

History of Religions

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As a humanity we have many differences. Sadly, because of these differences, we experience harsh criticism and often violence. However, this need not be the case. Each religion has a person or people that were sparked to create and carry forth a wisdom and knowledge. For thousands of years people have searched for the meaning and truth of their own unique nature. Hopefully, at some point, we come to realize that instead of judging one another, we have so much to learn from one another. For example, in nature there are different kinds of flowers and trees. With humans, it is the same, but instead there are different religions which embody unique belief systems.

If every flower did not like and reacted negatively to other flowers, there would be no gardens. If every tree did not like and reacted negatively to other trees, there would be no forests. It is time for respect instead of prejudice towards our human brothers and sisters. We are supposed to be uniquely united, whereby we grow, develop and become enlightened by the potpourri of our human experience. We came here to see one another through, not see through one another.

Every religion is sacred and this sacredness is meant to endow honor on all living beings. Religion is a wondrous, divine intervention infused into our human spirit. Each has a mission that was formulated as a heavenly kinship to bring values, principles, grace, love, virtue and comfort. The Hopi Indians believe that each religion is a thread and all these threads are supposed to come together in one tapestry in peace. The understanding of one another is the key to peace, and peace comes from the mutual recognition and respect of differences.

To know more, there are many books and in-depth information concerning this subject. This was a simple way to bring awareness and honor the nobility of each religion.

The Religions are in alphabetical order.

Religion Timelines

Monotheism is the belief that there is only One God.

Polytheism is the belief in multiple gods.

Henotheism is the belief in a single primary God while accepting the existence or possible existence of other Gods.

Zoroastrianism **H** – 6000 B.C.

Hinduism **H** – 2300 B.C.

Judaism **M** – 600 B.C.

Buddhism **P** – 600 B.C.

Taoism **P** – 550 B.C.

Confucianism – 500 B.C.

Gnosticism **P & M** – 200 B.C.

Christianity **M** – 1st century A.D.

Sethianism **M** – 2nd and 3rd century A.D.

Islam **M** – 7th century A.D.

Sikhi **M** – 15th century A.D.

Mormon **M** – 19th century A.D.

Baha'i **M** – 19th century A.D.



Bahá'í

History: Founded in 1860 AD by Baha u llah, claiming to be the promised one of all religions. Today there are approximately 8 million Bahai'i members in the world.

Wisdom: A new ten commandments stating the oneness of humanity, equality of the sexes, no prejudice, truth, education for all, a spiritual solution to economic problems and a world union governed by representative of all people.

Gift: The belief in the unity of all humanity.

Sacred Text: Aqdas



Buddhism

History: Founded in approximately 500 B.C.E. by Siddhartha Gautama, in North India. He became the first Buddha, which means enlightenment. Today there are approximately 535 million Buddhist members in the world.

Wisdom: Buddhism is based on the essential teaching that our ignorance causes us to have desires based on illusion, not reality. This results in suffering. Meditation is one of the methods for breaking the pattern of illusion and suffering.

Gift: Anyone willing can become an enlightened Buddha and be free of suffering and karma. The keys are the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

The Four Noble Truths

1. All existence is filled with suffering
2. All suffering comes from attachments and desires
3. All suffering can cease and Nirvana can be experienced
4. By just following the Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path

1. Right Understanding
2. Right thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

Sacred Text – Pali Canon



Christianity

History: Founded over 2000 years ago by Jesus Christ in Palestine. He was said to be the Son of God, the Creator in human form. Today there are approximately 2.4 billion Christian members in the world.

Wisdom: Christ's teachings were of forgiveness, compassion and love. The Christian belief is that all will be forgiven of their sins and have salvation and eternal life through their faith in Jesus.

Gift: Unconditional love the manifestation of God's miracles.

Sacred Text: The Old and New Testament Bible



Confucianism

History: Founded in the sixth century B.C. by Confucius. It took 2,000 years for the religion to be recognized in Europe. Today there are approximately 6,100,000 Confucianist members in the world.

Wisdom: The core belief includes harmony, justice, respect and loyalty to one's family, friends and acquaintances. However, only keep those close to you who come with merit and trust.

Gift: The Golden Rule of "do not impose on others what you do not wish for yourself" And "Those who set their hearts on doing good, will be forever free from evil".

Sacred Text: The Analect



Gnostic

History: Founded in 200 B.C. – 400 A.D. by Jewish and early Christians. It was denounced as heresy by the church and the texts were almost completely destroyed. Today there are only 100,000 Gnostic members in the world, and they live mostly in Iraq.

