-
itory of all vital wisdom. Xunzi’s emphasis on education, rituals, hierarchy,
and strict rule contributed to the authoritarian pattern in government. His
negative view of human nature together with his emphasis on authoritari-
anism were further developed into a philosophy known as Legalism, which
advocated the idea that strict laws and retributions are the only means to
bring harmony and security in society. The ruler has the right to become
Confucianism

People act based on the norms prescribed by the terms used to name their roles. This doctrine is called zhengmi, or rectification of names, which was also articulated by Xunzi. The doctrine of zhengmi emphasized role-terms, which advocates the idea that bearing of particular names in society compels a person to act according to the norms associated with his or her name.

Neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucianism refers to the revival of the different features of Confucian philosophy and political customs which began in the middle of the 9th century. It was able to reach new heights of intellectual and social resourcefulness in the 11th century during the Song dynasty. This revival of the Confucian tradition was initiated by the great philosopher Zhu Xi and became the point of reference for all future Confucian intellectual discourse and social theory. The Neo-Confucian movement included speculative philosophers, as well as painters, poets, doctors, social and political theorists, historians, local reformers, and civil servants. It sought to promote a unified vision of self-cultivation that would end up with a person becoming a sage, or a wise person.

The painting “The Vinegar Tasters” represent how Buddhist and Daoist ideologies were incorporated in Neo-Confucianism. The painting depicts the founders of three religions—Kung Fuzi for Confucianism, Laozi for Taoism, and Buddha for Buddhism—who tasted vinegar and had different reactions to it. This shows how the three religions, despite their differences and distinctions, can all be considered as one. Neo-Confucianism shows the influence of these teachings, for Neo-Confucianism is considered as the synthesis of Daoist cosmology, Buddhist spirituality, and Confucian ethics in relation to government and society. The painting “The Vinegar Tasters,” therefore, may be interpreted to show that “the three teachings are one.”

The term Neo-Confucianism is a Western coinage, while in China this was known as the ‘Metaphysical Thought,” for advocates of this philosophy looked for the spiritual legacy of Confucianism itself, which emphasizes the relationship between the universe and human reason; of being humane while being rational. It also emphasizes on the “Li” or propriety, which refers to the rational principle or law governing the natural order of things. Neo-Confucianism believes in the basic pattern of the universe, similar to the Dao in Daoism and the Dharma in Hinduism.

Neo-Confucian philosophers reformulated Confucian philosophy on the basis of a smaller body of work which includes the Four Books: the Analects of Confucius; the Book of Mencius; the Great Learning (taken from the Book of Rites); and the Doctrine of the Mean (also taken from the Book of Rites). Neo-Confucianism became an international movement and spread to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. It has become the official philosophy for China.
SELECTED ISSUES
Certain issues arise when we try to reconsider the relevance of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. One characteristic of the Confucian social order is the fixed and strict hierarchy, with the higher partners being composed of men—fathers, husbands, and rulers exercising more right and privilege over women who are placed in a subordinate position. Another issue related to hierarchy would be authoritarianism, which was an influence of the philosophy of Legalism and which became the guiding principle of the Chinese government during the Qin dynasty. Still, the issue of Confucianism’s incompatibility with environmentalism is another aspect being analyzed by scholars.

Female Subordination
It is often said that a woman’s life under Confucianism can be summed up in three periods, also known as the “Three Obediences:” obedience to her father while at home; obedience to her husband when married; and obedience to her son when widowed. Women, being at the bottom of the Confucian hierarchy, are expected to display ideal behavior and accommodation. They are expected to demonstrate obedience before all other virtues and are not expected to act as independent beings.

Women lived separately from men by custom. Women were also assigned the role of providing a male heir to ensure the continuation of the tradition that male children should perform the ancestral rites. This also excuses the husband to take on secondary wives if the first wife failed to provide him with a son, while women were not allowed to see other men other than their husbands and close male relatives. In the “Five Relationships,” it is very clear that the relationship between husband and wife should be based on male supremacy. In the Book of Changes, the male-female relationship is represented in terms of the superiority of heaven over inferior earth.

The patriarchal nature of Confucianism is manifested in certain beliefs like preference for male children. Men are expected to inherit the family names and property, and are responsible for the care of their parents, that is why having male children is preferred. For one, women are the ones expected to give dowry to the family of their groom when they get married, and among poor families, having female children has become a burden rather than a blessing. This also paved the way for more cases of female infanticide and abortion every year (although abortion is prohibited in Confucianism except in cases when the life of the mother is at risk). Implementation of the one-child policy by the Chinese government in the 1970s and the 1980s made it even worse for women. Some would say that despite the elevation of the status of women in China during the time of communist rule, the one-child policy paved the way for the return of Confucian values and made it once again trendy not to have girls. If the parents have a daughter for a first born, they would often try to have a son. If the first three children were girls, it is not unusual to keep the first girl, give away the second girl, and abort the third girl. For critics, it is obvious that the more Confucian the society became, the less freedom the women enjoyed.
Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is another challenge that Confucianism still faces at present. Because Confucianism stresses the hierarchy between relationships, this has reinforced top-down values and hierarchical systems by encouraging deference to one’s superiors—ruler, father, teacher, or anyone older. When Confucian values are used to suppress opposition, thwart fresh ideas to surface, or to protect apathy, then Confucianism poses a serious threat to the development of society and the flourishing of democracy.

Confucianism has been criticized on the issue of father-son relationship, especially on the aspect of allowing the bad behavior of a father and requiring the son to accept it when this occurs. After all, Confucianism teaches that a father must be respected at all costs and a son must obey his father no matter what. This suggests that children must not question the authority of their parents and simply accept their subordinate status. When they become parents, the son will become a father hence that is the time that he will enjoy a superior status over his son. Meanwhile, the daughter, when she becomes a mother, will continue to be in an inferior position, this time to her husband. The following passage explains the nature of father-son relationship: The Master said, “In serving your mother and father, remonstrate with them gently. On seeing that they do not heed your suggestions, remain respectful and do not act contrary. Although concerned, voice no resentment.” (Analects 4:18)

While Confucianism has been considered as the key to success of East Asian societies, it has also been seen as the source of mediocrity. In companies and even government offices, Confucian emphasis on authoritarianism might drag everyone down, so to speak. Organizations steadily become comfortable with the least effort from their employees. One does not have to strive hard to rise to the top or to propose new ideas for the growth of the organization, for as long as the employees’ behavior does not endanger the system, the organization would survive, thereby promoting laziness and incompetence. Confucianism is also seen as being incompatible with liberal democracy for emphasizing the values of loyalty, unity, social duties, responsible paternalism, over the values of individual freedom, diversity, individual rights, and individual autonomy.

Environmental Ethics

One more issue that Confucianism faces today is that of environmentalism. While it is true that Confucianism advocates respect for the environment, its acceptance of people’s dominance of nature poses a threat to the issue. The Analects mentioned the subordination of animals to social interests. Some experts also say that when faced with the dilemma between maintaining social duties and the environment, Confucianism would lead one to choose the former than the latter. Confucian logic would give priority to defence of social duties over environmental protection.

The Analects contain passages that suggest Confucius’ neglect of or lack of concern for animals, such as the following passage:
“There was a fire in the stables. When the Master returned from court, he asked: ‘Was anybody hurt?’ He didn’t ask about the horses.’” (Analects 10:12)

There was also a passage when Confucius preferred the sacrifice of the sheep for ritual’s sake, not heeding Zi Gong’s appeal to spare the sacrificial sheep. Another Confucian thinker, Xunzi, advocated that people should exert control over the natural environment and put it to good use. In general, critics noticed that Confucianism has not provided anything to promote an environmentally sound philosophy. Since Confucianism values economic prosperity and family success, it faces a greater challenge than other Eastern philosophies when it comes to weighing between economic concerns and environmental sustainability.

Summary

• Human nature is basically good, and this innate goodness can be further developed through self-cultivation and education.
• The goal of a person is to be a “gentleman” by following the moral way consisting of the virtues of love, righteousness, wisdom, propriety and loyalty to promote harmony in society.
• Ancestor worship is an important aspect of Confucianism; for Confucius believed that one way of achieving harmony in society was by way of performing the necessary rituals which would bring reward (social order) or punishment (social chaos).
• Since Confucius believed that the afterlife was not on the realm of human comprehension, people should live based on the promotion of social relations rather than on the expectations of rewards or punishments after death.
• Confucius discouraged his students from worrying about the afterlife, but he believed in Tian (heaven) which is analogous with moral order but dependent upon human intervention to bring its will into action; the li or ritual propriety is the way through which the family, the state, and the world may become parallel with Tian’s moral order.

Critical Thinking

1. Do you agree that Confucianism is both a religion and a philosophy? Why or why not?
2. How did Confucianism try to find solutions to the social problems prevalent at the time it was formulated?
3. Do you think Confucian values can be a solution to the problem of corruption in the Philippine government? If yes, how?
4. What particular Confucian values do you think can be applied to solve particular social problems at present?
Assessment

A. Identification. Write the letter of the correct answer:

- a. Tian  f.  Syncretism
- b. Five Classics  g.  Remonstrate
- c. Confucianism  h.  Shintoism
- d. Mandate of Heaven  i.  Eastern Zhou
- e. Taoism  j.  Tao

1. the Way
2. amalgamation of different religious beliefs
3. virtue is needed to promote harmony in society
4. becoming one with the Tao is the way to promote harmony in society
5. importance of ancestor and nature worship to achieve harmony in all dimensions
6. period of great economic growth, social change, and political development
7. refers to heaven
8. make a forcefully reproachful protest
9. a group of books which was regarded as early Confucianism’s special texts
10. the basic justification of a ruler’s power is when he is accepted by his people

B. Matching Type. Write the letter of the correct answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Confucius</td>
<td>a. Mohism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mencius</td>
<td>b. Book of Rites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hsun-tzu</td>
<td>c. Meng-tzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mo-tzu</td>
<td>d. Master Kung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Zu Xhi</td>
<td>e. Legalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I Ching</td>
<td>f. Neo-Confucianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ch’un-ch’iu</td>
<td>g. Book of History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Shang-su</td>
<td>h. Book of Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Shih-ching</td>
<td>i. Spring and Autumn Annals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Li-chi</td>
<td>j. Book of Changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Give examples of Chinese traditions that still reflect the following Confucian doctrines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confucian Doctrines</th>
<th>Chinese Traditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filial Piety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Based on your understanding of Confucianism, make a comparative analysis showing its positive and negative effects on society. Use the rubric below as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARDS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Information used were accurate; analysis and explanation were substantial.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Diagram was easy to comprehend</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Main ideas and analysis were effectively connected</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 20
On to the Next Lesson

We have studied the core teaching of Confucianism, which is to "be a gentleman" by following the moral way consisting of the virtues of love, righteousness, wisdom, propriety and loyalty to promote harmony in society. Let us now take a look at Daoism as another Daoic religion and learn its core teaching.

Sources

BOOKS

INTERNET SOURCES
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el3i3TfNg-I/Retrieved September 14, 2014.
The picture below is a typical Daoist painting, which is characterized by elements of nature such as the bamboo. Much of Chinese art, particularly the development of landscape painting, nature poetry, and garden culture was influenced by Daoism, a philosophy which flourished in China during the late Bronze Age and emphasizes humanity’s relationship with nature. In this lesson, we will know more about another Daoic religion—Daoism—and understand its historical development and its relevance to Chinese society and culture.

Daoism functioned as a philosophy of abandonment and withdrawal from the rampant warfare and social unrest which characterized the reign of the Zhou dynasty—a period of constant struggle for power, wealth, and prestige. It began in the state of Chu in the southern part of the present Hunan.
Province. In effect, it served as a protest of common people against the rising despotism of rulers and served as a reaction to the growing firmness of the moralists, who were followers of Confucius. Daoists struggled to fight for individual autonomy in the midst of the struggle of rulers and moralists to bring people to conform to social patterns to achieve social harmony. The ultimate goal of Daoists was to conform to the great pattern of nature, which is called *Dao*, or “The Way.” As a philosophy, Daoism focuses on the great mysteries of the Dao; as a religion, its goal is to achieve long life and, ultimately, immortality.

**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**

Make an inventory of the things which can be found in your bedroom (e.g. bed, clothes, books, toys, etc.). Considering the Daoist teaching that one should acquire only the things that one needs to survive, which of the things you have listed can you do without? As homework, write a reflection paper about it and read your output in class.

**CONCEPTUAL MAP**

**SYMBOLS**

The Yin and Yang is the most well-known Daoist religious symbol. It is an image composed of a circle divided into two swirling parts: one black and the other white. Within each swirling or teardrop-shaped half is a smaller circle of the opposite color. Overall, the Yin and Yang symbol signifies the perfect harmonic balance in the universe. For example, day and night; birth and death.

According to Daoist cosmology, the big circle signifies the Tao (Dao), the source of existence. Meanwhile, the black and white teardrop-shaped halves signify the Yin-qi and Yang-qi, known as the primordial feminine and masculine energies, respectively. Daoists believe that the interplay of the Yin-qi and Yang-qi created the manifest world. In Chinese philosophy, yin and yang describe how opposite or contrary forces are actually complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world.
Laozi, depicted as Daode Tianzun the Heavenly Lord of Dao and its Virtue.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Laozi (Lao-tzu), meaning “Old Master,” is believed to have authored the *Dao De Jing* (*Tao te ching* or *The Book of the Way and its Power*), dating back to around third century B.C.E. According to myth, Laozi was conceived by a shooting star and was born of a virgin mother, who kept him in her womb for 82 years; Laozi was said to be born with flowing hair, which signified that he would become a wise man. He is considered as the first important Daoist who is believed to be a senior contemporary of Kung Fuzi (some said he even became Kung Fuzi’s adviser) although there is much debate on his date and identity. The Chinese historian Sima Qian wrote a biography of Laozi in the *Historical Records* (*Shih Chi*) in the late 2nd century B.C.E. According to Sima Qian, Laozi’s family name was Li, his given name was Erh, and he was also known as Tan. According to his biography, he worked as a government archivist but became frustrated with government corruption, and sensing his unavoidable disgrace he left Chu and was detained at Han-ku Pass by a gatekeeper named Yin Hsi, who requested him to write a book for him before leaving. Laozi agreeably wrote two chapters about the *Dao* (Way) and *De* (individual power), which came to be named *Dao De Jing* or *Laozi*.

