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# ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

The Abrahamic religions, also referred to collectively as Abrahamism, are a group of Semitic-originated religious communities of faith that claim descent from the practices of the ancient Israelites and the worship of the God of Abraham. The term derives from a figure from the Bible known as Abraham.

Abrahamic religion spread globally through Christianity being adopted by the Roman Empire in the 4th century and Islam by the Islamic Empire from the 7th century. Today the Abrahamic religions are one of the major divisions in comparative religion (along with Indian, Iranian, and East Asian religions). The major Abrahamic religions in chronological order of founding are Judaism in the 7th century BCE, Christianity in the 1st century CE, and Islam in the 7th century CE.

Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are the Abrahamic religions with the greatest numbers of adherents. Abrahamic religions with fewer adherents include the faiths descended from Yazdânism (the Yezidi, Yarsani and Alevi faiths), Samaritanism, the Druze faith (often classified as a branch of Isma'ili Shi'i Islam), Bábism, the Bahá'í Faith and Rastafari. Mandaism is also sometimes included as an Abrahamic religion, but this is actually inaccurate as Mandaeans believe that Abraham was a false prophet.

True Abrahamic religions are monotheistic. They also all believe that people should pray to and worship God often. Of monotheistic religions, the Abrahamic religions have the world's largest number of followers. They are also all ethical monotheistic religions meaning they have a certain set of rules that they have to follow.

The main Abrahamic religions are Christianity, Islam, Judaism. The Bahai Faith and Rastafari Movement are more recent.

These religions are monotheistic faiths, that recognize a belief that originated in the middle east and identifies with Abraham.

These religions share the following:

They are monotheistic religions, believing in one God.

They are people of the Book. The book is the present Bible, New Testament or the Quran.

Jerusalem is a Holy City.

Prophetic tradition, especially Islam respect Jesus, Moses, Abraham and Muhammed as the prophets of God.

The faiths all have a basis in divine revelation, rather than in philosophical speculation or custom.

Abrahamic religions all have an ethical orientation. They speak of a man's choice between good and evil, which is either obedience or disobedience to a single God and to Divine Law.

That life follows a concept of beginning and end. It began with the creation and will end with a Ressurrection of the dead and final judgment.

These religions have an association with the desert, which has affected religious ethos.

# 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.

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.

Christianity exists in a great variety of forms, and different Christian groups highlight different aspects. Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christians all stress in varying fashion the need for correct doctrine, while mystics, saints, Pietists, evangelicals, and Pentecostals speak in divergent ways of an immediate experience of God. Other Christians underscore the ethical imperatives of the faith, and still others are primarily concerned with the life of the community, its institutional forms, traditions, and self-government.

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. 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.

## 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.

## BELIEF

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that his Crucifixion (death on the cross) and subsequent Resurrection (rising from the dead) all make up for the sins of humankind. A belief in Jesus and his suffering leads to salvation.

## 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

There is no special dress for Christians. 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.

#### NAME OF GOD

The Christian god is called God and is also known as the Lord or the Father. Jesus is believed to be the Son of God. The concept of the Trinity makes God a combination of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

#### OBSERVANCES

Christmas and Easter are the two major holy days in the Christian calendar. Christmas observes the day of Jesus's birth. Easter recognizes his Resurrection from the dead.

#### SACRED BOOKS

The Christian Bible includes the Old Testament and the New Testament. Christians accept the books of the Jewish, or Hebrew, Bible as sacred Scripture and designate them collectively as the Old Testament. An addendum, or New Testament, contains the accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus in the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), along with the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, other letters (Catholic Epistles), and the Book of Revelation. Much of the New Testament consists of reinterpretations of Old Testament writings in relation to the life, teaching, ministry, and person of Jesus.

#### SACRED SITES

The Holy Land (the places in Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank connected with the birth, life, and death of Jesus) contains sites sacred to all Christians.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

One of the earliest Christian symbols was the fish, associated with the fishermen who followed Jesus. Today the symbol is especially popular among evangelical Christians. A dove, with wings outstretched, symbolizes the Holy Spirit and is widely used by Pentecostal and charismatic Christians.

The cross is a fundamental Christian symbol, although Eastern Christians portray the cross differently than do Western Christians. The Greek cross has four arms of equal length, while the Latin cross has three arms of roughly equal length, with one longer arm. Eastern crosses sometimes have small crossbars near the ends of the arms. In honor of Andrew, who is said to have died on a cross in the form of an X, the Russian cross has three arms across the vertical shaft, two parallel to the ground and one at a 45-degree angle.

#### 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.

#### PILGRIMAGES

Pilgrimages for Christians are voluntary journeys; they are not required. People make them for a number of reasons. Some go in search of a miraculous cure. Others wish to renew their faith by visiting sites mentioned in the Bible or connected with the life of Christ. Such visits most often include the Holy Land (modern-day Israel), Jordan, and the West Bank, where Christ was born and preached his message. Among the sites is Jerusalem, a city holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This is a site of many of the events in the life and death of Christ.

#### 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.

#### rites of passage

Major stages of life, or rites of passage, are celebrated by the Christian church. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions make these rites into central sacraments. Protestant churches also celebrate them.

#### **Birth, Baptism**

The first rite of passage comes at birth with baptism. Since baptism is a sign that a person belongs to Christ and is a Christian, the ceremony is also called a christening. An official of the church, such as a priest or minister, carries out the ceremony, while saying "I Baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This service is attended by friends and family and by persons chosen by the parents to be godparents, who promise to help raise the child as a Christian. In some Protestant traditions, though, children are not baptized until their parents and other church members feel they are old enough to understand the commitment they are making in the ceremony.

## **Confirmation**

The next major rite of passage for Christians is confirmation, or joining the church as an adult. This service basically "confirms" the promises of faith made at baptism. Some groups that do not practice infant baptism, such as Baptists and Pentecostals, have a separate adult baptism for this ceremony. Children in the Catholic religion receive penance and First Holy Communion at age seven or eight, which is considered the "age of reason." Confirmation follows because they are now believed able to understand the promises made at their baptisms.

## **Wedding**

Weddings are another rite of passage in Christianity, as they are in many other religions. Christian weddings are usually celebrated in a church, but they can also be held at homes or even outside in parks or at the beach. Inside or outside, the groom usually stands in front of the minister or priest performing the service. Then the bride's father will bring the bride to the groom, symbolically handing over his daughter to her new husband. A minister or priest generally reads from standard wedding vows in which the bride and groom promise to be true to one another in all circumstances. The couples also exchange rings, which they wear on the fourth finger of the left hand.

In the Eastern Orthodox church the ceremony most often follows service, which is followed by the marriage service. In the betrothal service, the priest first blesses the rings the couple exchange, and places them on the fourth fingers of their right hands. Later comes the marriage ceremony. The priest gives the man and woman lighted candles to hold, signifying that the light of God will follow them through their married lives. A wedding crown, made of flowers or an actual crown of gold and jewels, is placed on the groom and then on the bride, and the two drink from a common cup to signify the life they will be sharing. Portions of the Bible, including the letters of Paul, are read at these services.

## **Death**

Finally, Christianity also provides for believers at their time of death. For Christians, death is not an ending, but a beginning. Christians believe that there is a life after death. For Christians, death is a passage to eternal life. Just before death, if possible, ministers or priests will give a final sacrament to the believer. This is called the anointing (touching with oil) of the sick. Catholics also confess their sins to the priest so that they can go to heaven without waiting in purgatory.

After death, all Christian traditions follow a similar routine. There is a public announcement of the death, the body is prepared, there are funeral services at a church, a procession of cars to the cemetery, and then a burial, where the body is placed in a coffin into the ground, or a cremation, where the body is burned and the ashes placed in a container and later buried or scattered. Often, there is a viewing of the body. This is usually held at the funeral home after the body has been embalmed, or preserved with chemicals. The coffin lid may be open so that mourners, those saddened by the death, can see the dead person one last time. Funeral services include prayers, the singing of hymns, and speeches, or eulogies, in honor of the dead person. In Catholic tradition, there is a vigil service (where people come to grieve over the dead person) at the funeral home or church. This is followed several days later by a funeral mass in the church, and then another ceremony, the rite of committal, when the body is buried.

In Eastern Orthodox tradition, the vigil service is called parastasis or panikhida, and is a time for thinking about death. The Eastern funeral service includes hymns, chants, and Bible readings. Burial is preferred but the Orthodox Church allows cremation if the law of the country requires it. Christian funerals are usually followed by a meal at the home of the deceased or dead person. This is a chance for friends and relatives to express their sadness over the death and release their emotions.

## **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.

## **➤ EASTERN CHRISTIANITY**

Eastern Christianity consists of four main church families: the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox churches, the Eastern Catholic churches (that are in communion with Rome but still maintain Eastern liturgies), and the denominations descended from the Church of the East. The term is used in contrast with Western Christianity (namely the Latin Church and Protestantism).

Eastern Christianity consists of the Christian traditions and churches that developed distinctively over several centuries in the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia Minor, Southern India and parts of the Far East. The term does not describe a single

communion or religious denomination. Some Eastern churches have more in common historically and theologically with Western Christianity than with one another. The various Eastern churches do not normally refer to themselves as "Eastern", with the exception of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East.

Because the largest church in the East is the body currently known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, the term "Orthodox" is often used in a similar fashion to "Eastern", to refer to specific historical Christian communions.

There are several liturgical rites in use among the Eastern churches (excepting the non-liturgical dissenting bodies). These are the Alexandrian Rite, the Antiochene Rite, the Armenian Rite, the Byzantine Rite, the East Syriac Rite and the West Syriac Rite.

Eastern Christians do not share the same religious traditions, but do share many cultural traditions. Christianity divided itself in the East during its early centuries both within and outside of the Roman Empire in disputes about Christology and fundamental theology, as well as national divisions (Roman, Persian, etc.).

In many Eastern churches, some parish priests administer the sacrament of chrismation to infants after baptism, and priests are allowed to marry before ordination. While all the Eastern Catholic Churches recognize the authority of the Pope, some of them who have originally been part of the Orthodox Church or Oriental Orthodox Church closely follow the traditions of Orthodoxy or Oriental Orthodoxy, including the tradition of allowing married men to become priests.

The Eastern churches' differences from Western Christianity have as much, if not more, to do with culture, language, and politics, as theology.

Eastern Christianity has always emphasized the importance of worship. The gathering of believers, especially for the Eucharist, is an act of thanksgiving and praise offered in response to the presence and actions of the Triune God.

Eastern Christianity has a special devotion to the Fathers and Mothers of the church. There is no absolute definition of such persons. Generally, the name is given to important teachers of the faith who are honored because of their sanctity and spiritual wisdom.

Eastern Christianity in general and the Orthodox Church in particular are especially known for its iconography. Forms of iconography have existed from the earliest days of the church, as evidenced by those primitive drawings in the catacombs of Rome. Icons may depict Christ, Mary, the Mother of God, and the other saints. Icons are not worshiped, yet they may serve as vehicles through which veneration is offered to Christ and the saints and through which the presence of God is communicated to believers.

## ✓ CHURCH OF THE EAST

The Church of the East, also known as the Nestorian Church, is a Christian church within the Syriac tradition of Eastern Christianity. It was the Christian church of the Sasanian Empire, and quickly spread widely through Asia. Between the 9th and 14th centuries it was the world's largest Christian church in terms of geographical extent, with dioceses stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to China and India. Several modern churches claim continuity with the historical Church of the East.

The Church of the East was headed by the Patriarch of the East, continuing a line that, according to its tradition, stretched back to the Apostolic Age, and the christianization of the Assyrian people and other ethnic communities in western provinces of the Persian Empire.

Like the churches from which it developed, the Church of the East has an ordained clergy divided into the three traditional orders of deacon, priest (or presbyter), and bishop. Also like other churches, it has an episcopal polity: organisation by dioceses, each headed by a bishop and made up of several individual parish communities overseen by priests. Dioceses are organised into provinces under the authority of a metropolitan bishop. The office of metropolitan bishop is an important one, and comes with additional duties and powers; canonically, only metropolitans can consecrate a patriarch. The Patriarch also has the charge of the Province of the Patriarch.

## ❖ ANCIENT CHURCH OF THE EAST

The Ancient Church of the East, officially the Ancient Holy Apostolic Catholic Church of the East, is an Eastern Christian denomination founded by Thoma Darmo in 1968.

The Ancient Church of the East distinguished itself from the Assyrian Church of the East in 1964. It is one of the Assyrian churches that claim continuity with the historical Patriarchate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon – the Church of the East, one of the oldest Christian churches in Mesopotamia. The church is headquartered in Baghdad, Iraq. In 1970, Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Addai II Giwargis succeeded Mar Thoma Darmo (1968 - 1969).

The Ancient Church of the East recognizes the following nine positions in its hierarchy:

1. Patriarch
2. Metropolitan (Archbishop)
3. Bishop
4. Archdeacon
5. Chorbishop
6. Priest

7. Deacon
8. Subdeacon
9. Reader

The Patriarch is the supreme head of the church, and oversees all dioceses of the church. The church has an episcopal polity, meaning it is organized into dioceses, each headed by a bishop. Dioceses are organized into Ecclesiastical provinces under the authority of a Metropolitan. Each diocese is made up of several parish communities. The individual parishes are staffed by at least one priest. Priests are assisted by Deacons, Subdeacons, and Readers. All members of the clergy may preach, baptize, witness marriages, and conduct funeral liturgies, though Deacons, Subdeacons, and Readers assume an assistant's role. Only those ranking above a deacon can celebrate the sacraments of the Eucharist, though others may be ministers of Holy Communion. Administering the sacrament of Holy Orders (ordaining someone into the clergy) is limited to Bishops, Metropolitans, and the Patriarch.

## ❖ ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST



the logo of the Assyrian church of the East

The Assyrian Church of the East, officially the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, is an Eastern Christian Church that follows the traditional christology and ecclesiology of the historical Church of the East.

It belongs to the eastern branch of Syriac Christianity, and uses the East Syrian Rite in its liturgy. Its main spoken language is Syriac, a dialect of Eastern Aramaic, and the majority of its adherents are ethnic Assyrians.

It is officially headquartered in the city of Erbil in northern Iraqi Kurdistan, and its original area also spreads into south-eastern Turkey and north-western Iran, corresponding to ancient Assyria.

The Assyrian Church of the East claims continuity with the historical Church of the East. It has a traditional episcopal structure, headed by the Catholicos-Patriarch. Its hierarchy is composed of metropolitan bishops and diocesan bishops, while lower clergy consists of priests and deacons, who serve in dioceses (eparchies) and parishes throughout the Middle East, India, North America, Oceania, and Europe (including the Caucasus and Russia).

The Assyrian Church of the East does not currently make large use of icons, but they are present in its tradition. A Nestorian Peshitta Gospel book written in Estrangela, from the 13th century, currently resided at the State Library of Berlin.

The Assyrians celebrate the usual Christian celebrations of Christmas and Easter. Rituals and traditions practised in the lead up to Easter are similar to those of all Christian Churches.

The Assyrians mark major life events, such as birth, marriage, and death, within the traditions of Christianity.

Special feast days and celebrations include: the finding of the Cross on 13 September; and the feast days of St Zay'a, a missionary and healer from Palestine who travelled to Assyria in the 4th and 5th centuries - the birth of St Zay'a is celebrated on 26 May and a three day fast commemorates his death on the first Wednesday of January.

## ❖ CHALDEAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Coat of arms of the Chaldean Catholic Church

The Chaldean Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic particular church (sui juris) in full communion with the Holy See and the rest of the Catholic Church, with the Chaldean Patriarchate having been originally formed out of the Church of the East in 1552. Employing the East Syriac Rite in Syriac language in its liturgy, it is part of Syriac Christianity by heritage. Headquartered in the Cathedral of Mary Mother of Sorrows, Baghdad, Iraq.

The Chaldean Catholic Church uses the East Syriac Rite.

A slight reform of the liturgy was effective since 6 January 2007, and it aimed to unify the many different uses of each parish, to remove centuries-old additions that merely imitated the Roman Rite, and for pastoral reasons. The main elements of variations are: the Anaphora said aloud by the priest, the return to the ancient architecture of the churches, the restoration of the ancient use where the bread and wine are readied before a service begins, and the removal from the Creed of the Filioque clause.

## ✓ **EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES (autonomous churches within the Catholic Church)**

The Eastern Catholic Churches or Oriental Catholic Churches, also called the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches, and in some historical cases Uniate Churches, are twenty-three Eastern Christian particular churches (Albanian Greek Catholic Church, Armenian Catholic Church, Belarusian Greek Catholic Church, Bulgarian Greek Catholic Church, Chaldean Catholic Church, Coptic Catholic Church, Eritrean Catholic Church, Ethiopian Catholic Church, Greek Byzantine Catholic Church, Greek Catholic Church of Croatia and Serbia, Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, Italo-Albanian Greek Catholic Church, Macedonian Greek Catholic Church, Maronite Church, Melkite Greek Catholic Church, Romanian Greek Catholic Church, Russian Greek Catholic Church, Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church, Slovak Byzantine Catholic Church, Syriac Catholic Church, Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church) sui iuris in full communion with the Pope in Rome, as part of the worldwide Catholic Church. Headed by patriarchs, metropolitans, and major archbishops, the Eastern Catholic Churches are governed in accordance with the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, although each church also has its own canons and laws on top of this, and the preservation of their own traditions is explicitly encouraged.

The Maronite Church is considered the only one of the Eastern Catholic Churches to have always remained in full communion with the Holy See, while most of the other churches unified from the 16th century onwards.

Full communion constitutes mutual sacramental sharing between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church, including Eucharistic intercommunion. On the other hand, the liturgical traditions of the 23 Eastern Catholic churches, including Byzantine, Alexandrian, Armenian, East Syriac, and West Syriac, are shared with other Eastern Christian churches: the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Ancient Church of the East.

Notably, many Eastern Catholic churches take a different approach to clerical celibacy than the Latin Church does and allow the ordination of married men to the priesthood (although not to episcopacy).

Eastern Catholic Churches have their origins in the Middle East, East Africa, Eastern Europe and India. However, since the 19th century, diaspora has spread to Western Europe, the Americas and Oceania in part because of persecution.

In general, Eastern Catholic Churches have always allowed ordination of married men as priests and deacons.

Most Eastern Churches distinguish between "monastic" and "non-monastic" clergy. Monastics do not necessarily live in monasteries, but have spent at least part of their period of training in such a context. Their monastic vows include a vow of celibate chastity.

Bishops are normally selected from the monastic clergy, and in most Eastern Catholic Churches a large percentage of priests and deacons also are celibate, while a large portion of the clergy (typically, parish priests) are married, having taken a wife when they were still laymen.

The beliefs and practice of the church is Orthodox.

The Eastern Catholic Church is sacramental in its worship, which resembles the other Eastern Orthodox Churches (Antiochian, Greek, Russian, Serbian, Ukrainian, etc.). The centre of its liturgical life is the Quiddisha Qurbana or the Holy and Divine Liturgy. The Holy Liturgy can only be celebrated by an ordained priest in canonical relationship with his vicar-bishop and metropolitan.

The Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) include the following: Holy Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation) – these two mysteries are never separated, Holy Confession or Absolution (which also occurs during the Holy Liturgy and individually in cases of serious sin), Holy Orders which effects all the other Holy Mysteries, Holy Matrimony, and Holy Unction (Anointing of the Sick). The Sign of the Cross has also historically been considered a Holy Mystery or Sacrament.

Marriages are usually celebrated within the Quiddisha Qurbana of Holy Matrimony. The Anointing of the sick may occur after the Quiddisha Qurbana or at any scheduled service, as well as in hospitals or in the sick person's home.

### **MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

As a general rule Eastern Catholic Churches observe the same moral principles as the Eastern Churches, especially in regions where Eastern Catholics and Orthodox Christians coexist: the state of Kerala in India, Syria, Lebanon, big cities in Iraq, Cairo and upper Egypt, the western Ukraine, and Romanian Transylvania. Eastern Catholics take a more liberal approach to moral principles than Orthodox Christians, however, and have more conservative patterns of conduct than Latin Catholics. In the traditional societies, as well as in diasporian communities, Eastern Catholics mostly develop interpersonal relations—marriage in particular - within the church community.

### **SACRED BOOKS**

Eastern Catholic Churches use the liturgical books and texts of traditional Eastern Christianity, including the Euchologions, the Books of Needs, the Anthologions, the Festal Anthologies, the Floral and the Lenten Triodions, Oktoechos, Horologions, Typikons, Menologions, Menaions, the Books of Akathistos, and the Books of Commemoration. Some churches accept Latin editions of these works.

### **SACRED SYMBOLS**

Eastern Catholics consider holy crosses of various forms (including Greek, Saint Andrew the First Called, Coptic, and Slavic) as important sacred symbols in liturgical as well as private contexts. The Heart of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary (a red heart in conjunction with such symbols as drops of blood, wreaths, crowns, or red rays) has become an important symbol in some churches since the end of the nineteenth century, notably the Coptic, the Syro-Malabar, and to some extent the Ukrainian and other churches of the Byzantine tradition.

### **HOUSE OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES**

Eastern Catholic church buildings come in a variety of styles, each with its own priest and other clergy. In large cities the Eastern Catholic traditions led by archbishops or metropolitans offer services in cathedrals. Chapels intended for private prayer (particularly for travelers) in various places (sometimes far from cities or villages, occasionally at memorial sites or crossroads)

do not have permanent clergy. Other popular holy places for prayer and veneration are missionary crosses and statues of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or popular saints found near churches, in the center of villages or cities, in hospitals, in the countryside, and in private houses.

#### WHAT IS SACRED?

In the Eastern Catholic Churches the bread and wine used in the sacrament of Communion are the most sacred things. Icons painted on wood or canvas are objects of special veneration, as are crosses, church buildings, the liturgical clothing of the clergy, and ecclesiastical texts.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

As in Eastern Christianity, Easter is the most significant holiday for Eastern Catholics because of its symbolism of victory over the death. The other main Eastern Catholic holidays are a combination of the 12 traditional holidays in Eastern Christianity (including Christmas, Theophany, Holy Trinity, Transfiguration, Dormition of the Most Pure Mother of God, Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Christmas of the God's Mother, and Entering of the God's Mother into the Temple), several holidays from Western Christianity (including Holy Eucharist and the Christ's Heart), and certain holidays celebrating specific events and saints from regional Eastern Catholic traditions - for example, the Day of Saint Josafat Kuntsevych, observed by Eastern European Catholics, and the Day of Mykola Charnetsky, a newly proclaimed saint in the Ukrainian Church.

#### MODE OF DRESS

The clergy of the most latinized Eastern Catholic Churches (the Syro-Malabar, Maronite, Armenian, and Romanian Churches and the church in the former Yugoslavia, as well as the Basilian monastic order in the Eastern European churches) dress according to Western Christian tradition in black robes with white collars. Some ideological movements that originated in the early 1900s have called for a mode of dress based exclusively on the Eastern tradition: long black (sometimes grey, rarely green or dark red) robes with wide sleeves.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

According to the common Orthodox tradition, Eastern Catholic Churches observe no specific dietary limitations or prohibitions. Fasts have a more significant role in the church than they do in Western Christianity, however. When adherents fast, they may not eat any product of animal origin or drink alcohol; they must limit public appearances and sexual activity; they may not organize or conduct celebrations or intensive spiritual exercises; and they more frequently attend worship services and pray. Eastern Catholics fast on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year and participate in four longer fasts: Lent, the Fast of the Holy Apostles, the Fast of the Dormition of the Most Pure Mother of God, and Advent. Several contemporary churches have eliminated fasting obligations on certain dates (New Year's Day in the Ukrainian Church, for example); relaxed general fasting requirements (permitting the use of eggs and milk and shortening the length of fasting periods); and exempted several groups of people from fasting, including children, the elderly, pregnant women, travelers, and those who are ill. These churches still support strict rules during Lent (the Great Fast).

#### RITUALS

The liturgy (the main service, which includes confession and Communion) is the focal point of ritual practice in the Eastern Catholic Churches. Each of the five main ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions (Byzantine, Coptic, Armenian, Chaldean, and Syrian, or Jacobite) uses its own unique texts, but all have three main parts (the Latin liturgy has only two): Proskomide (introduction and preparation of the saint's gifts for Communion); the Liturgy of Oglashenny, or Catechumens (those preparing to be baptized); and the Liturgy of Adherents. Influenced by the Latin tradition and a general tendency to simplify and shorten rituals, some Eastern Catholic Churches make a point of rejecting certain forms of worship - for example, all-night vigils and "little vespers" - that are traditional components of Eastern Christianity.

Eastern Catholic Churches recognize the seven sacraments (the most holy mysteries) and emphasize baptism, marriage, confession, and Communion. Other rituals important to Eastern Catholics include Chrismation (which involves the application of myrrh after baptism), the consecration of priests, and consecration by oil for bodily and spiritual recovery.

#### rites of passage

Although their level of religious activity and their involvement in religious life are high compared with Western (Latin) Catholics, the majority of Eastern Catholics do not attend weekly services. Eastern Catholics do generally adhere to those rituals connected with birth, adulthood, marriage, and death. Children are baptized within several days after their birth, when the parents choose godparents to support the spiritual growth of the child. Unlike in the Orthodox tradition, some Eastern Catholic Churches accept the Latin practice of confirmation for older children. In marriages between Eastern and Western Catholic spouses, the children accept the rite of the parent of their gender: boys inherit their father's rite and girls take their mother's. Funeral services are attended by special commemorations, which are repeated on the ninth and fortieth days after the death and again one year after the death.

Eastern Catholic Churches, listed below, are generally grouped in five liturgical traditions:

#### I. Alexandrian liturgical tradition, originating in Egypt:

- Coptic Catholic Church
- Eritrean Catholic Church
- Ethiopian Catholic Church

#### II. Antiochian liturgical tradition, originating in Antioch and West Syria:

- Maronite Church
- Syrian Catholic Church
- Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

#### III. Armenian liturgical tradition:

- Armenian Catholic Church

IV. Chaldean or East Syrian liturgical tradition, originating in Mesopotamia:

- Chaldean Catholic Church
- Syro-Malabar Church

V. Byzantine or Constantinopolitan liturgical tradition, originating in Constantinople:

- Albanian Catholic Church
- Belarusian Catholic Church
- Bulgarian Catholic Church
- Croatian Byzantine Catholic Church or Croatian Greek Catholic Church
- Greek Catholic Church
- Hungarian Catholic Church
- Italo-Albanian Catholic Church
- Macedonian Catholic Church
- Melkite Greek Catholic Church
- Romanian Church United with Rome
- Russian Catholic Church
- Ruthenian Catholic Church
- Slovak Catholic Church
- Ukrainian Catholic Church

### ❖ ALBANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Albanian Greek Catholic Church is an autonomous (*sui iuris* in Latin) Byzantine Rite particular church in communion with Rome, whose members live in Albania and which comprises the Apostolic Administration of Southern Albania.

### ❖ ARMENIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Emblem of the Armenian Catholic Church

The Armenian Catholic Church improperly referred to as the Armenian Uniate Church, is one of the Eastern particular churches *sui iuris* of the Catholic Church. They accept the leadership of the Bishop of Rome, known as the papal primacy, and therefore are in full communion with the Catholic Church, including both the Latin Church and the 22 other Eastern Catholic Churches. The Armenian Catholic Church is regulated by Eastern canon law, namely the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. The head of the *sui iuris* Armenian Catholic Church is the Armenian Catholic Patriarch whose main cathedral and *de facto* archiepiscopal see is the Cathedral of Saint Elias and Saint Gregory the Illuminator, in Beirut, Lebanon. The church belongs to the group of Eastern Rite Catholic churches and uses the Armenian Rite and the Armenian language in its liturgy.

Unlike the Byzantine Church, churches of the Armenian rite are usually devoid of icons and have a curtain concealing the priest and the altar from the people during parts of the liturgy. The use of bishop's mitre and of unleavened bread is reminiscent of the influence Western missionaries once had upon both the miaphysite Orthodox Armenians as well as upon the Armenian Rite Catholics.

Armenian Catholic churches are characterized by architectural simplicity. The temples are usually hall churches, small in size, with stone walls and wooden roof structure.

They traditionally have two entrances - one opposite the altar, the other on the side. In places where the old customs have been kept alive (especially in the Samtsche region of Georgia), the side entrance, which leads to the front part of the temple, is reserved exclusively for men. The back door is used by women, who occupy places farther away from the altar, including on wooden balconies above the entrance. Other typical elements include statues of saints and colorful carpets, floor covers and cushions.

### ❖ BELARUSIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Belarusian Greek Catholic Church sometimes called in reference to its Byzantine Rite, the Belarusian Byzantine Catholic Church, is the heir within Belarus of the Union of Brest and Ruthenian Uniate Church. It is listed in the *Annuario Pontificio* as a *sui iuris* Church, an Eastern rite particular Church in full union with the Catholic Church.

## ❖ **BUGARIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Bulgarian Greek Catholic Church is a Byzantine Rite sui juris particular Church in full union with the Roman Catholic Church.

## ❖ **CHALDEAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**



Coat of arms of the Chaldean Catholic Church

The Chaldean Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic particular church (sui juris) in full communion with the Holy See and the rest of the Catholic Church, with the Chaldean Patriarchate having been originally formed out of the Church of the East in 1552. Employing the East Syriac Rite in Syriac language in its liturgy, it is part of Syriac Christianity by heritage. Headquartered in the Cathedral of Mary Mother of Sorrows, Baghdad, Iraq.

The Chaldean Catholic Church uses the East Syriac Rite.

A slight reform of the liturgy was effective since 6 January 2007, and it aimed to unify the many different uses of each parish, to remove centuries-old additions that merely imitated the Roman Rite, and for pastoral reasons. The main elements of variations are: the Anaphora said aloud by the priest, the return to the ancient architecture of the churches, the restoration of the ancient use where the bread and wine are readied before a service begins, and the removal from the Creed of the Filioque clause.

## ❖ **COPTIC CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Coptic Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic particular church in full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Coptic Catholic Church uses the Alexandrian Rite.

Uniquely among Eastern Catholic Churches, it uses the Coptic language (derived from Ancient Egyptian, hence the name) in its liturgy, whereas the Ethiopian Catholic Church and Eritrean Catholic Church use the Alexandrian Rite in the Ge'ez language.

The offices of the Patriarchate are located in Cairo. The patriarchal Cathedral of Our Lady of Egypt is in Nasr City, a suburb of Cairo.

The Coptic Catholic Church does not have Coptic monasteries. Instead the Church has religious congregations such as the three communities for women: the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, the Coptic Sisters of Jesus and Mary (both based in Egypt) and the Egyptian Province of the Little Sisters of Jesus. There is also a community of male Franciscans.

## ❖ **ERITREAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Eritrean Catholic Church is a Metropolitan sui iuris Eastern particular church headquartered in Asmara, Eritrea. Established in 2015 by separation from the Ethiopian Catholic Church, it is in full communion with the Holy See. It follows the Alexandrian liturgical rite.

Like the other Eastern Catholic Churches, the Eritrean Catholic Church is in full communion with the Holy See. It holds to the Christological definition taught at the Council of Chalcedon and accepts the universal jurisdiction of the Pope. These points distinguish it from the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which is an Oriental Orthodox church comprising most Christians in the country. Like the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Eritrean Catholic Church follows the Ethiopic liturgical rite in the Ge'ez language, a Semitic language which fell out of common use several centuries ago. This rite is based on the Coptic Church liturgy.

## ❖ **ETHIOPIAN CATHOIC CHURCH**



Symbol of the Ethiopian Catholic Church

The Ethiopian Catholic Church is a Metropolitan sui iuris Eastern particular church within the Catholic Church, established in 1930 in Ethiopia.

Like the other Eastern Catholic Churches, the Ethiopian Catholic Church is in full communion with the Holy See. It holds the

Christological doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon and accepts the universal jurisdiction of the Pope. These points distinguish it from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, an Oriental Orthodox Church which comprises most Christians in the country. Like the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Ethiopian Catholic Church follows the Alexandrian liturgical rite. Ge'ez, a Semitic language fallen out of daily use several centuries ago, is the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Catholic Church. The Church's liturgy is based on that of the Coptic Church.

### ❖ GREEK BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Greek Byzantine Catholic Church is a sui iuris Eastern Catholic particular church of the Catholic Church that uses the Byzantine liturgical rite in Koine Greek and Modern Greek. Its membership includes inhabitants of Greece and Turkey.

### ❖ GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CROATIA AND SERBIA

The Greek Catholic Church of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia is an Eastern Catholic Church sui iuris of the Byzantine Rite which is in full union with the Roman Catholic Church. It consists of the Eparchy of Križevci and the Apostolic Exarchate of Serbia.

The liturgy is the Slavonic form of Byzantine Rite, using the Old Church Slavonic language and the Cyrillic alphabet.

### ❖ HUNGARIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Hungarian Greek Catholic Church is a Metropolitan sui iuris ("autonomous") Eastern Catholic particular Church in full communion with the Catholic Church. It is headquartered in Debrecen.

Its liturgical rite is the Byzantine Rite in Hungarian.

### ❖ ITALO-ALBANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Italo-Albanian Catholic Church or Italo-Albanian Church, is one of Eastern Catholic Churches which, together with the Latin Church, compose the Catholic Church. It is a particular church that is autonomous (sui iuris), using the Byzantine Rite and the ancient Greek language (the language that was the principal of all peoples in the tradition of the Eastern Churches) or the Albanian language (the mother language of the community) for the liturgy, whose Italo-Albanian members are concentrated in Southern Italy (Abruzzo, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria), and Sicily.

The Italo-Albanian Church is in full communion with the Pope of Rome, directly subject to the Roman Congregation for the Oriental Churches, but follows the ritual and spiritual traditions that are common in most of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Church members are the descendants of the exiled Albanians who fled to Italy in the 15th century under the pressure of the Turkish persecutions in Albania and the territories inhabited by Albanians in the Balkans and the Peloponnese. The Albanian population in Italy has maintained until today the language, customs and religious rites of their origin. This Church maintains their heritage, the ethnic, cultural and religious tradition of the Albanians fathers, keeping alive the spiritual and liturgical tradition of the Eastern Church from the time of Justinian (6th century).

The Church is the only remaining Byzantine-rite community in Italy, unique in the Latin rite-majority Western Europe. It is securely inclined to ecumenism between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

### ❖ MARONITE CHURCH



Manorite cross

The Maronite Church is an Eastern Catholic sui iuris particular church in full communion with the Pope and the Catholic Church, with self-governance under the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

Officially known as the Syriac Maronite Church of Antioch, employing the West Syriac Rite with Syriac language, it is part of the Syriac Christianity by liturgy and heritage.

