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# *Life Pilgrimage* **Religions Manual**

Development of new Inter-religious tools



*Life Pilgrimage*







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# CHRISTIANITY



Principal symbol of Christianity

The Christian faith is founded on the life and teaching of Jesus who lived 2000 years ago in what is modern day Israel /Palestine. Christians believe in One God and worship him as Creator. They believe that God is uniquely revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and strive to lead an ethical life based on His message of love for all people. The Holy Spirit is revered as the agent of God's activity in the world. The Bible is treasured as a guide, inspiration and source of learning.

In the early days of Christianity there was no formal structure or set pattern of belief or worship. Christianity developed out of Judaism and its first scriptures were Jewish. Christian creeds, liturgies, and patterns of leadership evolved over time. Collections of Christian writings were gradually brought together to form the New Testament.

From about the sixth century C.E. the Western and Eastern Churches began to separate. The split was formalised in the eleventh century. Some of the differences between the churches were theological and some were cultural. Eastern and Western Churches still have different calendars and do not celebrate Christmas and Easter at the same time.

There are increasing numbers of Orthodox Christians in the UK, as a result of various upheavals in Eastern Europe. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest Orthodox Church in the UK; there are also Russian Orthodox, Antiochian (Arab) Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches. They represent many different cultures and languages, and include Greeks, Russians, Serbs, Poles, Ukrainians and Romanians.

The Reformation of the 16th century led to the emergence of Protestant Churches and divided the Western Church into Roman Catholic and Protestant. England became a Protestant country with the Anglican Church as the state religion.

There are now numerous Christian groups within the UK. Some are organised as formal churches and are part of a wider organisation; others are independent house churches which may be linked to a national or international network. It is impossible to cover them all in this handbook. Most are Trinitarian (that is they believe that the One God is known in three persons – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit), but a considerable number are not. Unitarians, for example, derive their name from their historic insistence on the Divine Unity.

A number of churches in the UK have made a covenant to work together and support each other. These include Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Salvation Army, Society of Friends, United Reformed Church and others depending on location. As "Churches Together" they provide chaplaincies in colleges, hospitals and prisons, they join together in social work and community projects, and they sometimes share buildings, especially on new estates. Their common ground is considerable but their practices may diverge, particularly in regard to sacraments like Baptism and Holy Communion, which are not practised by the Salvation Army or the Quakers.

In this section we are focussing on the Western Churches, but we recognise that there are many people in the UK from the Eastern Churches, some of whom are refugees and asylum seekers. There are Coptic Christians, Armenians, Ethiopian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and others. There are increasing numbers from Africa. Those individuals who come from churches in other parts of the world may have very different cultural experiences of Christianity and may feel very isolated in this country. Their diversity needs to be acknowledged and their traditions explored.

## ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Anointing of the sick is important to Roman Catholics and to those members of the Church of England who are known as Anglo-Catholics. It is imperative to call a priest to anoint the dying, but this sacrament can also be offered to the sick, especially before an operation, as a sign of God's healing power and as a source of comfort. However, for many people, anointing has traditionally been associated with impending death and so the matter needs to be handled sensitively. Children also may wish to be anointed if they are ill. Latter-day Saints anoint the sick with oil alongside prayer.

## BAPTISM

Most Christians are baptised, some when they are babies, others when they are adults. In non-conformist churches, where adult baptism by total immersion is the norm, babies may be dedicated or blessed. If the newborn baby of Roman Catholic parents is at risk, the baby should be baptised promptly, ideally by a priest. In an emergency, anyone, even someone who is not a Christian, can perform the baptism, providing they have the right intention and baptise the baby "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". Anglicans, Methodists and some other Christian parents with newborn babies at risk may also request baptism – or, in some cases, the naming – of the infant.

## BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS

This is of particular importance to Jehovah's Witnesses, for whom blood represents life itself and so must be treated with respect. They carry an Advance Medical Directive/ Release that directs no blood transfusions be given under any circumstances, while relieving medical practitioners/ hospitals of responsibility for any damages that might be caused by their refusal of blood. When entering

the hospital, consent/ release forms should be signed stating this and dealing specifically with the hospital care needed.

Non-blood volume expanders are acceptable, and re-infusion of their own blood is permitted by many Witnesses as long as the blood is not stored and providing that the equipment is arranged in a circuit that is constantly linked to the patient's circulatory system. While a blood transfusion is not acceptable, organ donation and transplantation are not forbidden. Therefore, whether to accept an organ transplant is a personal and medical decision and the same would be true of organ donation. So while refusing blood they willingly accept all non-blood alternative medical and surgical management. Also, Witnesses will receive components with no blood – e.g. corneas. The use of minor blood fractions, such as albumin, immunoglobulins and haemophiliac preparations, are a matter of personal choice. If there is doubt, Jehovah's Witnesses'

Hospital Liaison Committees can advise.

#### CIRCUMCISION

Some of the Eastern Churches (eg. Syrian Orthodox) follow the ancient custom of circumcision of boys.

#### COMMUNION

Communion (Breaking of Bread, Eucharist, Lord's Supper or Mass), like Baptism, goes back to the very early days of the church, to the meals shared by Jesus and his disciples, especially the Last Supper. Communion unites Christians with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and with each other. It can also act as a recommitment to follow in the path set out by Jesus' life and example. Communion services are regularly held in most Christian churches and communion is often taken to sick people in their homes or in hospital, by lay people as well as by ministers. Catholics would expect to attend Mass every Sunday, on some feast days and sometimes daily. Orthodox Christians receive Communion from the time of their baptism in babyhood, but many Orthodox adults receive communion much less frequently than Roman Catholics or Anglicans. Non-conformists also take communion less often. The Salvation Army and the Quakers do not hold their own communion services but their members might choose to participate in those of other Christian churches. Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate the Lord's evening meal annually on the equivalent of Nisan 14 in the Jewish calendar.

#### CONFIRMATION

When a child who has been baptised is old enough to make its own promises to God, it may be brought for a service of Confirmation. This includes Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist Churches.

#### DEATH

Christians should be offered the help and support of the appropriate minister or chaplain at the time of death, or when a relative or friend is dying. It is the belief of Christians that the bodies of the dead should be treated with the same respect as if they were alive. There are usually no formal objections to post-mortems, transplants or body donations; it will depend on the individuals concerned. Families may wish to spend some time in prayer beside the bed of someone who has died. Some Christians choose to wear black as a sign of mourning. The sadness of death is seen against the background of hope in the Resurrection.

Latter-day Saints prefer burial to cremation and generally prefer to prepare their own members for burial. For Greek Catholic Christians, the corpse rests in an open coffin for three days. During the last night there is a watch at home by friends and family before the coffin is closed. Most coffins are taken to a service of Mass in a Church. After the Mass a Bible is put on the foot of the coffin and the congregation is asked to say their last farewells by kissing the Bible and walking clockwise around it. Then it is taken to the cemetery for a burial service. After 40 days there is another family service at the graveside.

#### DIET

There are no general dietary requirements, but some Christians prefer to eat no meat on Fridays. Some will abstain from food and drink before taking Holy Communion. Jehovah's Witnesses do not eat meat unless the blood has been properly drained away. Methodists traditionally do not drink alcohol, others take it in moderation. Drug-taking is frowned upon except for medical necessity. All Seventh-day Adventists, like Jews, are required to abstain from pork, shellfish and fish without fins or scales. Avoidance of tobacco and alcohol is advocated. Latter-day Saints (Mormons) do not drink alcohol, tea or coffee or use tobacco or other harmful drugs. They may also avoid meat, especially if it has blood in it.

#### DRESS

Generally speaking this is up to individuals concerned. Latter-day Saints dress modestly. Women usually wear full-length skirts and non-skimpy tops. Full members wear a special garment next to the skin. It should be treated with respect but may be removed for medical treatment and for activities like swimming. It would be part of burial clothing. Women within the Brethren tradition should not cut their hair and they should keep it covered.

#### EVANGELISM

Christians are called to share the good news of the gospel which Jesus taught, but they interpret this calling in different ways. Some Christians believe that they should strive to convert non-Christians; they may feel a commitment to go from house to house or to preach in public places. Other Christians, including Quakers and Unitarians, celebrate human and religious diversity and believe that people should be free to develop their spirituality in accordance with their conscience.

#### FAMILY LIFE

The family unit is very important and should provide a warm and loving environment for the nurturing of children within the faith. Latter-day Saints expect families to set aside an evening a week to play and study together. Many Churches put on services for families, especially at Christmas. Mothering Sunday is another traditional time for family services. Jehovah's Witnesses do not observe Christmas or birthdays as these are not based on Biblical tradition. Witnesses are more comfortable with the concept of spontaneous giving. They believe it is important to build up children's trust, to maintain moral standards of truth and integrity and to uphold scripture.

#### FASTING

During Lent, the 40 days of preparation for Easter, many people choose to observe some kind of fasting. This may mean moderating the diet or total abstinence for a period of time. Fasting is a recognised part of an Orthodox Christian's life. Wednesday and Friday each week, and a long period before Christmas and Easter have traditionally been times when no meat, fish, dairy products or alcohol were taken. In the Roman Catholic Church, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days when meat is avoided and only one main meal and two lighter snacks are taken. This does not apply to those under 7 or over 60, or to those who are sick. Latter-day Saints hold regular fast-days, usually on the first Sunday of each month during which neither food nor drink are taken. This is not expected of children, of the sick, or of women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.

#### FESTIVALS

Sunday has been celebrated since the beginning of Christianity as the day of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Most Christians meet for worship on this day. Seventh-day Adventists, however, gather together on Saturdays, following the Jewish Sabbath tradition. They also try to honour the day by avoiding unnecessary work. The most important feast days are

Christmas (25 Dec), celebrating the birth of Christ; Easter, remembering His death and resurrection; and Whitsun/Pentecost, which celebrates the coming of God's Spirit, and the birth of the church. Most Orthodox Christians in Britain celebrate Christmas Day on 25 December, but some follow the Julian calendar and celebrate it on 7 January. The Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter (Pascha) on a date which is often considerably later than the western Easter. The western dates of Easter and Whitsun vary, as they are linked to old Pagan festivals of spring, and are based on a lunar calendar. There are many ancient symbols and customs associated with Christian festivals, some of which are also shared by people outside the Church. Jehovah's Witnesses do not observe Christmas, or birthdays, as these are not based on Biblical tradition.

#### LIFESTYLE

This varies from person to person, but there are some common characteristics. All Christians should follow the example of Jesus and his teaching which is highlighted in the Sermon on the Mount. Plymouth Brethren avoid many secular occupations, allowing only those compatible with the teaching of the New Testament. They also avoid leisure activities which bring them into contact with people and things which are deemed harmful. Exclusive Brethren would not watch TV, listen to the radio, read newspapers or fiction, use computers, the internet or mobile phones. Quakers avoid titles, preferring to be referred to or addressed simply by their Christian names.

