

WORLD RELIGIONS AT A GLANCE

Hinduism

Founder: None; indigenous religion of India from beginning of recorded history.

Number of Adherents: 900 million worldwide, 1.5-2.4 million in the United States.

Theistic View: Brahman is the One Reality manifested in many gods & goddesses.

Life Purpose: Escape ignorance to be delivered from reincarnation and be one with all things.

Afterlife: Reincarnation until obtaining enlightenment, then achieve Nirvana.

Basic Practices: Meditation, devotion, live according to one's chosen purpose.

Scriptures: *Vedas, Upanishads.*

Jainism

Founder: Mahavira, 6th century B.C. India.

Number of Adherents: 4 million worldwide,

Theistic View: Polytheistic; the universe is eternal.

Life Purpose: Avoid bad karma to escape reincarnation, cause no harm to any living thing.

Afterlife: Reincarnation until liberation into a state no longer subject to rebirth.

Basic Practices: Non-violence, worship at home and in temples.

Scriptures: The teachings of Mahavira.

Sikhism

Founder: Guru Nanak, A.D. 1500, Punjab, India

Number of Adherents: 26 million worldwide (75% in Punjab), 250,000 in the United States.

Theistic View: Monotheistic (the “One Constant” or “True Name”).

Life Purpose: Align with the will of God, become a “saint soldier” fighting for good.

Afterlife: Reincarnation until merging with God.

Basic Practices: Prayer, meditation, worship (home and temple); no monasticism or asceticism.

Scriptures: *Adi Granth.*

Buddhism

Founder: Siddhartha Gautama, 6th century B.C., India

Number of Adherents: 300 million worldwide, 5-6 million in the United States.

Theistic View: Varies.

Life Purpose: Escape suffering & gain enlightenment and release from cycle of reincarnation.

Afterlife: Reincarnation until the self is enlightened and extinguished in Nirvana.

Basic Practices: Meditation, mantras

Scriptures: None.

Confucianism

Founder: Confucius, 6th century B.C., China.

Number of Adherents: 5-6 million worldwide, 26,000 in the United States.

Theistic View: Not addressed.

Life Purpose: Fulfill role in society with honor, loyalty & politeness.

Afterlife: Not addressed.

Basic Practices: Honesty, loyalty, politeness.

Scriptures: *Analects*

Taoism

Founder: Lao-Tzu, 6th century B.C., China

Number of Adherents: 20 million worldwide, 30,000 in the United States.

Theistic View: Pantheistic monism.

Life Purpose: Inner peace & harmony achieved by living in accordance with the Tao.

Afterlife: Absorption into all that is.

Basic Practices: Detachment and non-struggle, practice “not doing.”

Scriptures: *Tao te Ching.*

Shinto

Founder: None; indigenous religion of Japan.

Number of Adherents: 3-4 million worldwide, around 30,000 in the United States.

Theistic View: Polytheistic (animistic), based on the *kami*

Life Purpose: Stay pure through ritual and by calling on the *kami*

Afterlife: Unclear, though some become *kami* after death.

Basic Practices: Worship & offerings to the *kami* at shrines and at home.

Scriptures: *Kojiki*.

Zoroastrianism

Founder: Zoroaster, 6th century B.C., Persia

Number of Adherents: About 250,000 worldwide, 11,000 in the United States.

Theistic View: Monotheistic (Ahura Mazda), though Dualistic

Life Purpose: Choose good in the battle between good and evil.

Afterlife: Heaven or temporary hell.

Basic Practices: Good words, good thoughts, good deeds; does not accept converts.

Scriptures: *Zend Avesta*.

Judaism

Founder: None, the religion of the Hebrew people.

Number of Adherents: 14 million worldwide, 5-7 million in the United States.

Theistic View: Monotheistic (Yahweh).

Life Purpose: Obey God's commandments, live ethically.

Afterlife: Unclear, shadowy existence, but some degree of reward and punishment.

Basic Practices: Synagogue services on the Sabbath, kosher foods, observe holy days.

Scriptures: *Tanakh* (Old Testament of the Bible).

Islam

Founder: Mohammed, 7th century A.D., Arabia

Number of Adherents: 1.3 billion worldwide, 2.6 million in the United States.

Theistic View: Monotheistic (Allah)

Life Purpose: Submit to the will of Allah and his prophet Mohammed in all things.

Afterlife: Paradise or hell.

Basic Practices: "5 Pillars," mosque prayers every Friday, pray 5 times daily.

Scriptures: *Quran*.

Baha'i Faith

Founder: Baha'u'llah, A.D. 1863, Iran.

Number of Adherents: 5-7 million worldwide, about 150,000 in the United States

Theistic View: Monotheistic (God has revealed Himself progressively through all religions).

Life Purpose: Develop spiritually and draw closer to God.

Afterlife: Heaven or hell (which are states of being).

Basic Practices: Prayer, scripture reading, hard work, sobriety, education, social justice.

Scriptures: Writings of Baha'u'llah and other Baha'i leaders.

Wicca

Founder: Gerald Gardner, 20th century A.D., U.K.

Number of Adherents: 1-3 million worldwide, about 1 million in the United States

Theistic View: Duotheistic/Polytheistic

Life Purpose: "An it harm none, do as thou wilt."

Afterlife: Reincarnation.

Basic Practices: Meditation, spellcasting, closeness with nature, celebrating holidays.

Scriptures: None.

Emotional Intelligence

by Abbot Tryphon

When we are in our head, we are more judgmental, yet when we are in our heart, we become non-judgmental. Being critical of others is not an Orthodox trait, for being critical, whether of other people, or even the way we approach our faith, can be a sign we are not centered in the heart. Holiness is about being made whole, and this wholeness depends on being centered in the heart, wherein we find the Kingdom of God.

In the world of psychology, *emotional intelligence* is the ability to be sensitive to the feels, or to the view point, of others. Emotional intelligence helps us avoid hurting another persons feelings, and allows us to be open to how they might feel. It helps us refrain from judging them, and even appreciate their point of view, even when we disagree with them. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

Orthodoxy, because of the emphasis on the heart, opens us to possibilities that are often closed in other Christian traditions, for the image of the Church as hospital of the soul allows us to see ourselves, and others, as needing the healing that comes with a relationship centered in the God Who loves us. It is a relationship with a God Who desires to transform us, and make us holy (whole). In this relationship, we see ourselves as ill, so we don't judge others, for they are just like us, and in need of healing. We don't even exclude those whose views are different then ours, even if they hold to beliefs, be they political or religious, that seem in total opposition to the ideas we hold dear.

If the other person is an atheist or a believer, a Buddhist or a Muslim, a liberal or a conservative, they are not a threat to us, for we are secure, for we see ourselves, and everyone else, as a patient in need of healing. As an Orthodox Christian, we are able to see everyone, even unbelievers, as impacted by Jesus Christ, the Word of God, through Whom the cosmos itself came into being. We know this very Christ desires that all come to the knowledge of the true, and be saved. We judge no one, and make no distinction between those who are like us, and those who are different from us. We love everyone, because Christ loves everyone.

Emotional intelligence enables us to work together for the common good, while avoid self-serving power trips that serve us, but keep others from succeeding. Emotional intelligence enables us to see things through the eyes of others, and enables us to desire the best for them. It even enables us to further the salvific message of the Gospels, because we don't get in the way of the message. Others can experience God's love because the empathy we have for their feelings is imaged in how we interact with them, and how we demonstrate our respect for their life experiences, feelings, viewpoints, and beliefs.



In the face of every stranger,
I see Christ Himself.

~ Elder Amphilochios Makris