



Steven R. Van Hook, PhD

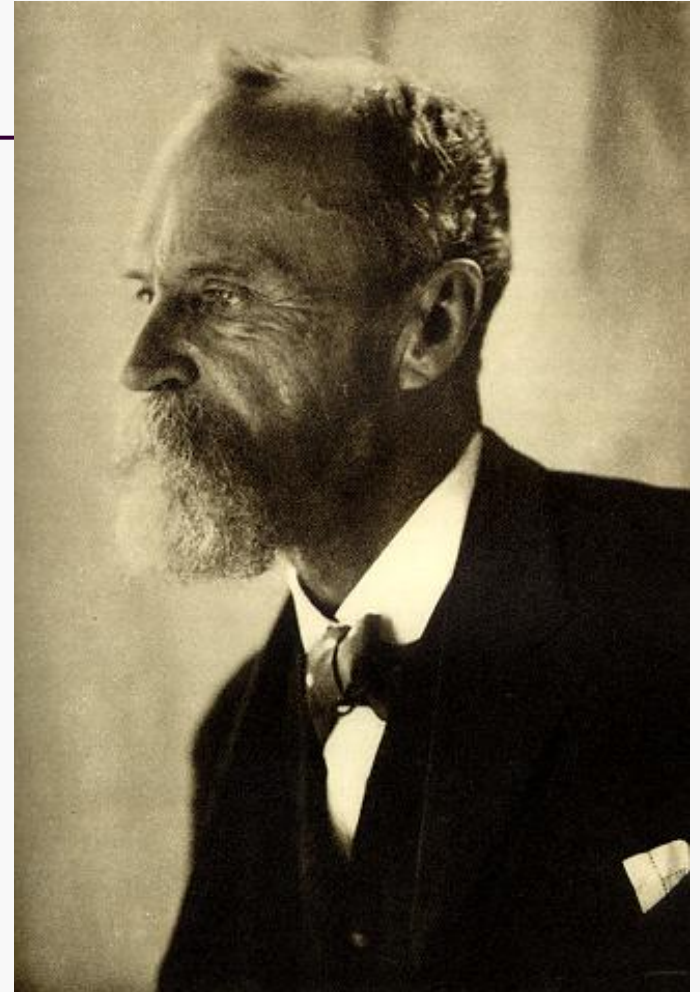
# World Religions

Our Common Spiritual Soil

# Religion is ...

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***“Religion is a feeling  
of being at home in  
the Universe.”***

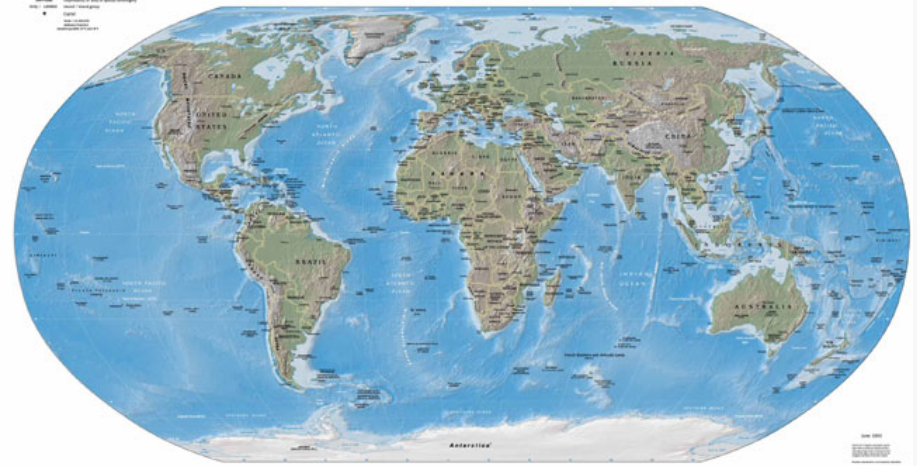


- William James, M.D.  
“Father Of American Psychology”  
**1842 – 1910**

# Religions Around the World

- **Christians 33.35%**  
(Roman Catholics 16.83%, Protestants 6.08%,  
Orthodox 4.03%, Anglicans 1.26%)
- **Muslims 22.43%**
- **Hindus 13.78%**
- **Buddhists 7.13%**
- **Sikhs 0.36%**
- **Jews 0.21%**
- **Baha'i 0.11**
- **Other religions 11.17%**
- **Non-religious 9.42%**
- **Atheists 2.04%**