**GUIDE QUESTION**

Why is there a debate on Laozi being a historical or a mythical figure?
Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), is believed to have lived from 369 to around 286 B.C.E. Sima Qian also wrote a biography of Zhuangzi in the *Historical Records*. According to Sima Qian, his last name was Chuang, his given name was Chou, and Tzu means “master,” thus Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi) means “Master Chuang.” He was born in the town of Meng in a small state of Sung, near the border between present-day Hunan and Shandong Province. He served as an officer-in-charge of a royal garden during the middle of the Warring States period and was said to be invited by King Wei of Chu to become his chief minister, which he declined. Zhuangzi is considered a great philosopher and a great writer, and he wrote a book, together with his followers, which became known as *Zhuangzi*, and was believed to be completed before the Han dynasty (Fairbank and Reischauer 1989).

**SACRED SCRIPTURES**

**Dao De Jing**
Daoism’s foundational text is the *Tao te Ching* or *Dao De Jing*, meaning “The Book of the Way and its Power.” It is a mysterious collection of enigmatic remarks which many find hard to understand. Its opening line which is often translated as “The name that can be named is not the eternal name,” implies the difficulty of putting the truth into words, and can only be explained through riddles and paradox. The *Dao De Jing* has often been attributed to Laozi, but some believe that it was a product of the collective efforts among various groups in China, since a closer analysis of the scripture reveals that there is no integrated philosophy in the *Dao De Jing*; instead, it was a collection of sayings and proverbs, lines from popular songs, and clever maxims coming from various contributors with various concerns. The *Dao De Jing*, which literally means *The Book of the Way and its Power*, expounds on the meaning of *Dao* and its accompanying concept of *De*—the power or virtue acquired by a person by means of living in harmony with *Dao*. It is said to have a paradoxical element, meaning it contains assertions that were rather contradictory and illogical, yet contain deeper meaning which can be understood through intuition than through rational thinking.

**Book of Chuang Tzu/Zuangzi**
Another important scripture is the *Zhuangzi*, dating to the third century B.C.E. and attributed to a man named Zhuangzi, the second founder of Daoism. It consists of delightful parables, metaphors, and poetic passages, and is praised for its high literary value which represents the most significant formulation of early Daoist thought. Zhuangzi is divided into three sections: the Inner Chapters, Outer Chapters, and Miscellaneous Chapters. According to some experts, certain chapters of the text were written by scholars during the early part of Han dynasty. But some question this allegation, saying that some of its chapters are quoted by Han Feizi and Lushi Chunqiu, which had been completed before the Ch’in (Sharma 1993). All in all, the book, which is an anthology of essays that make use of parables and allegories, discusses
spiritual freedom which makes one surpass the limitations of one’s own mind, and not merely the freedom from social norms and restrictions. Zhuangzi believes that such freedom can only be attained by living according to the Dao itself. Part of living according to the Dao is to defer to its laws, which includes the law of dying. According to the book, the sage—through his exceptional wisdom—is liberated from life’s ups and downs and the world and has overcome his sensibility. This gives equal importance to life and death, and does not advocate longevity as opposed to Confucianism. There are other passages in the text, however, which suggests otherwise. For instance, there is a passage which describes the sage as immortals who no longer depend on a diet of grains, have defeated death, and have the ability to help others get well from sickness and overcome other evils (Ching 1993). Zhuangzi’s central theme, however, is the relativity of things or nature or the balance of yinyang, which will be discussed later.

**CONCEPTS/BELIEFS**
Daoism can be best understood by discussing its concepts and beliefs. Some of its concepts include the Dao or the “way of nature”; the De or “virtue/proper” adherence to Dao; Wu Wei or “action through inaction” which gives importance to humility and noncompetition, naturalness and naturalism, and non-aggression; yinyang or the balance of nature or universe; and the Chi/Qi or the natural energy or life force that sustains living beings.

The Dao
According to Laozi, the Dao, which is the essential concept and creative principle in Daoism, existed before the world. It is undetectable, indistinct, shapeless, and indefinable, it is the foundation of all being, and the way in which nature and the universe exist. All things come from it, and are nourished by it, that is why sometimes the Dao is called “Mother.” Dao is the origin of heaven and earth and it is also the way in which heaven and earth now live. Its meaning differ across religions and philosophies: for Confucians, it refers to the basic principles of moral philosophy while for the Legalists, it is the way of power (Brown 1987).

The Dao is distinct from God. It is not a being for it is the origin of all beings, and its great virtue is that it does everything but desires nothing. It is “emptiness”, which does not compete with other forces but is content with itself. This contentment, when practiced by people, will enable them to lead good lives (Ching 1993).

Deity/God (Dao as the origin of all beings)
Unlike the Abrahamic religions, Daoism does not have a God, for Daoists believe that the universe originated from the Dao, which created and controls the universe and distantly guides things on their way. However, the Dao itself is not God and is not worshipped by the Daoists. Instead, they worship deities, who are gods of a particular role, and they traditionally worship Laozi not only as the first god of Daoism but also as the representation of
the Dao. Most of the deities worshipped by the Daoists were borrowed from other cultures, but they are within the universe and are subject to the Dao. The Daoist pantheon has often been described as a divine administration which reflects the secular governments of Imperial China. However, some believe that it is the other way around—that the secular administrations are just reflections of the divine administration (Fairbank and Reischauer 1989).

For the Daoists, the Dao possesses heavenly qualities, is mysterious, indescribable, lies under the surface of sense perception, and unifies obvious opposites on a different level. Daoists also believe that the Dao can only be found in silence since it is heavenly and beyond change. For the Daoists, God is found inside us, in the thoughtful emptiness from which all power and life originates in all directions; it is the “Nothing” within all of us where all our energy comes from.

**The De**

The De, which means virtue or the proper adherence to Dao, is another basic concept in Daoism. It encourages inaction in nature and advocates the quiet and passive nature of a person so that the Dao, or the creative principle in the universe, may act through them without interference. People should simply follow the Dao and must do nothing on their own. In this regard, Laozi professed a distaste for culture and civilization for they are products of human activity and proof of humanity’s tampering with nature. In line with this, he preferred the use of inaction in ruling the people (Brown 1987).

“Non-competition in Emptiness” is said to be the other side of the principle of “inaction in nature.” For Daoists, inaction means a person’s outward actions, and emptiness is the corresponding inner state, which also means “absence of desire.” Daoists believe that when a person becomes peaceful, that person acquires power to overcome all things without having to compete with others. In line with this, humility and avoiding competition with others are two virtues which Daoists value most. Lastly, “contentment with what is” is another expression of inaction in nature and of non-competition in emptiness. By following the way of nature, a person can attain contentment. For Laozi, the way of happiness is contentment. “There is no greater sin than the desire for possession, no greater curse than the lack of contentment.” (Brown 1987)

**Wu-Wei**

Wu-wei means “no behavior” or “doing nothing.” It also means “to do without doing” (wei-wu wei) or “actionless activity.” It is a concept used to negate or limit human action. It refers to the cancellation or restriction of human behavior, especially human activities. Wu-wei may refer to certain stages such as nonbehavior or doing nothing; taking as little action as possible; taking action spontaneously; taking a passive attitude toward society; waiting for the spontaneous transformation of things; and taking action according to objective conditions and the nature of things, or acting naturally. It advocates a “go with the flow” attitude by cultivating a state
of being wherein our actions are in harmony with the natural cycles of the universe. Laozi believed that wu-wei can lead to a peaceful and harmonious society. The opposite of wu-wei, which is *yu-wei*, means taking action, which Laozi believes causes vicious actions, theft, and crime. Wu-wei, on the other hand, brings prosperity, harmony, and peace.

Wu-wei—considered by Daoism as the highest form of virtue—emphasizes passivity, which may benefit less fortunate or weak people, for it will help them overcome their opponents and become strong. Spontaneity, or “being natural” is important in wu-wei, for Daoists believe that everything in the world should develop naturally. Non-aggression is also important in wu wei, for Laozi believed that the Daoist ideal society is a primitive community with a natural, harmonious, and simple life which exists without war and competition (Sharma 1993). One may practice wu wei by becoming an “enlightened leader,” one who rules in such a way that the people become happy and prosperous. Another way of practicing wu wei is to become a hermit by withdrawing from society and wandering through the mountains, meditating in the caves, and eating based on what the natural world has to offer.

**Yin Yang**

As stated earlier, the concept of yin yang was articulated by the Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi who stated that “yin in its highest form is freezing while yang in its highest form is boiling. The chilliness comes from heaven while the warmness comes from the earth. The interaction of these two establishes *he* (harmony), so it gives birth to things. Perhaps this is ‘the law of everything’ yet there is no form being seen.” (Zhuangzi Chapter 21) Yin yang is an important concept in Daoism which explains Laozi’s methodology that everything contains opposite sides, and each side depends on the other, which emphasizes the concept of dualism, of two halves forming a whole. Yin yang emphasizes complementarity, interconnectedness, and interdependence of both sides seeking a new balance with each other.

When something is whole, it is fixed and imperfect, but when it is split into halves, it disturbs the balance of completeness, thus initiating change. The theory that opposite sides always transform into each other serves as the philosophical foundation of Laozi’s methodology. There are about 70 concepts of things in pair which are listed in Laozi, and some of them are: good and evil, long and short, bright and dark, full and empty, lead and follow, strong and weak, beauty and ugliness, difficult and easy, favor and disgrace, superior and inferior, glory and humility, masculine and feminine, increase and decrease, offensive and defensive, and being and nonbeing, among others.

The yin and yang symbolize the integration of the polarities mentioned by Laozi. He stressed the need for balance and harmony, which is achieved only when one is fully grounded in the Dao. Here we can deduce that masculinity refers to all forms of behaviors that are forceful and aggressive while femininity represents all gentle, nurturing, and flexible attributes. The goal is to embody both these polarities in a balanced and harmonious manner (Hodge 2002).
Qi/Chi
The *qi* refers to the natural energy or life force that sustains living beings. Qi literally means ‘air’ or ‘vapor.’ It is the fundamental substance of nature and living beings, as well as life force. It refers to matter, which is continuous, energetic, and dynamic. It is sometimes translated as “material force” or “vital force.” It is considered as the foundation of body and life. Daoists believe that everything is made up of qi and will eventually return to qi. Because of this, people should not be afraid of death, for life and death are but phases of the circulation of qi (Sharma 1993). Zhuangzi articulated the concept of qi with the story of his wife’s death, which narrates that when Huizi went to Zhuangzi to console him for the death of his wife, he found Zhuangzi drumming upon an inverted bowl on his knees and singing a song. Zhuangzi explained that while it is true that he was saddened by his wife’s death, he was also aware that the qi is still there, it just evolved into another form, which is death (Zhuangzi Chaptr 18).

While some believe that qi is a separate force from the physical world, some think that it comes from physical matter, while others believe that matter arises from qi. Daoists believe that the balance of *qi* is the key to a healthy life and longevity. Qi is considered as the basic component of everything that exists, which gives form to life and makes things happen. It is considered as the root of the human body, the basis of human health. Every person has a normal or healthy amount of qi, and health is achieved when there is balance and harmony in its flow (Kohn 2003).

WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES
Ritual or liturgical expressions are important to the Daoist religion. These include ritual initiation meant for purification and renewal in the life-cycle and development of the human person. Daoist priests are licensed to perform rituals of specific traditions. One form of ritual is exorcism, performed in cases of sickness with the goal of gaining victory over the evil spirits. Other rituals are performed in the form of festivals, especially New Year. In these rituals, incense is a central aspect, together with the sacrificial offering of sacred writings such as paper charms which contain the prayers of individuals, bearing their names and the intentions which are burned as part of the ritual. Those who will perform such rituals are encouraged to prepare for them by fasting and by having a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Meditative Practices
Humility and non-competition are among the most important virtues in Daoism. These virtues, together with naturalness and naturalism, as well as non-aggression and passive rule, manifest the fundamental virtue of wu wei. The physical appearance of the Daoist sage exemplifies the virtue of humility, for on the outside the sage may dress shabbily but his mind is full of wisdom and his heart, full of compassion. The sage also manifests the virtue of non-competition by not competing but emerging victorious nonetheless. The sage has achieved oneness with the Dao by understanding its simplicity;
his mind is undistracted that is why he is able to discover the simplicity in the Dao. In this regard, he is likened to a cat, which has much in common with the sage. Like the cat which does not deviate from its own nature and being fully aware of the situation at hand, it always lands on its feet no matter what. (Brodd World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery).

Moral Practices
Physical and spiritual techniques are just as important as ethical or moral techniques or practices. Daoists put emphasis on ethical behavior by incorporating it into their practices. They value the need for a moral life, of good works as well as of ritual atonement for misbehavior (Ching 1993). Daoism values the virtues of naturalness, behaving as nature dictates, not as caused by social pressure or personal pride; and naturalism, which entails resisting temptation to meddle with nature. Daoists tend not to initiate action; instead they wait for events to make action necessary, avoiding letting their own desires and compulsions push them into doing things. Generally, Daoism, just like other religions, disapprove of killing, stealing, lying, and promiscuity. It promotes philanthropic, selfless, and humane behavior. Good behavior is seen as an essential part not only of self-improvement but the world as a whole.

To attain the spiritual perfection like the sage, Daoists practice certain rituals which are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To obtain longevity and immortality</td>
<td>• use of potions (led to the practice of alchemical experiments which made lasting contributions in various fields such as chemistry, medicine, and pharmacology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• practice meditation (includes experiments with one’s self, especially the body through the use of methods of inner alchemy, associated with yoga and other forms of meditation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• breathing technique (to be in contact with qi, for longevity and to counter aging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To dispel illness or suffering</td>
<td>• Jiao Festival (or the rite of cosmic renewal, celebrated to rededicate the local temple and to renew the whole community by cleansing it from suffering and hardships)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Refrain from eating grain (based on the Daoist belief that illness is caused by three corpse worms which reside in the body, and eating grain will encourage these worms to stay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Confession and purging of one’s sins (based on the belief that illness may be caused by wrongdoings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 13.1
Some Daoist Practices

SELECTED ISSUES

Fatalism
Like any other religion, Daoism has its share of issues. One of them is that Daoism has often been criticized for propagating laziness or espousing a fatalistic attitude in life by letting nature take its course and reminding Daoists to just go with the flow. A closer examination of the wu-wei, however, would reveal that inaction in Daoism simply means avoiding unnatural actions by not doing forced or aggressive actions. It means performing all one’s actions with natural and unforced attitude. The example of running water exemplifies this kind of unforced action, for when running water in a stream encounters a rock on its path it does not need to force its way to be
able to pass through, instead it just passes through its sides for it to continue its path. Daoists believe that force causes resistance. Another example given to illustrate this point is that of a Daoist Master who went to a village where the people could not pass through a street because there was a wild horse that kicks anyone who passes by. Incidentally, that street leads to the market and since nobody could pass through the street, they were not able to buy their food for the day. Some even thought of killing the horse just so they can return to their normal lives. When the people saw the Daoist Master they told him their dilemma and asked for his advice. The Daoist Master simply advised them to take an alternative street leading to the market, and they were enlightened. Inaction is often misinterpreted as not doing anything, when in fact it means doing things naturally by taking the natural action without the use of force.

