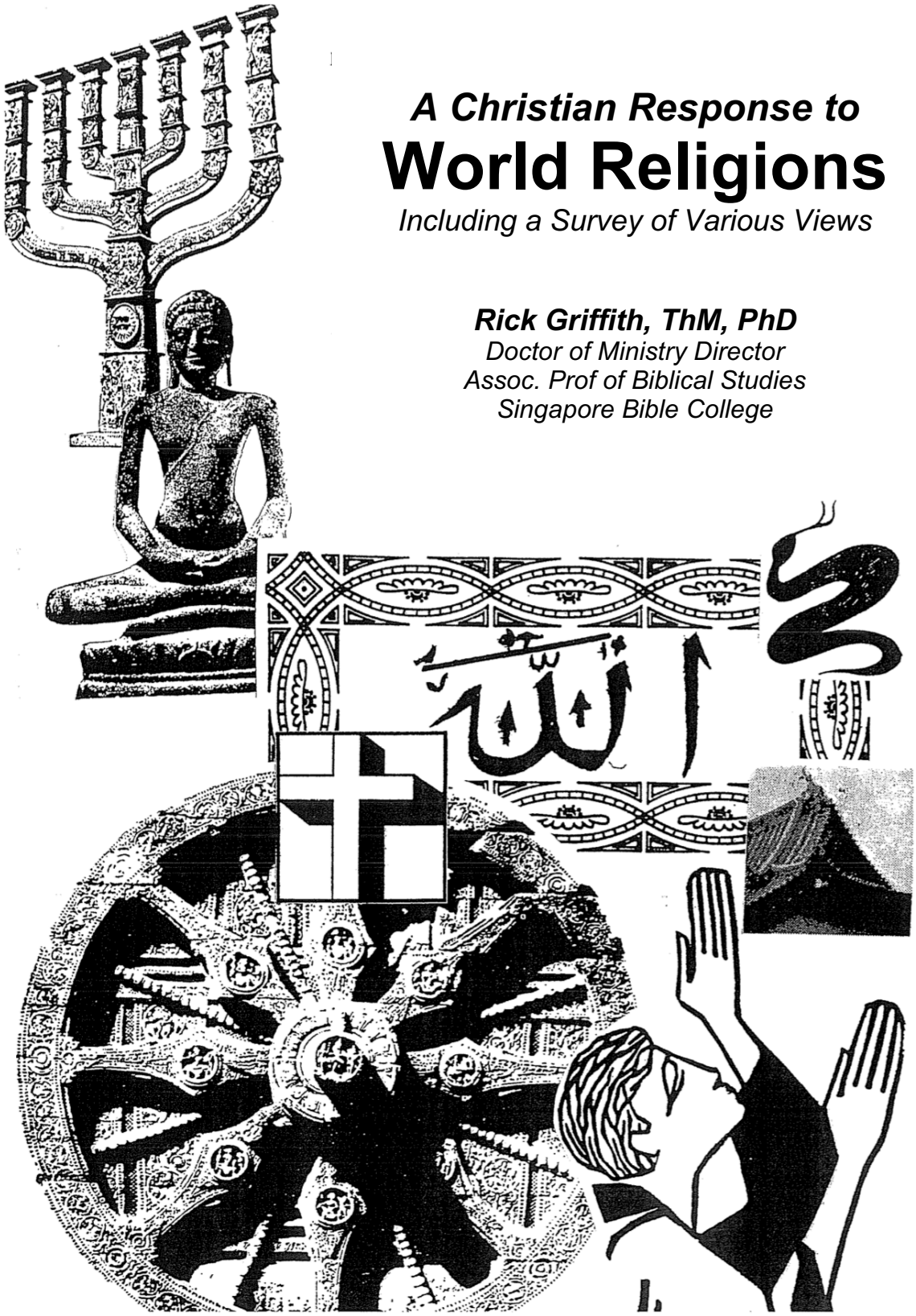

A Christian Response to

World Religions

Including a Survey of Various Views

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Addressing Man's Religious Nature

"New Nation Educational Broadsheet: 2" *New Nation* newspaper (April 12, 1971)

Introduction

UNLIKE other animals, Man cooks, laughs and makes tools. Even more remarkable is the fact that he worships.

Throughout history, in every land, Man has sought to come to terms with something that he believes to be greater than himself. In every human settlement is to be found some building, place or object used for no purpose other than the performance of acts of worship.

Europe, the Americas, and Australia have churches and chapels; the Moslem world boasts its mosques; the East its mysterious temples. In primitive lands, while the great religions have their converts, the gods of many other religions are also worshipped.

In uninhabited places of the world, there are the remains of older shrines and temples — swallowed up in the jungle as at Angkor Wat in Cambodia; crumbling in the desert as in the ancient Persian city of Persepolis; or isolated in mid-ocean like the great mute statues on Easter Island in the Southern Pacific.

What could all these structures be about? What has impelled man through the ages to erect them? The universality of the human religious response suggests that the answer to these questions must be something fundamental to the human condition.

Most people conclude that men are animals who are not content to respond merely to the demands of the body. Eating, drinking, and making merry cannot totally satisfy them. Their very self-consciousness divides each of their worlds into "I" and "the other"; and "the other" — the mysterious "that which is not me" — seems to demand some sort of response, and this response is worship.

The enormous power of Religion in shaping and moulding society is one of the most arresting facts about it. It is hard to visualise the Arab world without Islam; the East without Brahma, Buddha, Lao-Tse or Confucius; how the history of Europe would have been written if the Gospels had never been written.

Religion obliges us to adopt a particular attitude towards it, ourselves, and our environment. This attitude may be noble, grotesque, obscene or merely superstitious. It may concentrate on explanations or on ecstasy. But throughout human history it is always there, for man has always been imbued with an awesome sense of the fundamental mystery of Life.

Rules for religious liberty

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 18. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

SEVEN RULES FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

(Drawn up by the World Council of Churches)

1. While maintaining clearly a Christian basis for religious liberty the civil liberty which Christians claim for themselves should be guaranteed everywhere to all men, whatever their religion or conviction.

2. Religious liberty includes freedom for the individual to change his religion or belief without his social, economic or political status being affected. This right contains within it the right to continue in his belief or unbelief without incurring from the outside either constraint or hindrance.

3. Religious liberty in addition includes the freedom to express one's religion or conviction: worship, teaching, the putting into practice and observation of rites are the fundamental forms of religious expression and any law on religious liberty should directly guarantee these.

