### Table 1

<table>
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<th>Religion</th>
<th>Domain Values</th>
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<th>Attitudes</th>
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<th>Founder and Charters</th>
<th>Ultimate Reality (=God)</th>
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Belief Comparisons of the World’s Major Religions

Coordinator: Meredith J. Sprunger

Table 2: Dominant Values, Explanation for Evil, Salvation, Afterlife

Table 1: Dominant Emphasis, Scripture and Notations, Founder and Charters, Ultimate Reality (=God)

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This document contains a brief historical overview of Buddhism, the life of Siddhartha Gautama, a description of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, a description of the spread of the Buddhist faith, an account of the role of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government in Tibet and when the Dalai Lama attempted to overthrow Chinese rule in 1959 the rebellion was crushed. The Dalai Lama and a group of his followers fled to India. China in 1950 set up a puppet government in Tibet and when the Dalai Lama attempted to overthrow Chinese rule in 1959 the rebellion was crushed. The Dalai Lama and a group of his followers fled to India. Buddha's teaching essentially points out the four noble truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the means by which to attain cessation. These noble truths are part of the Eightfold Path, which includes right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Eightfold Path is a way to end suffering and achieve Nirvana, the ultimate goal of Buddhism. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of karma, the idea that our actions have consequences. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of dharma, the idea that there is an inherent order to the universe and that it is our duty to follow that order. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of compassion, the idea that it is important to help others and promote the well-being of all beings. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of non-violence, the idea that it is important to avoid causing harm to others.

The scripture of Buddhism is the Tripitaka (Three Baskets of Wisdom), made up of the Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline Basket), the Sutta Pitaka (Teaching Basket), and the Abhidhamma Pitaka (Higher Doctrine Basket). Parts of the Tripitaka such as the Dhamma-pada and the Sutta-paya have been translated into many languages. The Tripitaka contains the teachings of Buddha and his disciples and is considered to be the authoritative source of Buddhist teachings.

The First Noble Truth: suffering. Buddha taught that all living beings experience suffering, including pain, sickness, and death. The First Noble Truth states that the ultimate source of all suffering is selfish desire, craving, and attachment.

The Second Noble Truth: the origin of suffering. Buddha taught that the root cause of suffering is desire and attachment. Desire for things, ideas, and experiences that one does not have and attachment to things, ideas, and experiences that one already has.

The Third Noble Truth: the cessation of suffering. Buddha taught that suffering can be ended by the cultivation of a greater awareness of one's own mind and by the development of a greater understanding of the nature of reality.

The Fourth Noble Truth: the path to the cessation of suffering. Buddha taught that the path to the cessation of suffering is the Eightfold Path, which includes right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Buddhism, a description of basic beliefs and an outline of Buddhism in today's world. This document contains a brief historical overview of Buddhism, the life of Siddhartha Gautama, a description of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, a description of the spread of the Buddhist faith, an account of the role of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government in Tibet and when the Dalai Lama attempted to overthrow Chinese rule in 1959 the rebellion was crushed. The Dalai Lama and a group of his followers fled to India. China in 1950 set up a puppet government in Tibet and when the Dalai Lama attempted to overthrow Chinese rule in 1959 the rebellion was crushed. The Dalai Lama and a group of his followers fled to India. Buddha's teaching essentially points out the four noble truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the means by which to attain cessation. These noble truths are part of the Eightfold Path, which includes right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Eightfold Path is a way to end suffering and achieve Nirvana, the ultimate goal of Buddhism. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of karma, the idea that our actions have consequences. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of dharma, the idea that there is an inherent order to the universe and that it is our duty to follow that order. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of compassion, the idea that it is important to help others and promote the well-being of all beings. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of non-violence, the idea that it is important to avoid causing harm to others. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of right livelihood, the idea that it is important to engage in activities that are not harmful to others. Buddha's teaching also promotes the idea of right effort, the idea that it is important to work towards the goal of achieving Nirvana.

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An Introduction to Hinduism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document presents an overview of the history and basic beliefs of Hinduism, information about the Vedas, the Upasuthas, the Bhagavad Gita, Brahmana, Sutras, and Vedantins, including the origins of Jainism and Buddhism.

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L HINDUISM

The Religion of Divine Immanence and An Hereditary Graded Social Structure

Hinduism, dating from around 1500 B.C., is the oldest living religion having a membership (1982) of 477,991,300 confined largely to India. It is the most complex, diverse, and tolerant of the world's religions. One can find within Hinduism almost any form of religion—from simple animism to elaborately philosophical systems—which has ever been practiced by mankind. Hinduism has met the challenge of other religions, primarily, by absorbing them and their practices and beliefs into the mainstream of Hindu religious expression.

The Aryans (noble orcs) invaded the Indo valley from Persia in the second millennium B.C. They were basically wandering nomads who spoke an Indo-European language which became the basis for Sanskrit. This early Aryan society developed into three basic socio-economic classes. The priests or Brahmans became the ruling class. The tribal chieftains and their warriors or Kshatriyas were next in line, with the commoners or merchants or Vaishyas rounding out the Aryan society. A fourth group, the conquered pre-Aryan people or Shudras, were at the bottom of society. Eventually these divisions developed into a religiously supported caste system.

The Vedas are the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. The four basic Vedic books are the Rig-Visa, the Yajur-Visa, the Sama-Visa, and the Atharva-Visa. Each of the Vedic books is divided into four parts. Each contains a section of hymns to the gods (Gadana), a section of mantras (Brahmanas), a section of guidance for hermits (Aranyakas), and a fourth section of philosophical treatises (Upanishads). The Mantras, the hymns, are the oldest materials with the Atharvavada and Upasuthas added later. This Vedic literature evolved during the classical period of Hinduism.

The fourteen principal Upasuthas form the basis of Hindu philosophy. They assume there is one reality, the imperceptual being called Brahman. All things and beings are an expression of Brahman. Everything in the world and experience which is not Brahman is illusion (maya). All phenomenal existence (pleasure, worldly success, wealth) is illusion arising from ignorance of the true nature of reality. Those who continue in this ignorance are bound to life by the law of karma which keeps them endlessly in the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. While the Jain doctrine of Desirre is not fulfilling its ready to the Path of Rennunciation, which recognizes the duty to others and family and community, and dedicates himself to a life of service. This is rewarding but he still yearns for infinite being, infinite awareness, and infinite joy.

