



A DOUBTER'S GUIDE TO WORLD RELIGIONS

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AUTHOR OF
A DOUBTER'S GUIDE
TO THE BIBLE

A FAIR AND FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY,
BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES OF THE BIG FIVE

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

A Doubter's Guide to World Religions

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PREFACE

THE FEAST OF IDEAS

English Translations of the Hindu Scriptures

Doniger, Wendy. *The Rig Veda*. Penguin Classics, 1981; Goodall, D. *Hindu Scriptures*. Berkeley: University of California, 1996; Sutton, N. *The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation and Study Guide* (Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies). San Rafael, Mandala Publishing, 2020.

English Translations of the Buddhist Scriptures

Takakusu, J., Müller, F. Max Müller, and E. B. Cowell. *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965; Rahula, W. *What the Buddha Taught*. The Grove Press, 1974; Horner, I. B. *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, Vol. 2. London: The Pali Text Society, 1989; Warren, H. C. *Buddhism in Translation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1900; Bodhi, Bikkhu. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2003; Thanissaro, Bhikkhu. *Digha Nikaya, The Long Collection. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition)*. Online: https://www.dhammadownload.org/suttas/DN/index_DN.html; Smart, N. *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology*. New York: Cross-

road, 2002; Reeves, G., *The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic*. Wisdom Publications, 2008; Jones, J. J. *The Mahavastu*. Vol.1. Luzac & Company, 1949.

English Translations of the Jewish Scriptures

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Jewish Bible (the Tanakh or Christian “Old Testament”) are from *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*. Jewish Publication Society, 1985. All quotations from the Jewish Prayer book or Siddur are from *The Complete Artscroll Siddur*. Mesorah Publications, 2001. All quotations from the Mishnah are from Neusner, J. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Yale University Press, 1988. Quotations from the Talmud are either from Rodkinson, M. L. *The Babylonian Talmud*. Vol. 1–10. Boston: Boston New Talmud Publishing Company, 1903–18; or Neusner, J. *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. Vol. 1–22. Hendrickson, 2005.

English Translations of the Christian Scriptures

All quotations from the Christian Bible (Old and New Testaments) are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Zondervan, 2011.

English Translations of the Muslim Scriptures

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TIPS FOR READING THE RELIGIONS

Most Practised Religions from Boston University's World Religions Database

Tradition	Number of adherents	Percentage of world population	Number of countries in which it is found
<i>Christianity (Christians)</i>	2.5 billion	32 percent	234
<i>Islam (Muslims)</i>	1.9 billion	24 percent	218
<i>Hinduism (Hindus)</i>	1.1 billion	14 percent	140
<i>Agnostic / Atheist</i>	879 million	11 percent	234
<i>Buddhism (Buddhists)</i>	546 million	7 percent	150
<i>Sikhism (Sikhs)</i>	28, million	0.36 percent	64
<i>Judaism (Jews)</i>	15 million	0.19 percent	147

HINDUISM ON A PAGE

Hinduism's key question: How can my soul escape the cycle of birth-death-and-rebirth in this material world?

1500–500 BCE: Aryans (or “noble ones”) begin to formalise their vedic religion

- The four Vedas, or books of “Wisdom” are composed.
- Many devas or divine beings (fire, storm, etc.).
- Rituals and sacrifice to keep the devas in favour.

1000–300 BCE: Indian gurus begin to unpack the meaning of the Vedas

- Most important writings in this period are the Upanishads.
- Brahman: the One force, or “Flame” of the universe.
- Atman: the soul as a spark from Brahman.
- The Advaita philosophical school: Brahman is everything, and thus the atman is Brahman in the final analysis.
- The Visist-advaita philosophical school: Brahman and the atman are not wholly identical but relate to each other in unity.
- Samsara: the trap of earthly existence and re-existence because of karma.
- Moksha: escape back into Brahman.