Physical Map of the World, June 2002



# Polytheistic Roots of Religion

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As far back as the Neanderthals, specialized gods helped:

- Hunting
- War
- Fertility
- Death



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# Axial Age: 800 – 200 BCE

- Rise and focus of faiths that define and govern life – the axis and rotation point of all future religions belief.
- People gather in cities. Market economy develops. Growth of violence & wars. Exploitation of weak by the strong and rich. People sought meaning and comfort.



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# Hinduism



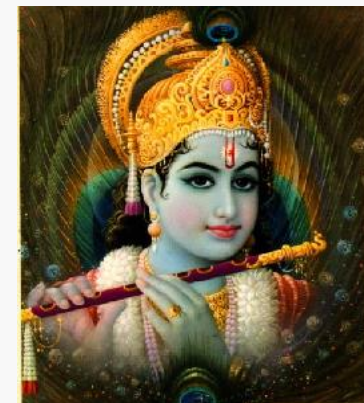
- Formed ~4000 BCE
- Belief in unity of all, a totality called “Brahman”
- Purpose of life: realize our unity with God and find enlightenment
- Traverse cycles of birth/life/death (*samsara*)
- Soul progress measured through *karma* – the accumulation of good and bad acts determining birth caste



*Arjuna and Krishna*  
*The Bhagavad Gita*



**Hindu Sacred Cow**



**Krishna**

# Hindu Trinity aspects of Brahman

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Three Aspects of  
Brahman:

- Krishna  
(The Incarnate)
- Shiva  
(The Destroyer)
- Vishnu  
(The Creator)



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# Hinduism: Key Concepts

- “If pleasure is what you want, don’t suppress it, but fulfill it as richly as possible until you realize pleasure isn’t *all* one wants.”
- “The eternal is buried under an almost impenetrable mass of distractions, false ideas, and selfish impulses – A lamp may be covered with so much dust and dirt its light is invisible.”
- “The realization of what total being is like can only be known by actual experience.”
- “I want to *taste* sugar; I don’t want to *be* sugar.”
- “Karma decrees that every decision has its determinate consequences.”
- The middle world (Earth) is not meant to be perfect and never will be; it’s meant as a training ground.



Lord Krishna



Kama Sutra Position



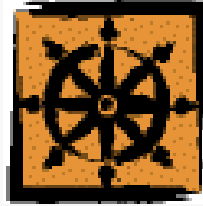
# Sacred Hindu River Ganges

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2:15

# Buddhism



- Siddhartha Gautama (560 to 490 BCE), achieved enlightenment or nirvana 435 BCE.
- Buddha means 'enlightened one' or 'awaken one.'
- As soul progresses through life cycles, nirvana may be achieved through renunciation of desire.
- Nirvana means to 'extinguish' or 'blow out' (e.g., desire). A *Bodhisattva* may delay nirvana 'until the grass itself be enlightened.'
- Buddhists don't necessarily believe in a personal God, a savior, prayer, or life eternal.