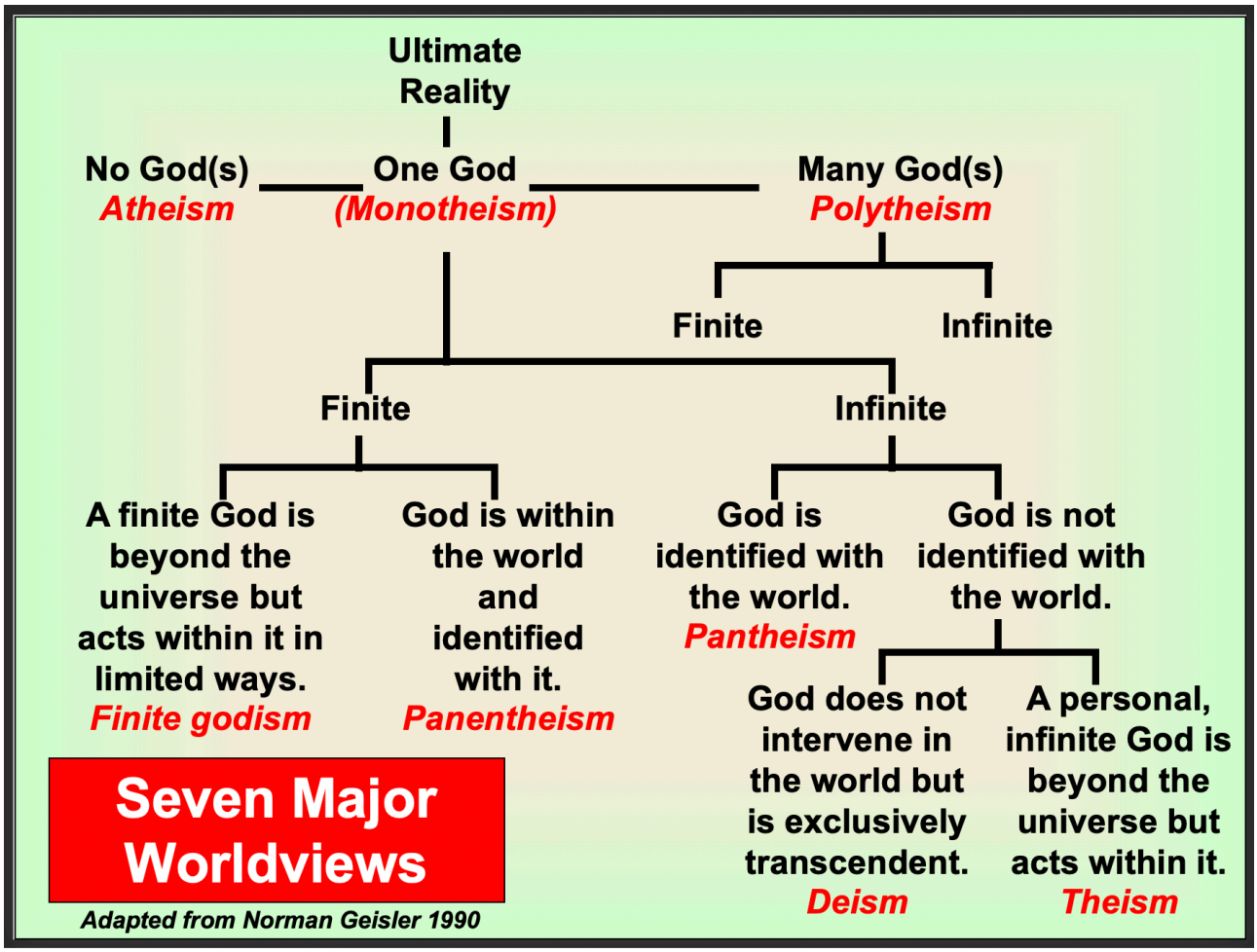
4. The right to express one's religion or belief should be guaranteed to everyone, singly or in common, in public or in private.

5. Religious liberty includes the freedom to maintain individual or collective links with religious communities or associations whose character transcends national frontiers: it also includes the freedom to express opinions or convictions and to communicate news and ideas by whatever means without consideration of frontiers.

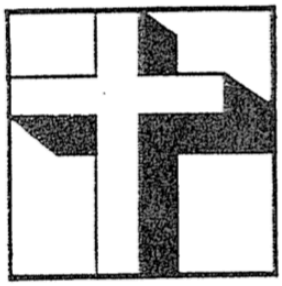
6. The norm for religious liberty should be international: it should not be interpreted in a restrictive fashion in order that it should conform to existing national constitutions and laws, but should be implemented in such a way that national laws and constitutions should be made to conform to the international norm.

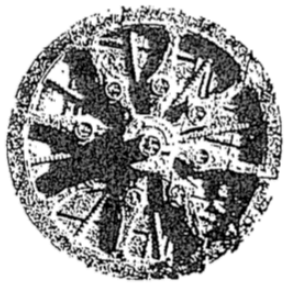
7. The exercise of religious liberty, in the same way as other civil rights, should be submitted to limitations defined by law only in the interests of public order: religious rights should be valid for all, without distinction of religion or conviction.

Seven Major Worldviews



Great Living Faiths of the World





Religion	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism
Distribution	Throughout the Far East, China, Japan, Ceylon.	Founded in Palestine. Now world-wide.	Majority of Hindus found in India.
Date of foundation	6th Century B.C.	4 B.C.	Between 650 and 250 B.C.
Founder	Prince Gautama: the "Buddha" ("Enlightened One")	Jesus Christ: "Son of God."	Fusion of local and invading Aryan cults.
Structure	In Theravada (orthodox) lands there is a close clergy/laity relationship. Central monastic organisation.	Basis: Bible, Creeds, Episcopal transmission of Apostolic authority (this last not universally accepted).	Depends for continuance on thousands of independent Brahmins and ascetics: no overall organisation.
Scripture	The Book of Discipline (Vinaya), the Discourses (Sutta Pittaka), and the Theological Discourses (Abhidhamma) form the Tripitaka or "three baskets" (three lines of teaching). The writings were probably collected and set down from oral tradition by monks in the first century B.C.	The New Testament provides basis for all Christian thought. At first the canon was very loase; finally in A.D. 393 the present collection of books was accepted at a Church Council. Old Testament also accepted by Christians.	The Vedas (ancient hymns, liturgies, blessings, curses dating back as far as 1000 to 800 B.C.); The Upanishads (over 250 mystical interpretations of the Vedas); The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavad-gita.
Ritual	The practice of the Eightfold Path.	In most churches, God's grace is given in the Sacraments, variously defined. Most universal: Baptism and Communion.	Home is centre of religious activities. Congregational worship as such scarcely exists.
After Life	Temporory or permanent entry to the monastic priesthood.	In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God overcame the power of death, granting the possibility of loving union with him after life on earth.	Belief in transmigration of souls to a final goal, differently described by the different sects.
Ideals	The souls of all living things are part of a transmigratory cycle of existence. Final goal is Nirvana, a state of extinction of desire and greed and all suffering. The Doctrine of Anatta: to give up the very thought of self in order to free the mind of all suffering.	Christianity interprets all human life through God's revelation in Jesus. "Love God with thy whole heart . . . and thy neighbour as thyself."	Main doctrines: transmigration of souls; all living things have the same essence; strict system of social classes (castes).
Concept of God	Basically, the Buddhist has no god. He worships Truth and reverences the Buddha not as a god but as a principle of enlightenment.	God is creator of all—present and active in his creation. One in essence; three in his persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. God is Love.	Fundamental monotheism (Brahman, the supreme power); the hundreds of gods worshipped are subsidiary aspects of the one God.
Divisions	Four historical schools: Theravada of the Hinayana School; Mahayana School; Hinayana School; Lanka Vamsa.	Heresies and schisms occurred early. Major divisions today are between Roman Catholics, Eastern (Orthodox) Churches, and Protestants. Ecumenism is the modern movement aimed at Church Unity.	Differences exist due to its divided origin and the influences of Islam and Christianity and have grown in the last 200 years.

Adapted from the newspaper New Nation Educational Broadsheet April 12, 1971

Great Living Faiths of the World (2 of 2)

Islam	Jainism	Judaism	Shinto
Arab countries, Pakistan.	A purely Indian religion.	Centred in Israel: now world-wide.	Japan: loosely organised cult.
Seventh century A.D.	Pre-600 B.C.	Twentieth century B.C.	Unknown.
Mohammed, born in Mecca.	First historical leader: Mahavira.	Traditional founder: Abraham.	No founder.
Islom excludes intermediaries between man and God, but Imams may lead mosque prayers and Mullohs teach.	Nucleus of the sect: a strict monastic order with intense discipline.	Synagogue is place of worship. No ordained priests.	Priesthood is now hereditary. Each shrine hos parishioners (ujiko) and worshippers (sukeisha).
The Koran, the verses of which are called suras.	Vast Jain literature, only a fraction published. Books often concealed.	Any Jew may learn the Torah and become a Rabbi (teacher). The 1st five books of the Old Testament, variously called: the Pentateuch, the Books of Moses or the Torah — law of doctrine, religion, morals.	No official canon — creed rests on two eighth-century texts: Kojiki and Nihon Shoki.
Pilgrimage to Mecca; recital of creed, divine worship; fasting in month of Ramadan; alms giving.	No sharp distinction between laymen and monks. Great acts of penitence: paryushana.	Five main observances: The Passover; Pentecost; Tabernacles; Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur.	Rites connected mainly with ceremonial purification from any form of pollution.
Blessed men go to Paradise and see their Lord. Angels exist; some are the watchmen of hell and others the guardians of men.	Transmigration of indestructible souls. Every "karma" is purged off till soul is light enough to ascend to top of Universe.	Long-standing belief in the immortality of the soul.	Early Japanese had only vague notion about life to come. Influenced by Buddhism, ancestor veneration grew important.
There is but one God and Mohammed is his prophet. Faith requires belief in God, angels, inspired books, prophets (among whom is Jesus), Day of Judgment.	Many vows made, most important being never to kill anything live, even vermin. Matter exists only as mutoble. Being is indefinite.	Faith in God's omniscience; reward and punishment; coming of Messiah; Israel chosen by covenant as people of the One God.	Stress on purity and perfection. Three purifying rituals: Misogi, Nakatomi, and Harai. Morally bad and criminal acts not clearly distinguished.
There is no God but one God, the first and the last. His name is Allah.	Jains believe their religion is millions of years old. 23 gods are worshipped, although they do not care for or influence the world.	One everlasting God, maker of Heaven and Earth, rules the world. Great stress on unity of God, incorporeal and eternal.	"The way of the Gods" meant the way of Kami: native indigenous spirits, anything awe-inspiring or with superior powers.
A.D. 657: Battle of Siffin — first known breach in unity of Islam. Today, two major sectarian divisions: Sunnites and Shiites.	Many schisms. Two distinct lines emerged in 3rd Century B.C. — Swetambaras and Digambaras.	Sects detached from main body of Judaism do not thrive. Present-day practising Jews may be either Orthodox (strict) or Progressive.	State Shinyo arose in early 1800s and was abolished in 1945. Shrine Shinto is now main survivor — wide variety of sects.