300 BCE–300 CE: The composition of many so-called remembered (smṛiti) writings

- Most important writing in this period is the Bhagavad-gita, or “Song of the Lord.”
- Four castes of society
 - Priests*
 - Warrior-kings*
 - Common people*
 - Servants*
- Three paths to salvation
 - Do the duty of your caste*
 - Attain knowledge of your oneness with Brahman*
 - Devote yourself to a “favourite god”*
- Two major “schools” of Hinduism
 - Vaishnavism (devotion to Vishnu)*
 - Saivism (devotion to Siva)*

Facts and Figures on Hinduism Today

- Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, with 1.1 billion believers according to World Religion Database, Boston University.
- Hindus make up about 14 percent of the world’s population.
- Hinduism is found in 114 countries in the world.
- Sanskrit, the language of the Hindu scriptures, is one of the oldest and most well-connected languages on earth, relating to Eastern languages like Hittite, as well as Western languages like Latin and Greek (and therefore English).

- There are an estimated 300 million different devas worshipped in India today.
- In the USA, there are 1.6 million Hindus, or 0.5 percent of the population. In the UK, there are 745,000 Hindus, or 1.11 percent of the population. In Australia, there are 470,000 Hindus, or 1.85 percent of the population.

Famous Hindus

Mahatma Gandhi

Considered by some the father of the Indian nation, Gandhi was famous for his policy of nonviolent resistance, crucial in the fight for Indian independence. He was assassinated in 1948. It must also be stated that Gandhi is scorned by many in India today for what are perceived to be his numerous compromises in both politics and the Hindu religion.

Julia Roberts

A famous Hollywood actress, Julia Roberts has won awards for her roles in *Erin Brockovich*, *Pretty Woman*, and *Steel Magnolias*. It was while shooting the movie *Eat, Pray, Love* in India that Julia decided to accept Hinduism as her religion.

Sri Chinmoy

Indian spiritual leader, athlete, and humanitarian Sri Chinmoy moved to New York in 1964. He founded the “Peace Run” to raise awareness of the need for peace. The motto of the Peace Run is “Peace begins with me.” Peace Runs are now run in many countries around the world.

George Harrison

Beatles guitarist and songwriter Harrison began his search for God in his mid-twenties. It led him to delve deeply into the mystical world of eastern religions, especially Hinduism, Indian philosophy, culture, and music.

Sachin Tendulkar

An Indian cricketer regarded as one of the greatest batsmen in the world. Up to July 2004, he scored 9470 runs at an average of 57.39 with 37 centuries and a highest score of 241.

Good Books and Sites on Hinduism

bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/ (a reliable introductory site from the BBC)

learnreligions.com/hinduism-4684846 (a well-researched and written resource for Hindu beliefs and history)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/hindus-and-hinduism/> (a site introducing contemporary statistics about Hinduism around the world)

Beckerlege, G., ed. *World Religions Reader*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2001 (Part Four: Hinduism, 201–320).

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- Knott, K. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Smart, N., and Hecht, R., eds. "Hinduism." *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology*. New York: Crossroad, 2002. See pages 179–230.
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BUDDHISM ON A PAGE

Buddhism's key question: Where is peace to be found in this transitory world of pain?

The Founder of Buddhism

- Siddhartha Gautama was an Indian prince born around 500 BCE.
- Siddhartha rejects his native Hindu religion and his life of luxury to discover the solution to the world's suffering.
- Enlightenment came one night in May under a Bodhi Tree.

The Four Noble Truths: The Heart of Gautama's Teaching

- Suffering: existence is marred by suffering.
- The Origin of Suffering: suffering arises from desire.
- The End of Suffering: eradicating desire will release you from suffering and bring the realisation of nirvana.
- The Path to the End of Suffering: the way to end desire, and therefore to eradicate suffering, is to practise the eight habits of the Buddhist life.

The Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering

- Right Understanding: knowing the truths of Buddhism.
- Right Aim: directing the mind to aspire for the ideals of Buddhism.

- Right Speech: speaking without desire—truthfully, kindly, helpfully.
- Right Action: acting without desire—non-violently, generously, etc.
- Right Livelihood: finding a job fitting to the Buddhist life.
- Right Effort: energetic daily decision to promote good and true thoughts.
- Right Mindfulness: diligent awareness of all sensations of body and mind.
- Right Concentration: practice of Buddhist forms of meditation.

