

Major Religions of the World

**A study of six major world religions
and the Christian response to each.**

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Table of Contents

Judaism	1
Hinduism	4
Buddhism.....	7
Mormonism.....	10
Arianism (Jehovah Witnesses).....	14
Mohammedism (Islam)	18

Major Religions of the World

Judaism

I. Origins

- Judaism's official beginning as a system of religion was when God gave Moses the law at Mount Sinai - Exodus 20ff.
- Although many believe Abraham and the other Patriarchs as being part of the Jewish religion, they were not. They were Jews, but they did not follow the instructions God gave Moses with regard to sacrifices, laws, and national judicial practices.
- The date of the Exodus, and the giving of the law, occurred circa 1400 B.C.

II. Prominent Figures

- Abraham - was first called a Jew. Chosen by God as the father of the Jewish nation - Genesis 12ff.
- Isaac - son of Abraham.
- Jacob - son of Isaac who usurped the blessing (according to God's divine plan - see Romans 9). Became the father of twelve sons who in turn were the head of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Judah - the fourth eldest son of Jacob (Genesis 29:31-35). Became the one through whom the Messiah was to come (Genesis 49:10, Matthew 1:2-3).
- Moses - the great lawgiver. Considered to be the most prominent person of the Old Testament. Writer of the first five books of the Old Testament.
- Saul - first King of Israel (1 Samuel 9).
- David - second and greatest King of Israel (1 Samuel 16). Recipient of the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7). Writer of many of the Psalms.

III. Holy Writings

- The Old Testament - consisting of 39 books. These were divided into the *Torah* (first five books), the *Nebiim* (prophets), and the *Kethubim* (writings).
- The *Midrash* - a doctrinal and homiletical study of the Old Testament.
- The *Talmud* - consists of two parts, the *Mishnah* which is a treatment of all the oral laws of the scribes, and the *Gemara*, an expanded commentary on the *Mishnah*.

IV. Holy Days

- Purim - celebrates the deliverance of the Jews from Haman as described by the book of Esther (Esther 9:27-28).
- Passover - celebrates the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12, Leviticus 23:4-8).
- Feast of Unleavened Bread - observed along with the Passover (Leviticus 23:4-8).
- Feast of Firstfruits - celebrates the provision of the Lord in the harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14).
- Feast of Weeks or Pentecost - observed fifty days after the Passover. This feast celebrates the harvest (Leviticus 23:15-22).
- Rosh Hashanah - Feast of Trumpets - celebrates the Jewish New Year according to the civil calendar (Leviticus 23:23-25).
- Yom Kippur - the Day of Atonement - the most important and solemn Holy Day. On this day the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to bring blood to cover the sins of the people of the nation Israel (Leviticus 23:26-32).
- The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) - commemorates the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Leviticus 23:33-44).
- Hanukkah - Feast of Lights - commemorates the purification of the temple after the overthrow of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B.C.

Table of the Jewish Sacred Calendar

Sacred	Civil	Name	Our Name	Feasts/Holy Days
1	7	Nisan (Abib)	Mar-Apr	14 Passover 15-21 Feast of Unleavened Bread
2	8	Iyyar	Apr-May	
3	9	Sivan	May-Jun	6 Pentecost
4	10	Tammuz	Jun-Jul	
5	11	Ab	Jul-Aug	
6	12	Elul	Aug-Sep	
7	1	Tishri	Sep-Oct	1-2 Feast of Trumpets 10 Day of Atonement 15-21 Feast of Tabernacles
8	2	Heshvan	Oct-Nov	
9	3	Kislev	Nov-Dec	25 Hanukkah - Feast of Lights
10	4	Tebeth	Dec-Jan	
11	5	Shebat	Jan-Feb	
12	6	Adar	Feb-Mar	14-15 Purim
13	-	Adar Sheni		14-15 Purim (in leap year)

V. Major Beliefs

1. Monotheism

- Judaism was the first true monotheistic religion. This is best summed up by the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

2. Ceremonialism

- Jews believe that the sacrifices as given by God to Moses served as the only means by which men could approach God.
- Jews believe that external observances of the law were required in order to assure a right standing before God. This included not only the law as revealed in the *Torah*, but the additions to the law made by the Scribes and Pharisees.

3. Nationalism

- Jews believe that they, and they alone, were God's chosen people. In order to become "converted", one must become a Jew and submit to all the rituals and ceremonies prescribed by the law including circumcision.