Wisdom: It is based on the belief that salvation can be achieved through attaining secret knowledge called 'gnosis'. It allows individuals to escape the flawed material world and return to their divine spiritual origins. It believes that knowledge is the key to understanding one's true self and achieving spiritual liberation.

Gift: Connection to the nature of the Universe as a way to achieve enlightenment.

Sacred Text: 52 Texts discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt



Hinduism

History: Founded in 2500 B.C.E. by a group of people in India. Today there are approximately 1.2 billion Hindu members in the world.

Wisdom: Hinduism is based on the spiritual practice to liberate the soul from its bondage to the temporal cycle of death and rebirth. The path to achieve this is a devotion to God. The sacred texts are in Sanskrit and are known as the Vedas.

Gift: Karma, the concept meaning that one reaps what one sows. The soul may need to reincarnate many lifetimes to complete their Karma.

Sacred Text: The Bhagavad Gita



Islam

History – Founded in 610 AD by Muhammad, in Saudi Arabia. He had a vision of the Archangel Gabriel, whose voice said: “You are the messenger of God.” Today there are approximately 2 billion Muslim members in the world.

Wisdom – The Koran is regarded as the work of God delivered to Muhammad. The doctrine claims that God is one and unique and that He has no partner or equal.

Gift – Submission to the will of God.

Sacred Text – The Quran



Jainism

History: Founded in the sixth century B.C.E. by Jina Vardhamana Mahavira. The Jain religion teaches salvation by perfection through successive lives, and non-injury to all living creatures. Today there are approximately 5 and 12 million Jain members in the world.

Wisdom: Their belief is that one will attain a path of victory in the stream of re-birth through an ethical and spiritual life. Jains, like Buddhist do not believe in a Supreme God.

Gift: The Jains believe that everyone is potentially divine and can reach their true goal by being pure, moral and disciplined.

Sacred Texts: There are many texts, not just one and they are known as Agams.



Judaism

History: Founded in 3000 B.C.E. by Abraham in Palestine. In 2000 B.C.E. Moses brought down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. Today there are approximately 15.7 million Jewish members in the world.

Wisdom: Judaism is based on the belief that the love of God is the first duty of man and that the soul of man is our gift from God. The Ten Commandments are believed to be the way to keep the soul pure.

Gift: The great ability to survive in exile and a charitable devotion to those of their race less fortunate.

Sacred Text: The Torah



Mormonism

History: Founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith. He and five associates formally organized the Church in Fayette, New York. He presided over the church until June 1844, when he was martyred for his belief in polygamy. Today there are approximately 17,255,394 Mormon members in the world.

Wisdom: It is based on the belief of following the example of Jesus Christ being the Eternal God, manifesting Himself to all nations.

Gift: Spiritual endowment and prophecy, which will benefit the recipient and those they serve.

Sacred Messenger: Book of Mormon



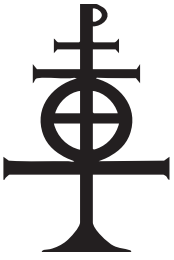
Native American

History: Founded in 18,000 B.C.E.. In 1492 there were 20 million native Indians settled in North America. Today, there are only 2 million members remaining.

Wisdom: Honor Mother Earth, respecting her as the main source that nurtures us all. To the Indian, man is not the highest being. He is just the brother of all life forms, not the master of them.

Gift: The ability to contact the spirit world. A belief in the supernatural powers, especially connected to the animals and plant world.

Sacred Messenger: Mother Earth and Father Sky



Sethianism

History: Founded in the 1st century by Jewish and Christians, who unified together for the purpose of awakening true divine knowledge within themselves and overcoming ignorance. In 1850, a group was formed in Europe, and they called themselves The Knights of Seth. While achieving popularity amongst the wealthy, they never gained the influence they had hoped for. Today the group is extinct.

Wisdom: Sethians believed that humans can rid themselves of their deficiencies and live their lives filled with the presence, power, agency and riches of God.

Gift: Sethians believed that humans can indeed live their limitlessness.

Sacred Texts: The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit and Second Treatise of the Great Seth



Shinto

History: Shinto cannot be accurately traced, as it goes back to the period of prehistory. It emerged from the traditions and practices of Japanese folk religions.

Wisdom: It is viewed in the way in which society is bound together in common value and attitudes. The prayers are simple and direct, with no fixed doctrine.