Although reduced in numbers today, Maronites remain one of the principal ethno-religious groups in Lebanon, with smaller minorities of Maronites in Syria, Cyprus, Israel, and Jordan.

Over 3,198,600 Maronites practice the faith.

Maronite Catholicism encompasses a whole range of traditions and practices that give meaning and texture to the faith. The Qurbono,<sup>1</sup> as the Maronite Mass is properly called, is the primary official form of prayer of the church, and a fundamental source of Maronite identity. It bears many similarities to other Eastern and Western Catholic liturgies, but has its own particular elements that make it distinctive.

Today most of the liturgy in the Middle East is celebrated in Arabic, the first language of almost all Maronites there.

The Maronite Qurbono is celebrated at an altar that is open to the church, not, as in the case in some Eastern liturgies, behind a screen. Other elements make clear the liturgy's Syriac origins: the Syriac hymns that are integral to the liturgy, the repeated use of incense, the hand cross that the priest holds and blesses with during many parts of the liturgy. Men, women and children mix in the pews, rather than having separate sides for each gender.

The... organ has more recently begun to be used.

The liturgy has two main parts: the Service of the Word, and the anaphora (known in the Roman rite as the Liturgy of the Eucharist).

Communion is by intinction, by dipping the host into the consecrated wine, therefore not in the hand.

## ❖ MACEDONIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Macedonian Greek Catholic Church is a Byzantine Rite sui juris Eastern Catholic Church in full union with the Roman Catholic Church which uses the Macedonian language in the liturgy.

The Macedonian Church comprises a single eparchy, the Macedonian Catholic Eparchy of the Blessed Virgin Mary Assumed in Strumica-Skopje.

## ❖ MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with the Holy See as part of the worldwide Catholic Church.

The Melkites, Byzantine Rite Catholics, trace their history to the early Christians of Antioch, formerly part of Syria and now in Turkey, of the 1st century AD, where Christianity was introduced by Saint Peter.

Melkite Greek Catholics are present throughout the world by migration due to persecution. Outside the Near East, the Melkite Church has also grown through intermarriage with, and the conversion of, people of various ethnic heritages as well as transritualism.

While the Melkite Catholic Church's Byzantine rite liturgical traditions are shared with those of Eastern Orthodoxy, the Church has been part of the Catholic Church since the affirmation of its union with the Holy See of Rome in 1724.

The Melkite Catholic Church is in full communion with the Holy See (the Latin Catholic Pope of Rome and his Roman Congregation for the Eastern Churches), where the Patriarch is represented by his Procurator at Rome, but fully follows the traditions and customs of Byzantine Christianity.

The traditional languages of worship are Arabic and Greek, but today, services are held in a variety of languages, depending on the country where the church is located.

The Melkite Synod of Bishops, composed of all of the Church's bishops, meets each year to consider administrative, theological and Church-wide issues.

The Greek Melkite liturgy, though Byzantine in form, is celebrated primarily in Arabic, with some use of Greek. (In countries outside the Middle East, it is often celebrated in the local language). It takes place largely at or behind the central door of a multi-doored wall known as an iconostasis, which as the name would suggest, is hung with icons. The altar lies behind the wall and is partially visible through the central door. Byzantine liturgy remains intentionally resplendent, with gold vestments and iconography, intended to signal a place where heaven and earth connect.

The celebrant usually faces in the same direction as the people, which is to say with his back to them, except for the blessings, readings and sermon. A deacon plays an important role in the service, moving back and forth between the people and the celebrant. Unaccompanied sung chant is integral to the liturgy.

Melkite Catholic churches have pews or chairs, and the liturgy combines sitting and standing. In contrast to Roman custom, standing, rather than kneeling, is the primary devotional posture during Melkite Catholic worship.

The bread used for communion is leavened, as is typical in the East, rather than unleavened, as is typical in the West. Worshippers cross themselves with the sign of the cross frequently during the liturgy, whenever the Trinity is invoked. In Jordan, many older women pray the rosary through the Melkite liturgy, though this was something of an enigma to younger Greek Catholics.

Fasting and abstinence play important seasonal roles in the life of the Melkite Church, in the "Great Fast," or Lent, before Easter; and in three other fasts - the weeks leading up to Christmas; the first two weeks of August before the Feast of the Theotokos; and at the Fast of the Apostles, which falls after the Feast of Ascension.

Fasting entails not eating any solid food before noon on a given day, and then only one meal thereafter on that day. During the appropriate seasons, fasting is a Monday to Friday discipline, though it is also the rule for Holy Saturday. Interestingly, during Lent, the fast includes a fast from the Divine Liturgy on weekdays.

Abstinence entails the avoidance of meats, fish, dairy products, eggs, olive oil and alcohol, though not all of these foods every

day.

Eating, and not just abstinence, also plays a role in the life of the church community. Almost all the parish events celebrated among Melkite Catholics in Jordan included some kind of communal meal.

## ❖ ROMANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Romanian Greek Catholic Church is a sui iuris Eastern Catholic Church, in full union with the Roman Catholic Church. It has the rank of a Major Archiepiscopal Church and it uses the Byzantine liturgical rite in the Romanian language.

## ❖ RUSSIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Russian Greek Catholic Church or also called Russian Catholic Church is a Byzantine Rite Catholic Church sui iuris in full union with the Roman Catholic Church. Historically it represents the first reunion of members of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church. It is now in full communion with and subject to the authority of the Pope as defined by Eastern canon law. Russian Catholics historically had their own episcopal hierarchy (the Russian Catholic Apostolic Exarchate of Russia and the Russian Catholic Apostolic Exarchate of Harbin, China), however these offices are currently vacant; their few parishes are served by priests ordained in other Byzantine Catholic churches, former Orthodox priests, and Roman Catholic priests with bi-ritual faculties.

## ❖ RUTHENIAN BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church, also known in the United States as the Byzantine Catholic Church, is an Eastern Catholic church that uses the Byzantine Rite for its liturgies, laws, and cultural identity.

There are two main communities within the church: American and European. In the United States, the Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh is self-governing (sui iuris). In Europe, Ruthenian Catholics are immediately subject to the Holy See. The European branch has an eparchy in Ukraine (the Eparchy of Mukacheve) and another in the Czech Republic (the Ruthenian Apostolic Exarchate of Czech Republic).

The Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church has four eparchies in the United States and one eparchy plus an Apostolic Exarchate in Europe.

## ❖ SLOVAK BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Slovak Greek Catholic Church or Slovak Byzantine Catholic Church, is a Metropolitan sui iuris Eastern particular Church in full union with the Catholic Church.

Its liturgical rite is the Byzantine Rite.

Spiritual life of Greek Catholics is very strong connected with the prayer of the church while private prayers are not as important as it is in the Catholic Church.

The Slovak Greek Catholic Church is in full communion with the Holy See.

The main aspect of the liturgy is celebration and thanksgiving expressed by singing, decorations, and loftiness of the services.

The churches are full of decorations and icons, singing is present throughout the whole services, and fasting is much stricter than in Roman Catholic Church. The main aim of the icon is contemplation of God through the portrayed mystery, statues are not used in the Byzantine Rite due to very strong influence of the Old Testament.

Greek Catholics eat and drink both the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion unlike Roman Catholics.

Priests of Geek Catholic Church are not celibate, they are allowed to get married.

Greek Catholic Church has its own law of the church.

## ❖ SYRIAC CATHOLIC CHURCH



logo for Syriac Catholic Church

Semi-autonomous Christian church, which is affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church through the Eastern Rite. By this, the Syrian branch is allowed to retain its customs and rites, even when these differ from the traditions of the Roman church.

They follow the liturgy of St. James, which even today is performed in Syriac. Syriac is still spoken in some few communities in eastern Syria and northern Iraq, but for most, Arabic is the vernacular language.

The official centre of their church is Antakya, Turkey, but the Patriarch has not been there for centuries, when he moved between several cities in Syria and Lebanon. Today, he has his headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon. The Patriarch always takes the name "Ignatius" added to his other names.

Despite its name, the Syrian Catholic Church is today strongest in Iraq and Lebanon.

Many Syrian Catholic priests are today married, even if they legally are bound to celibacy since 1888.

The Liturgy of the Syriac Catholic church is very similar to their Orthodox Counterparts.

The liturgical language of the Syriac Catholic Church, Syriac, is a dialect of Aramaic. The Qurbono Qadisho (literally: Holy Mass or Holy Offering/Sacrifice) of the Syriac Church uses a variety of Anaphoras, with the Anaphora of the 12 Apostles being the one mostly in use with the Liturgy of St James the Just.

## ❖ SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic sui iuris particular church in full communion with the Pope and the worldwide Catholic Church, with self-governance under the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

The Church is headed by Major Archbishop Cardinal of the Major Archdiocese of Trivandrum based in Kerala, India.

The Church follows the West Syriac Rite liturgy of Saint James, which is also used in the Maronite Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The Church traces its origins to the evangelistic activity of Thomas the Apostle in the 1st century.

The Malankara Catholic Church was established on 20 September 1930 as a result of the re-union movement under the leadership of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, when it split from the Malankara Church and entered into communion with the Catholic Church.

The liturgy of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is of the Antiochene Rite, West Syriac in character. The liturgy today is celebrated in Malayalam, Syriac, English, Tamil, and Hindi. The church uses one of several Bible translations into Malayalam.

The Syro-Malankara rite is drawn from the same West Syrian tradition as the Maronite Church and the Syriac Catholic church.

The Holy Qurbono, as the liturgy of the Syro-Malankara church is called, focuses a great deal on ritual, gesture and symbols. Chant is an important part of the liturgy, deeply integral to the liturgy, not simply an optional frame for it. Incense, bells and rich vestments also convey a sense of mystery.

At Syro-Malankara liturgies, men and women generally separate into different sides of the church, a practice in keeping with many other aspects of Indian life. Shoes are left outside of church during Mass.

## ❖ SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH



The Seal of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

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## ❖ UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) is a Byzantine Rite Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with the Holy See. It is the second-largest particular church (*sui juris*) in the Catholic Church (after the Latin, or Roman, Church).

The church is one of the successor churches to the acceptance of Christianity by Grand Prince Vladimir the Great of Kiev, in 988.

In 1963 the church was recognized as Ukrainian through the efforts of Yosyf Slipyi.

The ordinary (or hierarch) of the church holds the title of Major archbishop of Kiev-Halych and All Ruthenia, though the hierarchs and faithful of the church have acclaimed their ordinary as "Patriarch" and have requested Papal recognition of, and elevation to, this title. Major archbishop is a unique title within the Catholic Church that was introduced in 1963 as part of political compromise.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the second largest religious organization in Ukraine in terms of number of communities. In terms of number of members, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church ranks third in allegiance among the population of Ukraine after the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kyiv Patriarchate. Currently, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church predominates in three western oblasts of Ukraine, including the majority of the population of Lviv, but constitutes a small minority elsewhere in the country.

## ✓ **ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES (called Non-Chalcedonian or "Miaphysite"/"Monophysite")**

The Oriental Orthodox Churches represents a communion of six churches within Christianity: The Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Eritrean Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Malankara Orthodox (India), and Armenian Apostolic churches. Although these six churches are still in full communion with one another and have similar theologies and doctrines, they are hierarchically autonomous from each other, lacking any equivalent to the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople or the Roman Catholic Pope of Rome. Because of this independence, the churches have established their own unique forms of literature, ritual, art, and liturgy. Not surprisingly, they use various languages and even have different versions of scripture due to language differences. Each of the six churches traces its heritage back to the missionary efforts of the first century C.E. The Oriental Orthodox Churches were unified with the Christian Church universal until the 5th century C.E. when they split from the Roman and Byzantine (Eastern Orthodox) Churches at the Fourth Ecumenical Council (at Chalcedon in 451 C.E.), thus being termed "non-Chalcedonian" or "pre-Chalcedonian." The split occurred over the doctrine of the "two natures" of Christ, of which the Oriental Orthodox claimed Christ only had one nature, at once both human and divine. One of the modern challenges of Oriental Orthodox Churches is their cohabitation with other majority religious traditions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism. Another modern challenge facing the Oriental Orthodox Church is the potential reconciliation with the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church. Since the 1960s, numerous conferences have been held aiming at theological reconciliation.

### **SACRED TEXTS**

The Oriental Orthodox churches use the Bible as their authoritative scripture, although the exact number of books included may vary. In addition, these churches have successfully preserved large and important bodies of extra-canonical literature.

### **SACRED NARRATIVES**

The Oriental Orthodox churches share the same set of biblically based sacred narratives as other Christian denominations, although stories about the foundation of individual churches are also important.

### **ULTIMATE REALITY AND DIVINE BEINGS**

God, the Supreme Being, is One although this being is understood as manifesting three forms. Debates about the nature of this Trinity brought about the separation of these churches.

### **SUFFERING AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL**

Human beings have been endowed by God with freewill. Therefore, the presence of sin and evil in the world is not the result of some external agency.

### **AFTERLIFE AND SALVATION**

Those who live according to God's expectations as expressed by Christ through the Church to be able to participate in an eternal union with God after death.

### **SACRED TIME**

Like many Christian churches, the Oriental Orthodox follow a regular liturgical calendar that marks the important dates in the life of Christ and in the history of the community.

### **SACRED SPACE**

The central sacred space for Oriental Orthodox communities is the church building itself, where regular liturgical services are held. In addition, monasteries and sites associated with saints, Church founders, and patriarchs may also be considered sacred.

### **rites and ceremonies**

In addition to regular liturgical meetings of the community, the Oriental Orthodox tradition has established a number of important ritual ceremonies commemorating important stages in the lives of Church members.

### **WORSHIP AND DEVOTION IN DAILY LIFE**

The weekly liturgical celebration is by far the most important act of worship, although many of the faithful have developed methods of private devotion such as prayer and spiritual reading to deepen their daily spiritual experience.

## SYMBOLISM

Oriental Orthodox tradition makes use of the full range of biblical symbols available to Christian iconography and discourse, although some of these churches have been influenced by imagery from their respective national traditions.

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Women, although not permitted to be ordained as clergy, may serve the Church as laypersons, deaconesses, or nuns. Clerical celibacy is idealized, although a married man may enter the clergy and in fact is often considered desirable.

## CALENDAR

Oriental Orthodox Church still use the Julian Calendar.

## ❖ ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH



The Armenian Apostolic Church is the national church of the Armenian people. Part of Oriental Orthodoxy, it is one of the most ancient Christian communities. The Kingdom of Armenia was the first state to adopt Christianity as its official religion under the rule of King Tiridates in the early 4th century. The church claims to have originated in the missions of Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus in the 1st century, by tradition.

The Armenian Church does not ordain women to the priesthood. Historically, however, monastic women have been ordained as deacons within a convent environment. Monastic women deacons generally do not minister in traditional parish churches or cathedrals.

Women commonly serve the church in the choir and at the organ, on parish councils, as volunteers for church events, fundraisers, and Sunday schools, as supporters through Women's Guilds, and as staff members in church offices.

In limited circumstances, the Armenian Church allows for divorce and remarriage. Cases usually include either adultery or apostasy.

Liturgically, the Church has much in common with the Roman Catholic Church. For example, their bishops wear vestments almost identical to those of Western bishops. They also typically do not use a full iconostasis, but rather a curtain.

The Armenian Church believes in One God, the Father Almighty who is the Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible & invisible.

The Armenian Church is One, Holy, Apostolic, Catholic, Church.

She believes in one Baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins.

The Armenian Church belongs to the Orthodox family of churches, known as the Oriental Orthodox, or Non-Chalcedonian, Churches, i.e., the Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian and Indian Malabar churches.

## ❖ COPTIC ORTHODOX CURCH OF ALEXANDRIA



Coptic cross

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is an Oriental Orthodox Christian church based in Egypt, Northeast Africa and the Middle East. The head of the Church and the See of Alexandria is the Patriarch of Alexandria on the Holy See of Saint Mark, who also carries the title of Coptic Pope. The church follows the Alexandrian Rite for its liturgy, prayer and devotional patrimony.

According to its tradition, the Coptic Church was established by Saint Mark, an apostle and evangelist, in the middle of the 1st century (c. 42 AD).

Coptic services take place in the very ancient Coptic language (which is based on the language used in the time of the Pharaohs), together with local languages. The liturgy and hymns remain similar to those of the early Church.

## MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Copts developed a moral code of conduct that, to a large extent, conforms with that of its Middle Eastern and Islamic environment. Believers rarely drink alcohol or eat pork, and forms of indulgence, such as overeating or sleeping long hours, are deemed incompatible with the ascetic character of the Coptic Church. Coptic society is patriarchal. Although many contemporary Coptic women are successful professionals, men are considered the head of the family.

## SACRED SYMBOLS

Apart from the Eucharist and liturgies in Coptic, the most sacred symbol in the Coptic Church is the cross, including a tattooed cross on the right wrist. Originally the tattoo was an identification mark so that Coptic children would not be mistaken for Muslims in times of upheaval. In modern times the cross has become a powerful mark of Christian identity in Egypt.

## WHAT IS SACRED?

Coptics hold the Eucharist most sacred. Furthermore, relics and icons of the saints are held sacred. Locally there are hundreds of places dedicated to martyrs, saints, and the Holy Family. Copts carry objects connected to these places or persons, such as holy oil, pictures, and crosses, as sources of baraka (blessing).

#### PRIESTHOOD

There are three ranks of priesthood: Priest, Archpriest (hegomen) and Khoori Episcopos. Priests must be married.

Bishops are drawn from monks, and so must be celibate and not have been married. A Metropolitan is the leader of group of bishops and the bishop of a large city.

The Patriarch (Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark) is the highest rank in the church.

#### WOMAN IN THE CHURCH

The Coptic Church does not permit women to be priests.

#### BELIEFS

The Coptic Church is one of the Eastern Orthodox churches and shares their general beliefs.

#### HOLY BOOKS

The Bible is, as you would expect, the basic scripture of the Coptic Church. The first translation of the Bible into Coptic script is thought have been around the 2nd century, although few early manuscripts survive.

#### HOLY DAYS AND FESTIVALS

The Coptic calendar is possibly the oldest in the world, being based on the calendar of the ancient Egyptians. It has 13 months and is divided into 3 seasons; Inundation, Sowing, and Harvest.

The Coptic Christmas is celebrated on January 7 (or 29 Kiahk - the fourth month of the Coptic calendar), which has been declared an official holiday in Egypt.

The deaths of Coptic saints are commemorated by moulids. These festivals consist of church-related activities and entertainment, and they are sometimes attended by Muslims. Moulids also provide opportunities to make pilgrimages to shrines of saints and martyrs.

#### FEASTS

Every Sunday stands as a true Sabbath (day of rest). There is no abstention from food on Sundays after the celebration of the Eucharist, even during Great Lent.

#### WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Coptic Church rituals use very ancient words and music. Local languages are also used, in order to allow the congregation to play a full part in the worship.

Sunday is the main day for services, which can last for over four hours.

#### CHURCHES

Coptic churches are built facing East so that the congregation faces East in prayer. The altar is located behind a screen, or iconostasis. Only priests, and deacons assisting at a service, are allowed through the iconostasis.

Churches are decorated with icons, wall paintings, carved wood, stuccos, and fabrics.

Candles are used a great deal in services. Incense is used during worship.

Women sit separately from men.

Many churches, monasteries, and convents stand on sites where the Holy Family stayed or that are connected to a saint or martyr.

#### MUSICS

Music is almost entirely vocal; the only musical instruments used are the cymbals and the triangle (other instruments are sometimes used in non-liturgical Coptic events).

The music of the church has been transmitted orally over the centuries because the church didn't use any system of music notation. 300 hymns have survived and are still in use.

#### LITURGIES

There are three main liturgies: The liturgies of St. Basil, used throughout the year; St. Gregory, used at Christmas, Epiphany and Easter; and St. Cyril (or St. Mark).

#### RITUALS

Daily Coptic prayer rituals are directed toward preparation for the Eucharist. Following the book of the hours, the day starts at sunset, in keeping with the time of Christ's death. Throughout the day Copts pray seven times, commemorating Christ's suffering.

The marriage ceremony is ruled by Coptic canon law and includes prayers and readings that lead to the al-iklil (the crowning ceremony), wherein the couple is crowned with two diadems that symbolize the high spiritual status of marriage.

Funeral liturgies vary according to the status (clergy or lay), age, and gender of the deceased. Burial occurs on the same day as death. Copts believe that the soul lingers for three days, and thus they perform a ritual for the spirit on the third day. On the 40th day after death, there is a church ceremony in front of a portrait of the deceased.

#### rites of passage

The most important rites of passage initiate children into the community and church. One week after birth a cluster of celebrations is held called subu', or seventh-day feast, which is celebrated by Muslims and Christians alike for good luck and protection. The child is given a name, and the child's status changes from newborn to family member. These ceremonies for Copts often include the salawat al-tisht (wash-basin prayers), at which time a priest gives the child its first bath while chanting prayers and verses from the Bible. Circumcision for boys and for many girls is performed sometime during early childhood. Having received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Communion, a boy becomes a full member of the church on his 40th day and a girl on her 80th. The new mother, whom the church considers unclean after having given birth, undergoes a cleansing ritual.

#### SACRAMENTS

There are seven sacraments in the Coptic Church.

#### Baptism

The Church baptises babies and adults

Baptism is by total immersion three times - regardless of age

The Church teaches that baptism is essential for salvation

#### Confirmation/Chrismation

This sacrament takes place immediately after Baptism. The person is anointed with oil of Myron with 36 signs of the cross on their joints and sense organs. An appropriate prayer is used for each place of anointing

Oil of Myron is made by adding spices and perfumes (including those used to anoint Jesus after the Crucifixion) to pure olive oil

#### Confession/Repentance

Regular confession is necessary if a person wishes to take communion

#### Eucharist

This is the most important sacrament

The Church accepts the doctrine of transubstantiation

Children of any age can take communion

Women may not take communion in church during their period (nor may people of either sex who are bleeding)

People are expected to receive communion immediately after the sacraments of Baptism, Confession, Matrimony and Priesthood

Adults must fast for 9 hours before communion, should dress appropriately, and abstain from sex on the day and eve of communion

#### Unction of the Sick

#### Matrimony

#### Priesthood

#### FASTING

Fasting is an important spiritual element of Coptic life. While it is regarded as an important spiritual practice, it is a voluntary spiritual sacrifice and the Church does not insist that people fast. Fasting is excused for those who are unwell.

Fasting requires not eating at all for a period, and then abstaining from meat, fish, dairy products and cooking fats or oil derived from animals.

There are 210 days of fasting each year. Fasts include the Fast of the Nativity (43 days), the Fast of the Apostles (duration varies), the Fast of the Virgin Mary (15 days), the Fast of Nineveh, and the Great Fast (Lent), which lasts 55 days. Many Copts also fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Copts typically wear Western clothing. In villages Coptic women wear veils similar to those of Muslim women. Monks and nuns wear a skullcap called a qalansuwa that is divided into two halves, with crosses embroidered on each half. The split symbolizes the struggle Saint Anthony experienced in the desert with the devil, who tore his cap in two.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Copts fast from all animal products, including meat, eggs, milk, and butter, every Wednesday and Friday, as well as during the days of Lent, Advent, and several other feasts, for a total of more than 200 days a year. The aged, children, and pregnant women are not excused from the fasts. Copts also fast for a minimum of nine hours before officiating at, or partaking in, the Eucharist. Fasting is a physical and a spiritual exercise and includes sexual abstinence.

#### DRINKING

The Church bans spirits (alcoholic drinks made by distillation) and the misuse of alcohol. Wine is permitted, but not in excess.

#### SUICIDE

The former pope, Shenouda III, said suicide is a crime of murder, as people do not own their souls.

#### EUTHANASIA

The Church does not permit euthanasia.

#### ABORTION

The Church believes that life begins at the moment of conception and regards a foetus as a living being who has the right to both life and dignity.

The Church states that "once a pregnancy has occurred, than it is a sin to abort the baby, even if its age is only one hour". However, abortion can be allowed if it is the only way to save the mother's life.

#### ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

The Church accepts organ transplants, whether from dead or living persons.

#### CONTRAPCEPTION

The Church accepts birth control methods that don't amount to abortion.

#### SEXUAL ETHICS

The Church expects its members to avoid any form of sexual immorality. Any form of physical intimacy should be avoided outside marriage.

#### MARRIAGE

Coptic marriages are monogamous.

Copts marry within the faith - non-Coptic partners are required to convert.

Copts undergo a ceremony of Betrothal in advance of marriage during which the couple exchange rings engraved with their partner's name; the betrothal is not a final commitment and can be renounced.

Divorce and remarriage is only permitted for the innocent party in cases of adultery or conversion, although this is currently

(2008) a controversial issue after Egypt's Higher Civil Court ruled that Copts who had been through a civil divorce had the legal right to remarry.

Marriages can be annulled in cases of deceit, such as bigamy.

#### **HOMOSEXUALITY**

The Church believes that homosexual acts are wrong.

The Church does not permit the ordination of gay priests.

### **❖ SYRIAC ORTHODOX CHURCH**



Coat Of Arms

The Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, or Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, is an Oriental Orthodox Church with autocephalous patriarchate established in Antioch in 518, tracing its founding to St. Peter and St. Paul in the 1st century, according to its tradition.

The Church uses the Divine Liturgy of Saint James, associated with St. James, the "brother" of Jesus and patriarch among the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem.

Syriac is the official and liturgical language of the Church based on Syriac Christianity.

Syriac Orthodox clergy and some devout laity follow a regimen of seven prayers a day, in accordance with Psalm 119.

According to the Syriac tradition, an ecclesiastical day starts at sunset:

Evening or Ramsho prayer (Vespers)

Night prayer or Sootoro prayer (Compline)

Midnight or Lilyo prayer (Matins)

Morning or Saphro prayer (Prime or Lauds, 6 a.m.)

Third Hour or tloth sho`in prayer (Terce, 9 a.m.)

Sixth Hour or sheth sho`in prayer (Sext, noon)

Ninth Hour or tsha` sho`in prayer (None, 3 p.m.)

The liturgical service, which is called Holy Qurbono in Syriac Aramaic and means "Eucharist", is celebrated on Sundays and special occasions.

Syriac Orthodox Churches use the Peshitta as its Bible. The New Testament books of this Bible are estimated to have been translated from Greek to Syriac between the late 1st century to the early 3rd century AD. The Old Testament of the Peshitta was translated from Hebrew, probably in the 2nd century. The New Testament of the Peshitta, which originally excluded certain disputed books, had become the standard by the early 5th century, replacing two early Syriac versions of the gospels.

### **❖ ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**



Ethiopian cross

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the largest of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church broke away from mainline Christianity long before the Great Schism and only recognizes the first three ecumenical councils: Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus. Ethiopian Orthodox churches are unique for strongly emphasizing certain Old Testament laws such as dietary restrictions, for performing exorcisms, and for using a now-extinct language, Ge'ez, for official liturgical purposes. They also prescribe specific rules for who may receive communion and dedicate their church buildings to patron saints. Membership of this denomination is estimated at more than 40 million.

Ethiopian Orthodox Churches are notable for their strong adherence to many Old Testament practices, including restrictions on pork and other non-kosher foods.

They also heavily emphasize certain feast and fast days.

Worshippers are expected to remove their shoes prior to entering a church building.

Women are seated separately from men and may not enter during their menstrual period.

Ethiopian Orthodox churches are each devoted to a patron saint and frequently pray to him/her, as well as to Mary.

Exorcism is a common practice as well.

Ethiopian Orthodox churches usually use the local dialect for sermons and other communication, but all liturgy is performed in the Ge'ez language, which today is used for no other purpose.

## ❖ **ERITREAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, as well as a portion of the St. Thomas Christians in India**



Eritrean Orthodox Cross

The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church is an Oriental Orthodox church with its headquarters in Asmara, Eritrea. Its autocephaly was recognised by Pope Shenouda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria after Eritrea gained its independence in 1993.

In common with all Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Western Orthodox churches; the Catholic Church and the Old Catholic churches of the Union of Utrecht, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church professes belief in the seven sacraments of baptism, confirmation, eucharist, confession, the anointing of the sick, matrimony, and holy orders. It regards the first four as being "necessary for every believer"

As is the tradition of the East, non-episcopal clergy may be married at the time of ordination, which is reserved for adult males. In order to demonstrate that a bishop is a member of a synod, there must be at least three bishops taking part in any episcopal ordination.

The Church holds the ancient Christian belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Ceremonies are elaborate by western standards.

The practice of reconciliation in the sacrament of penance is regarded as strictly personal, and members of the Church are encouraged to select a confessor (also referred to as a 'soul father') who is well known to them and with whom they are comfortable.

As in other Eastern Christian traditions, the bond of marriage is able to be dissolved, but only on the grounds of adultery. To safeguard the practice of the faith, Church members are discouraged from marrying people outside of the Orthodox communion. Church members who undergo a purely civil ceremony are not regarded as sacramentally married.

The Divine Liturgy and other religious services of the Eritrean Church are celebrated in the Ge'ez language.

The Eritrean church like the Ethiopian church places a heavier emphasis on Old Testament teachings than one might find in Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant churches, and its followers adhere to certain practices that one finds in Orthodox or Conservative Judaism.

Eritrean Christians, like some other Eastern Christians, traditionally follow dietary rules that are similar to Jewish Kashrut, specifically with regard to how an animal is slaughtered. Similarly, pork is prohibited, though unlike Rabbinical Kashrut, Ethiopian cuisine does mix dairy products with meat.

Women are prohibited from entering the church temple during menses; they are also expected to cover their hair with a large scarf (or shash) while in church, As with Orthodox synagogues, men and women are seated separately in the Eritrean church, with men on the left and women on the right (when facing the altar).

Eritrean Orthodox worshippers remove their shoes when entering a church temple.

The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church is Sabbatarian, observing the Sabbath on Saturday, in addition to the Lord's Day on Sunday, although more emphasis, because of the Resurrection of Christ, is laid upon Sunday.

The Eritrean Orthodox Church calls for male circumcision, with near-universal prevalence among Orthodox men in Eritrea.

### **Sacraments**

In common with all Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church professes belief in the seven sacraments of baptism, confirmation, eucharist, confession, the anointing of the sick, matrimony or holy orders. It regards the first four as being "necessary for every believer". A church sacrament is a holy ordinance through which the believer receives an invisible grace under the form of an outward sign, visible or audible. The Bible contains some instructions regarding every one of the seven sacraments.

### **The Divine Liturgy**

The Divine Liturgy is the central worship service of the Orthodox Church and the very heart of our church's life. It offers worshippers the proclamation of the Word of God in prayer, hymns, Biblical readings and sermon.

### **Communion/Eucharist**

The current practice of the Orthodox Church is that only members of the Orthodox Church who are in good standing may approach to receive Holy Communion. The Orthodox Church understands the Eucharist to be an action of the people of God that signifies a oneness of faith, worship and life.

### **Confession**

The Church urges all Orthodox Christians to receive this Sacrament on a regular basis. Confession is offered privately by appointment with any Orthodox priest who has been blessed to hear Confessions. The priest then offers a prayer of forgiveness if there is sincere contrition and desire to turn away from sin and toward Christ. All confessions are kept in strictest confidence.

### **The anointing of the sick/Uncion**

Faithful members of the church are allowed to take small amounts of Uncion (Holy water) home with them to keep throughout the year. The consecration of holy water for the healing of physical and spiritual sickness and sin. This service can be conducted at church or in homes as needed. The clergy have reserved Uncion for anointing the sick at any time. Holy

### **Baptism**

For centuries, the prevailing practice in the Orthodox Church has been to baptize infants, although older children and adults can also be baptized if they didn't baptize for so many reasons. For those parents who wish to have their children baptized, they are

encouraged to plan a baptism, for girl when 80 days old and for boy when 40 days old. Pre-baptismal instruction is required for parents and godparents.

#### **Marriage**

It is important that the priest should be contacted before the wedding dates are planned. An initial meeting with the priest and premarital counseling is required. The Church currently has no provision for blessing marriages between Orthodox Christians and non-Christians (such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, etc.). In the event that a member of the Orthodox Church marries a non-Orthodox Christian who refuses to have their marriage blessed in the Orthodox Church, or who marries a non-Christian, he or she should consult with a priest for spiritual counsel.

#### **Funeral**

Immediately upon death the church can be contacted so that a priest may come and lead the family in prayer before the body is removed. The clergy will also be available to help with all funeral arrangements, as well as a brief prayer service.

#### **Memorials**

Memorial services are conducted as needed throughout the year, most commonly one year after death. Always contact the church office in advance to arrange memorials. General memorial prayers are offered for all the departed at the conclusion of a Divine Liturgy.

#### **Language**

Liturgy and other religious services of the Eritrean Church are celebrated in the Geez language, which has been the language of the Church for centuries. Sermons are also delivered in the local languages. The clergy at St. Mary's use a mixture of Geez and Tigrinya. The choir sings in Tigrinya. English language is also used in many occasions especially during the Bible study and other educational programs.

## ❖ **MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH**

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was founded by St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, who came to India in A.D. 52. At least from the fourth century, the Indian Church entered into a close relationship with the Persian or East Syrian Church. From the Persians, the Indians inherited The East Syrian language and liturgies, and gradually came to be known as Syrian Christians. In the sixteenth century Roman Catholic missionaries came to Kerala. They tried to unite the Syrian Christians to the Roman Catholic Church and this led to a split in the community. Those who accepted Roman Catholicism are the present Syro-Malabar Catholics. Later, Western Protestant missionaries came to Kerala and worked among The Syrian Christians. This also created certain divisions in the community. In the seventeenth century, the Church came in to relationship with the Antiochene Church, which again caused splits. As a result of this relationship, the Church received West Syrian liturgies and practices. The Church entered into a new phase of its history by the establishment of the Catholicate in 1912.

At present, the Church is using the West Syrian liturgy. The faith of the Church is that which was established by the three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (A.D. 325), Constantinople (A.D. 381) and Ephesus (A.D. 431).

The Church is in communion with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches namely, Syriac, Alexandrian, Armenian, Eritrean and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. The Church is in good ecumenical relationship with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches.

This Church now consists of about 2.5 million members, who are spread all over the world, though the majority reside in The state of Kerala in South West India. The Church as a whole is divided into 30 ecclesial units called dioceses and each diocese is served by a bishop, administratively and spiritually.

## ✓ **ORTHODOX CHURCH (called "Eastern Orthodox")**



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.

For Orthodox Christians the Church of the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople is an important center, though since 1453 the building has been a mosque and museum.