Superstition
Another issue encountered by Daoism is the belief in superstitious practices. For instance, there is a misconception that Daoism involves sorcery, which includes the drawing of signs, chants, and other practices which led to the notion that Daoism promotes superstitious practices. But the practice of ancestor worship has been an aspect of Chinese culture which found its way in Daoism, similar to the Shinto practice among the Japanese, thus Daoists often find themselves in temples, praying to their ancestors for guidance in their everyday lives. Daoists also pray as a way of remembering their source to repay kindness and sow gratitude. They believe that all things have spirits, and that deities of the heavens and earth are all around us. They are always around us to guide, protect, and bless us, thus we should always see to it that we show our gratitude to them by performing rituals such as praying and using incense as a medium of communicating with the deities, for they believe that when the precious incense burns in the golden incense burner, the smoke travels up to the heavens. According to Daoist scriptures, the offering of three sticks of incense is important if one wishes to convey a message to the deities, who in turn will shower them with blessings. Daoists believe that the left hand must be used to offer the incense, because the left hand represents the yang, which symbolizes respect. While offering the incense, they will silently recite the spell “Burning of the incense shall receive ultimate peace.” They have to make sure that the distance between the three incense sticks are not more than one inch, and must be placed straight upright. They believe that by doing so, they are showing sincerity to the deities, and they believe that a sincere heart can reach the heavens.

Urban Development
Another issue in Daoism is environmentalism. Daoists believe in the dictum “leave nature alone and nature will thrive.” Daoism has advocated a utopian vision of society characterized by order and harmony, and an emphasis on self-cultivation as a means of achieving social harmony. One should have a healthy relationship with nature and it should begin with one’s own body.
Daoism advocates the idea that we should follow the lead of nature instead of controlling it, for humans are natural creatures who should live in harmony with nature. Daoism emphasized the balance of opposites and the interdependence of all things, which can be interpreted as an ancient equivalent of today’s notion of the ecosystem. China’s excessive movement toward urban development at present is seen as being inconsistent with the Daoist belief in the importance of living in harmony with nature. Daoists believe that social harmony will be achieved through a return to nature.

Summary

- Daoists believe that everything comes from the Dao. Human nature should be aligned with the rest of nature to achieve harmony and balance. Self-cultivation should be encouraged for people to return to the natural mode of existence.
- For some Daoists, spontaneity is the mode of being experienced fully only by immortals; for most Daoists, living a long and healthy life is their goal. They can achieve this through practicing methods of nourishing life by way of physical exercises designed to improve one’s health and lengthen life, breathing exercises, drinking potions believed to lengthen life, etc.
- Living in harmony with nature is the way of living with the Dao, which will lead to good health and long life (even immortality for some) because there is a balance of yin and yang, therefore the qi flows freely.
- Life and death are mere phases of the qi according to Daoists. They are advised not to be afraid of death since life and death are but phases of the circulation of the qi. Thus, Daoist concept of salvation focuses on this life than in the afterlife.
- Daoists have no concept of heaven and hell as compared to other religions. In their scriptures there were mentions of heaven as the abode of their deities and life on earth should be in harmony with the will of heaven. However, based on their concept of qi, heaven is achieved when one achieves immortality and, if this is not possible, then long life is enough. They have this concept that those who achieve immortality reside in utopian places on earth, such as forests and mountains.

Critical Thinking

1. How did Daoism try to address the problem of social disorder in China during the Zhou period?
2. Why is Daoism often misunderstood as a fatalistic and superstitious philosophy/religion?
3. What aspect of Daoism can we adopt as Filipinos that will help us improve our society?
4. Why is Daoism often described as a critique to Confucianism? How is it possible for the Chinese to adopt the two philosophies in their way of life?
Assessment

A. Identification. Write the letter of the correct answer.

Column A

_____ 1. A philosophy which emphasizes humanity’s relationship with nature
_____ 2. The origin of all beings whose essence is nothing
_____ 3. A period known for the constant struggle for power, wealth, and prestige
_____ 4. Place where Daoism began
_____ 5. Old Master
_____ 6. Chinese historian who wrote a biography of the founder of Daoism in the Historical Records
_____ 7. Gatekeeper who requested the founder of Daoism to write a book for him before leaving Han Ku Pass
_____ 8. Title of the said book
_____ 9. Another important figure in Daoism
_____ 10. Virtue or proper adherence to Dao

Column B

   a. Zuangzi
   b. Daodejing
   c. Te
   d. Ssu-Ma Chien
   e. Daoism
   f. Zhou
   g. Dao Ch’u
   h. Ch’u Laozi
   i. Laozi
   j. Yin Hsi

B. Matching Type. Write the letter of the correct answer.

Column A

_____ 1. Yin-yang
_____ 2. De
_____ 3. Daodejing
_____ 4. Dao
_____ 5. Wu-wei
_____ 6. Qi/Chi
_____ 7. Yin
_____ 8. Yang
_____ 9. inaction in nature
_____ 10. non-competition in emptiness

Column B

   a. virtue
   b. the way of nature
   c. action through inaction
   d. classic of the Way
   e. balance of nature
   f. natural energy
   g. active force
   h. passive force
   i. absence of desire
   j. contentment with what is

C. Watch a video about “The Dao of Pooh” (based on a book with the same title by Benjamin Hoff). Based on your understanding of Winnie-the-Pooh characters, how would you describe the traits of the following characters? Which of them possess the Daoist ideals? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winnie-the-Pooh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piglet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eeyore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On to the Next Lesson

In this lesson, we have studied the core teaching of Daoism, which is the idea that the "Dao" is the origin of all beings whose essence is nothing. Let us now take a look at the core teaching of Shintoism in the next lesson.

Sources

**BOOKS**


**INTERNET SOURCES**

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
To understand that the core teaching of Shintoism is the worship of ancestors and forces of nature to achieve harmony in all dimensions.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
1. Why is Shintoism considered more as a way of life than a religion?
2. Why is it important for Japanese people to worship spirits which they call kami?
3. What importance do rituals play in the worship of kami?

Shintoism is considered as the very essence of Japanese devotion to unseen spiritual beings and powers. It is a very local kind of religion in that it is focused on the land of Japan, hence an “ethnic religion” that is not interested in missionary activities so as to spread it outside Japan. Shintoism espouses the belief that “human beings are basically good and has no concept of original sin.” Unlike other religions, it has no known founder nor god, and it may be practiced with other religions such as Buddhism and Daoism.

The picture below shows the entrance to Itsukushima shrine, one of the most visited places in Japan. Shrines are an important aspect in Shintoism, considered as the main religion in Japan which is more closely associated to the Japanese way of life and traditions. Shinto belief in kami or spirits is reflected in the numerous shrines they have built to honor the spirits which they believe can be found in nature, and which still guide their everyday lives by giving them good fortune and prosperity. In return, the Japanese people have to perform the necessary rituals to appease the spirits surrounding them. Purification is a key concept in Shintoism, that is why much of their rituals make use of water for cleansing purposes. Ancestor worship is also an important aspect of Shintoism, as well as showing reverence to forces of nature, and because Shintoism is considered more as way of life than a
religion, it has co-existed with other religions in Japan, such as Buddhism and Confucianism. In fact, Shintoism has become so entrenched with the way of life of the Japanese people that most of them would perform Shinto rituals like worshipping at the shrines while not identifying themselves as Shintoists. The shrine shown at the picture is dedicated to the daughters of Susano-o-no Mikoto, the god of seas and storms and brother of the sun goddess, Amaterasu, who is believed to be the ancestor of the Japanese imperial family.

Shintoism is considered the ethnic religion in Japan and is practiced by less than 40% of the population according to 2006 and 2008 surveys. Around 50% to 80% worship spirits or *kami* at Shinto shrines while not identifying themselves as Shintoists. This is because Shintoism has become a way of life for the Japanese people instead of considering it as a religion; it does not exist independently of other religions. Hence, syncretism is a common practice, with Shintos the fundamental folk belief incorporated to Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Followers of Shintoism are called Shintoists.

**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**

List at least three examples of Filipino practices that show belief in unseen spirits. Compare it with the Japanese belief of erecting shrines for spirit-worship. Do you think this aspect of animism (belief in nature as the abode of spirits) still persists despite the fact that most Filipinos now practice Christianity? Can you say the same for Japan? Explain your answer.

**CONCEPT MAP**

```
SHINTOISM

Sacred Scriptures
Worship and Observances
Beliefs and Doctrines
Subdivisions
```
Symbol
The Torii Gate is the most common symbol for Shintoism. It is a sacred gateway supposed to represent a gate upon which a cock crew on the occasion when Amaterasu emerged from the rock cave and relighted the world. It marks the entrance to a sacred space which is the Shinto shrine. It represents the transition between the world of humans and the world of the gods and goddesses. It is believed to help prepare the visitor for their interaction with the spirits by signifying the sacredness of the location. It is traditionally made of wood or stone, but now most toriis are made of concrete and steel.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
The development of Shintoism in Japan has a long history. During the prehistoric period in Japan, animism was evident in the agricultural affairs of the people. Agricultural rites were celebrated seasonally and all communal religious activities were focused on objects or places believed to be inhabited by kami or spirits. Later on, adherents formulated rituals and stories for them to make sense of their universe, such as creation stories regarding Japan and its natural elements, thereby creating their own sense of cultural and spiritual worlds. One such story is the “Story of Creation,” which narrates that in the beginning there were two kami, Izanagi-no-Mikoto (male) and Izanami-no-Mikoto (female). It was said that after Izanagi’s creative work on earth, he went up to heaven while Izanami was left permanently on earth as the queen of the lower world. According to the myth, Amaterasu-o-mi-kami, the goddess of the sun, came out of Izanagi’s left eye while Tsukiyomi-no-Mikoto came out of his right eye, and Susa-no-Wo-no-Mikoto came from his nostrils. The Nihongi narrates the following account of the creation of the three great kami of the upper air:
“When Izanagi-no-Mikoto had returned (from the Lower World), he was seized with regret, and said, ‘Having gone to Nay! A hideous and filthy place, it is meet that I should cleanse my body from its pollutions.’ He accordingly went to the plain of Ahagi at Tachibana in Wodo in Hiuga of Tsukushi, and purified himself...Thereafter a Deity was produced by his washing his left eye, which was called Amaterasu-no-Oho-Kami. Then he washed his right eye, producing thereby a Deity who was called Tsukiyomi-no-Mikoto. Then he washed his nose, producing thereby a God who was called Susa-no-Wo-no-Mikoto. In all, there were three Deities. Then Izanagi-no-Mikoto gave charge to his three children, saying, “Do thou, Amaterasu-no-Oho-Kami, rule the plain of High Heaven; do thou, Tsukiyomi-no-Mikoto, rule the eight-hundred-fold tides of the ocean plain; do thou, Susa-no-Wo-no-Mikoto, rule the world.” (Holtom 1965)

Amaterasu-Omikami, who is believed to have come from the left eye of the sky god Izanagi, is considered the sun goddess and the ancestor of the Japanese imperial family, with Emperor Jimmu Tenno, Amaterasu’s great grandson, as the first emperor of Japan. Amaterasu exhibited great virtue and ruled over Takama-ga-Hara while Susa-no-Wo-no-Mikoto performed evil deeds and was later driven out and went down to Izumo, where he subdued the rebels and gained possession of the sword, which he presented to Amaterasu, the Great Deity. He had a child named Okuni-Nushi-no-Mikoto, who succeeded him as the ruler of Izumo and, with the help of Sukuna-Hikona-no-Kami, ordered the cultivation of the land, suppressed the rebels and taught the knowledge of medicine, making him popular in the land. The myth further narrates that just when Amaterasu was about to make her grandson the ruler of Japan, she instructed Okuni to give up the land, to which he obeyed and preferred to retire in the palace of Kidzuki, where he was later enshrined, thus beginning the Great Shrine of Izumo. Afterwards, Amaterasu gave an imperial command to her grandson, Ninigino-Mikoto, saying that her descendants should reign in the land of Japan, and that she has chosen Ninigino to rule over the land. She conferred on him the Yata mirror, the Clustering-clouds sword, and the Yasaka curved jewels, which are called the “Three Sacred Treasures.” And so Ninigino descended upon the land which is now called Japan, with his son Hiko-Hoho-Demi-no-Mikomoto, and his grandson, Ugaya-Fuki-Ahezu-no-Mikoto, and for three generations made Hyuga their capital. The first emperor of Japan, Jimmu Tenno, was the son of Ugaya (Holtom 1965).

After the prehistoric period, the kami living in some places were gradually associated with local ruling clans, also known as uji, thus taking the name ujigami. A clan from the Yamato region claimed that they have descended from Amaterasu, and that family was then recognized as the imperial household of Japan and cornerstone of Japanese nationhood. From then on, indigenous festivals and ceremonies became inseparable from government affairs especially with the emergence of the unified nation-state. These festivities
became known as matsurigoto (affairs of religious festivals) but retained its meaning to refer to “government” today.

The term “Shinto” came from “Shentao/Shendao”, shen means divine beings or kami and dao means “the way,” hence Shintoism means “the way of the kami.” The term first appeared in the Nihongi and Kojiki (or probably much earlier). It was used in order to help distinguish kami-no-michi (the Japanese Way of the Gods), from Butsudo (Buddha-Tao). This took place during the 6th century, with the introduction of Buddhism. It was a period when there was a coexistence of the interests in foreign bodhisattva with the indigenous family of kami. In fact, kami was seen as transformations of Buddha manifested in Japan to save all sentient beings (this signifies the fusion of Buddhism and Shinto). Shinto persisted even when Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced, spread, and became a major religion/philosophy in Japan. During the reign of Prince Shotoku (574-622), Buddhism was promoted in Japan, but it never saw a total conversion of the Japanese people from Shintoism to Buddhism, instead Buddhism was gradually absorbed and mixed with local folk religions, mainly Shintoism. The fusion can be seen, for example, in certain Shinto gods being regarded as protectors of Buddha. Another manifestation was the formation of temples next to shrines, called temple shrines or jingo-ji. During the Meiji Restoration, Shintoism was organized and became completely separated with Buddhism, which was banned and reorganized. It was then when Shintoism became the official state religion. It was during this period when the Japanese people were compelled to participate in Shinto ceremonies as a manifestation of patriotism. It was only abolished as a state religion after the defeat of Japan in 1945, but followers of this religion continued to increase, with the total number of its adherents amounting to 80 million (Brown 1994).