#### MARRIAGE

Most Christians prefer to be married in church. Traditionally the bride wears white. Quaker weddings are a version of the usual Sunday meeting, adapted to meet the needs of the couple concerned. Since sharing and simplicity are emphasised wedding lunches will be modest affairs. Mixed faith marriages may be accepted within some churches. The status of same-sex partnerships is a matter of debate within some of the churches. Partnership blessings for same-sex relationships are offered increasingly by Unitarians. Exclusive Brethren are encouraged to marry early (within the faith) and have large families. Latter-day Saints do not permit sex before marriage or outside marriage; marriage should be between one man and one woman, and this union is solemnised in the temple for eternity. Most churches discourage if not forbid divorce, while extending understanding and support for individuals caught up in distressing family situations. Remarriage is acceptable within some Christian traditions. Christian marriages and blessings should reflect stable, loving and responsible relationships.

#### MEDICAL TREATMENT

There is generally no problem with most medical treatments. Abortion, simply to avoid the birth of an unwanted child, is unacceptable, except when the mother's life is at risk. There may be other exceptional circumstances, as in a case of rape. Fertility treatments involving the destruction of fertilised embryos are also likely to be rejected. In general, Christians do not view euthanasia as acceptable; nor do they feel that it is desirable to prolong treatment or life unnecessarily. Christian Scientists turn to God in the first instance when they are ill. They may seek the support of a Christian Science Practitioner (professional spiritual healer). They may also accept conventional medical treatment.

#### PASTORAL CARE AND SOCIAL CONCERN

Pastoral care is a very important aspect of Christian ministry. It is particularly important at times of stress. All Christians have the responsibility to show compassion and offer support to others, but at various moments in their lives Christians may want to see a minister or priest for guidance or confession. In hospitals, prisons, colleges or the armed services there are usually Christian chaplains on hand.

Those in hospital may welcome a visit from a chaplain or their own minister, especially before an operation. They may wish to visit the chapel, to attend a service or listen to it over the hospital radio. Prayer cards and Bibles should be available. In hospital some privacy would be needed when patients are receiving Holy Communion, or having a pastoral visit.

It is important to take seriously the pastoral needs of children. It is equally important to consider the pastoral and spiritual needs of the elderly, particularly if they are cut off from their regular support networks or are unable to continue with established and valued patterns of worship.

All the churches are committed to working within the wider community both in the UK and overseas. Christian Aid and CAFOD work with other partners throughout the world for the relief of poverty. The Salvation Army is the largest provider of Welfare Aid in the UK apart from the government.

#### PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer, taught by Jesus to his disciples, is treasured by Christians and used both in private and in public worship.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Icons (sacred pictures of Christ, his Mother and the saints) are extremely important to Orthodox Christians. Religious statues, crucifixes and rosaries are important to Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics while some non-conformists may actually find them offensive.

#### WORSHIP

For some Churches, including Roman Catholic and Anglican, there are set forms of prayer and liturgy. Congregational worship is usually conducted by a priest. In non-conformist Churches like the Baptists, the worship is freer and there is more emphasis on the sermon. Ministers or elders lead the worship. Some Churches accept the leadership of women; others reject it as unscriptural. Charismatic congregations are found in most denominations.

The worship of the Roman Catholic Church centres on the Mass. The worship of the Orthodox Churches centres on the Divine Liturgy. By contrast, a Quaker Meeting is silent worship in the presence of the Spirit of God. There is nothing prearranged and no leader. No religious symbols are used and there are no rituals – no baptism, no eucharist, no anointing.

Quakers sit together in mindful silence until somebody feels prompted to speak or read from the Bible or other literature. Everyone is welcome to join in Quaker meetings for Worship and anyone may feel the call to speak: man, woman, child, experienced Quaker or first time visitor.

## ➤ CATHOLICISM

### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Catholic Church prescribes a traditional Christian code of conduct, often specified in terms of the biblical Ten Commandments. While some of the commandments are understood as God's direct orders otherwise unknowable by humans, most are considered to be knowable by human reason without special divine revelation. Catholic teaching commonly follows medieval tradition, especially the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, in referring to moral principles knowable by reason as the natural law. Accordingly, the Catholic Church - in specifying conduct required of, permitted of, or forbidden to humans - makes greater use of philosophy than do many Christian churches. A body of Canon Law governs the internal life of the church.

### SACRED BOOKS

Catholics believe in the authority of the Bible. They accept 46 books of the Old Testament - the 39 from the Hebrew canon and the 7 deuterocanonical books (which most Protestants call Apocrypha). Like most Christians, Catholics accept 27 books in the New Testament. The Catholic Church regards the entire Bible as the inspired word of God, free from error. It locates that freedom from error, however, not necessarily in the literal text but in the "truth that God, for the sake of our salvation, wished the ... text to contain" (according to the Second Vatican Council).

### SACRED SYMBOLS

Catholicism uses a wide range of symbols to signify the sacred. Most central is the cross, representing the crucifixion of Jesus. Catholics are more likely than many other Christians to employ the crucifix, a cross that bears the figure of the crucified Christ.

### HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Catholic houses of worship are called churches. There is an altar at the front or center, along with a pulpit or lectern for reading and speaking. The most common structure is based on a type of Roman public building called a basilica; the term "basilica" is now used to indicate special honor for a church, regardless of structure. A diocese's principal church is called the cathedral. Smaller churches or churches designated for particular communities (other than parishes) may be called chapels. A shrine is a place of prayer, especially a site for pilgrimages; it may be a church, a building, or another location, indoors or outdoors.

### WHAT IS SACRED?

For Catholics most sacred objects are linked to the rituals called sacraments (explained below under RITUALS). After bread and wine have been consecrated in the Mass, they are held sacred as the body and blood of Christ (although still appearing as bread and wine). Also sacred are baptismal water, the oil (chrism) used in confirmation and ordination, and the oil of the sick, used for anointing. Some objects that are less centrally connected to a sacrament, such as wedding rings, are called sacramentals.

The church also venerates the relics (bodily remains or personal objects, such as clothing) of saints, who will share in the final bodily resurrection of the dead.

### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

The Catholic Church divides the week and the year according to the liturgical calendar. The week centers on Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. Catholics are obligated to attend Mass on Sunday and, to the extent possible, to observe it as a day of rest. The year centers on Easter, the annual feast of Jesus' resurrection; it falls on the Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox. A secondary focus is Christmas, 25 December. The Sacred Triduum celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus; it begins on Holy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter) and continues through Good Friday (commemorating Jesus' death), Holy Saturday, and the Easter Vigil (held on the Saturday evening before Easter Sunday) to Easter Sunday.

Pentecost, which commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles after Jesus' resurrection, is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter. Holy Days of Obligation - feasts on which Catholics are obligated to attend Mass - are Christmas and the feasts of Mary, Mother of God (1 January), Epiphany (6 January, unless moved to Sunday), Saint Joseph (19 March), Ascension (the fifth Thursday after Easter, unless moved to Sunday), the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi; the second Thursday after Pentecost, unless moved to Sunday), Saints Peter and Paul (29 June), the Assumption of Mary (15 August), All Saints (1 November), and the Immaculate Conception of Mary (8 December). Bishop's conferences usually transfer some of these to Sunday and waive the obligation to attend Mass on some others.

### MODE OF DRESS

The following vestments are worn by ministers in the church's liturgy: alb, a full-length white robe; cincture, a cord that serves as a belt for the alb; stole, a scarflike garment worn by a priest or deacon; chasuble, a sleeveless outer garment worn by a priest; and dalmatic, a sleeved outer garment worn by a deacon. The colors of the stole, chasuble, and dalmatic vary with the liturgical season or with the nature of the feast. Liturgical vestments are based on the ordinary clothing of civil officials in the late Roman Empire. On public occasions outside of liturgy, a priest is expected to wear clerical dress, which in many countries means a black suit with a stiff white collar known as a Roman collar. Men and women religious sometimes wear habits, which are based on ordinary medieval clothing but which vary from one religious community to another. There is no distinctive dress for Catholic laity.

## DIETARY PRACTICES

Latin Rite Catholics are required to fast (reduce food consumption) on Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent, a six-week period before Easter) and Good Friday. Canon Law also calls for Catholics to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays (although, since 1966, bishop's conferences have been allowed to mitigate the last requirement, and in some areas, such as the United States, Friday abstinence has been confined to Lent). It is also required that Catholics abstain from all food and drink except water for one hour before receiving Communion (the Eucharist; explained below in RITUALS).

## RITUALS

The official public prayer of the Catholic Church is called the liturgy. The central act of the liturgy, commonly known as the Mass, is the celebration of the Eucharist. The Mass consists of the Liturgy of the Word, which includes readings from the Bible and preaching, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, in which bread and wine are understood to become the body and blood of Christ and are eaten in Communion. The Mass is celebrated every day except Good Friday.

The Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments of the church. The others are baptism, confirmation (a ritual ratification of baptism understood to bring about a special presence of the Holy Spirit in the person confirmed), penance or reconciliation (a ritual forgiveness of sins), marriage, order (holy orders or ordination), and anointing of the sick. There are also liturgies for funerals, church dedications, and other occasions. The Liturgy of the Hours consists of prayers (chiefly psalms) and readings at certain times of day, particularly morning and evening. Priests and religious must pray it, publicly or privately; laity may do so.

Nonliturgical prayers and rituals include the rosary, a prayer commemorating events in the lives of Jesus and Mary and consisting of repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and doxology; Stations of the Cross, which commemorate events from Jesus' trial to his burial; pilgrimages to Rome, the Holy Land, and shrines or other holy places; and processions on certain feasts of importance in particular localities. In a retreat an individual or group withdraws from ordinary activities to engage in an intensive period of prayer, often at a location set apart for such activities. Catholic private prayer takes a wide variety of forms; the most common prayers are the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father"), the Hail Mary (based on the angel's greeting to Mary in Luke 1), and the doxology ("Glory [be] to the Father ...").

## RITES OF PASSAGE

Certain sacraments function as rites of passage for Catholics. Baptism is a ritual of entry into the church. It may be administered to infants or to adults; for adults it is preceded by a process of preparation called the catechumenate. Confirmation functions as a ritual of adolescence for many Catholics baptized as infants, though this is not the essential nature of the sacrament; for adults it is administered immediately after baptism, and in the Eastern churches infants receive confirmation immediately after baptism. Marriage and ordination are official recognitions of commitments typical of adulthood. The anointing of the sick is for those who are seriously ill, especially when in danger of death. Dying Catholics are to receive viaticum (Holy Communion), and there are special prayers for the "Commendation of the Dying" to the mercy of God. In funeral and burial rituals the community publicly entrusts the dead person to God's mercy.

## ➤ ORTHODOXY

Along with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy is one of the three major branches of Christianity. It exists as a fellowship of 18 independent or semi-independent church bodies, each headed by a bishop (sometimes called a patriarch).