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. Mount Athos, in northern Greece, contains a vast complex of Orthodox monasteries, where at its peak, in the 1400s, 40,000 monks may have been in residence.

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.

#### SACRAMENTS

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.

##### **Baptism**

Children of Orthodox families are normally baptized shortly after birth.

##### **Chrismation**

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.

### **Marriage**

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 of the sick**

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.

### **Confession**

Confession, also called penance, is a sacrament through which sins can be repented and absolved, or forgiven.

### **WEDDING**

In the Eastern Orthodox church the wedding ceremony most often follows service, which is followed by the marriage service. In the betrothal service, the priest first blesses the rings the couple exchange, and places them on the fourth fingers of their right hands. Later comes the marriage ceremony. The priest gives the man and woman lighted candles to hold, signifying that the light of God will follow them through their married lives. A wedding crown, made of flowers or an actual crown of gold and jewels, is placed on the groom and then on the bride, and the two drink from a common cup to signify the life they will be sharing. Portions of the Bible, including the letters of Paul, are read at these services.

### **FUNERAL**

There is a public announcement of the death, the body is prepared, there are funeral services at a church, a procession of cars to the cemetery, and then a burial, where the body is placed in a coffin into the ground, or a cremation, where the body is burned and the ashes placed in a container and later buried or scattered. Often, there is a viewing of the body. This is usually held at the funeral home after the body has been embalmed, or preserved with chemicals. The coffin lid may be open so that mourners, those saddened by the death, can see the dead person one last time. Funeral services include prayers, the singing of hymns, and speeches, or eulogies, in honor of the dead person.

In Eastern Orthodox tradition, the vigil service is called parastasis or panikhida, and is a time for thinking about death. The Eastern funeral service includes hymns, chants, and Bible readings. Burial is preferred but the Orthodox Church allows cremation if the law of the country requires it. Christian funerals are usually followed by a meal at the home of the deceased or dead person. This is a chance for friends and relatives to express their sadness over the death and release their emotions.

### **WORSHIP/RITUALS**

For Orthodox Christians, worship joins the human being to God in prayer and unites them to the Church, the body of Christ. Orthodox Christians do not worship the icons, but pray through the icons to God.

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.

The main service is called the Divine Liturgy, during which people receive the bread and wine.

There are three main parts:

- the Proskomedia - meaning 'offering' when the bread and wine is prepared
- the Liturgy of the Catechumens focused on the word of God in the Bible
- the Liturgy of the Faithful focused on the Eucharist

### **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).

## ❖ GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

The name Greek Orthodox Church or Greek Orthodoxy, is a term referring to the body of several Churches within the larger

communion of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, whose liturgy is or was traditionally conducted in Koine Greek, the original language of the Septuagint and New Testament, and whose history, traditions, and theology are rooted in the early Church Fathers and the culture of the Byzantine Empire. Greek Orthodox Christianity has also traditionally placed heavy emphasis and awarded high prestige to traditions of Christian monasticism and asceticism, with origins in Early Christianity in the Near East and in Byzantine Anatolia.

The Orthodox hold a common doctrine and a common form of worship, and they see themselves not as separate Churches but as administrative units of one single Church.

Orthodox Churches, unlike the Catholic Church, have no Bishopric head, such as a Pope, and hold the belief that Christ is the head of the Church. However, they are each governed by a committee of Bishops, called the Holy Synod, with one central Bishop holding the honorary title of "first among equals."

They are notable for their extensive tradition of iconography, for their veneration of the Mother of God and the Saints, and for their use of the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, which is a standardized worship service dating back to the fourth century A.D. in its current form.

## ❖ SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Serbian Orthodox Church is one of the autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches. It is the second oldest Slavic Orthodox Church in the world (after the Bulgarian Orthodox Church).

The Serbian Orthodox Church comprises the majority of the population in Serbia, Montenegro, and the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is organized into metropolises and eparchies.

The Serbian Orthodox Church is an autocephalous, or ecclesiastically independent, member of the Eastern Orthodox communion. Serbian Patriarch serves as first among equals in his church.

One of the key characteristics of the Serbian Orthodox church is that at least two people must lead a service, the likes of which usually occurs every day of the week.

Usually, all of the services are conducted on a daily basis only in monasteries and cathedrals, while parish churches might only do the services on the weekend and major feast days. The Divine Liturgy is not celebrated on weekdays during the preparatory season of Great Lent. Communion is consecrated on Sundays and distributed during the week at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Services, especially the Divine Liturgy, can only be performed once a day on any particular altar.

The Serbian Orthodox Church is characterized by monotheistic Trinitarianism.

A key part of the Serbian Orthodox religion is the Slava, a celebration of the Clan Patron Saint, placed into Serb Orthodox religious canon by the first Serb archbishop Saint Sava.

The sacred sacrament of communion as practised by Serbian Orthodox Christians is the same as that of all Eastern Orthodox Christians. The sacrament is received only after the recipient has been baptized and prepared themselves by confessing their sins beforehand. The recipient must also abstain from consuming any food or liquids starting from the evening of the day before. Communion initially takes the form of wine and leavened bread and is transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ by the priest.

## ❖ RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



The three-barred cross of the Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), alternatively legally known as the Moscow Patriarchate is one of the autocephalous Eastern Orthodox churches, in full communion with other Eastern Orthodox patriarchates. The Primate of the ROC is the Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus'.

## ❖ ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Romanian Orthodox Church is an autocephalous Orthodox Church in full communion with other Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches and ranked seventh in order of precedence. Since 1925, the Church's Primate bears the title of Patriarch. Its jurisdiction covers the territories of Romania and Moldova, with additional dioceses for Romanians living in nearby Serbia and Hungary, as well as for diaspora communities in Central and Western Europe, North America and Oceania.

Currently it is the only self-governing Church within Orthodoxy to have a Romance language for its principal and native tongue. The Romanian Orthodox Church is the second-largest in size behind the Russian Orthodox Church.

## ❖ BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is an autocephalous Orthodox Church. It is the oldest Slavic Orthodox Church with some 6.5 million members in the Republic of Bulgaria and between 1.5 and 2.0 million members in a number of European countries, the Americas and Australia. It was recognized as an independent Church by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 870 AD.

## ❖ GEORGIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church is an autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Church in full communion with the other churches of Eastern Orthodoxy. It is Georgia's dominant religious institution, and a majority of Georgian people are members. The Georgian Orthodox Church is one of the oldest churches in the world.

As in similar autocephalous Orthodox churches, the Church's highest governing body is the Holy Synod of bishops.

Orthodox Christianity was the state religion throughout most of Georgian history until 1921. The current Constitution of Georgia recognizes the special role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the country's history, but also stipulates the independence of the church from the state.

The church is the most trusted institution in Georgia.

## ❖ GREEK OLD CALENDARISTS (called "Genuine Orthodox" or "True Orthodox")

Greek Old Calendarists sometimes abbreviated as GOC ("Genuine Orthodox Christians"), are groups of Old Calendarist Orthodox Christians that remained committed to the traditional Orthodox practice and are not in communion with many other Orthodox churches such as the Orthodox Church of Greece, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, or the Church of Cyprus. The split began with a disagreement over the abandonment of the traditional church calendar (also called the Julian calendar) in preference to the adoption of the Revised Julian calendar which is similar to the papal Gregorian calendar but will pull ahead by one day in the year 2800 and over other liturgical reforms that were introduced.

Greek Old Calendarists adhere to traditional Greek Orthodox practices. While they are called (and might informally call themselves) "Old Calendarist," many maintain that they have not separated over a mere calendar. Instead, the calendar is a symptom of what has been called "the pan-heresy of ecumenism."

Other than the calendar issue, Old Calendarists generally maintain the rites and beliefs of the Church of Greece, although there are other important differences on Baptism and the Oriental Orthodox. Each church rejects the leaders of the other. Some accept baptisms performed by the other church. Officially, however, each side usually receives the members of the other through chrismation (confirmation).

## ❖ RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS (or "Old Ritualists")

In Eastern Orthodox church history, the Old Believers, or Old Ritualists are Eastern Orthodox Christians who maintain the liturgical and ritual practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church as they existed prior to the reforms of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow between 1652 and 1666.

Old Believers use two fingers while making the Sign of the Cross (the pointer finger straight, middle finger slightly bent) while new-style Orthodoxy uses three fingers for the sign of cross (three fingers (including the thumb) held together at point, two fingers folded). Old Ritualists generally say the Jesus Prayer with the Sign of the Cross, while New Ritualists use the Sign of the Cross as a Trinitarian symbol. This makes for a significant difference between the two branches of Russian Orthodoxy, and one of the most noticeable.

Old Believers reject any changes and emendations of liturgical texts and rituals introduced by the reforms of Patriarch Nikon. Thus they continue to use the previous Church Slavonic translation of the Greek texts, including the Psalter, striving to preserve intact the "pre-Nikonian" practices of the Russian Church.

Old Believers only recognize performing baptism through three full immersions, in agreement with the Greek practice, but reject the validity of any baptismal rite performed otherwise (for example through pouring or sprinkling, as the Russian Orthodox Church has occasionally accepted since the 18th century).

Old Believers perform the Liturgy with seven prosphora, instead of five as in new-rite Russian Orthodoxy or a single large prosphoron, as sometimes done by the Greeks and Arabs.

Old Believers chant the alleluia verse after the psalmody twice rather than the three times mandated by the Nikonian reforms.

Old Believers do not use polyphonic singing as the new-style Russian practice, but only the monodic, unison singing of Znamenny chant. In this respect it represents a tradition that parallels the use of Byzantine chant and neumatic notation.

## ✓ SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY

Spiritual Christianity refers to "folk Protestants" (narodny protestanty), non-Orthodox indigenous to the Russian Empire that emerged from among the Orthodox, and from the Bezpopovtsy Raskolniks. Origins may be due to Protestant movements imported to Russia by missionaries, mixed with folk traditions, resulting in tribes of believers collectively called sektanty (sects), and many labeled by Russian Orthodox Church for their particular heresy - not fasting, meeting on Saturday, rejecting the spirit, castration, self-flagellation, etc.

These heterodox (non-Orthodox) groups "rejected ritual and outward observances, believing instead in the direct revelation of God to the inner man". Adherents are called Spiritual Christians.

Spiritual Christians believe that the validity of an individual's observance of God's Law was suppressed and prohibited as Israel became politicized; they believe that Jesus Christ promoted the New Covenant of Jeremiah by sacrificing his life to initiate the Messianic Era. The religion of the Spiritual Christians encourages individual spiritual interpretation and substitute observances of Biblical Law, with individual approaches to be understood and respected by all. Spiritual Christians have taken an inclusive approach to Christianity; they embrace all relevant aspects of the collective human experience which can be related to timeless Biblical themes.

Rejecting bureaucratic church hierarchy, they considered their religious organization as a homogeneous community, without division into laymen and clergy with respect to all but practical understanding of the Biblical tradition. Because of their rejection of hierarchy and authority, the Imperial government considered them suspect. In the modern era, some Spiritual Christian churches hardened their own doctrine and practices, reducing the flexibility first found in this sect.

## ❖ DOUKHOBOR

The Doukhobors or Dukhobors are a Spiritual Christian religious group of Russian origin. They are one of many non-Orthodox ethno-confessional faiths in Russia, often categorized as "folk-Protestants", Spiritual Christians, sectarians, and/or heretics. They are distinguished as pacifists who lived in their own villages, rejected personal materialism, worked together, and developed a tradition of oral history and memorizing and singing hymns and verses. Before 1886, they had series of single leaders.

They rejected the Russian Orthodox priesthood, the use of icons, and all associated church ritual. They came to believe that the Bible alone, as a supreme source, was not enough to reach divine revelation, and that doctrinal conflicts can interfere with their faith. Their goal was to internalize the living spirit of God so that God's spirit would be revealed within each individual. Bible teachings are evident in some published Doukhobor psalms, hymns, and beliefs. They draw on the characteristics of God, as portrayed by Jesus Christ, to guide their faith as God's peaceful ambassadors.

## ❖ MOLOKAN

A Molokan is a member of various Spiritual Christian sects that evolved from Eastern Christianity in the East Slavic lands. Their traditions - especially dairy consumption during Christian fasts—did not conform to those of the Russian Orthodox Church, and they were regarded as neither Eastern Orthodox, nor Catholic, nor Protestant.[citation needed]. The term Molokan is an exonym used by their Orthodox neighbors; they tend to identify themselves as Spiritual Christians.

Unlike the Protestant "reformists" of Western Europe, Molokans rejected conformity. There are almost as many different ways among Molokans as there are Molokans. Some built chapels for worship, kept sacraments, and revered saints and icons, while others (like Ikonobortsy, "icon-wrestlers") discarded these practices in the pursuit of individual approaches to scripture. In general, they rejected the institutionalized formalism of Orthodoxy and denominations with similar doctrines in favor of more emphasis on "Original Christianity" as they understood it. They emphasized spirituality and spiritual practice; such sacramental practices as water baptism have been permitted only as tangible signs and symbols of more important spiritual truths.

Similar to Presbyterians among Protestants, and considered heretical by the Orthodox Church, they elect a council of dominant elders who preserve a sort of apostolic succession. Molokans had some practices similar to the European Quakers and Mennonites, such as pacifism, communal organization, spiritual meetings, and sub-groupings.

Molokans adhere to Old Testament laws in the spirit of the Christian New Covenant. They perform morning and evening worship as symbols of the morning and evening offerings prescribed in the Pentateuch. All sects refrain from eating pork, shellfish, or other "unclean" foods, as defined in the Bible at least on holy days. Most keep the Sabbath on Saturday, as well as all keeping at least the first Sunday of every month, as a Biblical Rosh Chodesh. Some refuse to serve on juries or file lawsuits against fellow church members. Church services, led by a Lector, are conducted predominantly in the local language, but also in Old Slavonic, which was common to the Orthodox Church. Men and women sit apart, and services are usually quite active. They have been using the liturgy of Trakai at least since the 1890s. Like Muslims, Molokans have clerics but no clerical hierarchy. They must not have eaten pork or drunk alcohol recently before worship. They respect but do not worship saints, and do not worship symbols or images, such as icons or crosses. Proselytism is encouraged to attract more members, as the Molokans traditionally practice endogamy and marry within the faith. Circumcision is uncommon.

The Molokan year is a system of weeks based around the Julian Calendar. Some Molokan congregations have adopted the Gregorian Calendar.

## ➤ WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

Western Christianity is the type of Christianity which developed in the areas of the former Western Roman Empire.

Western Christianity consists of the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church (in contrast to the Eastern rites in communion with Rome), Independent Catholicism, and a wide variety of Protestant denominations.

The name "Western Christianity" is applied in order to distinguish these from Eastern Christianity.

## ✓ 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 baptistery 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.

## ❖ ANABAPTISTS (RADICAL PROTESTANTS)

Anabaptist groups meet weekly or fortnightly for communal worship and observe some elements of the Christian year (e.g., Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost).

Anabaptist groups diverge sharply on the question of a devoted sacred space. Most progressive Anabaptist groups worship in church buildings, which they sometimes call meetinghouses. Many conservative groups, however, worship in homes or barns, a reminder to them that God is present wherever God's people gather.

From their beginning, Anabaptists have practiced adult baptism and observed the Lord's Supper, both of which they view as symbolic rites or "ordinances." In addition, many Anabaptist groups have placed great significance on church discipline and foot washing.

Old Order Anabaptists often have family devotions that include Bible reading and prayer, though small group Bible studies are discouraged. Progressive Anabaptist groups encourage personal Bible study and prayer as well as involvement in small groups for Bible study, prayer, support, and encouragement.

### ▪ AMISH

The Amish are a group of traditionalist Christian church fellowships with Swiss German Anabaptist origins. They are closely related to, but distinct from, Mennonite churches. The Amish are known for simple living, plain dress, and reluctance to adopt many conveniences of modern technology.

The history of the Amish church began with a schism in Switzerland within a group of Swiss and Alsatian Anabaptists in 1693 led by Jakob Ammann. Those who followed Ammann became known as Amish. In the second half of the 19th century, the Amish divided into Old Order Amish and Amish Mennonites. The latter mostly assimilated into the main society during the 20th century, whereas the Old Order Amish retained much of their traditional culture. When it is spoken of Amish today, normally only the Old Order Amish are meant.

Two key concepts for understanding Amish practices are their rejection of Hochmut (pride, arrogance, haughtiness) and the high value they place on Demut (humility) and Gelassenheit (calmness, composure, placidity), often translated as "submission" or "letting-be". Gelassenheit is perhaps better understood as a reluctance to be forward, to be self-promoting, or to assert oneself.

Amish church membership begins with baptism, usually between the ages of 19 and 23. It is a requirement for marriage within the Amish church. Once a person is baptized within the church, he or she may marry only within the faith.

Church districts average between 20 and 40 families and worship services are held every other Sunday in a member's home. The district is led by a bishop and several ministers and deacons. The rules of the church, the Ordnung, must be observed by every member and cover many aspects of day-to-day living, including prohibitions or limitations on the use of power-line electricity, telephones, and automobiles, as well as regulations on clothing.

Bible is the main holy book. There's also a prayer book some Amish use in services and at home.

The Amish wear all homemade clothes. There isn't a button to be found on any of their clothes, they use hooks and eyes instead. The men usually wear white shirts and black trousers with suspenders and broad-brimmed hats. The guys also wear beards but they don't include mustaches. The ladies sport long dresses, capes or shawls over their shoulders, and bonnets. Mostly the colors are very plain.

Amish celebrate the same holy days as other Christians.

Amish only marry other Amish, although not necessarily from their own community. They may not marry a first cousin, and are discouraged from marrying a second cousin.

The Amish have a traditional code of ethics that rejects sex outside of marriage, divorce, homosexuality and public nakedness as sins forbidden by the Bible. Modesty and purity are vital virtues.

The Amish are pacifists, basing this on Jesus' instruction that one should love one's enemy. They reject all forms of violence.

The Amish admire large families and tend not to use birth control other than to control the spacing of children. They have large families averaging 7-8 children.

The Amish worship in their houses, which are designed to allow a large group to meet. Different households take it in turns to host worship.

A 3-hour preaching service takes place every other Sunday morning and is followed by a shared meal.

On Sunday evening there may be a meeting for young people of several communities who gather in a house to sing hymns and talk, sitting on opposite sides of a long table.

Communion services are held twice a year.

Most Amish do not buy commercial insurance or participate in Social Security. As present-day Anabaptists, Amish church members practice nonresistance and will not perform any type of military service.

The Amish value rural life, manual labor, and humility, all under the auspices of living what they interpret to be God's word.

Members who do not conform to these community expectations and who cannot be convinced to repent are excommunicated.

In addition to excommunication, members may be shunned, a practice that limits social contacts to shame the wayward member

into returning to the church. Almost 90 percent of Amish teenagers choose to be baptized and join the church. During an adolescent period of rumspringa ("running around") in some communities, nonconforming behavior that would result in the shunning of an adult who had made the permanent commitment of baptism, may be met with a degree of forbearance. Amish church groups seek to maintain a degree of separation from the non-Amish world, i.e. American and Canadian society. Non-Amish people are generally referred to as 'English'. There is generally a heavy emphasis on church and family relationships. They typically operate their own one-room schools and discontinue formal education after grade eight, at age 13/14. Until the children turn 16, they have vocational training under the tutelage of their parents, community, and the school teacher. Higher education is generally discouraged as it can lead to social segregation and the unraveling of the community.

## ▪ HUTTERITES

Hutterites (German: Hutterer) are an ethno religious group that is a communal branch of Anabaptists who, like the Amish and Mennonites, trace their roots to the Radical Reformation of the 16th century.

The founder of the Hutterites, Jakob Hutter, "established the Hutterite colonies on the basis of the Schleithem Confession, a classic Anabaptist statement of faith", with the first communes being formed in 1528.

Since the death of their eponym Jakob Hutter in 1536, the beliefs of the Hutterites, especially living in a community of goods and absolute pacifism, have resulted in hundreds of years of diaspora in many countries.

The Hutterites are a communal people, living on hundreds of scattered bruderhöfe or colonies throughout the prairies of northwestern North America. On average, fifteen families live and work on the typical Hutterite colony, where they farm, raise livestock and produce manufactured goods for sustenance.

The communal lifestyle of the Hutterites finds its roots in the biblical teachings of Christ and the Apostles. Emerging as a distinct culture and religious group in the early 16th century, this non-resistant Anabaptist sect endured great persecution and death at the hands of the state and church in medieval Europe.

Hutterites are insistent that all of life belongs under the lordship of Jesus. Along with beliefs in nonviolence and baptism following confession of faith, the radical economic practice of sharing goods in intentional community stems from this principle. All of Hutterite experience is fashioned in the context of this shared life.

Church services, which occur daily on most communities, form the core of Hutterite devotional life. They serve to refocus all things in life back on God.

Evening services, known as Gebet, is approximately half an hour in length, and takes place before the evening meal. On Sunday and on holy days, church services are held in the forenoon as well. The morning service typically lasts about 75 minutes.

All services begin with song. Most Hutterite ministers still line the words to the song for the congregation, this practice is becoming less common, especially among the Schmiedeleut. Lining the songs has been retained although originally lining was practiced because church attendees lacked individual songbooks.

Like most other Christians, Hutterites commemorate Christmas, Easter and Pentecost as the high points of the church year. These three holy days are marked by three days of morning services. Ascension and the Annunciation of Mary are also observed. Special services (Lehren) are held for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Other special days such as thanksgiving are also celebrated.

Young Hutterite men and women have ample opportunities to meet Hutterite young people from other colonies. They can go on visits, spend time together or even spend weeks working in another colony or helping out in some way. Often these visits will result in young men and women finding a future mate. Usually, they will find a future partner from another colony, but almost always from the same sect. Courting or dating off the colony does not happen.

Hutterites strongly encourage purity in relationships.

Hutterites can marry only members of the Hutterian Brethren Church. This means that they must be baptised before they can get married. Of course, marriage is defined as the holy union of one man and one woman.

When a couple marries, the woman leaves her home colony and lives at her husband's colony.

The male is expected to initiate the proceedings leading to the wedding. He will seek permission and guidance from the elders in his colony, and his intentions will be announced publicly.

Traditionally, the groom-to-be goes to the bride's colony with family and friends for what is known as the Aufred Hulba, usually a week or two prior to the wedding. On this Sunday afternoon or evening there will be a gathering in the bride's home consisting of elders, friends, relatives and youth where the groom-to-be publicly asks the parents' consent for their daughter's hand in marriage. There is a lot of well-wishing, admonishment, and advice from elders, friends, and relatives; this is a festive time, followed by a fine supper.

Later in the evening at the Hulba there will be a gathering of the entire colony and invited guests to celebrate this happy event. The couple is seated at front center, surrounded by family and close friends on one side, and ministers and other special guests on the other. Singing in various forms takes place, from choral arrangements by the youth to various small groups, children's groups and traditional songs by the entire congregation.

Many from the bride's colony will not be at the wedding, as most weddings take place on the groom's colony; so this will be their only chance to celebrate with her.

A day of the following week following the Aufred Hulba is usually set aside for the couple to obtain legal documents, and for the couple's families to spend some time together.

The Saturday before the wedding, the bride will say goodbye to friends staying behind; the couple will be escorted in a train of vehicles carrying the wedding party to the groom's colony. The arrival of this motorcade is a merry event: An 'organized confusion' of shouting, coloured balloons and honking horns lead the bride and groom's motorcade into the colony. The bride

and guests are greeted and welcomed by members of the community. Shortly after there is a short church ceremony, festive supper, and a other activities similar to the previous Sunday's celebration.

The wedding ceremony takes place Sunday morning where at the end of a lengthy sermon on Christian conduct in marriage, the couple stands before the assembled church, exchanges wedding vows and is pronounced man and wife.

Following the wedding ceremony a traditional mid day wedding meal is served.

Hutterites do not believe in divorce and marriage is seen as a sacred ceremony which stands for the life of the couple.

Baptism is one of the most important steps in the life of a Hutterite. Baptism is when Hutterites make a vow to God and to the church to remain steadfast and faithful for the remainder of their lives. It is taken very seriously by members.

Hutterites typically ask for baptism between their 20th and 30th birthday. Baptism comes after the young people have received religious instructions for 5 to 10 years in school, Sunday School, and church. Long before baptism is requested, the individual is expected to show clear signs of a regenerate life, and a commitment to the faith. It is an important decision in the life of a Hutterite and proper emphasis is placed on preparation. Individual who have shown through their lifestyle that they are truly serious and really want to belong to the church of God are baptized.

## ■ **MENNONITES**

The Mennonites are members of certain Christian groups belonging to the church communities of Anabaptist denominations named after Menno Simons (1496–1561) of Friesland (which today is a province of the Netherlands).

The early teachings of the Mennonites were founded on the belief in both the mission and ministry of Jesus, which the original Anabaptist followers held to with great conviction despite persecution by the various Roman Catholic and Protestant states.

Mennonite congregations worldwide embody the full scope of Mennonite practice from "plain people" to those who are indistinguishable in dress and appearance from the general population. Mennonites can be found in communities in at least 87 countries on six continents. The largest populations of Mennonites are to be found in Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India and the United States.

The Mennonite church has no formal celibate religious order similar to monasticism, but recognizes the legitimacy of and honours both the single state and the sanctity of marriage of its members. Single persons are expected to be chaste, and marriage is held to be a lifelong, monogamous and faithful covenant between a man and a woman. In conservative groups, divorce is discouraged, and it is believed that the "hardness of the heart" of people is the ultimate cause of divorce. Some conservative churches have disciplined members who have unilaterally divorced their spouses outside of cases of sexual unfaithfulness or acute abuse. Until approximately the 1960s or 1970s, before the more widespread urbanization of the Mennonite demographic, divorce was quite rare. In recent times, divorce is more common, and also carries less stigma, particularly in cases where abuse was known.

Mennonite theology emphasizes the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. Their core beliefs deriving from Anabaptist traditions are the authority of Scripture and the Holy Spirit; salvation through conversion by the Spirit of God; believer's baptism, usually by pouring or immersion; discipline in the church (including shunning in some congregations); and the Lord's Supper as a memorial rather than as a sacrament or Christian rite.

There is a wide scope of worship, doctrine and traditions among Mennonites today. Old Order Mennonites use horse and buggy for transportation and speak Pennsylvania Dutch (similar to German). They refuse to participate in politics and other so-called "sins of the world." Most Old Order groups also school their children in church-operated schools.

Conservative Mennonites maintain conservative dress but accept most other technology. They are not a unified group and are divided into various independent conferences. Moderate Mennonites differ very little from other conservative, evangelical Protestant congregations. There are no special form of dress and no restrictions on use of technology. They emphasize peace, community and service.

Another group of Mennonites have established their own colleges and universities and have taken a step away from strict Bible teaching. They ordain women pastors, embrace homosexual unions, and practice a liberal agenda, focusing on peace studies and social justice issues.

## ■ **RIVER BRETHREN**

The River Brethren is a name used to indicate certain Christian groups originating in 1770, during a revival movement among German colonizers in Pennsylvania. In the 17th century, Mennonite refugees from Switzerland had settled their homes near the Susquehanna River in the northeastern U.S.

Influenced by the Schwarzenau Brethren (named Dunkers), the River Brethren developed a conviction that trine (triple, in allusion to the Trinity) immersion, foot washing, adherence to plain dress, was the scriptural form of religion. They opposed war, alcohol, tobacco, and worldly pleasures.

Nevertheless, they maintained their identity and did not join the Dunker movement. Jacob Engle is one of the early leaders who promoted trine immersion.

The River Brethren women in the early period in Kansas all looked alike for they wore a black matching cape and apron called a "Frock and Yoke" - a long black dress reaching to the ground and a plain "Fichus," a three cornered piece which hung over the shoulders from the neck. A long skirted huge bonnet of black and a tiny sheer cap called a "Prayer Covering" which was never removed except for sleeping and combing\*. No jewelry or adornments and plain black high shoes. The daughter was a

small replica of the mother.

The Men generally wore heavy beards but with the upper lip shaved. The hair worn very long and brushed straight back from the forehead. The "Sunday go Meeting," suit black trousers cut in the ancient sailors pattern and called "Broad front." The coat was collarless and sometimes clerically cut, white collar but never a necktie. Black high shoes and a black felt hat with a wide brim, Quaker fashion.

## ■ SCHWARZENAU BRETHREN

The Schwarzenau Brethren, the German Baptist Brethren, Dunkers, Dunkards, Tunkers, or simply the German Baptists, are an Anabaptist group that originally dissented from several Lutheran and Reformed churches that were officially established in some German-speaking states in western and southwestern parts of the Holy Roman Empire as a result of the Radical Pietist ferment of the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The beliefs of the Schwarzenau Brethren include trine immersion baptism, which provides that the candidate kneel in water and be immersed, face first, three times in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the New Testament as the infallible guide in spiritual matters; communion service celebrated in the evening, accompanied by the love feast; the ceremony of the washing of feet; the salutation of the Holy kiss; prayer and anointing with oil over the sick; and nonresistance.

Many of the early Schwarzenau Brethren believed in universal restoration, a variant of universal salvation that foretold that after the judgment and harsh punishment described in the New Testament, God's love would one day restore all souls to God. Brethren typically kept this teaching to themselves, and it was largely abandoned by the late nineteenth century. They were among the first to take Christian universalism to America when they emigrated there.

The church leaders are ministers, teachers, and deacons, though the positions may vary slightly in the various branches. The official role of elder, while no longer recognized in most congregations, was the most respected position in the church. Ministers and deacons are elected by the members of the congregation in which they hold membership. Ministers preach the word, baptize, assist deacons in anointing, solemnize marriages, and officiate at communion. Deacons serve the church by arranging for visitation to members or their families during illness or crisis, and often function in the capacity of stewards.

## ■ SHAKERS

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as the Shakers, is a millenarian restorationist Christian sect founded in the 18th century in England. They were initially known as "Shaking Quakers" because of their ecstatic behavior during worship services. As early as 1747, women assumed leadership roles within the sect, notably Jane Wardley, Mother Ann Lee, and Mother Lucy Wright. They practice a celibate and communal lifestyle, pacifism, and their model of equality of the sexes, which they institutionalized in their society in the 1780s.

At the present time, there is only one active Shaker village, Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, which is located in Maine. Their celibacy combined with external and internal societal changes resulted in the thinning of the Shaker community, and consequently many of the other Shaker settlements are now village museums.

Shaker theology is based on the idea of the dualism of God as male and female. Shakers believed that Jesus, born of a woman, the son of a Jewish carpenter, was the male manifestation of Christ and the first Christian Church; and that Mother Ann, daughter of an English blacksmith, was the female manifestation of Christ and the second Christian Church (which the Shakers believed themselves to be). She was seen as the Bride made ready for the Bridegroom, and in her, the promises of the Second Coming were fulfilled.

The four highest Shaker virtues were virgin purity, communalism, confession of sin - without which one could not become a Believer - and separation from the world.

Ann Lee's doctrine was simple: confession of sins was the door to the spiritual regeneration, and absolute celibacy was the rule of life.

Shakers were so chaste that men and women could not shake hands or pass one another on the stairs.

Shakers were celibate; procreation was forbidden after they joined the society (except for women who were already pregnant at admission). Children were added to their communities through indenture, adoption, or conversion. For children, Shaker life was structured, safe and predictable, with no shortage of adults who cared about their young charges.

When Shaker youngsters, girls and boys, reached the age of 21, they were free to leave or to remain with the Shakers. Unwilling to remain celibate, many chose to leave; today there are thousands of descendants of Shaker-raised seceders.

Shaker religion valued women and men equally in religious leadership. The church was hierarchical, and at each level women and men shared authority. This was reflective of the Shaker belief that God was both female and male. They believed men and women were equal in the sight of God, and should be treated equally on earth, too.

Shakers worshipped in meetinghouses painted white and unadorned; pulpits and decorations were eschewed as worldly things. In meeting, they marched, sang, danced, and sometimes turned, twitched, jerked, or shouted. The earliest Shaker worship services were unstructured, loud, chaotic and emotional. However, Shakers later developed precisely choreographed dances and orderly marches accompanied by symbolic gestures. Many outsiders disapproved of or mocked Shakers' mode of worship without understanding the symbolism of their movements or the content of their songs.

## ❖ ANGLICANISM



The compass rose, a symbol of the Anglican Communion

Anglicanism is a branch of the Christian religion. The Anglican Communion is an organization of autonomous national churches connected with the Church of England, which has its roots in the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

The Anglican faith is often considered a reformed Catholicism, a hybrid between the Catholic and Protestant faiths.

The Anglican Church hierarchy is different from the Roman Catholic church, in that the Pope and the Vatican provide directives, whereas his counterpart the Archbishop of Canterbury offers only consensus governance. The Archbishop of Canterbury is a spiritual leader only.

Anglicans are not subject to the Pope and are Protestant in most areas of doctrine, but Anglicans also retain many Catholic forms of worship, including a hierarchy based on bishops (which is the meaning of the word "Episcopalian").

Anglicanism in general allows for significant freedom and diversity within the bounds of scripture, reason and tradition. This has led to considerable variation in Christian beliefs and Christian practices between Anglican churches in different provinces. For example, some Anglican churches ordain women to the priesthood while others do not, and some emphasize Protestant doctrines while others hold more to Roman Catholic teachings.

Anglican rituals are expressed primarily in the Book of Common Prayer, a collection of liturgy developed by Thomas Cranmer in the 16th century and periodically modified since then. However, the Book of Common Prayer is not held to be normative.

Worship is the centre of Anglican life. Anglicans view their tradition as a broad form of public prayer, and they attempt to encompass diverse Christian styles in a traditional context. In 2000 the church introduced Common Worship, a modernized collection of services and prayers, as an official alternative to the 1662 prayer book.

Anglicans accept a threefold order of ministry, consisting of bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons. Anglicans attempt to balance the clerical point of view with forms of authority that include the laity. Even bishops are rarely able to function without the advice and consent of other clergy and laity.

The Anglican Communion consists of autonomous national churches that are bound together by intangible links best described as ties of loyalty between the see of Canterbury and each other.

The basic unit of the Anglican Communion is the diocese, a geographic area over which a bishop presides. Dioceses generally form part of a larger unit known as a province, but even these are far from uniform in configuration.

The principle Scriptures in Anglicanism are the Book of Common Prayers, Thirty-Nine Articles and the English Bible. The Book of Common Prayer was introduced since the English Reformation. It provides Anglicans daily prayers from morning to evening for private prayers and the Holy Communion.