To achieve these ultimate objectives of experience we must realize the basic purpose of life is to pass beyond impermanence. That which is beyond the limitations and imperfections of life can be found within. Unleashing our physical existence and personality is an infinite reservoir of reality. This infinite center of life, this hidden authentic self or Atman is no less than Brahman, the Godhead. By detachment from the finite, illogical self and commitment to Atman-Brahman, we achieve infinite being, infinite awareness, and infinite joy.

This philosophy of the Upasuthas is a reaction to the sacrificial, priestly form of worship in Hinduism. It emphasizes meditation as a means of worship and teacher that ignorance is man's basic plight. Historically, the priestly sections of the Vedas have directed the religion of the masses in India while the Upasuthas have attracted a relatively small number of Indian intellectuals. Contemporary Western people who are attracted to Eastern thought tend to identify Hinduism with the philosophy of the Upasuthas.

Classical Hinduism also produced the ethical Code of Manu which teaches that the caste system is divinely ordained. The first three castes (Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishya) are "twice born" people while the Shudras are "once born" manual labors. The upper nobility morality through this caste system is by means of repeated reincarnations. Although the caste system is outlawed in contemporary India, its social influence is still strong.

The Code of Manu also teaches the various stages through which a man is expected to pass in a successful life: student, householder, hermit, and sage. These stages are only for twice born people while the Shudras are limited to life in the home, farm, and shop. Each stage has a social and control of the chief male in the household. The code requires the cultivation of pleasures, patience, control of mind, non-violating, purity of speech, of senses, intelligence, knowledge, truthfulness, and non intractability. The killing of cows is listed as the greatest of sins.

The composition of the great epic poem, the Bhagavad-Gita, sometime between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D. marks the end of the Vedic period. The Bhagavad-Gita is found within the text of a much larger poem and is probably the most highly esteemed scripture of Hinduism. In the poem Arjuna, a Hindu knight, for the first time in the recorded history of Hinduism, raises the question of the propriety of killing people. He is answered by the idealistic Krishna, who turns out to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Krishna is told to obey his duty as a warrior and kill. The Gita also teaches a variety of means of personal salvation. One may achieve release from life (Nirvana) through asceticism, through meditation, through devotion to and worship of the gods, or through obedience to the rules of his craft.

After the close of the classical period subtle changes gradually appear in Hinduism. Out of the millions of major and minor gods, worship tended to center around the Trimurti: Brahma, the creator; Shiva, the destroyer, and Vishnu, the preserver. Among this trinity, Brahma received the greatest attention. Shiva is the most popular of the three gods. His numerous goddess consorts such as Kamadeva equably revered. According to mythology, Vishnu has appeared on earth in many forms to save the world from destruction at a time to bring the world to an end. Among his appearances are Krishna, Garuda, the Buddha, Muruga, the fish that saved Manu from the great flood, and Christ.

The majority of the people of India seek salvation through devotion to the gods while many of the wealthy and educated seek salvation through the study of the Vedas and Vedantins, including the origins of Jainism and Buddhism.

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II. JAINISM

The Religion of Asceticism

Jainism, founded by Mahavira in the sixth century, has around two million adherents in India, most of whom are business people who have wealth and social importance far beyond their numerical significance. Mahavira was part of a great creative period of history which produced Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tzu, Zoroaster, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaia, Thales, Anaximander, Xenophanes, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus.

Jainism (conqueror) began as a reformed movement in Hinduism. Both Jainism and Buddhism denied the validity of the Vedas as inspired scripture and rejected the religious implications of the Indian caste system.

Mahavira was the son of a minor ruler in northeast India. Before his birth his mother is said to have been a woman with fourteen wonderful dreams. She married and was the father of a daughter. Despite his position and wealth, he was not happy. At the age of thirty, after the death of his parents, Mahavira bade farewell to his family and his wife and child, returned his back on wealth and luxury and went off to join the ascetics in the pursuit of salvation.

Not finding salvation among ordinary ascetics, he went off on his own path of extreme asceticism. He believed one should not injure any form of life (ahimsa) and swept the path where he walked and strained all the water he drank. To torment his body Mahavira went naked and sought the coldest spots in winter and the hottest climates in summer. He begged for his food, preferring that which was left over from the meals of others. When beaten or attacked by dogs he did not resist. Legend tells of a time when he was meditating and some people built a fire under him to see if he would resist; he did not. So as not to become attached to people or things he never stayed more than one night at the same place. He became indifferent to all things. During the thirteenth year, squatting in the sun, he achieved release (moksha) and reached Nirvana.

After he felt he had gained complete control over his body, Mahavira changed from being a solitary ascetic to a leader and teacher of monks. He taught that the world is made up of two substances, soul and matter. The cause of all misery is the connection of the vile material body with the pure eternal spirit. Salvation is liberating the soul from matter. The law of karma and reincarnation are closely linked with this drama of the flesh and the spirit.

Salvation of the soul must be accomplished by the individual himself; therefore, there should be no worship or prayer. The gods are of little consequence; they are simply beings living on a different plane from mankind who are busy working out their own salvation. Although Mahavira taught that there is no personal God and forbid worship and prayer, his followers worship him and pray to him. They believe he was sinless, omniscient, pre-existent, and incarnate—the last of a series of twenty-four saviors of men.

The scriptures of Jainism are Agana (precepts) or Siddhantas—treatises. The language of these scriptures is one of the Prakrit vernaculars. Early commentaries were written in Sanskrit. A few documents have been translated into contemporary languages but most Jains are largely ignorant of their own scriptures. The devout Jain is ascetic, humble, inoffensive, and unvindictive.

By 80 A.D. the Jains were divided into two sects. The Svetaambara or “white clad” live mainly in northern India today. They are more liberal in their interpretation of Mahaviral teachings regarding nudity and allow their monks to wear white garments. Women are also allowed in their religion and monasteries accepting the possibility that they may find salvation.

The Digambara or “sky clad” live mainly in southern India. They adhere to the old ideals of non-polluting the body. Mahavira changed from being a solitary ascetic to a leader and teacher of monks. He taught that the world is made up of two substances, soul and matter. The cause of all misery is the connection of the vile material body with the pure eternal spirit. Salvation is liberating the soul from matter. The law of karma and reincarnation are closely linked with this drama of the flesh and the spirit.

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The Digambara or “sky clad” live mainly in southern India. They adhere to the old ideals that require their monks to go about naked; however, civil authorities sometimes have required them to wear loin-cloths. The Digambara sect believe women have no chance of achieving salvation until they are born as men. Consequently women are prohibited from entering monasteries and temples.

