

Religion is what exactly?



Introduction

Name Religions by their Symbols



- Name them?
- Put them in order of appearance?
- Regions of origin on the planet?

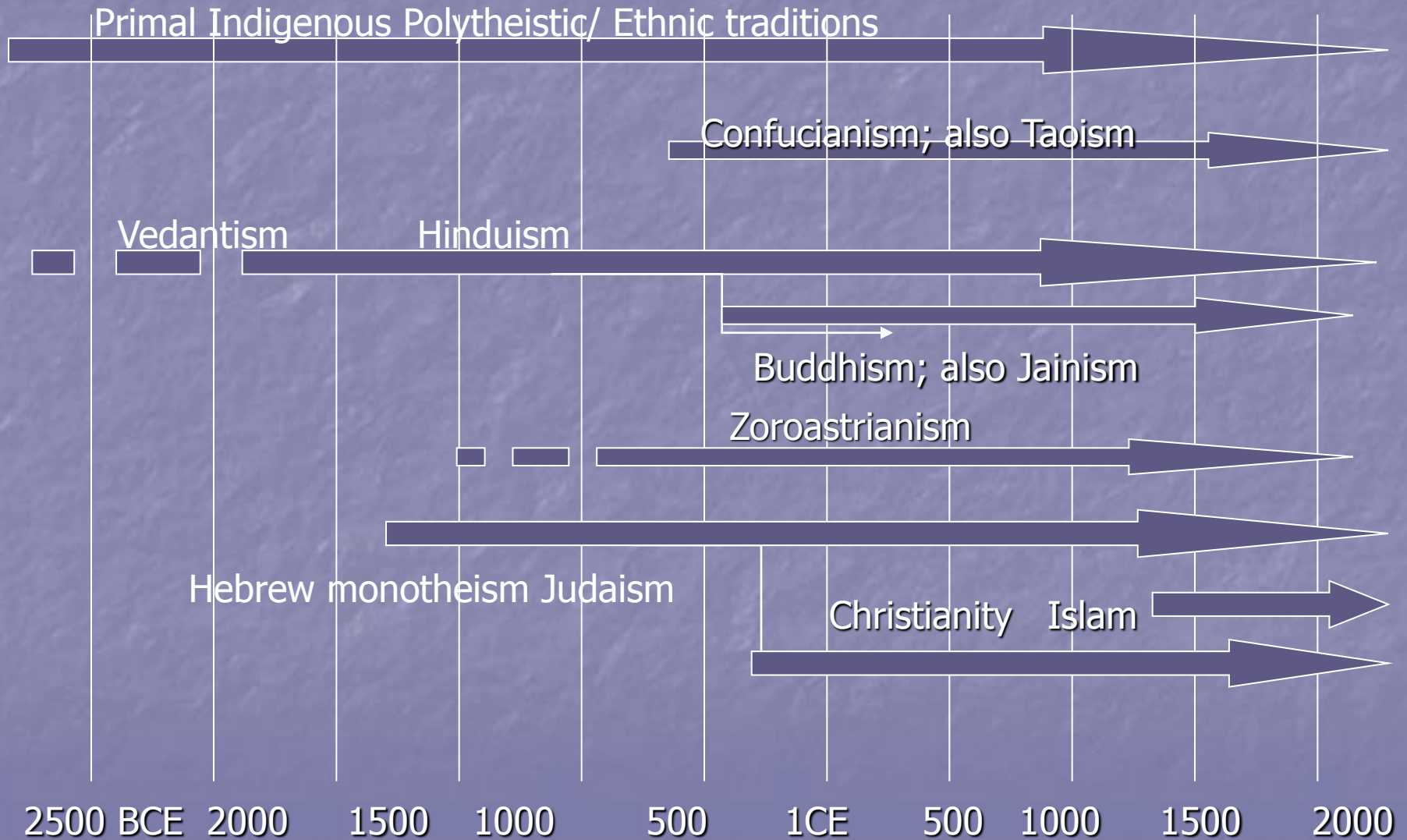
Defining 'Religion'

- Think Pair Share a Definition (< 10 words)
- Now come up with a definition using these words:
 - Beliefs, doctrines
 - Rituals, worship
 - Ethics, values.

Religion is ... ?

- “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature... the opium of the masses” – Karl Marx
- “Religion is the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity...”- Sigmund Freud
- “Men create gods in their own image” - Xenophanes
- “Society is the soul of religion”- Emile Durkheim
- “You have created us for Yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in You”- St Augustine

From the Dawn of Time



Three Traditions

- Primal: Polytheistic: Sacrificial: Mediums
...for perhaps 100 000 years
- Then two fascinating ideas on different sides of the world about 4000 years ago
 - In the West (Semitic): There is One God. God's Prophets reveal God's will. Salvation comes from ethical living.
 - In the East (Indic): Enlightenment can be attained by meditation on the illusionary nature of the world and self and ethical living.