The Eastern Orthodox Church, a branch of Christianity also known as Eastern Orthodoxy, Orthodox Christianity, or the Orthodox Church, identifies its roots in the early Church, particularly as it developed within the Greek-speaking eastern branch of the Roman Empire. The Eastern Orthodox Church accepts the first seven Ecumenical Councils (which were held between 325 and 787 C.E.), and regards itself as the True Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Church is organized with an episcopal structure including the Four Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem (the Patriarch of Constantinople is the first of equals) and consecrated bishops (whose lineage is believed to be traced back to Jesus' apostles). Their worship is highly liturgical and extremely iconographic, both of which are central to the Church's life, history, and practice. Their icons, which include depictions of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, biblical scenes, or saints, are believed to create a sense of the presence of God.

Eastern Orthodoxy is strongly doctrinal and places great authority in the Bible, the Creeds (Apostles' and Nicene), and the seven ecumenical councils.

Like all other Christians, Orthodoxy is Trinitarian, believing that God exists in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

## MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Bound by a general awareness that humans possess the capacity for both good and evil, Orthodox Christians accept the moral code of the Ten Commandments. Still, Orthodox place the highest importance on the aspiration to selfless love, as personified by Christ and reflected in the faith and obedience of his own mother, the Apostles, the martyrs, and saintly men and women throughout history. Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the regular participation in the mysteries are considered essential components of a spiritual life.

## SACRED TEXTS

Eastern Orthodoxy, along with other Christians, treasures the ancient collection of Jewish scriptures, which they call the Old Testament, and the Christian scriptures, called the New Testament. For its Old Testament, Eastern Orthodoxy, like the Roman Catholic Church, uses the Septuagint, which contains ten books not found in the Jewish scriptures. Called the Deutero-Canonical Books, Orthodox Christians tend to view those ten as slightly lower in status than the rest of the Old Testament.

For Orthodox Christians, the Bible is one of the most treasured sources of holy tradition. However, it is not sufficient by itself as the source of the Christian's faith.

#### SACRED NARRATIVES

The biblical stories of God's divine plan for creation, including the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, are sacred to Eastern Orthodox Christians. These stories, found in the Christian Bible, are common to all Christians. In addition, Eastern Orthodoxy has a strong tradition of venerating martyrs and saints, who are believed to be capable of performing miracles during their lives and after their deaths.

#### SACRED TIME

Eastern Orthodox Christians worship daily, weekly, and at special times throughout the year, using traditional liturgies.

#### PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

The foundation of an Orthodox temple requires the blessing of a bishop, adherence to specific requirements in construction, and a ritual of formal consecration when the building is complete. Within each parish church a chair is reserved for the bishop, even in his absence, to signify that the church and its worshipers are his responsibility. The Orthodox altar always faces east toward the sunrise, symbolic of Christ as the light of the world. Traditionally, Orthodox temples do not have pews, since standing is the normal posture for Orthodox prayer. In Western countries and some Mediterranean nations, however, pews and occasionally organs may be incorporated into the temple.

The most prominent and distinctive feature of an Orthodox church is the iconostasis ("wall of icons"), a screen that separates the central prayer area ("nave") from the altar area ("sanctuary"), representing a gateway into the latter Holy Place. The iconostasis bears three entrances (usually doors) to the altar: the Royal Doors stand at center, with Deacon's doors on either side. Only bishops, priests, and deacons may pass through the Royal Doors in performing their duties. An icon of Christ always occupies the place of honor to the right of the Royal Doors, while an icon of the Theotokos (Mary, the "God bearer") always occupies the place to the left. The rest of the screen is filled with icons of the angels, apostles, or saints that reflect the regional traditions of that church.

Monasteries are also regarded by the Orthodox as holy places. Dedicated to God for prayer and penitence, they are not open to visitors except as permitted by the ruling abbot or abbess. The Orthodox make pilgrimages to these and other sites where saints lived or were martyred.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

The central sacred symbol of Eastern Orthodoxy is the cross. In church services the processional cross signifies to worshipers the entrance of Christ to the Sanctuary. The priest carries a hand cross as a symbol of his role as a teacher and sanctifier of worshipers. Orthodox Christians also normally wear crosses around their necks as a way of publicly confessing their faith. When making the sign of the cross, the fingers of the right hand are held in a particular way to convey "right teaching and right praise." The thumb and first two fingers are joined to represent the One God in Three Persons, while the last two fingers are joined together and held against the palm of the hand to represent the Divine and human natures of Christ.

#### rites and Ceremonies

Eastern Orthodoxy recognizes the same seven sacraments as the Roman Catholic tradition. They are baptism, chrismation (called confirmation in the western rites), Eucharist, confession, ordination, marriage, and the anointing of the sick. As in other Christian traditions, baptism and the Eucharist are the most significant sacraments.

Children of Orthodox families are normally baptized shortly after birth.

Chrismation (sometimes called confirmation) is normally given immediately after baptism as part of the same service, but is also used to receive lapsed members of the Orthodox Church.

Communion is given only to baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians who have prepared by fasting, prayer and confession. The priest will administer the gifts with a spoon, called a "cochlear", directly into the recipient's mouth from the chalice.

Orthodox Christians who have committed sins but repent of them, and who wish to reconcile themselves to God and renew the purity of their original baptisms, confess their sins to God before a spiritual guide who offers advice and direction to assist the individual in overcoming their sin. Parish priests commonly function as spiritual guides, but such guides can be any person, male or female, who has been given a blessing to hear confessions.

The church understands marriage to be the union of one man and one woman, and certain Orthodox leaders have spoken out strongly in opposition to the civil institution of same-sex marriage.

With the exception of bishops, who remain celibate, the Orthodox Church has always allowed priests and deacons to be married, provided the marriage takes place before ordination. In general it is considered preferable for parish priests to be married as they often act as counsel to married couples and thus can draw on their own experience. Unmarried priests usually are monks and live in monasteries, though there are occasions when, because of a lack of married priests, a monk-priest is temporarily assigned to a parish.

Anointing with oil, often called "unction", is one of the mysteries administered by the Orthodox Church and it is not reserved only for the dying or terminally ill, but for all in need of spiritual or bodily healing.

#### WORSHIP/RITUALS

The ecclesiastical day begins at sunset, as indicated by Moses, whose description of God's creation of the world began with evening. Evening prayer service is called vespers. Private evening prayer, called compline, is often recited before the family altar (located in an east corner of the home), which normally holds icons, a lamp or candle, and a copy of the Holy Scripture. Morning prayer, called Orthros, precedes the Divine Liturgy (Eucharist). Throughout the rest of the day monastics and some laity pray at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour. Specific rituals accompany each of the mysteries. The Great Blessing of Waters occurs on the Feast of Epiphany in honor of the baptism of Christ; another common ritual involves the commemoration of a deceased on the anniversary of his or her death.

#### SYMBOLISM

The most distinctive sign or symbol of Eastern Orthodoxy is the icon. Icon is a Greek word meaning image, and in Christianity, icons are sacred images. They can be images of Christ, Mary, the apostles, the saints, angels, prophets, and other significant personalities from Christian stories and history.

#### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Marriage is a sacrament in Eastern Orthodoxy, and while the hope is that the marriage will represent a lifelong commitment, Orthodoxy accepts divorce. While divorce is seen as a painful tragedy, it is allowed, primarily in the case of adultery, but in other cases as well. Divorce decrees issued by the civil authorities are not recognized, however. Divorce is only recognized when authorized by the church. In those cases, second and even third marriages are allowed. It is forbidden to marry a fourth time.

#### SEX

Sexual intercourse is only acceptable within marriage. Pre-marital sex is not sanctioned by the church, and homosexual relations are also prohibited.

#### BIRTH CONTROL

Traditionally birth control was forbidden, but in the modern Eastern Orthodox churches, the use of contraceptives within the sacrament of marriage is seen as responsible. Married couples make their own decisions on the number of children they will have and when. Abortion is absolutely prohibited.

#### CALENDAR

After World War I various Orthodox Churches, beginning with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, began to abandon the Julian calendar or Old Calendar, and adopt a form of the Gregorian calendar or New Calendar. The Julian calendar is, at the present time, thirteen days behind the Gregorian Calendar.

Today, many Orthodox Churches (with the exception of Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, and Mount Athos) use the New, Gregorian Calendar for fixed feasts and holy days but the Julian calendar for Easter and movable feasts. In this way all the Orthodox celebrate Easter together.

Christmas is celebrated by Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe and throughout the world on the 7th of January in the Gregorian Calendar - 13 days after other Christians.

#### HOLIDAYS/FESTIVALS

The cycle of time in Orthodoxy revolves around Pascha, or Easter, the day of the resurrection of Christ. While Easter is the most important holiday in the Orthodox calendar, every Sunday is also regarded as a "little Pascha." In all there are 12 major festivals or feasts in Orthodoxy, marking special days in honor of Christ, the Theotokos (Mary), the apostles and saints, and significant events in the history of the church. Christmas, Epiphany, and Pentecost also hold special importance, as they celebrate the incarnation and baptism of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles.

#### FASTING

The number of fast days varies from year to year, but in general the Eastern Orthodox Christian can expect to spend a little over half the year fasting at some level of strictness. There are spiritual, symbolic, and even practical reasons for fasting.

In general, fasting means abstaining from meat and meat products, dairy (eggs and cheese) and dairy products, fish, olive oil, and wine. Wine and oil - and, less frequently, fish - are allowed on certain feast days when they happen to fall on a day of fasting; but animal products and dairy are forbidden on fast days, with the exception of "Cheese Fare" week which precedes Great Lent, during which dairy products are allowed. Wine and oil are usually also allowed on Saturdays and Sundays during periods of fast.

There are four major fasting periods during the year:

- The Nativity Fast (Advent or "Winter Lent") which is the 40 days preceding the Nativity of Christ (Christmas), beginning on 15 November and running through 24 December.
- Great Lent which consists of the 6 weeks (40 Days) preceding Palm Sunday, and Great Week which precedes Easter.
- The Apostles' Fast which varies in length from 8 days to 6 weeks. It begins on the Monday following All Saints Sunday and extends to the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on 29 June.
- The Dormition Fast, a two-week-long Fast preceding the Dormition of the Theotokos, lasting from 1 August through 15 August.

In addition to these fasting seasons, Orthodox Christians fast on every Wednesday and Friday throughout the year. Monastics often fast on Mondays.

#### MONASTICISM

The Eastern Orthodox Church places heavy emphasis and awards a high level of prestige to traditions of monasticism and asceticism with roots in Early Christianity in the Near East and Byzantine Anatolia.

Those who wish to do this therefore separate themselves from the world and live as monastics: monks and nuns.

Ascetics of the Eastern Orthodox Church are recognised by their long hair, and in case of male monks, long beards.

There are three main types of monastics. Those who live in monasteries under a common rule are coenobitic. Eremitic monks, or hermits, are those who live solitary lives.