Gift: The giving of praise to another from abundant offerings.

Sacred Texts: The Kojiki and the Nihon-gi



Sikhism

History: Founded in 1500 AD by Guru Nanak in Punjab, India. He was the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. Today there are approximately 28 million Sikh members in the world.

Wisdom: Devotion and determination to defend the truth of God. Sikhs believe that God likes the manifestation of moral strength through good work. Sikhs believe that men and women are equal before God.

Gift: Kindness to all living beings.

Sacred Text: The Guru Granth Sahib Collection



Taoism

History: Founded in 500 B.C.E. by Lao Tzu, meaning old master, in China. It is said he lived to be 160 years old. Today there are approximately 8 million Taoist members in the world.

Wisdom: Tao means ‘The Way’. Taoists base much of their teaching on the careful observance of nature. One such teaching is “water is soft and yielding, yet it can wear away huge rock.”

Gift: By observing nature, we can learn to live blessed lives, ultimately achieving mastery and even immortality.

Sacred Text: Tao Te Ching



Zoroastrianism

History: Founded in 1200 B.C.E. by Zoroaster in Persia. He was presumed to be the founder of astrology as well. He was known to be the only baby born laughing. Today there are approximately two hundred thousand Zoroastrian members in the world.

Wisdom: Zoroastrianism believes that the world will end shortly and only the followers of goodness will share in its second existence. Their ethics are based on preserving purity. Interestingly enough, the three Magi who came for Mary, were from Persia.

Gift: Optimism in the belief that there will be triumph of good over evil.

Sacred Text – Zend-Avesta

Other Religions

Celtic Religion

The Celts spread over much of Europe from 3000 B.C.E., eventually being absorbed into the Roman World. Only on the edges of the Roman Empire, in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Cornwall, did they persist. The religion of the tribes was quite localized, with each clan having its own deities, and only a few Gods worshipped over wide areas. Central to their beliefs were the warrior-heroes with supernatural powers, the sacredness of the earth and the dominance of Mother Earth. She is revered as the Goddess of protection and the bringer of life.

The Celts pay great attention and homage to trees. They believe them to be messengers. The Mistletoe is thought to have been part of the Druid rites. Druids were the ritual and cult experts, acting as judges and teachers.

In the fifth century, when St. Patrick and others brought Christianity to Ireland, a form of Christianity different from that of the Roman Empire was established. The Goddesses were of great importance as the source of life and fertility, especially the triad Danu, Mach and Brigit, who survives in Christianity as St. Brigit.

Much has been lost and little written down until the 7th century A.D. The Celts had no written history until the Christian periods because the Druids passed down everything orally.

Egyptian Religion

Ancient Egyptian religion consisted of vast beliefs and practices, linked by the interaction between the world of humans and the world of the Divine. Because of their belief in the afterlife they made great efforts to ensure the survival of their souls after death. In life, rituals were done to make contact with many deities believed to be present and in control of the world. Prayers and offerings were done to gain their favor.

Egyptians believed that humans possessed a ka, which was a life force that left the body at the time of death. As well, every human had a ba, which was the set of spiritual characteristics, that stayed with the body after death. They also believed that the concepts of the universe were truth, justice and order.

Egypt became a province of the Roman Empire in 30 B.C.E. and the empire weakened. The biggest gift left to the modern world of today are the Pyramids, which were created for the departed souls. The first, and largest pyramid at Giza was built by Pharaoh Khufu in 2551 B.C.E. as his tomb. It took 20 years to build.

Greek Religion

Greek Religion meant the worship of 12 Olympian deities, whose king, Zeus resided at the peak of Mount Olympus. Each deity had several unique attributes and they could be male or female. However, there were over 2000 names of God and many thousands of local deities also existed. To mention some - in red are the twelve Olympians who were the main deities. They were called Olympians because they resided on Mt. Olympus.