Jains practice their religion in two distinct groups: common citizens and monks. Monks lead the ideal life for a Jain and have the best chance for salvation. They take five vows: non injury to life, to speak the truth, to not steal, to renounce sexual pleasure and women in general, and to renounce all attachments. Mahavira declared, “Women are the greatest temptation in the world.” Generally all Jains seek to follow the first three vows as much as possible. The Jain doctrine of ahimsa was a potent influence in the lives of Mohandas Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer.

Today Jainism is sometimes regarded as a minority sect of Hinduism. Jains are forbidden from entering all occupations that take life or profit from taking life. This has forced them into the commercial field. Their reputation for honesty and high moral principles has made them excellent businessmen. It is a paradox that a sect which began with the ideal of asceticism and poverty has become one of the wealthiest classes in India!

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An Introduction to Sikhism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a short historical overview of Sikhism and its founder, Guru Nanak. The relationship between Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam is briefly described.

Related Documents in this archive:
The Social Problems of Religion
Religion in Human Experience

IV. SIKHISM
The Religion of Syncretism

Sikhism is the youngest of the world religions. It was founded by Nanak in the sixteenth century and has approximately 6,000,000 adherents located chiefly in the Punjab region of India. In a sense Sikhism may be regarded as yet another reform movement in Hinduisim. Nanak attempted to integrate the best in Hinduism and Islam into a new inclusive religion. Nanak stands in a tradition of reformers. An older contemporary, Kabir, is especially noted for his attempt to bring Hinduism and Islam together.

Nanak was born of common Hindu parents of the Khatri (Kshatriya) caste in 1469. He was a precocious youth who loved poetry and religion but was a failure at a variety of occupations. He married at nineteen and was the father of two sons. Later he left his wife and sons and went to the city of Sultanpur where he was a more successful in business pursuits.

Around the age of thirty Nanak had a vision of God while meditating in the forest. He was told he had been singled out as a prophet of the true religion. His message was to be, "There is no Muslim and there is no Hindu." Following this visionary experience, he became an evangelist of the gospel of unity between these two religions.

Along with his constant companion, the minstrel Mardana, Nanak traveled widely throughout India preaching the essential unity of Islam and Hinduism. He wore a mixed costume made up of both Hindu and Muslim clothing. They even made a pilgrimage to Mecca. Wherever he went he tried to organize groups who accepted his teachings. Nanak is reported to have performed miracles. His followers were known as Sikhs (disciples). Toward the end of his life Nanak appointed his disciple, Angal, as his successor.

In October, 1538 Nanak was about to die. His Muslim converts wanted to bury him and his Hindu converts wished to cremate him after death. To settle the argument Nanak told each group to place flowers on either side of him and the group whose flowers were still fresh in the morning could have his body. He then drew the sheet over his head and became still. When the sheet was removed the next morning both bouquets of flowers were in bloom but the body of Nanak was gone. Thus, according to this legend, even in death the peaceful and loving Nanak sought to bring harmony between Muslims and Hindus.

Nanak, like Kabir and others, tried to synthesize the best elements of Islam and Hinduism. He taught a devotional monotheism, referring to God as "The True Name." Nanak rejected ahimsa thus allowing Sikhs to kill and eat animals. He accepted the principle of reincarnation and the law of karma but eliminated cerenomiation and ritual. Nanak also accepted the Hindu doctrine of Maya or illusion. God created matter by drawing a veil of illusion over himself producing all of the diverse forms of creation: the finite gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva; the heavens, the hells, the earth, men, animals, and plants. Salvation consists in becoming one with God. But salvation is not going to Paradise after the last judgment but absorption in Nirvana—individuality extinguished in absorption in God, the True Name.

The scripture of Sikhism is the Granth (book) which is an anthology of many poems somewhat like the Hebrew Psalms and wisdom literature. The Granth has many authors and the Sikhs ascribe absolute authority to it. The first two sentences of the Granth is prescribed as the first utterance for every Sikh each day, "There is but one God, whose name is True, Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent, great and bountiful. The True One is, was, and also shall be." The main method of worship is meditation on God. The need for a teacher and the Pure Congregation of disciples are important in Sikhism. The good Sikh is pure in motive and action, serves others, honors those who can teach him, and craves the Guru's word; loves his wife and renounces all other women; avoids quarrelsome topics, is not arrogant, does not trample on others and forsakes evil company.

The first four of the ten gurus of Sikhism followed the teachings of Nanak. The fifth guru, Arjan Des, turned from the pacificism of Nanak to a militant stance. Under the persecution of Islam rulers Sikhism grew more defensive. Gobin Singh, the tenth guru, introduced a ritual, the baptism of the sword, and prepared the Sikhs for self-defense and war. He developed an elite class of Sikhs known as Singhs (lions) who were distinguished from their fellows by wearing long hair, beards, a comb, short trousers, a steel bracelet, and a dagger. They were not allowed to use wine, tobacco, or any other stimulant. The Singhs were incredible warriors and later the British used them as soldiers and policemen throughout India and many other parts of the world.

Today there are three main branches of Sikhism and many minor groups. The first sect is called the Udasis which is basically an order of ascetics and holy men. They frequently shave their heads and beards and are often active as missionaries. The second sect is the Sahajdharis who reject militarism and prefer to be clean shaven. The third sect is the Singhs already described. In temples the central object of worship is a copy of the sacred Granth. Congregational worship involves prayer, hymns, a sermon, and a communal meal. Since there are no Sikh priests, group meetings may be led by any member of the community. All Sikhs give special attention to the Takht (throne) of Sikhism with its golden temple at Amritsar.

If this material is of interest to you, you may be very interested in The Urantia Book.
An Introduction to Taoism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief overview of Taoism and a description of basic Taoist beliefs.

Related Documents in this archive:
The Social Problem of Religion
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What is The Urantia Book?

V. TAOISM
The Religion of the Divine Way

The religions of China are rooted in ancient religious concepts. The Chinese people recognized many gods and spirits. The good spirits were known as Shen and the evil spirits were called Kwei. The common people performed sacrifices and rituals. They believed the universe was composed of the negative force of nature, Yin, and the positive force of nature, Yang. Filial piety and ancestor worship were practiced. They predicted the future by divination through the translation of the oracle bones. Following the eleventh century the Chou rulers for political reasons promoted a belief in Shang Ti, the one supreme God who controlled the destiny of men and rulers.