Types of Buddhism: The Two Main Schools

Theravada (“school of the elders”): Often dubbed “classical Buddhism” this school emphasises the historical man Gautama and tends to shun mystical speculation.

Mahayana (the “great vehicle”): With a larger canon of scripture, this school encourages devotion to the Buddha as a saviour-figure. It also emphasises the need to postpone nirvana in order to save others from suffering before eventually becoming a Buddha yourself.

Facts and Figures on Buddhism Today

- Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world, with 546 million believers.
- Buddhists make up about 7 percent of the world’s population.
- Buddhism is found in 150 countries in the world.
- Buddhism has had a profound impact on religious and cultural life from China, Korea, and Japan in the east to

Afghanistan in the west. It has found a firm footing in southeast Asia, and forms an important part of the religious makeup of Europe and North America.

Famous Buddhists

The Dalai Lama

Tenzin Gyatso was named the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1937. After the Chinese takeover of Tibet, he was forced into exile. He has spent subsequent years teaching, writing, and speaking out for freedom for Tibet, while advocating non-violent resistance. He was granted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Leonard Cohen

Leonard Cohen was a Jewish-born Canadian singer, songwriter, and poet. A lifetime of depression, sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll led Cohen to Buddhism. He was ordained as a Monk in 1996, retiring to a Buddhist Centre in Los Angeles. “So Long Marianne,” “First We Take Manhattan,” “Hallelujah,” and “Everybody Knows (I’m Your Man)” are amongst his greatest songs.

Tiger Woods

American professional golfer Tiger Woods is one of the best-known athletes of all time. His 107 worldwide wins include 82 PGA Tour victories. Woods captained the Presidents Cup Team, leading them to a 16–14 victory against the International Team.

Aung San Suu Kyi

A noted campaigner for democracy and human rights in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), Aung San Suu Kyi

was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her campaign for peaceful democratic reforms. She has become increasingly controversial in the West for her seeming unwillingness to speak openly about her nation's poor treatment of the Rohingya minority.

Good Books and Sites on Buddhism

bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/ (a reliable introductory site from the BBC)

www.buddhanet.net (a site seeking to serve all Buddhist traditions)

<http://www.dharmaset.org> (a site representing the Mahayana tradition)

<https://archive.org/details/buddhismtrans03warrgoog/page/n6/mode/2up> (an extraordinary collection of Buddhist texts in English translation made a century ago: Warren, H. C. *Buddhism in Translations*. Harvard Oriental Studies, vol.3. Harvard University Press, 1922.

Buswell, R. E., ed. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

Carter, J. R. and Palihawadana, M., trans. *The Dhammapadam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Carrithers, M. *Buddha: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Gyatso, K. G. *Introduction to Buddhism: An Explanation of the Buddhist Way of Life*. Cumbria: Tharpa Publications, 2002. (Strongly representing the Mahayana tradition)

Hardy, F. "The Classical Religions of India." *The World's Religions*. Edited by S. Sutherland, et al. London: Routledge,

1988. See pages 569–645, especially “Buddhism,” pages 591–603.

Harvey, P. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Keown, D. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Rahula, W. *What the Buddha Taught*. Revised edition with illustrative texts translated from the original Pali. New York: Grove Press, 1974. (Representing the Theravada tradition)

Smart, N., and Hecht, R., eds. “Buddhism.” *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology*. New York: Crossroad, 2002. See pages 231–75.

Smart, N. *The World’s Religions*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. See pages 75–165.

JUDAISM ON A PAGE

Judaism's key question: How should God's people (Israel) live in order to fulfill their divine calling in the world?

Foundational Judaism (2000–500 BCE): The fundamentals of the faith are developed

- God promises Abraham that he will become a great nation and that he will be a blessing to all nations. Circumcision is introduced as the sign of this covenant.
- The Jews living in slavery in Egypt are redeemed by God in a mass exodus (1200s BCE). The Passover festival is introduced to commemorate the event.
- The Torah is given by God to Moses at Mt. Sinai—Israel now has its way of life revealed, developing into the Tanakh, or Bible of Judaism.
- God promises that King David's throne will be eternal—here are the foundations of the Jewish belief in the Messiah.
- The first temple is built in Jerusalem (900s BCE) as a place for atonement and the praise of Israel's God.
- After a long period of disobedience, Israel is invaded by the Babylonians who destroy the temple (586 BCE). The Second Temple is built (512 BCE).