Singapore's Religious Harmony

①

Time for S'pore to wake up to vulnerabilities

IT SHOULD not come as a shock for Singaporeans that we are also a terrorist target. No one is spared as the Osama bin Ladens and Al-Qaedas of this world seek mindless terror in the name of their brand of religion.

It is time for all of us to wake up to our vulnerabilities, not only economically but also to religious fanaticism.

Those who empathise with Osama and Al-Qaeda, and their form of religion, should be stripped of their citizenship, so that others so inclined will know that Singapore citizenship is a privilege, not a birthright.

It must be the religion of Satan which wants to shed innocent blood and cause untold harm to nations.

Certainly Prophet Muhammad did not preach mindless violence and the killing of innocent people. He was a prophet of peace who promoted education and the emancipation of women and children.

We should ban all movements which deviate from the quintessential teachings of Buddha, Jesus, Krishna, Muhammad, Zorasthra and other established prophets of peace.

We can do without newfangled religions or deviations from established ones, whose aim is anything but religious tolerance and peace!

All Singaporeans ought to be grateful to the ministries of Home Affairs and Defence, which keep a 24-hour vigil throughout the year so that the rest of us can carry on with our lives in peace.

Thanks, too, to the Internal Security Department for its superb alertness in apprehending the would-be destroyers and potential murderers. The main lesson here is this: Let vigilance be our second nature.

ST 8 Jan 02 **ANANDA PERERA**

②

Draconian bans will only breed hatred

I REFER to the letter, "Time for S'pore to wake up to vulnerabilities" (ST, Jan 8), by Mr Ananda Perera. It is true that no one is spared as the Osamas and the Al-Qaedas of this world seek mindless terror in the name of their religion.

However, I am surprised that one can suggest stripping Singaporeans of their citizenship for empathising with Osama and the Al-Qaeda.

While violence in any form is patently against all forms of religion and no religion advocates violence, freedom of belief rules the day.

Empathy does no harm, actions do. Empathising with Osama may be an unusual point of view, but does no harm unless it is accompanied by action.

Bans on forms of religions deviating from the established few, as suggested by Mr Perera, also raise many questions. Who is to judge what is established and what is not? And what defines a deviation?

Religious tolerance can be accomplished only through mutual respect and understanding. Draconian bans can only breed ignorance, and this breeds hatred. I believe Osama and Al-Qaeda's hatred of America is due to such ignorance and lack of understanding.

It is better to allow things to exist as they are now, under the watchful eye of the Internal Security Department and related departments, so that Singaporeans have the opportunity to see and learn better judgment in the process.

ST 10 Jan 02 **DANIEL ANG**
Cambridge, US

THE STRAITS TIMES : Tuesday, January 15, 2002

③

Be vigilant against deviant religions

I REFER to the letter, "Draconian bans will only breed hatred" (ST, Jan 12), by Mr Daniel Ang.

I am sure subsequent revelations about the activities of Al-Qaeda-trained empathisers in Singapore will make most thinking, sensible and loyal Singaporeans agree that we can do without such elements in our society.

Therefore, stripping such "Singaporeans" of their citizenship for being traitors is justified for the sake of peace and cohesion in our society.

Such people should live in the countries where their preferred leaders hide and espouse their violent and deviant causes.

History shows that such traitors were once publicly beheaded.

The Taleban used their sports stadium to execute hundreds of men and women publicly for disagreeing with their deviationist teachings.

Some were killed for not shrouding their faces, others for continuing to read and educate themselves, and yet some others for not keeping a prescribed length of beard.

The Americans learnt a bitter lesson on Sept 11 about the impact of such deviationist teachings.

In consequence, the rest of the civilised world is still reeling from this dastardly act.

If Singapore were to wait for a learning process as advocated by Mr Ang, racial disharmony will have destroyed the fabric of our multi-racial and multi-religious society even before this lesson is learnt.

He also asks: "Who is to judge what is established and what is not?"

All registered and established religious authorities, the Government and the majority of Singaporeans should be the judge.

As Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Mohamad Maidin Packer said: "We should make sure that everyone is properly qualified to teach religion by getting appropriate certification."

He added that while the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, or Muis, did check new teachers to ensure their teachings were not deviant, it could look further into this concern.

The wake-up call for suitable religious leaders must apply beyond Islam to include religious teachers of other faiths as well.

We have to be vigilant to ensure that newfangled religions or deviations from established ones will not injure the fabric of our society.

ANANDA PERERA

Worldview Witnessing Strategies

Monotheism	Judaism: Fulfilled prophecy (Isa. 53)
	Islam: Character of Christ (gospels)
	Sikhism: Character of Christ (gospels)
Atheism	Proofs for God's existence (Rom. 1)
	Truth "piece of the pie" results in agnosticism
	Faith is required in every belief system (including atheism)
	Personal opinion does not determine truth
Polytheism	Illogical that matter created intelligence (Gen. 1:1)
	Works cannot take care of sin problem (Eph. 2:8-9)
Pantheism	Demonstrate God's power over the universe (Acts 17:24-25)
	Show God as distinct from the universe (Rom. 1:20, 23, 24)
	The universe had a beginning so it cannot be God (Gen. 1:1)
	Man is like God (Gen. 1:26-27) but God has no equal (Isa. 46:19)
	Geisler, *False Gods of Our Time*, 80-87

Religion: **Buddhism**

Dates of Origin:
Two Types of Buddhism:
Thervada: 600 B.C. (conservative)
Mahayana: 300 B.C. (liberal)
Buddhism is hardly a religion in the generally-accepted sense of the word as connoting some contact between man and divinity. It is rather a moral philosophy and a Way.

Founders:
Offspring of Hinduism and of India
Thervada: Siddhartha Gautama
Mahayana: unknown, evolved from Thervada

Sacred Writings:
Thervada: *Hinayana*
Mahayana: 5,000+ miscellaneous volumes

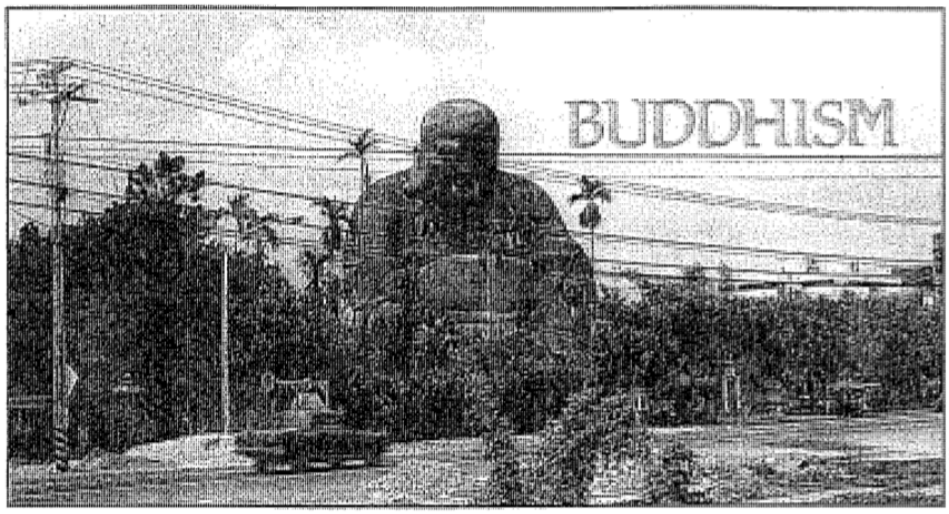
Beliefs About:

God:
Thervada:God in the objective, personal sense does not fit into the system; no ultimate reality.
Mahayana: varied, mostly atheistic

Sin:
Thervada: No forgiveness, redemption, heaven, hell, judgment, prayer, praise.
Mahayana: varied, but Zen lacks any deep, theological sense of sin, guilt, or separation from Ultimate Reality.