SACRED SCRIPTURES
The Kojiki and Nihongi are considered as sacred scriptures on Shinto, although they are not exclusively about Shinto; they also contain extensive information on Buddhism and Confucianism. These books, which are compilations of ancient myths and traditional teachings, are considered to have a dual purpose: a political as well as a moral purpose. Its political purpose is to establish the supremacy of Japan over all countries in the world by legitimizing the divine authority of the ruling families and to establish the political supremacy of the Yamato. Its moral purpose is to explain the relationship between the kami and human beings by establishing that the Japanese are a special people chosen by the kami, who have many human-like characteristics. It also emphasizes purification as both a creative and cleansing act. Death is considered as the ultimate impurity.
Kojiki
As one of the most important texts on Shintoism, Kojiki is composed of three books: the first is the age of *kami*, which narrates the mythology, while the second and third books discuss the imperial lineage, narrating the events concerning the imperial family up to the death of the thirty-third ruler, Empress Suiko. The third book is concerned mainly with revolts and love stories of successive rulers intertwined in a song-story format. After providing rich information about what transpired up to the reign of Emperor Kenzo, genealogy of each imperial family was discussed. The establishment of the three orders are reflected in the three books: the establishment of the order of the universe, the establishment of the order of humanity, and the establishment of the order of history. Even though it was written at the onset of the spread of Buddhism in Japan and despite the fact that Emperor Genmei, to whom the *Kojiki* was presented, was a Buddhist, there was no mention of Buddhism in the Kojiki. It just goes to show that Kojiki is based on the eternal and cyclical world of mythology.

Nihon shoki/Nihongi
Meanwhile, the Nihon shoki or Nihongi records the descent of the Yamato rulers of Japan from the gods. It represents a combination of a political purpose with folklores and myths. It is believed to have been completed around 720 C.E. and have become significant in the restructuring of Japan by the Yamato rulers, even in the naming of the country as Nippon. It was presented to the court during the reign of Emperor Gensho and is considered as Japan’s first official history which was completed after 39 years and compiled by Jimmu Tenno’s third son, Prince Toneri, along with numerous bureaucrats and historians. It is composed of 30 books, the first two of which discuss the “age of the *kami*” while the remaining books chronicle the events pertaining to the rulers up to the 41st emperor.

The stories in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* provide the Japanese people with a sense of pride, for these scriptures narrate how their rulers were descended from the gods, and how their race was descended from the gods as well. Some would even interpret that the whole of humanity descended from the two deities (Izanagi and Izanami), thereby creating a sense of superiority among the Japanese people. We can also see in the creation story the concept of dualism in Shinto, as shown by Izanagi as the sky god, and Izanami as the earth mother, as well as with Amaterasu as the benevolent child and her brother Susa-no-Wo-no-Mikoto as performing evil acts. The political legitimacy this myth provides the ruling families of Japan as well as the sense of pride it provides the Japanese people have made the Japanese people develop a strong sense of nationalism.
WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES

Unlike other religions, Shintoism has no weekly service; instead, people visit shrines at their own convenience. Proper performances of rites and ceremonies are an important aspect of Shintoism. They hold most of their rituals at the shrines, which they believe are the abode of the *kami* or spirits. At first, shrines were normal things that can be found in nature such as mountains, rivers, trees, rocks, etc., but later on they built shrines dedicated to their deities. Such shrines are often wooden structures that feature the natural beauty of the surroundings, which basically expresses Shintoism’s profound veneration of the environment (for example, woods used in shrines are often left unpainted). For Shintoists, the performance of rituals will give them the blessings they expect from the *kami*. Below are some of the rituals performed by the Shintoists.

Shinto Rites of Passage

Below are the rites of passage observed by the Shintoists from birth to death:

1. **Hatsumiyamairi (First Shrine Visit).** Newborn children are taken to the shrine to seek protection from the *kami*; traditionally, the newborn is taken by the grandmother because the mother is deemed impure from childbirth; the ritual takes place on the second day after birth for a boy, and third day for a girl;

2. **Shichi-go-san (Seven-Five-Three).** Festival observed every 15th of November by boys of five years and girls of three and seven years of age, who visit the shrine to give thanks for the protection provided by the *kami* and to ask for their healthy growth;

3. **Adult’s Day (Seijin Shiki).** Observed every 15th of January by the Japanese who had their 20th birthday the previous year by visiting the shrine to express gratitude to the *kami* (20 being the legal age of adulthood in Japan)

4. **Wedding Rites.** Patterned after the wedding of Crown Prince Yoshihito and Princess Sado in 1900;

5. **Funeral rites.** Since death is considered impure, most Japanese funerals are Buddhist in nature; Shintoism’s funeral practices are called *sosai*.

Ritual Purification (Meditative Practices)

The Japanese observe the *misogi*, or ablutions (the act of washing one’s body part or part of it, usually for religious purposes) which are considered as very ancient ceremonies performed after funeral ceremonies, when all members of the family go into the water together to cleanse themselves in a purification bath. Today, this can be done privately with water and salt, or with water alone. Its purpose is to cleanse the body of minor contaminations associated with the dead. Another form of purification rites is the *harai* or exorcism (the expulsion of an evil spirit from a person or place), performed usually by a priest by swinging a purification wand over the people and the objects to be exorcised. Another is the *imi* or abstentions (the act of restraining oneself from indulging in something), which are practices performed against...
impurity. After the purification rites, they are now ready to participate in the rites of offering and dedication, wherein they offer rice, rice wine, and other foods to the deities, followed by a presentation of music and dance. Then the most important part of the rituals comes, which is prayer to the deities of the shrines. Prayers can be in the form of praise of the kami, request for protection, and appeal for blessings in their lives (Brown 1994).

TYPES OF WORSHIP
There are various ways by which Shintoists worship kami. They may worship at home, at Shinto shrines, and during seasonal festivals. Let us take a look at each of these categories:

At Home (kamidana)
Shintoists often place a small altar (“kami shelf”) inside their houses and this is where they perform the following rituals: purification; offertory; clapping their hands to the kami (who, they believe, could see and hear what they are doing); and offering of prayers.

At Shinto Shrine
Also called ceremonial worship, this includes a visit to a Shinto shrine which detaches a worshipper from his or her ordinary environment. In this type of worship, trees in Shinto shrines, particularly the oldest and most revered ones, have ropes tied to them to signify reverence to the presence of kami.

Shrine visits usually take the following steps: first, one is advised to behave respectfully and calmly (there are prohibitions for the sick, wounded, or in mourning from visiting shrines because these people are considered impure). Take the ladle at the purification fountain, rinse both hands then transfer some water to rinse one’s mouth, then spit the water beside the fountain (one should not transfer the water directly from the ladle to the mouth or swallow the water). Then throw a coin at the offering box upon entering the offering hall, bow deeply twice, then clap hands twice, bow deeply again, use the gong, and pray for a while. It is believed that using the gong before praying attracts the attention of the kami.

Magical Charms and Amulets
Aside from worshipping the kami at the shrines, one of the main attractions at the shrines is the sale and distribution of charms or amulets. Shintoists believe that these amulets provide protection and can even be a source of magic. They often carry personal amulets and their homes are guarded by magical charms in the form of lintel placards or different talismanic symbols placed on the altars for their deities. The most common Japanese designation for charm is mamori, which they believe provides them with protection and may include a wide range of objects. Shimpu (god ticket or sacred ticket) is the term they use to refer to the magico-religious objects obtained at the Shinto shrines. These charms vary in sizes and shapes. Private amulets are often small in size and worn by the person in a specially constructed charm
bag, in the purse or sash which is placed in close contact with the body, and these amulets are considered as a means of bringing the individual under a close supervision of a particular deity. Charms may be made of wood, paper, and other materials. Most of the charms have specific uses, such as the lover’s charm which aims to fulfil a lover’s wish; the easy-birth charm; and the charm for the expurgation of intestinal worms. Meanwhile, domestic charms are larger and also vary in size and form. One type of domestic charm consists of a white paper covering folded around two very thin sheets of wood. In between the sheets of wood we can find the charm proper, the name or printed image of a deity. Shintoists believe that these charms are blessed by the *kami* and serve as material manifestation of the guidance, blessings, and protection of the deities (Holtom 1965).

**Seasonal Festivals**
Japan celebrates numerous festivals (called *matsuri*) since almost every shrine has its own festival. Festivals are usually held once a year to celebrate the shrine’s kami or a seasonal/historical event. Some of these festivals last for several days, and they are often done with processions, with the figure
of the local kami carried through dashi or decorated floats, around town. Some festivals are serene and pensive while most are lively and loud, with people playing drums and flutes while on parade. One example of an important festival in Japan is the Great Purification Festival, which is celebrated in shrines all over Japan every June and December, with priests waving a cleansing wand over the people, who rub paper dolls on their bodies to symbolize the transfer of impurities from their bodies to the dolls, then these dolls are thrown away by the priest. Another example is the New Year Festival, considered the most extravagant festival in Japan, which begins on the first day of January and just like other festivals in Japan, lasts for several days. During this period when people are still on vacation, they are expected to visit Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. On January 7, an enormous banquet is held and this signifies the start of New Year and the return to their daily lives (Brodd 2009).

BELIEFS AND DOCTRINES

Kami Worship
Shintoism is a religion which revolves around the belief in and worship of kami or spirits. Scholars agree that the concept of kami is difficult to explain, and that even the Japanese themselves who are Shinto believers cannot provide a definite definition of kami. According to the Japanese scholar, Motoori Norinaga:

“I do not yet understand the meaning of the term, kami. Speaking in general, however, it may be said that kami signifies, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient records and also the spirits of the shrines where they are worshipped. It is hardly necessary to say that it includes human beings. It also includes such objects as birds, beasts, trees, plants, seas, mountains, and so forth. In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power or which was awe-inspiring was called kami. Eminence here does not refer merely to the superiority of nobility, goodness or meritorious deeds. Evil and mysterious things, if they are extraordinary and dreadful, are called kami.” (Holtom 1965)

To Norinaga, even the successive generations of emperors can be called kami since for the ordinary people, they are far-separated, majestic, and worthy of reverence. However, the kami is not exclusive to the nobility alone; for in every village and even in every family, there are human beings who can be considered as kami. Even things such as thunder and echo can also be considered as kami, as well as animals such as tigers and wolves. Among the deities considered as kami, were Izanagi, the sky father, and Izanami, the earth mother.

In Shintoism, people are regarded as superior beings and everyone is considered a potential kami whose life on earth is destined to be filled with blessings. In that sense, Shintoism can be considered to have an optimistic
view of human nature (“people are basically good and have no concept of original sin”), hence it motivates people to accept life as it is and expect that life will be filled with blessings if only they will practice the necessary rituals and possess the right attitude.

As for the nature of kami, they are not all-powerful but believed to possess human traits, hence they may behave badly. Like human beings, they enjoy entertainment such as dance, music, etc. Kami can also refer to beings or to qualities which beings possess, hence kami may possess good or evil characteristics. Kami is roughly translated to English as “spirits,” but they are more than invisible beings, and they are best understood by Shinto followers through faith. Kami are numerous and can appear anywhere, and believed to have existed even before the Japanese islands were created.

Kami are often confused with the Western concept of a supreme being, but this is because explaining the concept of kami is not an easy task, and associating them with divine beings makes the concept of kami easier to understand. Although kami may refer to the gods such as Izanagi and Izanami, they may also refer to the spirits that inhabit many living beings, some beings themselves who inspire a feeling of awe (such as emperors and priests), elements of nature such as mountains and rivers, forces of nature such as earthquakes and storms, and certain human beings who become kami when they die. In general, kami may be classified into three types: the ujigami or clan ancestors; kami who reside in elements and forces of nature; and the souls of exceptional human beings who died.

Shintoism has a concept of yao yoruzu no kami, or eight hundred myriads of kami. Some of them are tutelary deities of clans who were later elevated to tutelary deities of their respective communities while some have no direct connection with the Shinto faith. Here are some of the most important kami in Japan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kami</th>
<th>Description/Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amaterasu-o-mi-kami</td>
<td>Sun Goddess; greatest of the kami; kami of the Ise shrine; ancestor of the imperial family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benten</td>
<td>music and the arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebisu</td>
<td>prosperity; abandoned leech-child of Izanami and Izanagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hachiman</td>
<td>Archery and war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Izanami</td>
<td>Sky god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Izanagi</td>
<td>Earth goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susanoo</td>
<td>wind/storm; Amaterasu’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenjin</td>
<td>education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/beliefs/kami_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/beliefs/kami_1.shtml))

**Concept of Pure and Impure**

Shintoism, unlike other religions, does not have a clear distinction between what is right and what is wrong. However, since its most important concept is purity, there are acts or things which are considered as evil since they
cause or signify impurity. It is very important in Shintoism to maintain physical, external, and material purity. For example, blood is regarded as impure. Shintoism strongly disapproved of the pollution of blood. Women who menstruate are considered impure, as well as women after child-birth, and have to be isolated for a definite period of time. Even at present, in some remote areas of Japan, the aforementioned women are prohibited from living together with their family and sharing meals with them. They built houses where women who have their period or who have recently given birth are expected to live alone and cook their own food. In these so-called “menstruation houses” (called Taya), visitations by men were prohibited.

In general, the practice of purification in Shintoism mainly aimed at the removal of physical or external pollution, and had nothing to do with spiritual purification. Hence, the concept of “sin” was simply of a physical or external nature which can easily be purified with the necessary rituals. In fact, even illnesses are seen as caused by natural powers and are listed as “sins” since they cause unpleasant feelings in other people (e.g. leprosy), which made the kami to also dislike them. Being struck by a thunderbolt is also regarded as a sin, as well as being bitten by an insect. Having sexual relations with one’s parent or one’s child is also regarded as a ‘sin,’ as well as having sexual relations with animals. To compensate for committing the sins mentioned above, they are required to make offerings to the deities (Kato 1973).