The Thirty-Nine Articles recognises two sacraments: the Eucharist and Baptism. Baptism is the initiation of becoming a member to the Anglican faith. Baptism allows the member to receive grace for other sacraments, including the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the central worship of the Anglican Faith, receiving the Body of Christ as a Blessed Sacrament. Although the expressed through the body and blood of Christ, it is also expressed through the Eucharistic prayers.

The English Bible is the foundation of the Anglican Church. The English Bible is written in both English and Latin. Similarly, the Christian bible with the collection of writings derived from the origin of Christianity with a modern translation.

Anglican corporate worship takes place weekly on the Lord's Day (Sunday), and follows a calendar of feast days, holy days, and seasons, commemorating individuals and also events in the life of Christ.

Women may now be ordained as Anglican priests in most places, although there is still some disagreement, and controversies over the Church's stance on homosexual practices are dividing the Church.

Anglican churches vary in their architecture and decor. Common components include stained-glass windows, pews, and a space solely for worship called the sanctuary. The sanctuary is considered sacred and Anglican worshipers typically reserve conversations and other interaction with the other members of their fellowship for outside of the sanctuary. Every Anglican sanctuary contains a cross and an altar. Some Anglican churches have additional space for social gatherings, classrooms and child care or nursery rooms.

Anglican worship services involve lots of standing, sitting and kneeling. Upon first entering the pew for worship, Anglicans typically kneel for a time of personal reflection and prayer. During the Liturgy there are prescribed postures for each component. It's common to stand during hymns and canticles, as well as when reciting the Creeds and during Holy Communion. Anglicans usually sit during New Testament and Old Testament readings as well as during the sermon and choir performances.

Anglican worship is organized and ritualistic. The basic format of the Anglican worship service is the same from one church to the next, all over the world. Key elements of Anglican worship include prayer, Bible readings, music, a homily and the Eucharist.

### **The Regular Services**

The principal service is the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion). In some Anglican churches it is celebrated quite simply, without music, early on Sunday morning. Weekday celebrations also are frequently without music, and without sermon. When celebrated at a later hour on Sundays, or on other great Christian days such as Christmas, music and a sermon are customary.

Another service is Morning Prayer. The parallel evening service is Evening Prayer. These services consist of psalms, Bible readings, and prayers; and may include a sermon. They may be with or without music.

While some parts of the services are always the same, others change. At the Holy Eucharist, for example, two or three Bible

selections are read. These change each Sunday. So do the psalms. Certain of the prayers also change, in order to provide variety.

Anglican worship changes based on the Christian calendar.

Scripture readings are proscribed for each season.

Clerical dress changes with the seasons of the Christian calendar, as well.

In the Anglican tradition, marriage is an important ceremony which expresses the beliefs of Christianity. An Anglican wedding ceremony consists of a declaration, sermons, vows, hymns, giving of rings, the proclamation, blessing, registration of the marriage and prayers. The Anglican tradition emphasises that marriage is a life-long commitment and that the couple can expect to be blessed by the gift of children. Anglicans believe that in the marriage service God joins a man and a woman in physical and spiritual union.

The Book of Common Prayer prescribes certain days as days for fasting and abstinence, "consisting of the 40 days of Lent, the ember days, the three rogation days (the Monday to Wednesday following the Sunday after Ascension Day), and all Fridays in the year (except Christmas, if it falls on a Friday)"

Within the Anglican faith, there is a belief that the quality of the afterlife is based on how the deceased lived their life.

Cremation is accepted by the Anglican Diocese. The cremation may take place prior to a memorial service or the cremation may take place following a traditional viewing and funeral service.

### **Views on Embalming**

Embalming is acceptable by the Anglican church. It may also be necessary if the family of the deceased chooses to hold a viewing right before the funeral service.

With the assistance of an Anglican priest, an Anglican funeral service is typically held within two or three days of the death occurring. Anglican funerals can be held at churches, funeral homes or at chapels on cemetery grounds. Traditional Anglican funerals would normally have closed caskets. If a family has chosen not to have the deceased's remains present, a photograph may be placed at the front of the venue as a primary focus. The funeral can be its own service or be part of a larger service in which Holy Communion is taken by Anglicans that are present. The priest leads the service by reading scripture, while hymns and eulogies are done by family members or close friends. All guests are allowed to attend the interment after the service is done. During the interment phase, the priest would be reciting prayers as they commit the body or cremated remains to the earth.

### **MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

Although in Anglicanism the moral code of conduct is based on the Bible, most Anglicans believe that it needs to be interpreted within the unique circumstances and experiences of each local church. As a result, Anglicans read and interpret the Bible in various ways. For example, in some Anglican churches it is acceptable for church leaders to remarry after divorce, while others frown upon the practice. Polygamist men and their wives who are newly converted to Christianity are allowed to become members of some Anglican churches and not of others. Differing views on human sexuality - particularly homosexuality - have caused tension within the Anglican Communion.

### **SACRED BOOKS**

Anglicans hold the books of the Old and New Testaments as their sacred scripture. In addition, they place great emphasis on the Book of Common Prayer, initially written and revised by the Church of England and subsequently adapted by other Anglican churches.

### **SACRED SYMBOLS**

The cross, with or without the figure of the crucified Christ, is considered a primary sacred symbol within Anglicanism. Some Anglicans (often referred to as Anglo-Catholics, or "high-church" Anglicans) use symbols and ceremonies identified with Catholic practice, while other Anglicans (known as evangelicals, or "low-church" Anglicans) are more similar to Protestants and shy away from these practices.

### **WHAT IS SACRED?**

Anglicans view their churches and cathedrals as holy but generally do not set apart specific items for sacred worship and adoration (although individual Anglicans might do so). Anglicans hold that there is the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist.

### **HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS**

Anglicanism follows the traditional liturgical seasons of Christianity (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost). Christmas (the birth of Jesus Christ) and Easter (the resurrection of Jesus Christ) are the two most significant holidays. Regional and national churches have appointed various days of remembrance for major and lesser saints throughout the liturgical year. Specific biblical passages to be read in worship each day and on Sundays are assigned from a regular lesson cycle, generally put forward in the Book of Common Prayer.

### **MODE OF DRESS**

Ordained individuals in the Anglican Communion usually wear clerical attire, most often black or gray (although occasionally other colors are worn) with a white clerical collar; bishops often wear purple. Liturgical dress includes a colored stole (a lengthy piece of cloth, of appropriate color for the liturgical season, worn around the neck) over an alb (a simple white gown). Other vestments include a cassock (a long black gown) worn with a surplice (a white overgarment). More ceremonial liturgical vestments, often in the color of the liturgical season, include a chasuble (an ornate garment worn during the Eucharist) and a cope (cape). Bishops often wear a cope and a miter (hat) and carry a crosier (staff) as a sign of their office.

### **DIETARY PRACTICES**

There are no prescribed dietary practices within Anglicanism. Some Anglicans, for reasons of personal piety, will fast from time to time or before receiving the Eucharist.

### **RITUALS**

Anglican worship is based on the monastic practice of regular community prayer throughout the day. Services for morning

prayer, noonday prayer, midday prayer, evening prayer, and compline (the final prayers of the day) are found in most Anglican prayer books. Sunday worship is the primary liturgical celebration for most Anglicans and includes either a morning prayer with a sermon (in more "low-church," or low ceremony, parishes) or the Holy Eucharist (in most churches). Public services of common prayer and celebration are also provided for at significant transitions in a person's life, such as confirmation, marriage, and funerals. Depending on personal beliefs and practices, some Anglicans will go on pilgrimages or retreats for spiritual growth and development.

#### **rites of passage**

In Anglicanism baptism with water (usually not involving immersion), both of infants and adults, marks an individual's entry into the universal fellowship of the church. Most Anglican churches also provide services for confirmation (in which adolescents or adults confirm their Christian beliefs) and reception (in which people from another Christian tradition are received into the Anglican faith). Confirmation and reception services are presided over by bishops and include the laying on of hands by the bishop as a sign of the rite of passage.

### **▪ ANGLO-CATHOLICISM**

Anglo-Catholicism, movement that emphasizes the Catholic rather than the Protestant heritage of the Anglican Communion. It was an outgrowth of the 19th-century Oxford Movement (q.v.), which sought to renew Catholic thought and practice in the Church of England.

In addition to stressing Catholic elements in worship and theology, Anglo-Catholics have worked among the poor and unchurched and have attempted to renew the church. Although their beliefs and activities have often been opposed by Anglican Evangelicals, who stress the Protestant heritage of Anglicanism, Anglo-Catholics have continued to be an important force within the Anglican Communion.

Anglo-Catholics are sometimes called high churchmen, in that they give a "high" place to the importance of the episcopal form of church government, the sacraments, and liturgical worship.

Anglo-Catholic priests often hear private confessions and anoint the sick, regarding these practices as sacraments. The classic Anglican aphorism regarding private confession is: "All may, some should, none must." Anglo-Catholics also offer prayers for the departed and the intercession of the saints;

Anglo-Catholics share with Roman Catholics a belief in the sacramental nature of the priesthood and in the sacrificial character of the Mass. A minority of Anglo-Catholics also encourage priestly celibacy. Most Anglo-Catholics, due to the silence of The Thirty-Nine Articles on the issue, encourage devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but not all Anglo-Catholics adhere to a high doctrine of Mariology.

### **▪ BROAD CHURCH**

Broad church is latitudinarian churchmanship in the Church of England in particular and Anglicanism in general. The term is often used for secular political organisations, meaning that they encompass a broad range of opinion.

After the terms high church and low church came to distinguish the tendency toward ritualism and Anglo-Catholicism on the one hand and evangelicalism on the other, those Anglicans tolerant of multiple forms of conformity to ecclesiastical authority came to be referred to as "broad". The expression apparently originated with A. H. Clough and was current in the later part of the 19th century for Anglicans who objected to positive definitions in theology and sought to interpret Anglican formularies in a broad and liberal sense.

Broad church as an expression is now increasingly replaced by references in the Church of England to liberalism.

In The Episcopal Church in the United States, the term "broad church" has a slightly different connotation, referring to those whose liturgical practice is neither high nor low church.[citation needed] Theologically, they may be either conservative—equating to Central Churchmanship in the Church of England—or liberal, which would identify them with the broad church or liberal strand within the Church of England.

### **▪ CONTINUING ANGLICAN MOVEMENT**

The Continuing Anglican movement, also known as the Anglican Continuum, encompasses a number of Christian churches that are from the Anglican tradition but that are not part of the Anglican Communion. The largest of these are the Anglican Catholic Church, the Anglican Church in America, the Anglican Province of America, the Anglican Province of Christ the King, the Diocese of the Holy Cross, the Episcopal Missionary Church, and the United Episcopal Church of North America. These churches generally believe that traditional forms of Anglican faith and worship have been unacceptably revised or abandoned within some Anglican Communion churches in recent decades. They claim, therefore, that they are "continuing" or preserving the Anglican line of apostolic succession as well as historic Anglican belief and practice.

## ▪ ENGLISH DISSENTERS (also NONCONFORMISTS)

English Dissenters or English Separatists were Protestant Christians who separated from the Church of England in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

A dissenter (from the Latin *dissentire*, "to disagree") is one who disagrees in opinion, belief and other matters. English Dissenters opposed state interference in religious matters, founded their own churches, educational establishments, and communities.

They originally agitated for a wide-reaching Protestant Reformation of the Established Church, and triumphed briefly under Oliver Cromwell.

In English church history, a nonconformist was a Protestant who did not "conform" to the governance and usages of the established Church of England. Broad use of the term was precipitated after the Restoration of the British monarchy in 1660, when the Act of Uniformity 1662 re-established the opponents of reform within the Church of England. By the late 19th century the term specifically included the Reformed Christians (Presbyterians, Congregationalists and other Calvinist sects), plus the Baptists and Methodists.

## ❖ BAPTISTS

The Baptists are one of the largest Christian denominations. As indicated by their name, the primary Baptist distinctive is their practice of "believer's baptism" instead of infant baptism.

This is perhaps the most obvious difference between Baptists and other denominations. Baptists reject infant baptism, thinking instead that baptism is for believers only - those who can personally declare Jesus as Lord. Some churches will re-baptise those who were baptised as infants in another Christian tradition, others respect that various denominations do things differently.

The name 'Baptist' comes from the Baptist practice of immersion in water. It was coined in the seventeenth century by opponents to the new movement but rejected by followers themselves. It wasn't until the nineteenth century that Baptists accepted the use of the label to describe themselves.

Historically, Baptists have played a key role in encouraging religious freedom and separation of church and state. In the United States, the two largest Baptist organizations are the Southern Baptist Churches (SBC) and American Baptist Churches (ABC), with the former being the more conservative branch. Notable Baptists have included Martin Luther King, Jr., Charles Spurgeon, John Bunyan and Billy Graham.

At the turn of the 21st century, there were about 43 million Baptists worldwide with about 33 million of those in the United States and 216,000 in Britain.

Baptist churches tend to be evangelical in doctrine, but they do not have a central governing authority so a wide range of beliefs can be seen between one Baptist church and another.

Baptists believe that baptism is a symbolic display of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When a person who has been saved and confessed his belief in Jesus submits to baptism, that person is publicly identifying with Christ, is burying past sinful thought and action, and resurrection in the newness of life, to walk with Christ the remainder of their days.

Baptists for the most part share orthodox Christian beliefs and they believe in the literal Second Coming of Christ at which time God will judge humanity and divide humanity between the saved and the lost.

Most Baptists believe in the "Four Freedoms".

**Soul Freedom:** The soul is competent before God, and capable of making decisions in matters of faith without coercion or compulsion by any larger religious or civil body.

**Church Freedom:** Freedom of the local church from outside interference, whether government or civilian only if the law interferes with religious teachings and church practices.

**Bible Freedom:** The individual is free to interpret the Bible for himself or herself, using the best tools of scholarship and biblical study available to the individual.

**Religious Freedom:** The individual is free to choose whether to practice their religion, another religion, or no religion. The separation of church and state is often called the civil corollary of religious freedom.

Baptist worship is hardly distinguishable from the worship of the older Puritan denominations (Presbyterians and Congregationalists) of England and the United States. It centres largely on the exposition of the Scriptures in a sermon and emphasizes extemporaneous, rather than set, prayers. Hymn singing also is one of the characteristic features of worship. Communion, received in the pews, is customarily a monthly observance.

Baptists share with other Christians belief in one, triune God (Father, Son (Jesus Christ), Holy Spirit), the sovereign and supreme being. Most Baptists also believe in the existence of angels (good and evil), and the devil.

### BAPTISM

The baptism is carried out by full immersion. Most Baptist churches have a baptistery, which is more or less a pool (about 4m by 3m) in the church. During a baptismal service the minister and the person being baptised enter the water. The minister, holding the person, will lie them back in the water so they are totally immersed, and then bring them back up again. Baptists believe this practice is in line with the New Testament practice of baptism, as carried out by John the Baptist.

### GENDER

Historically, Baptists have held to views of gender and sexuality that are consistent with Protestant views in general. More recently, as with other Protestant traditions, a significantly increased diversity of views has emerged.

## WEDING

A Baptist wedding is an act of worship in which a couple seeks God's blessing of their union before a community of faith. People can only get married in the Baptist Church if they are a baptized believer. Both members of an engaged couple must be baptized Christians in order to marry in the Baptist Church.

## MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Although there is significant variance, Baptist life is normally associated with strict codes of conduct, particularly in the realm of personal piety. Many Baptists abstain from alcohol and tobacco, though they do so more out of concern for setting a good witness for their neighbors than out of an obligation to a scriptural or theological command. Baptists promote chastity before marriage and complete faithfulness to one's spouse after marriage. Many Baptists have been at the forefront of the debate over the acceptance of homosexuality, with the majority opposing homosexual practice. Baptists are encouraged to tithe to their local congregations and to make additional financial gifts for specific offerings, usually associated with missions.

## SACRED BOOKS

There is only one source of sacred revelation for Baptists, and that is the Bible itself. Baptists have been among the staunchest defenders of both the Old and New Testaments as authoritative sources for faith and life. Baptists believe that the Bible is the only authority because it is divinely inspired or has a divine nature.

## SACRED SYMBOLS

There are no sanctioned symbols for Baptists, although many churches have adopted traditional Christian images such as the cross, a dove, or a flame as part of their logo.

## HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Baptist churches range from converted houses and storefronts to enormous campuses with sanctuaries that seat several thousand. Most Baptists meet for worship, study, and fellowship on Sunday mornings, with other activities throughout the week. Many Baptists worldwide worship twice or more on Sunday. An architectural feature of Baptist churches that is often commented on is the centrality of the pulpit, usually, but not always, located front and center in the sanctuary and reflecting the importance of the written word in Baptist life. There are no shrines or places of historical importance that are especially revered by Baptists, although many claim an affinity for the land of Israel.

## WHAT IS SACRED?

While most Baptists believe that the body is a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they do not attach a special significance to the physical body as such. There are no sacred objects or totems that are unique to Baptists.

## HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Like other Christians, Baptists celebrate Easter and Christmas, setting them aside for special worship services. This includes all ten of the official days of observance. There are other times of the year that are set aside for special offerings, usually for missions. Many Baptist churches also celebrate their annual homecoming, when former members of a congregation gather for worship and fellowship.

## MODE OF DRESS

Baptists have no specific mode of dress, although depending upon the congregation, ministers may wear clerical robes. Even then, however, the significance of the robe is downplayed. Generally speaking, Baptists prefer modest attire.

## DIETARY PRACTICES

The use of alcohol and tobacco are often frowned upon but not specifically prohibited. There are no other restrictions on diet for most Baptists.

## RITUALS

Baptist worship services often reflect local cultural influences more than a historically transmitted pattern. Features of the service may include songs of praise, special prayers, and preaching, as well as informal fellowship and the giving of tithes and offerings. Weddings and funerals also follow local patterns. Preaching is central to most Baptist services, with opportunities to make a public profession of faith in Christ often following the sermon.

## RITE OF PASSAGE

The two primary rites and ceremonies of the Baptist tradition are baptism and communion, or the Lord's Supper. Baptists participate in these acts out of obedience to Christ's example in the New Testament rather than from a belief that they are in any way necessary for salvation. Baptism is reserved for those who have made a profession of faith in Christ and is done not by sprinkling but by totally immersing the believer under water. Historically this has been controversial and the cause of some persecution, but Baptists have held firm to the practice, basing it on their reading of the New Testament. All Baptists observe Communion, though they differ in frequency.

## ORGAN DONATION

Organ donation is acceptable in the Baptist faith.

## FUNERAL CUSTOMS

Many Baptist congregations hold to the convention that burial should take place within three to five days of the death. While it is customary to avoid burial on Sundays and religious holidays, a Baptist may be buried any day of the week.

Baptist funeral customs focus on the religious and spiritual elements of the person's life. The actual approach to the funeral event will vary depending on the particular community. For some, the funeral is a joyous celebration, for others, the event is more solemn. Eulogies often focus on family and faith. Spiritual music is customary and may include contemporary religious selections as well as hymns. A viewing is customary and may include the commemoration of the deceased secular activities such as participation in community or fraternal organizations.

A viewing is customary in the Baptist tradition, and may be held at either a funeral home or at the church.

After the funeral it is customary to hold a reception where people can gather and remember the life of the deceased. The reception can take place at the church, at a private home of a family member or friend, or at another location.

## EMBALMING

Embalming is acceptable in the Baptist faith, and depending on the rules of the state and/or the funeral home that you're working with, embalming before the viewing may be necessary.

#### CREMATION

There is no ban on cremation for members of the Baptist faith, and cremation may take place either

### ❖ BLACK CHURCH

The term black church or African-American church refers to Protestant churches that currently or historically have ministered to predominantly black congregations in the United States. While some black churches belong to predominantly African-American denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), many black churches are members of predominantly white denominations, such as the United Church of Christ (which developed from the Congregational Church of New England).

After slavery was abolished, segregationist attitudes in both the North and the South discouraged and even prevented African Americans from worshiping in the same churches as whites. Freed blacks most often established congregations and church facilities separate from their white neighbors, who were often their former masters. These new churches created communities and worship practices that were culturally distinct from other churches, including forms of Christianity that derived from African spiritual traditions.

African-American churches have long been the centers of communities, serving as school sites in the early years after the Civil War, taking up social welfare functions, such as providing for the indigent, and going on to establish schools, orphanages and prison ministries. As a result, black churches were particularly important during the civil rights movement.

### ❖ CHRISTIAN ATHEISM

Christian atheism is a philosophical stance in which beliefs in conventional Christian notions of God are absent, strongly doubted or rejected, but the moral teachings of Jesus are followed.

Christian Atheists want to remove what they see as the fairy tale elements of Christianity.

They prefer to call this a non-realistic version of Christianity, rather than Christian atheism. They say that they do believe in God - but not in a fairy tale way.

If there's no God out there, it might seem pointless to go to church, or to pray. Christian Atheists would disagree:

Worship is a beneficial activity. Worship in a group is good way for a community to:

- communicate with each other

- share ideals and ideas

- explore the meaning and purpose of their individual lives, and the life of their community Hymn-singing and prayer

These are powerful ways for individual human beings to explore the meaning and purpose of their lives.

### ❖ CHRISTIAN DEISM

### ❖ CONFESSING MOVEMENT

### ❖ EVANGELICANISM



Evangelicalism is a movement within Christianity that emphasizes reliance on Scripture over tradition and that holds conversion to be the foundation of the life of the believer. The doctrine that Jesus Christ died to atone for the sins of mankind is central to evangelical beliefs. Pentecostalism, a charismatic movement, is usually considered to be a part of evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism originated in the 1600s in the Pietism of Philipp Jakob Spener, a Lutheran pastor in Germany. By the eighteenth century it had spread to England and by the nineteenth century to the United States. Today evangelicalism is a worldwide movement of some 750 million believers.

#### WORSHIP

In Evangelical christianity, a worship service or service is a time when believers meet to praise, worship, pray God and receive a teaching (sermon) based on the Bible. It can take place with the church or with the family. Meetings can be held on weekdays,

but Sunday's has a special connotation. In Anglican and other more traditional Protestant churches, worship service is often framed by the liturgy for the exercise of the sacraments. In the evangelical churches, worship service is more seen as an act of adoration of God, with a more informal conception.

There is no liturgy, the conception of worship service is more informal. It is usually run by a Christian pastor. It usually contains two main parts, the praise (Christian music) and the sermon, with periodically the lord's Supper.

#### PLACES OF WORSHIP

Places of worship are usually called "church building" or "temples". In some megachurches, the place of worship is called "campus". For evangelicals, the building is not sacred. Some services take place in auditoriums or multipurpose rooms with few religious symbols.

#### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Because evangelicalism had its origins in the Pietism and Holiness movements of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, purity of personal conduct has been a central mode of its expression. While this strictness has decreased over time, in general a person is expected to abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and sex outside marriage. At one time dancing was forbidden, and in the early twentieth century movies as well. The latter two restrictions have dropped away, but faithfulness in marriage has remained critical. After the 1960s, however, divorce was no longer an automatic reason for dismissal from the church or indeed from leadership as a pastor.

#### SACRED BOOKS

The sacred book for evangelicals is the Christian Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments. In this sense evangelicalism has adopted the Reformation theme of solo scriptura, the belief that it is by Scripture alone that a person can know God. Correct biblical interpretation is a critical issue. Some evangelicals say that the Scriptures are "infallible" (without error regarding salvation), while other say that they are "inerrant" (without error in matters of both science and salvation).

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

From its inception Protestantism has been iconoclastic, rejecting any object or person that might take the place of God in the hearts of believers. Thus, symbols - whether in stained glass, rosaries, or icons - have been rejected by many churches. Nonetheless, in much of the world the image of a man or woman with a Bible in hand has come to be a classic image of evangelicalism. For evangelicals, however, this is not so much a symbol as a witness of their faith in the power of Scripture.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structures of evangelicals are enormously diverse, with no central authority. This elasticity and the ability to adapt to the needs of particular cultural systems have allowed evangelical leaders to plant new churches quickly, with little or no bureaucratic approval. The authority of local evangelical leaders frequently depends on their personal charisma.

#### WHAT IS SACRED?

For evangelicals the Scriptures are the sacred witness to Jesus Christ as the only salvation for a person's soul for eternity.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

In general evangelicals do not follow the traditional Christian liturgical year. This is not to say that evangelicals do not celebrate Christmas, which they do, or recognize Easter, which they see as the focus of their faith. Evangelicals, however, tend to interpret liturgical patterns as overly ceremonial. A common phrase in American evangelical parlance is that "Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with Jesus." Thus, liturgical formality is downplayed, and conversion becomes a central focus of worship and of holidays, with festivals often serving as occasions for evangelical outreach.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Although modes of dress for evangelicals vary by region, informality is the rule for both believers and clergy. In warm climates, for example, one may see a young pastor in shorts, while in colder climates he may wear pants and a shirt but without a coat or tie. There are, however, evangelical clergy in the Anglican and Catholic traditions who maintain the practice of wearing robes and collars.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Dietary restrictions for evangelicals often include a prohibition on the consumption of alcohol, although this varies by region. Otherwise, there are no notable restrictions.

#### RITUALS

The evangelical movement is marked both by its core beliefs and by dramatic cultural adaptations in worship and rituals. One may, for example, see spirit dancing in an African congregation, a staid worship service in a Korean Presbyterian evangelical congregation, spirit healing and exorcism in a Brazilian house church, and contemporary music and drama in American non-denominational churches. Holy Communion, which serves as congregational fellowship, is often followed by a period of prayer that invokes the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit in healing and prophecy. Weddings are most often seen by evangelicals as an occasion for witnessing to the family, with funerals a celebration of the moment at which believers receive their promise of eternal life.

#### rites of passage

Because the rite of baptism signifies conversion, it is central to evangelicalism. This passage is the "new birth" that marks the believer as a disciple. For evangelicals baptism is the only rite of passage that matters. It is often remembered as a birth date, and it is referred to as the major turning point in the course of a person's life, marking one's identity and sealing one's salvation.

#### MEMBERSHIP

For evangelicals membership is a matter of conversion to the faith, which is the primary rite of passage. A person must repent, turn from sin, and give his or her heart to Jesus Christ. Membership is demanding in the sense that there is an expectation of personal change, a challenge of moral purity, an obligation to participate in worship, and an expectation that the person will reach out to others with the message of the "gospel of Jesus Christ." In this sense the passage is from the "old life of sin" to the "new life in Christ." There is often, though not always, an expectation that the person will tithe. Proselytization is central to evangelicalism, and the extensive use of mass media reflects this mission.

## DIVORCE

One of the most basic tenets of evangelical Christianity is a strict interpretation of the Bible. For this reason, it is not surprising that many evangelical Christians are fundamentally opposed to divorce, as there are passages in the Bible that seem to prohibit the practice. Furthermore, the evangelical emphasis on morality and preserving the traditional family unit would seem to preclude divorce. However, over time, the overall position of evangelicals has softened, leading to conflict among different factions.

## ❖ JESUISM

Jesuisism, also called Jesusism or Jesuanism, is a term for the teachings of Jesus in distinction to the teachings of mainstream Christianity. In particular, the term is often contrasted with the theology attributed to Paul of Tarsus and mainstream church dogma. While not being opposed to the Christian Bible or Church doctrine, Jesuisism does not affirm their authority over the teachings of Jesus. As a philosophy, Owen Flanagan characterized Jesuisism as naturalistic and rationalist, rejecting the conflict between faith and science.

## ❖ LUTHERANISM



The Luther Rose symbol, representing Lutheranism

Lutheranism, branch of Protestantism that arose as a result of the Reformation, whose religious faith is based on the principles of Martin Luther, although he opposed such a designation. When Luther realized that the reforms he desired could not be carried out within the Roman Catholic Church, he devoted himself to questions of faith rather than form in the new Evangelical churches that developed. His was the conservative attitude, as distinguished from the views of the Reformed (Calvinistic) communions.

Lutherans retain many of the liturgical practices and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Lutherans differ from other Reformists in a variety of ways including Christology, the purpose of God's Law, Divine Grace and whether one is once saved always saved and predestination.

The Lutherans hold varying views of the holy bible of the Old and New Testaments.

Unlike other Christian denominations, Lutherans generally believe that God's forgiveness cannot be earned but instead is granted by the grace of God.

Lutherans commonly believe that after death a person either spends everlasting life with God in Heaven or without God in Hell.

### rites and ceremonies

One of the most profound changes Luther made in the rituals of Christianity was in the sacraments. Lutherans have two, in contrast to the seven of Roman Catholicism, and the theology used to understand what they mean differs significantly from the sacramental theology both of Roman Catholicism and of many other Protestant denominations.

### gender and sexuality

Lutherans are split on leadership roles for women, and on gay clergy and the blessing of same-sex unions. European churches tend to be liberal. In North America, the largest Lutheran denominations are fairly liberal (though divided), while the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is conservative.

### baptism

Lutherans practice infant baptism as well as the baptism of believing adults. In the Lutheran perspective, baptism is a sacrament that is commanded by God and "cleanses from sin, snatches us from the power of Satan, and gives us everlasting life."

### moral code of conduct

Luther taught that faith in Christ, not moral living and the performance of good works, leads to salvation. Even so, flowing from their faith in Christ, believers have an obligation, or a "new obedience," to perform good works. It is Christ's forgiveness, liberating believers from sin and evil, that frees them to serve their neighbors in love. Lutheran Pietists emphasize a strict adherence to moral codes, some forbidding pleasures such as dancing or card playing.

### sacred books

Lutherans view the Bible as the only authority for their teachings and approach to life, and Luther insisted that doctrine come from Scripture alone (though he did not mean it was to be used apart from Christian tradition). Most Lutherans have also turned to the Augsburg Confession (composed in 1530 by Philip Melancthon) and to a collection of confessions of faith compiled with it in the Book of Concord (1580), which have provided an interpretation and summary of Lutheran teachings.

### sacred symbols

Lutherans retained most of the central symbols of the medieval Catholic Church. Unlike some Protestants, they are not opposed to the use of images, although they discarded representations of saints that involved superstitious practices. The crucifix (a cross with the body of the suffering Christ) is often the preferred expression of the cross.

### sacred space

Lutheran sacred space, especially worship space, is more similar to the worship space of Roman Catholicism than the worship space of other Protestant denominations.

#### **PLACE OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES**

Lutheran reformers converted medieval Catholic churches with few, if any, changes in their structure or furnishings. The importance of proclaiming the Word of God makes the pulpit a central point of worship, and the altar and baptismal font are also significant because there God bestows life and forgiveness of sins through the Lord's Supper and baptism. Because Lutherans emphasize music, the organ is an integral part of the church.

#### **WHAT IS SACRED?**

Lutherans reject the idea that divine power is mediated through objects. Thus, they do not hold any objects to be sacred.

#### **HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS**

Lutherans continued to follow the liturgical calendar of the medieval Catholic Church and its system of pericopes (lessons read in Sunday worship), although the number of saint's days was drastically reduced to secondary celebrations of a few New Testament figures. Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost anchor the church year, and there is a focus on Christ's suffering during Passion Week, with special attention to Good Friday. In 1617 the Festival of the Reformation (31 October) was introduced.

#### **MODE OF DRESS**

Lutherans have never prescribed modes of dress, and there are a variety of clerical vestments in Lutheran practice. In Sweden and in certain areas of Germany, the medieval vestments have continued to be used; in other territories pastors wear a robe similar to sixteenth-century academic garb, sometimes with clerical bands or the ruff collar. The liturgical revival, or return to ceremonial worship, in the twentieth century led to the widespread use of the cassock (a full-length robe, usually black) and the surplice (a white outer garment) and later the alb (a long white robe) as vestments, particularly in North America.

#### **DIETARY PRACTICES**

There are no special dietary practices in Lutheranism. Compulsory fasting was abolished during the Reformation, though Luther urged its pious use. Moderation in eating and drinking is expected of believers.

#### **RITUALS**

Luther adapted the liturgy of the medieval Catholic Church and translated it into German. Over the years Lutheran churches have used the core of this historical liturgy, translated into the vernacular, for their services, emphasizing two elements: the sermon and the Lord's Supper. Congregational hymn singing plays a significant role in worship.

#### **RITE OF PASSAGE**

The Lutheran church practices infant baptism. Through baptism God establishes a relationship with a human being, leading him or her toward faith. Confirmation of adolescents affirms the baptismal gift of forgiveness of sins and serves as a person's entry into the Lutheran community.

#### **BELIEFS ABOUT DEATH**

The Lutheran faith suggests that when a person dies, they either go to Heaven or Hell. They believe that God has made it possible for people to go to Heaven if they believe and have accepted that Jesus died to save them from their sins. Lutherans believe that there is nothing a person could do in order to get into Heaven other than believe. According to Lutheran beliefs, anyone who has not accepted Jesus as their savior will go to hell and suffer there for eternity.

#### **FUNERAL SERVICE**

The most common Lutheran funeral includes worship in church with the body of the deceased present. However, should this not be possible, adaptations can be made to accommodate the situation.

A traditional Lutheran funeral service is composed of the following basic elements: hymns, litany, Old Testament reading and New Testament reading, Gospel reading, Apostle's Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Holy Communion is also often celebrated at the funeral and is not limited to the participation of family and mourners but is extended to all communicants present at the service.

#### **ORGAN DONATION**

Organ donation and donating the body to medical research are acceptable in the Lutheran faith.

#### **FASTING**

Similar to Catholics, Lutherans observe Lent for 40 days starting on Ash Wednesday. During Lent, Lutherans are encouraged to eat only one meal on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday, abstaining from meat by substituting fish.

## **❖ METHODISM**



The United Methodist Church

Methodism (also known as the Methodist movement) is a group of historically related denominations of Protestant Christianity which derive their inspiration from the life and teachings of John Wesley. George Whitefield and John's brother Charles Wesley were also significant early leaders in the movement. It originated as a revival movement within the 18th-century Church of England and became a separate denomination after Wesley's death. The movement spread throughout the British Empire, the United States, and beyond because of vigorous missionary work.

Methodists hold that sacraments are sacred acts of divine institution.

In common with most Protestants, Methodists recognize two sacraments as being instituted by Christ: Baptism and Holy

Communion (also called the "Lord's Supper", rarely the "Eucharist"). Most Methodist churches practice infant baptism, in anticipation of a response to be made later (confirmation), as well as believer's baptism.

Early Methodists wore plain dress, with Methodist clergy condemning "high headdresses, ruffles, laces, gold, and 'costly apparel' in general". The early Methodists distinguished themselves from other members of society by fasting once a week, abstaining from alcohol, and devoutly observing the Sabbath. The early Methodists did not participate in, and condemned, "worldly habits" including "playing cards, racing horses, gambling, attending the theater, dancing (both in frolics and balls), and cockfighting".