Hinduism



Place of Origin: India ('Hindu' is Persian word for Indian) emerging from ancient Vedic cults from 1200 BCE. 80 % of Indians are Hindu and 90% of Hindus are Indian.

Form: Indic or Eastern polytheism. Hinduism is a complex of various Indian religious traditions; a diversity- not a unity.

Foundations: ॐ 3000-1500 BCE Harappan civilisation
ॐ 2000- 1200 BCE Aryan immigration
ॐ 1200- 600 BCE four Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva)

Other Heroes: ॐ Sankara (c. 788-850 CE) founded a Hindu monastic order

ॐ Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948 CE), a charismatic leader advocating Hindu holiness and passive resistance

Sub-Traditions: Hindus are mostly devotees (bhaktis) performing private rituals for one or more deities. Large collective rituals and yogic exercises are occasional. Every town has unique practices.



Beliefs: No core creed- orthopraxis or right religious practice is centrally important.

ॐ Dharma- the natural universal laws of the cosmos, ethics, caste and customs

ॐ Karma- all human actions have cause and effect in samsara- the cycle of birth, death, rebirth until moksha- release and union with Brahman.

ॐ Atman- the essence of life, not self, but inner true self.

ॐ 300 million gods- the main ones are:

~ Brahman- Cosmic Absolute Reality

~ Shiva, Vishnu- his incarnations Krishna and Rama; goddesses- Kali, Parvati.

Practices:

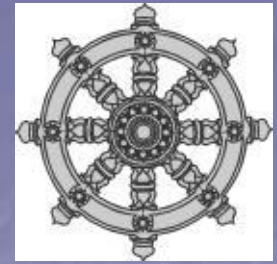
Vedic Sacrifice: fire sacrifice of offerings

Renunciation: in the last stage of life.

Puja worship: in a temple or the home.

Samskara: 10-16 rites of passage.

Buddhism



Place of Origin: India, a reform movement of Hinduism Buddhism has spread throughout SE Asia, China, Japan and is gathering popularity in the West.

Form: Indic or Eastern philosophy.

Founder: Siddharta Gautama, the 'Buddha' Sakyamuni (c.563-483 BCE)- his father the King of the small Sakya kingdom in NW India, an educated prince, experiences and awakening (sanskrit word 'bud')

Other Heroes: ❁ Emperor Asoka (c 273-232 BCE)

❁ In Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama is considered to be a God-King.

Sub-Traditions: There are three traditions or 'turns of the wheel of the Dharma'

❁ the Theravada (Hinayana)- focuses upon core teachings of the Buddha- Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka

❁ the Mahayana (Zen- containing the teaching of the Bodhisattva and the six Paramitas)

❁ the Tantra (chiefly Tibetan)



Buddhism

Beliefs:

- ☸ The Buddha rejected all beliefs or 'views' as illusions- acknowledge karma, samsara & anatman, not-self
- ☸ His enlightenment was to four noble truths of escape from suffering, by purging desire and following the middle way (avoiding excess & ascetism)
- ☸ the eightfold path- wisdom, morality and meditation- to nirvana.

Practices:

- The Three Refuges: "I go to the Buddha for refuge...", Dharma & the Sangha"- order of Monks
- Five Precepts: 'I undertake to abstain'
- Meditation: mantras, mudra, yoga.
- Veneration: & pilgrimage to relic stupas.
- Rites of Passage: not significant, coming of age.

Judaism



Place of Origin: Migrating Hebrew nation arrives from Egypt in the Land to be known as Israel

Form: Semitic, from 1200 BCE to 70 CE a temple cult but from the second and final destruction of the temple, rabbinical. An ethical monotheism.

Founder: Moses leads Jews out of Egypt to the land promised to Abraham in 1200s, and is law-giver at Mt Sinai.

Other Heroes:

- ☆ Abraham, father in faith and seer of God's face- the covenant; father of Isaac, who was Jacob's father;
- ☆ Jacob (or Israel) father of the 12 tribes
- ☆ David, King, anointed one (1000 BCE)
- ☆ The Prophets- Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah,
- ☆ Esther, liberator from Persia (500 BCE)
- ☆ Maccabees led revolt (160 BCE)
- ☆ Rabbi Judah- the Mishnah (200s CE)
- ☆ Moses Maimonides, philosopher

- Judaism is an Abrahamic religion -- faiths which recognize Abraham as a Patriarch. Others include Christianity Islam, and the Baha'i Faith. Although Jews comprise only about 0.2% of the human race, Jewish influence on the world has been vast -- far more than their numbers would indicate.

Judaism



Sub-Traditions:

- ✧ Orthodox tradition has its roots in early rabbinical Judaism. Relies on the literal truth of the Torah, the Tenakh, The Talmud and the Mishnah;
- ✧ Conservative is a modern less literalist movement attempting to reconcile with modern western and Christian cultures- eg confirmation rite
- ✧ Liberal (Reform, Progressive) Judaism allows females as Rabbis, vernacular, and recently approved homosexuality.
- ✧ Zionism has advanced the politico-religious cause of a state of Israel (1948)

- Beliefs:**
- ✧ the unity of YHWH (eg the Shema)
 - ✧ the Torah as Gods word via Moses;
 - ✧ Abrahams Covenant with YHWH;
 - ✧ the promise of the Messiah to come.