The origins of Taoism are unclear. Traditionally, Lao-tzu who lived in the sixth century B.C. is regarded as its founder. Its early philosophic foundations and its later beliefs and rituals are two completely different ways of life. Today (1982) Taoism claims 31,286,000 followers.

Legend says that Lao-tzu was immaculately conceived by a shooting star; carried in his mother's womb for eighty-two years; and born a full grown wise old man. It is said that he was the keeper of the royal archives but tired of the artificial court life and retired. Lao-tzu traveled west into the mountains and sought to leave the country at the Hankao Pass. The guard at the gate recognized the wise old man and refused to allow him to leave until he had committed to writing the sum of his wisdom. He retired for three days and returned with a slim manuscript entitled Tao Te Ching (The Way and Its Power). After leaving he was never seen again.

Except for the Analysts of Confucius, the Tao Te Ching is the most influential book in Chinese literature. It has been the object of at least a thousand commentaries and has been translated into English more than forty times. The book was probably developed over the centuries and evolved into its present form around the fourth century B. C.

The chief religious teaching of the Tao Te Ching is concerning one eternal Supreme Being. "Original, primeval, the Ultimate... sustaining source of all things... an All-Father... Makes its knower fearless, invulnerable, immortal." The ethical ideal of the Tao Te Ching is to recompense injury with kindness and achieve a quiet, restful, humble simplicity in living. The teachings of early Taoism center around the following themes:

1. The basic unity behind the universe is a mysterious and unexplainable force called the Tao. Tao produces all things and all things go back to their common origin and blend into one. Absolute truth and absolute good are unknowable.

2. Life is the greatest of all possessions. The chief aim of human existence is to attain fullness of life by attunement with the Tao. When man seeks his own plan rather than the eternal plan of the great Tao, he precipitates ills, suffering, and evil.

3. Live in primitive simplicity. Leave all things take their natural course. Education, wealth, power, and family ties are worthless impediments to living. The sage can know the whole world without going out of his door. The further one travels, the less one knows. The Tao is characterized by its quietude of power, its production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination. "Aim at extreme disinterestedness and maintain the utmost possible calm... There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition... Only quiet non-striving is successful." Kindness, sincerity, and humility should be cultivated.

4. Pomp and glory are to be despised. The tree which stands higher than its neighbors is the first to be felled by the woodsman. The weak and humble overcome the strong and proud. The highest goodness is like water, it seeks the lower levels; therefore it is near to Tao. The least government is the best government. Weapons are instruments of ill omen; he who has Tao will have nothing to do with them.

This early Taoism was more a philosophy than a religion. it was concerned about the quality of life and had little interest in the heavens, gods, rituals, or life after death. During the fourth and third centuries B.C., in addition to Taoism, three major schools of thought struggled for dominance in China. The Confucians believed in an idealized feudal system characterized by social propriety. The Legalists were tough-minded realists who believed human nature is wicked and lazy and must be ruled with a strong hand. The Mohists taught the values of the traditional religions, especially that men should love one another. They were pacifists who recognized the necessity of self defense.

Later Taoism became a religion of the masses and deteriorated into polytheism, demonology, witchcraft, magic, and occultism. It borrowed from Mahayana Buddhism and its teaching of an afterlife with heavens, hells, and judgment and developed a monasticism after the Buddhist pattern. The upper classes and intellectuals of twentieth century China continued reading the classics of philosophical Taoism but regarded the religion as only fit for the ignorant masses. The current Chinese government look upon it, and all forms of religion, as superstition.

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If this material is of interest to you, you may be very interested in The Urantia Book.

What is The Urantia Book?
An Introduction to Confucianism

Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief historical overview of Confucianism and a description of basic Confucian beliefs.

Related Documents in this archive:
The Social Problems of Religion
Religion in Human Experience
The Urantia Book's synopsis of Confucian teachings

VI. CONFUCIANISM
The Religion of Social Propriety

Confucianism has been the chief cultural influence of China for centuries. The teachings of Confucius were never intended to be a religion. It has no revelatory sacred writings, no priesthood, no doctrine of an afterlife, and frowned on asceticism and monasticism. Later Confucius was deified and raised to the rank of Emperor and Co-assessor with the deities in Heaven and Earth. Official animal sacrifices were made at the tomb of Confucius for centuries. In 1982 Confucianism claims 156,070,100 adherents.

The Chinese name of Confucius was Kung. His disciples called him Kung, the master (Kung Fu-tse) which western missionaries Latinized to "Confucius." He was born in 551 B.C. of an aristocratic family who had lost their wealth and position. His father, who died before Confucius was three, is said to have been a famous warrior of gigantic size and strength who was seventy years old when Confucius was conceived. Confucius was the youngest of eleven children. He grew up in poverty but received a good education. In his teens he accepted a minor government position, married and fathered a son but the marriage ended in divorce.

In his twenties, following his mother's death, Confucius set himself up as a teacher. He taught the traditional Six Disciplines: history, poetry, government, propriety (ethics), music, and divination. Confucius became one of the great teachers of history but aspired to public office. He had supreme confidence in his ability to reorder society.

Legend has it that at the age of fifty Confucius ascended through the offices of Minister of Public Works and Minister of Justice to Prime Minister. His government was ideal. Enemies, however, conspired against him and he was forced to retire at the age of fifty-five. In reality, scholarly speculation has assumed that contemporary rulers were much too afraid of Confucius' candor and integrity to appoint him to any position involving power.

During the next twelve years Confucius wandered from place to place with a few of his disciples. He was jeered at and even placed in jail. At the age of sixty-seven a position was found for him as an advisor to the Duke of Ai. During the next years he spent his time teaching and compiling some of the classic Chinese texts. He died in 479 B.C. Confucius was not only a wise man, he was an incorruptible, human-hearted man. Although largely defeated in his purpose of reforming society, he died with courage, saying, "There is not one in the empire that will make me his master!"

Li (social propriety) is the greatest principle of living. When society lives by li it moves smoothly. Confucius saw the embodiment of this society in the idealized form of feudalistic government, illustrated by the Five Relationships: kindness in the father, filial piety in the son; gentility in the eldest brother, humility and respect in the younger; righteousness behavior in the husband, obedience in the wife; humane consideration in elders, deference in juniors; benevolence in rulers, loyalty in ministers and subjects. Li may also refer to the "middle way" in all things.