Concept of Death
Death is considered as the worst form of impurity in Shintoism. When a person dies, his or her body is considered as the most impure thing. That is why they perform ritual bathing after a funeral ceremony wherein all family members do a ritual bathing in the river. Also, it is believed that the Shinto kami greatly dislike death, that those who have been in contact with the dead are prohibited from participating in the rites performed at the shrines. They are considered as impure and cannot participate in the rites for 30 days after contact with a dead body; seven days after child-birth; and five days after contact with the death of certain domestic animals; furthermore, those who paid a visit to the dead or participated in memorial services cannot visit the Imperial Palace, and even those who miscarried after more than a four-month pregnancy cannot participate in the rite for a certain number of days. Even the mere mention of the term “death” was taboo at the Great Shrine of Ise and the Kamo Shrine in Kyoto (Kato 1973). Although death is considered as the ultimate manifestation of impurity, death is not to be feared of according to Shintoism; Shintoists believe that death is but the continuation of life, and that even if one dies he or she will continue to receive the blessings of the kami. However, the dead live in the world of darkness while the living live in the world of light. But they believe that even the dead are allowed to visit the world of the living and this happens during Shinto festivals.

TRIVIA
“Spirited Away” is a 2001 anime film by renowned Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki. Shinto perspective, specifically Shrine Shinto, is used in the film, with its setting at a bathhouse where various creatures, including the kami, were seen to bathe and be cleansed. This is accordingly derived from the Shrine Shinto practice of calling all the local kami to invite them to bathe with them in their baths (https://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No2/boydShinto.htm). Cleansing through water is a very important tradition in Shintoism, with purification as the most significant way to rid oneself of sins.
De/Virtue

The way to appease the kami or the spirits, according to Shinto, is through purification. Proper observance of rituals is necessary in order to purify oneself and be deserving of the blessings from the deities. Living in harmony with nature, which is inhabited by the kami or spirits, is encouraged. In line with this, Shintoists value the virtues of beauty, truth, goodness, and morality. Sincerity in everything that we do is also valued, for it implies a pure heart. To achieve this, purity rituals often involve cleansing with water, such as rinsing the mouth, washing the hands, taking a bath, standing under waterfalls, and it is better if these activities are performed at the shrine. Hence, cleanliness is also valued by the Shintoists for it is through cleansing that purity can be achieved.

SUBDIVISIONS

There are three main types of Shintoism: The Shrine (Jinja) Shinto, the Sect (Kyoha) Shinto, and the Folk/Popular (Minzoku) Shinto. The Shrine Shinto is considered as the purified/traditional type under which the State and Imperial Shinto belong. The Sect Shinto refers to the 13 government-organized independent sects formed during the 19th century, focusing on human welfare in this earthly life. Folk or Popular Shinto is the type of Shintoism practiced in local shrines and considered to be more ingrained to the people’s rite of passage. It is considered as a Japanese folk religion. Let us take a look at each main type of Shintoism.

Shintoism Shrine

Shintoism Shrine, or Jinja, was officially coined by the Japanese government in the 19th century when Shintoism gained state support and was recognized as a state religion. Prior to this, at the advent of Buddhism in Japan in the 7th century, Buddhism was intertwined with Shintoism, when Buddha and the bodhisattvas were regarded as kami. Later on, the imperial government started to purify Shinto from all Buddhist elements. In the 19th century during the Meiji Restoration, Japan was transformed to a modern nation, and the said transformation covered the political, economic, social, and religious aspects. It was then when Shrine Shinto became the state religion. As a result, Shintoism became a vehicle for patriotism. Japan’s divine origin was also emphasized on Japanese children. The Japanese people had to attend and serve shrines, and consequently shrines and priests were put under imperial control. However, the defeat of Japan in World War II brought a major setback on Shinto, yet it remained to play a significant part in Shinto in general.

Sect Shintoism (Kyoha)

This type of Shintoism was recognized by the Imperial government in the late 19th century, referring to the 133 organized Shintoism. It developed in response to historical reality, as an administrative way of dealing with the crystallization of Shinto traditions into organized religious groups. These 13
Sect Shinto were designated by the government as “religions” along with other faiths such as Buddhism and Confucianism. Their place of worship were called “churches” to distinguish them from the shrines which are under imperial control. Incidentally, many of the sects were founded and led by women, which is a reflection of women’s prominent role in Japanese religion in ancient times. Sect Shinto can be classified into five groups (Bahn 1964):

1. Pure Shinto Sects
2. Confucian Sects
3. Mountain Sects
4. Purification Sects
5. Faith-healing sects

Folk/Popular Shintoism (Minzoku)
This type of Shinto is often associated with superstition, magic, and common practices of the Japanese people. It includes traditional practices, often best understood as Japanese folk religion. It is a form of Shinto worship which does not require a priest or a formal shrine, hence it is also known as Shinto which people practice in their daily lives. It emphasized on purification rituals and regarded as more personal or local. It is often practiced in connection with growing of crops, major blessings, and at major stages of life, such as birth and marriage.

SELECTED ISSUES
As mentioned before, Shintoism is a religion in Japan that was able to co-exist with other religions such as Confucianism and Buddhism. Shintoism got from Confucianism its system of ethics and the value of ancestor worship, while treating Buddhism as dealing with afterlife matters. The Japanese people have always been seen as very nationalistic, and this has always been attributed to the myths provided by Shintoism, such as tracing back their ancestry to the deities, particularly Amaterasu. It has served as a vehicle for patriotism, as taking care of the Japanese people’s needs in this present world, and it promotes high veneration and conservation of nature. Shrine visits of the Prime Ministers of Japan is also another aspect of Shintoism, which was declared the state religion of Japan in 1868, with the accession of Emperor Meiji to the throne as a descendant of Amaterasu, although after the defeat of Japan in World War II it was abolished by the Allied Powers as the state religion of Japan.

Vehicle for Patriotism
Aside from Shintoism providing the Japanese people with the pride of believing that they came from the deities and that their rulers have descended from the heavens, there are some aspects of Japanese history that they interpret as having divine intervention and therefore have also become a source of fervent patriotism. The Japanese government, even in recent times, have played a very crucial role in instilling a sense of patriotism to its people. For example, the Japanese government, through its ministry of education, has an
important role in approving the topics to be taught to high school students in Japan. It has also allegedly purposively omitted the atrocities committed by the Japanese soldiers to other nationalities such as the Filipinos and the Chinese in their history textbooks so that the youth will continue to look up to them and still be proud of their county.

One example of a historical event that the Japanese people interpret as having displayed divine intervention was when the Mongols attacked Japan in the 13th century. They believed that Japan won over the Mongols because of the help of the kami, particularly by the great Kami of Ise, Amaterasu Omikami. The divine winds, or kamikaze, supposedly drove away the Mongols when a strong storm blew. As described by Hiroshi Kurita:

In summer of the fourth year of Ko-an (1281), during the reign of Go-uda, the 90th Emperor, the Mongolian warships which had conquered China came to the Japan Sea, their banners shining in the sun. In order to destroy these enemies, the Emperor sent an Imperial messenger to the Daijingu of Ise, the Great Shrine. Thus did a strong storm blow, the sea became wild, as the Kami manifested their divine power in the form of this incarnation. If the divine light had not caused the waves to become higher and higher, all the enemies would have escaped. It seems that Amaterasu-Omi-Kami sent the Kami of Wind, who was enshrined in one branch of the Daijingu of Ise, to destroy the enemies (Kato 1973).

Thus, the belief that they came from the kami and they are protected by the kami strengthens the Japanese people’s sense of patriotism because their religion, which was even declared by the Japanese government as a state religion for a long time, teaches them that they are a chosen people and that they will prevail no matter what, with the help of the kami. They just have to do the necessary rituals so that the kami will be appeased. The Japanese government plays a very crucial role in the practice of Shintoism, that in the 20th century, the Japanese people were required by the government to participate in Shinto ceremonies to prove their love of their country, which led to the persecution of non-Shinto practitioners in Japan.

Shintoism has always been praised for being able to co-exist with other religions such as Buddhism. This is because Shintoism is seen as a religion that provides the needs of the Japanese people in this present world, while other religions take care of the things that matter in the afterlife, which they found in Buddhism. And because Shintoism is considered as having no prescribed concept of morality, another religion, Confucianism, provided it with its own sense of ethics. In effect, Shintoism is seen as having the means to attend to the daily concerns of communities and individuals, particularly the cultural and economic aspects of life such as providing the people with good harvests and safe dwellings.

Like most animistic religions, Shintoism has a high regard for nature, since the early practitioners of Shintoism saw that nature provided them with everything they needed such as food, shelter, and clothes. Consequently, they became grateful to nature for providing all their needs and they showed
their gratitude by worshiping the kami in natural shrines. In fact, the earliest shrines were natural ones, such as mountains, groves, trees, rocks, rivers, springs, and other natural objects. It was only later that they built shrines for their deities. Nevertheless, they still continue to give importance to nature because Shintoism started as ancestor-worship and nature-worship.

Even though Japan is already considered a highly-industrialized nation, one can still see trees even in the cities. This reflects the Shinto belief in the grove as a ritual space for the worship of deities, and that they have to be preserved no matter what. In fact, to make sure that the shrines for the deities will be preserved even in the future, the Japanese government has formulated policies and projects to help conserve Japan’s environment. A Shinto plan which was launched in 2009 was aimed at protecting the forests in Japan. The idea is for the management of forests which is “religiously compatible, environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable.”

Shrine Visits of Prime Ministers
Shrine visits refer to visits being made by important Japanese such as Prime Ministers to Shinto shrines. This is being done to show respect to people who died in the service of the Emperor. One example of such a shrine is the Yasukuni Shrine, in the Chiyoda ward in Tokyo, which houses the remains of soldiers as well as civilians who produced war materials, who all died in the...
service of the Emperor Meiji. The spirits of these people were considered as *kami* from the Meiji Restoration, including those who died in the Satsuma Rebellion, the First Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Rebellion, the Russo-Japanese War, World War I and II, as well as the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Rituals when visiting the Yakusuni Shrine include going to the Main sanctuary (called Honden), which is considered the central building and it is believed that the *kami* reside within its deepest and darkest recesses, where the priests make offerings twice a day (in the morning and evening). The first *torii* where the pilgrim should pass is located at the bottom of the Kudan hill, and it is here where the pilgrims perform the necessary rituals like bowing of the head and clapping of the hands before the Yakusuni *kami*.

For the Japanese people, those who are enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine are considered as heroes who sacrificed their lives for the advancement of Japanese interests. For the neighboring countries, such as China and Korea, this shrine visit becomes controversial because it appears as if the Japanese Prime Minister is honouring the memories of people who abused their own people in times of war, such as the comfort women of China and Korea and the Philippines who were used as sex slaves of the Japanese soldiers during World War II. As mentioned earlier, the Japanese people hardly learn about this dark side of their own history because these are not being discussed in their history textbooks and not being taught in their classrooms.

**WEBLINK**
Visit asianhistory/about.com/od/japan/yl/yasukuni-shrine-japan.htm and explain the controversy surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine.
Summary

• For Shintoism, human beings need to ensure that they continue to become part of the natural world, which is considered sacred; human nature is pure and in the natural state of existence, and people need to continuously purify themselves through rituals so as to maintain this purity.
• The goal of every human being is to become part of the natural realm through purification rites.
• There is no clear-cut distinction between good and evil in Shintoism, but there are things which are associated with impurity such as blood and death; thus, it is necessary to perform the appropriate rituals to purify oneself from these things which are considered impure.
• As long as people worship the kami, they are protected and provided for by the kami; not performing the necessary rituals that will appease the kami will certainly not earn the favor of the spirits.
• Living a healthy and bountiful life is more important than the concept of what will happen in the afterlife; hence, Shintoism prefers that people live a healthy and prosperous life here on earth than be concerned with the afterlife.
• There is no clear concept of heaven and hell; there is mention, however, of another world which is inhabited by the kami; and there is another world connected to the burial of the dead.
• Shintoism is primarily concerned with humanity’s life on earth than on the afterlife.

Critical Thinking

1. Why is Shintoism able to co-exist with other religions/philosophies such as Confucianism and Buddhism?
2. Why is Shintoism considered not only as a religion but a way of life for the Japanese?
3. What measure did Japan’s imperial government take to preserve Shintoism as the national tradition after the spread of Buddhism?
4. How do the Japanese people view their emperor and their lineage?
5. Why do you think do religions, especially Shintoism, practice purification? Why is it essential?

Assessment

A. Modified True or False. Write the word True if the statement is false. If False, change the underlined word to make the statement correct.

_______ 1. Temples are built to honor the spirits believed to be found in nature.
_______ 2. Shinto is the Japanese word for spirits or deities.
_______ 3. Kami means “way of the spirits.”
_______ 4. Shrine Shinto is a mixture of traditions, magic, and other practices of the common people.
_______ 5. Kamikaze refers to the divine wind believed to have driven away the Mongols from attacking Japan.
6. **Nihongi** refers to the Ancient Records of Ancient Matters.
7. **Kojiki** refers to the Chronicles of Japan.
8. The **Yamado clan** was the ruling family who declared Shinto as the national religion in the 7th century C.E.
9. The **Ise Shrine** is considered as a controversial shrine in Japan.
10. **Zen Buddhism** believes that all human beings are Buddha.

**B. Fill in the blanks.**

1. _______ is the sky god according to Japanese mythology.
2. _______ means “way”.
3. _______ refers to affairs of religious festivals.
4. _______ is the earth mother according to Japanese mythology.
5. _______ is considered the first emperor of Japan who descended from the gods.
6. _______ is the sun goddess according to Japanese mythology.
7. _______ or exorcism is practiced in Shintoism to rid the body of evil spirits.
8. _______ or ablutions are practiced in Shintoism for purification.
9. _______ is important in Zen Buddhism for the attainment of enlightenment.
10. _______ refers to spirits or deities in Shintoism.

**C. Recreate your own kamidana (two-dimensional miniature Shinto altar) in an illustration board, identify its elements and explain the importance of this little shrine to Japanese everyday Shinto life.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RUBRIC FOR KAMIDANA</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRITERIA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On to the Next Lesson**

In this lesson, we have learned about the core teaching of Shintoism, which is the worship of ancestors and forces of nature to achieve harmony in all dimensions. Let us now take a look at a comparative analysis of the three Daoic religions in the next lesson.
Sources

BOOKS

INTERNET SOURCES
The three Daoic religions—Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism—all originated from East Asia, thus they are also called East Asian religions. Confucianism and Daoism both came from China during the Warring States Period (Zhou dynasty) while Shintoism, which is also regarded as an “indigenous religion,” thus it is hard to trace its origins, came from Japan.

Let us now take a look at the similarities and differences among the three religions in terms of origin, morality, purpose, destiny, and views on women.