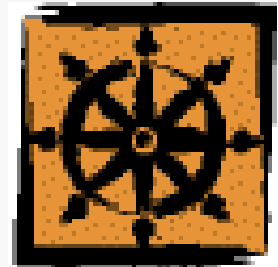


**The sacred Bodhi tree, where the Buddha reached enlightenment.**

# Buddhism: Key Concepts

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- “Those who shall rely upon themselves only ... it is they who shall reach the very topmost height.”
- **The 4 Noble Truths:** life is suffering; the cause of suffering is desire; the cure is overcoming desire; desire can be overcome through the Eightfold Path.
- **The Eightfold Path:**  
Right Knowledge; Right Aspiration;  
Right Speech; Right Behavior;  
Right Livelihood; Right Effort;  
Right Mindfulness; Right Absorption.



# Buddhists of Inlay Lake

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3:25

# Confucius

- K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucius) born 551 BCE in the state of Lu in China.
- He traveled throughout China giving advice to its rulers and teaching. He stressed individual morality, ethics, and the proper exercise of political power:
  - *Li*: ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.
  - *Hsiao*: love among family members
  - *Yi*: righteousness
  - *Xin*: honesty and trustworthiness
  - *Jen*: benevolence towards others; the highest virtue
  - *Chung*: loyalty to the state



# Confucianism: Key Concepts

- Unlike most religions, Confucianism is primarily an ethical system with rituals at important times during one's lifetime.
- The most important periods recognized in the Confucian tradition are birth, reaching maturity, marriage, and death.
- “Only those are worthy to govern who would rather be excused.”
- “Hear much; leave to one side that which is doubtful, and speak with due caution about the remainder.”
- “While you do not know life, how can you know about death?”



K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucius)



# Taoism



- Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse, a contemporary of Confucius in China. His *Tao-te-Ching* describes the nature of life, the way to peace and how a ruler should lead his life.
- Taoism was adopted as a state religion in 440 CE.
- Tao, roughly translated as *path*, is a force which flows through all life and is the first cause of everything. The goal of everyone is to become one with the Tao.
- People should develop virtue, compassion, moderation and humility.
- Yin (dark side) and Yang (light side) symbolize pairs of opposites which are seen through the universe, such as good and evil, light and dark, male and female.



Lao Tzu



# Taoism: Key Concepts



- Pure perception is achieved by cleaning away layers of toil and worry.
- “The way to *do* is to *be*.”
- “Standing on tiptoes, you may lose your balance.”
- “Serve best like water, as you go along, finding the common level of life.”
- “The most important part of a bowl is the part that isn’t there.”  
(*Our capacity for joy is carved by our pain* – Kahlil Gibran)
- A leader is best when the people barely know the leader exists.
- When a good leader’s work is done, the people will say, ‘we did this ourselves.’



Lao Tzu

# Shintoism



- Founded in 660 BC, at the time of Buddhism; Japan's state religion until 1945. 1974: 63-million; 1995: 3-million.
- The essence of Shintoism is *kami*, the divine spirit found in all things in heaven and earth; mountains and rivers, sun and moon, plants, animals, and human beings... and very specially at Mount Fuji, the cherry blossoms, bonsai trees, formal gardens, and the *Sakaki* (the holy tree).
- The main deity is Goddess Amaterasu, a sun goddess of fertility, reputed to be the founder of the ruler dynasty in Japan, so the Emperor is divine.



Shrine visitors write their wishes on wooden plates and then leave them at the shrine in the hope that their wishes come true. Most people wish for good health, success in business, passing entrance exams, love or wealth.

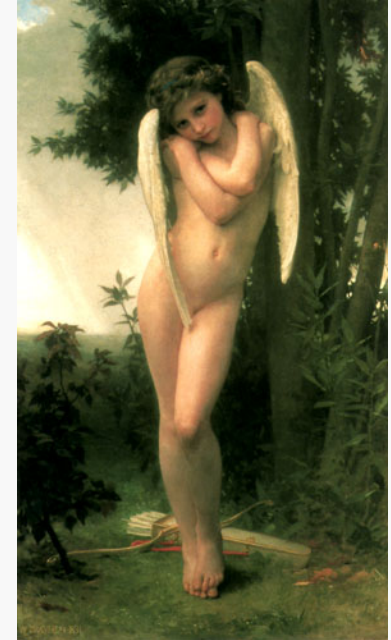




# Mythological Gods



- Greek, Roman, Norse ....