Salvation:
Thervada: *The Eightfold Path* (right views, aspirations, speech, *conduct, mode of livelihood, effort, awareness, and concentration); i.e., a self-salvation through asceticism
* Right conduct includes abstention from killing man or animal; even breaking an egg, a potential life, is condemned.
Mahayana: universal; however, the fiducial (Paradisic or "Pure Land") school teaches salvation by faith through the simple recitation of the sacred formula which expresses faith in Amida Buddha.

Buddhism Supplement



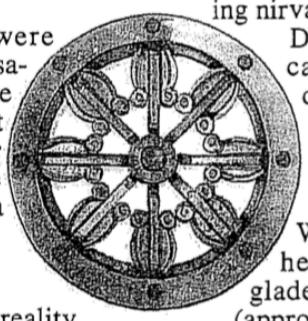
Doug Thompson

Origin

Buddhism was founded by Prince Siddhartha Gautama, born about 563 B.C. to a Hindu chief in what is now southern Nepal. Troubled by what he saw of poverty, sickness and death, and dissatisfied with much of what Hinduism taught, at age 29 he began a search for truth. On his 35th birthday he sat beneath a sacred tree, declaring that he would not rise until he attained understanding. After 49 days he arose as the Buddha, "The Enlightened One," and spent the remaining 45 years of his life imparting his message.

Scriptures

Buddha's teachings were passed on orally. The first sacred books appeared in the first century B.C. The best known is *The Way of the Law,* parts of which are attributed to the Buddha himself.



Beliefs

God: The transcendent reality of which the universe and man are only manifestations.

Reincarnation: When the body dies, the soul comes back to earth in another body or form.

Nirvana: A state of bliss, the spiritual goal of freedom from the endless cycle of reincarnations.

The Four Noble Truths teach that: Suffering is universal, the cause is selfish craving, the cure is to eliminate craving, and the way is the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is: Right knowledge, intention, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

The Five Precepts are to abstain from: Taking life, taking what is not given, illegal sexual pleasures, lying, and intoxicants.

Practices

Buddhist monks officiate at funerals, perform ceremonies in monastery temples, and provide religious education for the young. Buddhism also provides for nuns.

Difficult pilgrimages to shrines or temples are considered an aid in gaining nirvana.

Domed or tower-like shrines, called *stupas,* house Buddhist relics, including teeth and hair from Buddha's body.

Scope

Worldwide: 180 million adherents. SIM fields (Bangladesh, India): 9.26 million (approximately one percent of the population).

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Religion: **Hinduism**

Date of Origin: Hindus call Hinduism *sanatana dharma* ("eternal religion")
approx. 2500 B.C.?

Founder: no one founder (Krishna?)

Sacred Writings:

1. *Sruti*, or "what is heard," refers to the eternal truths of religion which the *rishis* or seers saw.
2. *Smriti*, or "what is remembered"
   -Vedas, Codes of law, Ramayana and Mahabharta (*Bagvagita, Upanishods*), Puranas,Agamas, Darsanas)

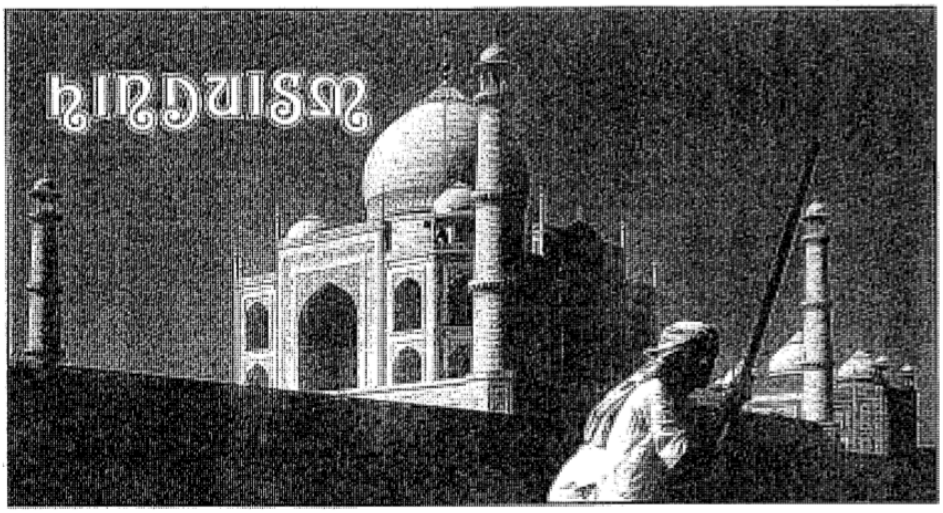
Beliefs About: Essentially eclectic and syncretistic

God: *Brahma*, Eternal Being or Reality
- *Vaiseshika* school believes in a personal God.
- *Vedanta* school sees *Brahma* as the one, abstract, all-pervading Reality.

Sin: Determined by the structures of human society (relative and metaphysical, not moral personal guilt)
Karma is "action" or "doing" and is a moral interpretation of the natural law of causation which states that any action is the effect of a cause and is in its turn the cause of an effect (*samsara*, rebirth or reincarnation).

Salvation: Release from the wheel of *karma* (from life that never ends!)
Bhakti (divine grace) is devotion for its one sake rather than for the glory of God (a method to merit the grace of God).
Through *Yoga* salvation comes to mean to become like God in his timeless perfection by the emancipated soul realizing its own immortality.

Hinduism Supplement



Origin

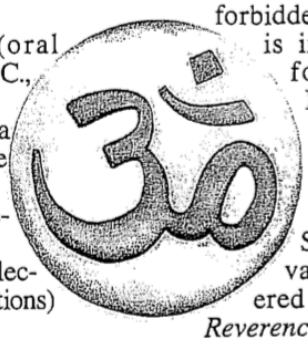
Hinduism has no known founder. Its origins are traced to northern India, about 1500 B.C. The name comes from the Sanskrit word *indus,* meaning ocean or river.

It is generally regarded as one of man's oldest living religions.

Scriptures

Hinduism's sacred books are written in Sanskrit, India's most important religious language. The chief categories are:

- The four Vedas (books of knowledge)
- The Brahmanas (rituals and sacrifices)
- The Upanishads (oral treatises from 800-600 B.C., scripted in 1300 A.D.)
- The Bhagavad-Gita (a section of the 100,000-verse epic poem Mahabharata)
- The Laws of Manu (behavioral codes)
- The Puranas (18 collections of legends and instructions)



Beliefs

God: The impersonal supreme being, the primal source and ultimate goal of all beings is Brahma (sometimes Brahman), who composes a trinity with Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. Brahma can be conceived of in any way men like — hence a pantheon of innumerable gods and idols.

God is silent and beyond personality.

Reincarnation: When the body dies, the soul comes back to earth in another body or form.

Karma: The principle that what one does today shapes one's tomorrow. Being born to poverty and suffering is attributed to the sins of past incarnations.

Salvation: A process of spiritual evolution which all men ultimately achieve after innumerable cycles of time.

Death: The eventual gateway to freedom from the reincarnation cycle.