The character below shows the Chinese symbol for Dao, which literally means “The Way.” It is impossible to describe the Dao with words; they can
only give us clues that will help us get a glimpse of what the Dao is. It is often described as the life force, the essence, the energy, the flow of the universe. In this lesson, we will compare the three Daoic religions—Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism—by emphasizing their uniqueness and similarities, and by showing that despite the differences in certain beliefs and practices, they share common traits, especially with regard to how they view nature and humanity’s relationship with it.

**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY**
Based on what you have learned in the previous lessons, try to fill out each column with information about the three Daoic religions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Symbol/s</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Believer</th>
<th>Sacred Texts</th>
<th>Relevant Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daoism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCEPT MAP**

**DAOIC RELIGIONS:**
CONFUCIANISM, DAOISM, SHINTOISM

- Origin
- Morality
- Purpose
- Destiny
- Views on Women
ORIGIN
Confucianism may have started during the time of Kung Fuzi, but his ideas became popular only after his death, with the initiatives of Mengzi, and later of Xunzi, who were among those who contributed their own ideas to Confucianism on concepts such as human nature, morality, politics and government. It initially started as a philosophy that would provide a solution to China’s chaotic society during the Zhou dynasty, but later it became a religion as well, although its main contribution to China lies in its ethical and moral dimensions.

However, it was not until the reign of the Han dynasty during the 3rd century B.C.E. that Confucianism secured a very significant place in Chinese society. With the initiative of Dong Zhongshu, Confucianism was adopted by the Han dynasty as an instrument for its political legitimacy. Confucian thought became mandatory for it served as the basis for civil service examinations, hence those who wanted to serve in the government should be well-versed with Confucianism, and in effect Confucianism became the official religion/philosophy of the state. “Without Kongzi, there would be no Confucianism; but without Dong, there would be no Confucianism as it has been known for the past 2,000 years.” Thus, when Confucianism was adopted by the Han dynasty, it served as the basis not only of China’s political and ethical system; but also of China’s social system as well.

Just like Confucianism, Daoism also started in China at almost the same period when Confucianism developed. Like Confucianism, it was also meant to offer solutions to China’s social upheavals during the time. Laozi, who is considered as Daoism’s prominent philosopher, authored Daoism’s sacred scripture, the *Dao De Jing* (believed by some as a reaction to Confucianism). While Confucianism accepted the importance of rituals and ancestor worship for the achievement of harmony between heaven and earth, Daoism believed that nature should be allowed to take its natural course for the attainment of social order. Confucianism and Daoism may have flourished at the same period and may have faced the same obstacles in society, but their solutions for the achievement of harmony between heaven and earth differ, with Confucianism emphasizing the need for a strict ethical control and with Daoism advocating the “go with the flow” attitude.

While Confucianism became extremely relevant in Chinese society when it was adopted by the Han dynasty, Daoism’s importance began upon the collection of writings of unknown origin during the 3rd or 4th centuries B.C.E. This collection of writings became known as the *Dao De Jing*, a compilation of several hundred years of writings about the *Dao* (the way) and *De* (virtue). Later it was attributed to Laozi, who was among those, together with Kung Fuzi and other scholars, who participated in the “hundred schools” debates during the Warring States period. Zhuangzi was another major contributor to Daoism by writing a book which also tackled the *Dao*. Despite the existence of these sacred scriptures in the said period, it took many centuries before Daoism would secure its rightful place in China’s religious and philosophical life.
Shintoism, which originated from Japan, is considered an animistic folk religion and its origin is hard to trace, but what is clear is that it started as an indigenous religion with utmost importance given to spirits (or *kami*) in nature. Later it was used by the imperial family to legitimize their rule and it was even declared as a state religion for a long time. It emphasized the core values of family, tradition, nature, ancestors, purity, and ritual practices. With the spread of Buddhism in Japan, it became linked with the new religion; thus, it is very common for many Shintoists to identify themselves as Buddhists as well. Shintoism is believed to have provided the people with their daily needs while Buddhism takes care of the afterlife.

**MORALITY**

In Confucianism, the concept of morality is based on loyalty to one’s superiors and elders, parents, and respect for others. Proper ritual observance, including rituals performed for the ancestors, is also considered moral action, as well as self-cultivation through wisdom and trustworthiness. Doing the right thing at all times is also considered meritorious.

Loyalty is also translated as “regard for others” (*zhong*), specifically loyalty to one’s superior but also includes respect to one’s equals and subordinates. The importance of self-reflection is also emphasized, with the Golden Rule as the guiding principle, “Do not do unto others what you do not want others do unto you.” From this self-reflection comes the need to express concern for others, and eventually the attainment of social order. From self-reflection comes self-cultivation, or the need to cultivate oneself through wisdom. Maximizing *ren* (concern for others) by performing the necessary rituals (*li*) would lead to *de* (virtue) and would produce the ideal person according to Confucianism. The cultivation of oneself would eventually lead not only to personal cultivation but to social and even cosmic cultivation as well.

While Confucianism had very few moral guidelines, Daoism initially advocated the idea that society should not be regulated with morality, but should be allowed to exist according to the natural laws. Doing so would lead to virtuous behavior. Later on, Daoist masters advocated the idea that one should perform good deeds that would be known only to the gods. Gradually, they started to regulate morality by confessing one’s sins and ask for forgiveness from the gods. Austerity and self-discipline were also emphasized, until in the 4th century C.E., the text containing 180 moral guidelines appeared, which listed moral guidelines attributed to Laozi and were clearly influenced by Buddhism. Included in the guidelines were the prohibition on stealing, adultery, abortion, murder, intoxication, and overindulgence. More developed moral guidelines appeared in the 5th century with the introduction of the Lingbao scriptures, which was heavily influenced by Buddhism. Some of its important guidelines were the prohibitions against killing, lying, stealing, intoxication, immoral deeds and actions, as well as maintaining good relationship with one’s family members (even with the dead ancestors), committing good deeds, helping the less fortunate, and avoiding thoughts of revenge.
**GUIDE QUESTION**

How similar and different is the concept of morality for the three Daoic religions?

Unlike other religions, Shinto morality is not based on definite standards of right and wrong. Since Shintoism is focused on following the will of the kami or spirits, anything that is not in accordance with the will of the kami is considered bad. Shintoism has provided the Japanese with a way of life that revolves around the worship of the kami, while Confucianism from China provided them with ethics. Hence, Shinto morality is based on having purity not only in the physical sense but also in a spiritual and moral sense. Human nature is basically good according to Shintoism, hence evil comes from external forces. And when people let evil guide their actions, they bring upon themselves impurities and sin which need to be cleansed through rituals. Impurities also disrupt the flow of life and the blessings from the kami that is why purification rituals are needed to be able to return to the natural state of cleanliness not only of the people but of the universe as a whole. In general, things which are considered bad in Shintoism involve disrupting the social order, the natural world, the harmony of the world.

**PURPOSE**

The three Daoic religions basically share the same view regarding the purpose of existence. Confucianism and Daoism both espouse the importance of self-cultivation for the benefit of all while Shintoism emphasizes the need to return to the original state of nature by observing purity in everyday life.

Confucianism advocates the idea that the ultimate goal of everyone should be to reach one’s highest potential as a person, and this can be achieved through self-cultivation. To become virtuous, one should be mindful of all the senses (sight, hearing, speech, and action) and make sure that every action, thought, and feeling should be in accordance with li (ritual). For Kung Fuzi, the ideal person is called a junzi, a person who exemplifies the quality of ren or concern for fellow human beings and manifests the quality of yi or righteousness. Mengzi shares the same belief: that human nature is basically good but still needs cultivation through the proper observance of li (ritual) and meditative practices to ensure the smooth flow of the qi (vital energy). He also believed that what makes us human is our feeling of sympathy for others’ suffering, but what makes us virtuous is our cultivation of this inner potential. While Xunzi believed otherwise—that human nature is essentially bad—he also believed that this can be reformed through self-cultivation and also through the proper observance of li or rituals, an idea also espoused by Kung Fuzi and Mengzi.

As for Daoism, the purpose of existence is to ensure that order and harmony are maintained by being aligned with nature. Thus, like in Confucianism, self-cultivation is also needed because it is the only way to return to the natural state of existence. The goal of every person is to make the body capable of reacting in a natural and spontaneous way. Doing physical exercises may help the body achieve that goal. Since spontaneity is meant only for the immortals, common people should instead aim for a long and healthy life. Activities such as gymnastics, breathing exercises, dietary restrictions, drinking talisman water, and certain sexual practices can help achieve longevity and

**WEBLINK**

Visit [www.patheos.com/Library/Taoism/Beliefs/Human-Nature-and-the-Purpose-of-Existence](www.patheos.com/Library/Taoism/Beliefs/Human-Nature-and-the-Purpose-of-Existence) and explain Daoism’s concept regarding humanity’s purpose of existence.
body wellness. It is also important to make sure that there is proper alignment or balance within the body, otherwise illness will occur. That is why acupuncture is very important among the Chinese, for it helps adjust the flow of *qi* and tends to balance yin and yang. They also believe that the body is inhabited by the gods, and that organs are governed by the gods, that is why it is necessary to perform the necessary rituals that are meant to welcome the gods to enter the body. Daoists also believe that one way to become a mortal is by merging the yin and yang within, leading to the creation of an embryo even among males (Daoists believe that Laozi was able to achieve this). Thus, in Daoism, to ensure that the body functions well is very important since what happens to the body is reflected outside, so that the purpose of existence is to cultivate the self in the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects so that harmony and order will prevail.

Shinto shares with Daoism the belief that the natural state of existence should be maintained. While Daoism and Confucianism both emphasized the importance of self-cultivation to achieve this goal, Shintoism emphasized the importance of purification rituals to maintain the natural state of existence. Hence, avoidance of pollution or anything that they consider impure (death, blood, or disease) is seen as a way to maintain purity. Pollution is inevitable but can be washed away by *misogi* or purification rituals. In Shintoism, maintaining the pure and natural state of existence is the purpose of life, and one should start with oneself.

**DESTINY**

For Confucianism, reality has two spheres: the inner sphere and the outer sphere. Destiny (or ming) is considered the outer reality which is outside the control and concern of people. Self-cultivation should be the goal of everyone, thus the focus should be on the inner sphere—the cultivation of oneself—for what happens inside reflects what happens outside. A descriptive interpretation of *ming* sees destiny as a distant force beyond human control. Meanwhile, a normative interpretation of ming sees destiny as basically the same with the concept of *yi* (duty): everything is being willed by heaven and people should follow the will of heaven not out of fate but as a way of performing the duties assigned to them as individuals (Slingerland 1996).

Among all Daoic religions, Daoism is often criticized for espousing a fatalistic attitude in life, with emphasis on *wu wei*, often translated as “non-doing” or “non-action.” This is interpreted by critics as a proof that Daoism encourages people to live by leaving everything to the universe and not taking action at all. An analysis of the Daoist concept of destiny, however, would reveal that just like in Confucianism, “non-action” does not mean not taking any action at all. Instead, self-cultivation is also needed so that one may develop oneself to the extent that one’s actions are naturally in accordance with the flow of the universe. Thus, destiny or fate can only be achieved when one has cultivated oneself to the highest potential that one’s actions go effortlessly with the way of the universe.
Shintoism advocates the idea that every person has a destiny to follow, a mission to fulfill which will make one’s life worthwhile. However, not everyone is able to realize his or her destiny or mission, for it is impossible to discover destiny when one has lost natural purity. Thus, *misogi* or purification is important to regain the natural purity one once had. Only when one is truly purified can one discover his or her mission in life. Shintoism believes that humanity’s natural greatness can only be achieved by returning oneself to the state of natural purity. Just like in Confucianism and Daoism, what happens in heaven should reflect the affairs of human beings, hence in Shintoism, humans are affected by the pattern of the universe, specifically under the guidance of the sun, moon, and stars. Thus, performing the necessary rituals at the shrines will help people purify themselves and unfold the destiny they are meant to fulfill.

**VIEWS ON WOMEN**

Among the three Daoic religions, Daoism can be considered as having the most positive view of women, with its emphasis on the significance of balancing the masculine and feminine qualities in every individual to achieve harmony not only of the body but the world as well. Confucianism emphasized hierarchy, and in that hierarchy women are expected to become subservient to men. Similarly, in Shinto men are placed at a more advantageous position in society than women.

Confucianism places women at the bottom of the hierarchy both in family and society. They are expected to exhibit proper behavior and utmost obedience. More privileges were accorded to men, like having many wives and concubines while women were allowed to have only one husband and see only their closest male relatives. A woman’s life revolves around obeying men—her father, her husband, and grown-up son. Women are expected to be loyal to their husbands even when widowed. In fact, widows are expected not to remarry, for it is considered a disgrace for widows to remarry after the death of their husbands. To encourage this, there were times when the government offered tax exemptions and memorial monuments to the families of women who were widowed before the age of 30 but did not remarry until the age of 50. Confucianism advocates the belief that widows who remarry after the death of their husbands lose their virtue.

Daoism espouses a positive view of women, or qualities associated with women. In fact, the *Dao* is considered as the “mother of all things” and playing the feminine part is a constant theme in Daoism. Since balancing the yin and yang is important in Daoism, men are encouraged to perform female roles and vice-versa. Androgyny, or the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics, can be achieved by developing a divine embryo (even among males), ritual sexual intercourse, and internal alchemy. The high status accorded to women is manifested by the fact that women are allowed to become priests in Daoism, and by the existence of numerous female deities.

Shintoism initially started with a high regard for women especially in the religious aspect. Historical developments, however, have brought considerable
changes to the role of women in Japanese religion and society. We can see how the status of women in religion and in society have changed in the three periods of the development of Shintoism in Japan.

During the “Primitive Shinto” period (from early history to the end of the 2nd to 7th century C.E.), women had a significant role in religion as the medium between the gods and the people, with the message of the gods being revealed to them, while the implementation of this will was entrusted to men. Thus, religion was the domain of both women and men, usually brothers and sisters. Upon the rising importance of religion in the lives of the people, women gained power as proven by the rising number of female shamans (or miko) who were deified, and the numerous female rulers mentioned in the ancient chronicles. Upon the subsequent centralization of the empire, religion gradually came under the control of the imperial government and as a result, women’s role in religion was relegated to becoming the emperor’s representative in the religious domain instead. The status of women in Japanese society continued to change during the time of “Organized Shinto” (from Taika Reform to the Meiji Restoration 645-1867), when religion became the government’s responsibility, when rites had to be performed by provincial governors and priests, usually males. During that time, only the shrine at Ise was led by a priestess. From the Meiji Restoration in 1868 up to the present day, the role of women in society continued to decline. Pure Shinto as the national religion was established, abolishing the mystical elements of Shintoism often associated with women, thus deterring women from participating in official priesthood. Since World War II, women were again accepted in the priesthood but only as substitutes for male priests. Since then, two issues continued to pose a threat to the low status of women in Japanese religion and society: one, the limited role given to women in high ranking shrines such as Ise, which was previously led by a priestess; and two, the emphasis given by Shintoism to blood being one of the causes of impurity, hence limiting women’s role in priesthood. The miko or female shamans remained active as fortune tellers, founders of new sects, and as healers. (Haruko 1993) However, in general women are still not on equal status with men in society, where men are allowed to commit adultery while women are expected to be loyal to their husbands. Women were also allowed the right to divorce their husbands only in the last century.