Just as li is the outward expression of the superior man, jen (goodness, humaneness, love) is the inner ideal. Confucius taught that men should love one another and practice respect and courtesy. If li and jen were operative in a person, the end product would be the Confucian goal: the superior man. Confucius believed in the natural goodness or at least the natural perfectibility of man. He stressed government by virtue (Te) and the arts of peace (Wen). Since filial piety is the root of all virtue this concern for parental respect is seen in the veneration of age and ancestor worship. Confucius was a pragmatic man who thought one should respect the spirits but keep them at a distance.

Confucius regarded himself as a transmitting, not the originator, of social values and wisdom. Although Confucianism does not claim revelatory scriptures, the Five Classics and the Four Books are regarded as the touch-stone of Confucian conduct and wisdom. Mencius and Hsün Tzu were the great expositors of Confucianism in the fourth and third centuries B.C. and did much to popularize and spread his teachings. During the Han Dynasty there developed a cult of Confucius himself. By the sixth century A.D. every prefecture in China had a temple to honor Confucius.

The Confucian cult was checked in 1503 when the images of Confucius were ordered removed from the temples and replaced with wooden tablets inscribed with his teachings. All titles were removed and he was spoken of simply as "Master Kung, the perfect teacher of antiquity." In 1906 there was an attempt to revive the Confucian cult but with the birth of the People's Republic of China all sacrifices to Confucius and other religious observances were officially abandoned.

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What is The Urantia Book?
An Introduction to Shinto
Dr. Meredith Sprunger

This document contains a brief introduction to Shinto and a description of its influence in shaping Buddhism in Japan. Basic beliefs of Shintoism are described as well as a brief outline of present day Shinto.

Related Documents in this archive:
The Social Problems of Religion
Religion in Human Experience
The Urantia Book's synopsis of Shinto

VII. SHINTO

The Religion of Nature Worship, Emperor Worship, and Purity

Shinto (the way of the gods), traditionally dating back to 660 B.C., is a loosely organized religion of the Japanese people embracing a wide variety of beliefs and practices. In its most basic sense Shinto is a religious form of Japanese patriotism. The mythology of Shintoism teaches that Japan and the Japanese people were brought into being by special divine creation and that their emperors were literally descendants of the Sun Goddess. In Japan a person may in good conscience be a Buddhist, a Confucian, and a member of a Shinto sect at the same time. Today (1982) Shintoism reports 57,154,200 members.

The two most important sacred books of Shintoism are the Kojiki (Chronicles of Ancient Events) and the Nihongi (Chronicles of Japan). The Kojiki mythology reports that in the beginning were the kami (gods, mana, occult force). Two of these primeval kami or deities were Izanagi (male-who-invites) and Izanami (female who-invites). After giving birth to the land of Japan they produced many other kami.

Izanami died after giving birth to the kami of fire. Izanagi journeyed to Hades to find her. Finding her decayed body crawling with maggots he fled in horror back to the land of the living. To purify himself he entered a body of water and when he washed his left eye there came into existence the Sun Goddess, the Great Kami Amaterasu; and when he washed his right eye Tsukiyom the Moon Kami emerged. After years of struggle the Japanese people were warring against each other and the Sun Goddess sent her grandson, Ninigi, to become the first emperor of Japan. Shinto is unique among the religions of the world in representing the Supreme Being as feminine in gender.

Although mythological tradition has the first Japanese emperor enthroned in the seventh century B.C., modern scholars think the actual history of Japan did not begin until the third century A. D. After the fourth century A. D. the Japanese came under the influence of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. By the end of the sixth century Mahayana Buddhism had taken a firm foothold on Japan. It was at this time that the term "Shinto" was introduced to distinguish the native Japanese religion from the new foreign religion.

Little by little the boundaries between Buddhism and Shintoism were obliterated. The concerns of day-to-day life became the domain of the Shinto side of religion while the concerns of the afterlife were served by the Buddhists. The Japanese developed distinctive forms of Buddhism such as Zen, Pure Land, and Nichiren.

Shinto almost died out as a viable religion but in the seventeenth century it was revitalized by tough-minded military leaders. A combination of Shinto and Confucianism was used to develop the warrior code of Bushido. The samurai (knights) who followed this code emphasized loyalty, gratitude, courage, justice, truthfulness, politeness, reserve, and honor. In Japan suicide has often been encouraged to avoid dishonor, escape from a bad life situation, or as a means of protest. When dishonored the Bushido warrior was expected to kill himself by hara-kiri (disembowelment).

Shinto teaches the importance of personal cleanliness and the sense of communal guilt. Apart from subservience to the Emperor, Shintoism has no definite set of theological beliefs or code of morality. Morality and theology are naturalistic. Motoori (1730-1801), one of the most important scholars in the history of Shintoism, explains the lack of ethics in Shintoism. "It is because the Japanese were truly moral in their practice that they require no theory of morals."

After Commodore Perry in the mid nineteenth century opened Japan to outside influence sweeping changes have occurred in the country. The Constitution of 1889 established a state supported Shinto but other religions were allowed to exist and propagate. State Shinto supported thousands of shrines and priests. The grand imperial shrine at Ise was dedicated to the mother goddess of Japan, Amaterasu. Every loyal Japanese citizen wishes to visit the Ise Shrine at least once in their life time.

There are many Shinto sects which tend to be oriented in three major categories. First, those whose emphasis is on mountain or nature worship. Second, those who stress shamanism, divination, and faith healing such as the Tenri-kyo (Teachings of Divine Reason) sect. The third type of sectarian Shinto is more in tune with historic Shinto, reviving the myths of the origin of Japan, stressing purification rites, fasting, breath control, and other techniques similar to the Yoga cults of Hinduism. Domestic Shinto is practiced in many homes. The kami-dana (god shelf) is found in residences. Flowers or food may be placed before this altar daily or brief prayers and devotions may take place.

Shinto had become such an inseparable part of Japanese militarism the American occupation forces felt it necessary to direct the abolition of state support of Shinto in December of 1945. New Year's Day 1946 Emperor Hirohito disavowed the belief in his divine nature and complete state support of Shinto.

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If this material is of interest to you, you may be very interested in The Urantia Book.
What is The Urantia Book?
VIII. ZOROASTRIANISM

The Religion of the Free Will Choice Between Good and Evil

Zoroastrianism is closely related to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Concepts of Satan, angelology, demonology, a deliverer, future life, Paradise, and judgements by these religions may or may not have been directly or indirectly derived from Zoroastrianism. Although it started with the intent of being a voluntarily accepted and universally adopted religion, today it is largely a heretical faith reporting (1882) 271,000 followers living mostly in India and Iran.