Practices

Caste: A hierarchical system of social groupings based on occupation, and fixed at birth. Although caste is forbidden by India's constitution, it is important to Hindus. The four highest castes are: Brahman, for priests and scholars; Kshatriya, for rulers and soldiers; Vaishya, for merchants, artisans, and farmers; and Sudra, for laborers and servants. Christians are considered outside the caste system.

Reverence for life: Because God is in everything, all life must be revered. Cows have special status.

Cremation: Because of belief in reincarnation, bodies are burned, except for those of holy men, who are believed to be reunited directly with Brahma.

White shrouds are for men, widows, and single girls; red is for wives.

Scope

Worldwide: 700 million. SIM fields: India, 670 million (82% of population); Bangladesh, 17.5 million (16%); Pakistan, 1.7 million (1.6%).

Religion: **Islam**

Date of Origin: 610 A.D.

Founder: Muhammad (571?-632 A.D.)
- four wives (including son's ex-wife)
- pre-existent
- impeccable, ascetic (solitude,fasting)
- last and greatest of the prophets

Sacred Writing: Qu'ran (Koran)
104 divine books of the124,000+ prophets

Beliefs About:

God: "There is no God but God [Allah], and Muhammud is the Prophet of God."

Jesus was the Messiah, virgin born, God's word, a spirit from God, miracle worker, greatest of the prophets, not God, didn't die on a cross.

Sin: Most heinous of the sins are polytheism, apostasy, scepticism, and impiety.

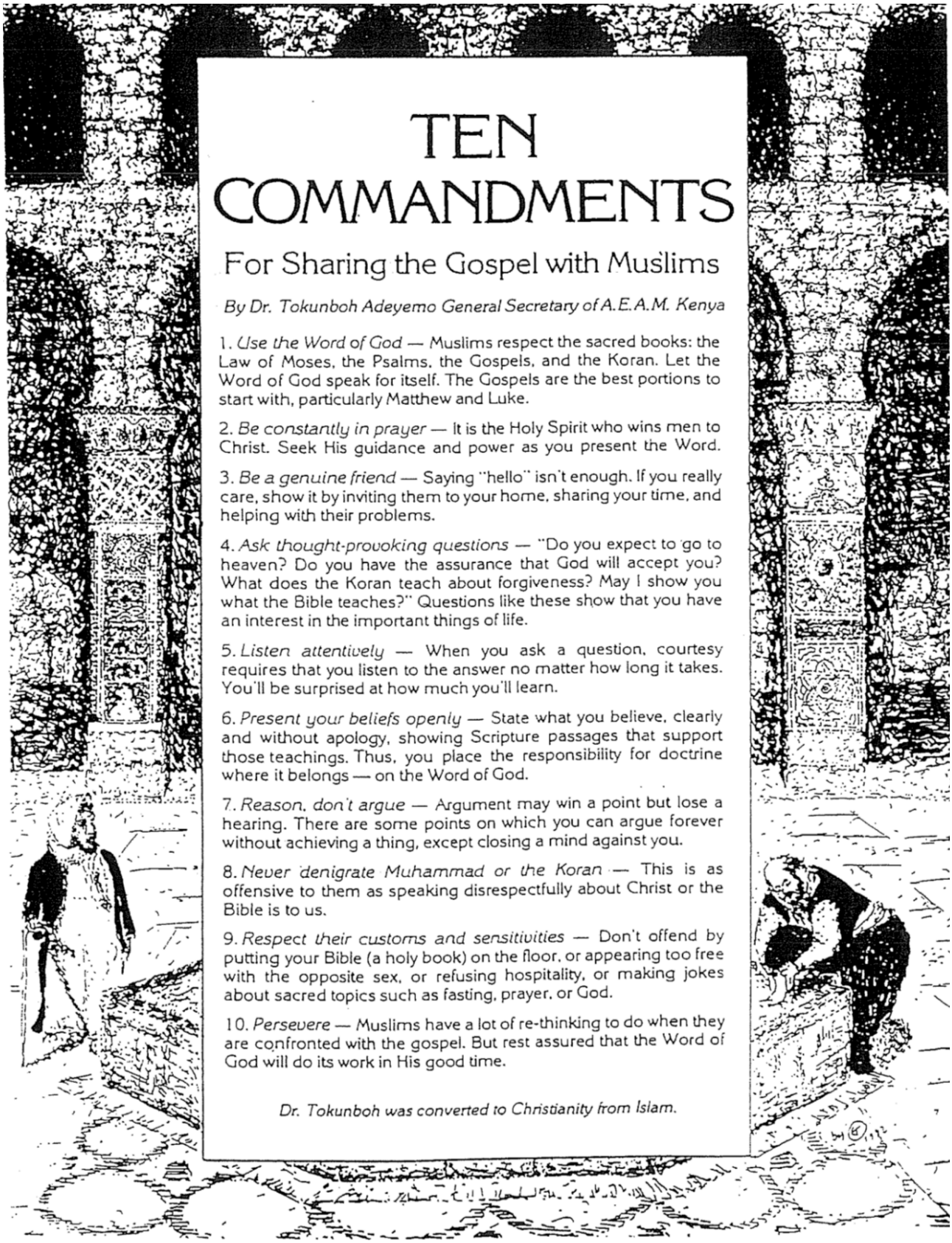
Salvation: Strict adherence to the "Five Pillars:"
1. Recital of the Creed
2. Prayer (five times daily)
3. Fasting
4. Almsgiving
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca

* "He who dies on the way to Mecca is enrolled in the list of martyrs."

* "He who dies in a Jilad (Holy War) is a martyr and assured of paradise."

* "When a man marries he perfects half his religion [no more than four wives]"

Islam Supplement



TEN COMMANDMENTS

For Sharing the Gospel with Muslims

By Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo General Secretary of A.E.A.M. Kenya

1. *Use the Word of God* — Muslims respect the sacred books: the Law of Moses, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Koran. Let the Word of God speak for itself. The Gospels are the best portions to start with, particularly Matthew and Luke.

2. *Be constantly in prayer* — It is the Holy Spirit who wins men to Christ. Seek His guidance and power as you present the Word.

3. *Be a genuine friend* — Saying "hello" isn't enough. If you really care, show it by inviting them to your home, sharing your time, and helping with their problems.

4. *Ask thought-provoking questions* — "Do you expect to go to heaven? Do you have the assurance that God will accept you? What does the Koran teach about forgiveness? May I show you what the Bible teaches?" Questions like these show that you have an interest in the important things of life.

5. *Listen attentively* — When you ask a question, courtesy requires that you listen to the answer no matter how long it takes. You'll be surprised at how much you'll learn.

6. *Present your beliefs openly* — State what you believe, clearly and without apology, showing Scripture passages that support those teachings. Thus, you place the responsibility for doctrine where it belongs — on the Word of God.

7. *Reason, don't argue* — Argument may win a point but lose a hearing. There are some points on which you can argue forever without achieving a thing, except closing a mind against you.

8. *Never denigrate Muhammad or the Koran* — This is as offensive to them as speaking disrespectfully about Christ or the Bible is to us.

9. *Respect their customs and sensitivities* — Don't offend by putting your Bible (a holy book) on the floor, or appearing too free with the opposite sex, or refusing hospitality, or making jokes about sacred topics such as fasting, prayer, or God.

10. *Persevere* — Muslims have a lot of re-thinking to do when they are confronted with the gospel. But rest assured that the Word of God will do its work in His good time.

Dr. Tokunboh was converted to Christianity from Islam.

Judaism

SOME POINTERS...

On witnessing to your Jewish friends

1. Be a real friend. There are many spiritual scalp hunters who want to win a Jewish soul for Christ, but are completely unaware of the person who is that soul. Have a well-rounded relationship with your Jewish friend before you attempt to witness on a personal basis.

   It is the continuing person-to-person witness through which most people have been won to their Messiah.

2. Don't be afraid of discussion on life issues. They can give you insight on how your friend perceives and understands things. Listen when he talks about the things which concern him, and discuss what his Jewishness means to him.

   In no way let him come to the misunderstanding that you only care for him "in order to convert him."

3. In some way give testimony to the gospel. A good place to begin is to tell specifically how God has answered prayer in your life. Avoid testimonies that talk about the peace and joy that you have in the Lord . . . remember, those who follow Eastern religions or any number of the "new" cults give such testimonies, as well as those who are made happy by the Jewish religion.