Interim Judaisms (500 BCE–100 CE): Jewish factions compete for prominence

- Sadducees are the aristocrats and priests, Essenes are the apocalyptic holy men, Zealots are the patriots who fight the Romans, and the followers of Yeshua (or first Christians) are deemed heretics of a false Messiah.
- The (second) Jerusalem temple is destroyed by the Romans (70 CE).

Classical Judaism (100–1800 CE): One form of Judaism emerges triumphant and sets the course for the bulk of Jewish history

- The Pharisees rise to prominence (100 CE) and govern Jewish religion.
- The rabbinic teachings are collected and compiled in the Mishnah (200 CE). Further reflection on the Mishnah and Tanakh leads to the production of the Talmud and the Midrash (400–800 CE).

Modern Judaisms (1800 to today): Classical Judaism splits in three

- Reform Judaism: a movement of deep integration with the gentile world.
- Orthodox Judaism: a movement insisting on separation from the gentile world.
- Conservative Judaism: a movement seeking a path between Reform and Orthodox Judaism.

Facts and Figures on Judaism Today

- Judaism is the sixth largest religion in the world, with approximately 15 million people identifying as Jews.
- Jews make up about 0.2 percent of the world's population.
- Judaism is found in 147 countries worldwide.
- Approximately 900,000 Jews live in Jerusalem, making Jerusalem the metro area with the third largest Jewish population in the world, behind New York (two million) and Tel Aviv (3.5 million).
- Of the estimated world population of 15 million Jews, more than 6 million live in Israel, and almost as many (just under 6 million) live in the United States.
- Jews were highly involved in establishing the early Hollywood film studios including Twentieth Century Fox, MGM, and Warner Brothers.

Famous Jews

Anne Frank

Anne recorded her life in a diary when her and her family were forced into hiding to escape Nazi persecution of the Jews during World War II. They were discovered and arrested by the Gestapo. She died in a concentration camp at the age of fifteen.

Barbara Streisand

Movie star, singer, and director Barbara Streisand has won numerous Oscar, Academy, Grammy, and Golden Globe awards. She is considered one of the highest selling female recording artists of all time. Streisand wrote

the music for the song “Evergreen” (Love Theme from *A Star is Born*) for which she received an Oscar.

Lord Professor Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

A highly influential philosopher, author, and public intellectual, Sacks was the Chief Rabbi (Orthodox) of Britain. Famed for his ability to integrate spirituality and academic disciplines such as history and science, he won the Templeton Prize in 2006. He passed away in November 2020.

Good Books and Sites on Judaism Today

bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/ (a reliable introductory site from the BBC)

torah.org (a site dedicated to Jewish readings and rituals)

jewishencyclopedia.com (a comprehensive introduction to Jewish history and belief)

Berlin, A. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Grabbe, L. L. *An Introduction to First Century Judaism: Jewish Religion and History in the Second Temple Period*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.

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See pages 45–89.

Smart, N. *The World's Religions*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. See pages 246–74.

CHRISTIANITY ON A PAGE

Christianity's key question: How can this fallen world (both humanity and the creation) be reconciled and restored to the Creator for eternity?

The Life of Jesus of Nazareth

- Born about 5 BC and raised as a carpenter in Galilee.
- Emerges in AD 28 as a famed healer, “friend of sinners,” and preacher of God’s Kingdom.
- Is executed during the Passover festival of AD 30 for his claim to be the Messiah.
- Disciples discover an empty tomb and witness Jesus raised from the dead.

From Christ to Christianity

- The followers of Jesus abandon circumcision as the sign for gentiles of belonging to Christ.
- As the gospel is proclaimed far and wide, churches spring up throughout the Roman Empire.
- Christian leaders compose the letters (to churches) and the Gospels (about Jesus) which would form most of the New Testament.