The origins of Zoroastrian religion are shrouded in mystery. The ancient inhabitants of the Persian region were Aryan nature worshippers who venerated a series of deities known as daevas. Above these minor deities were higher gods among which the most important and popular was Mithra, the god of light, benefactor of cattle and upholder of loyalty and obedience. Part of these Aryans migrated into India which explains why many of the gods and practices of Vedic Hinduism and the ancient Persians are the same.

Zoroaster's birth-date is uncertain. Tradition says he was pre-existent and born of a fifteen year old virgin in 660 B.C. Many marvels accompanied his birth. His name, Zarathustra Spitama, indicates he was born into a warrior clan that was connected with the royal family of ancient Persia. At fifteen he put on the kusti, a sacred string which signified his passage into manhood as a member of his religion. He spent years, partially in solitude, searching for answers to religious questions. At the age of thirty Zoroaster had a vision of the angel Vohu Mana, who appeared nine times the size of a man. The angel told him there was only one true religion and that he was to become the prophet of Ahura Mazda. During the next ten years Zoroaster had other visions in which each of the archangels of Ahura Mazda appeared and revealed further truth to him.

He began preaching this new revelation but with no success. In ten years the only convert he won was a cousin. The turning point came when he met the Aryan King Vishtasp. In a struggle with local priests he was thrown in jail but after two years won Vishtasp to his faith, tradition says, by his wonderful care of Vishtasp's favorite black horse. The king put all of his power behind the propagation of the faith. Zoroaster became a leader in the nation and married three wives and was the father of six children.

The next twenty years was spent vigorously promulgating the faith among Persians and fighting two holy wars in its defense. During a war with the Turanians an enemy soldier found the seventy-seven year old prophet tending the sacred flame in a fire temple and killed him.

Zoroaster taught that Ahura Mazda (Who is also given many other names) was the one true God and the nature gods or daevas (devils) his people worshipped were false gods. Ahura Mazda reveals himself to man through six modes (called archangels by Western scholars). Three were masculine and three were feminine in nature. Together with Ahura Mazda they compose seven sources of reality. The masculine immortals are Acha (knowledge of the law of God), Vohu Mazda, and Khshathra (living service). The three feminine immortals are Amesha (purity), Huvarshat (wholeness or perfection) and Azermerat (immortality).

The inclusive name of Zoroastrian scriptures is Avesta (knowledge) and it is divided into five main parts. Yasna (worship) Gathas (Psalms), Vendidad (law against demons), Yashts (worship hymns), and the Khorda-Avesta (liturges and prayers). In Zoroastrianism there are a limitless number of angels. Two angels are said to record each person's good and evil deeds. Mithra is the strongest of these heavenly beings and the ideal of soldiers. Zoroaster approached the problem of evil more systematically than any other world religion. His position is often referred to as a dualism but this is incorrect. He taught there were two spirits emanating from Ahura Mazda. One is Spenta Mainyu, the Beneficient Spirit; the other is Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit (sometimes known as Ahriman or Satan). These spirits or forces exist and operate much like the yin and yang of Taoism.

Zoroaster saw the forces of good and evil struggling with the forces of evil in the world. Man is born in a pure and unless state and has complete freedom of will to cooperate with good or evil and shape his destiny. It is possible for man to choose the path of rightousness and achieve perfection in this life. He believed in a law of retribution which is called kamma in Hinduism and is stated by St. Paul as, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Man is entirely responsible for his destiny.

In Zoroaster's eschatology the soul stays with the body for three days. On the fourth day the soul journeys to the place of judgment. If the propendence of his life has been good the soul goes to Paradise; if evil it is sentenced to hell. The descriptions of hell by Zoroastrians is suited to the sins of the person and filled with revolting horrors. These souls will abide in heaven or in hell until the final consummation of the world established by Ahura Mazda. Before the end of the world there will be three serions who will come at intervals of one thousand years. At the end of the age Ahura Mazda will wipe out every trace of the evil work of Angra Mainyu. The souls from hell will be brought up and purified and will join the resurrected souls of the righteous and the world will enter a new cycle of perfection where none will grow old or die and Ahura Mazda will reign supreme.

Zoroastianism teaches concern for good thought, good word, and good deed as expressed in truthfulness, chastity, compassion, care of the soul and natural elements, charity, education, and service. Their worship consists mainly in prayers requesting assistance in living righteous lives. They may offer sandalwood to be burned in the sacred fire which burns eternally in their temples. At the age of seven in India and ten in Iran the young Zoroastrian is received into his faith with the investiture of a sacred shirt (sade) and the sacred thread (kusti) and he must wear them the rest of his life except when bathing. There are ceremonies for all of the important points of life. At death there body does not contaminate ground, fire, or water so it is placed in a Dakhma (tower of silence) where it is eaten by vultures or beasts of prey—or may be buried in a stone casket lined with lead.

The Persian empire was conquered by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. Many of the Zoroastrians and their wandering priests were driven from their homes and ended up by spreading their religion throughout the Mediterranean world and were a major rival of early Christianity. There was a revival of Zoroastrianism in the third century A.D. under the Sassanid rulers of Persia. When they were conquered by Muslim warriors in the seventh century followers of Zoroastrianism were eventually forced to convert to Islam or flee the country. Many followed their God to India where they were known as Parsees. When the British arrived they favored the Parsees because they were not encumbered with the caste system or food taboos and because they valued education. The Parsees became leaders in education, business, and finance. Today they make up a small minority in India and an even smaller minority in Iran known as Gahurs (infidels).

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If this material is of interest to you, you may be very interested in The Urantia Book.
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XI. Judaism
The Religion of Ethical Monothism

Judaism is among the oldest of the world’s major living religions. Its members have been frequently persecuted and scattered throughout the world for thousands of years. In 1882, Jewish populations totaled 13,652,000 followers. Judaism teaches that God is active in the social and historical process. The amazement of achievement of Judaism is that it has developed the concept of God from that of a primitive tribal deity to the God of all nations.

The patriarchs of Judaism lived in the Fertile Crescent at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. The Biblical report speaks of the calling of Abraham in which he is promised that he will become the father of a great nation through which all the world will be blessed. The covenant of ethical monotheism and circumcision was announced. The covenant was sustained during the ages by Men of God and by those who lived according to the ethical monotheism.