Over time, many of these practices were gradually relaxed in mainline Methodism, although practices such as teetotalism and fasting are still very much encouraged, in addition to the current prohibition of gambling.

#### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Methodists have never been slow to translate doctrine into discipline - personal, organizational, and programmatic. Wesley's work on translating biblical theology into personal morality resulted in the document "Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies." Still contained in most Methodist handbooks, these rules are in themselves simple and short: Members should "evidence their desire of salvation" (1) "by avoiding evil of every kind," (2) "by doing good of every possible sort," and (3) "by attending upon all the ordinances of God" (all the means through which God's power can affect a person's life). Each rule is accompanied by a list of examples that have remained unchanged since the eighteenth century. Many people now view the examples as antiquated, so the rules have been largely neglected for the last hundred years.

#### SACRED BOOKS

According to the preface of the 1788 edition of the Articles of Religion, the Bible is the sole standard of Christian truth for Methodists. It is the only book considered truly sacred, though not the only source of knowledge or inspiration.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

Methodists use many Christian symbols to represent sacred realities. These range from traditional visual symbols grounded in the life of Christ (such as the cross and others related to the crucifixion and resurrection) to the many representations of ideas and events from the long history of God's action in human history (such as the rainbow, the flame, and the alpha and omega).

#### PLACE OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Early Methodists held nonsacramental meetings in "preaching houses" (later often called "chapels") as a supplement to Anglican parish church services. Contemporary Methodists generally hold Sunday morning and evening worship services in churches and chapels. Revival services often take place in tents, "brush arbors," amphitheaters, or other outdoor venues that echo the early Methodist "field preaching." Prayer meetings, church school classes, and other meetings of subgroups of a given congregation often meet in educational buildings, the homes of members, or at campgrounds.

Some Methodist denominations designate historic shrines and landmarks, but when Methodists talk of a "pilgrimage" to Wesley's birthplace at Epworth, England, or to Francis Asbury's home near Gloucester, Massachusetts, or to John Fletcher's home in Madeley, Shropshire, they are not speaking of a spiritual exercise similar to a Roman Catholic's at Compostella or a Muslim's at Mecca.

#### WHAT IS SACRED?

Methodists believe in a doctrine of God's creation, but nothing in that creation has the same sacred status as the divine being of the Trinity. Churches are often called "sacred space," and persons are seen as having "sacred worth," but these are metaphorical uses of the term.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Most Methodist bodies follow the liturgy and holidays of the Christian Year, in which holy days represent events in the life of Jesus. The Church of England celebrates a festival of John and Charles Wesley on 3 March (the day after John's date of death in 1791), but the Methodists more often celebrate 24 May, the day John Wesley experienced "assurance of faith" at a society meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, in 1738. Many Methodist congregations emphasize other historical events, educational themes, and social concerns on specially designated Sundays.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Some Methodist clergy wear clerical garb, including a clerical collar and such liturgical vestments as a stole, robe, alb, cross, or other paraphernalia, especially during worship services, other services (such as funerals and weddings), and pastoral occasions (such as hospital visits). Many British Methodist clergy follow Wesley's habit of wearing Geneva tabs (a form of clerical collar) as a sign of their ministerial status. Other clergy typically dress like the members of their congregations. Laity in most Methodist denominations are usually undifferentiated from the general population, although some with closer ties to the nineteenth-century Holiness movement (which stressed personal piety) still encourage simplicity of dress and denigrate the wearing of jewelry or fine clothing.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Many Methodist groups officially observe temperance in eating and drinking, with a historical focus on abstinence from alcoholic beverages; this has extended to a stance against drug abuse.

#### RITUALS

Since the nineteenth century Methodist churches have usually followed the Protestant move toward a "free church," impromptu approach to ritual, straying from Wesley's interest in the more formal ritual of the Church of England. Most Methodist books of worship, however, still include versions of the historical rituals for worship and the Eucharist (Communion), as well as for baptisms, marriages, funerals, and other significant religious rites of passage. Distinctive Methodist rituals include a Covenant Service (based on Wesley's idea of renewing one's covenant with God) at the beginning of each new year and the Love Feast, closely patterned after the Moravian service (also from Wesley's day).

#### rites of passage

Methodists celebrate two Christian sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Entrance into the body of Christ is celebrated in baptism, usually in infancy, and membership in the community of faith is marked by confirmation, as a child approaches teen

years.

Marriage is usually solemnized in church but is not considered a sacrament.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

Historically people become members of Methodist churches by professing faith in Christ or transferring from other recognized Christian denominations. Continued membership requires active participation in and support of the ministries of the church. The early tradition of closed membership ceased in the last half of the nineteenth century. Methodists have traditionally evangelized through preaching services, mission outreach, and small group encounters.

#### **ORGAN DONATION**

Organ donation is acceptable in the Methodist faith.

#### **CREMATION**

Cremation is acceptable in the Methodist faith, and will not interfere with holding a traditional Methodist funeral.

#### **FUNERAL SERVICE**

The pastor will officiate the service, which may include hymns, a sermon, and a eulogy by a close friend or family member. If the body is not present for the service, a memorial service will be arranged. Wherever the service is held, it is appropriate that the casket be closed during the service.

A spray of flowers or a pall may cover the casket, or the casket may be left as-is. If the body is not present for the service, a photograph of the person who died may be placed at the front of the room.

#### **FASTING**

The Methodist religion has practiced fasting since its beginnings by not only giving up meat, but also giving up all food in order to spend time praising God during Lent. According to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, fasting was a means to express sorrow for overindulging in food and drink. However, Lent is optional for Methodists and there are no specific rules that Methodists practice.

## **❖ PENTECOSTALISM**

Pentecostalism began in the United States in January 1901, when Charles Fox Parham, an independent Holiness evangelist in eastern Kansas, preached that speaking in tongues was the biblical evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit. His teaching was taken to Los Angeles in 1906 and sparked the Azusa Street Revival, whose publications attracted radical evangelical groups across the United States.

The Pentecostal Religion is considered as a renewal faith within Christianity that values a direct personal experience of God through the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

This baptism in the Holy Spirit is proven by the ability of adherents to speak in tongues.

The Pentecostal Religion has a wide range of theological beliefs and there is no central authority as exists in many religions.

Theologically, most Pentecostal denominations are aligned with evangelicalism, in that they emphasize the reliability of the Bible and the need for the transformation of an individual's life through faith in Jesus.

Pentecostals generally adhere to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, believing that the Bible has definitive authority in matters of faith, and adopt a literalist approach to its interpretation.

#### **MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

Pentecostals draw their moral code of conduct from Scripture. Early Pentecostals dreaded worldliness and separated themselves from the world in decisive ways. Movies, theaters, spectator sports, dance halls, bars, and the like were off-limits. Adherents dressed modestly and shunned jewelry, and women wore their hair long, avoided makeup, and wore skirts rather than slacks. One Southern U.S. denomination, the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, divided over the worldliness of men's ties. Others argued about the propriety of wedding rings. In tobacco-growing regions Pentecostals wrestled with the conflict presented by making their livelihood from a product they denounced. Pentecostals also abstained from alcohol.

After World War II many of these proscriptions began to change, especially those related to dress and entertainment. Objections to movies and theaters gave way to sponsored dramatic competitions, as early notions of worldliness yielded to the press of popular culture. Like other evangelicals, Pentecostals have moved away from the lists that once governed conduct to general guide-lines that leave many such decisions to individual choice. Oneness Pentecostals have tended to be the most conservative on these issues.

#### **SACRED BOOKS**

The Bible is the only book Pentecostals regard as sacred. They value the devotional writings common among evangelicals, however, and they regularly publish new resources and materials. Pentecostal how-to and therapeutic manuals are as popular as the classics.

#### **SACRED SYMBOLS**

Pentecostals have no sacred symbols in any traditional sense, and the movement sustains no concept of sacred space. While some churches display a cross or a scripture text, others display no Christian symbols.

#### **PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES**

Pentecostal congregations meet in all kinds of buildings, from mega-churches filled with the latest technology to small frame buildings. The movement has no holy places, though the memory of the Azusa Street Revival has a hallowed place in rhetoric and collective identity.

#### **WHAT IS SACRED?**

While Pentecostals do not generally denote objects or spaces as sacred, in practice they regard both the teaching of Scripture and the "moving of the Spirit" as sacred. They understand the Holy Spirit to move among gathered believers when spiritual

gifts are exercised and emotions are touched. Ecstasy, individual audible praise, prostration, uplifted hands, dance, or tears may mark such moments.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Pentecostals have no holidays or festivals of their own. Some, however, take special note of the day of Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter, to celebrate the movement's particular emphasis on speaking in tongues and baptism with the Holy Spirit, experiences recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles as having marked the first Christian Pentecost.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Pentecostals vary in their customs of dress. Some emphasize modesty, but they interpret this in a variety of ways. Pastors often wear business suits, although some adopt clerical collars and others wear robes. African-American congregations may feature deaconesses, or congregational mothers, who dress in white and take a prominent part in the life and worship of the community. A few denominations object to the wearing of jewelry.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

In general Pentecostals view the body as God's temple and urge believers to exercise good stewardship of their health. Many Pentecostals participate enthusiastically in the popular evangelical culture of religiously based diet books—with titles like *What Would Jesus Eat?* - and some churches host diet support groups. Pentecostals oppose smoking and the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

#### RITUALS

Pentecostal congregations have worship services on Sunday mornings as well as midweek prayer and Bible studies with a family emphasis. In the United States, Sunday evening services are increasingly less common. Rituals include prayers for healing, often accompanied by anointing with oil; exorcisms; and altar calls (invitations to the penitent or those seeking healing or Spirit baptism to come forward for prayer). Annual or biennial denominational business meetings attract huge numbers of members. The fall convention of the Church of God in Christ, for example, draws tens of thousands of people to Memphis, Tennessee. At these mammoth gatherings of the faithful, both lay and clerical, rituals for cleansing, healing, and reconciliation are reenacted around business sessions.

#### rites of passage

Most Pentecostal congregations offer a service of infant dedication, in which parents promise to provide their child with a Christian home and church education. Once they reach an age of accountability, children may choose to be baptized. Both new converts and anyone who received baptism as an infant are encouraged to be baptized on a profession of faith. Pentecostals regard baptism as obedience to a command, as a sign of something from the past rather than as a moment of grace. In some Pentecostal denominations it is not necessary to be baptized to receive Communion.

#### FUNERAL CUSTOMS

The service traditionally takes place at the church, but it may also be conducted at a funeral home or at the site of the grave. In the past, it has been the custom to wear black at Pentecostal funeral services. However, white is more frequently being used to symbolize the Pentecostal belief in the resurrection of the body.

Pentecostal funeral services are led by the church's minister, and they include standard scripture readings from the Bible. Prayers and other hymns and songs are sung by the congregation. The tone of the service is more exuberant than in other Protestant traditions. Following the musical selections, the minister typically will offer his condolences to the family members and loved ones of the deceased. The minister then preaches a sermon. The sermon is then followed by the Lord's Prayer and possibly the Benediction.

A reception line is formed for visitors to offer condolences to the family. When the church service is dismissed, committal service is conducted at the graveside. If the Benediction was not offered at the church or funeral home, it will be said at the brief graveside service.

Memorial flowers and donations are generally accepted. In addition, a large reception usually follows the interment and friends and relatives are invited to attend. During this time family members and friends share fond memories and special stories about the deceased. It is appropriate to offer to prepare a dish or meal to share at the reception or to serve to the family following the burial.

### ▪ CHURCH OF GOD



The Church of God, with headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, United States is a Pentecostal Christian denomination. The movement's origins can be traced back to 1886 with a small meeting of Christians at the Barney Creek Meeting House on the Tennessee/North Carolina border, making it the oldest Pentecostal denomination in the United States.

The Declaration of Faith is the Church of God's doctrinal standard. It articulates both an evangelical and Pentecostal doctrinal position with Wesleyan influences.

## ❖ REFORMED CHURCHES

### ▪ AMYRALDISM

Amyraldism (sometimes Amyraldianism) is also known as the School of Saumur, post redemptionism, moderate Calvinism, four-point Calvinism, or hypothetical universalism (though it is in fact one of several hypothetical universalist systems).

It is the belief that God decreed Christ's atonement, prior to his decree of election, for all alike if they believe, but he then elected those whom he will bring to faith in Christ, seeing that none would believe on their own, and thereby preserving the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election. The efficacy of the atonement remains limited to those who believe.

This doctrine is named after its formulator Moses Amyraut, and is still viewed as a variety of Calvinism in that it maintains the particularity of sovereign grace in the application of the atonement. However, detractors such as B. B. Warfield have termed it "an inconsistent and therefore unstable form of Calvinism."

### ▪ ARMINIANISM

Arminianism, a theological movement in Christianity, a liberal reaction to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The movement began early in the 17th century and asserted that God's sovereignty and man's free will are compatible.

The movement was named for Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch Reformed theologian of the University of Leiden (1603–09), who became involved in a highly publicized debate with his colleague Franciscus Gomarus, a rigid Calvinist, concerning the Calvinist interpretation of the divine decrees respecting election and reprobation. For Arminius, God's will as unceasing love was the determinative initiator and arbiter of human destiny. The movement that became known as Arminianism, however, tended to be more liberal than Arminius.

### ▪ CALVINISM

The Calvinist religion is also referred to as the Reformed tradition, Reformed faith or the Reformed theology. It originated in the 16th century and was advanced by several theologians of which the French reformer John Calvin is best known.

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches has 75 million believers throughout the world.

This term refers to the doctrines and practices of Reformed churches of which Calvin was an early leader or it may refer to the individual teachings of Calvin.

The Calvinist Religion is best known for its doctrines of predestination and total depravity, stressing the absolute depravity of man. Calvinists believe people are sinners and must be saved from themselves.

Calvin's influence occurred within the Reformed churches during the second phase of the Protestant Reformation after Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Catholic Church. Calvin's religious direction took a different path than did Martin Luther and his Lutheran Church.

Today's Calvinist theology may be summarized in the five points of Calvinism, also called the doctrines of grace. Calvin however played no part in the formation of this doctrines of grace.

### ▪ PRESBYTERIANISM



Prosbiterian cross

The name "Presbyterian" comes from the representational form of church government called presbyterian. In presbyterian churches, governing authority is given to elected lay leaders known as "elders" (or "presbyters"), who work with the congregation's ordained minister. Presbyterian belief and practice center on the Bible and the sovereignty of God.

#### WORSHIP

Presbyterian worship services are characterized by the centrality of the Christian Scriptures. Bible readings and sermons that explain and apply its teachings are a central focus of each service. The Presbyterian Church (USA), the largest Presbyterian denomination in America, suggests in its constitution that the service be arranged around five actions centered on the Bible (or Word): gathering around the word, proclaiming the word, responding to the word, the sealing of the word, and bearing and following the word into the world.

Presbyterian worship services also include prayer, music, the sacraments (the Lord's Supper and baptism) and an optional offering.

#### SACRAMENTS

Presbyterians traditionally have held the Worship position that there are only two sacraments:

Baptism, in which they would baptize infants, as well as unbaptized adults by the Aspersion (sprinkling) or Affusion (pouring) method, rather than the Immersion method.

The Lord's Supper (also known as Communion), in which they would believe that Christ is present in the bread and wine through the Holy Spirit, as opposed to being locally present.

## BAPTISM

The act of baptism is deceptively simple - but in a handful of water, there is a deep well of mystery and meaning.

Presbyterians celebrate baptism as a communal act of public worship.

Presbyterians practice both adult and infant baptism.

While pouring or sprinkling water upon the head is most common, Presbyterians also allow for baptism by immersion. Whatever the method, the deep significance of baptism demands a visible and generous use of water, conveying the lavish outpouring of God's grace, filling believers with the gifts of the Spirit, and overflowing in lives of faithfulness, service, and love.

## HOLY BOOK

The Christian Bible is the key holy book of the Presbyterian Traditions, who share the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity.

## ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Women may be ordained to the ministry in many Presbyterian churches, but not all.

In the Church of Scotland, the ordination of women was granted in 1968 after a group of six women made an impassioned plea to the General Assembly on the basis of an "increasing consensus of opinion in the churches that there is no valid theological reason against the admission of women to the ministry."

The first woman was ordained in 1969 in Aberdeen. However, women may not be ordained in Australia.

In the United States, women may be ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ, but not in the Presbyterian Church in America or the Reformed Churches of the United States.

## ORGAN DONATION

Donation is encouraged and supported.

## FUNERAL CUSTOMS

A funeral service is held a few days after the death and is arranged in association with the church. The service may take place in the church sanctuary or at a funeral home. Guests are free to sit where they please and not expected to view a body. The pastor or minister presides over the ceremony. Programs are often distributed and non-members are invited to participate to the extent that they feel comfortable.

In general, Presbyterian funeral services is intended to remember the deceased, give thanks for this person's life and acknowledge

God's power over death. A Pastor leads the service with appropriate scriptures, prayers, readings, and hymns. The pastor will often present a short sermon. Presbyterian funeral services are closed casket but a viewing may be held prior to the service.

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Like other Protestant denominations, Reformed churches are divided on questions of gender and sexuality. European churches tend to be more liberal than American ones. In the U.S., Reformed churches tend to have a conservative wing that wants to limit the role of women and prohibit homosexual acts, and a liberal wing that wants to push for total equality.

## ▪ QUAKERS



Quakers are members of a group with Christian roots that began in England in the 1650s.

The formal title of the movement is the Society of Friends or the Religious Society of Friends.

There are about 210,000 Quakers across the world.

Although outsiders usually regard the movement as a Christian denomination, not all Quakers see themselves as Christians; some regard themselves as members of a universal religion that (for historical reasons) has many Christian elements.

Tolerance is part of the Quaker approach to life, so Quakers are willing to learn from all other faiths and churches.

The essence of the Quakers:

Quakers believe that there is something of God in everybody and that each human being is of unique worth. This is why Quakers value all people equally, and oppose anything that may harm or threaten them.

Quakers seek religious truth in inner experience, and place great reliance on conscience as the basis of morality.

They emphasise direct experience of God rather than ritual and ceremony. They believe that priests and rituals are an unnecessary obstruction between the believer and God.

Quakers integrate religion and everyday life. They believe God can be found in the middle of everyday life and human relationships, as much as during a meeting for worship.

## KEY BELIEFS

Key Quaker beliefs are:

God is love

the light of God is in every single person

a person who lets their life be guided by that light will achieve a full relationship with God

everyone can have a direct, personal relationship with God without involving a priest or minister

redemption and the Kingdom of Heaven are to be experienced now, in this world

## HOLY BOOKS

Quakers do not regard any book as being the actual 'word of God'.

Most Quakers regard the Bible as a very great inspirational book but they don't see it as the only one, and so they read other books that can guide their lives.

#### HOLY DAYS

Quakers do not celebrate Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas.

#### WORSHIP

Quaker communal worship consists of silent waiting, with participants contributing as the spirit moves them.

#### MEMORIAL SERVICE

Traditional Quaker memorial services are held as a form of worship and are known as memorial meetings. Friends gather for worship and offer remembrances about the deceased. In some Quaker religious traditions, the coffin or ashes are not present. Memorial meetings may be held many weeks after the death, which can enable wider attendance, and can also replace grief with spiritual reflection, and celebration of life to dominate. Memorial meetings can last over an hour, particularly if many people attend. Memorial services give everyone a chance to remember the lost individual in their own way, comforting those present, and re-affirming the love of the people in the wider community.

#### MARRIAGE

A meeting for worship for the solemnisation of marriage in an unprogrammed Friends meeting is similar to any other unprogrammed Meeting for Worship. The pair exchange vows before God and gathered witnesses, and the meeting returns to open worship. At the rise of meeting, the witnesses, including the youngest children, are asked to sign the wedding certificate as a record.

In many Friends meetings, the couple meet with a clearness committee prior to the wedding. This committee's purpose is to discuss with the couple the many aspects of marriage and life as a couple. If the couple seems ready, the marriage is recommended to the meeting.

As in the wider society, there is a wide diversity of views on the issue of same-sex marriage, and Friends have varying views on the topic. Various Friends meetings around the world have voiced support for, and have recognised, same-sex marriages. In jurisdictions, where same-sex marriage is not recognised by the civil authorities, some meetings follow the practice of early Quakers in overseeing the union without reference to the state. There are also Friends who do not support same-sex marriage, and some Evangelical and Pastoral yearly meetings in the United States have issued public statements stating that homosexuality is a sin.

## ❖ RESTORIAN MOVEMENT

The Restoration Movement (also known as the American Restoration Movement or the Stone-Campbell Movement, and pejoratively as Campbellism) is a Christian movement that began on the United States frontier during the Second Great Awakening (1790–1840) of the early 19th century. The pioneers of this movement were seeking to reform the church from within and sought "the unification of all Christians in a single body patterned after the church of the New Testament." Especially since the mid-20th century, members of these churches do not identify as Protestant but simply as Christian.

The Restoration Movement developed from several independent strands of religious revival that idealized early Christianity. Two groups, which independently developed similar approaches to the Christian faith, were particularly important. The first, led by Barton W. Stone, began at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, and identified as "Christians". The second began in western Pennsylvania and Virginia (now West Virginia) and was led by Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander Campbell, both educated in Scotland; they eventually used the name "Disciples of Christ". Both groups sought to restore the whole Christian church on the pattern set forth in the New Testament, and both believed that creeds kept Christianity divided. In 1832 they joined in fellowship with a handshake.

Among other things, they were united in the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; that Christians should celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week; and that baptism of adult believers by immersion in water is a necessary condition for salvation. Because the founders wanted to abandon all denominational labels, they used the biblical names for the followers of Jesus. Both groups promoted a return to the purposes of the 1st-century churches as described in the New Testament. One historian of the movement has argued that it was primarily a unity movement, with the restoration motif playing a subordinate role.

Restoration Movement lacks any centralized structure, having originated in a variety of places with different leaders, there is no consistent nomenclature for the movement as a whole.

## ▪ ADVENTISM

Adventism is a branch of Protestant Christianity which was started in the United States during the Second Great Awakening when Baptist preacher William Miller first publicly shared his belief that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ would occur at some point between 1843 and 1844.

The name refers to belief in the imminent Second Coming (or "Second Advent") of Jesus Christ. William Miller started the Adventist movement in the 1830s. His followers became known as Millerites. After the Great Disappointment, the Millerite movement split up and was continued by a number of groups that held different views from one another. These groups, stemming from a common Millerite ancestor, became known collectively as the Adventist movement.

Although the Adventist churches hold much in common, their theologies differ on whether the intermediate state of the dead is unconscious sleep or consciousness, whether the ultimate punishment of the wicked is annihilation or eternal torment, the

nature of immortality, whether the wicked are resurrected after the millennium, and whether the sanctuary of Daniel 8 refers to the one in heaven or one on earth. The movement has encouraged the examination of the whole Bible, leading Seventh-day Adventists and some smaller Adventist groups to observe the Sabbath. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has compiled that church's core beliefs in the 28 Fundamental Beliefs (1980 and 2005), which use Biblical references as justification.

## ○ SEVENT-DAY ADVENTIST



The Seventh-day Adventist Church originated in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. With more than 13 million members in over 200 countries, it is among the world's ten largest international religious organizations.

Adventists believe that it is God alone who will ultimately solve the world's ills through the Second Coming, or Advent, of Jesus Christ. For this reason preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is their highest priority.

Seventh-day Adventists hold many doctrines in common with other Christians. They believe in the triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, as the unique Savior of the world. Christ crucified, risen, interceding, and returning forms the center of their faith and doctrine.

Adventists accept the entire Bible as the Word of the living God, and they hold the Scriptures to be the authentic record of the creation of the world, of the first human beings, of their fall and its terrible results, and of God's dealings with humanity in history.

In common with the mainstream Christian tradition, Adventists believe the law of God, the Ten Commandments, to be binding upon all humanity. Consequently, they also believe that the fourth commandment - to keep holy the seventh day of the week, which is Saturday, not Sunday - remains the God-ordained day of rest for the whole human family. In this their religious practice differs from many other Christians. Basic Adventist beliefs are summed up in the statement "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," which is published in each Yearbook of Seventh-day Adventists.

### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

While Adventists accept the Ten Commandments as God's moral code for all humanity, they firmly believe that salvation is not earned through keeping the law, which is legalism, but only received through grace. They also believe, however, that faith in Christ results in the desire and will to obey God's law. Grace does not abrogate the law, which is the doctrine of antinomianism. Jesus in his life on earth fulfilled the law perfectly and taught that whoever loves him will obey God's commandments. In fact, only genuine love for God and neighbor fulfills the law.

Adventists recognize that there are distinctions in Scripture between eternal principles and temporary laws, but they hold that God's moral principles are binding upon human beings in all ages and cultures. They see the moral law as an expression of God's character, fully exemplified in the life of Christ and unchangeable, because God's character and will do not change. Any human laws or traditions that are in conflict with God's law or are substituted for God's commandments are condemned by Christ and should be rejected by his followers.

### SACRED BOOKS

The Scriptures are held by Adventists to be the sacred oracles of God. While aware that some changes may have occurred in the transmission of the original text, they believe that the whole Bible is the God-given standard by which all other writings and teachings should be judged. Adventists also accept the writings of Ellen White as having been given through the spirit of prophecy, but as she herself insisted, they are to be held subject to the Scriptures.

### SACRED SYMBOLS

For Adventists, as for many Christians, the cross is the major symbol of their faith in Christ. It symbolizes Christ's death on the cross for the sins of humans and also the life of self-denial to which he calls his followers. Another symbol, unique to Adventists, is that of three flying angels, derived from the angel's messages in Revelation 14. Adventists apply this symbol to their church in the humble conviction that they have been called to proclaim these messages as God's final call to faith and repentance before Christ's Second Coming.

### PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Adventist church buildings range from large modern structures to small jungle chapels. With a rapidly growing membership, especially in parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, there is a great need for houses of worship. Many are built by volunteers. Simplicity characterizes most Adventist churches.

### WHAT IS SACRED?

Adventists believe that only God can make or declare something sacred or holy. Although human beings cannot make anything holy, they are called upon to keep holy what God has made sacred. For this reason Adventists keep the Sabbath holy and receive the Bible as God's sacred book.

### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

For Adventists worldwide the Sabbath is the weekly recurring festival of joyful worship and fellowship. There are no other prescribed religious festivals.

### MODE OF DRESS

Simplicity, modesty, true beauty, and cultural appropriateness are considered to be the guiding principles by Adventists not only for the way they dress but also for their total manner of life. Their aim is to follow the example of the Lord.

### DIETARY PRACTICES

Adventists believe that God is greatly interested in the well-being of his human children, and they accept the biblical laws on

health as still valid. Consequently, Adventists abstain from all harmful substances, including addictive drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. They promote a vegetarian diet as God's ideal for humanity.

#### RITUALS

Like most Protestants, Adventists practice the Christ-ordained rites of baptism and Communion. Baptism is by immersion on a profession of faith in Christ. Infants are dedicated to God but are not baptized. The Communion service is preceded by the mutual washing of feet, following Christ's example and command.

#### RITES OF PASSAGE

There are no rites of passage that are distinctive to the Adventist Church.

#### HOLY COMMUNION

Adventist churches usually practice communion four times a year. It commences with a foot washing ceremony, known as the "Ordinance of Humility", based on the Gospel account of John 13. The Ordinance of Humility is meant to symbolize Christ's washing of his disciples' feet at the Last Supper and to remind participants of the need to humbly serve one another. Participants segregate by gender to separate rooms to conduct this ritual, although some congregations allow married couples to perform the ordinance on each other and families are often encouraged to participate together. After its completion, participants return to the main sanctuary for consumption of the Lord's Supper, which consists of unleavened bread and unfermented grape juice.

#### MARRIAGE

The Adventist understanding of marriage is a lawfully binding lifelong commitment of a man and a woman. The Church Manual refers to the origination of the marriage institution in Eden and points to the union between Adam and Eve as the pattern for all future marriages.

Adventists hold that marriage is a divine institution established by God Himself before the fall.

The Old and New Testament texts are interpreted by some Adventists to teach that wives should submit to their husbands in marriage.

Adventists hold that heterosexual marriages are the only biblically ordained grounds for sexual intimacy. Adventists do not perform same-sex marriages, and individuals who are openly homosexual cannot be ordained, but may hold church office and membership if they are not actively pursuing same-sex relationships. Current church policy states that openly homosexual (and "practicing") persons are to be welcomed into the church services and treated with the love and kindness afforded any human being.

#### ETHICS AND SEXUALITY

The official Adventist position on abortion is that "abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned." At times, however, women may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life or health, severe congenital defects in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest; in these cases individuals are counselled to make their own decisions.

Adventists believe in and encourage abstinence for both men and women before marriage. The church disagrees with extra-marital cohabitation.

### ▪ CHRISTADELPHIANS

The Christadelphians are a non-Trinitarian, millennial Christian group whose fellowship is linked by a common understanding of the Bible and Christianity.

Christadelphians aim to get as close as possible to the faith and practice of the early Christian church. They describe themselves as "a lay community patterned after first century Christianity".

Their name comes from a Greek phrase, *Christou adelphoi*, which means 'brothers (and sisters) in Christ'.

Christadelphians have no priests, paid ministers, or central leadership, and the leadership of local ecclesias (churches) is shared by senior members.

Christadelphians do not have elaborate churches, robes or ceremonies.

Christadelphians are not totally exclusive but they do regard themselves as set apart to serve God.

Because of this they try to live to the highest moral standards and avoid activities that they regard as 'of the world'.

They only marry within the faith. Christadelphians do not join the armed forces or the police, nor do they vote or take part in politics.

#### BELIEFS

Christadelphians regard themselves as Christians but don't accept some mainstream Christian doctrine.

For example, they believe that God is not a Trinity but the single being God the Father.

They believe that Jesus Christ was (and is) the Son of God, but was also a man as he was born of a woman, though this birth was miraculous.

They believe that the Holy Spirit is the power of God.

They believe that Jesus now lives in Heaven, but will literally return to the earth to set up God's Kingdom. All those who have believed and been baptised will be raised to be judged by Jesus. Those who are found worthy will live in the Kingdom for ever; those who are not, or those who have not been raised, will stay dead forever.

They are a millennial church and believe that Jesus will co-exist on earth with his followers for a thousand years (the millennium) before the final battle of Armageddon.

Due to their interpretation of prophecies and in particular the Olivet Prophecy, they believe that the day of Jesus' return will be soon.

#### HOLY BOOKS

Christadelphians base their faith on the Bible and nothing else.

They regard the Bible as inspired by God and completely free of error, and the only source of knowledge about God and his plans.

They believe that the Bible should be read as a whole, and understood through the plain meaning of its words.

They aim to read the Old Testament once a year and the New Testament twice a year following a reading plan called the Bible Companion.

Christadelphians also value the many books written by their founder, John Thomas, including *Elpis Israel* (1849), although they do not treat them as having any particular authority.

#### WORSHIP

Christadelphian worship is modelled on what they believe was the pattern followed by the early Church. They meet for the 'breaking of bread' every Sunday ("the first day of the week").

Services are simple, with hymns, prayers, readings from the Scriptures and an 'exhortation' (sermon).

Services are led by a different member each week, or by a visitor from another ecclesia.

There may be a Sunday School for children, a meeting on Sunday evening and other meetings during the week for Bible study and prayer.

Some Christadelphians meet in their own halls, but worship can take place anywhere, and often takes place in the home of a group member.

Christadelphians don't worship with other Christian groups because they don't believe it appropriate to do so with people who don't share a common doctrine.

#### ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS

Christadelphians don't actually prohibit these, because they are not forbidden in the Bible. But they do use them rarely if at all, because they are an indulgence and can lead to a loss of self-control.

#### GAMBLING

Gambling is discouraged.

#### SEXUAL MORALITY

Christadelphians do not have sex outside marriage.

#### MARRIAGE

Christadelphians do not regard marriage as a sacrament, but they do regard it as a highly spiritual thing that should be firmly based on God's principles and involve husband and wife working in partnership to the glory of God and his son Jesus Christ.

Christadelphians only have one marriage partner.

Christadelphians only marry other Christadelphians - they believe that "marriage with the alien is an offence against the law of Christ", and would result in the partners pulling in different spiritual directions.

## ■ CHRISTIAN SCIENCE



Christian Science seal, with the Cross and Crown and words from Matthew

Christian Science is a set of beliefs and practices belonging to the metaphysical family of new religious movements. It was developed in 19th-century New England by Mary Baker Eddy, who argued in her 1875 book *Science and Health* that sickness is an illusion that can be corrected by prayer alone. The book became Christian Science's central text, along with the Bible.

Eddy described Christian Science as a return to "primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing." There are key differences between Christian Science theology and that of other branches of Christianity. In particular, adherents subscribe to a radical form of philosophical idealism, believing that reality is purely spiritual and the material world an illusion. This includes the view that disease is a mental error rather than physical disorder, and that the sick should be treated not by medicine, but by a form of prayer that seeks to correct the beliefs responsible for the illusion of ill health.

The church does not require that Christian Scientists avoid all medical care-adherents use dentists, optometrists, obstetricians, physicians for broken bones, and vaccination when required by law-but maintains that Christian-Science prayer is most effective when not combined with medicine. This consists of silently arguing with oneself; there are no appeals to a personal god, and no set words. Between the 1880s and 1990s, the avoidance of medical treatment led to the deaths of several adherents and their children. Parents and others were prosecuted for, and in a few cases convicted of, manslaughter or neglect.

Christian Science practitioners are certified by the Church of Christ, Scientist, to charge a fee for Christian Science prayer. There were 1,249 practitioners worldwide in 2015; Their training is a two-week, 12-lesson course called "primary class," based on the Recapitulation chapter of *Science and Health*. Practitioners wanting to teach primary class take a six-day "normal class," held in Boston once every three years, and become Christian Science teachers. There are also Christian Science nursing homes. They offer no medical services; the nurses are Christian Scientists who have completed a course of religious study and training in basic skills, such as feeding and bathing.

#### RITES AND CEREMONIES

Christian Science worship calls for no rites, ceremonies, or rituals. Adherents celebrate the sacraments of baptism and communion spiritually, in prayer, without material components.

#### AFTERLIFE AND SALVATION

Individuals are thought to "pass on" to an existence similar to that experienced before death, where they can continue making

strides toward eternal salvation. Death is considered the "last enemy" that does not offer any advantage toward salvation.

#### **GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

The term Father-Mother God is metaphorical; God is unsexed, not androgynous. Expectations for human sexuality (including homosexuality) emphasize the emulation of biblical and spiritual standards and patterns. Chastity, marriage, fidelity, and equality of the sexes are strongly supported.