In between are those in semi-eremitic communities, or sketes, where one or two monks share each of a group of nearby dwellings under their own rules and only gather together in the central chapel, or katholikon, for liturgical observances.

Nuns live identical ascetic lives to their male counterparts and are therefore also called monachoi (monastics) and their common living space is called a monastery.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Orthodoxy does not impose particular requirements on everyday dress. Laymen and lay-women are expected to dress modestly. In some places women wear a veil or head covering in church, but this is no longer a universal custom.

The vestments worn by the clergy during public worship are evolved from the dress of Roman imperial officials. Outside of worship, bishops, priests, and deacons wear black cassocks or, in Western countries, black suits with clerical collars. Monks and nuns wear a black habit including a veiled hat (for monks) or a veil (for nuns).

## DIETARY PRACTICES

Orthodoxy influences the daily diet of its believers through its demand for regular fasting, although a completely vegan diet is not permitted lest one be tempted to spiritual pride and lack of gratitude to God for the goodness of creation (which includes the primacy of humans over other created life).

Orthodox Christians observe four major periods of fasting (mentioned above in FASTING), during which they limit themselves to one meal per day and refrain from meat, dairy, wine, and oil. In addition, they fast on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year (except Bright Week, the week following Pascha, the week following Pentecost, and the 12 days from Christmas to Epiphany). Some churches now refrain from fasting during the entire Paschal season (between Easter and Pentecost).

## ➤ PROTESTANTISM

Protestantism is one of the three major branches of Christianity, along with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. It shares with all other Christians core beliefs in the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, the necessity of grace to save humans from the consequences of sin, and the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection for salvation. Composed of hundreds of denominations with an expansive variety of doctrines, rituals, and religious practices, Protestantism formed from the split with Roman Catholicism during the Reformation in the 16th century.

Protestants share an adherence to the centrality of scripture (both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament) as well as a doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Different Protestant denominations have to varying degrees maintained or rejected Roman Catholic forms of worship. Anglican and Lutheran churches have maintained liturgies and rituals similar to those of the Roman Catholic Church, whereas other denominations, such as Baptists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and United Church of Christ, have developed less liturgical forms of worship. Most Protestants practice baptism and communion as key rites of Christian initiation and ongoing devotion. Though originating in Europe, Protestant Christianity has spread across the globe through missionary activity and now has members from nearly every country, race, and ethnicity.

### SACRED BOOKS

Protestants believe in the authority of the Bible. The canon of Scripture in Protestantism consists of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. The Apocrypha, or deuterocanonical books, may be studied but do not possess theological status as part of the canon. Theological writings, pronouncements of church councils, confessions of faith, and creeds are subordinate standards for understanding the Bible, which for Protestants is authoritative as God's Word.

In addition, some Protestant churches have creeds (formal statements of belief), while others are non-creedal.

### SACRED TIME

Some Protestant traditions do not acknowledge sacred time other than Christmas and Easter. For many Protestants, however, sacred time is organized by a liturgical calendar that celebrates all the major events in the life of Jesus and in the early Church throughout the course of each year.

### SACRED SYMBOLS

Protestant churches vary in the amount of symbolism they display in their sanctuaries and during worship. As the central symbol of Christianity, the cross is nearly always displayed in church buildings. Protestants usually display an empty cross, recognizing that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, rather than a crucifix, displaying Christ on the cross, as in the Roman Catholic tradition. Most Protestants allow the cross to be worn in various forms of jewelry.

### SACRED SPACE

Protestants have largely rejected the use of images and statues in worship. They tend to have plainer, more austere worship spaces than Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. There are differences, however, with some Lutherans and many Anglicans tending more toward the Catholic end of the spectrum than other Protestants.

### PLACE OF WORSHIP

The place of worship for any Christian is a church. Those that are of the Protestant faith and go to church have little decor and live a simpler way of life.

### CHURCHES

Protestant churches vary greatly in their architectural styles. This is true not only in terms of the country in which churches are located but also in regard to the particular denomination to which a church belongs. To emphasize the centrality of the Word of God, Protestant sanctuaries feature a pulpit, which is often located in the center front of the sanctuary. An altar, where the bread and wine for the Lord's Supper are placed, is featured prominently in the front of the sanctuary as well. Reformed churches speak of a "communion table" instead of an altar. Churches also have a baptismal font or a baptistry for baptism by immersion. Other particular features of the sanctuary are distinctive to each Protestant tradition. For example, although almost all sanctuaries feature an empty cross, the size, type, and placement vary.

### SACRAMENTS

Most Protestant churches recognize only two sacraments directly commanded by the Lord - baptism and communion - as opposed to the seven sacraments accepted by the Catholic Church.

### BAPTISM

In Protestantism baptism is a rite of entry, of welcome into the life of the church community. It belongs to the so-called rites of passage, such as ceremonies marking the passage from one state, situation or status to another.

So baptism is celebrated by an ordained minister or an authorised lay person. In all traditions water is used to baptise.

Water is the symbol of purity and life, but also of death, as one recalls flooding and drowning disasters.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Festivals of the Christian year, as recognized by the universal Church, are observed by most Protestant denominations. Among others these include Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Easter, and Pentecost. Reformed churches initially rejected holiday and festival celebrations, but today most celebrate the major festivals. The ways in which these holidays and festivals are commemorated vary widely among Protestant churches. Local customs and practices may play a role in the way observances are carried out. Other days honoring saints and commemorating events in the traditions of specific churches are also observed. Individual congregations may recognize special days in their own locales. In a number of Protestant traditions, use of the Common Lectionary, or list of Bible readings for Sundays, provides a way by which celebration of the church's festivals are integrated into the worship practices of each congregation.

#### MODE OF DRESS

For worship some Protestant clergy wear special vestments, which may include a clerical collar, a cassock or an alb, and a cross. In other Protestant traditions, however, the clergy dress in the same way as their parishioners. The variations in dress for clergy apply both to men and to women. Protestants have no prescribed modes of dress for laypersons, which vary according to time, place, and culture. Outside worship some clergy wear clerical garb, which clearly sets them apart from other persons and testifies to the clerical vocation. In other Protestant traditions clergy do not wear special garments outside worship, the emphasis being on their common unity with the laity.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Most Protestants do not subscribe to or participate in special dietary practices. Protestants historically have not emphasized fasting in the same way Roman Catholics have. Although fasting is not a prescribed activity, Protestants may at times fast voluntarily. In Protestantism there are no specific bans against eating meat or, for a number of Protestants, against using alcohol. Some Protestants, particularly in the United States, however, regard alcohol as sinful, which has led many churches to substitute grape juice for wine in the Lord's Supper. Many Protestants see the Lord's Supper in a sacramental sense as an "eating and drinking with Jesus." For them the blessing of Jesus for fellowship around a table with food and drink gives Christians the freedom to enjoy these created, Godgiven elements as gifts that can and must be shared with others.

#### RITUALS

In practice there is great diversity among the worship services of Protestant churches. The varieties exist between Protestant denominations and also within denominations themselves. Most Protestant traditions have clear liturgical practices that prescribe or suggest the elements of ritual for each worship service and the patterns by which worship is to be carried out. Church "bulletins" often list the order of worship and provide instructions for the congregation to follow. Protestant worship services typically consist of prayers, Scripture readings, hymns, an offering, and a sermon, as well as the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Not all Protestant churches celebrate the Lord's Supper in each worship service. Baptism may be administered as appropriate, always to adults in the Protestant tradition and, for the Lutheran and Reformed streams, also for infants. Anabaptists insist that only adult baptism is valid. Some churches have a tradition of holding regular "revivals," while others emphasize glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, and some practice foot washing. Weddings and funerals are typically special services. Weddings are usually held in a church sanctuary, whereas a Protestant funeral may be conducted in a church, a home, or a funeral parlor.

#### rites of passage

Most of Protestantism recognizes two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Anabaptist traditions these are regarded not as sacraments, in which God has promised to be present and which provide the benefits of salvation, but as "ordinances," that is, as memorials or acts of obedience. The Lutheran and Reformed traditions baptize infants, whereas Anabaptist traditions recognize only adult baptisms. Baptism in general is the incorporation of the person into the household of God. For Protestants the Lord's Supper nurtures the faith of believers, who are "nourished" by the bread and the wine. Unlike Roman Catholics, Protestants do not believe that the "substance" of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. Other rites of passage typically include confirmation, a rite whereby those baptized as infants are "confirmed" by making personal affirmations of Christian faith. Ordination in Protestantism marks a person for a ministry or function in the church. Clergy are ordained, and in some Protestant traditions laity are also ordained as church officers. Wedding ceremonies are performed by Protestant clergy and typically take place apart from the weekly worship services. Wedding services witness to the blessing of God upon marriage. Funerals serve as a witness to the Resurrection and, in many Protestant traditions, also as a celebration of the life of the deceased.

#### MARRIAGE, SEX, DIVORCE

Essentially all Protestant denominations hold marriage to be ordained by God for the union between a man and a woman. They see the primary purposes of this union as intimate companionship, rearing children and mutual support for both husband and wife to fulfill their life callings. Protestants generally approve of birth control and consider marital sexual pleasure to be a gift of God. While condoning divorce only under limited circumstances, most Protestant churches allow for divorce and remarriage.

Conservative Protestants take a stricter view of the nature of marriage. They consider marriage a solemn covenant between wife, husband and God. Most view sexual relations as appropriate only within a marriage. Divorce is permissible, if at all, only in very specific circumstances (for example, sexual immorality or abandonment by the non-believer).

#### FUNERAL CUSTOMS

Protestant funerals center on celebrating life, rejoicing that a loved one is now in Heaven. Protestant Christian funerals are often held in a place of worship like a church or in the chapel of a funeral home. A viewing, also called a visitation, may be held the day before as well as immediately preceding the service. An open casket may be present, allowing friends and family closure and finality by saying goodbye and paying respects to their loved one. Sometimes, a viewing is held with a closed casket, an urn or simply pictures of the loved one.

Services can be conducted by a trusted minister, trained celebrant or by a family member. Friends and family sing songs of faith and hope, and speakers chosen by the family deliver a eulogy, scriptures, readings and prayers. Increasingly, open mic times are included to allow attendees to share a memory, story or reading to honor the person. Funerals can conclude at the indoor service or continue at the cemetery or other gathering space.

After the funeral, family and close friends frequently gather to eat and reminisce. Food may be provided by friends to help care for and ease the burden of family members. These gatherings are informal and unstructured. They can be held at a church, the funeral home or at the home of a family member.

## ISLAM



Islam is an Arabic word meaning "submission" or "surrender". The word originally derived from the word "salaam", which means to be at perfect peace. Its full connotation is, therefore, "the perfect peace which comes when one's life is totally submitted to God." Islam, based on the Oneness of God, emphasises divine mercy and forgiveness.

Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion teaching that there is only one God (Allah) and that Muhammad is a messenger of God. It is the world's second-largest religion and the fastest-growing major religion in the world.

Allah (meaning 'the God') is the Originator of all that exists and thus the Creator of the world and of man. Islam is the religion of every prophet of Allah from Adam through to Muhammad among whom are included Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). All brought the same message of the unity of God and called for submission to His will. The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not the founder of Islam, but rather the last prophet and messenger of Allah. He brought the final revelation, the Qur'an, in the 7th century CE. The Quran is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God (Allah).

Muslims repudiate polytheism and idolatry, called Shirk, and reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Mecca is regarded as the holiest city in the religion of Islam and a pilgrimage to it known as the Hajj is obligatory for all able Muslims.

A mosque is a place where Muslims worship and pray to God.

### ABLUTIONS AND HYGIENE

Muslims have to observe certain rules of cleanliness and prefer water for washing in the same room as the WC. They prefer to wash in free-flowing water and need shower facilities. Ablutions are performed before each prayer-time. After menstruation women are required to take a full bath or shower. Personal cleanliness is very important to Muslims and understood to be part of faith. Muslim adults are required to take a bath at least once a week and generally shave their armpits and pubes.

### ABORTION

Abortion is unacceptable, except in extreme circumstances, as when the mother's life is in danger. It should be performed before the sixteenth week of pregnancy.

### BIRTH

It is Muslim custom to make the Adhan (pronounced "azan"), the call to prayer, at the moment a child is born, so that these words "there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah" are the first words the child hears. Any Muslim may perform this task, though it is usually done by the father.

In the seventh day, the aqiqah ceremony is performed, in which an animal is sacrificed and its meat is distributed among the poor. The head of the child is also shaved, and an amount of money equaling the weight of the child's hair is donated to the poor. Apart from fulfilling the basic needs of food, shelter, and education, the parents or the elderly members of family also undertake the task of teaching moral qualities, religious knowledge, and religious practices to the children.

Where possible only female maternity staff should be present during child birth. It is important that maternity staff know about these customs and facilitate them. In cases of miscarriage or stillbirth there may be a funeral ceremony. Some Muslims may wish to bury the placenta.

### CALENDAR

The Islamic, Muslim, or Hijri calendar is a lunar calendar consisting of 12 months in a year of 354 or 355 days. It is used (often alongside the Gregorian calendar) to date events in many Muslim countries. It is also used by Muslims to determine the proper days of Islamic holidays and rituals, such as the annual period of fasting and the proper time for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

### CIRCUMCISION

In Islam, circumcision of boys is required, and it is usually performed at an early age, preferably on the 7th day. Some clarification on whether the hospital will perform the operation is required, as the parents may ask for it to be done before the child leaves hospital. Information should be on hand about what facilities are available.

### DEATH

The patient's face should, if possible, be turned towards Makkah, Saudi Arabia (South East) and a relative or another Muslim should be summoned to whisper in Arabic in the ear of the Muslim the article of the faith "there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah". These should be the last words heard by the dying person. If possible Muslims may also recite the

Quran audibly near the patient.

The body should be handled with care and it should not be uncovered, except for washing. The body should be washed by people of the same sex and then enshrouded in a threefold white garment called kafan. Placing the body on a bier, it is first taken to a mosque where funeral prayer is offered for the dead person, and then to the graveyard for burial. For Muslims it is required that the body be buried as soon as possible. A post-mortem should be avoided if legally possible and the body should be released quickly to the relatives. It is customary amongst some cultures for the bereaved to express their emotion freely when a relative has died; therefore privacy should be provided. Cremation is prohibited. Islam states that the body belongs to God and all of it should be buried. Therefore no part of it should be cut out or harmed although Muslims differ about donation. Therefore autopsy is prohibited except on sound medical or judicial grounds. Euthanasia is forbidden. Since Muslim funerals are plain, donations to charities are preferred to flowers. Widows from some cultural backgrounds may stay indoors for 130 days after the funeral.

#### DIET

Pork and anything containing pork, cooked near pork, or processed using pork extracts is forbidden. This includes lard, gelatine and some cheeses. Animals must be killed in the right way, by a Muslim, and with prayer. Some Muslims consider shellfish, apart from prawns, and fish without scales as prohibited. Muslims do not eat carnivorous animals or anything that feeds on dirt or blood. Acceptable food is called "halal" and forbidden food is "haram". Jewish kosher food would be acceptable to Muslims. Any food and drink containing alcohol is forbidden. Alcohol is, however, permissible as a constituent of medication, if there is no other alternative. All halal food should be prepared, cooked and served separately to other food.

#### FASTING

During the month of Ramadan a Muslim does not eat or drink (even water) between sunrise and sunset (between the first prayer and the fourth prayer of the day). Fasting is excused for women during menstruation, pregnancy, after recent childbirth, or when breast-feeding; it is excused for all who are very old or young, sick or on a journey. It should be noted that fasting may be interpreted as not accepting anything into the body in any way, including medication by injection.

#### FESTIVALS

The major festivals are Eid-ul-Fitr, which brings Ramadan to an end, and Eid-ul-Adha, which marks the end of the time of the pilgrimage to Makkah (Haj). These are important times for families to be together.

#### FIVE PILLARS

The five pillars of Islam are the tenets and practices essential to the faith. These are: the proclamation that God is One and Muhammad is his prophet (Shahadah), offering prayer 5 times a day (Salat), almsgiving (Zakat), fasting during Ramadan (Saum), and undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj) at least once in a lifetime, if it is possible. Both Shia and Sunni sects agree on the essential details for the performance of these acts.

#### GREETINGS

When two Muslims greet each other they might say "Assalamu Alaikum" (peace be upon you). Modesty discourages physical forms of greeting (kissing, hugging etc.), between members of the opposite sex, unless they are related. For some Muslim communities, shaking hands is acceptable, even between members of the opposite sex. In some Islamic countries, such as Morocco, young men may have close friendships and hold hands in public, but this practice is cultural rather than Islamic.

#### HOLY BOOK

The Qur'an (Koran) is Islam's holy book, which Muslims believe was revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad. Qur'anic revelations are regarded by Muslims as the sacred word of God, intended to correct any errors in previous holy books such as the Old and New Testaments. The Quran is divided into 114 chapters (suras) which combined, contain 6,236 verses (āyāt). There are 114 chapters in the Qur'an. Qur'an is written in the old Arabic dialect. The Quran is more concerned with moral guidance than legislation, and is considered the "sourcebook of Islamic principles and values".

#### HOLY SITES

There are sites, which are mentioned or referred to in the Quran, that are considered holy to Islam.

Mecca and Medina are the two holiest cities in Islam, unanimous among all sects. In the Islamic tradition, the Kaaba in Mecca is considered the holiest site, followed by the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. Additionally, Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem is also quite significant, being the third holiest site in Sunni tradition, and one of the holiest sites in Shi'ite tradition.

#### HAJJ/PILGRIMAGE

For Muslims, the Hajj is the fifth and final pillar of Islam. It occurs in the month of Dhul Hijjah which is the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the journey that every sane adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their lives if they can afford it and are physically able. The pilgrimage occurs from the 8th to 12th (or in some cases 13th) of Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar.

#### IN A MUSLIM HOME

You might see a copy of the Qur'an in pride of place, and you might also see prayer mats ready for use. You should offer to remove shoes when entering a Muslim home.

#### MARRIAGE

Marriage, which serves as the foundation of a Muslim family, is a civil contract which consists of an offer and acceptance between two qualified parties in the presence of two witnesses. The groom is required to pay a bridal gift (mahr) to the bride, as stipulated in the contract. Most families in the Islamic world are monogamous. Polyandry, a practice wherein a woman takes on two or more husbands is prohibited in Islam. However, Muslim men are allowed to practice polygyny, that is, they can have more than one wife at the same time, up to a total of four. A man does not need approval of his first wife for a second marriage as there is no evidence in the Qur'an or hadith to suggest this.

There is no set form of marriage, as Muslims come from many different cultural backgrounds. Normally speaking Muslims marry partners from within their own faith, but both bride and groom should give their consent. Normally a bride's

guardian has to consent too.

Under Islamic law, divorce is allowed, but discouraged.

Pregnancy outside marriage is considered a cardinal sin. Cohabitation and adultery are likewise forbidden.

#### MEDICINE

Islam has made major contributions to the study of medicine and doctors are highly respected.

Muslims from some cultural backgrounds would not expect to have medical information discussed directly with the patient, preferring to refer the matter to male relatives, including uncles and cousins.

#### MODESTY

Men and women are required to dress and behave modestly. Some Muslim women prefer to keep their hair (and neck) covered in public at all times. In Islam free mixing of sexes is not encouraged and this is sometimes interpreted quite strictly. If it is necessary to speak to a Muslim woman, it may be necessary for other family members, including children, to be present. Muslims should not be accommodated in mixed wards except in an emergency. Generally Muslims prefer to be examined by medical staff of the same sex. It is always preferable to have female professionals to care for women.

#### MOSQUE

Visitors to a mosque will be expected to dress modestly, with legs and arms covered. Women should have their heads covered too, and are asked to avoid visiting a mosque when they are menstruating. Shoes are removed before entering a mosque. Women and men sit separately in a mosque. Seating is on the floor, and care ought to be taken not to point the feet towards the 'Qibla' (the wall niche which shows the direction of Makkah – the direction Muslims face when praying).

Music and raising ones voice in the mosque is forbidden.

#### PLACE OF WORSHIP

A Mosque is a place of worship for followers of Islam. Many mosques have elaborate domes, minarets, and prayer halls, in varying styles of architecture.

#### PRAYER

Muslims are required to pray five times a day at set times, according to the positions of the sun. They face towards Makkah and prostrate themselves to pray. Women who are menstruating, or who have post-natal bleeding are not required to do this. Muslims physically unable to stand may make their prayer sitting, or lying down. Shoes are removed and heads usually covered before prayer. Muslims are required to pray in a clean area with clean clothes. Urine and excrement in an area or on clothes will have to be cleaned first before obligatory prayer. Adult males are highly encouraged to take part in special prayers on Fridays which includes a sermon.

## JUDAISM



Star of David



Menorah

Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions and was founded over 3500 years ago in the Middle East. It is a total way of life, with a code of conduct which applies to every aspect of life from the cradle to the grave, from sunset to sunset.

The basic laws of Judaism are enshrined in the Torah (the first five books of Moses) and also in the Talmud, which is a vast collection of commentaries, expositions and interpretations. The Ten Commandments are embedded in the Torah.

Jews believe that God appointed the Jews to be his chosen people in order to set an example of holiness and ethical behaviour to the world.

Judaism was founded by Moses, although Jews trace their history back to Abraham.

Jews believe that there is only one God with whom they have a covenant.

Traditionally, Jews recite prayers three times daily, Shacharit, Mincha, and Ma'ariv with a fourth prayer, Mussaf added on Shabbat and holidays.