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, lived for 146 years and bore 12 sons. These sons, the 12 tribes of Israel, settled in the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. The land was divided into 12 parts, and the tribes were given their own land. The land of Canaan was later called the Holy Land, and it is still considered holy to this day.

In the 17th century, the Jewish people began to return to their homeland. This return was called the Return of the Exiles. In 1850, the Jewish people were finally able to return to their homeland.

The Jewish people have faced many challenges throughout their history. They have been persecuted and scattered throughout the world. Despite these challenges, the Jewish people have maintained their faith and culture.

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bodily second coming of Christ. These churches now prefer to be called “evangelicals.” They have become quite militant in their evangelism

virgin birth of Christ; the necessity of the substitutionary blood atonement doctrine; the physical or bodily resurrection of Christ; and the

There was a sharp reaction to this “modernism” by conservative churchmen who became known as fundamentalists. They denounced the

trouble with the possibility that there may be millions of inhabited planets in the universe.

The nineteenth century was characterized by a strong missionary movement; and the twentieth century has given birth to the ecumenical

bodily assumption of Mary (1950). The Vatican Council of 1869 declared the dogma of papal infallibility when the pope speaks ex cathedra.

The Urantia Book

The Urantia Book is a complex and multi-faceted text that contains a wide range of information on religious, spiritual, and scientific topics. The document contains a brief history of Christianity, from its inception, through the middle ages and into the twentieth century.

The Urantia Book was written by an unknown author, believed to be from the Urantia region, but the exact identity of the author is unknown. The text is divided into several sections, each addressing different aspects of religious and spiritual knowledge.

The Urantia Book contains teachings about the nature of God, the purpose of human life, the origin of the universe, and the role of humanity in the cosmic plan. It also includes insights into human consciousness, the nature of the soul, and the afterlife.

The Urantia Book is considered by some to be a sacred text, while others view it as a source of knowledge that can be used to expand one's understanding of the world. The document is available in a variety of formats, including hardcover, audio recordings, and digital copies.

If this material is of interest to you, you may be interested in other resources that provide additional information on the Urantia Book and its teachings. These resources may include books, articles, and online forums where people discuss and explore the content of the Urantia Book.
The Religion of Peaceful, Ethical Self-Culture

Essential beliefs of Islam include: (1) The one God, Allah, who is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient creator and ruler of the universe. He has ninety-nine names which are suggestive of his infinite nature. Allah in referring to himself uses a plural pronoun, “we,” like the Hebrew plural “Elohim.” (2) Angels of various kinds which are both good and evil. The leader of the demons is Iblis (devil) who was cast out of the presence of Allah. His mission is to plunge as many beings as possible into sin. (3) The last Judgment and the kingdom of the saved. The final judgment will be in the end of time and its aim is the measurement of the worth of lives which have been lived. This judgment will be immediately followed by the kingdom of the saved. (4) The Final Day of Resurrection. This day is the time when all of the dead will rise from the grave and be judged. (5) heaven and hell. The two states are everlasting and the fate of every person will be determined for eternity. (6) The Holy Scriptures. The holy scriptures of Islam are the Quran, the Holy Bible, the Torah, and the Talmud.

Islam is the youngest of the major religions of the world. It is the third largest of the world's religions with 589,143,400 followers. Muslim philosophy is a blend of Arabic, Jewish, and Christian thought. It is strongest in the Middle East and in the Muslim communities of the Indian subcontinent. Muslims make up a majority of the population in some countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. In the United States, Muslims are the second-largest religious group after Jews. According to the recent Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, Muslims make up about 1% of the U.S. population.

Al-Madinah, with the help of its strategic location was the capital of the Islamic state. Here a permanent government was established and the new state began to develop. Muslims from all parts of Arabia flocked to Medina to seek its security and freedom. As Muslims multiplied, the city was too small to accommodate them. So they began to build houses in the surrounding desert. As they moved farther away from the city, they named their houses after the places they came from. Thus settlements were created which were to become the first city of Islam.

The Quran was revealed to Muhammad, the founder of Islam, in 610 AD. He was born in Mecca and grew up in the family of the Prophet, who was the leader of the tribe of the Quraisy. Muhammad had a wife, Khadija, who was the daughter of the Prophet. They had four children together, two sons and two daughters. Muhammad's eldest son, Hamza, was killed in battle, and his youngest son, Husein, was beheaded in battle.

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The Urantia Book

A Service of

Dr. Deborah Spongis

This document contains a brief overview of Islam, its development and history, its beliefs, and a brief account of the activities of the Movement for Islamic Enlightenment.
Mechanical inventions and the dissemination of knowledge are modifying civilization; certain economic adjustments and social changes are

Presented by a Melchizedek of Nebadon.

Man can never wisely decide temporal issues or transcend the selfishness of personal interests unless he meditates in the presence of the sovereignty

of God and reckons with the realities of divine meanings and spiritual values.

Human friendship, conserve morality, promote neighborhood welfare, and facilitate the spread of the essential gospel of their respective messages of eternal

things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

It is high time that man had a religious experience so personal and so sublime that it could be realized and expressed only

psychological opinions and theological beliefs. Goals rather than creeds should unify religionists. Since true religion is a matter of personal spiritual

experience, it is inevitable that each individual religionist must have his own and personal interpretation of the realization of that spiritual experience. Let

Religious collectivism must confine its efforts to the furtherance of religious causes.

Objective religion must not seek material rewards. There is always the great danger that religion will become distorted and perverted into the pursuit of false goals, as when in times of war each

church than a church without religion. The religious turmoil of the twentieth century does not, in and of itself, betoken spiritual decadence. Confusion goes

inherent in all human aspiration. Because of the mechanistic and naturalistic conceptions of many sciences.

Contending philosophies of religion is ended:

Magical promises of future mystical rewards.

magical promises of future mystical rewards.

3. Freedom from all social, economic, and political alliances.

2. The mechanistic and naturalistic conceptions of many sciences.

unprecedented scientific achievement and mechanical development there is spiritual stagnation and philosophic chaos.

The institutionalized church may have appeared to serve society in the past by glorifying the established political and economic orders, but it must

Religious collectivism must confine its efforts to the furtherance of religious causes.

by making clear-cut and vigorous restatements of its moral mandates and spiritual precepts, its progressive

The spirit of religion is eternal, but the form of its expression must be restated every time the

pace with all these advances in civilization by making clear-cut and vigorous restatements of its moral mandates and spiritual precepts, its progressive

Ignorant nor so politically helpless.

in lasting brotherhood only by the ministry of religion.