4. Eschatological

- Jews look forward to deliverance from bondage to the Gentile nations. This will occur when the Messiah comes, who will destroy foreign powers and elevate the Jewish nation as the ruler of the world.

VI. A Christian Response

- The Christian response to Judaism is a very difficult one because the Jews see Christianity as an aberration of their own religion. As a result, they are very closed to the idea of Christ being their Messiah.
- The central issue in evangelizing the Jew is the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is critical that the evangelist use every possible passage at his disposal, in the Old Testament, to prove that Christ was indeed the promised Messiah. Some good passages are Isaiah 52-53 and Psalm 22-24. Comparison can be made to the New Testament for verification, but it is important to remember that the Jews reject the New Testament as Scripture, and it is therefore critical to keep their attention in the Old Testament and only use the New when absolutely necessary.
- The Jew needs to see Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the suffering Messiah, as well as the expected Messiah of both the Christians and the Jews Who will come in power and great glory in order to establish His kingdom.
- More help on this subject can be obtained by contacting Jews for Jesus or the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministries.

Major Religions of the World

Hinduism

I. Origins

- Hinduism is a religion formed by the synthesis of the beliefs of several hundred tribal groups throughout the Indian subcontinent.
- Fragments of Hindu thought can be traced back several thousand years.
- Hinduism has evolved over the years to become what it is today. Of all religions, it appears to fit the "evolutionary" model the best.

II. Prominent Figures

- Brahma - chief "god" of the Hindu "trinity". Supposedly the highest and most powerful.
- Shiva - god of destruction.
- Krishna - another major Hindu deity. Worshiped by ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness).
- Arjuna - major character of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. A warrior-prince whose charioteer is an incarnation of Krishna, from whom Arjuna learns the major beliefs of Hinduism.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi - "father" of Transcendental Meditation - an Americanized version of Hinduism.
- Sai Baba - a major religious guru in India today. He is supposedly able to do miraculous things through the power of meditation and the application of Hindu philosophy.

III. Holy Writings

- A. *Vedas* (from "wisdom" or "knowledge"). Collected towards the end of the second Millennium B.C. This is a collection of oral traditions which form the basis of Hinduism.
- B. *Upanishads*. Concluding portion of the *Vedas* which are actually a synthesis of the Vedic teachings.
- C. *Bhagavad-Gita*. One portion of the *Upanishads* which relates the story of Arjuna and his charioteer, the God Krishna in disguise.

IV. Holy Days

- None

V. Major Beliefs

A. Pantheism

- Hinduism is a pantheistic religion which means that they believe that god is All and All is god.
- Hinduism is based on monism, the philosophical belief that all of the universe is made of a single substance, god. This is opposed to dualism which teaches that the universe is composed of matter (evil) and spirit (good).
- Subsequently, Hinduism teaches that god and nature are the same.

B. Reincarnation/Karma/Nirvana

- Reincarnation is the belief that when one dies one comes back again in a new incarnation in order to continue one's progression towards spiritual perfection.
- Transmigration of souls, the actual Hindu belief, says that one can come back as something other than human because of evil done in a lifetime. Reincarnation is the Americanized form of transmigration of souls.
- Karma teaches that whatever one does will return to that person in the same measure. It can be considered an impersonal law which rewards each good deed and punishes each evil deed. If one does something "evil", then "evil" will be done to that person. If one does "good", then one is rewarded with a better incarnation the next time around.
- Nirvana is the ultimate goal of Hinduism. This is the state where one reaches spiritual perfection and is reabsorbed back into the universe like a drop of water is absorbed by the ocean.

C. Amorality

- Hinduism teaches that there is nothing evil in and of itself. Whatever appears to be evil is actually good when viewed from another perspective.
- Hinduism teaches that there is no ultimate right or wrong. This is a necessary corollary of monism. One must choose their own path in life (*dharma*), which only they and they alone can choose.

D. Personal Divinity

- Hinduism teaches that we are all "gods", we just don't know it. Since the universe consists of a single substance (monism), and we are part of the universe, then we are god (since god is All and All is god).
- The goal of meditation is to enter an altered state of consciousness in which one comes into contact with the universal mind, the mind of god. By doing this, one aids their own realization of divinity.
- Hence, one is "saved" by their own effort. Through successive incarnations one is slowly purged until they can once again reunite with the universe.