Most of the prayers in a traditional Jewish service can be recited in solitary prayer, although communal prayer is preferred. Communal prayer requires a quorum of ten adult Jews, called a minyan. In nearly all Orthodox and a few Conservative circles, only male Jews are counted toward a minyan; most Conservative Jews and members of other Jewish denominations count female Jews as well.

Jewish holidays are special days in the Jewish calendar, which celebrate moments in Jewish history, as well as central themes in the relationship between God and the world, such as creation, revelation, and redemption.

#### HOLY DAYS

Shabbat, High Holy Days: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Purim, Hanukkah, Fast Day, Israeli holidays

The most important Jewish holy days are the Sabbath, the three pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot) and the two High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). For observant Jews, it is forbidden to work on any of these days.

#### ABLUTIONS

Jews are required to wash their hands before eating. In communities where a ritual bath exists, it is used for purification by men and women before the Sabbath, and by women before their wedding and after menstruation.

#### CIRCUMCISION

The circumcision and naming of Jewish boys (Brit Milah) takes place on the eighth day after birth. The ceremony is performed by a Jewish practitioner (mohel), and usually takes place in the home. It may be deferred if the baby is unwell. The name of a baby girl is announced by her father in the synagogue.

#### COMING OF AGE

Jewish boys are Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13, when they take their full part with other men in the life of the synagogue. Girls are Bat-Mitzvah at 12 years.

#### DEATH

Euthanasia is forbidden. A Jewish patient who is dying may wish to hear the Shema (Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God...), or the 23rd Psalm ('The Lord is my Shepherd...'). Traditionally someone who is dying should not be left alone, and relatives are likely to sit with the dying person during the last hours or days. The Chevra Kadisha, Jewish Burial Society, should be notified and it will take care of all the arrangements. Autopsy is not generally acceptable. The funeral should normally take place within 24 hours, though the body cannot be moved on the Sabbath. Cremation is not generally acceptable. Flowers are not usually sent. Simplicity rather than show is stressed at Jewish funerals. Generally mourners do not wear black or buy new clothes for the occasion.

There may be open displays of grief at the funeral. Close relatives are likely to help to shovel the earth onto the coffin and other mourners can follow suit. A mourning period of seven days takes place for family members, during which they will not be expected to work.

Jews do not emphasise a belief in the afterlife, preferring to live well in this life, leaving the rest in God's hands.

#### DIET

Most Jews will require kosher food, specially prepared under supervision. Jews will not eat pork in any form. Among other forbidden foods are rabbit, shellfish, crustacea and fish without fins and scales. Most Jews will accept a vegetarian diet in hospital or in another home. Observant Jews obey the rule that says meat and milk products may not be eaten together at the same meal. During Passover unleavened bread must be eaten, precluding most cakes and wheat-based foods. Other special foods may be required.

#### DRESS

Orthodox Jewish men keep their heads covered all the time, and all Jewish men do so in the synagogue. Orthodox women also keep their heads covered and some will wear a wig. Some will not wear trousers or sleeveless tops. Liberal Jews may not be distinguishable by any dress code. Some observant Jews wear a beard and may also have side-locks. During various periods in the religious calendar, some Jews will not shave at all.

#### FASTING

The main fast of the year occurs in the autumn on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). It is a total fast lasting 25 hours, though medical advice will be respected if fasting is considered harmful to health. Religious Jews also observe other fast days. Young children, pregnant and nursing women, diabetics and the sick are not expected to fast.

#### FESTIVALS

The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, and so festival dates vary from year to year when compared with the secular calendar. Among the most important festivals are Rosh Hashanah, which is the New Year, and Sukkot, the Autumn Feast of Tabernacles. Another is Pesach, or Passover, celebrated in the spring and commemorating the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. In preparation for the Passover, the house is thoroughly spring-cleaned and all traces of leaven are removed. It is important for families to gather together for the major festivals, which like the Sabbath begin at sunset and end an hour after sunset.

#### GREETING

There are no fixed forms of greeting. Orthodox Jews would not expect overly physical displays of affection between those of the opposite sex. A very Orthodox Jew will not touch any woman other than his wife and immediate family.

#### IN A JEWISH HOME

A Jewish home can be identified by a mezuzah, a small ornamental case fixed to the right hand doorpost by the front door. It contains the Shema, the central prayer.

#### MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

According to Orthodox Jews, a Jew is a person whose mother is Jewish. For Progressive "Liberal" Jews, a person is accepted as Jewish if either of their parents is Jewish. Judaism is a family-centred faith and the home is the centre of Jewish life. The weekly Sabbath sustains and strengthens family life.

A wedding is a time for great festivity. A rabbi conducts the marriage ceremony. The couple make their vows under a canopy.

Divorce is acceptable in certain circumstances.

#### MODESTY

Jews usually dress in a modest manner, and prefer to remain suitably clothed, even in a hospital bed. Mixed-sex wards are not acceptable. There is usually no objection to doctors or nurses of either sex.

#### PRAYERS

Traditionally, Jews recite prayers three times daily, Shacharit, Mincha, and Ma'ariv with a fourth prayer, Mussaf added on Shabbat and holidays. At the heart of each service is the Amidah or Shemoneh Esrei. Another key prayer in many services is the declaration of faith, the Shema Yisrael (or Shema).

Most of the prayers in a traditional Jewish service can be recited in solitary prayer, although communal prayer is preferred. Communal prayer requires a quorum of ten adult Jews, called a minyan. In nearly all Orthodox and a few Conservative circles, only male Jews are counted toward a minyan; most Conservative Jews and members of other Jewish denominations count female Jews as well.

#### RITE OF PASSAGE

Brit milah – Welcoming male babies into the covenant through the rite of circumcision on their eighth day of life. The baby boy is also given his Hebrew name in the ceremony. A naming ceremony intended as a parallel ritual for girls, named

zeved habat or brit bat, enjoys limited popularity.

Bar mitzvah and Bat mitzvah – This passage from childhood to adulthood takes place when a female Jew is twelve and a male Jew is thirteen years old among Orthodox and some Conservative congregations. In the Reform movement, both girls and boys have their bat/bar mitzvah at age thirteen. This is often commemorated by having the new adults, male only in the Orthodox tradition, lead the congregation in prayer and publicly read a "portion" of the Torah.

Marriage – Marriage is an extremely important lifecycle event. A wedding takes place under a chuppah, or wedding canopy, which symbolizes a happy house. At the end of the ceremony, the groom breaks a glass with his foot, symbolizing the continuous mourning for the destruction of the Temple, and the scattering of the Jewish people.

Death and Mourning – Judaism has a multi-staged mourning practice. The first stage is called the shiva (literally "seven", observed for one week) during which it is traditional to sit at home and be comforted by friends and family, the second is the shloshim (observed for one month) and for those who have lost one of their parents, there is a third stage, avelut yud bet chodesh, which is observed for eleven months.

#### SABBATH

The Sabbath (seventh day) is the last day of the Jewish week. It begins on Friday at sunset and ends one hour after sunset on Saturday. The beginning of the Sabbath on Friday evening is celebrated by the family with special prayers, rituals and food. The Mother lights the Sabbath candles and recites a blessing. Sabbath observance takes the form of prayer and contemplation, therefore no work is carried out, no money is spent and only travel on foot is permitted. It is important to remember that some Jews interpret the 'day of rest' rule strictly, and some will not even use a phone on the Sabbath.

#### WORSHIP

Visitors to a synagogue will be expected to dress modestly, with arms and legs covered, and women wearing a skirt or dress, rather than trousers. They may also be expected to cover their heads. In some synagogues, men and women sit separately.

#### HOLY PLACES

In the Jewish faith, the Temple Mount is the holiest spot on the planet. It is the location where Adam was created, where the binding of Isaac took place and where both the First and Second Temples stood.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron is the second holiest location in the Jewish faith. It is the resting place of all of Israel's beloved biblical patriarchs and matriarchs except for Rachel, who is buried in a separate location.

Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem is the third holiest site in the Jewish faith.

#### ABORTION

Judaism does not forbid abortion, but it does not permit abortion on demand. Abortion is only permitted for serious reasons. Judaism expects every case to be considered on its own merits and the decision to be taken after consultation with a rabbi competent to give advice on such matters.

Strict Judaism permits abortion only in cases where continuing the pregnancy would put the mother's life in serious danger.

#### ORGAN DONATION

In principle, Judaism supports and encourages organ donation in order to save lives (pikuach nefesh).

As all cases are different, Jewish law requires consultation with a competent Rabbinic authority before consent is granted.

If an organ is needed for a specific, immediate transplant then it could be considered a great honour for a Jew to donate organs to save another person's life.

But if the organs were being donated into an organ bank, or for medical research, then this may be looked on less favorably.

#### CONTRACEPTION

Contraception, including artificial contraception, is permitted in Judaism in appropriate circumstances.

The methods of contraception allowed under Jewish law are those that do not damage the sperm or stop it getting to its intended destination. These are the contraceptive pill and the IUD.

#### Methods

The female birth control pill is favoured by Jewish couples because male birth control methods are frowned on. This is because they 'waste seed' and because the commandment to have children is primarily directed at men.

Condoms are particularly unacceptable because they block the passage of semen, and because they reduce the pleasure husband and wife get from sex and so interfere with one of the natural purposes of intercourse.

Rabbis disagree about the use of the diaphragm - some forbid it because it blocks the passage of semen, while others state that it is not forbidden because the semen enters the woman's body in a normal manner.

#### HOLY BOOKS

The Tanakh. It encompasses the Torah, the Nebi'ilm, and the Ketuvim. However, among these, **the Torah is the most sacred, the most important**. It is the heart of Judaism. The other important books are the Mishnah and the Gemara which together form the Talmud, or the Oral Torah.

## BUDDHISM



Dharmachakra

Buddhism is a Indian Religion or Dharma found by Siddhartha Gautama. Buddhism is also very similar to Hinduism as it was created from it.

Buddhism teaches people how to end their suffering by cutting out greed, hatred and ignorance. Buddhism along with other Indian Religion believes in Karma (i.e) When people do bad things, they will get bad consequences. When people do good things, they will get good consequences.

This cause-and-effect chain is reflected in the endless cycles of life, death and rebirth. Buddhism believes in reincarnation (rebirth). The ultimate goal of a Buddhist is to get enlightenment (Nirvana) and liberate oneself from endless reincarnation and suffering. Some see Buddhism as a religion, others see it is a philosophy, and others think it is a way of finding reality. Buddhism is a tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development. Buddhists strive for a deep insight into the true nature of life and do not worship gods or deities.

The various Buddhist traditions have their origin in what was then northern India and stem from the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama who is said to have been born in 563BCE. Although he was a prince, he left his comfortable home in search of the Truth to bring to an end the misery which he could see all around him. He experienced a profound spiritual realisation: the ability to see things as they really are, the inter-dependence of all things and the inevitable link between the conditions we create and their consequences. Thus he became a Buddha (one who has awakened as though from a dream). He spent the next 45 years travelling through northern India communicating this liberating vision.