4. Answer questions or objections from Scripture. But remember, you don't have to answer every question when it is asked. You can say, "I don't know the answer to that, but I'll find out;" or "Let me think about it a little more and I'll give you an answer the next time I see you."

5. See if your friend will study the Bible with you. Don't concentrate only on the messianic prophecies; there is valuable truth in all Scripture. A good beginning point is Genesis 12 through Exodus 20--the story of the major covenants. However, if your Jewish friend is willing to study the Scriptures on a person-to-person basis, you may want to consult with your pastor. He will be able to recommend an appropriate study plan.

6. Offer to pray for your friend's needs. While our prophetic or teaching ministry is not always acceptable, most people appreciate prayer; and God seems to be particularly pleased to honor prayers as evidence of his existence.

7. Encourage your friend to communicate with Jewish Christians. Such a meeting might be painful, but it does bring persons to the place where they realize that Jesus is for Jewish people too!

8. Emphasize that Christ is the sin-bearer for Jew and Gentile alike, and that a person doesn't have to relinquish his Jewishness to accept Jesus.

   Remember that your Jewish friend has been taught that he will be committing spiritual treason even to consider the claims of Christ. It's up to you to show him that isn't true.

9. Ask for a decision. As a general rule, it is not good to press for a decision, but you will know the timing on the matter. Don't forget to ask the person for a decision.

Some Messianic Passages

Old Testament Prophecy		New Testament Fulfillment
1. Gen. 3:15, Isa. 7:14	Messiah to be seed of the woman, to be born of a virgin	Matt. 1:18-25 Gal. 4:4 Luke 1:26-38
2. Gen. 49:10	Messiah to be born of the tribe of Judah	Heb. 7:14 Rev. 5:5
3. Isa. 11:1-2, 10	Messiah to be from the house of Jesse	Acts 13:22-23
4. Isa. 9:6-7 Psalm 132:11	Messiah to be of David's lineage	Luke 1:32-33 Acts 13:22-23
5. Micah 5:2	Messiah to be born in Bethlehem	Matt. 2:1-6 Luke 2:4-7
6. Daniel 9:24-26	Time of Messiah's coming	Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10
7. Deut. 18:15, 18-19	Messiah, a prophet	Acts 3:20-26
8. Psalm 118:22	Messiah, the stone that was rejected	John 1:11-12 John 12:37-43 Acts 4:1-12
9. Psalm 22	Messiah's crucifixion	Matt. 27:39-43, 46 Mark 15:20, 24-26 Luke 23:11-35 John 19:15-18, 23-24
10. Psalm 110:1-4	Messiah's priestly ministry	Mark 16:19 Luke 24:50-51 Acts 2:33-36 Heb. 10:12-13
11. Isaiah 52:13 through Isaiah 53:12	The Gospel of Messiah in Isaiah	
Isa. 52:13		Matt. 21:9-11 Mark 11:7-10 Luke 19:35-38 John 12:12-15
Isa. 52:14		John 19:1-2 Matt. 26:67-68; 27:27-30
Isa. 53:1		John 12:37-38
Isa. 53:2		Luke 2:40
Isa. 53:3-4		John 1:11; 7:47-48
Isa. 53:5-6		John 1:29; 11:49-52 I Cor. 15:3 II Cor. 5:21 I Peter 2:24-25
Isa. 53:7		Matt. 26:59-63; 27:12-14 Mark 15:3-5 Luke 23:8-9
Isa. 53:8		Matt. 27:1-2 Luke 23:1-25
Isa. 53:9		Matt. 27:57-60 Mark 15:42-47 Luke 23:50-52
Isa. 53:10		Heb. 2:10
Isa. 53:11		Romans 3:22-24 Eph. 2:8-9
Isa. 53:12		Luke 23:32-33 Heb. 9:26,28 I Peter 3:18
12. Jer. 31:31	Messiah's New Covenant	Heb. 8:6-13; 9:12-22 Heb. 10:4-24 Matt. 26:17; 27-29 Luke 22:15-20 Romans 11:26-27

JEWS FOR JESUS
60 Haight Street
San Francisco, CA 94102-5895

Religion: **Jainism**

Date of Origin: 599-527 B. C. (Mahavira's lifetime)

Founder: Prince Mahavira, who pledged: "I shall neglect my body and abandon the care of it; I shall with equanimity bear, undergo, and suffer all calamities arising from divine powers, men, or animals." He begged 42 of his 72 years, wandering naked (accompanied for some years by another naked man, Goshala Makkhali). He spoke to nor greeted anyone in fear of forming relationships. He died by the insane rite of *sallekhana* (voluntary starvation).

Sacred Writing: *Kalpa Sutra* (Mahavira's Sermons)

Beliefs About: Teaching summarized in the *Three Jewels*: Right Faith, Right Knowledge, Right Conduct: don't kill anything (even insects), steal, covet, lie, live unchastely or get drunk

God: No Supreme Ruler exists (atheistic), although many finite beings who might be called "gods" exist on various levels of the celestial regions. They cannot help man, however, since they too need redemption. Prayer to them is useless.

Sin: Passions, self-indulgence. People are responsible for their own karma.

Salvation: Reincarnation and karma are conquered through ascetism as the only method of release. Nirvana comes through the control of the body. Asceticism is achieved through the *Five Jain Vows*: non-violence (not killing *any* living thing), truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-covetousness. Women must be reborn as men to be saved.

Religion:	**Sikhism**
Date of Origin:	15th Century, A.D. (initially a reform of decadent Hinduism)
Founder:	Nanak (1469-1538 A.D.), born a Hindu but God appeared to him and said, "I am with thee... Abide uncontaminated by the world. Practice the repetition of My name, charity, ablutions, worship, and meditation. I have given thee this cup of nectar, a pledge of My regard."
Sacred Writing:	the *Granth* (a devotional hymnbook by Guru Arjan) is their one authority
Beliefs About:	A combo of Hinduism and Islam, yet unique; non-caste, syncretistic, meat-eaters, militant.
God:	Monotheistic: "There is but one God whose name is True, the Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, self-existent, great and bountiful." *True Name* is eternally one, sovereign, omnipotent, transcendent and immanent, creator and destroyer, merciful and loving.
Sin:	Lack of love for God (replaced by asceticism, bathing, pilgrimmages, etc.)
Salvation:	"The all-sufficient means of bringing an end to reincarnation is the simple, complete love of God that absorbs the soul into the Absolute." Salvation is not going to Paradise...but absorptiom--and individuality-extinguishing absorption --in God, the True Name.

Religion: **Shinto**

Date of Origin: A.D./B.C. (2,000 years old)

Founder: No founder; Shinto is a term which merely distinguishes the Japanese traditions from the Way of Buddha or the Teaching of Confucious. Consequently, the word does not simply refer to a religious faith or a religious way of life, but to Japanese attitudes, ideas, and ways of doing things.

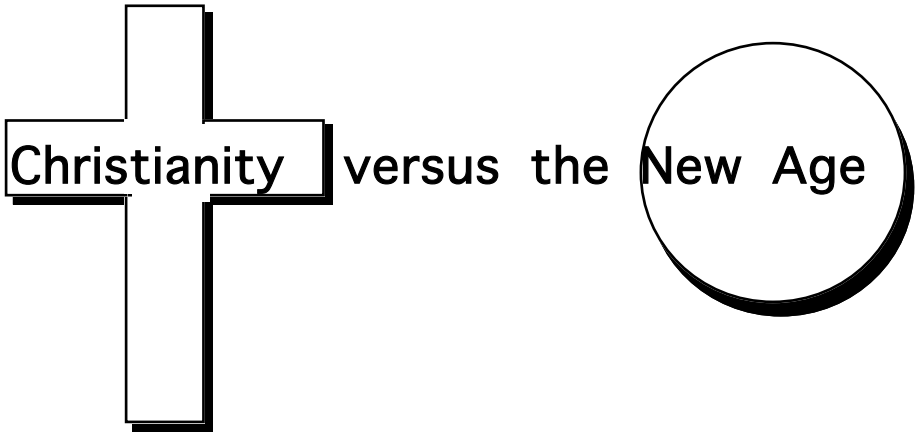
Sacred Writings: No written canon, and therefore there is no organized, clearly defined body of doctrine or unified, systemized code of behavior (ecclectic).
Kojiki, Nihon Shoki, Kogoshui, Manyoshu, Engishiki (not canons Shintos bound by).