VI. A Christian Response

A. Pantheism

- The response to the concept of pantheism is to show that God is the creator of the universe and is transcendent, i.e. above creation and separate from it, yet immanent, i.e. personally involved in creation (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16-17, Isaiah 57:15, Isaiah 66:1-2).
- Also, it is necessary to show that God is personal as opposed to impersonal. The Scriptures teach us that God has self-awareness (Exodus 3:13-14), intellect (Genesis 18:19, Isaiah 1:18), emotions (Genesis 6:6), and a will (Genesis 3:15, 2 Peter 3:9). All of these are elements of personality.

B. Reincarnation/Karma/Nirvana

- The response to reincarnation is that the Scriptures teach there is no second chance (Hebrews 9:27). The Scriptures also teach that men are God's highest creation and as such is different than animals (Genesis 1:26, 9:6). This destroys the teaching of transmigration of souls.
- As far as karma goes, nowhere does the Bible talk about such a universal law.
- Finally, the Hindu must be shown that the ultimate destination of men is not nirvana, but heaven or hell (Revelation 20:11-15, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 21-22). Eternity is a place of unending torment outside of the presence of God, or eternal bliss in the presence of God.

C. Amorality

- The Scriptures teach that there are moral absolutes (Exodus 20, Matthew 5:18-19). Furthermore, the breaking of these absolutes produces death, both physical and spiritual (Romans 6:23, Ezekiel 18:4).
- There is coming a day in which men will be held accountable for their lives, and will be judged for their sin (Romans 2:3-6, Romans 3:19).

D. Personal Divinity

- The Bible does not teach that men are divine, but are fallen creatures under divine wrath (Romans 3:10-20).
- The only way of salvation is through Christ, where one appropriates, by faith, Christ's substitutionary death on their behalf (Romans 10:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Acts 16:31, John 14:6).

Major Religions of the World

Buddhism

I. Origins

- Began around 500 B.C. as a sect within Hinduism.
- Buddhism denies the authority of the Vedas, the holy scriptures of the Hindus.
- After leaving his sequestered life to observe the world, Buddha took a trip in which he saw four sights which caused him such distress that he renounced his royalty in order to search for truth.
 - An elderly man which portrayed the inevitability of old age and death.
 - A sick man which portrayed the reality of disease and suffering.
 - A funeral procession which portrayed the inevitability of death.
 - A beggar monk with a tranquil face which portrayed the path to enlightenment.
- After becoming a beggar, Buddha wandered from place to place seeking wisdom. This came as he meditated beneath a fig tree where he received enlightenment. The fig tree became known as the Bodhi tree (tree of wisdom). This enlightenment resulted in the Four Noble truths and the Eightfold path.

II. Prominent Figures

- Siddhartha Gautama - a prince who renounced his royalty, became a beggar, and founded Buddhism.

III. Holy Writings

- Theravada Buddhism has three groups of writings, Vinaya Pitaka (discipline basket), Sutta Pitaka (teaching basket), and Abidhamma Pitaka (metaphysical basket). Total volume is approximately 11 times that of the Bible.
- Mahayana Buddhism has approximately 5,000 volumes of Buddhistic teachings.

IV. Holy Days

- None

V. Major Beliefs

1. Four Noble Truths

- a. The existence of suffering and pain from birth to death.

- b. The cause of suffering being the craving desires and passions of men.
 - c. The end of suffering being the cessation of craving.
 - d. The way to end suffering, the Eightfold Path.
 - 1). Right Views - accept Buddhism and its truths.
 - 2). Right Resolve - renounce all pleasures of the senses.
 - 3). Right Speech - do not lie, slander, or engage in idle talk.
 - 4). Right Behaviour - do not kill any living creature, do not commit immorality, do not steal.
 - 5). Right Occupation - earn your livelihood in a way that harms no one.
 - 6). Right Effort - become perfected, overcome evil desires and the lust for pleasures.
 - 7). Right Contemplation - be free of sorrow and desire, be thoughtful.
 - 8). Right Meditation - after abandoning all sensual pleasures, enter the four degrees of meditation.
2. Nirvana
- Same idea as Hinduism. Nirvana is the ultimate goal of meditation, it is a state in which one is reabsorbed back into the universal mind.
3. Bodhisattvas
- Supposed "advanced" men who gave up their realization of nirvana in order to help others along in their spiritual journeys.
4. Five Precepts
- a. Kill no living thing, even bugs!
 - b. Do not steal.
 - c. Do not commit immorality.
 - d. Do not lie.
 - e. Do not take alcohol or drugs.
5. Zen Buddhism - a branch of Mahayana Buddhism widely known in the West.
- Zen emphasizes meditation (*zazen*), looking within for answers.
 - Zen has no scriptures, but use any writings that will further their cause.