Buddhism has been described as a "non-theistic religion" because there is no place for an all-powerful creator God within it. Some Buddhists revere the Buddha as though he was divine, but Gautama himself was a human being who gained enlightenment through his own efforts. All Buddhists believe that there have been many Buddhas in the past, present and future and that all living beings have the potential to become Buddhas. They can do this by aiming to reach enlightenment, by following the Buddhist way of life. Buddhists value compassion, selflessness, personal responsibility, and mindfulness of the present moment. They try to avoid causing harm to any life form.

The 'Three Jewels' of Buddhism are the Buddha, the dharma (his teachings) and the sangha, or community of Buddhists. It is essential for Buddhists to retain close contact with the sangha at all times.

#### ENLIGHTENMENT AND NIRVANA/NIBBANA

Buddhists believe that there is a cycle of birth, life and death and rebirth. This goes on and on. They believe that unless someone gains Enlightenment, when they die they will be reborn. If a person can gain Enlightenment, they can break out of this cycle.

Breaking out of the cycle is called Nirvana (sometimes called Nibbana). It is the end of everything that is not perfect. It is perfect peace, free of suffering.

#### Meditation

Buddhists try to reach Nirvana by following the Buddha's teaching and by meditating. Meditation means training the mind to empty it all of thoughts. When this happens what is important comes clear.

#### KEY FACTS

- Buddhism is 2,500 years old
- There are currently 376 million followers worldwide
- Buddhism arose as a result of Siddhartha Gautama's quest for Enlightenment in around the 6th Century BC
- There is no belief in a personal God. It is not centred on the relationship between humanity and God
- Buddhists believe that nothing is fixed or permanent - change is always possible
- The two main Buddhist sects are Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism, but there are many more
- Buddhists can worship both at home or at a temple
- The path to Enlightenment is through the practice and development of morality, meditation and wisdom.

Four Noble Truths, four principles which contain the essence of the Buddha's teachings:

- The truth of suffering (Dukkha)
- The truth of the origin of suffering (Samudāya)
- The truth of the cessation of suffering (Nirodha)
- The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Magga)

#### WORSHIP

There are as many forms of Buddhist worship.

Buddhists can worship both at home or at a temple. It is not considered essential to go to a temple to worship with others.

At home - Buddhists will often set aside a room or a part of a room as a shrine. There will be a statue of Buddha, candles, and an incense burner.

Temples - Buddhist temples come in many shapes. Perhaps the best known are the pagodas of China and Japan. Another typical Buddhist building is the Stupa, which is a stone structure built over what are thought to be relics of the Buddha, or over copies of the Buddha's teachings.

Buddhist temples are designed to symbolise the five elements:

- Fire
- Air
- Earth, symbolised by the square base
- Water
- Wisdom, symbolised by the pinnacle at the top

All Buddhist temples contain an image or a statue of Buddha.

#### SACRED BOOKS

The sacred book of Buddhism is called the Tipitaka. It is written in an ancient Indian language called Pali which is very close to the language that the Buddha himself spoke. The Tripitaka is a very large book. The English translation of it takes up nearly forty volumes.

#### BIRTH

Buddhist ethics proceed on a “case by case” basis, but there are general principles. For example, contraception can include pills to prevent conception but not morning-after pills. If sexual intercourse has taken place, then full responsibility must be taken for the possible consequences, including parenthood. The first precept of Buddhism (abstain from taking life) makes abortion unacceptable unless the mother’s life is at stake. There are no set rituals for the birth of a child but the occasion could be marked by a family celebration. Parents might take the baby to a temple to be blessed by monks.

#### CLOTHING

Buddhists are likely to dress modestly. Buddhist monks or nuns often wear orange robes and have shaved heads. One of the monastic rules is not to become separated from one’s robes.

#### DEATH

Acceptance of death is a key part of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism teaches that the ideal death is a calm, fully conscious one. A Buddhist will require support from his or her spiritual master. In terminal cases Buddhists may refuse painkillers. They may need support in deciding what level of medication would be appropriate. An atmosphere of calm should be promoted around a dying Buddhist – the presence of distressed relatives may not be conducive to the desired tranquillity.

When a Buddhist dies it is important that a Buddhist minister is informed. Ideally the body should be moved as little as possible before he arrives. Between three and seven days should elapse before the body is disposed of, as some Buddhists believe that consciousness remains in the body for a while after death. This belief in continued consciousness means that Buddhists treat the newly dead as if they were still alive, and would prefer medical staff to do so also, explaining their procedures as they handle the body. Ceremonies for the dead include chanting and meditation.

Both cremation and burial are acceptable as, traditionally, bodies could be disposed of by means of any of the four elements, earth, air, fire or water. As some Buddhists believe that spiritual death may take place some time after organic death, it may not be possible for the organs of a deceased Buddhist to be donated. However, many Buddhists would feel that the compassionate act of donating organs outweighs concerns about disturbing the body.

Some Buddhists believe in literal reincarnation, whereas others believe in a spiritual rebirth that is understood as a causal connection between lives, rather than the reincarnation of an unchanging individual soul. Some would say that the habitual patterns of the mind continue through different births. This is often imaged as a line of candles, each lit from the previous one.

#### MARRIAGE

The Buddhist view of marriage considers marriage a secular affair and as such, it is not considered a sacrament. Buddhists are expected to follow the civil laws regarding marriage laid out by their respective governments. While the ceremony itself is civil, many Buddhists obtain the blessing from monks at the local temple after the marriage is completed.

#### DIVORCE

Since marriage is secular, Buddhism has no restrictions on divorce.

#### DIET

There are no absolute rules for lay Buddhists concerning diet. Many Buddhists are vegetarian or vegan, in accordance with the first Buddhist precept – abstain from taking life. A monk should eat anything that is offered to him, because of the benefit in encouraging the generosity of the giver, but would be gravely at fault for hinting that he would like meat. Monks and nuns, or other Buddhists who are especially concerned with shrines or images should avoid onions and garlic because of the smell.

#### EUTHANASIA AND SUICIDE

Buddhists are not unanimous in their view of euthanasia, and the teachings of the Buddha don't explicitly deal with it.

Most Buddhists (like almost everyone else) are against involuntary euthanasia. Their position on voluntary euthanasia is less clear.

#### FASTING

In the West, it is mostly only monks and nuns who fast. On fast days a Buddhist may eat before noon, but not afterwards. Full moon days and new moon days are often fast days for Buddhists.

#### FESTIVALS

A commonly observed festival is Wesak, or Bodhi Day, the Buddha's birthday.

#### GREETING

In Buddhist countries the normal form of greeting is to place the hands together in a prayerful manner and bow. Buddhists in Western countries normally adopt the usual styles of greeting found there, like shaking hands. When greeting a monk or a nun, it is not appropriate to take their hand or embrace them.

#### IN A BUDDHIST HOME

Most Buddhist homes will have a shrine, probably with a statue of the Buddha. Some Buddhists might prefer visitors to remove their shoes when entering the home. Many Buddhists would prefer that Dharma books are not laid directly on the floor, or stepped over, or have other objects placed on top of them.

#### HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Many Buddhists prefer showers to baths. A Buddhist may wish to sleep on the floor.

Traditionally Buddhists treat doctors with respect. However, since much emphasis is put on the importance of having a clear mind, Buddhists may be reluctant to take medications that are mind-altering, and will need side-effects explained to them thoroughly.

Buddhists may prefer the use of home remedies - for example, rice porridge (one part rice to two parts water) may be considered beneficial for convalescence.

Buddhist monks and nuns would prefer to be treated by members of the same sex.

#### ORGAN DONATION

There are no rules in Buddhism for or against organ donation, but central to Buddhism is a wish to relieve suffering.

There may also be occasions when organ donation may be seen as an act of charity.

In Buddhism the decision for or against organ donation relies very much on an individual's decision. People may decide for

or against it, without one choice being seen as right, and the other wrong.

#### PUJA

The terms 'prayer' and 'worship' are not really appropriate to Buddhism, since there is no God figure. 'Puja', meaning 'the acknowledgement of an ideal' is better, though not all Buddhists will use or be familiar with this term. Some Buddhists use the word 'prayer' to mean a devout personal determination, without the connotation of praying to a deity. A space should be set aside for puja, which may involve chanting. Incense, flowers and candles may be used. Buddhists wash before puja. A Buddhist temple is called a vihara. When entering a Buddhist centre, visitors will be expected to remove their shoes. Some Buddhists consider pointing the sole of the foot at the figure of Buddha disrespectful.

#### CELIBACY

Apart from certain schools in Japan and Tibet, most who choose to practice Buddhism as ordained monks and nuns, also choose to live in celibacy. Sex is seen as a serious monastic transgression. Within Theravada Buddhism there are four principal transgressions which entail expulsion from the monastic Sangha: sex, theft, murder, and falsely boasting of superhuman perfections. Sexual misconduct for monks and nuns includes masturbation. In the case of monasticism, abstaining completely from sex is seen as a necessity in order to reach enlightenment.

#### ABORTION

There is no single Buddhist view on abortion.

Buddhists believe that life should not be destroyed, but they regard causing death as morally wrong only if the death is caused deliberately or by negligence.

Traditional Buddhism rejects abortion because it involves the deliberate destroying of a life. Buddhists regard life as starting at conception.

Modern Buddhists, however, are more divided about the morality of abortion.

It's personal: Buddhists are expected to take full personal responsibility for everything they do and for the consequences that follow. The decision to abort is therefore a highly personal one, and one that requires careful and compassionate exploration of the ethical issues involved, and a willingness to carry the burden of whatever happens as a result of the decision. The ethical consequences of the decision will also depend on the motive and intention behind the decision, and the level of mindfulness with which it was taken.

#### AFTERLIFE AND SALVATION

There is no consistent notion of the afterlife or salvation in Buddhism. It varies according to country, era, and individual perspective.

## HINDUISM



Hinduism is an Indian religion, or a way of life. Hinduism is widely practiced in South Asia mainly in India and Nepal. Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world, and Hindus refer to it as Sanātana Dharma, "the eternal tradition," or the "eternal way," beyond human history.

The Hindu tradition has no founder and is best understood as a group of closely connected religious traditions, rather than a single religion, representing nevertheless a complete way of life. Hinduism can be traced back to at least 5000 BCE in the civilisations of the Indus Valley, from which the name is derived. It is inextricably bound up with culture and social structure. The teachings are enshrined within many holy books, including the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Srimad Bhagvat Geeta.

For many Hindus the numerous gods and goddesses of Hinduism are seen as aspects of the One divine principle, Brahman. The belief that there are many ways to worship Brahman leads to a tolerance of other religions.