Presentation



# Birth of Monotheism: Abraham

- Monotheism began with a covenant between God & Abraham in 2000 BCE.
- Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i faith all have their roots in Abraham: Ishmael the 'father of Arabs'; Isaac the 'father of Israel.'



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# Isaac & Ishmael: Fathers of the Jews & Arabs

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*West Wing / Season 3 x 1 / 1:15*

# Judaism



- Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i faith all originated with a divine covenant between the God of the ancient Israelites and Abraham around 2000 BCE.
- Isaac, son of Abraham, beget Jacob (Israel).
- Moses, led his people out of captivity in Egypt and received the Law from God.
- Joshua later led them into the promised land where Samuel established the Israelite kingdom with Saul as its first king. King David established Jerusalem and King Solomon built the first temple there. In 70 CE the temple was destroyed and the Jews were scattered throughout the world until 1948 when the state of Israel was formed.



**The Torah**



**Menorah**



# Judaism: Key Concepts

- Jews believe in one creator who alone is to be worshipped as absolute ruler of the universe.
- God monitors peoples' activities and rewards good deeds and punishes evil.
- The Torah was revealed to Moses by God and can not be changed though God does communicate with the Jewish people through prophets.
- Jews believe in the inherent goodness of the world and its inhabitants as creations of God and do not require a savior to save them from original sin.
- They believe they are God's chosen people and that the Messiah will arrive in the future, gather them into Israel, there will be a general resurrection of the dead, and the Jerusalem Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE will be rebuilt.



**Jerusalem Temple Burns**



# Moses Frees Hebrew Slaves from Egypt

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**1:10**

# The Exodus & Parting of the Red Sea

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## **The Prince of Egypt / 3:05**

**Dreamworks 1998 / Voices: Val Kilmer, Sandra Bullock, Patrick Stewart, Ralph Fiennes, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jeff Goldblum, Danny Glover, Martin Short, Steve Martin**

# Moses Receives Ten Commandments

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**“Moses” with Ben Kingsley**  
1996 / 1:05

# The Ten Commandments

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- *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
- *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.*
- *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*
- *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
- *Honor thy father and thy mother.*
- *Thou shalt not kill.*
- *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*
- *Thou shalt not steal.*
- *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*
- *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thy neighbor's wife ... nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.*

# Christianity

- Christianity started out as a breakaway sect of Judaism nearly 2000 years ago.
- Since Christianity and Judaism share the same history up to the time of Jesus Christ, they are very similar in many of their core beliefs.
- There are two primary differences:
  - 1) Christians believe in original sin and Jesus died in our place to save us from that sin.
  - 2) Jesus, as the Son of God is part of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was joined by twelve disciples who followed him in his journeys and learned from him. He performed many miracles during this time and related many of his teachings in the form of parables.



**An ancient Roman depiction of Jesus**



**Reconstruction of what Jesus may have looked like according to the Discovery Channel**

# Behold ...

- "... my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."
- Fervent believers such as Paul took word of Jesus as afar and into Greece & Rome.