Beliefs About:

God: The *Kami* are spiritual beings of today , mythological entities of ancient times, natural phenomena (including both animate and inanimate things), physical objects of worship or ancestral spirits (lack of definiteness in the term).
Japanese Emperors are descendants of the sun-goddess.

Sin: "Goodness" and "badness" not determined by measurement against any clearly defined standard or moral code; no absolutes; while man is basically good his behavior should be in keeping with the mores of the community;

Salvation: Worship centers around the Shinto shrine and consists of four elements: purification, offering, prayer, and sacred meal.



Probably the closest parallel to the ancient Colossian heresy is today's New Age Movement. It is similar in that it draws from many erroneous philosophies directly contrary to biblical Christianity.

Issue	Christianity	New Age
Theism	Monotheism	Pantheism
God	Personal	Impersonal (& personal?)
Divinity	External: *"He's* God"	Internal: *"I'm* God"
Our Origin	Creation	Evolution
Our Problem	Alienation from God	Undiscovered divinity
Our Solution	Faith in God	Feel the Force
Techniques	Unimportant	Vital: imaging, hypnosis
Faith	Historical	Mystical
Truth	Objective	Subjective
Standards	Absolute	Relative
Matter	Real & temporal	Illusion & eternal
Forgiveness	Only in Christ	Not needed
Appeal	Rational: fill mind	Experiential: empty mind
Religion	One way	Many ways
Orientation	Exclusive	Inclusive (syncretism)
Occultism	Prohibited	Practiced
Salvation	Atonement	Enlightenment
Basis	Divine salvation	Human effort
Jesus Christ	God made man	Man knowing divinity
Hope	Resurrection	Reincarnation
Afterlife	Fellowship with God	Merge with God

A Glossary of Terms Related to Non-Christian Religions

Ahura Mazda: the ethical, supreme god whose followers included Cyrus the Great, Darius I, Xerxes I, and the Magi (Zoroastrianism)

Allah: the one god who is supreme, self-existent, omnipotent, omnipresent, the creator, the judge of all mankind, one who reveals himself, yet is not imminent or personal (Islam)

Animism: the existence of souls or spirits in all living and in animate things (pre-literate societies)

Bushido Code: the code of the samurai, the military class of the feudal period of Japan, that included eight attitudes: loyalty, gratitude, courage, justice, truthfulness, politeness, reserve, and honor (Shinto)

Brahma: both the material world (pantheism) and the subjective world—reason, feeling, will, and self-awareness in mystical union (Hinduism)

Brahman: Volumes of literature that describe sacrifices (Hinduism)

Brahmin: the head priest of the ritual sacrifice (Hinduism)

dynamism: the universe made up of forces coming into interaction with one another; nonpersonal forces that affect one another with no ultimate reality (pre-literate societies)

Eightfold Path: the process to achieve Nirvana by right views, aspirations, speech, behavior, occupation, efforts, mindfulness, and absorption (Buddhism)

Fetishism: any resort to the presumed power in inanimate things (pre-literate societies)

filial piety (Hsiao): loyalty to one's family as one's first and highest consideration (Confucianism)

High god: the one supreme being who created everything and rules above the gods (pre-literate societies)

Hara-kiri: Japanese warrior-knight suicide for failure or misjudgment by the ceremonial method of disembowelment, carried out coolly and deliberately according to rule and without any expression of emotion (Shinto)

impermanence: all that exists passes through the cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death; life is one and indivisible; nothing eternal or immortal exists about man or any part of him; separate individual existence is an illusion, for self has neither beginning or ending (Buddhism)

Ise: Japanese sun goddess and high god known also as Amaterasu (天照), Amaterasu-ōmikami or Ōhirume-no-muchi-no-kami deity of the Japanese myth cycle (Shinto)

kami: spiritual beings existing today; mythological entities of ancient times; natural phenomena such as islands, sun, and mountains, or powers and processes, such as birth or growth; their generation may be spontaneous, without explanation suddenly appearing from natural objects or born as the result of physical union between parent *kami* (Shinto)

A Glossary of Terms Related to Non-Christian Religions

(2 of 2)

karma: action–reaction, denoting the law of cause and effect; reaping what one sows (Buddhism)

magic: an endeavor through the utterance of set words, or the performance of set acts, or both, to control or bend the powers of the world to man's will (pre-literate societies)

Mahayana: liberal, syncretistic form of Buddhism that views Buddha like god (Buddhism)

Mana: occult force or supernatural power distinct from persons or spirits (pre-literate societies)

Middle Way: the balanced teaching between asceticism (Jainism) and fatalism/depression (Hinduism) that Buddhists call their religion (Buddhism)

Nichiren: nationalistic Buddhism and a branch school of Mahayana Buddhism that claims salvation from the lotus sutra (eternity of Buddha), propagated by Nichiren (born 16 February 1222) who claimed to be the resurrected Buddha (Buddhism)

Nirvana: an ethical state, a condition that eliminates any future rebirth, the extinction of all craving, the final release from suffering; a state of mind in which *karma* comes to an end (Buddhism)

popular magic: magic not confined to magicians or priests, being diffused through the group (pre-literate societies)

shaman: a religious personage found in many pre-literate societies of Asia, Oceania, and the Americas (pre-literate societies)

Siddhartha Gautama: founder of Buddhism, deified after his death (Buddhism)

taboo: prohibition or hands-off warnings applied to many things, persons, and actions because they are sacred, dangerous, or socially forbidden (pre-literate societies)

Theravada: conservative, individualistic Buddhism that views Buddha not as a deity but as a great leader (Buddhism)

Totemism: the existence of a more or less relationship between certain human groups and corresponding classes or species of animals, plants, or an animate objects in nature (pre-literate societies)

Upanishads: Holy writings of the Hindus (Hinduism)

Vedas: Holy writings of the Hindus (Hinduism)

Zoroastrianism: originally an Iranian religion following the teachings of Zoroaster (660 BC) who espoused ethical monotheism of the supreme god Ahura Mazda, but most present-day adherents reside in Bombay

A Biblical Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions

Introduction

Mr. Howard Burkle, a United Church of Christ professor of religious studies, postulates these often-asked questions: "Can Christianity accept itself as simply one of the world's many religions? Can it regard other religions as valid alternative pathways to salvation? Can it do this without giving up its conviction that Christianity is unique and decisive for the salvation of humankind?"

Burkle's answer to these questions is a definitive "yes." However, the Bible believing Christian must reply with an equally resounding "no." Christianity is like no other religion in its basic tenants: the crucifixion and resurrection of One who was both God and man. It can therefore accept no other way as a legitimate means to reach God.

The Bible supports this conclusion. Christ said of Himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). John also records, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36). Similarly, Luke wrote, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Since Christianity is unique and incompatible with other religions, how should Christians respond to those of other faiths? What should be the proper, biblical attitude toward those who adhere to and teach heretical doctrines?

I. Basic Content to Share with Other Faiths

Believers often deal with non-Christian religions in one of two extremes. The first extreme (noted above) is syncretism, while the second is isolationism. Syncretism is an "all roads lead to God" perspective that places the way of salvation offered by Christ no better or worse than the means of salvation offered by any other religion. Isolationism, on the other hand, denies any interaction with those of other faiths since it is based on a "once you've got what you are looking for, why look elsewhere?" kind of attitude. Both extremes should be avoided. The better approach is one of engagement, or dialogue.

Romans 1 is perhaps the best chapter to show God's view of other religions. Verse 18 reveals that the religions of the world have come about not because of man's *ignorance*, but because of his stubborn refusal to believe what God has already revealed about himself: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness *suppress* the truth" (italics mine). This truth that is rejected specifically relates to an innate knowledge of God's existence as the powerful creator of the world (v. 20). This truth is common to all persons, each of whom can see the order and beauty of the universe. This is also why an atheistic civilization has yet to be discovered.