- Practices:**
- Rites of memorial eg pesakh, seder;
 - Rites of passage eg Brit Milah, Bar
 - Synagogue, Torah school, Mitzvah, marriage, funeral.

Islam: 'Submission to Allah'

Place of Origin: Arabia, early 7th century,

Form: Semitic, 700 CE, a prophetic monotheism drawing on Judeo-Christian roots;

Founder: Muhammad, born in Mecca in 570 CE, claimed revelations from Allah via the angel Gabriel; captured Mecca in 620 during month of Ramadan; died 632.

Other Heroes:

- ☉ Adam- repented; the first prophet
- ☉ Abraham, father of Ishmael (Hagar);
- ☉ Moses and later prophets respected
- ☉ Abu Bakr- followed Muhammad, his friend, as Caliph; next Omar, then Uthman and Ali (the Prophet's son-in-law)
- ☉ Jesus respected as a lesser Prophet as is his mother (regarded as Virgin)



Muslim Pillars of Faith

Sub-Traditions:

- ☉ Sunni Muslims (orthodox majority) do not interpret the Koran other than literally; the Imam merely leads prayer;
- ☉ Shia Muslims (Shiites) insist Koran is interpreted by Imams or Ayatollah. One Imam holds authority and this can lead to a theocratic state (eg Iran).
- ☉ Sufi Muslims, a 11th century mystical cult placing emphasis on secret knowledge, dance and chant.
- ☉ Ismailis claim more Prophets. Sixth pillar of obedience to the Aga Khan (Muhammad's descendants)

Beliefs: ☉ There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet (Shahadah)
☉ the Koran as Allah's word via the Prophet Muhammad;
☉ central Islamic duty, the Five Pillars.

Practices or Pillars : (Five Pillars)

1. Witness: (Shahadah)
2. Prayer- the Salat, 5X daily in Mosque
3. Fasting- eg in Ramadan
4. Alms- giving to the needy (Zakat)
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)



- The messenger of Allah said: Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians...and (all) who believe in God and the last day and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Christianity



Place of Origin: First Century Palestine under Romans

Form: Semitic, a reform movement of Judaism (temple cult). An ethical monotheism.

Founder: Jesus (Ieshua), Nazarean Jew, itinerant teacher and healer, son of carpenter born Bethlehem(?) c. 6 BCE; died Jerusalem. c. 29 CE, crucified.

Other Heroes:

- ✠ Abraham, father in faith(1800 BCE)
- ✠ Moses, teacher, law giver (1200 BCE)
- ✠ David, King, anointed one (1000 BCE)
- ✠ Mary, mother of Jesus, virgin birth(?)
- ✠ Peter, disciple & first among apostles
- ✠ Paul, convert & converter of gentiles
- ✠ The Four Gospel Evangelists
- ✠ The Church Fathers & Augustine (500)
- ✠ Aquinas & Natural Law (1200)
- ✠ Saints and Modern Heroes: Martin Luther King Jr

Way of Jesus



Sub-Traditions: The first and core strain of Christianity is Catholicism, centred around the truth teachings of the Popes and the Church's interpretation of scripture;

✠ The Orthodox traditions split from Rome in the 11th Century holding that the Patriarchs could mediate the truth;

✠ Luther led the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century and Evangelical Christianity developed claiming only the Bible held the truth and that souls could only know the truth through God's grace.

Beliefs:

✠ the mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus is true God & true man- resurrection;

✠ the mystery of the Trinity: God is one nature and God is three persons;

✠ Sacraments: God is transcendent and yet immanent- seen in signs;

✠ the Resurrection of the Body.

Practices: Rites of reflection on scripture and Eucharist- Jesus' memorial meal;

✠ Baptism, Penance, prayer, serving others- especially the poor.

What's the Truth?

What does it mean for a person to be a believer in:

✡ Judaism;

☾ Islam;

ॐ Hinduism;

☸ Buddhism;

✝ Christianity orAboriginal Spirituality.

Can all these religions be true? Are none?

Are some or all partly true?

How can we arrive at truth in our beliefs about and
our factual study of these tradition?

Is doubt helpful?

Why study religions?

Studying other Religions can:

1. challenge prejudice with information;
2. promote other expressions of cultural, multi-cultural tolerance; e.g. of Islam;
3. raise philosophical issues of truth, belief and non-belief;
4. help understanding of world events (eg Middle Eastern conflict, the rise of terrorism).

What do you hold to be true? Who made these statements?

- “We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal.”
- “I am the way the truth and the light”.
- “We all have our own truth. That’s yours; not mine!”
- “What is truth?”
- “The truth is out there”.

Which one is your spin on the truth?

References and Resources

www.religious.tolerance.org