VI. A Christian Response

A. No Personal God

- It is necessary to show that God is personal as opposed to impersonal (or non-existent). The Scriptures teach us that God has self-awareness (Exodus 3:13-14), intellect (Genesis 18:19, Isaiah 1:18), emotions (Genesis 6:6), and a will (Genesis 3:15, 2 Peter 3:9). All of these are elements of personality.

B. Reincarnation/Nirvana

- The response to reincarnation is that the Scriptures teach there is no second chance (Hebrews 9:27). The Scriptures also teach that men are God's highest creation and as such is different than animals (Genesis 1:26, 9:6).
- Finally, the Buddhist must be shown that the ultimate destination of men is not nirvana, but heaven or hell (Revelation 20:11-15, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 21-22). Eternity is a place of unending torment outside of the presence of God, or eternal bliss in the presence of God.

C. Morality

- The Scriptures teach that there are moral absolutes (Exodus 20, Matthew 5:18-19). Furthermore, the breaking of these absolutes produces death, both physical and spiritual (Romans 6:23, Ezekiel 18:4)
- There is coming a day in which men will be held accountable for their lives, and will be judged for their sin (Romans 2:3-6, Romans 3:19).

D. Suffering

- The Buddhist must be shown that suffering is not the result of the cravings of men, but it is the result of sin (Genesis 2:16-17, Romans 5:12-21).
- The answer to suffering, pain, and death is ultimately realized in the New Creation when God makes all things new (Revelation 21:4).

E. Personal Salvation

- The Bible does not teach that men save themselves, but are fallen creatures under divine wrath (Romans 3:10-20). This requires a Saviour outside of oneself (Acts 4:12, John 14:6).
- The only way of salvation is through Christ, where one appropriates, by faith, Christ's substitutionary death on their behalf (Romans 10:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Acts 16:31, John 14:6).

Major Religions of the World

Mormonism

I. Origins

- In 1820, Joseph Smith had the first of several visions which became the foundation of the Mormon faith. In the first vision, he asked an angelic messenger which of one of the many denominations were right and which one should he join. He was told to join none, since all of them had perverted the truth and taught abominations. As a result, he was chosen to become the channel through which the truth, lost for over 1,800 years, was to come.
- On September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith was visited by the angel Moroni, who instructed Joseph Smith to meet him periodically until Moroni delivered the golden plates of the book of Mormon some four years later. After receiving the golden plates, Joseph Smith moved into the home of his father-in-law where they were translated from their original language (reformed "Egyptian Hieroglyphics," a language which has never existed!) through the use of "magic glasses." Thus was produced the *Book of Mormon*.
- After Joseph Smith's death (martyrdom?) on June 27, 1844, the mantle passed to Brigham Young. He was the one who led the westward movement of the group to Utah. At the time of his death, the Mormons numbered some 150,000. Today there are several million.

II. Prominent Figures

- Joseph Smith - founder of the Mormon faith.
- Brigham Young - leader of the Mormons who supervised their westward relocation to Utah.
- Spencer Kimball - late leader of the Mormon religion, a direct descendant of Brigham Young.
- Moroni - the angel from God that delivered the golden plates containing the *Book of Mormon* to Joseph Smith.

III. Holy Writings

1. The Bible

Although the Mormons claim that the Bible is inspired, it is only authoritative and correct "as far as it is translated accurately." As a result, they can pretty much throw out whatever they feel contradicts their own special revelation since of course they are the only ones who can translate it accurately. Thus, they do not believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, but in a modified version of the Neo-Orthodox view which states that the Bible "contains the Word of God", but it is not the Word of God, and thus man is free to choose exactly what he believes is and is not the Word of God.

2. *The Book of Mormon*

This is the official source of doctrine for the Mormon faith. It is supposedly God's revelation to the Western Hemisphere, as opposed to the Bible which is God's revelation to the Eastern Hemisphere.

The *Book of Mormon* is the account of the early inhabitants of the Americas and the story of how they made their way from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. to the Western Hemisphere.