Major Teachings of Christianity

- Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share in one divine nature.
- The “kingdom come”: when Jesus returns, people will be resurrected and judged, and the creation will be renewed.
- Grace: God’s unmerited gift of salvation.
- The love ethic: Christian life is to be characterised by love of all people, including one’s enemies.
- Baptism: a “spiritual bath” celebrating God’s forgiveness of sins.
- The Lord’s Supper: a “meal” of bread and wine embodying Christ’s body and blood given on the cross.
- Easter or Pascha: the central annual festival recalling the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Three Branches of Christianity

- Roman Catholic Church: the worldwide church that looks to the pope, or bishop of Rome, for final authority in matters of doctrine and morality.
- Protestant Church: the worldwide church that sought to reform perceived abuses in the sixteenth century church and so split with Roman Catholicism.
- Orthodox Church: the worldwide church that originated in the eastern Roman Empire and emphasises salvation as sharing in God’s own nature.

Facts and Figures on Christianity Today

- Christianity is the largest religion in the world today with approximately 2.5 billion adherents.
- Christians make up 32 percent of the world's population.
- Christianity is found in 234 countries.
- Approximately half of the world's Christians are Catholic (over 1.2 billion). There are close to 1 billion Protestants and approximately 300 million Orthodox.
- The United States has the largest Christian population in the world, followed by Brazil and Mexico.
- The largest cohort of professing Christians in the US is women of colour.¹
- Roughly equal numbers of Christians today live in Europe (26 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (24 percent), and sub-Saharan Africa (24 percent).²

Famous Christians

William Wilberforce

British politician who led the fight to end slavery in British colonies.

J. R. R. Tolkien

Author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Mother Theresa

1 "Racial and Ethnic Composition among Christians (US)," Pew Research Center, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/christians/christian/racial-and-ethnic-composition/>.

2 The Global Religious Landscape," Pew Research Centre, 2012, <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

The “Saint of the Gutters,” Mother Theresa founded an order of nuns called the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India, who are dedicated to serving the poor. She worked for around 50 years serving the poorest of the poor in Calcutta. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Bono

Irish born rock singer and member of the massively popular band U2, Bono talks openly about Jesus as the Son of God and Jesus as Messiah. He believes in the power of prayer and in miracles. “With or Without You,” “Where the Streets Have No Name,” and “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For” are amongst the band’s most well-known hits.

C. S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis was a Fellow and Tutor at Oxford University until he was elected to the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University. A prolific writer, he wrote many books on Christian apologetics as well as children’s fantasy. *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are still widely read today.

Good Books and Sites on Christianity

bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/ (a reliable introductory site from the BBC)

christianitytoday.com (leading Protestant website)

vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html (official English language website of the Roman Catholic church)

- goarch.org (official site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, with numerous links to Orthodox topics of interest)
- Bauckham, R. *Jesus: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
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ISLAM ON A PAGE

Islam's key question: What is the correct way to submit to the Almighty in order to please Him and enter into eternal Paradise?

Life of Muhammad

- Born 570 CE
- Called to be Prophet / Quran revealed in 610 CE
- Flees to Medina in 622 (beginning of Muslim calendar)
- Takes back Mecca in 629
- Dies 632

Types of Islam

- Sunni: majority traditional Islam
- Shi'ite: dedicated to Muhammad's family (via Ali)
- Sufi: mystical branch of Islam

Sources of Islamic Faith

- Quran: the very Word of God (in Arabic)
- Sunna: the example of the Prophet (recorded in the Hadiths)

Five Pillars of Islam (the heart of Muslim Sharia, or "law")

1. The declaration of faith (*shahada*): one God; Muhammad is the Prophet.
2. Prayer (*salat*): five times a day; together at the mosque on Fridays.

3. Tax for the poor (*zakat*): 2.5% for the underprivileged and the spread of Islam.
4. The fast of Ramadan (*saum*): month-long commemoration of the coming down of the Quran.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*): journey to the birthplace of the Prophet; believed to wash away the Muslim's past sins.