CONCLUSION
By comparing the three Daoic religions, we have seen that they share more similarities than differences. One important aspect that needs to be stressed is their belief that the state of nature should be maintained for it is the only way to promote harmony and order in society. Another important aspect is the emphasis on rituals and ancestor worship, which need to be performed to help achieve self-cultivation at its highest form. On the other hand, Shintoism states the importance of returning to the natural state of purity to become a better person and fathom one’s destiny, thereby promoting order in society.

GUIDE QUESTION
Among the three Daoic religions, which espouses the most positive view of women?

TRIVIA
Shintoism is believed to be influenced by Daoism and Confucianism, such as Daoism’s concept of dualism (yin-yang) and Confucian elements in a new school of Shinto known as Juka Shinto.

peopleopposingviews.com
Despite the uniqueness of each of these religions, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism clearly share common threads that make them classified as Daoic religions.

**Summary**

- All three Daoic religions originated in East Asia—with Confucianism and Daoism originating in China during the Warring States period while Shinto started as an indigenous religion of Japan. Confucianism and Daoism started as attempts by philosophers Kung Fuzi and Laozi to bring order to the chaos happening during the Warring States period in China, while Shinto started as a religion focusing on the worship of *kami* or spirits that were seen as the source of prosperity, especially in the sphere of agriculture.

- Unlike other religions, the three Daoic religions discussed in this chapter have no strict set of moral guidelines to follow. In Confucianism, morality is based on loyalty, ritual observance, and self-cultivation; in Daoism, imposition of ethics was initially discouraged for it would hinder humanity from being in harmony with nature, but later Buddhism had influenced Daoism with its moral dimension. In Shinto, anything that goes against the observance of purity is considered evil.

- All three Daoic religions consider the harmony between heaven and earth as the ultimate goal, since they all believe that what happens in heaven should be reflected on earth. Thus, self-cultivation, for Confucianism and Daoism, is important for one can reach one’s highest potential only by cultivating oneself for the common good. Shintoism emphasizes purity of oneself to maintain the natural state which can bring harmony and order in society.

- Destiny, according to Confucianism and Daoism, lies in one’s cultivation of the self in order to achieve a harmonious society. In Shintoism, everyone has a destiny to fulfill, but only purity would make one capable of realizing his or her mission in life.

- Among the three Daoic religions, Daoism is considered as having the most positive view of women, with the idea of balancing the feminine and masculine qualities in everyone to balance the yin and yang and allow the smooth flow of *qi*. Confucianism, with its emphasis on hierarchy, prioritizes men over women in all aspects. Shintoism initially had a high regard for women, but historical developments led to the diminishing status of women in religion and society.
Critical Thinking

1. How did the imperial government become instrumental in making Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto relevant in their respective countries?
2. Why does Shintoism consider anything associated with death, blood, and pollution impure and a potential source of sin?
3. In what ways are self-cultivation and purity important in attaining one's highest potential in Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism?
4. How similar are Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism in terms of belief in the purpose of existence?
5. Why is Daoism considered as the religion with the most positive view of women compared to Confucianism and Daoism?

Assessment

A. Modified true or false. Write the word TRUE if the statement is true. If false, write the word FALSE and change the underlined word to make the statement correct.

1. Confucianism started as a philosophy that would provide a solution to China's chaotic society during the Shang dynasty.
2. Confucianism was adopted by the Han dynasty as an instrument for its political legitimacy.
3. Daoism believes that nature should be allowed to take its natural course for the attainment of social order.
4. Shintoism emphasized the core values of family, tradition, nature, ancestors, purity, and ritual practices.
5. Laozi believed that what makes us human is our feeling of sympathy for other's suffering, but what makes us virtuous is our cultivation of this inner potential.
6. In Shinto, pollution is inevitable but can be washed away by proper meditation.
7. In Confucianism, destiny can only be achieved when one has cultivated oneself to the highest potential that one's actions go effortlessly with the way of the universe.
8. The Dao is considered as the “mother of all things” and playing the feminine part is a constant theme in Daoism.
9. A normative interpretation of ming sees destiny as a distant force beyond human control.
10. In Confucianism, a woman's life revolves around obeying men---her father, her husband, and her brother.

B. Matching Type. Write the letter of the correct answer.

1. zhong a. destiny
2. li b. ritual
3. ren c. concern for others
4. junzi d. perfect gentleman
5. ming e. female shamans
6. miko f. purification rituals
C. Complete the table below by writing the correct words or phrases that describe the following categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Morality</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Destiny</th>
<th>Views on Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td>7. misogi</td>
<td>g. non-action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. wu wei</td>
<td>h. vital energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. qi</td>
<td>i. righteousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. yi</td>
<td>j. regard for others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daoism

Shinto
D. Write an essay discussing the similarities and differences of Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto in terms of morality. Why do you think do these Daoic religions not have a specific standard of moral guidelines, unlike other religions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The similarities and differences were clearly discussed.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 20**

**On to the Next Lesson**

In this lesson, we have studied the comparative analysis of the three Daoic religions in terms of origin, purpose, morality, destiny, and views on women. Let us now look at the synthesis of all the lessons in the next and last chapter.

**Sources**


At this point we have discussed world religions such as the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam); the Dharmic religions (Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism); as well as the Daoic religions (Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism). We have also tackled key concepts in religion, origin of world religions as well as the positive and negative effects of religions. We also made comparative analyses of the Abrahamic, Dharmic, and Daoic religions by focusing on their origins, morality, purpose, destiny, and views on women.

In this lesson, we will have a synthesis of everything that we have learned by analyzing the significance of religion in our modern times. We will also compare the basic similarities of the world religions with hope of promoting mutual understanding among believers of different faiths. Lastly, we will paint a picture of the religious landscape in the 21st century to help us understand the role of religion in our lives and its continuing significance in the future.

Religion has become an important part of individual lives, society, nation, and even the world as a whole. It has served various purposes to humanity such as providing meaning to one’s life and making sense of unfathomable things such as the origin and destination of life. It has also helped societies maintain peace and order by regulating behavior and has become the basis of people’s morality. It was even predicted in the 1990s that the world order would be based on religious differences among nations. Let us now take a look at the significance of religion in our world today.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION
Setting aside the negative effects of religion such as religious fanaticism and religious wars, religion has become an integral aspect of a civilized society. Some of its important uses include: providing inner peace; explains individual sorrow; inculcates social values; promotes social unity; regulates behavior; promotes welfare; provides recreation; influences economic and political systems; and provides purpose in life.

Religion provides inner peace by giving people a sense of origin and destination. Even prehistoric societies have used religion to explain among themselves where they came from through religious myths and cosmology. Most creation stories narrate how a group of people came from deities, and for some it has become the basis of their sense of pride and nationhood, like the Japanese people tracing their origin to the sun goddess. These stories of creation provided by religions have given people inner peace by giving them a sense of origin. Religions have also provided us with a sense of destination after death, like the concept of heaven and hell in Christianity which serves as a guide on how one should conduct his/her life on earth. Therefore, religion has provided people with explanations on things they cannot explain, especially with regard to humanity’s origin and ultimate destination.

Religion also attempts to explain human suffering. In times of sorrow and loss, religion often provides people with explanations on the cause or purpose for their suffering. For example, Mahayana Buddhism, through its Four Noble Truths, advocates the belief that life is full of suffering, and explains its cause and ways to end it. Hinduism would attribute suffering to bad karma by explaining that not fulfilling one’s dharma in past lives must be the source of suffering in the present life. By explaining the cause and purpose of suffering,
Religions have provided people with reasons for their suffering and take away the fear that God must have forsaken them.

Religion is also credited for instilling values to people. Religion lays down the foundation for whatever values they wanted to cultivate in their adherents. Confucianism promotes filial piety while Islam values humility. In general, religion promotes social values, such as honesty, non-violence, service, love, truth, discipline, among others. If adherents of particular religions will only internalize these virtues, they become instrumental in establishing a peaceful and harmonious society.

Religion also regulates the behavior of people in any given society. Because of the sense of morality provided by religion, it gives people ideas on what traits or acts are acceptable and unacceptable in society. Thus, values are developed which help people behave well within the social context, thereby promoting peace and order. Judaism and Christianity, as well as other religions, are clear on what are the acts that do not earn the favor of God, such as killing, adultery, and theft. Thus, religion assists the state, through its laws, in implementing peace and order in society.

Religion encourages people to promote the welfare of others, making them selfless by always making sure that they serve humanity in whatever way they can. Christianity advocates the belief that what people do to others, they do to God. Islam emphasizes alms-giving as one of its pillars, while Sikhism has a practice of feeding the poor people on a regular basis. Helping the poor and the less fortunate has always been an important aspect of religions and this further develops a sense of humanity among us.

Religion also helps promote social harmony. It gives adherents a sense of belonging to one group which paves the way for the development of a sense of unity among believers. Even when members of a particular religious group may not meet all of their co-members, in their imagination lies the idea that all of them are brothers and sisters worshipping the same God, practicing the same belief, and having the same values. For example, Islam has a concept of ummah or universal brotherhood while Jews pride themselves for being the Chosen People of God. Religion has also become a source of identity for people, identifying with co-members of a particular religion even if they will not meet fellow members in this lifetime.

Religion also provides recreation for people. It gives people an opportunity to take a break from their work and do something for their spiritual lives. Religious festivities serve as an attraction for people to join religions because this means being a follower of a particular religion is not just about prayers and meditation, but recreation as well.

Religion also influences the economy. Some sociologists such as Max Weber have theorized that religion can be related to an economic system, particularly the influence of Protestant ethics to capitalism. Hinduism, with its emphasis on the important of artha or pleasure derived from material wealth, has encouraged Hindus to improve the condition of their lives by engaging in business. Jews are encouraged to prosper in life for it is seen not as a hindrance in serving God, but a challenge to serve Him even more. Aside
from economy, religion can also influence political systems. In ancient and medieval Europe, the concept of divine right became the basis of political legitimacy of rulers as representative of the gods. In Hinduism, the concept of devaraja or god-king placed absolute leadership on the king who is considered to possess the qualities of the gods. Moreover, the policies of a particular state may be influenced by the religion of the ruling class, which may have an effect on religious minorities in a particular state.

Probably the most important role of religion in one’s life is that it provides an opportunity to examine the meaning and ultimate value of life. Through a study of world religions, we have observed that every religion provides a particular purpose of existence and this would make us reflect if how we are living our lives serves this purpose. Religion also guides us on how to relate with ourselves, with our families, and with society in general. By being familiar with the basic teachings of our particular religion, we will have an idea on how to achieve our personal happiness and fulfilment.

BASIC SIMILARITIES OF WORLD RELIGIONS

One of the reasons why the study of world religions is important is to appreciate the uniqueness of each religion. More importantly, we need to realize that despite the differences, there are similarities which bind these religions together and make them co-equal with one another. Studying the commonalities among world religions also help people develop religious tolerance and respect each other’s religious beliefs and practices.

There is an old Indian tale which we can use to show that world religions are indeed complementary. According to the story, once upon a time a King asked a group of blind men to describe an elephant. Each blind man was shown only a part of an elephant (head, trunk, ears, leg, body, tail, etc). As expected, each had a different description of the elephant as only a certain part of it was presented to them, describing the elephant as like a hose, a pot, a fan, a pillar, a wall, a rope, a brush, etc. Then they debated and each insisted that he was right and the others were wrong, when in fact all of them were right because the elephant is composed of many parts and what they were describing were only parts of the same elephant and not the elephant itself.

Comparing this analogy to the seeming unity of world religions, we can say that if we emphasize on the similarities of religions, we will have the right perspective to the ultimate truth. While it is true that religions vary in beliefs and worship different gods, we may consider that world religions provide us with alternative paths to the same transcendental reality. It is also like viewing a mountain from different angles and seeing different aspects of the same mountain. Religions may provide various ways of looking at life and how to live our lives, but may agree on the ultimate destination. Looking at certain categories such as the meaning and ultimate value of life, how to relate to oneself, family, society, and nature, and the way to achieve personal happiness and fulfilment, may give us a clue on the commonalities among world religions.
Meaning and Ultimate Value of Life
Humanity has always been fascinated with life’s mystery, such as life’s origin, meaning, and destiny. Religions have provided us with answers on these queries with regards to creation, life, and death. As to the origin of life, all major religions discussed in this book agree that humanity has divine origins. In Hinduism, it is believed that humans have a divine essence: every individual soul (atman) came from a universal soul (Brahman) in a pure state, and must go back to the Brahman in a pure and divine state as well. Samsara or the cycle of birth and rebirth is the way to purify the soul and rid itself of bad karma and attain moksha, or the union of the atman and the Brahman. In Buddhism, personhood is considered a hindrance in attaining nirvana or enlightenment, so attainment of Buddhahood is the way to enlightenment. In Daoic religions, people have the ability to attain ultimate goodness through self-cultivation. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, people are created in the likeness of God, that is why everybody possesses God-like attributes which can be used to do good by helping others. Since world religions agree that humanity came from a divine being and must ultimately return to its Creator or origin, the meaning and ultimate value of life is to live life in such a way that our souls will be worthy enough to go back to our Creator. In Hinduism, following one’s dharma or moral and social obligations is instrumental in liberating the soul from the cycle of birth and rebirth and ultimately return to Brahman. In Buddhism, getting rid of desires and living in such a way that the attainment of enlightenment is one’s goal helps one in reaching nirvana. In Daoic religions, self-cultivation which will lead one to reach his/her highest potential can best be attained by helping others. And in Abrahamic religions, since the purpose of existence is to love and serve God, it is important to help others because it serves as a reflection of one’s dedication to God.