3. *Doctrine and Covenants*

A collection of some 183 revelations including baptism for the dead and celestial marriages.

4. *The Pearl of Great Price*

Contains the *Book of Moses*, the *Book of Abraham*, and historical accounts of the beginning of the Mormon faith.

IV. Holy Days

- No major holy days.

V. Major Beliefs

1. The Bible

The Bible is authoritative only as it is interpreted in light of the *Book of Mormon*, *Pearl of Great Price*, and the *Doctrines and Covenants*.

2. God

The God of the Bible, Elohim, is not the creator God, but a being of flesh and bone just like us. Many thousands of years ago, he was born on a different planet, and after his exaltation became the God of this planet. He, along with his "celestial wives", produce spirit-children which then inhabit physical bodies produced by mortal men.

3. Christ

Christ is not God, but the "firstborn son" of Elohim, the God of this world. In fact, Mormons teach that Christ inhabited the body produced by the physical union of Elohim and Mary!

4. Satan

Satan is not a created being, but is in fact the spirit-brother of Christ. He has become adversarial because of a conflict with Christ that supposedly happened long ago.

5. Man

Men exist prior to birth as spirit-children, the offspring of Elohim and one of his many celestial wives. When a physical baby is born through the union of a man and a woman, the spirit-child then inhabits that body. This is why the Mormons insist on having many children, and why the early Mormons practiced polygamy.

6. Salvation

Mormonism teaches that all men, ultimately, will be saved to some degree. Those that, by their works, attain to the highest level are admitted to the "Celestial" heaven, where Joseph Smith, Jesus Christ, and God are. This level is reserved for those who attain godhood (Mormonism teaches that all males may attain this position where they become a god, just like Elohim, and are given a planet of their own to populate with their celestial wives).

The second level of heaven, the terrestrial, is reserved for those who fall short of the celestial heaven, but have by their works merited some salvation. Lastly, the telestial heaven is reserved for all others.

There is no eternal hell or everlasting punishment in Mormon theology.

VI. A Christian Response

1. The Bible

The Bible does not contain the Word of God, the Bible is the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21). By relegating the Bible to fourth-place in terms of authority, Mormonism denies the inspiration and authority of the Scripture. As such, they fall to the error of adding to the Bible.

The Mormon charge that the Scriptures have been altered is without any textual basis. Comparing manuscripts of the Old Testament from the second century B.C. with those from 900 A.D. show no discernable differences. New Testament manuscripts from the second century A.D. to the 1600's also have little difference. When there are differences, it is in the areas of spelling or omissions of letters, not in any area where any major doctrine is even remotely brought into question.

Finally, the assertion that the *Book of Mormon* is God's revelation to the Western Hemisphere is without basis. All archaeological data to this point supports no single statement of the *Book of Mormon*. Their assertions of an advanced culture in the Americas is without scientific and archaeological validity.

2. God

The Bible clearly teaches that God does not have "flesh and bones", but is in fact a Spirit (John 4:23-24, Colossians 1:16-17). God is also eternal, without beginning, and without ending (Psalm 90:1-2). The concept of God having "celestial wives" is without any basis in Scripture.

3. Christ

Christ is not a created being, but is in fact God (John 1:1-14, 10:28-30, Hebrews 1:8-14). He is not the firstborn in sense of time, but the firstborn in sense of position, or rank (that is the meaning of the word firstborn, Greek *prototikos*, in Colossians 1:18).

4. Satan

Satan is a created being who fell into sin because of pride (Isaiah 14:12-14, Ezekiel 28:12-19). He is not the brother of Christ!

5. Man

Man is not a pre-existent spirit but comes into existence at the moment of conception. There is no Biblical support for the teaching of the pre-existence of man. Additionally, the Bible teaches that man is a sinner by virtue of being in the lineage of Adam (Romans 5:12).

6. Salvation

Men are not saved by their own efforts, but by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf (Titus 3:5, Romans 10:9-10, Ephesians 1:7, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, John 3:16ff).

Those who reject the offer of salvation in Christ, either through active or passive rejection, find themselves the recipients of Divine wrath which is eternal in nature (John 3:36, Revelation 20:11-15, Revelation 14:11).