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**1:15**

# Jesus, the “Messiah” or “Christos”

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1:00



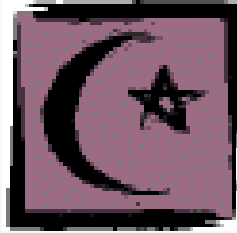
# Christianity: Key Concepts

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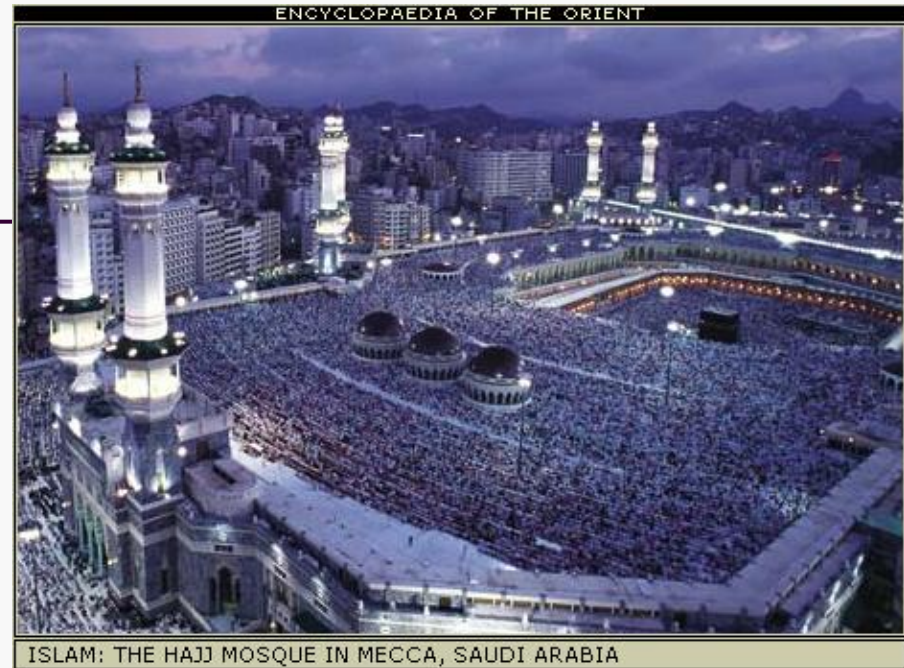
- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”
- “As I have loved you, so love one another.”
- “You have made the temple a den of thieves.”
- The seven Catholic sacraments: baptism, confirmation, holy matrimony, holy orders, extreme unction (last rights), confession, holy communion (Mass).
- Due to disagreements on dogma, adaptation to different cultures, or simply personal taste, the various forms of Christianity may seem like different religions to some people.
- Christians believe in heaven and that those who sincerely repent their sins before God will be saved and join Him in heaven. Belief in hell and Satan varies among groups and individuals.



# Islam



- Islam was founded in 622 CE by Muhammad the Prophet in Medina.
- Simple creed (the *shahadah*):  
*La ilaha illa Allah*  
“There no God but Allah” –  
and Mohammed is His Prophet.
- Muslims believe in the same faith as taught by the prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The role of Muhammad as the last prophet was to formalize and clarify the faith and purify it by removing ideas which were added in error.
- The two sacred texts of Islam are the Koran, which are the words of Allah ‘the One True God’ as given to Muhammad, and the Hadith, which is a collection of Muhammad's sayings. The entire body of Islamic law is called the *Sharia*.



# Islam: God and His Prophet

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**3:00**

# Islam: Key Concepts

The duties of all Muslims are known as the Five Pillars of Islam:

- Recite the *shahadah* at least once.
  - Perform the *salat* (prayer) 5 times a day while facing the Kaaba in Mecca.
  - Donate regularly to charity via the *zakat*, a 2.5% charity tax.
  - Fast (*sawm*) during the month of Ramadan, the when Muhammad received the Koran from Allah.
  - Make pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in life (the *haji*), if economically and physically possible.
- Muslims follow a strict monotheism with one creator who is just, omnipotent and merciful.
- Muslims believe in Satan who drives people to sin, and that all unbelievers and sinners will spend eternity in Hell.
- Muslims who sincerely repent and submit to God will return to a state of sinlessness and go to Paradise after death.
- Alcohol, drugs, and gambling should be avoided and Muslims reject racism.



Masjid al-Nabawi Mosque in Medina



Selimye Mosque  
Edirne, Turkey

# A Summary of Faiths

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- Hinduism
- Theravada Buddhism
- Mahayana Buddhism



- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- New Spiritual Age

“Alters of the World” / 1976

4:45