Facts and Figures on Islam Today

- Islam is the second largest religion in the world, with over one billion believers.
- Muslims make up about 20 percent of the world's population.
- Islam is found in more than 200 countries worldwide.
- Around 2.5 million Muslims make the trip to Mecca each year.
- Some countries operate schemes to help people pay for the Hajj. In Malaysia there is a lottery with first prize being an all-expenses paid pilgrimage to Mecca.

Famous Muslims

Malala Yousafzai

Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai became a household name after surviving a gunshot wound to her head in an attempted assassination. She is an outspoken activist for education rights for women and children in Pakistan.

Muhammad Ali

Professional boxer and social activist, Muhammad Ali was the first man to win the heavyweight title 3 times. In 1999, Ali was named the "Greatest Heavyweight Boxer

of All Time” and “The Greatest Athlete of the 20th Century” by the popular Sports Illustrated magazine.

Muhammad Hassan Wilkerson

American footballer Muhammad Hassan Wilkerson was drafted to play defensive end by the New York Jets for the 2011–17 seasons. In 2018 he signed a one-year contract with the Green Bay Packers. His season ended when his teammate accidentally leg-whipped him in a tackle, resulting in surgery.

Good Books and Sites on Islam Today

bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ (a reliable introductory site from the BBC)

sunnah.com (online searchable links to the Hadiths)

islam.uga.edu (a resource centre from the University of Georgia)

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html> (a site for searching all of the Hadiths about Muhammad)

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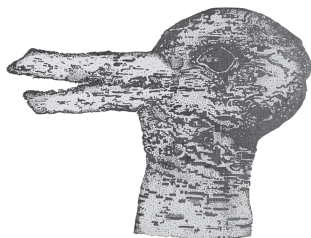
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DUCKS, RABBITS, AND THE ELEPHANT: PLURALISM

The Duck-Rabbit Experiment



GLOSSARY

Agni—Hindu god of fire

Amidah—Jewish *eighteen prayers*

Apostle—one *who is sent out*—Jesus chose 12 apostles who were given the special function to act in his name

Arhat—Buddhist—worthy one who has achieved a state of *karma-less perfection*

Ascetic—one who denies earthly comforts in an effort to strive for mystic consciousness

Atheist—one who believes that God does not exist

Atman—the Hindu soul

Atonement—Jewish concept of God's judgment falling on a sacrificed animal instead of on the person who has disobeyed God

Avatars—incarnations of various Hindu gods

Baptism—Christian cleansing ritual / spiritual bath symbolising the removal of guilt from the believer and providing admission into the Christian church

Bar/bat Mitzvah—Jewish ceremony to mark the transition of a teenager into adulthood

Bhagavad-gita—*The Song of the Lord*—treasured Hindu text

from the *Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty*
 Bhakti yoga—Hindu path of devotion
 Bodhi tree—*tree of wisdom* where Buddha discovered
 enlightenment
 Bodhisattva—a Buddha-to-be, or one who delays attainment of
nirvana in order to assist others
 Brahman—Hindu concept—the ultimate and only reality of the
 universe. All things originate from Brahman
 Caliph—Islamic term given to the leader, or deputy, following
 the death of the prophet Muhammad
 Dharma—Hindu duty
 Devas—powerful unpredictable beings of the Hindu Vedas
 Dvija—Hindu *twice-born* ceremony
 Essenes—ultra-devout Jews around the first century who saw
 themselves as the true people of God. They lived in the desert
 and diligently followed the scriptures and kept to the Jewish
 Law.
 Eucharist—*Communion or Lord's Supper*—re-enacted meal of
 Jesus “last supper” with his disciples. The bread and the wine
 serve as a reminder of Jesus’ death and resurrection
 Gentiles—non-Jews
 Gospel—*grand news*—the New Testament first-century accounts
 of the life of Jesus
 Grace—Christian emphasis on the unmerited gift of God’s
 pardon
 Hadiths—collection of the words and deeds of Muhammad
 Hajj—Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca
 Hanukkah—Jewish festival to mark rededication of the temple
 by Judas Maccabeus 164 BCE after successful Jewish revolt