Major Religions of the World

Arianism (Jehovah Witnesses)

I. Origins

- The ancient origins of Arianism stem from Arius, a heretic condemned by the Church in the fourth century A.D., who taught that Jesus Christ was not God, but a created being.
- The modern form of Arianism is found in the Jehovah Witnesses. Founded originally as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the Jehovah witnesses came into being through the teachings of Charles Taze Russel in the late 1800's.

II. Prominent Figures

- Charles Taze Russell - founded of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah Witnesses).
- Judge Rutherford - second leader of the Watchtower Society under whose leadership they came to be known as the Jehovah Witnesses.
- Nathan Knorr - successor to Judge Rutherford. It was under Knorr's leadership that the *New World Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (the Jehovah Witness's Bible) was produced.
- Frederick W. Franz - successor to Nathan Knorr - current leader of the Jehovah Witnesses.

III. Holy Writings

- *The New World Translation of the Greek Scriptures.*

IV. Holy Days

- None.

V. Major Beliefs

1. The Bible

Although the Jehovah Witnesses claim the Bible as their only source of authority, they have systematically retranslated and altered the text to support their teachings regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. It is the only Bible translation in which this has been done, i.e. the deliberate and systematic altering of source texts in order to produce a slanted Bible version.

2. God

The Jehovah Witnesses categorically deny the Trinity, claiming it was ported into the Church from paganism, and is hence a pagan doctrine. Along with this they

deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They believe there is only one God, Jehovah.

3. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is not God but a created being of a different substance than God. In fact, Jehovah Witnesses teach that Jesus is the archangel Michael in his preincarnate form, and became a man when born of Mary. After his death, he went to heaven in spirit form, hence they deny the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

4. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not God, but a "force from God which does the will of God."

5. Salvation

Salvation is obtained by doing good works, specifically, going door-to-door promulgating their religion. 144,000 Jehovah Witnesses will, by virtue of their exceptional deeds, inherit heaven, while the rest inherit the earth.

6. Eternal Punishment

Jehovah Witnesses teach the doctrine of annihilationism, which says that those who are lost are removed from existence. They reject the idea of a burning Lake of Fire and endless torment.

VI. A Christian Response

1. The Bible

The Bible is the authoritative and verbally inspired record of God's revelation to man. The systematic and deliberate mistranslation of the Scriptures, as evidenced in the *New World Translation of the Greek Scriptures*, deny the Jehovah Witnesses assertion that they believe in the true Word of God. As such, they are like those who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16).

2. God

The Scriptures teach that God is One, yet exists in three separate personalities, Father, Son, and Spirit. The Trinity is a derived doctrine, that is, although there are no Scriptures to clearly define the doctrine of the Trinity, a careful exegesis of Scripture leads one to that belief.

A mini-proof for the Trinity is as follows:

- a. The name for God in the Old Testament, Elohim, is plural, yet is always used with singular verbs thus indicating unity in plurality.
- b. A careful comparison of Acts 5:3 with Acts 5:4 equates the Holy Spirit with God.
- c. A comparison of Romans 8:9 with 8:14 indicates that the Spirit of God is the same as the Spirit of Christ.

- d. Hebrews 1:8 tells us that the Son is God.
- e. A proper exegesis of Philippians 2 indicates that Jesus is God.
- f. Deuteronomy 6:4 describes Jehovah as God.
- g. Thus if the Father (Jehovah) is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and Jesus Christ is God, and there is only one God, then one is led to the inescapable conclusion that God must exist in three distinct personalities although He is One.

3. Jesus Christ

Jehovah Witnesses teach that Jesus Christ is a created being, specifically Michael the Archangel (which is taught nowhere in Scripture). However, the Scriptures teach different.

- a. John 1:1 teaches that in the beginning the Word (Christ) was God. There is no single, reputable Greek scholar in the world that supports the reading, "the Word was a God." It is not grammatically possible to give this verse that reading.
- b. Colossians 1:15 teaches that Christ is the firstborn of every creature. The Jehovah Witnesses use this to prove that Christ was the firstborn in sense of time, however, that is not the meaning of the Greek term for firstborn, *prototikos*. *Prototikos* does not refer to a chronological birth order, but an order of importance, preeminence. Christ, by virtue of His death and resurrection, is the most preeminent of all creatures.
- c. John 14:28, which states, "My Father is greater than I," is often used by Jehovah Witnesses to prove that Christ did not consider Himself God. However, Christ was not referring to His essential nature, but His role as a servant and messenger of the Father. In His humiliation He was "a little lower than the angels." Elsewhere in John, specifically John 10:31-33, the Jews picked up stones to kill Christ for claiming to be God. They got the picture, unfortunately, the Jehovah Witnesses have not.