#### **EQUALITY**

Christian Science believes women are equal to men. No discrimination is made among races.

#### **BAPTISM**

Baptism is the spiritual purification of daily life, not a sacrament.

#### **HEAVEN AND HELL**

Heaven and hell exist not as places or as parts of the afterlife but as states of mind. Mary Baker Eddy taught that sinners make their own hell by doing evil, and saints make their own heaven by doing right.

#### **HOMOSEXUALITY**

Christian Science promotes sex within marriage. However, the denomination also avoids judging others, affirming the spiritual identity each person receives from God.

#### **DIET**

There are no special dietary considerations. Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are avoided.

#### **BLOOD TRANSFUSION**

The Christian Scientist would have no objection to blood transfusion as such. However, they would regard it as a material method of treatment, and therefore in conflict with their reliance on spiritual means of healing alone. They would therefore not normally wish to be either a donor or a recipient.

#### **AS DEATH APPROACHES**

Christian Science is kept free from ritual and there are no last rites. The presence of a Christian Science practitioner may be appreciated and the family should know how to contact an appropriate person.

#### **LAST OFFICES**

Last Offices should be performed as normal. Christian Scientists would prefer the body of a female to be handled by a female. Post-mortems would not be acceptable unless required by law. Cremation is usually chosen in preference to burial.

#### **ORGAN DONATION**

Organ donation would usually be prohibited.

#### **FASTING**

Fasting is often thought of as denying oneself some luxury or necessity in the observance of a religious rite. From this standpoint it might appear that Christian Scientists do not fast, but that is not the case.

### ■ **CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

Churches of Christ are autonomous Christian congregations associated with one another through distinct beliefs and practices. Represented chiefly in the United States and one of several branches to develop out of the American Restoration Movement, they claim biblical precedent for their doctrine and practice and trace their heritage back to the early Christian church as described in the New Testament.

Churches of Christ seek to practice the principle of the Bible being the only source to find doctrine (known elsewhere as sola scriptura). The Bible is generally regarded as inspired and inerrant. Churches of Christ generally see the Bible as historically accurate and literal, unless scriptural context obviously indicates otherwise. Regarding church practices, worship, and doctrine, there is great liberty from congregation to congregation in interpreting what is biblically permissible, as congregations are not controlled by a denominational hierarchy.

The Churches of Christ generally combine the lack of any historical evidence that the early church used musical instruments in worship and the belief that there is no scriptural support for using instruments in the church's worship service to decide that instruments should not be used today in worship. Churches of Christ have historically practiced a cappella music in worship services.

### ■ **IGLESIA NI CRISTO**



Iglesia ni Cristo – Seal

The Iglesia ni Cristo Religion is a religious organization that originated from the Philippines and claims to be the largest independent church in Asia. The church officially originated in 1914, being registered by Mr Felix Y Manalo.

However, the official doctrines of the church profess that Jesus Christ is the founder of the church and that Felix Manalo was God's last messenger, whom he sent to re-establish the Christian Church to its true, pristine form.

The historical context of the Iglesia ni Cristo lies in a period of the early 20th century characterised by a variety of rural anti-colonialism movements, often with religious undertones, in the Philippines.

The Iglesia ni Cristo religion does not believe in the Trinity, nor that the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are Biblical.

The Iglesia Ni Cristo believes that the Bible is the only book inspired by God. It is the sole basis of all their beliefs and practices.

#### **BAPTISM**

The church believes that baptism is done by immersion baptism or Believer's baptism by adults in water, and that it is necessary that people be baptised in the Iglesia Ni Cristo to become disciples of Jesus Christ. The church rejects infant baptism. Newborn children of members are instead dedicated to God through a congregational prayer, led by an ordained minister of the INC.

People who wish to be baptized in the INC must first submit to a formal process taking at least six months. Once someone officially registers with their local congregation, the person is given the status of being a Bible student (Tagalog: dinudoktrinahan) and taught the lessons concerning fundamental teachings and its beginnings in the Philippines. These lessons are contained in the doctrine manual written by Eraño G. Manalo entitled "Fundamental Beliefs of the Iglesia Ni Cristo". This book is given to ministers, evangelical workers, and ministerial students of the INC. Each lesson is usually thirty minutes to one hour in length. After hearing all the lessons, the students enters a probationary period (Tagalog: sinusubok) during which they are obliged to attend fifteen once-a-week group prayer meetings, where they are taught to pray and are guided in their adjustment to the INC lifestyle. When the sixth month comes, students who have been active in attending the twice-a-week worship services and whose lifestyles are in accordance with INC doctrines are screened before being baptized. During the screening, they are asked questions about the teachings of the church.

#### **WORSHIP AND PRAYER**

The church conducts regular worship services, one during the week, and one during the weekend, conducted in the local languages (providing sign language interpreters and translators in some congregations). It consists of singing of hymns, prayers, studies of the bible, collection of obligatory offerings, and benediction. Both God the Father and Jesus are worshipped. The ministers of every congregation in a given worship service use the same sermon outline prepared by the executive minister. Deacons and Deaconesses guide worshipers to their seats and collect voluntary offerings. The singing of hymns is led by the locale's choir. Children worship services are held every weekend. They use similar lessons as the standard worship services taught using the Socratic method (question and answer). The church teaches that willfully forsaking the worship service is a grievous sin, thus members are expected to attend the congregational worship services twice a week without fail.

The church encourages its members to make prayer a part of everyday life. Thus, prayer before various activities, such as taking meals and going to sleep, are commonly practiced. Prayers recited in rote repetition are not observed.

### **▪ JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

The Jehovah's Witnesses were established as a religion in 1879 in the United States. The religion was founded by Charles Taze Russell who was a businessman from Pennsylvania. Adherents are known mostly for going door-to-door and handing out literature that explains their worldview or inviting people to upcoming events at their gathering place called the Kingdom Hall. Religious expression is important to Jehovah's Witnesses. It is a means through which they express their beliefs and values.

#### **BELIEFS**

Jehovah's Witnesses believe in one God, the Creator of the universe and the God of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. They stress the fact that God has revealed his personal name to humanity, which is Jehovah. Jehovah has a spirit body and lives in heaven, but sees all things. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the doctrine of the Trinity.

In accordance with their rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, Witnesses disagree with mainstream Christianity that the Holy Spirit is one of the three Persons in the Godhead. Instead, they believe the Holy Spirit to be "God's active force."

Jehovah's Witnesses deny the existence of hell. Instead, they hold that the souls of the wicked will be annihilated.

Witnesses also have a slightly different view of heaven than mainstream Christianity. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only 144,000 people will go to heaven to rule with God and Jesus. The remainder of the righteous will enjoy paradise on earth - a restored Garden of Eden in which there is no sickness, old age, death or unhappiness.

#### **BAPTISM**

Jehovah's Witnesses baptize those "of a responsible age" who have made a conscious decision to join the faith. Baptism is done by full water immersion and is a sign of one's devotion to God. After baptism, primary duties expected of a Jehovah's Witness include regular attendance at Kingdom Hall meetings and evangelism.

#### **EVANGELISM**

Probably the most well-known practice of the Jehovah's Witnesses is evangelism, which is most often done door-to-door. Evangelism is central to the religious life of a Jehovah's Witness.

#### **MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

Jehovah's Witnesses are stern moralists. Although they have no prohibitions against any food (except blood products) or drinks, including alcoholic beverages, their Governing Body prohibits many other activities. These include the use of tobacco or any hallucinogen, saluting flags, standing for national anthems, participating in politics, serving in armed forces, working in factories producing weapons of war, and taking blood transfusions. They hold abortion and euthanasia to be murder. They permit birth control and sanction divorce for marital unfaithfulness. Otherwise, they insist on traditional, monogamous, heterosexual sexual values.

The Governing Body also asserts that questioning official Witness doctrine as promulgated through the Watch Tower Society is a serious violation of spiritual authority that may be regarded as apostasy. Any Witness who violates any of these proscriptions may face expulsion from the Witness community through "disfellowshipment" and shunning by other Witnesses, including family members.

Moral rules have often changed. For example, for some time Jehovah's Witnesses were told that they could not accept organ transplants or perform alternative civilian service in lieu of serving in the armed forces. Furthermore, they could not accept

medically administered blood fractions, such as blood plasma or platelets. Over the years, however, the bans on organ transplants and alternative civilian service have been lifted, and Witnesses can now accept certain blood fractions.

#### ETHIC AND MORALITY

All sexual relations outside of marriage are grounds for expulsion if the individual is not deemed repentant.

Homosexual activity is considered a serious sin, and same-sex marriages are forbidden.

Abortion is considered murder. Suicide is considered to be "self-murder" and a sin against God.

Modesty in dress and grooming is frequently emphasized.

Gambling, drunkenness, illegal drugs, and tobacco use are forbidden. Drinking of alcoholic beverages is permitted in moderation.

The family structure is patriarchal. The husband is considered to have authority on family decisions, but is encouraged to solicit his wife's thoughts and feelings, as well as those of his children. Marriages are required to be monogamous and legally registered. Marrying a non-believer, or endorsing such a union, is strongly discouraged and carries religious sanctions.

Divorce is discouraged, and remarriage is forbidden unless a divorce is obtained on the grounds of adultery, which they refer to as "a scriptural divorce". If a divorce is obtained for any other reason, remarriage is considered adulterous unless the prior spouse has died or is since considered to have committed sexual immorality. Extreme physical abuse, willful non-support of one's family, and what the denomination terms "absolute endangerment of spirituality" are considered grounds for legal separation.

#### SACRED BOOKS

The Witnesses regard the Protestant canon of the Bible as originally written to be inspired and inerrant. They have produced their own version, The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, in many modern languages.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

Jehovah's Witnesses have no sacred symbols. Since they hold that Jesus was "impaled" on an upright stake rather than crucified, they regard the cross as an emblem of "false Christianity."

#### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organization of the Jehovah's Witnesses is hierarchical. At the top is the Governing Body, which selects all new members of that body as well as, indirectly, zone, branch, district, and circuit overseers, plus congregational elders and ministerial servants (deacons). All are males in these positions. The Jehovah's Witnesses have no clergy.

#### PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Jehovah's Witness congregations meet in Kingdom Halls. The homes for officials and workers at their American head-quarters and branch offices are called Bethels. Inside, Kingdom Halls usually have chairs for the audience, a lectern for the speaker, a library, and an area providing religious literature. There are no crosses displayed outside or inside Kingdom Halls.

#### WHAT IS SACRED?

Besides the Bible and their organization, Jehovah's Witnesses place a high value on both human and animal life. They must not take human life except in self-defense, and they must not take animal life for sport. Obedience to God is, however, regarded as more important than life itself, and martyrdom for such obedience is esteemed.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

The celebration of all religious and national holidays is condemned as either pagan or "worldly."

Witnesses do not celebrate Christmas or Easter because they believe that these festivals are based on (or massively contaminated by) pagan customs and religions. They point out that Jesus did not ask his followers to mark his birthday.

Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays or other secular festivals that originate in other religions.

The most important religious event of the year for Jehovah's Witnesses is the commemoration of the Memorial of Christ's Death, which takes place on the anniversary of the Last Supper, calculated according to the lunar calendar (on Nisan 14, according to the Jewish calendar) in use in Christ's time. They believe that this is the only observance commanded by Christ.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Jehovah's Witnesses dress in the common apparel of the countries in which they live and have no unique garb. They do stress that their apparel must be "chaste and modest" since they are "God's ministers."

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Jehovah's Witnesses have no prohibitions against any foods or beverages except those that include blood or blood products.

#### RITUALS

Jehovah's Witnesses usually meet three times per week: once on Sunday and twice during the week. The Sunday service consists of the Public Meeting, a 45-minute Bible-based lecture, and the Watchtower Study, a one-hour discussion of a recent article in the Watchtower magazine. Although all baptized members are considered ordained ministers, services are usually led by elders or "ministerial servants." The services begin and end with prayer and usually include some singing. Worship is simple and includes very little ritual.

#### rites of passage

All Jehovah's Witnesses at the age of understanding are encouraged to be baptized as acts of dedication to Jehovah through Christ and "Jehovah's spirit directed organization." Only members of the "anointed remnant" - those who hope to receive a heavenly resurrection - partake of Communion.

#### FUNERAL CUSTOMS

The Jehovah's Witnesses funeral service is similar to other Christian faiths but lasts only 15 or 30 minutes. The funeral usually takes place within a week after death. At the service, men wear a suit and tie, and women are expected to dress modestly, but neither needs a head covering. Flowers and food may be offered to the family before, during or after the service.

Services take place in a funeral home or Kingdom Hall, the Jehovah's Witnesses place of worship. There may or may not be an open casket. The Congregation Elder conducts the service and delivers a talk, which may be tape recorded.

Guests who are not of this faith may participate in the service to the extent that they feel comfortable. At the graveside, the

scriptures are referenced and a prayer is read.

There is no rule concerning when the bereaved may return to work and social activities, but visits from friends after the funeral are welcome.

#### **ORGAN DONATION**

Not expressly forbidden, but church beliefs regarding blood transfusion should be taken into account. It is generally thought that as long as all blood has been removed from the organs, donation or transplantation is permissible.

### ▪ **LATTER DAY SAINT MOVEMENT**



Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church)

The Latter-day Saint movement began in the late 1820s during a time of religious ferment in the United States. It shared with other "restorationist" movements the conviction that existing churches had strayed so completely from early Christianity that they were incapable of reform from within. But unlike other groups at the time who organized new churches based on close readings of the Bible, the Latter-day Saints believed in the immediate revelation of God and in the prophetic authority of its founder, Joseph Smith. Though a variety of faith communities trace their origins to Smith, by far the largest and best known is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), founded in 1830 and headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah.

#### **CENTRAL DOCTRINES**

The Latter-day Saints worship a godhead comprised of three separate divine persons: God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Thus, the Latter-day Saints do not believe in the Trinity, the view held by traditional Christianity that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are united in one God. This, combined with the church's doctrine of "eternal progression," a belief that humans have divine potential, has led some to argue that the LDS Church is not Christian. Yet the church shares with traditional Christianity the doctrine of the Father's sovereignty and of Christ's divinity as God's only begotten son in the flesh, whose sacrificial atonement and resurrection is the sole means of overcoming human sin and death. Equally central to Latter-day Saint belief are the traditional Christian doctrines of repentance, faith in Christ, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

#### **MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Latter-day Saints subscribe to the classic ethical values associated with New Testament Christianity: love of God and love of neighbor (broadly defined). In addition to its emphasis on moral integrity, the church places a high value on sexual chastity, including abstinence prior to, and fidelity within, marriage.

#### **SACRED BOOKS**

The LDS canon includes four books that are considered equally authoritative: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. The church prefers the King James Version of the Bible. The Book of Mormon, a 500-page narrative of an Israelite civilization in the Americas, includes an account of Christ's postresurrection ministry. The Pearl of Great Price comprises Smith's other revelations, many of which elaborate upon the biblical narrative. The Doctrine and Covenants contains Smith's revelations concerning the organization of the church and elucidation of its doctrines.

#### **SACRED SYMBOLS**

On top of every LDS temple is a statue of an angel blowing a trumpet. A common motif in LDS imagery, this figure symbolizes both a specific event and a religious ideal. Historically it refers to the angel Moroni, who gave Joseph Smith the golden plates upon which the Book of Mormon was based. Moreover, since Moroni is equated with the angel prophesied in Revelation 14:6, the statue also symbolizes the church's sense of divine commission to evangelize the entire world.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

LDS congregations are organized geographically and are called "wards." Several wards form a "stake," and several stakes make up an "area," the aggregation of which covers the world. Each unit is presided over by a lay presidency serving a limited tenure; all are under the direction of the church's lifetime appointed president and its quorum of twelve apostles.

#### **PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES**

Formal LDS worship occurs in both chapels and temples. Chapels are the site of regular Sunday worship services and are architecturally distinctive by the absence of the cross, which reflects the LDS emphasis on the resurrection. More distinctive are the more than one hundred temples built throughout the world. After their dedication, temples are closed to all but active members of the church. Highly symbolic in design, temples portray LDS cosmology and its theology of the immediacy of the divine. Certain locations, such as Temple Square in Salt Lake City and places associated with Joseph Smith's ministry, are deeply meaningful to the Latter-day Saints as sites of religious sacrifice or revelatory experience.

#### **WHAT IS SACRED?**

The Latter-day Saints do not ascribe particular sanctity to objects. Rather, they take literally the Hebrew Bible's notion of a priestly people who, in virtue of their covenantal relationship to God, are able to mediate the divine for the sake of the world. In this manner, Latter-day Saints believe that God acts to sanctify the world through humans who can consecrate, bless, and heal through prayer, anointing, and laying on of hands.

#### **HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS**

The Latter-day Saints observe the primary events of the Christian calendar: Easter and Christmas. They also commemorate the Mormon exodus from Illinois and heroic crossing of the American continent. Each year celebrations are held in Utah's cities (in addition to smaller observances held worldwide in Latter-day Saint congregations) to commemorate, with parades and

reenactments, the entry of the first pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Latter-day Saints dress in the fashion of their respective cultures, adapting it only to observe certain standards related to modesty. Temple-going church members wear at all times an undergarment that symbolizes, not unlike a clerical collar, their formal dedication to serving God.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Latter-day Saints continue to observe a dietary code, divinely revealed to Smith in 1833, that forbids the consumption of alcohol, tea, coffee, and tobacco and advocates wise eating habits as foundational to both spiritual and physical strength.

#### RITUALS

The LDS Church's prophetic and lay priestly tradition, coupled with a belief in the necessity of sacraments, has created a rich set of ritual practices that order both communal and personal life. Infants are introduced into the congregation through rituals of naming and blessing, usually by the father. Sunday services, while in the Protestant model of sermons and classes, are focused on the administration of Communion. On Monday nights the home is the site of family worship designed to teach gospel principles and strengthen family relationships through wholesome activities. On any day but Sunday, a member who receives the necessary authorization (based on worthiness) may attend the temple to perform ordinances, such as baptism, for a deceased person who did not receive such ordinances while alive.

#### rites of passages

Membership in the church is signified by baptism and confirmation at the age of eight. Full-time missionary work and marriage in a temple mark important transitions to adult status within the church, as well as increased responsibility for it. The temple is the preferred site of LDS marriages, since only in the temple may a couple be joined for time and eternity. Those who choose to be married in LDS chapels are considered joined until death. The dead are buried in simple ceremonies that emphasize the certainty of resurrection and include prayers over the grave.

### ▪ **STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT (called CAMPBELLITES)**

Campbellites were religious followers of ministers Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander Campbell in the early nineteenth century. Originally associated with the Presbyterian Church in western Pennsylvania and Virginia, the Campbells argued that the strict religious practices of the church were too divisive and that all denominations should give up their doctrinal differences and reunify as one single Christian Church. In addition, they believed that all Christians, regardless of denomination, should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper. Unable to convince the various denominations to follow their teachings, the two men founded their own church in 1809. They later formed an alliance with the followers of another religious dissenter, Barton W. Stone of Kentucky, to create the Disciples of Christ in 1832.

Over time, the Campbells' new church gained members from a number of denominations, in spite of its perceived radical views, and spread into Ohio. By the 1850s, the Disciples of Christ, also commonly known as the Christian Church, had established ninety churches in the state and had founded Hiram College.

## ✓ **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (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.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The pope exercises supreme power in the Catholic Church. The bishops share in this power. The Catholic Church is divided into mostly geographic districts, called dioceses (often called eparchies in the Eastern churches); a diocese is governed by a bishop. Bishops are usually organized into national or regional episcopal (or bishop's) conferences. In some of the Eastern churches, a bishop called a patriarch is second in authority to the pope. The sacrament of order (ordination, holy orders) has three degrees: a bishop has the fullness of the sacrament, a priest holds the second rank, and a deacon the third. All ordinations must be performed by bishops, who are considered successors of the apostles. A diocese is divided into parishes, governed ordinarily by a priest called the pastor. Cardinals, who include all the patriarchs, are bishops who have authority to elect the pope. Men and women who make special commitments to poverty, chastity, and obedience are called religious. Some of the men are priests; the women (who are not ordained) are called sisters or nuns. People who are not ordained are laypersons or laity; often these terms are further restricted to those who are not "religious" in the above sense.

The pope governs the worldwide church through the Roman Curia, the central administrative offices in Vatican City (a sovereign state governed by the pope and located within the city of Rome).

#### **ORGAN DONATION**

Though there is some disagreement within the Catholic Church on the acceptability of organ donation, many Catholic leaders have accepted the medical definition of "brain death" (the end of brain function as the end of life) and see organ donation as a final charitable act that one may make.

#### **EMBALMING**

Embalming is acceptable in the Catholic faith, and depending on the rules of the state and/or the funeral home that you're working with, embalming before the Vigil may be necessary.

#### **CREMATION**

Historically, the Catholic Church has not supported cremation. However, these days it is acceptable for a Catholic to be cremated. That said, most churches prefer that the body be present for the Funeral Mass, meaning that cremation should occur after the Funeral Mass. Remains should be buried in the ground or at sea or entombed in a columbarium, and should not be scattered.

#### **FUNERAL CUSTOMS**

The Vigil is a prayer service usually held the evening before the funeral. Much like a viewing or a wake, family and friends gather in the home of the deceased, in the funeral home, or in the church to pray and remember the deceased. A priest or deacon usually presides over the prayers, though a layperson with knowledge of the prayers and traditions may preside in the event that a priest or deacon is not available.

Catholic funerals are held in Catholic churches, though they may also be held in the chapels of Catholic assisted living or care facilities or in the chapels at Catholic cemeteries.

Priests lead the Funeral Mass, and may also lead the funeral liturgy (service). If a priest is not available, deacons may lead the funeral liturgy. Only a priest or a deacon may deliver the homily (sermon), which will also serve to remember the deceased by incorporating examples from the deceased's life.

The music played at the Funeral Mass should be appropriate church music; popular or non-religious music is not appropriate. However, the family of the person who died may coordinate with the priest to have special or especially meaningful hymns, psalms, or readings included in the Mass.

There is no prescribed mourning period or memorial events in Catholicism.

### **❖ AFFIRMING CATHOLICISM**

Affirming Catholicism is a movement operating in several provinces of the Anglican Communion, including the UK, Ireland, Canada, and the United States. In the US, the movement is known as Affirming Anglican Catholicism or AAC. The movement represents a liberal strand of Anglo-Catholicism and is particularly noted for holding that Anglo-Catholic belief and practice is compatible with the ordination of women. It also generally supports ordination into the threefold ministry (bishops, priests, deacons) regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

The movement was formalised on 9 June 1990, at St Alban's Church, Holborn in London by a number of Anglo-Catholic clergy in the Diocese of London who had been marginalised within, or expelled from, existing Anglo-Catholic groups because of their support for women's ordination to the priesthood. It developed a theological stance which was staunchly liberal in matters of inclusivity but traditionally Catholic in matters of liturgy and the centrality and theology of the sacraments whilst believing that traditional restrictions on who may receive them should be re-examined.

### **❖ BREAKAWAY CATHOLICS**

Breakaway Catholics, is a term for minor schismatic Christian denominations self-identifying as Catholic despite not affiliated with or recognised by the Catholic Church. The Independent Catholic denominations, their magistry, and sacraments are not recognised by the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church or Oriental Orthodox Church.

### **❖ CHARISMATIC CATHOLICS**

## ❖ HEBREW CATHOLICS

Hebrew Catholics are a movement of Jews converted to the faith of the Catholic Church and Catholics of non-Jewish origin who choose to keep Mosaic traditions in light of Catholic doctrine. The phrase was coined by Elias Friedman (1987) who was himself a converted Jew.

Hebrew Catholics subscribe to the doctrines of the Catholic faith and are in full communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. Their point of differentiation lies not in dogmatic beliefs but in liturgical practices. For example, their liturgical calendar might differ from the liturgical calendar used by Latin Catholics in their retention of certain Jewish holidays. Hebrew Catholics may celebrate Passover, Rosh Hashana, Shavuot, etc. and even wear traditional ritual wear like kippot, tallitot, tefillin, use mezuzot and keep many mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah as a sign of their heritage. Where these Jewish holidays and practices do not conflict with Catholic doctrine, they are kept for ethnic reasons, much as Irish Americans might celebrate Saint Patrick's Day as a major feast day regardless of the diocese they reside in.

The movement is neither a sectarian group within the Catholic Church nor a schismatic movement outside it.

## ❖ INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC CHURCH

Independent Catholic Churches is the name for a few Christian churches which say that they have the traditions of the Catholic Church, but who are not recognised by the Holy See. Almost all of them say that their bishops have apostolic succession, that is that their legitimacy comes from an apostle. The first of these churches was the Old Catholic Church, who did not agree that the pope was infallible, in religious matters. This was agreed at the First Vatican Council in 1870. Most of the independent Catholic churches split from the Old Catholic church. A notable exception is the Society of St. Pius X, a grouping of traditionalist priests, founded in the 1970s.

Communities such as the Eastern Orthodox, the Oriental Orthodox Church, or the Coptic Orthodox Church do not have the problem of recognition, as they are at least partially recognised by the Roman Catholic Church. Most Independent Catholic Churches were created after 1870.

Virtually all members of the Independent Movement worship according to a set liturgy, usually derived from a mainstream historical Christian rite, such as the Syriac, Byzantine, or Roman. Sometimes they use a liturgy that is a combination of two or more of these historical liturgies or one that is unique to the group in question. By definition, all such groups are episcopal in polity, being led by bishops and priests who are assisted by deacons. All hold to some type of sacramental understanding of the Christian faith related to that broadly held in common by the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian, and Anglican Churches. Many also affirm the text of the Nicene Creed, but interpretations vary widely.

However, Independent groups disagree on the ordination of women, the ordination of sexually active gays and lesbians, the acceptability of same-sex marital unions, abortion, contraception, divorce, and other issues that are controversial also in more mainstream sections of Christianity. Unlike most of their more conventional counterparts, these groups, usually being quite small, tend to be internally fairly homogeneous on these and other issues; in other words, divisions on these and other questions are between these groups, not so much within them.

Many have embraced the model of parish organisation in which a bishop, not a priest, is the pastor of a parish. This model enables those who wish to become bishops to rationalise the process even when there are no other members of the clergy in the group. Thus, a high percentage of Independent clergy end up seeking ordination to the episcopacy. Congregations tend to be minuscule and sometimes even non-existent.

It is rare to find Independent clergy who are supported financially in their work. In the United Kingdom there are several who make a substantial income by conducting marriages and/or funerals, from high church to humanist or even pagan in character, leading to the charge that these people see ministry as a career rather than as a vocation. However, most Independent clergy pursue their ministry as a part-time, volunteer calling, whilst engaging in some other occupation in order to support themselves and their families.

### ▪ OLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES (UNION OF UTRECHT)

The term Old Catholic Church was used from the 1850s by groups which had separated from the Roman Catholic Church over certain doctrines, primarily concerned with papal authority; some of these groups, especially in the Netherlands, had already existed long before the term. These churches are not in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Member churches of the Union of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches (UU) are in full communion with the Anglican Communion, and some are members of the World Council of Churches.

The term "Old Catholic" was first used in 1853 to describe the members of the See of Utrecht who did not recognize any infallible papal authority. Later Catholics who disagreed with the Roman Catholic dogma of papal infallibility as defined by the First Vatican Council (1870) were hereafter without a bishop and joined with Utrecht to form the Union of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches (UU). Today these Old Catholic churches are found chiefly in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Austria and Czechia. Union of Utrecht Old Catholic churches are not generally found outside of Western Europe.

The Old Catholic Church shares some of the liturgy with the Roman Catholic Church and similar to the Orthodox, Anglicans and high church Protestants.

Old Catholics hold an open view to most issues, including the role of women in the Church, the role of married people within ordained ministry, the morality of same sex relationships, the use of conscience when deciding whether to use artificial

contraception, and liturgical reforms such as open communion. Its liturgy has not significantly departed from the Tridentine Mass, as is shown in the translation of the German altar book (missal).

In 1994 the German bishops decided to ordain women as priests and put this into practice on 27 May 1996. Similar decisions and practices followed in Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The UU allows those who are divorced to have a new religious marriage and has no particular teaching on abortion, leaving such decisions to the married couple.

## ❖ LIBERAL CATHOLICISM

Liberal Catholicism was a current of thought within the Catholic Church. It was influential in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, especially in France.

Being predominantly political in nature, liberal Catholicism was distinct from the contemporary theological movement of modernism. It is also distinct from both the attitude of Catholics who are described as theologically "progressive" or "liberal".

Liberal Catholicism has been defined as "in essence a trend among sincere Catholics to exalt freedom as a primary value and to draw from this consequences in social, political, and religious life, seeking to reconcile the principles on which Christian France was founded with those that derived from the French Revolution".

## ❖ LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Liberation theology is a synthesis of Christian theology and Marxist socio-economic analyses that emphasizes social concern for the poor and the political liberation for oppressed peoples. In the 1950s and the 1960s, liberation theology was the political praxis of Latin American theologians, such as Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, Leonardo Boff of Brazil, Juan Luis Segundo of Uruguay, and Jon Sobrino of Spain, who popularized the phrase "Preferential option for the poor".

The Latin American context also produced Evangelical advocates of liberation theology, such as C. René Padilla of Ecuador, Samuel Escobar of Peru, and Orlando E. Costas of Puerto Rico, who, in the 1970s, called for integral mission, emphasizing evangelism and social responsibility.

Theologies of liberation have developed in other parts of the world such as Black theology in the United States and South Africa, Palestinian liberation theology, Dalit theology in India, and Minjung theology in South Korea.

One of the most radical aspects of liberation theology was the social organization, or reorganization, of church practice through the model of Christian base communities. Liberation theology strove to be a bottom-up movement in practice, with biblical interpretation and liturgical practice designed by lay practitioners themselves, rather than by the orthodox Church hierarchy. In this context, sacred text interpretation is understood as "praxis". Liberation theology seeks to interpret the actions of the Catholic Church and the teachings of Jesus Christ from the perspective of the poor and disadvantaged. In Latin America, liberation theologians specifically target the severe disparities between rich and poor in the existing social and economic orders within the nations' political and corporate structures. It is a strong critique of the various economic and social structures, such as an oppressive government, dependence upon First World countries and the traditional hierarchical Church, that allow some to be extremely rich while others are unable to even have safe drinking water.

## ❖ TRADITIONALIS CATHOLICS

Traditionalist Catholicism is a movement in favour of restoring many or all of the customs, traditions, liturgical forms, public and private devotions and presentations of the teaching of the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). It is associated with an attachment to the pre-1970 Roman Rite Mass, referred to as the Traditional Latin Mass.

About 1% of people who identify as Catholic claim to be "traditional", but the number of practicing Catholics who consider themselves "traditional" may be as high as 11%. The vast majority of traditional Catholics regard the newer rites of the sacraments and the post-Vatican II popes as valid, and attend traditional Masses offered by diocesan priests, the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest (ICRSS), FSSP, or SSPX. Some attend the Mass as revised in 1969, referred to as the Novus Ordo Mass, if no Traditional Latin Mass is available to them, while regarding it as inferior; others refuse to attend the Novus Ordo Mass, even if there is no Traditional Latin Mass.

## ✓ UNITARIANISM AND UNIVERSALISM



Unitarianism and Universalism began as independent traditions emerging from the liberal Protestant Reformation period of the Christian faith. Unitarianism was founded on the belief that God is one and that Jesus was not of the same substance as God (as opposed to the orthodox Trinitarian view).

Distinct Unitarian and Universalist communities around the world share a common commitment to the belief that individuals must find answers to the great questions of human existence for themselves through the use of reason rather than blindly accepting dogma or unexamined tradition. Over time the two traditions became more similar theologically, and in 1961 they merged in North America to form the Unitarian Universalist Association. Outside the United States, older organizations in this tradition are identified as Unitarian, while more recently established ones are typically Unitarian Universalist. As a global organization, the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists connects the various national and regional bodies but has no ecclesiastical authority over them.

#### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The application of theological ideals to issues of daily life has always been an important part of the Unitarian and Universalist traditions. The early Unitarians in Eastern Europe stressed that individuals should attempt to live the ethics of Jesus. The English and American Unitarians of the Enlightenment had a similar emphasis.

Over the centuries Unitarians and Universalists have produced many catechisms, statements of agreement, and other corporate theological documents. The morality of behavior has been a core issue in each of these. The current "Principles and Purposes" of the Unitarian Universalist Association in the United States, for example, includes foundational principles that are relevant to interpersonal relationships; acceptance of and compassion toward others; the primacy of the individual conscience; the value of a democratic society; war, peace, and justice in a global context; and ecological and environmental issues.

#### SACRED BOOKS

Because Unitarian Universalism is a faith with Christian roots, many Unitarian Universalists consider the Bible to be a sacred, albeit not inerrant, text. Reasoned interpretation of the Scriptures was one of the defining characteristics of the early European Unitarians. In many UU congregations the sacred writings of all religions are respected and included in worship services, as are modern prose and poetry.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

Unitarian Universalists throughout the world attach varying significance to the Christian cross. A variety of world religious symbols can be found in many UU congregations. The nearest thing to a uniquely, universal UU symbol would be the flaming chalice symbol adopted by the Unitarian Service Committee during its World War II relief efforts in Europe. The use of this symbol has spread informally, and it is now common in several countries.

#### HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Unitarian Universalist houses of worship vary tremendously, from the stark white clapboards of a New England meeting-house, to the churches designed by Unitarian Frank Lloyd Wright, to ultramodern structures of glass and steel. Some smaller groups may meet in a rented space or a private home. While "holy" may not be an appropriate word, important places typically are associated with significant historical events and people, such as the prison in Romania where Ferenc Dávid was held and died.

#### WHAT IS SACRED?

For most Unitarian Universalists all of existence is sacred. The natural world is holy, and the preservation of it is considered by many to be a religious duty. Specific objects are not sacred in the sense that they are especially sanctified or possessing of special or magical qualities. Even the bread and wine of the Communion, where it is still celebrated, are valued for their symbolic nature.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Most UU congregations, even ones that are humanistic in approach, tend to commemorate the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter. Some also commemorate holidays and festivals of other religious traditions. There are no universally held, uniquely Unitarian or Universalist holidays. The closest would be the Flower Ceremony, originally created by Czech Unitarian minister Norbert Capek for his Prague congregation during the 1930s. Each attendee is asked to bring a flower to the ceremony, which is usually held in the spring but not on any specific date. These flowers are combined into large bouquets and blessed, after which each individual leaves the ceremony with a different flower than the one he or she contributed. The flowers celebrate the community of the congregation and the contribution made by each person.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Unitarian Universalists generally are embedded in their local culture. There are no special modes of dress that set UUs apart. Congregational expectations concerning formality of dress vary greatly. In some churches ministers wear robes, at least on special occasions, and in others they never do.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Unitarian Universalists tend to follow the dietary customs of their culture. Among North American and European UUs there is a greater proportion of vegetarians than in the general population, but this is for individual reasons and is not a tenet of the organized faith.