against Hellenistic rule
 Hasmonean Dynasty—century-long dynasty of Jewish priest-kings ruling Jerusalem as free and autonomous state
 Hellenistic Empire—Greek empire under Alexander the Great and his successors
 Imam—Shi'ite Muslim term for a leader thought to be able to intercede with Allah on behalf of a believer
 Indra—Hindu warrior god
 Islam—*submission*—surrendering your life to Allah
 Jihad—Muslim concept of striving for Allah
 Jnana yoga—Hindu path of knowledge
 Karma (Hindu)—actions that determine future existence
 Karma (Buddhist)—wilful action growing out of desire
 Karma yoga—Hindu path of duties
 Koran—(Quran)—holy book of Islam
 Krishna—incarnation of Hindu god Vishnu
 Mahayana Buddhism—*great vehicle*—dominant in Tibet, China, Japan, and Korea
 Majjhima Patipada—middle path of the Buddha
 Manu—(*Laws of*)—text outlining details of duties of various castes of Hindu society
 Margas—Hindu paths to escape birth and rebirth
 Mahabharata—epic Hindu poem of Bharata Dynasty
 Messiah—*Anointed One*—Jewish belief in the future ultimate and eternal king by whose reign Israel would achieve its purpose
 Midrash—Jewish written works devoted to interpreting sections of the Tanak—recasting old texts to have contemporary significance

Mishnah—recorded sayings and legal opinions of first- and second-century rabbis regarded as preserving the spoken instructions to Moses
 Moksha—Hindu escape into ultimate reality
 Monotheism—belief in *one* God
 Muslim—one who submits to Allah
 Nirvana—Buddhist notion of extinguishing of all desire—
blowing out or *extinction*
 Palestine—Roman name for land of Israel
 Pantheism—everything is god
 Pharisees—reform movement in Judaism around first century stressing commitment to preserving and obeying the Law
 Pluralism—belief that spiritual truth is *plural* in form, not singular
 Polytheism—belief in a great number of gods
 Protestantism—Christian churches derived from the sixteenth-century protest movement against the Roman Catholic church's perceived abuses
 Ramayana—*Romance of Rama*—epic poem of Hindu smriti writings
 Sadducees—faction of conservative Jews under Roman rule—rejected innovation of faith and sought to maintain role of priest and temple; religious aristocracy in Jerusalem
 Samsara—Hindu notion of entrapment in birth, death, and rebirth
 Sanatana dharma—*Hinduism* or eternal law/religion
 Sangha—the Buddhist community
 Saivism—devotion to Hindu god Siva
 Scruti—"Heard" writings of Hinduism

- Sharia—Muslim concept of God’s *law*
- Shema—Jewish three-line statement of belief
- Siddhartha Gautama—founder of Buddhism
- Sira—first biography of Muhammad’s Life
- Smriti—“Remembered” writings of Hinduism
- Soma—Hindu god associated with key Vedic ritual
- Sunna—the *example* of the prophet Muhammad
- Talmud—Jewish set of books interpreting the Mishna
- Theravada Buddhism—*school of the elders*—“Classical”
 Buddhism, found mainly in Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia,
 Thailand, and Myanmar (Burma)
- Torah—sacred writing of Judaism—God’s instruction to the
 Israelites on legal, environmental, religious, and social
 matters; came to refer specifically to first five books of the
 Jewish Bible
- Transubstantiation—Roman Catholic belief that in the ritual of
the Lord’s Supper, the bread and wine change substance and
 actually become the body and blood of Jesus
- Trinity—Christian doctrine of one God in three persons—the
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Upanishads—sacred writings of Hinduism composed between
 1000–300 BCE
- Vaishnavism—Hindu devotion to Vishnu
- Varnas—Hindu castes
- Vedas—earliest writings of Hinduism
- Vedism—Aryan religion originally from Persia
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)—Jewish festival celebrating
 the mercy of God toward Israel

Zealots—Jewish faction that violently opposed Roman rule in the Holy Land

Zen Buddhism—extension of meditative dimension of Buddhism

Zionism—movement within Judaism for a Jewish state in the “Holy Land”