Therefore, when seeking to reach someone from another religion (or an atheist), the most important concept to teach is the correct view of God Himself. Who is He? This can be especially illustrated in the creation account, for here we see an all-powerful, totally righteous God who creates only good things—and the best of the "good things" is man himself. God has made us in His own image and as a result desires fellowship with us. This focus on creation can help us lay the theological foundation on which to build a proper understanding of salvation in Christ.

II. Basic Behavior to Show to Other Faiths

A proper, biblical attitude towards non-Christian religions concerns far more than simply content. This is why we call it an "attitude." In all our seriousness about Christ being the only way to God, we must be careful to communicate this narrow teaching with love and a non-judgmental spirit. The non-Christian must see a great deal of graciousness in us. We have no option but to declare truth lovingly, while reserving for God His right to judge.

Christians have a very defined and exclusive message. Communication of this narrow message calls for the utmost tact. We must be committed to proclaiming the truth, but even truth can wear an ugly garment. This is where the over-used cliché, "Love the sinner but not the sin" has merit. While doing this we must be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (James 1:19b). We must keep our focus on the right issue—not belittle the person who follows a false system, but expose the error of the system itself.

Paul's careful approach to the Greek philosophers of his day showed this proper approach to pagan religion (read Acts 17). He explained to these men of Athens in terms they could understand—and yet he did it in a way that they were not offended. The issues were made clear, though not as clear as they could have been (which would have turned his listeners off). These people worshipped a God whom they knew nothing about, and Paul became a spokesman for that God. He did not harangue them. He gave evidence for his claim, and while some sneered, others believed. Interestingly, Luke's account of Paul's speech never uses any names for Jesus Christ. The message was more important than a name.

A. Conclusion

In summary, a biblical attitude towards non-Christian religions begins with the truth. The fact is that Christianity cannot compromise its uniqueness to become compatible with other religions. God never asked us to be compatible—only to be separate and distinct. This uniqueness is not something for which the Christian should apologize, though. He should communicate the message of Christ first in terms of the character of God, and always in a spirit of love and humility.

Racial harmony must remain a priority

THE recent arrest of a group of Muslims involved in terrorist activities here has hurt the feelings of many Muslim Singaporeans, myself included.

My immediate reaction to this was: How will this make non-Muslim Singaporeans feel about us?

Personally, I felt ashamed.

I would like to urge my fellow Muslim Singaporean friends to come out openly in condemning all acts of terrorism, including those carried out by Muslims, regardless of where in the world they take place.

Let us all — Singaporeans of all races and faiths — stand together and fight to keep what we have inherited from our fathers; that is, racial harmony and religious tolerance.

This is so that the same privilege can be enjoyed by our children.

It is an asset that no money can buy.

KHAN ABDUL MAJID

Inter-racial and inter-religious harmony between the various communities is vital, as underscored by recent developments in the country.

IF THERE IS ANY USEFUL LESSON THAT CAN BE LEARNT FROM THE RECENT EPISODE, IT IS THAT SINGAPOREANS SHOULD CHERISH THE IDEAL OF ONE UNITED PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF RACE, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION.

Let recent episode push us to know Muslims better

I REFER to the report, "Carry on as usual: PM Goh" (ST, Jan 13).

Like many Singaporeans, I was shocked at the news of the arrests of 15 people over terrorism-related activities here.

That such a development has taken place underscores the importance of maintaining inter-racial harmony between the various communities in Singapore.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong is right in calling on all Singaporeans not to overreact and let this episode harm our multi-racial and multi-religious harmony.

The important question is what we can do.

It is imperative that we see this recent development in the right perspective and not draw rash conclusions based on the behaviour and actions of a few misguided individuals, who happened to be Muslims, and blow it out of proportion.

It is also imperative that we do not overreact by making spurious comments or casting doubts on the Muslim community here.

Indeed, we must take this opportunity to understand our fellow Muslim citizens better and seek to forge a warmer and stronger relationship that will bind us together as one people.

If there is any useful lesson that can be learnt from the recent episode, it is that Singaporeans should cherish the ideal of one united people, regardless of race, language or religion.

These are testing times for Singapore and I hope that good sense and goodwill among fellow citizens will prevail.

SEBASTIAN TAN

Rick Griffith, PhD New Testament Survey: Colossians 200x
Singapore Religious Harmony
1-Apr-19

Six Questions to Ask an Atheist

By Margaret Manning

http://www.rzim.org/usa/usfv/tabid/436/articleid/10284/cbmoduleid/1561/default.aspx

Many times, as Christian theists, we find ourselves on the defensive against the critiques and questions of atheists. Sometimes, in the midst of arguments and proofs, we miss the importance of conversation. These questions, then, are meant to be a part of a conversation. They are not, in and of themselves, arguments or "proofs" for God. They are commonly asked existential or experiential questions that both atheists and theists alike can ponder.

1. ***If there is no God, "the big questions" remain unanswered***, so how do we answer the following questions: Why is there something rather than nothing? This question was asked by Aristotle and Leibniz alike—albeit with differing answers. But it is an historic concern. Why is there conscious, intelligent life on this planet, and is there any meaning to this life? If there is meaning, what kind of meaning and how is it found? Does human history lead anywhere, or is it all in vain since death is merely the end? How do you come to understand good and evil, right and wrong without a transcendent signifier? If these concepts are merely social constructions, or human opinions, whose opinion does one trust in determining what is good or bad, right or wrong? If you are content within atheism, what circumstances would serve to make you open to other answers?

2. ***If we reject the existence of God, we are left with a crisis of meaning,*** so why don't we see more atheists like Jean Paul Sartre, or Friedrich Nietzsche, or Michel Foucault? These three philosophers, who also embraced atheism, recognized that in the absence of God, there was no transcendent meaning beyond one's own self-interests, pleasures, or tastes. The crisis of atheistic meaninglessness is depicted in Sartre's book *Nausea.* Without God, there is a crisis of meaning, and these three thinkers, among others, show us a world of just stuff, thrown out into space and time, going nowhere, meaning nothing.

3. ***When people have embraced atheism, [were not] the historical results… horrific***, as in the regimes of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot who saw religion as the problem and worked to eradicate it? In other words, what set of actions are consistent with particular belief commitments? It could be argued, that these behaviors – of the regimes in question – are more consistent with the implications of atheism. [However], I'm thankful that many of the atheists I know do not live the implications of these beliefs out for themselves like others did! It could be argued that the socio-political ideologies could very well be the outworking of a particular set of beliefs – beliefs that posited the ideal state as an atheistic one.

4. ***If there is no God, the problems of evil and suffering are in no way solved,*** so where is the hope of redemption, or meaning for those who suffer? Suffering is just as tragic, if not more so, without God because there is no hope of ultimate justice, or of the suffering being rendered meaningful or transcendent, redemptive or redeemable. It might be true that there is no God to blame now, but neither is there a God to reach out to for strength, transcendent meaning, or comfort. Why would we seek the alleviation of suffering without objective morality grounded in a God of justice?

5. ***If there is no God, we lose the very standard by which we critique religions and religious people,*** so whose opinion matters most? Whose voice will be heard? Whose tastes or preferences will be honored? In the long run, human tastes and opinions have no more weight than we give them, and who are we to give them meaning anyway? Who is to say that lying, or cheating or adultery or child molestation are wrong—really wrong? Where do those standards come from? Sure, our societies might make these things "illegal" and impose penalties or consequences for things that are not socially acceptable, but human cultures have at various times legally or socially disapproved of everything from believing in God to believing the world revolves around the sun; from slavery, to interracial marriage, from polygamy to monogamy. Human taste, opinion law and culture are hardly dependable arbiters of Truth.

6. ***If there is no God, we don't make sense,*** so how do we explain human longings and desire for the transcendent? How do we even explain human questions for meaning and purpose, or inner thoughts like, why do I feel unfulfilled or empty? Why do we hunger for the spiritual, and how do we explain these longings if nothing can exist beyond the material world?

For further reading, see Ravi Zacharias's book *The Real Face of Atheism*, and C.S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity*. The RZIM website has many excellent resources on atheism at www.rzim.org, as does the Centre for Public Christianity at www.publicchristianity.org.