#### RITUALS

Regular worship services are most commonly held on Sunday mornings and typically follow the Protestant format of readings, hymns, and prayers surrounding a sermon. The content of the readings and hymns varies greatly, especially in terms of the degree of Christian content. In some congregations the Bible may be the referent for the entire service. In others biblical references may only be heard around Christian holidays.

In North America and western Europe, where humanism and theological diversity mix, prayer is highly individualistic, depending on personal theology, and congregational prayer typically is couched in sufficiently general terms as to cover a range of forms. Some congregations have more specific prayer practices, but this is not typical. Among eastern European churches, where a liberal Christian theology prevails, prayer is more theistically centered, and the Lord's Prayer is always part of congregational worship.

Wedding and funeral rituals follow a similar dichotomy: In countries where liberal Christianity has been maintained, the wedding and funeral ceremonies are more traditional, in the Protestant mold. In other regions, such as North America, weddings are highly individualized and based on the wishes and preferences of the couple. Among UUs in Western countries weddings of same-sex couples are common, and in fact UU ministers often are called upon to perform services of union for non-UU same-sex couples. Among American UUs religious rituals immediately following a death are often limited to family and close friends. Cremation is common, and a memorial service for the community is often held at a later time.

#### rites of passage

The rites of passage celebrated by Unitarian Universalists are similar to those of other traditions emerging from Protestantism. Naming ceremonies are held for infants. A confirmation or coming-of-age ceremony is commonly held for young teens. In North America the term "bridging" refers to a ceremony in recognition of the passage from youth to adulthood and is often associated with graduation from high school.

## ✓ WESTERN ESOTERICISM

Western esotericism is a term under which scholars have categorised a wide range of loosely related ideas and movements which have developed within Western society. These ideas and currents are united by the fact that they are largely distinct both from orthodox Judeo-Christian religion and from Enlightenment rationalism. Esotericism has pervaded various forms of Western philosophy, religion, pseudoscience, art, literature, and music, continuing to affect intellectual ideas and popular culture.

The idea of grouping a wide range of Western traditions and philosophies together under the category that is now termed esotericism developed in Europe during the late seventeenth century.

The earliest traditions which later analysis would label as forms of Western esotericism emerged in the Eastern Mediterranean during Late Antiquity, where Hermetism, Gnosticism, and Neoplatonism developed as schools of thought distinct from what became mainstream Christianity. Renaissance Europe saw increasing interest in many of these older ideas, with various intellectuals combining "pagan" philosophies with the Kabbalah and Christian philosophy, resulting in the emergence of esoteric movements like Christian theosophy. The seventeenth century saw the development of initiatory societies professing esoteric knowledge such as Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, while the Age of Enlightenment of the eighteenth century led to the development of new forms of esoteric thought. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of new trends of esoteric thought that have come to be known as occultism. Prominent groups in this century included the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Modern Paganism developed within occultism, and includes religious movements such as Wicca. Esoteric ideas permeated the counterculture of the 1960s and later cultural tendencies, from which emerged the New Age phenomenon in the 1970s.

## ➤ OTHER - Certain Christian groups are difficult to classify as "Eastern" or "Western"

### ✓ CRISTIAN GNOSTICISM

### ✓ CRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM



Christian Universalism is a range of Christian theologies which includes belief in the doctrine of universal reconciliation, the view that all human beings and angels will ultimately be redeemed in paths of proper relationship with God.

The term Christian universalism was used in the 1820s by Russell Streater of the Christian Intelligencer of Portland - a descendant of Adams Streater who had founded one of the first Universalist Churches on September 14, 1785.

Christian universalists believe this was the most common interpretation of Christianity in Early Christianity, prior to the 6th century. Christians from a diversity of denominations and traditions believe in the tenets of Christian universalism, such as the

reality of an afterlife without the possibility of eternal punishment in hell.

As a formal Christian denomination, Christian universalism originated in the late 18th century with the Universalist Church of America. There is currently no single denomination uniting Christian universalists, but a few denominations teach some of the principles of Christian universalism or are open to them. In 2007, the Christian Universalist Association was founded to serve as an ecumenical umbrella organization for churches, ministries, and individuals who believe in Christian universalism.

Christian Universalists disagree on whether or not Hell exists. However, they do agree that if it does, the punishment there is corrective and remedial, and does not last forever.

There are three general types of Christian Universalism today - Evangelical Universalism, Charismatic Universalism, and Liberal Christian Universalism - which by themselves or in combination with one another describe the vast majority of currently existing and identifiable versions of Christian Universalist belief and practice.

## ✓ NONTRINITARIANISM

Nontrinitarianism is a form of Christianity that rejects the mainstream Christian doctrine of the Trinity - the teaching that God is three distinct hypostases or persons who are coeternal, coequal, and indivisibly united in one being, or essence (from the Greek *ousia*). Certain religious groups that emerged during the Protestant Reformation have historically been known as antitrinitarian, but are not considered Protestant in popular discourse due to their nontrinitarian nature.

In terms of number of adherents, nontrinitarian denominations comprise a minority of modern Christianity. The largest nontrinitarian Christian denominations are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("Mormons"), Jehovah's Witnesses, La Luz del Mundo and the Iglesia ni Cristo, though there are a number of other smaller groups, including Christadelphians, Christian Scientists, Dawn Bible Students, Living Church of God, Oneness Pentecostals, Assemblies of Yahweh, Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ, Members Church of God International, Unitarian Universalist Christians, The Way International, The Church of God International and the United Church of God.

Nontrinitarian views differ widely on the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as held in mainstream Christianity, is not present in the other major Abrahamic religions.

## ✓ MESSIANIC JUDAISM



Messianic Judaism is a modern syncretic religious movement that combines Christianity - most importantly, the belief that Jesus is the Messiah - with elements of Judaism and Jewish tradition, its current form emerging in the 1960s and 1970s.

Messianic Judaism believes that Jesus[a] is the Jewish Messiah and "God the Son" (one person of the Trinity), and that the Tanakh[b] and New Testament are the authoritative scriptures. Salvation in Messianic Judaism is achieved only through acceptance of Jesus as one's savior, and Jewish laws or customs which are followed do not contribute to salvation. Other Christian groups usually accept Messianic Judaism as a form of Christianity.

Many adherents of Messianic Judaism are ethnically Jewish and argue that the movement is a sect of Judaism. Many refer to themselves in Hebrew as *maaminim* (believers), not converts, and *yehudim* (Jews), not *notzrim* (Christians). Jewish organizations and the Supreme Court of Israel have rejected this claim in cases related to the Law of Return, and instead consider Messianic Judaism to be a form of Christianity.

From 2003 to 2007, the movement grew from 150 Messianic houses of worship in the United States to as many as 438, with over 100 in Israel and more worldwide; congregations are often affiliated with larger Messianic organizations or alliances.

An estimated total worldwide membership of 350,000.

The Messianic Seal of Jerusalem is a symbol for Messianic Judaism and Christians. The symbol is seen as a depiction of the Menorah, an ancient Jewish symbol, together with the Ichthys, an ancient depictive representation of Christian faith and the community of Jesus followers, creating a Star of David at the intersection. The Messianic Seal is not the only symbol of Messianic Judaism, which has other graphical representations such as the Menorah and Star of David, the cross in the Star of David, among others.

(There is an ongoing dispute as to whether or not the seal dates from the 1st century AD, or if it is a 20th-century invention.)

Many Messianic Jews affirm the doctrine of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as three representations of the same divinity.

The place of Jesus in Messianic Judaism is usually clearly defined. His Jewishness and that of all the original disciples is affirmed. Messianic Judaism asserts that Jesus is the Word of God become manifest, a belief that is identical with normative Christian doctrine regarding the nature and identity of the son of God. Furthermore, Messianic Judaism generally asserts that

the Messiah has a dual aspect as revealed in Scripture. Messianic Jews believe Jesus' first role as Messiah was to rescue the world from spiritual bondage, and that he will return to rescue the world from physical oppression and establish his unending Kingdom—again, a belief that is identical to the normative Christian view of the Messiah.

Both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are usually considered to be the established and divinely inspired Biblical scriptures by Messianic Jews. With a few exceptions, Messianic believers generally consider the written Torah, the five books of Moses, to remain in force as a continuing covenant, revised by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament, that is to be observed both morally and ritually.

There is no unanimity among Messianic congregations on the issue of the Talmud and the Oral Torah. There are congregations which believe that adherence to the Oral Law, as encompassed by the Talmud, is against Messianic beliefs. Similarly, there are congregations which deny the authority of the Pharisees, believing that they were superseded, and their teachings contradicted, by Messianism. There are adherents which call rabbinic commentaries such as the Mishnah and the Talmud "dangerous", and state that followers of rabbinic and halakhic explanations and commentaries are not believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Other congregations are selective in their applications of Talmudic law, and may believe that the rabbinic commentaries such as the Mishnah and the Talmud, while historically informative and useful in understanding tradition, are not normative and may not be followed where they differ from the New Testament. Still others encourage a serious observance of Jewish halakha.

Messianic Jews generally consider the entire Christian Bible to be sacred scripture.

Some Messianic Jews observe Shabbat on Saturdays. Worship services are generally held on Friday evenings (Erev Shabbat) or Saturday mornings.

The Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council recommends the observance of Jewish holidays. Most larger Messianic Jewish congregations follow Jewish custom in celebrating the three biblical feasts (Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot), as well as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah.

The observance of the kashrut dietary laws is a subject of continued debate among Messianic Jews. Some Messianic believers keep kosher purely for the purposes of evangelism to Jewish people. Most avoid pork and shellfish, but there is disagreement on more strict adherence to kosher dietary laws.

Messianic Jews practice baptism, calling it a mikveh rather than the term hattvila ("baptism" in the Hebrew New Testament).

## ✓ UNIFICATION CHURCH

The Unification Church (UC), also called the Unification movement and sometimes colloquially the "Moonies", is a worldwide new religious movement that was founded by and is inspired by Sun Myung Moon, a Korean spiritual leader, entrepreneur, activist, and peace advocate.

It is a spiritually-based and charismatically-led movement of legally independent organizations that include businesses, news media, projects in education and the arts, and political and social activism.

Considering that Moon repeatedly proclaimed the "end of religion" and his desire to not have a "church", the term "Unification movement", rather than "Unification Church" is sometimes used to describe the theology, organizations, and individuals associated with him.

The main text of the Unification Church is Reverend Moon's book *The Divine Principle* (1952). His speeches are also considered authoritative. The Christian Bible is highly regarded, but used to a lesser degree.

The Unification Church is a profoundly family-centered Church. Members are expected to remain celibate during their youth. They are to subsequently marry, have children, and create an ideal family which contributes to world peace.

The Blessing or mass wedding ceremony is the most remarkable Unification ritual. Rev. Moon matches up each couple a month (or less) in advance, selecting from among the Church membership. Sometimes, they first meet on the day of their wedding. The bride and groom are expected to marry, but can decide to opt out without disgrace. A Holy Wine Ceremony is conducted before the marriage; this purifies the couple so that they are able to have children free of Fallen Nature (resulting from original sin inherited from Adam and Eve). A special Three Day Ceremony is performed by the married couple for some weeks after their wedding, before they engage in sexual activity.

A Pledge Service is celebrated at 5 AM each Sunday, and on the first day of each month and on January 1.

They celebrate four major seasonal days of celebration:

- True God's Day,
- True Parents' Day,
- True Day of All Things.
- Chil II Jeol: Declaration Day of God's Eternal Blessing
- True Children's Day
- Foundation Day for the nation of the Unified World

Dates are variable, and are set according to a lunar calendar.

An exact number is extremely difficult to obtain. The UC does not publish official statistics for outsiders, explaining that the media may use these statistics against the organization. Membership is estimated at 1-2 million worldwide, with the largest number in Korea and U.S.

## ✓ EASTERN LIGHTNING

Eastern Lightning which prefers to use the name The Church of Almighty God,[a] is a new religious movement established in China in 1991.

Its core teaching is that Jesus Christ returned to earth in our days as the incarnate Almighty God, this time not as a man but as a Chinese woman.

In The Church of Almighty God, the Bible is accepted as the holy scripture for the Age of Law and the Age of Grace, although it is argued that.

The Church of Almighty God believes that the sacraments, including baptism, were practices of the Age of Grace and have no place in the Age of Kingdom. Accordingly, there is no baptism in The Church of Almighty God, and one becomes a member of the church by confessing that the incarnated Almighty God is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the appearance of the only one true God in the last days, being willing to pray in the name of Almighty God, and being able to understand and accept the beliefs of The Church of Almighty God. The absence of sacraments does not mean that gathering together, praying and worshiping God is not important for the members of the Church of Almighty God. They “fellowship” regularly by meeting and discussing their sacred scriptures, hearing sermons, singing hymns, and sharing testimonies.

## ✓ ARIANISM (HISTORICAL)

Arianism was a major theological movement in the Christian Roman Empire during the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. Arians do not believe in the traditional doctrine of the Trinity.

## ✓ EBIONITES (HISTORICAL)

Ebionites is a patristic term referring to a Jewish Christian movement that existed during the early centuries of the Christian Era. They regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah while rejecting his divinity and his virgin birth, and insisted on the necessity of following Jewish law and rites. They used only one of the Jewish–Christian gospels, the Hebrew Book of Matthew starting at chapter 3, revered James the brother of Jesus (James the Just), and rejected Paul the Apostle as an apostate from the Law. Their name suggests that they placed a special value on voluntary poverty. Ebionim was one of the terms used by the sect at Qumran that sought to separate themselves from the corruption of the Temple. Many believe that they were Essenes.

## ✓ MARCIONISM (HISTORICAL)

Marcionism was an Early Christian dualist belief system that originated in the teachings of Marcion of Sinope at Rome around the year 144.

Marcion believed Jesus was the savior sent by God, and Paul the Apostle was his chief apostle, but he rejected the Hebrew Bible and the God of Israel. Marcionists believed that the wrathful Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving God of the New Testament. This belief was in some ways similar to Gnostic Christian theology; notably, both are dualistic, that is, they posit opposing gods, forces, or principles: one higher, spiritual, and "good", and the other lower, material, and "evil" (compare Manichaeism). This dualism stands in contrast to other Christian and Jewish views that "evil" has no independent existence, but is a privation or lack of "good".

Marcionism, similar to Gnosticism, depicted the God of the Old Testament as a tyrant or demiurge (see also God as the Devil). Marcion's canon consisted of eleven books: a gospel consisting of ten sections drawn from the Gospel of Luke; and ten Pauline epistles.

Marcion's canon rejected the entire Old Testament, along with all other epistles and gospels of the 27 book New Testament canon because they transmitted "Jewish" ideas. Paul's epistles enjoy a prominent position in the Marcionite canon, since Paul is credited with correctly transmitting the gracious universality of Jesus' message in opposition to the harsh dictates of the "just god".

Marcionism was denounced by its opponents as heresy, and written against, notably by Tertullian in a five-book treatise *Adversus Marcionem*, written about 208.

## ➤ GNOSTICISM



Gnosticism is a modern name for a variety of ancient religious ideas and systems, originating in Jewish-Christian milieus in the first and second century AD. These systems believed that the material world is created by an emanation of the highest God, trapping the divine spark within the human body.

The Gnostic ideas and systems flourished in the Mediterranean world in the second century AD, in conjunction with and influenced by the early Christian movements and Middle Platonism. After the Second Century, a decline set in, but Gnosticism persisted throughout the centuries as an undercurrent of western culture, remanifesting with the Renaissance as Western esotericism, taking prominence with modern spirituality. In the Persian Empire, Gnosticism spread as far as China with Manicheism, while Mandaëism is still alive in Iraq.

A major question in scholarly research is the qualification of Gnosticism, based on the study of its texts, as either an interreligious phenomenon or as an independent religion.

Gnostics tended toward asceticism, especially in their sexual and dietary practice. In other areas of morality, Gnostics were less rigorously ascetic, and took a more moderate approach to correct behaviour. In normative early Christianity the Church administered and prescribed the correct behaviour for Christians, while in Gnosticism it was the internalised motivation that was important. Ritualistic behaviour was not important unless it was based on a personal, internal motivation.

## ✓ BOSNIAN CHURCH (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)

The Bosnian Church was a Christian church in medieval Bosnia that was independent of and considered heretical by both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox hierarchies.

Historians have traditionally connected the church with the Bogomils, although this has been challenged. Adherents of the church called themselves simply *krstjani* ("Christians") or *dobri Bošnjani* ("Good Bosnians"). The church's organization and beliefs are poorly understood, because few if any records were left by church members, and the church is mostly known from the writings of outside sources, primarily Roman Catholic ones.

The Bosnian Church used Slavic language in liturgy, as did the Orthodox. The church was headed by a bishop, called *djed* ("grandfather"), and had a council of twelve men called *strojnici*. The monk missionaries were known as *krstjani* or *krščani* ("adherents of the cross"). Some of the adherents resided in small monasteries, known as *hiže* (*hiža*, "house"), while others were wanderers, known as *gosti* (*gost*, "guest"). It is difficult to ascertain how the theology differed from that of the Orthodox and Catholic. The practices were however unacceptable to both.

The Church was mainly composed of monks in scattered monastic houses. It had no territorial organization and it did not deal with any secular matters other than attending people's burials. It did not involve itself in state issues very much.

The monumental tombstones called *Stećak* that appeared in medieval Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, are sometime identified with the Bosnian Church.

Hval's Codex, written in 1404 in Bosnian Cyrillic, is one of the most famous manuscripts belonging to the Bosnian Church in which there are some iconographic elements which are not in concordance with the supposed theological doctrine of Christians (Annunciation, Crucifixion and Ascension).

The Bosnian Church retained some teachings from the Catholic Church, but developed its own teachings; many strongly opposed to those of the Orthodox Church. The Bosnian Church denied the trinity and the cross as a symbol of faith. Further, the Bosnian Church believed that Christ's incarnation is an illusion, and his physical death on the cross could not have actually happened. The Bosnian Church also taught that Satan's powers were almost equal to God's – a trait likely derived from their Manichaean counterparts. The Bosnian Church also rejected mass and baptism. Ultimately, the Bosnian Church rejected wealthy monasteries (probably the cause of their own unique organization) and traditional church buildings.

## ✓ CERDONIANS (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)

The Cerdonians were a Gnostic sect founded by Cerdo, a Syrian, who came to Rome about 137, but concerning whose history little is known. They held that there are two first causes - the perfectly good and the perfectly evil. The latter is also the creator of the world, the god of the Jews, and the author of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the son of the good deity; he was sent into the world to oppose the evil; but his incarnation, and therefore his sufferings, were a mere appearance. Regarding the body as the work of the evil deity, the Cerdonians formed a moral system of great severity, prohibiting marriage, wine and the eating of flesh, and advocating fasting and other austerities.

Most of what the Church Fathers narrate of Cerdo's tenets has probably been transferred to him from his famous pupil Marcion, like whom he is said to have rejected the Old Testament and the New, except part of Luke's Gospel and of Paul's epistles.

## ✓ COLARBASIANS (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)

In Christian Gnostic religious history, the Colarbasians were a supposed sect of the 2nd century, deemed heretics, so called from their leader Colarbasus, a disciple of Valentinius. Colarbasus, along with Marcus, another disciple of Valentinius, was said to maintain the whole plenitude, and perfection of truth and religion, to be contained in the Greek alphabet; and that it was for this reason that Jesus was called the Alpha and Omega.

## ✓ SIMONIANS (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)

The Simonians were a Gnostic sect of the 2nd century which regarded Simon Magus as its founder and traced its doctrines, known as Simonianism, back to him. The sect flourished in Syria, in various districts of Asia Minor and at Rome. In the 3rd century remnants of it still existed, which survived until the 4th century.

The Simonians were variously accused of using magic and theurgy, incantations and love-potions; declaring idolatry a matter of indifference that was neither good nor bad, proclaiming all sex to be perfect love, and altogether leading very disorderly, immoral lives.

## ✓ BOGOMILISM (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)

Bogomilism was a Christian neo-Gnostic or dualist sect founded in the First Bulgarian Empire by the priest Bogomil during the reign of Tsar Peter I in the 10th century. It most probably arose in what is today the region of Macedonia as a response to the social stratification that occurred with the introduction of feudalism and as a form of political movement and opposition to the Bulgarian state and the church.

The Bogomils called for a return to what they considered to be early spiritual teaching, rejecting the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and their primary political tendencies were resistance to the state and church authorities. This helped the movement spread quickly in the Balkans, gradually expanding throughout the Byzantine Empire and later reaching Kievan Rus', Bosnia (Bosnian Church), Dalmatia, Serbia, Italy, and France (Cathars).

The Bogomils were dualists or Gnostics in that they believed in a world within the body and a world outside the body. They did not use the Christian cross, nor build churches, as they revered their gifted form and considered their body to be the temple. This gave rise to many forms of practice to cleanse oneself through purging, fasting, celebrating and dancing.

They rejected Baptism, the Eucharist, and the whole organization of the Orthodox Church and did not accept the docetic teaching of some of the other sects.

The moral teaching of the Bogomils was as consistently dualistic. They condemned those functions of man that bring him into close contact with matter, especially marriage, the eating of meat, and the drinking of wine.

They held the "Lord's Prayer" in high respect as the most potent weapon against Satan, and had a number of conjurations against "evil spirits". Each community had its own twelve "apostles", and women could be raised to the rank of "elect".

The Bogomils wore garments like mendicant friars and were known as keen missionaries, travelling far and wide to propagate their doctrines.

They accepted the four Gospels, fourteen Epistles of Paul, the three Epistles of John, James, Jude, and an Epistle to the Laodiceans, which they professed to have.

They sowed the seeds of a rich, popular religious literature in the East as well as the West.

## ✓ CATHARISM (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)



The Occitan cross was a Cathar rallying symbol

Catharism was a Christian dualist or Gnostic revival movement that thrived in some areas of Southern Europe, particularly northern Italy and what is now southern France, between the 12th and 14th centuries. The followers were known as Cathars and are now mainly remembered for a prolonged period of persecution by the Catholic Church which did not recognise their belief as truly Christian. Catharism appeared in Europe in the Languedoc region of France in the 11th century and this is when the name first appears. The adherents were also sometimes known as Albigensians after the city Albi in southern France where the movement first took hold. The beliefs are believed to have been brought from Persia or the Byzantine Empire.

Cathar beliefs varied between communities, because Catharism was initially taught by ascetic leaders who had set few guidelines. The Catholic Church denounced its practices including the Consolamentum ritual, by which Cathar individuals were baptized and raised to the status of 'perfect'.

The idea of two Gods or principles, one being good and the other evil, was central to Cathar beliefs. The good God was the God

of the New Testament and the creator of the spiritual realm, contrasted with the evil Old Testament God—the creator of the physical world whom many Cathars, and particularly their persecutors, identified as Satan. All visible matter, including the human body, was created by this evil god; matter was therefore tainted with sin. This was antithetical to the monotheistic Catholic Church, whose fundamental principle was that there was only one God, who created all things visible and invisible. Cathars, in general, formed an anti-sacerdotal party in opposition to the Catholic Church, protesting against what they perceived to be the moral, spiritual and political corruption of the Church.

In contrast to the Catholic Church, the Cathars had but one central rite, the Consolamentum, or Consolation. This involved a brief spiritual ceremony to remove all sin from the believer and to induct him or her into the next higher level as a perfect. Many believers would receive the Consolamentum as death drew near, performing the ritual of liberation at a moment when the heavy obligations of purity required of Perfecti would be temporally short. Some of those who received the sacrament of the consolamentum upon their death-beds may thereafter have shunned further food or drink and, more often and in addition, expose themselves to extreme cold, in order to speed death. This has been termed the endura.

The Cathars also refused the Catholic Sacrament of the eucharist saying that it could not possibly be the body of Christ. They also refused to partake in the practice of Baptism by water.

The alleged sacred texts of the Cathars besides the New Testament, include The Gospel of the Secret Supper, or John's Interrogation and The Book of the Two Principles.

Killing was abhorrent to the Cathars. Consequently, abstention from all animal food (sometimes exempting fish) was enjoined of the Perfecti. The Perfecti avoided eating anything considered to be a by-product of sexual reproduction.

To the Cathars, reproduction was a moral evil to be avoided, as it continued the chain of reincarnation and suffering in the material world. It was claimed by their opponents that, given this loathing for procreation, they generally resorted to sodomy.

Catharism has been seen as giving women the greatest opportunities for independent action since women were found as being believers as well as Perfecti, who were able to administer the sacrament of the consolamentum.

## ✓ **YAZIDIS (a syncretic Kurdish religion with a Gnostic influence)**



Melek Taus, Yazidy Holy Symbol

They practice a syncretic religion influenced by pre-Islamic Assyrian traditions, Sufi and Shiite Islam, Nestorian Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Their rich oral tradition is their primary way of passing on their beliefs, which makes it complicated for scholars and historians to pin down the nuances of their religion.

Yezidi's believe in one God (Xwede) who created the universe and then left it in the capable hands of his seven mightiest angels. God is uninterested in the affairs of earth, even if he is all forgiving and merciful. He has left the workings of the world to the governing of Tawsi Melek (the Peacock Angel) who is both his servant and an occasional manifestation of himself.

The central figure in the Yezidi faith is this Tawsi Melek. It is believed that Tawsi Melek is the Yezidi's direct connection with God. They pray to and venerate him as God, though they do recognize a distinction between the two. Some would refer to the peacock angel as God's 'alter ego'.

Yezidis believe that they are a separate people from all others that walk the earth. They consider themselves to be born only of Adam, not Adam and Eve, and therefore to marry or commune with a non-Yezidi is to lose the purity of their race. One cannot convert to Yezidism, but one can certainly and irrevocably be removed from it. They do believe in the eternity of the soul, but not necessarily in heaven. Instead, souls transmigrate or are reincarnated, presumably back into the Yezidi community.

The Yazidi community is based in Iraq, near their primary shrine, Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir's tomb in Lalish, near Mosul. Yazidis can also be found in Iran, Syria and Turkey, though many have migrated to Europe and America since the first Gulf War.

Their population is estimated to number as many as 600,000 people, though the recent violence in Iraq has most likely decreased their ranks.

The Peacock Angel, Melek Taus - The concept of Melek Taus is the most misunderstood part of the Yazidi religion, and is one of the reasons why their community has suffered such historical persecution. They believe that once God created Adam and Eve, he ordered the angels to bow to his creations. While the other angels did so, Melek Taus was the only one to refuse, because he believed that he should submit to no one but the Supreme God. He was then thrown into Hell, until his tears of remorse quenched the fires and he became reconciled to God. He now serves as an intermediary between God and humanity.

### SCRIPTURES?ORAL TRADITION

Yezidi's don't have a written text that is has been passed down throughout the generations. Many of the traditions of their faith have been passed down through stories and songs that can only be spoken by their holy men.

### RITUALS

Yezidis follow several rituals that are similar to other religions. They do pray, fast, observe holy days, and go on pilgrimages.

### PRAY

No Yezidi is required to pray, nor are there set times of corporate or individual prayer. The most religious do pray at 5 times during the day; dawn, sunrise, noon afternoon and sunset. When they pray they must first wash their hands and face, cross their arms over their body, and lift their faces to the sun. There are no rote prayers to be said. All prayers are addressed to Tawsi

Melek or Shams (the sun). Most prayers are completed while standing and are ended by kissing the hem of their garment or an east facing wall.

#### **FASTING**

Fasting is usually only done for three days every December. Again, this is not a requirement but something the most religious do. It is done in memory of Sultan Ezi. Those in higher levels of the religious and social strata do fast for 40 days during the summer and during the winter.

#### **HOLY DAYS**

The Yezidi holy day is Wednesday. Much like the sacred days of other religions, no work is to be done on the holy day. Those who are close enough to visit a shrine would do so on this day. However, there is no formal requirement to meet with other community members or have any kind of corporate worship. Each Yezidi is to pass the day as they wish. Other holy days require pilgrimages.

#### **HOLY FESTIVALS**

Yezidi religious year includes four holy festivals:

- The New Year
- The Feast of Sacrifice
- The Feast of Seven Days, Sept 23-30
- The first Friday of December feast following three days of fasting.

#### **rites of passage**

There are six rites of passage that all Yezidi males and most females will pass through. They are haircut, baptism, circumcision, brother (or sister) of the hereafter, wedding, and funeral.

#### **FIRST HAIRCUT PARTY**

Yezidi boys are not allowed to have their hair cut until they are six months to a year old. Tradition calls for the child's 'godfather' (brother of the hereafter) to cut off a portion of the forelock and keep it. Gifts are given to the boy's family and he is officially considered part of Yezidi society.

#### **BAPTISM**

Baptism at Lalish Girls must wait to join society until they can be baptized. This is usually done when they are very young, but can be done at any time in a person's life. The child (either male or female) is baptized in the waters of the baptistry of Lalish (the most holy shrine of the Yezidi). The only people present for the baptism are the holy man, the child, and the child's parents. Baptism is more than just joining society, it also indicates that the child is now a servant of Sultan Ezi.

#### **CIRCUMCISION**

Males are circumcised twenty days after their baptism. The parents choose a kefir for this occasion. The kefir is generally chosen from a caste with which the child is not permitted to intermarry as the kefir is considered a brother to the child. Often the kefir is someone from outside the Yezidi faith.

#### **BROTHERS FOR THE AFTERLIFE**

The brothers of the hereafter are chosen during a lifetime. Every Yezidi must have two to help and protect them as they navigate the rites of life. Men may only choose from the two upper classes of society, whereas women are free to choose any they wish. However, should a woman marry, her husband's brother or sister will then become her brother (or sister).

#### **ARRANGED MARRIAGES**

Most marriages happen young (15-16 years old) and are arranged by the fathers of the couple. There is a bride price paid by the groom's family and the wedding must be carried out by a holy man. The bride undergoes the application of henna, is arrayed in red and is escorted from her family home to that of her groom. There is usually a sheep slaughtered in sacrifice, followed by feasting and dancing. Marriage is only allowed within the Yezidi community, but even that is limited by castes and social standing. Marriages can occur at any time during the year, except in the holy month of April.

#### **DEATH**

A funeral does not denote the passing of a soul, but only the end of its time in that body. The soul will transmigrate to a new body after undergoing its Judgement Day and will have no remembrance of its previous life. The corpse is washed, dressed in a white shroud, and placed in a sarcophagus. Soil from the shrine of Sheik Adi is placed in the mouth, and the body is buried with its head facing east.

After the funeral, a seer is asked by the family to determine the destiny of the deceased. If the soul is seen to have entered returned as a Yezidi the family celebrates with a feast. If however, it is found to be housed in any other living being the family offers sacrifices to 'redeem' their soul. For one week after this, the brother of the hereafter visits the family. His job is to console, sing praise to Tawsi Melek, and share happy memories of the deceased. After four days, an ox is sacrificed on the tomb and its meat is given to passersby as alms.

## **PERSIAN Gnosticim**

### **✓ BAGNOLIANS (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)**

The Bagnolians were a sect in the 8th century, deemed heretical, who rejected the Old Testament and part of the New Testament. They held the world to be eternal, and affirmed that God did not create the soul, when he infused it into the body. They derived their name from Bagnols, a city in Languedoc, France. Their doctrine generally agreed with that of the Manicheans.

## ✓ MANDAEISM



Mandaean cross

According to most scholars, Mandaeanism originated sometime in the first three centuries AD, in Mesopotamia.

Mandaeanism or Mandaeanism is a gnostic religion with a strongly dualistic worldview. Its adherents, the Mandaeans, revere Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Noah, Shem, Aram, and especially John the Baptist.

Mandaeanism, as the religion of the Mandaean people, is based more on a common heritage than on any set of religious creeds and doctrines. A basic guide to Mandaean theology does not exist.

Mandaeans believe in marriage and procreation, and in the importance of leading an ethical and moral lifestyle in this world. They also place a high priority upon family life. Consequently, Mandaeans do not practice celibacy or asceticism. Mandaeans will, however, abstain from strong drink and red meat. While they agree with other gnostic sects that the world is a prison governed by the planetary archons, they do not view it as a cruel and inhospitable one.

The Mandaean Community is divided into priests and laity. There are three different ranks of priests. They include ordinary priests (tarmide, 'disciples, pupils'), bishops or 'treasurers' (ganzibre) and the 'head of the people' (rishama). The priest acts as the representative of heavenly messengers and angels (uthre) and thus he is equated with them repeatedly in the rituals.

The Mandaean worldview is stamped by gnostic dualism. A World of Light (nhura) and a World of Darkness (hshuka) exist in mutual hostility.

### BELIEFS

**Life** - Recognition of the existence of one God, whom Nasurai call "Hayyi" which in Aramaic means "the Living" or life itself. The Great Life (or Supreme Deity) is a personification of the creative and sustaining force of the universe, and is spoken of always in the impersonal plural, it remains mystery and abstraction. The modern Jewish practice of saying "To Life!" and of wearing the Chai (Life) letters as pendants may be related to this Mandaean reverence for Life. The symbol of the Great Life is flowing 'living' water or yardna. Because of this, flowing water holds a central place in all Nasurai rituals, hence the necessity of living near rivers.

**Light** - The second vivifying power is light, which is represented by a personification of light, Melka d Nhura (the King of Light) and

the light spirits, who bestow health, strength, virtue and justice. In the ethical system of the Mandaeans, as in that of the Zoroastrians, cleanliness, health of body and ritual obedience must be accompanied by purity of mind, health of conscience and obedience to moral laws. A phrase in the Manual of Discipline reads: that they may behold the Light of Life.

**Immortality** - The third important rite of the religion is the belief in the immortality of the soul, and its close relationship with the souls of its ancestors, immediate and divine. The fate of the soul is a chief concern, while the body is treated with disdain. Belief in the existence of the next life, in which there will be reward and punishment. The sinner will be punished in al-Matarathi and then enter Paradise. There is no eternal punishment because God is merciful and forgiving.