Anyway one looks at it, Jesus Christ is claimed to be God by the Scriptures. A comparison of the visions of Jehovah in the Old Testament with those of John who had a vision of Christ in the Book of Revelation show that Jehovah and Christ are identical. Christ is called the Alpha and Omega indicating eternity. Christ is God!

4. The Holy Spirit

We have already pointed out in our discussion of the Trinity that the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit is God. Compare Acts 5:3 with 5:4. One cannot lie to an impersonal force. In Acts 13:2 we find the Holy Spirit choosing Paul and Barnabas to be two of the first missionaries. An impersonal force does not have a will. Finally, in Ephesians 4:30 we are told not to grieve the Spirit, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 we are told not to quench the Spirit. These are attributes of personality, not an impersonal force. How can one "grieve" a force?

5. Salvation

Men are not saved by their own efforts, but by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf (Titus 3:5, Romans 10:9-10, Ephesians 1:7, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, John 3:16ff).

The Jehovah Witnesses teaching that they are the 144,000 of God is completely without Biblical support. It is very clear in Revelation 7 and 14 that the 144,000 are Jews, not Jehovah Witnesses (note that the actual tribes are mentioned by name).

6. Eternal Punishment

Those who reject the offer of salvation in Christ, either through active or passive rejection, find themselves the recipients of Divine wrath which is eternal in nature (John 3:36, Revelation 20:11-15). It is conscious torment forever in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 14:11). The teaching of annihilationism is not supported in Scripture.

Major Religions of the World

Mohammedism (Islam)

I. Origins

- Mohammedism (Islam) came into existence with the divine revelations given to Mohammed, the last and greatest prophet of the Islam faith. This occurred in the sixth century A.D.
- Islam is among the four largest religions in the world, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism being the other three. Today there are over 450 million adherents throughout the world.
- Islam consists of three major sects. The Sunnis (Moslems which exist outside of Iran) accept the first four Caliphs (leaders of Islam after Mohammed's death). The Shiites (comprising Moslem's in modern Iran) reject the first three Caliphs (who were not direct descendants of Mohammed) and accept only the fourth (Mohammed's son-in-law). The third group, the Sufis, comprise the mystical sect of Islam placing great importance on personal, mystical experiences.
- Islam traces its roots back to Abraham's son Ishmael, whom they claim is the child of promise, not Isaac. However, the Bible clearly teaches that Isaac is the child of promise (Galatians 4:21-31, Romans 9:7-8, Genesis 21:12).

II. Prominent Figures

- Mohammed, the last and greatest prophet - founder of the Islam faith.
- Abu Bakr - first convert to Islam. He became the leader of Islam after Mohammed's death.
- Ali - Mohammed's son-in-law. Fourth leader of Islam and the first leader recognized by the Shiite sect of Islam.
- Allah - the one true God.

III. Holy Writings

1. The *Koran* (*Qu'ran*)

The *Koran* consists of 114 chapters (*suras*) containing the revelations of Allah to Mohammed. It was compiled from the writings of Mohammed as well as the oral traditions existent at the time of his death. These chapters are considered to be the Islamic scriptures, and as such are the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

2. The *Torat of Moses*

3. The *Suhuf* (books of the prophets)

4. The *Zabur* (Psalms of David)
5. The *Injil* (gospel of Jesus)

All writings with the exception of the *Koran* are considered to have been hopelessly corrupted. As a result the *Koran* supercedes all other revelation and is considered by many Moslems to be the only authoritative revelation of Allah to man.

IV. Holy Days

- *Hijira* - the flight. Commemorates the departure of Mohammed on July 16, 622, from Mecca as a result of the persecution received by the inhabitants of that city. This day is considered to be the foundational year of the Islamic calendar, much like A.D. and B.C. to us.
- *Ramadam* - the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This month is observed by fasting during the day, increased religious devotion, and abstinence from any earthly pleasures including wine, women, and song.

V. Major Beliefs

1. The Bible

Islam accepts the Bible, but believes that it is so corrupted that its truth has been lost. As a result, they do not accept any teaching in the Bible that contradicts the teaching of the *Koran*.