At the heart of Hinduism is Dharma, the ancient law which underlies the order of the universe and is reflected in a moral and ethical life. Karma, the law of action and reaction, teaches humans how to behave, and shapes their destinies. Hindus consider that religion is a sanctified and disciplined path that one should follow to reach a higher goal, i.e. to become a better person.

Hindus believe in reincarnation, through myriad lives, until release is obtained. Reincarnation is bound up with the ancient Hindu principle of compassion for all living things. Release into divine bliss can be reached by human beings through the Way of Action, the Way of Knowledge, the Way of Devotion or the Way of Meditation.

Practices may vary considerably among Hindus, according to where they come from, according to caste, and according to personal preference. Although the caste system is not legally sanctioned in India, it still influences many people, and those from the traditionally higher castes may not wish to be touched by, or eat with, lower caste people.

#### DEITIES

The Hindu trinity consists of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. Their feminine counterparts are Saraswati, the wife of Brahma, Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu, and Parvati the wife of Shiva. The followers of the last two form two major sects.

#### BELIFES

Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include (but are not restricted to) Dharma (ethics/duties), Samsāra (the continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth), Karma (action, intent and consequences), Moksha (liberation from samsara or liberation in this life), and the various Yogas (paths or practices).

Central to Hinduism is the belief in a supreme God Brahman, the universal soul, which is found in everything.

Brahman is worshipped in a variety of forms, including Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Shiva and several others. Hinduism does not have any founder.

Hindus believe that life is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, governed by Karma.

Hindus believe that every action has an effect and there is a cause for everything. This is called the law of Karma.

Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of lives and that the next life is dependent on how the previous life was lived.

#### CONCEPT OF GOD

Hinduism is a diverse system of thought with beliefs spanning monotheism, polytheism, panentheism, pantheism, pandeism, monism, and atheism among others; and its concept of God is complex and depends upon each individual and the tradition and philosophy followed. It is sometimes referred to as henotheistic (i.e., involving devotion to a single god while accepting the existence of others), but any such term is an overgeneralization.

#### HOLY BOOKS

The oldest scriptures in Hinduism are the Vedas.

The main Hindu scriptures are:

- the Vedas, a collection of hymns praising the Vedic gods. Veda means 'knowledge'
- the Ramayana, long epic poems about Rama and Sita
- the Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad Gita
- the Puranas, a collection of stories about the different incarnations and the lives of saints.

#### ABORTION

Hindu medical ethics stem from the principle of ahimsa - of non-violence. When considering abortion, the Hindu way is to choose the action that will do least harm to all involved: the mother and father, the foetus and society. Hinduism is therefore generally opposed to abortion except where it is necessary to save the mother's life.

#### ABLUTIONS AND HYGIENE

Some Hindus prefer washing in free flowing water and they would require water for washing to be available in the same room as the WC.

#### rites of passage

Birth, The Ceremony of the Sacred Thread, Marriage, Death

#### BIRTH

The birth of a baby is celebrated, especially the birth of the first boy. Soon after the birth it is customary for a close relative to be invited to put a drop of water and honey on the infant's tongue, celebrating the sweetness of life and the bond with the family. Mothers usually rest for about forty days after the birth and do not prepare food. Sometimes the baby's head is shaved at the 30th day. Sometimes the baby's name is kept a secret at first.

#### BABIES RITES

Hindu rituals (sanskars) begin before a child is born. Soon after a couple are married, a prayer called Garbhada (conception) is recited for fulfillment of one's parental obligations.

During the third month of pregnancy the ceremony of Punsavana (foetus protection) is performed. This is done for the strong physical growth of the foetus.

The Simantonyana is performed during the seventh month. This is the equivalent of a baby shower and means 'satisfying the craving of the pregnant mother'. Prayers are offered for the mother and child with emphasis on healthy mental development of the unborn child.

Once the child enters the world, Jatakarma is performed to welcome the child into the family, by putting some honey in the child's mouth and whispering the name of God in the child's ear. Other rituals include a naming ceremony (Namakarna), the Nishkarmana (the child's first trip out) and the Annaprasana, (the child's first taste of solid food).

The ear-piercing ceremony (Karnavedha) and first haircut (Mundan) ceremonies are also considered highly significant. These sacraments are performed on both the sexes.

Head shaving is connected to the removal of impurities.

When the child reaches school-going age, the Upanayana (sacred thread) ceremony is performed. The three strands of the sacred thread represent the three vows (to respect the knowledge, the parents and the society) taken before the start of formal education.

#### SACRED THREAD

The Ceremony of the Sacred Thread is an ancient rite of passage into adolescence reserved for male members of the three upper castes, the Brahmins, Shatriyas, and Vaishyas. Like the Jewish bar mitzvah, it represents a rebirth or initiation into the religious community.

Traditionally, this rite of passage served to introduce the devotee into religious life. In the presence of a guru, or holy teacher, the young man shaves his head and dons a saffron robe. Taking up a simple walking stick, he renounces all material possessions and then receives the sacred thread. The unadorned Thread is symbolic of the interconnectedness of all things. It consists of seven strands, each of which represents a different virtue or quality. They are as follows:

1. Power of speech
2. Memory
3. Intelligence
4. Forgiveness
5. Steadfastness
6. Prosperity

## 7. Good reputation

The boy promises to embody these qualities, and for the rest of his life he wears the sacred thread as a symbol of his coming-of-age.

The ceremony concludes with a fire sacrifice, the most common form of ritual in Hinduism. In early times, the initiate would follow his teacher into a faraway dwelling to study scriptures and to lead a life of spiritual practice and austerity. Afterwards, he would reenter society, marry, and raise a family. Nowadays, only young men seeking to become priests or ascetics live with a guru.

### MARRIAGE

Most Hindu marriages are arranged by the parents, although the children must also be happy with their chosen partner. Hindus almost always marry within the same caste, although in modern times there are increasing exceptions.

Hindu marriage ceremonies can vary a great deal but the central focus is the sacred fire, around which the couple walks (5-7 times) while the priest reads aloud from the scriptures. A wedding can take place at any time of the year but the time of day is likely to be carefully chosen according to its astrological significance for the couple. Most Hindu marriages are arranged through the families. The pre-marriage celebrations last 3-5 days and involve all the relations. The bride usually goes to live with the bridegroom's family. Red and pink are considered to be auspicious colours to wear at a wedding ceremony.

After the marriage ceremony, which is filled with Hindu ritual and devotions to various deities, the marriage is considered to be permanent.

### DIVORCE

The concept of divorce is unthinkable to many Hindus, particularly Indian Hindus. Hinduism does not acknowledge divorce as a proper or valid course for a couple to take.

### DEATH

After death the body should always be left covered. It is important to consult the family and ask if they wish to perform the last rites. It is traditional that female relatives wash the body of a dead woman; male relatives wash a dead man. Hindus are cremated. Usually the eldest son of the deceased takes a leading part in the ceremonies. Hindus may wish their ashes to be sprinkled in a holy river, such as the Ganges. Many carry Ganges water with them, and believe that it should be the last thing that is put into the mouth when a Hindu dies. White is the colour of mourning.

### DIET

Hindus do not eat beef because cows are held to be sacred and they may find derogatory comments about cows offensive. Many Hindus are strict vegetarians and do not eat any sort of meat. They may also avoid eggs. Hindus would prefer not to use plates and utensils which have been used for non-vegetarian food. As for other vegetarians, food should be prepared and served separately from meat dishes. Some Hindus will only eat with their right hand, and may expect visitors to do the same.

### DRESS

It is not generally acceptable for a girl or woman to have uncovered legs. Saris, or loose top and trousers are normal wear. The emphasis on modesty means that joining activities such as swimming may be problematic.

Gold jewellery worn next to the skin is believed by some Hindus to ward off diseases and these items will be removed reluctantly. Married women often wear a gold brooch given to them by their husbands, as well as gold bangles. Men of the highest caste (Brahmins) may wear a sacred thread over their right shoulder and around the body; it should only be removed if absolutely necessary.

### FASTING

Very few Hindus would insist on fasting whilst in hospital, though they may practise this as part of their faith. Only the more devout Hindus, often women, are likely to fast. Sometimes fasting implies eating only 'pure' foods such as fruits or yoghurt, rather than complete abstinence.

### FESTIVALS

Hindus celebrate many holy days:

- Diwali (the festival of lights) is the best known
- Holi
- Navaratri (celebrating fertility and harvest),
- Raksha Bandhan (celebrating the bond between brother and sister)
- Janmashtami (Krishna's birthday)

Notable festivals are Holi (in the spring to mark the death of winter) and Diwali (in the autumn, celebrated with lamps and candles).

### GREETINGS

When a younger Hindu greets an elder, the younger may touch the feet of the elder, as a mark of respect. When meeting with a family, or another group of Hindus, it is usual to begin by addressing greetings to the eldest member first.

Public displays of physical intimacy such as kissing and hugging are not the norm amongst Hindus.

### IN A HINDU HOME

Most Hindu homes contain a small shrine to one of more gods. These will often feature a statue perhaps an aum symbol, candles and offerings of food or other gifts for the deity. It would be disrespectful to remove or handle things placed at the shrine.

When receiving a visitor it is considered polite to offer some food and drink and it could be seen as offensive for the visitor to refuse such offers.

### MODESTY

Hindu women are likely to have a strong preference to be treated, examined and cared for by female professionals and should not be cared for in mixed wards except in emergency situations.

## NAMES

Hindus may have several names - a personal name, a special name, and a family name.

## ORGAN DONATION

No religious law prohibits Hindus from donating their organs and tissues. Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. This could be seen as reflecting positively on the concept of organ donation and transplantation.

## PILGRIMAGE

Religious pilgrimage plays an important role in Hinduism. There are many holy sites in India, each dedicated to a certain god, a group of gods, or a famous happening. At these centers of worship, the devotee is energized by history, by the meeting of the spiritual and the earthly.

Within India there are four principal places of pilgrimage resting on the four compass points. Hindus visit these sacred spots in a popular all-country route. The pilgrimage normally lasts ten weeks.

## HOLY PLACE:

Himalayan Char Dham - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri. Varanasi/Kashi, Allahabad/Prayag, Haridwar-Rishikesh, Mathura-Vrindavan, Somnath and Ayodhya.

## WORSHIP

Puja (worship) takes place in the Mandir (temple).

Mandirs vary in size from small village shrines to large buildings, surrounded by walls.

People can also visit the Mandir at any time to pray and participate in the bhajans (religious songs).

Hinduism is based on the community, rather than the congregation. The home is a place for devotion, but worship also takes place in the temple, or mandir. Visitors to a mandir will be expected to remove their shoes and cover their heads. They should also dress modestly. Seating is on the floor, and it is considered disrespectful to sit with feet pointing towards the sacred area at the front of the temple. Mandirs are only likely to be found in major cities.

Hindus can also worship at home, and many have a special shrine dedicated to certain gods and goddesses.

The giving of offerings is an important part of Hindu worship. It's a common practice to present gifts, such as flowers or oils, to a god or goddess.