How to Relate to Oneself, Family, Society, and Nature
The world religions all advocate the idea that one should be good to oneself, to one’s family, to society, and to nature. Some just put more emphasis on how one should relate to oneself. In Christianity, for example, it is a mortal sin to take away one’s life since it is God’s gift and we have no right to take away what God has given us. Some religions put more emphasis on one’s relation to one’s family, such as Confucianism with its emphasis on filial piety and even ancestor worship. Some religions focus on one’s relation to society, such as Islam with its concept of ummah or a community of believers that does not discriminate in terms of race, ethnicity, class, or gender. Still, some religions put more emphasis on one’s relationship with nature, such as Daoism which advocates the belief that humanity should be one with nature in order to achieve harmony between heaven and earth.

The Way to Achieve Personal Happiness and Fulfilment
The way to achieve personal happiness and fulfilment is closely connected to the purpose of existence. For adherents of different religions, living according to their purpose of existence leads them to enjoy personal happiness and
fulfilment, for it means they are fulfilling the very reason why they are here on earth. Thus, for the Hindus following their dharma leads to a fulfilling life for all the rewards will be reaped in their next lifetime, in which they are sure to have a better life, even attainment of moksha if they truly fulfilled their dharma. In Daoic religions, as long as one cultivates oneself in order to achieve one’s highest potential, it will lead to the smooth flow of the qi, or the vital force, which will eventually lead to a better world. In Abrahamic religions, as long as a person’s life is lived according to God’s will, personal happiness and fulfilment will eventually follow. Therefore, understanding one’s purpose of existence is very important in having personal happiness and fulfilment, for it serves as a guide on how one should live his/her life on earth.

THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

It has often been considered that religiosity has an inversely proportional relationship with scientific advancement and technological development. After all, ancient and medieval Europe was associated with the dominance of the Catholic Church. Only when secularism replaced religiosity during the 19th and 20th centuries did Europe grow richer. In West Asia, the conservatism of the Islamic Ottoman Empire was challenged by Western-style democracy in the 20th century. On the other hand, people who are known to be more religious are often considered as the world’s poorest, such as Africa. But then, there are some thinkers who proposed that not all religions lead to technological underdevelopment, such as Protestantism, with its Protestant ethics, which has made England more advanced compared to other Catholic countries in Europe. We can also take the case of South Korea which has progressed despite (or because of) the dominance of Buddhism.

Therefore, we cannot undermine the value of religion in the 21st century and beyond. In fact, there was even a prediction that religion will play a very crucial role in the emerging world order in that the conflict among civilizations will be based on religion; that people’s cultural and religious affiliations will determine the world order in the post-Cold War era (Huntington 1996). Looking at current trends, we can see that religion still plays a crucial part in the lives of the people everywhere in the world, and that the number of adherents of world religions has not diminished over the past decades.

So why the continuing relevance of religion? Because “human beings are spiritual beings first, with a natural orientation toward transcendent realities...people make decisions partly based on how they understand their self-interest, worldviews, and vision of what is true and good and beautiful. Religion has been the most intense worldview-shaping phenomenon in history, and it will continue to be the most important worldview-shaping phenomenon of the 21st century” (Gobry 2015).

Therefore, we can expect that the study of religion will also continue to be relevant in the 21st century and beyond. For one, being familiar with other religions aside from one’s religion has proven to cultivate a sense of tolerance for others, with people becoming more accepting of people who belong to other religions than before. Aside from this, being familiar with other

WEBLINK
Religion in The 21st Century

Religions increases the ability of the world’s national and regional communities to work together in solving global problems, such as poverty, climate change, human rights violations, etc. Lastly, studying world religions is expected to increase awareness of the historical fact that coercion in religious matters has not helped in bringing unity; instead it has caused conflicts and wars to be launched in the name of religion.

Religious literacy, or being familiar with world religions, will gain greater importance in the years to come, for people especially in the academe have come to realize its importance in liberal education. Knowledge of other religions aside from one’s religion helps in developing critical thinking skills and makes one act not on the basis of prejudice but of tolerance of other faiths. The youth of today will become the leaders of tomorrow, and if this trait is inculcated in them at an early age then we expect our future policymakers to act not out of ignorance and hasty generalizations about various religions but on well-informed knowledge of world religions. Studying religions will make people in all walks of life understand that their own worldview is not the only worldview which exists, and that what they believe in may not be applicable to everyone else. Studying religion will help people of different faiths co-exist peacefully in the world and even solve world issues.

Summary

- Religion is very significant not only in providing meaning to one’s life but also in regulating behavior of individuals in society.
- Focusing on the basic similarities of world religions will make people more tolerant of people of other faiths and will make them realize that their worldview is not applicable to everyone else.
- Religion will continue to be relevant in the 21st century and beyond because if understood and used properly, it can help make the world a better place to live in.

Critical Thinking

1. In your own opinion, what is the most significant aspect of religion to an individual? To society?
2. Can you think of an analogy to the study of world religions wherein the unity of religions is emphasized?
3. What is the basis of predictions that religion will continue to be relevant in the 21st century and beyond?
Assessment

A. Enumeration. List down five (5) important uses of religion and explain your personal experience on each use.

1. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
B. Identification. Write only the letter of the correct answer.

a. Religion gives inner peace
b. Religion affects political systems
c. Religion influences economy
d. Religion instils values
e. Religion explains human suffering

1. Provides people with a sense of origin and destination
2. Provides people with explanation for their loss
3. Lays down positive traits among adherents
4. Provides basis for leadership
5. Affects the progress of a nation

C. Complete the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning of Life</th>
<th>Abrahamic Religions</th>
<th>Dharmic Religions</th>
<th>Daoic Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to Relate to Oneself, to Family, to Society, and to Nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Way to Achieve Personal Happiness and Fulfilment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
D. Essay: Write a position paper on why religion will continue to be relevant in the 21st century and beyond. Use the rubric below as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>POINTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The concept was clearly and creatively conveyed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The concepts were clearly discussed.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The idea was clearly presented based on the words used.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 20</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Simulate a panel discussion as a final activity for this class. Organize three teams, with each team comprising of three members. One team will be assigned the Abrahamic religions; the second team will be assigned the Dharmic religions; and the third team will be assigned the Daoic religions. Each member of each team will be assigned a particular religion. Conduct an inter-religious dialogue by discussing the following concepts:

1. The meaning and ultimate value of life
2. How to relate to oneself, family, society, and nature
3. The way to achieve personal happiness and fulfilment

After the discussion, a moderator will summarize all the things that have been discussed and facilitate an open forum for further clarifications.

**Sources**

**BOOK**


**INTERNET SOURCES**

Glossary

**Anti-Semitism** - pertains to hostility towards and discrimination against the Jewish people that was strongly felt in France, Germany, Poland, and Russia in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**Bible** - considered the sacred scripture of Christianity.

**Bishops** - teachers of the doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of church government.

**Buddhism** - a path of practice and spiritual development that started in India. It strives for a deep insight leading to the nature of reality.

**Cardinals** - represent the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in different parts of the world. They serve as advisers to the Pope and elect a new Pope as the need arises.

**Christians** - the followers of Christianity.

**Christianity** - considered the most popular religion in the world with the most number of adherents among all religions.

**College of Cardinals** - the body comprising the cardinals.

**Confession** - considered the fourth sacrament, which is meant to reconcile Christians with God by confessing their sins.

**Death** - the permanent separation of body and mind.

**Destiny (or Ming)** - considered the outer reality which is outside the control and concern of people.

**Dharma** - Buddha’s teachings and the inner realizations that are attained in dependence upon practicing them.

**Folk/Popular Shinto** - associated with superstition, magic, and common practices of the Japanese people. It includes traditional practices, often best understood as Japanese folk religion.

**Holy Communion** - entails the reception of Christ’s body and blood which helps Christians grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

**Holocaust** - a term of Greek origin that means “sacrifice by fire.”

**Inquisition** - refers to the Roman Catholic Church groups charged with subduing heresy from around 1184.

**Islam** - means to “surrender or submit oneself for obedience to God” or to “enter into a condition of peace and security with God through allegiance and surrender to him.”

**Judaism** - an ancient monotheistic religion that traces its origin as an organized belief system during the Bronze Age in West Asia.

**Karma** - the impact of previous deeds (usually in former lives) on one's current circumstances.

**Kojiki** - one of the most important texts on Shintoism composed of three books.

**Misogi** - the act of washing one's body part or part of it, usually for religious purposes or spirits.

**Monotheistic** religions - claim that there is only one god who could have designed and created the universe or may have directed all events that led to the creation of everything.

**Permanent Deacon** - a seminarian who can get married and serve as a priest’s assistant in administering some of the sacraments.

**Pesach** - an eight-day festival that originally marked the beginning of
the barley harvest

**Philosophy of Religion** - deals primarily with issues concerning religion that includes an analysis on the existence of a divine being or on sacred texts

**Pope** - serves as the head of the Catholic Church, the inheritor of Peter

**Priest** - ordained ministers responsible for the administering of the sacraments such as the Eucharist, marriage, baptism, and confirmation

**Ptolemaic Theory** - claims that the earth is the center of the solar system

**Qi** - refers to the natural energy or life force that sustains living beings

**Religion** - an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods

**Rosh Hashanah** - a day of judgement wherein God assesses one’s deeds and decides what lies ahead of him or her the following year

**Sangha** - literally means “sharer” that refer to monks who shares in the general fund of alms provided by a community

**Sect Shinto** - a type of Shinto that was recognized by the Imperial government in the late 19th century

**Self-immolation** - the killing of oneself as a form of sacrifice, originally referred to as the act of setting oneself on fire

**Shahada** - the basic creed of Islam that “there is no God but Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”

**Shavuot** - a two-day festival that was originally a celebration of the wheat harvest.

**Shinto** - a religion which revolves around the belief in, and worship of kami

**Shrine Visits** - refer to visits being made by important Japanese such as Prime Ministers to Shinto shrines

**Sukkot** - a nine-day festival commemorating the autumn harvest and the forty years of Israelites’ stay in the desert wilderness subsisting solely on the bounty of God

**Synagogues** - Jewish temples of worship, instruction, and community fellowship that contain separate rooms designed for specific activities, such as praying and studying

**Ten Commandments** - set of absolute laws given by God to Moses at the biblical Mount Sinai that shall govern the life of every Israelite

**Theism** - a belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world

**Theology** - involves the systematic study of the existence and nature of the divine

**Transitional Deacon** - a seminarian who is studying for the priesthood

**Yom Kippur** - the most sacred and solemn day in the Jewish calendar that brings the period of repentance to its conclusion

**Yin and Yang** - most known concept used in Taoism. It means two halves that together complete a wholeness. Yin, the shady side and Yang as the sunny side

**Zion** - a Jewish synonym for Jerusalem
# Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abrahamic</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-din</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allah</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amaterasu</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amitabha</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animosity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avalokiteshvara</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belief system</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bishops</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bodhisattvas</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brahman</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bronze age</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brotherhood</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buddhahood</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capital punishment</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cardinals</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catholicism</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Hammurabi</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confucianism</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucius</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservatism</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cosmic law</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cosmology</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cro-magnons</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daoic</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daoism</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deuteronomy</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharma</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharmic</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easter</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecumenism</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnicity</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>euthanasia</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golden rule</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grand mosque</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hajji</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han dynasty</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanukkah</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haram</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasidism</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskalah</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew bible</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hexagram</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holy spirit</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holy trinity</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homosexuality</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humanity</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jainism</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jodo-shu</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>judaism</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaaba</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabbalah</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kami shelf</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karma</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kojiki</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lent</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotus Sutra</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makruh</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mandub</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manjushri</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meccan</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicin</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>megiloth</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meiji restoration</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mengzi</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesopotamia</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>messiah</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>militancy</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moksha</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monotheistic</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morality</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mount fuji</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mozi</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mubah</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myth</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neo-confucianism</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new testament</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nicene creed</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nihongi</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nihonshoki</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old testament</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orthodox</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pentateuch</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pentecost</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pilgrimage</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pope</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primitive shinto</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prophets</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protestantism</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proverbs</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purification</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quran</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ramadan</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationalist</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rituals</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Empire</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Empire</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbath</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seal of the prophets</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seven sacraments</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexuality</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shimpu</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shinto</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shintoism</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sukhavati</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syncretism</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ten commandments</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terrorism</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torah</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>torii gate</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yogachara</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou dynasty</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zionist</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zohar</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zoroastrianism</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

CHAPTER ONE
CHAPTER TWO


CHAPTER THREE


CHAPTER FOUR


United States Federal Government “Collage of images displaying the following, from left to right: 1) American Muslim females enjoying Iftar in Patterson, New Jersey. 2) Two young Iranian women walking down the street, one talking on a mobile phone. (October 20, 2005, by Gabriel White) 3) An Afghan school girl sings a prayer in celebration and for blessing during a ground breaking ceremony in the village of Dar Bhabha in the Nangahar province May 15. The school that will be built here is funded by the Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team. (Provincial Reconstruction Team) 4) Indonesian exchange students of the Jordanian Yarmouk University.” https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/Female_hijab_in_Islam.jpg


Abinanash Chandra Dna “Ramakrishna Paramahansa” https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ramakrishna.jpg


Shekhatraga - Own work “Bronze chariot, depicting discourse of Krishna and Arjuna in Kurukshetra” https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/Hitopadesha.jpg

Wat Pha Pong Sangha - “Thai Forest Tradition meditation master Ajahn Chah with his resident sangha at Wat Nong Pah Pong in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand” http://bp2.blogger.com/_rxKjDLO5gW4/RyhQ3K44D2I/AAAAAAAAAgY/OsP49kc4zRw/s1600-h/ajan+cha+%26+farang+sangha.jpg


City of Ten Thousand Buddhas “Guanyin” http://www.cttbusa.org/gwan_yin_bodhisattva/gy65.jpg


unknown “confucius” http://mx.tuhistory.com/files/nace-confucio-600x310.jpg


By Philg88 - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12118321

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3_Aspects_of_the_Moon_%285%29.jpg


Chinese Seal script for de ṣ “virtue”
“A painting of the Daode Tianzun (‘the Heavenly Lord of Dao and its Virtue’), the deified Laozi, one of the supreme divinities of Daoism.”

Third shinto gateway of the Hikawa shrine
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Third_shinto_gateway_of_the_Hikawa_shrine.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kojiki_French_edition.JPG french version of kojiki

Itsukushima-jinja Shinto Shrine, Miyajima, Japan.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Itsukushima_Shinto_Shrine_-_DSC01939.JPG


Abelito Roldan,.MikeTyson,.Retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/89717245@N07/8160382471/in/photostream/ Creative Commons.


JO Anna from Vancouver,Canada,. Janet Jackson on stage at the Number Ones Tour in 2011.Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Janet_Jackson_Number_Ones_Tour_2011.jpeg