2. God

Islam accepts only one God, Allah. They deny the idea of a trinity as well as the deity of Christ. Unlike the God of the Bible, however, Allah is so far above man that he is impersonal and unknowable. His major attribute is judgment and is almost completely lacking in love, mercy, and grace.

3. Christ

Islam believes Christ to be one of the six greatest prophets that ever lived, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Mohammed being the other five. They do not believe Jesus died on the cross since Allah would never allow one of the great prophets to be so treated by men. They do not accept the resurrection of Christ, and many believe that it was Judas that died on the cross instead of Christ. Additionally, they deny the literal virgin birth of Christ.

4. Man

Man is a creation of Allah and must accept the tenets of the Islam religion for salvation. Women in Islamic cultures are treated as being lower than men, and in most cases have no rights.

5. Salvation

Salvation in the Islamic religion is totally a work of man and is something earned, not given. In order to achieve salvation one must believe in the Five Articles of Faith and perform the Five Pillars of Faith. In the day of judgment Allah will

weigh the deeds of every man allowing those who pass to enter Paradise, a place of sensual pleasures, and casting those who fail the test into hell for eternal torment.

Although the Moslem believes in sin, he does not believe that man has a sinful nature. Man is a sinner because he sins, he does not sin because he is a sinner.

a. Five Articles of Faith

- 1). There is no god but Allah who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and the sovereign judge.
- 2). The existence of angels, the devil, and *jinn*s (beings underneath angels but higher than men).
- 3). Allah has revealed himself in the *Koran* which is the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice.
- 4). God has spoken through numerous prophets, the six greatest being Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Mohammed. Of these, the greatest is Mohammed.
- 5). In the last days Allah will resurrect all men to have their deeds weighed. Depending on whether one's good deeds outweigh the bad determines one's eternal destiny, in Paradise, or hell.

b. Five Pillars of Faith

- 1). The Creed (*Kalimah*) - "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah." This must be stated in order to become a Moslem.
- 2). Prayer (*Salat*). Done five times a day, in the morning, at noon, at midafternoon, at evening, and before bedtime. This must be done while facing Mecca and the *Ka'aba* stone.
- 3). Almsgiving (*Zakat*). Each Moslem is required to give 1/40 of his income to the poor.
- 4). Fasting (*Ramadam*). During the month of *Ramadam* Moslems are required to fast from sunup to sundown.
- 5). The Pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Once during one's lifetime a pilgrimage must be made to Mecca.
- 6). A sixth possible pillar of faith, though not believed to be such by all Moslems, is that of *Jihad*, holy war. Any Moslem who dies in a holy war is guaranteed immediate entrance into paradise.

VI. A Christian Response

1. The Bible

The Bible is the authoritative and verbally inspired record of God's revelation to man, not the *Koran* (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21). Islam falls into the same error as many other cults and religions in that they deny the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures while at the same time superceding the Bible with their own revelations.

2. God

Although the Bible teaches that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4), it also teaches that God exists in three separate personalities, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Additionally, the God of the Bible is personally involved in His creation (John 3:16). He is a God of love (1 John 4:8), mercy (Titus 3:5), faithfulness and compassion (Lamentations 3:22-23).

3. Christ

The Bible teaches that Christ was born of a virgin (Luke 1:35, Matthew 1:23). He led a sinless life and was crucified for the sin of the world. He was buried, and rose again the third day in order to be a guarantor of our future resurrection (1 Corinthians 15).

Furthermore, it is Christ who is the greatest prophet, and not Mohammed (Hebrews 1:1-2).

4. Man

Man is a fallen creature as is the recipient of divine wrath (John 3:36). He is a sinner by nature as well as by choice (Romans 5:12). Women are not inferior to men but are equal in value, worth, and importance to God, although God has ordained that women be in subjection to men in the area of roles with marriage and the Church.

5. Salvation

Men are not saved by their own efforts, but by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf (Titus 3:5, Romans 10:9-10, Ephesians 1:7, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, John 3:16ff). There is nothing man can do to earn or merit salvation.

6. Last Days

Those who reject the offer of salvation in Christ,, either through active or passive rejection, find themselves the recipients of Divine wrath which is eternal in nature (John 3:36, Revelation 20:11-15). It is conscious torment forever in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 14:11).

Those who are the redeemed will worship God forever in the New Heavens and Earth, not a sensual paradise of pleasure (Revelation 21-22).