Amon: was the God of air

Anubis: was the God of the dead

Aphrodite: was the Goddess of love

Apollo: was the God of light

Ares: was the God of war

Artemis: was the God of the hunt

Athena: was the Goddess of war and wisdom

Cronos: was the father of Zeus

Demeter: was the God of harvest

Dionysus: was the God of grape-harvest

Eos: was the Goddess of the dawn

Eros: was the God of love

Gaia: was the Goddess of earth

Hades: was the God of the underworld

Hathor: was the Cow Goddess

Helios: was the God of the sun

Hephaestus: was the God of the casting and molding

Hera: was the Goddess of marriage

Heracles: was the son of Zeus

Hermes: was the messenger of the Gods

Hestia: was the Goddess of family
Horus: was the God of vengeance
Hypnos: was the God of sleep
Isis: was the Goddess of magic
Kratos: was the God of strength
Maat: was the Goddess of order
Mut: was the Mother Goddess
Nike: was the God of victory
Nun: was the Primeval God
Odysseus: was a Greek hero
Osiris: was the King of death and resurrection
Pan: was the God of shepherds
Persephon: was the Goddess of the underworld
Poseidon: was the God of the sea
Ptah: was the Creator God
Ra: was the God of radiance
Rhea: was the mother of Zeus
Selene: was the Goddess of the moon
Seth: was the God of storms and chaos
Typhon: was the Father of all Monsters
Zeus: was the God of sky and thunder

Norse Religion

Norse or Scandinavian Religion is often thought of as the religion of the Vikings. Its origins are in the Bronze Age, 450 B.C.E. – 100 A.D. This is when the first recognizable figure of Gods and Goddesses can be discerned. Scandinavian mythology saw the universe as being divided into nine worlds. They believe that the World Tree, Yggdrasil, which was commonly represented as a gigantic ash tree could bridge the gap between heaven and earth and these worlds. In time, the Christian and Viking world blended, whereby God almighty would be worshipped.

One of the sacred tools that have been developed in the modern world is the Runes. They are widely used through North America and Europe.

Roman Religion

The Romans, like the Greeks had no word for religion. The nearest equivalent is the worshiping of Gods and Goddesses. The central feature of the Roman religions was the importance of making rituals, festivals and sacrifices. It was closely associated with public life. The Gods were not remote but were deeply concerned with Rome's affairs. The link between religion and public life is seen clearly in the reign of Augustus, 27 B.C.E. – 14 A.D.

The Greek Pantheons were adapted by the Romans
To mention some:

Aurora: was the Goddess of the dawn – like Eos

Bacchus: was the God of grape-harvest – like Dionysus

Ceres: was the Goddess of harvest – like Demeter

Cupid: was the God of love – like Eros

Diana: was the Goddess of the hunt – like Artemis

Faunus: was the God of shepherds – like Pan

Hercules: was the son of Zeus – like Heracles

Juno: was the Goddess of marriage – like Hera

Jupiter: was the King of Gods – like Zeus

Luna: was the Goddess of the moon – like Selene

Mars: was the God of war – like Aries

Mercury: was Messengers of the Gods – like Hermes

Minerva: was the Goddess of wisdom – like Athena

Neptune: was the God of the sea – like Poseidon

Ops: was the mother of Zeus – like Rhea

Pluto: was the God of the underworld – like Hades

The Four Oldest Civilizations

Chinese Civilization (5000 B.C.)

China is thought to have started around 10,000 years ago. Agriculture developed gradually in China, with the earliest evidence of rice cultivation dating back 8,000 years ago. The Chinese invented gunpowder and had a deep connection to Confucianism. It has a diverse religious landscape and created the widespread practice of the Chinese Zodiac, where each person is associated with an animal based on their birth year.

Mesopotamia Civilization (4000 B.C.)

For 3,000 years, Mesopotamia remained the preeminent force in the Near East. However, in 539 B.C. Cyrus the Great captured and incorporated it into the Persian Empire. By 100 A.D. Mesopotamian culture had effectively come to an end. It is important to note that the Mesopotamian culture developed the first written language, religion, and agriculture. Mesopotamia is the present-day Iraq.

Indus Valley Civilization (3300 B.C.)

The Indus Valley Civilization from 3300 B.C. to 1300 B.C. was one of the most developed ancient societies and consisted of over five million people. They were noted for their baked brick houses, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, and non-residential buildings. They were also known to be the first to raise chickens and use carved stones called seals to mark their goods. Indus Valley is now Eastern Pakistan and Northwestern India.

Egyptian Civilization (3100 B.C.)

Ancient Egypt was the preeminent civilization in the Mediterranean world from 3100 B.C. to its conquest in 332 B.C. It kept written records, using a system known as hieroglyphics. The Egyptians invented the calendar, ways to measure distances, improved irrigation, created one of the earliest peace treaties on record, and made improvements in medical surgery. Cleopatra was Egypt's last pharaoh, though she was not Egyptian but predominantly of Macedonian Greek ancestry. They were known for their pyramids, which were built between 2670 B.C. and 2500 B.C.