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100:7.14 His courage was equaled only by his patience. When pressed to act prematurely, he would only reply, "My hour has not yet come." He was never in a hurry to achieve his purposes. In his dealings with the scribes and Pharisees he was always gentle, yet unswervingly true to the divine purpose. He was the perfect example of the Christian ideal, the perfected mortal, the consummate man. He was able to maintain this confident attitude because of his unswerving trust in God and his unshakable confidence in man. He was always touchingly gentle and loving in his dealings with the fallen sons of Adam. He was the consummate exemplar of all that is best in the human character and nature.

100:7.15 His courage was magnificent, but he was never foolhardy. His watchword was, "Fear not." His bravery was lofty and his courage often heroic. But his courage was never based on personal safety or security. He would not permit the desire for personal safety or security to diminish his courage. His courage was dedicated to "the Father's business." This divine enthusiasm led his unspiritual brethren to think he was beside himself, but the onlooking universe appraised his motives and understood his purpose.

100:7.16 The Master was a pattern of reverence. The prayer of even his youth began, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name." He was even but never audacious. His courage was magnificent, but he was never foolhardy. His watchword was, "Fear not." His bravery was lofty and his courage often heroic. But his courage was equaled only by his patience. When pressed to act prematurely, he would only reply, "My hour has not yet come." He was never in a hurry to achieve his purposes. In his dealings with the scribes and Pharisees he was always gentle, yet unswervingly true to the divine purpose. He was the perfect example of the Christian ideal, the perfected mortal, the consummate man. He was able to maintain this confident attitude because of his unswerving trust in God and his unshakable confidence in man. He was always touchingly gentle and loving in his dealings with the fallen sons of Adam. He was the consummate exemplar of all that is best in the human character and nature.
Ganid was shocked to discover how near Buddhism came to being a great and beautiful religion without God, without a personal and universal Deity. However, he did find some record of certain earlier beliefs which reflected something of the influence of the teachings of the Melchizedek missionaries who continued their work in India even to the times of Buddha. Jesus and Ganid collected the following statements from the Buddhist literature:

"Out of a pure heart shall gladness spring forth to the Infinite; all my being shall be at peace with this supermortal rejoicing. My soul is filled with content, and my heart overflows with the bliss of peaceful trust. I have no fear; I am free from anxiety. I dwell in security, and my enemies cannot alarm me. I am satisfied with the fruits of my confidence. I have found the approach to the Immortal easy of access. I pray for faith to sustain me on the long journey; I know that faith from beyond will not fail me. I know my brethren will prosper if they become imbued with the faith of the Immortal, even the faith that creates modesty, uprightness, wisdom, courage, knowledge, and perseverance. Let us forsake sorrow and disown fear. By faith let us lay hold upon true righteousness and genuine manliness. Let us learn to meditate on justice and mercy. Faith is man’s true wealth; it is the endowment of virtue and glory.

Unrighteousness is contemptible; sin is despicable. Evil is degrading, whether held in thought or wrought out in deeds. Pain and sorrow follow in the path of evil as the dust follows the wind. Happiness and peace of mind follow pure thinking and virtuous living as the shadow follows the substance of material things. Evil is the fruit of wrongly directed thinking. It is evil to see sin where there is no sin; to see no sin where there is sin. Evil is the path of false doctrines. Those who avoid evil by seeing things as they are gain joy by thus embracing the truth. Make an end of your misery by loathing sin. When you look up to the Noble One, turn away from sin with a whole heart. Make no apology for evil; make no excuse for sin. By your efforts to make amends for past sins you acquire strength to resist future tendencies thereto. Restraint is born of repentance. Leave no fault unconfessed to the Noble One.

Cheerfulness and gladness are the rewards of deeds well done and to the glory of the Immortal. No man can rob you of the liberty of your own mind. When the faith of your religion has emancipated your heart, when the mind, like a mountain, is settled and immovable, then shall the peace of the soul flow tranquilly like a river of waters. Those who are sure of salvation are forever free from lust, envy, hatred, and the delusions of wealth. While faith is the energy of the better life, nevertheless, must you work out your own salvation with perseverance. If you would be certain of your final salvation, then make sure that you sincerely seek to fulfill all righteousness. Cultivate the assurance of the heart which springs from within and thus come to enjoy the ecstasy of eternal salvation.

No religionist may hope to attain the enlightenment of immortal wisdom who persists in being slothful, indolent, feeble, idle, shameless, and selfish. But who so is thoughtful, prudent, reflective, fervent, and earnest -- even while he yet lives on earth -- may attain the supreme enlightenment of the peace and liberty of divine wisdom. Remember, every act shall receive its reward. Evil results in sorrow and sin ends in pain. Joy and happiness are the outcome of a good life. Even the evildoer enjoys a season of grace before the time of the full ripening of his evil deeds, but inevitably there must come the full harvest of evil-doing. Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart: `The penalty of wrongdoing shall not come near me.' What you do shall be done to you, in the judgment of wisdom. Injustice done to your fellows shall come back upon you. The creature cannot escape the destiny of his deeds.

The fool has said in his heart, `Evil shall not overtake me'; but safety is found only when the soul craves reproof and the mind seeks wisdom. The wise man is a noble soul who is friendly in the midst of his enemies, tranquil among the turbulent, and gen erous among the grasping. Love of self is like weeds in a goodly field. Selfishness leads to grief; perpetual care kills. The tamed mind yields happiness. He is the greatest of warriors who overcomes and subdues himself. Restraint in all things is good. He alone is a superior person who esteems virtue and is observant of his duty. Let not anger and hate master you. Speak harshly of no one. Contentment is the greatest wealth. What is given wisely is well saved. Do not to others those things you would not wish done to you. Pay good for evil; overcome evil with the good.

A righteous soul is more to be desired than the sovereignty of all the earth. Immortality is the goal of sincerity; death, the end of thoughtless living. Those who are earnest die not; the thoughtless are dead already. Blessed are they who have insight into the deathless state. Those who torture the living will hardly find happiness after death. The unselfish go to heaven, where they rejoice in the bliss of infinite liberalty and continue to increase in noble generosity. Every mortal who thinks righteously, speaks nobly, and acts unselfishly shall not only enjoy virtue here during this brief life but shall also, after the dissolution of the body, continue to enjoy the delights of heaven."