### PRAYER

Mandaeans must face the North (Pole) Star during prayers. This mis-conception of star worship comes from the fact that although the Mandaeans are monotheists, they pay adoration to the angels and the good and free spirits which they believe reside in the stars and from which they govern the world under the Supreme Deity. Kneeling and prostration during prayer is unknown, neither is the covering of the face with the hands at any time. The head is held erect, and the hands are not used. Priests are required to pray a different set prayer each day of the week. Prayer hours are dawn, noon and dusk.

### ASCETICISM

Asceticism, self-denial and simplicity as religious attitudes. There should be no sale of foodstuffs as these should be offered to the needy. There should be no embellishment of graves nor visiting them. A good deed should be done in secret and not for show.

### CIRCUMCISION

One of their inviolable beliefs was the integrity of the physical body. No part of it should be cut off, for just as God created the person sound and complete so should this trust be returned to him. Circumcision is included in this prohibition.

### RESPECT FOR RIVERS

Respect for and sanctification of rivers is such that Mandaeans always try to live near their banks. A major sin as mentioned in the Holy Books is that a person should urinate in a river. However, it is recommended to throw left-over food in water, especially the food remaining from ceremonies remembering a deceased person which will be eaten by the river fish. This is because the river or Yardna represents Life and Light from which everything was formed and so will return to it. - It involves communion with the Light World and the long departed Souls.

### BAPTISM

The central rite of the Mandaean cult is immersion in water, which is regarded not only as a symbol of Life, but to a certain degree as life itself. The chief purpose and significance of baptism is first that the neophyte, by immersion in the yardna, enters into close communion with the World of Light receiving physical well being, protection against the powers of death and promise of ever lasting life to the Soul. The second quality is purificatory, just as it washes away filth, infections and impurity from the body, it washes away transgressions and sins from the Soul. The greater the number of ablutions performed or received the better, for without baptism no Mandaean (or his Soul) may pass onto the next world. Baptism was at one time so essential such that unbaptised children were not considered to belong to the community. Baptism takes place on Sundays

(habshaba), the first day of the week, which is for the Mandaeans, a holiday.

#### ABSOLUTIONS

Ablutions (rishama) are performed before the prayers, and this means washing the face and the rest of the limbs while reciting certain prayers.

#### DIET & PURITY

Food is also ritually cleansed, such as fruits and vegetables before consumption. Other items like the rasta (robes) and kitchen utensils such as pots and pans undergo frequent ritual purifications. Salt is the only exception. Ganzivri (Bishops) and priests must only eat of the food they prepare themselves and their bread may not be baked with that of lay persons. For Ganzivri (Bishops) wine, coffee and tobacco are forbidden to them and they must avoid eating hot or cooked food. All their fruits and vegetables must be eaten raw. Water is the only beverage of a priest and this must be taken directly from the river or spring. The Mandaeans also use other terms to differentiate amongst themselves on basis of ritual cleanliness, Suwadi is used for laymen, Hallali is applied to ritually pure men, who of their own will follow a high religious standard, and of course Nasurai used for priests. Only that grows from a seed is lawful for food (hence a mushroom is forbidden). In practice little meat is eaten, and the attitude towards slaughter is always apologetic, perhaps because all original Nasurai were vegetarians and meat eating only crept in after a departure from their original faith. All killing and blood letting is supposedly sinful and it is forbidden to kill female beasts. Flies, scorpions and all harmful stinging things may be slain without sin. Under Mandaean customs every mother must suckle her own child, it is forbidden to act as a foster mother for hire. The child's education and upbringing is the duty of the father, until the child reaches the age of 15 (or 20 according to others, which was the age of adulthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Pythagorean tradition).

#### RISHAMA BAPTISM

The first of the miqvah purifications performed is the rishama (signing), the priests presence is not required, such that each man is his own priest. This should be performed daily, and with covered head, just before sunrise after the evacuation of the bowels and before all religious ceremonies.

#### TAMASHA BAPTISM

The second, the tamasha, is a simple triple immersion in the river, again this is performed without the aid of the priest or priestess. It must be performed by women after menstruation and after childbirth. Both man and woman must perform this abluion immediately after sexual intercourse, it must be performed after touching a dead body, after nocturnal pollution or any serious defilement or contact with a defiled person, as impurity is contagious - a person touching an unclean person, himself becomes unclean. These practices are related to the ritual purity laws of the Jews and were no doubt taught and practiced to some degree, and after their own fashion, by early Nazarenes.

#### MASBUTA BAPTISM

The third abluion, or 'full baptism', encompasses all aspects of baptism and must be performed by a priest or priestess. This abluion is known as masbuta (maswetta) includes the sacraments of oil, bread (known as pihtha) and water (from the river only, known as mambuha), the kushta (the hand grasp and kiss) and the final blessing by laying the right hand of the priest on the head of the baptized person. The masbuta should take place on Sunday, after major defilement's (i.e.. childbirth, marriage, illness and even after a journey) and especially for those who have lied or who have had violent quarrels, indeed after any action which is ashamed of. Major sins such as theft, murder, and adultery require more than one baptism.

#### CLOTHING

The rasta or ritual dress, also called the ustlia` in Mandaean texts, must be worn on all religious occasions such as baptism, marriage and death (in particular). It is a white dress, symbolic of the dress of light in which the pure soul is clad. All Mandaeans, laymen and priests, must possess one. The rasta consists of seven items for laymen and nine items for priests. though ritually clean, the rasta, except when new, is seldom white, it may not be washed with soap but may be washed in the river. It is the greatest misfortune for a person to die in his lay clothes, for his soul cannot reach Abathur. At one time the Mandaeans continually wore the rasta as it was a sin to wear a color. Wear white only, no colors are permitted regardless if they are natural or dyed. Of the fabrics, natural silk is most preferred and recommended, wool can only be used if shorn from a live animal, those that are fleeced after they die cannot be used to make clothing. No synthetic fiber's allowed i.e., nylon, rayon polyester etc. The Rule of the Garden of Peace mandates that all residents wear natural white clothing, just like the Mandaeans, ancient Essenes and ancient Pythagoreans.

#### BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

As death approaches the dying person is bathed, water is brought in from the river, the dying person is undressed and then washed with a threefold sprinkling from head to feet. He/she is then lifted and placed on clean bedding facing the North Star and is then dressed in a new rasta, with gold or gold threads sown on the right side of the stole and silver or silver threads sown on the left side. Weeping is forbidden. (To die at the sacred season of Panja means that the soul of the deceased will fly quickly to the worlds of light and escape the tortures and dangers of the purgatories. ) The dead person is interned facing north and the tomb goes unmarked - .. the body is dirt and rubbish, once the Soul has left it is a Mandaean saying. At the moment the body is being lowered into the tomb the lofani (ritual meal) is begun . A Zidqa Brikha, prayers and baptisms are also performed.

#### BANNERS

During the immersion ceremonies, a white silk banner, the dravsha, is erected on the bank of the pool to the south-east and right of the hut. The banner is purely a light symbol and the Mandaeans imagine the light of the sun, moon and stars as streaming from such banners. The silk is looped up so as not to touch the ground and then thrown around the peak, the end is fringed. A myrtle wreath is slipped over the peak of the banner, and, just beneath the cross (hidden from sight) a piece of gold wire called the aran dravshi, twisted into a 'letter' secures seven twigs of myrtle in place. The use of this cross emblem has confused many as to the Mandaean's relationship with Christianity. It is possible that it is pre-christian and may be an alternative source for the Christian use of the cross. It seems natural that something to hang one's clothing or prayer shawl on during Miqvah immersions would exist in a culture of daily immersers. The Seer Cayce told one woman that she helped prepare paintings for the walls, and

drawings that could be carried about, and were used as banners. (The Mandaens do not presently carry their dravsha banner in procession.)

#### PRIESTHOOD

Priesthood is allowable to both males and females within the Mandaean culture, and historically there have been female priests, or priestesses, although there are none known of at present. Priestly training begins in a boys early years, he puts on his rasta and acts as his fathers Shganda . He begins to learn his letters when he is 3 or 4 years old, when he is literate he is called a Yalufa. He begins to commit prayers and rituals to memory as soon as he can speak. A child destined for priesthood must not cut his hair or shave his beard. He must be without any physical blemish. He must be of pure Mandaean blood, his family must be physically and ritually immaculate for several generations back on both sides of the family. If any of his female ancestors within three generations were married when widows or non-virgins, then the would-be priest cannot be consecrated. When a boy has memorized enough of the rituals and prayers, acted in the proper manner of the Shganda under the guidance and instruction of the priest or Ganzivra, he becomes ready to receive initiation into the first degree of priesthood, becoming a Tarmida.

#### NEW NAME

Every Mandaean has two names, that of his earthly name (laqab) and the religiously important Malwasha (zodiacal name). The latter is his real name and is used on all religious occasions, this name is linked and derived from the mother and not the father. The priest uses the time of birth, the day, the zodiac sign and astrological chart to determine this name - but the giving of this religious name protects that person from the evil powers of the zodiac sign in which he was born - remember that the "12" and "7" are mentioned in the religious books as being evil and represent the zodiac signs and the then known planets, respectively. The purpose of the Malwasha is to protect that person from his star sign, the Malwasha is used in the religious ceremonies and prayers, the other name given by the parents is an earthly name of no significance to the religion.

#### CELIBACY

Celibacy is regarded as a sin, while the procreation of children is regarded as a religious duty. Women are not forced into marriages, although divorce is not accepted and only separation is sanctioned. Polygamy is not uncommon in the community, although this is a personal matter and is not universal.

#### SCRIPTURES

A. The Ginza Rba (The Great Treasure) or Sidra Rba (The Great Book). This consists of two parts, the right Ginza and the smaller left Ginza which is written upside down. The contents of the right side are mostly cosmogony, accounts of creation, prayers and legends. The second part (the left) deals only with the souls and its 'ascent' (masiqta) to the realm of light, its hymns are chanted during mass for the dead.

#### PLACE OF WORSHIP

A mandī is a place of worship for followers of Mandaicism. A mandī must be built beside a river in order to perform maṣbuta (or baptism) because water is an essential element in the Mandaic faith. Modern mandīs sometimes have a bath inside a building instead. Each mandī is adorned with a darfash, which is a cross of olive wood half covered with a piece of white pure silk cloth. The cross bears no relation to the Christian cross. Instead the four arms of the cross symbolise the four corners of the universe, while the pure silk cloth represents the Light of God.

## ✓ MANICHAISM



Mani is the founder of Manichaeism. An Iranian prophet, he was born in 216 AD in Babylonia (Iraq) and died in 274 AD in Gundeshapur (Iran). As a teenager, an angel appeared to him twice and he was then determined to be a prophet like Jesus, Buddha, and Zoroaster. In his mid 20's, he decided that he would fast and chastise so that he could receive salvation. Through his Manichaean journey, he wrote the Gospel of Mani for his followers and converted many important rulers during the 3rd century. His religion was then spread throughout the Silk Road regions (Europe to Asia).

Mani believed that the teachings of Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus were incomplete, and that his revelations were for the entire world, calling his teachings the "Religion of Light".

Manichaeism, the Gnostic and Dualistic religion founded by Mani, emphasizes on good and evil/light and dark.

Manichaeans believed that there is only 1 true God, and that all creation is from God and we are all part of the His creation. Additionally, they believed that all physical matter is not permanent, while all the light is real therefore eternal. Manichaeism also teaches that all suffering in the world is rooted in our ignorance of our true nature and due to our distraction from the real purpose in life. Manichaeism also tell us that everyone in the world is equal, no matter their race, gender etc. Therefore, everyone deserves to be protected, including animals and other life forms.

Mani's doctrines were strictly Gnostic and puritanical. They included the strict abomination of all matter, especially the flesh. The Devil created the material world and also made sex to entrap the ethereal souls in the prison of the flesh. Similar views were taught by the Essenes. The Manichaeans abstained from sex, from all animal food, and eggs, believing all flesh was evil if begotten by copulation.

Fish was edible on the pretense the fish did not propagate sexually but spontaneously came from the "living waters." On the

practical side perhaps some Manichaeans thought they should eat sometime besides seeds and weeds. The adoption of the Christian Aphroditian fish symbol to represent Christ was perhaps derived from Manichaeism.

Manichaeism's view on God's love is that it can be experienced by humanity through the love, compassion, kindness and selfless acts, and that the peace of God is reflected in the world through the actions of the faithful. Through them, the world can experience a taste of the peace that awaits them in the Eternal Kingdom of Light. Mani also taught that salvation is possible for the ones who are strict with their religion.

Manichaeans live according to the Evangelion, or the Gospel of Mani.

Only a portion of the faithful followed the strict ascetic life advocated in Manichaeism.

The community was divided into the elect, who felt able to embrace a rigorous rule, and the hearers who supported the elect with works and alms.

The essentials of the Manichaean sacramental rites were prayers, almsgiving, and fasting.

#### PRAYER

Prayer was obligatory four times a day: at noon, late in the afternoon, after sunset, and three hours later. Prayer was made facing the sun or, in the night, the moon; when neither sun nor moon was visible, then the North, the throne of the Light-King. It was preceded by a ceremonial purification with water or for lack of water with some other substance in the Mohammedan fashion. The daily prayers were accompanied by twelve prostrations and addressed to the various personalities in the realm of light: the Father of Majesty, the First-Man, the Legatus Tertius, the Paraclete (Mani), the Five Elements, and so on. They consist mainly of a string of laudatory epithets and contain but little supplication.

#### FASTING

They had weekly, monthly and yearly fasts. All fasted on the first day of the week in honor of the sun, the Perfect also fasted on the second day in honor of the moon. All kept the fast during two days after every new moon; and once a year at the full moon, and at the beginning of the first quarter of the moon. Moreover, a monthly fast, observed till sunset, was begun on the eighth day of the month.

The Manichees had no sacrifices.

They observed Sunday, with the intention of honouring the sun, for them equivalent with the redeemer.

They rejected all festivals.

#### RITES AND CEREMONIES

Of rites and ceremonies among the Manichæans but very little is known to us. They had one great solemnity (in March), that of the Bema, the anniversary of Mani's death. This was kept with a vigil of prayers and spiritual reading. An empty chair was placed on a raised platform to which five steps led up.

The sacraments were mysteries of the elect alone, so little information has come down to us concerning these.

Confession and the singing of hymns were also important in their communal life.

The Manichaean scriptural canon includes seven works attributed to Mani, written originally in Syriac.

In Manichaeism, heaven and hell are only temporary states. Also, they are located somewhere along Earth's atmosphere. Additionally, those who are in heaven are not necessarily saved, because paradise may one day be destroyed.

#### WOMAN

The equal treatment of women has always been of great importance in Manichaeism. A man has no greater status in society than a woman or vice versa.

#### SYMBOLS

This symbol is known as the Manichaean Cross of Light and Life. Depicted are the 5 Steps of the Holy Bema, the 8 Arms of the Cross and the circle depicts the presence of Mir Izgadda and His calling for all the sparks of Light to be regathered into the Cross of Life and Life. (Mir Izgadda is a man who wrote teachings related to Manichaeism. Some consider him the Messiah of modern times.)

Second symbol shows us light rays flowing downward. The light stands for the Pure Light. The cloud is the trap in which the light tries to escape from. The 5 rays stand for Excellent Reason, Excellent Mind, Excellent Intelligence, Excellent Thought, and Excellent Understanding.

## **SYRIAN-EGYPTIC GNOSTICISM (None of these religions are still extant)**

### **✓ SETHIANISM (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)**

The Sethians were one of the main currents of Gnosticism during the 2nd and 3rd century CE, along with Valentinianism. It originated in the second-century CE as a fusion of two distinct Hellenistic Judaic philosophies, and was influenced by Christianity and Middle Platonism.

### **❖ BASILIDEANS (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)**

The Basilidians or Basilideans were a Gnostic sect founded by Basilides of Alexandria in the 2nd century. Basilides claimed to have been taught his doctrines by Glaucus, a disciple of St. Peter.

Of the customs of the Basilidians, we know no more than that Basilides enjoined on his followers, like Pythagoras, a silence of five years; that they kept the anniversary of the day of the baptism of Jesus as a feast day and spent the eve of it in reading; that their master told them not to scruple eating things offered to idols. The sect had three grades – material, intellectual and

spiritual – and possessed two allegorical statues, male and female. The sect's doctrines were often similar to those of the Ophites and later Jewish Kabbalism.

The Basilidians believed in a very different Gospel to that of orthodox Christians.

Among the later followers of Basilides, magic, invocations, "and all other curious arts" played a part. The names of the rulers of the several heavens were handed down as a weighty secret, which was a result of the belief that whoever knew the names of these rulers would after death pass through all the heavens to the supreme God.

## ❖ VALENTINIANISM (HISTORICAL-NO LONGER EXIST)

Valentinianism was one of the major Gnostic Christian movements. Founded by Valentinus in the second century AD, its influence spread extremely widely, not just within Rome, but also from Northwest Africa to Egypt through to Asia Minor and Syria in the east.

Disciples of Valentinus continued to be active into the 4th century AD, after the Roman Empire was declared to be Christian. Valentinus and the Gnostic movement that bore his name were considered threats to Christianity by church leaders and Christian scholars, not only because of their influence, but also because of their doctrine, practices and beliefs. Gnostics were condemned as heretics, and prominent Church fathers such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Hippolytus of Rome wrote against Gnosticism. Most evidence for the Valentinian theory comes from its critics and detractors, most notably Irenaeus, since he was especially concerned with refuting Valentinianism.

In almost all the sacramental prayers of the Gnostics handed down to us by Irenaeus, the Mother is the object of the invocation. Valentinian Gnosticism may have been monistic rather than dualistic.

## NEO-GNOSTIC GROUPS

### ✓ ECCLESIA GNOSTICA



Logo of Ecclesia Gnostica

The Ecclesia Gnostica (Latin for The Church of Gnosis or The Gnostic Church) is an openly Gnostic liturgical church that practices and offers its sacraments publicly. It is centered in Los Angeles, California with parishes in Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Salt Lake City, Utah; Sedona, Arizona; and Oslo, Norway. The church and its affiliate, the Gnostic Society, attempt to "make available the philosophy and practice of gnosticism to the contemporary world."

There's an open communion and participation regardless of creed. Due to this open participation, there is not an emphasis on membership. On the other hand, the position of the church stated in its catechism is that the Gnostic worldview is a specific one (with Gnosis and the Gnostic religion going hand in hand), and that an experienced practitioner in the Gnostic church would be expected to be in general agreement with it.

Holy orders are considered one of the seven sacraments practiced by the church. Clergy are of both major and minor holy orders. The five minor orders are: cleric, doorkeeper, reader, Exorcist, and Acolyte. The major orders are: subdeacon, deacon, priest, and bishop. Clergy formation (training) is progressive, with individuals being ordained to and serving in each order in succession. Formation of priests is generally over seven or more years. All levels of holy orders are open to both male and female; married, divorced, and single; and both gay and straight candidates. Clergy are self-sustaining, not receiving a salary from the church.

The Ecclesia Gnostica is a liturgical orthopraxy rather than an orthodoxy. Christian liturgy is central to the existence of the church, and in ritual and ornament the church is similar to Catholicism.

Ecclesia Gnostica services consist of different liturgical celebrations usually based on traditional Western forms of Christian liturgy. Like ancient Gnostic groups, the Ecclesia Gnostica blends several disparate traditions.

The celebration of the Gnostic Holy Eucharist is offered every Sunday in Los Angeles (and most other parishes). The Eucharist is central to the practice of the church, and is celebrated with high formality.

The Ecclesia Gnostica recognizes five initiatory sacraments: Baptism, Chrism or Confirmation, Eucharist, Redemption (sacrament) and Bride-Chamber, with the additional two sustaining sacraments of Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick.

The church follows the traditional Western liturgical calendar with additions and emendations. These changes include the addition of observances of Gnostic church fathers and martyrs of the Gnostic tradition.

## ✓ ECCLESIA GNOSTICA CATHOLICA



Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica (E.G.C.), or the Gnostic Catholic Church, is a Gnostic church organization. It is the ecclesiastical arm of the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), an international fraternal initiatory organization devoted to promulgating the Law of Thelema.

Thelema is a philosophical, mystical and religious system elaborated by Aleister Crowley, and based on The Book of the Law. The word Catholic denotes the universality of doctrine and not a Christian or Roman Catholic belief set.

The Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica descended from a line of French Gnostic revival churches that developed in the 19th century. At that time, these Gnostic churches were essentially Christian in nature. In 1907, Gerard Encausse, Jean Bricaud and Louis-Sophrone Fugairon founded their own, simply called the Gnostic Catholic Church. In 1908, they gave O.T.O. Grand Master Theodor Reuss episcopal consecration and primatial authority in their GCC. Later that year, Reuss incorporated the Gnostic Catholic Church into O.T.O. after the original founders renamed their own church to the Universal Gnostic Church.

The name "Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica" was not applied to the church until Crowley wrote the Gnostic Mass in 1913, which Reuss proclaimed to be the church's official rite. This marked the first time an established church was to accept the Law of Thelema as its central doctrine.

Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica has a hierarchical structure of clergy, assisting officers, and laity which parallels the degree structure of the O.T.O. initiatory system. Before 1997, the two systems were more loosely correlated, but since then there have been strict rules concerning minimum O.T.O. degrees required to serve in particular E.G.C. roles.

Membership in Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica is similar to the Roman Catholic Church, with some important differences. As currently constituted, E.G.C. includes both clergy and laity. Clergy must be initiate members of O.T.O., while laity may affiliate to E.G.C. through baptism and confirmation without undertaking any of the degree initiations of the Order.

Novice clergy are initiate members who participate in the administration of E.G.C. sacraments, although they have not yet taken orders (i.e., been through a ceremony of ordination).

The first ordination in E.G.C. is that of the diaconate. Second Degree initiates of O.T.O. who have been confirmed in E.G.C. can be ordained as Deacons, whose principal duties are to assist the Priesthood.

The sacerdotal ordination admits members to the priesthood. Sacerdotal ordinands must hold at least the K.E.W. degree of O.T.O., a degree only available by invitation. The Priesthood is responsible for administering the sacraments through the Gnostic Mass and other ceremonies as authorized by their supervising Bishops.

The Priesthood is supervised and instructed by the Episcopate, or Bishops. Full initiation to the Seventh Degree of O.T.O. includes episcopal consecration in E.G.C. The Tenth Degree Supreme and Holy King serves as the Primate or chief Bishop for any country in which O.T.O. has organized a Grand Lodge. The Frater (or Soror) Superior of O.T.O. is also the Patriarch (Matriarch) of the Church, with ultimate authority over the clergy.

The principal ritual of Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica is the Gnostic Mass, a Eucharistic ceremony written by Aleister Crowley in 1913.

Although some Gnostic Masses are held privately for initiates only, there is nothing 'secret' about E.G.C. rituals as such, and they are commonly open to the public.

The Gnostic Saints of Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica are a series of historical and mythological figures revered in the religion of Thelema.

Two Gnostic Saints have been officially added to the original list.

# 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).

The basis of Islam, and the heart of Muslim belief and thought, lie in its holy scripture, the Qur'ān, considered by Muslims to be the direct and true word of God, transmitted by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad (in Arabic) while the latter was in a state of divine inspiration akin to trance. In this state Muhammad was ordered to recite (iqrā) the word of God, whence Qur'ān, a "recitation."

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".

#### HOLYDAYS

Muslims celebrate two great holidays. One is Id al-Fitr, the feast celebrating the breaking of the Ramadan fast. The second, which occurs two and a half months later, is Id al-Adha, or the Feast of Sacrifice. This latter holiday, the greater of the two, marks the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca and commemorates God's testing of Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son Ismail (Isaac in Jewish and Christian traditions). The feast is a worldwide celebration that lasts for three days.

#### 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. The mosque's main prayer area is a large open space adorned with Oriental carpets. When they pray, Muslims face the mihrab, an ornamental arched niche set into the wall, which indicates the direction of Mecca. Near the mihrab is the *minbar*, a raised wooden platform, like a pulpit, that is similar to the one the Prophet Muhammad used when giving sermons. For many Muslims, Friday at a mosque is a day of congregational prayer, religious education, and socializing.

#### 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.

#### rites of passage

Life cycle rituals in Islam serve to provide meaning and reinforce an individual and communal worldview. In addition to the Five Pillars of Islam, rites of passage for birth, puberty, marriage, and death symbolize the theme that a Muslim's purpose is to serve God by submission and thanksgiving.

#### Birth

At birth the call of prayer is recited in the infant's right ear. Names for babies are often derived from those of the prophets or their wives or companions, or a name is formed from the prefix *abd* (servant) and an attribute of God, such as "servant of the Almighty" (*Abd al-Aziz*). In addition, a goat or sheep is sacrificed to express gratitude to God and joy at the birth, as well as to form an association with Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God.

#### Puberty

Puberty, the entrance into adulthood, represents the beginning of religious and social responsibility, the obligation to perform purification rituals to ensure physical cleanliness and daily prayers, and participation in the fast during Ramadan.

#### Marriage

In Islam marriage (*nikah*) is encouraged as an integral part of humanity, and celibacy is discouraged. Marriage is considered a contract, however, not a sacrament. As with other rites of passage, marriage customs in the Muslim world reflect local customs. Because Islam views sexuality as a part of life requiring rules that preserve social morality, the Koran and sunnah (example of the Prophet) provide guidelines for prayer before, as well as a ritual bath (*ghusl*) after, conjugal relations.

#### Death

Death in Islam is seen as the transition from life in this world to life in the next. Burial normally occurs on the day of death, after funerary rituals, based on practices of Muhammad, that include bathing and wrapping the body. The *salat al-janazah*, a funeral prayer led by a relative or an imam, is said in the mosque after any of the daily prayers, and the *shahadah* (declaration of faith) is recited by the family and friends at the burial. The deceased is placed in the grave with his or her face turned toward Mecca. To reinforce humility and the mindfulness of death, each funeral participant contributes three handfuls of earth toward filling the grave.

#### RITUAL

The practice of Islam consists essentially of a small number of ritual obligations called the "pillars of the faith." These include giving witness, ritual prayer, legal almsgiving, fasting, and the pilgrimage.

#### SACRED SPACE

The Kaaba is considered the most sacred space in the Muslim world and the spiritual center of the earth, the point Muslims turn toward when they pray and the direction toward which their heads point in burial. It is thought to mark the location where the earth was created. The Kaaba symbolizes an earthly image of the divine throne in heaven, and it is therefore believed that actions that take place at the Kaaba, such as circumambulation, are duplicated in heaven at the throne of God.

## ✓ SUNNI ISLAM

Followers of the Sunni tradition are known as Sunnis or Sunnites; they sometimes refer to themselves as Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jamaa'h, "adherents to the Sunnah and the assembly."

Sunnism is the largest branch of Islam, representing more than 80 percent of all Muslims. The word itself derives from the Arabic sunnah, which means "accepted or established practice."

Sunnis claim that they represent the traditional, common understanding of Islam proclaimed by the prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (c. 570 - 632 c.e.), who founded Islam.

The Sunnis are so named because they believe themselves to follow the sunnah ("custom" or "tradition") of the prophet.

Sunni doctrine affirms that God of Islam, or Allah, is the only God, a concept underlined in the Koran by the word tawhid (unity, or oneness of God).

Sunnis insist that the Prophet was but a man, and they have forbidden not only the worship of the Prophet but also the creation of any images of him. Moreover, Sunnis affirm that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets (33:40), meaning that he brought the final and complete message from God. Sunnis are convinced that God will not speak again through any other spokesperson, so they have opposed newer claims to apostleship by other Muslims, such as the Ahmadiyya reformers in India and Pakistan.

The four Sunni schools of law (madhahib) - the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali - are sometimes mistakenly understood as different sects, but they are not.

These four schools of religious law associate themselves with four great scholars of early Islam: Abu Haneefah, Malik, Shafi'i, and Ahmad bin Hanbal.

They differed only in minor issues of application of certain principles in the religion and were not in opposition to each other.

Sunnis, like all Muslims, believe that the Quran is the only actual "scripture" revealed to Muhammad by God, and they consider the text to be the inimitable and uncorrupt record of God's communication with humans during the twenty-three years of the Prophet's career. What distinguishes Sunni Islam, however, is its reliance upon hadith within the broader historical and literary traditions. The hadith elucidate, clarify, and even emend some of the legal rulings and prescriptions contained in the Quran, and Sunni jurists developed methodologies for approaching hadith in order to apply this second body of texts to rulings and interpretations based or stemming from the Quran itself. Thus the hadith and their accompanying literary genres are crucial for the formation of Sunni doctrine. They serve as secondary sources for the interpretation of the Quran.

Like Judaism, but unlike Christianity, Islamic belief does not include a concept of original sin.

Accountability, reward, and judgment are essential elements of Sunni belief. One of the six articles of faith that characterize the Sunni creed is a belief in the Day of Judgment.

Heaven is envisioned as a paradise, whereas hell is full of torment and suffering.

In addition to the good deeds and religious obligations performed during one's lifetime, there are other influences on a person's afterlife - namely the supplications of righteous offspring, charitable endowments that continue even after an individual's death (a waqf, or pious endowment), and the religious knowledge one passed on to others during his or her life.

### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Sunni moral code is a product of the Koran, which often expresses the importance of action over belief.

Everyday activities are normally evaluated according to two concepts, halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden). Halal encompasses all things that the Koran, the hadith, and Sunni culture have decided are permitted. Thus, only animals killed according to proper procedures are permitted to be eaten. Haram applies to all those acts that the sources define as being forbidden, such as suicide or eating pork.

### SACRED BOOKS

The Koran is the sacred scripture for both Sunnis and Shiites. Sunnis regard the Koran as God's last instruction; it is the ultimate authority on all matters of doctrine, religious behavior, and faith.

### HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

There are no essential differences between Sunnis and Shiites concerning places of worship. Indeed, though the mosque is the common house of worship, a Muslim needs no building to carry out his or her religious responsibilities. No representation of the human form appears in mosques, because Islam forbids any image to be worshiped. By far the best-known Muslim building is the Kaaba in the center of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Sunnis who belong to a Sufi order may also pray in a meeting place called a zawiyah, takiyah, or khaniqah. One corner of these buildings usually features the tomb of the order's saint or founder.

Some places are sacred, such as Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem. While they are not exclusively honored by Sunnis, they hold a special place in Sunni consciousness because they have been under Sunni control.

### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Sunnism observes all major Muslim holidays (including Id al-Fitr, celebrating the end of the Ramadan fast, and Id al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice). Most Sunni countries also celebrate the birthday of the Prophet. This is in contrast to Shiite communities, where Ali or other Shiite figures receive prominent attention.

### MODE OF DRESS

Sunnism has not developed a distinctive dress code. Diversity is the norm within Muslim communities, and ethnicity and culture have often had greater influence than religion on clothing. Nevertheless, at times throughout history some distinctive styles have been supported by Sunni culture.

Wearing the hijab, or veil, almost always identifies a woman as a conservative Muslim; some Sunni women go so far as to wear the burqa, a loose garment that covers the whole body, including the head and face, with only a slit for the eyes.

### DIETARY PRACTICES

Sunnis observe all the dietary laws of Islam. There are minor differences between the various Sunni law schools; for example, depending on the school, eating shellfish is classified as forbidden, reprehensible, or neutral.

### PRAYER

On an individual level, Muslims are obligated to perform five prayers (salat) daily, and these are distributed throughout the day. Islamic prayer times were traditionally timed according to the changes in the movement of the sun, therefore their appointed times vary from day to day and from location to location. They occur before dawn (fajr), in the mid-afternoon (dhuhr), late afternoon (asr), sunset (maghrib), and evening (ishaa). The sun has nothing to do with the prayers aside from the issue of timing: this way, the five prayers are distributed throughout the day and night.

Individual prayers can be performed anywhere, including in a public place or a person's home.

There are several accompanying factors that contribute to the sacredness of prayer time, namely ablution, behavior during prayer, and dress. To enter into ritual prayer, a Muslim first performs ablution, or a ritual washing. The Sunni schools of law have differing views on the details of ablution based on their view of what the proper custom (sunna) of Muhammad was. In general, all agree that pray-ers must wash their faces, hands, and lower arms, and wipe their feet. Among certain Sunni schools there is also a rinsing of the mouth and a wiping of the upper forehead and hairline. All agree that this ablution is required, and must be redone if the state of ritual purity is broken, which is usually effected by bodily functions. As such, five daily prayers likewise mean repeated ablutions.

Men and women in ritual prayer must wear garments that conceal their bodies. Women also cover their hair while praying, even if they do not for the rest of the day.

Though any prayer may be said in a congregational setting, the only time it is obligatory for Muslim men to attend a congregational prayer is the Friday mid-afternoon prayer.

#### RITUALS

Sunnis embrace all the central rites of Islam, the most fundamental of which include daily prayer, fasting during Ramadan, almsgiving, and hajj (pilgrimage). There are only minor differences between Sunnis and Shiites in these areas.

#### rites of passage

Sunnis practice four major rites of passage: birth, circumcision, marriage, and death. They celebrate the birth of child with the 'aqiqa, a sacrifice of an animal on the seventh day after birth.

Circumcision of boys is a marker of Muslim, and Sunni, identity; for example, in Egypt it occurs when a boy has completed the recitation of the Koran, usually at about age 12. For many Middle Eastern Muslims, completing the Koran's memorization is a sign that the adolescent is ready to move into the realm of adult responsibility.

A small number of Sunni cultures also perform female circumcision, depending upon ethnic custom and the interpretation of a particular statement of the Prophet. In the societies that practice this rite, it takes place at the onset of puberty. Girls are then deemed capable of being married, so the rite is associated with passage to adulthood. Most Sunni cultures oppose female circumcision.

Sunnism regards marriage as a blessing from God and views sexuality within marriage to be healthy and beneficial, so the wedding is an occasion for great community festivity. Thereafter, both parties take their places as members of the adult community. A major difference between Sunnism and Shiism is the practice of mut'ah (temporary) marriage, in which a duration, such as a day, a month, or three years, is chosen for the marriage. Sunni law rejects it.

**Islamic law** states that Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men. In the West and in places where Muslims are a minority, however, male conversion through marriage is one means of community growth.

#### PILGRIMAGE

In addition to the major pilgrimage in Mecca (called Hajj), which takes place in Mecca at a particular time on the Islamic calendar, lesser pilgrimages abound in the Sunni world, and have for centuries. These minor pilgrimages, called ziyarat (literally, visitations), are usually to the tomb or shrine of a historical figure who was important in the history of Islam, and whose importance is usually construed in terms of saintliness.

#### GENDER ISSUES

Attitudes toward sexuality and issues of gender equity have always been a part of discussions in Sunni law. In the modern period, these issues take on greater significance, and the concept of gender identity has broadened in contemporary thought.

## ❖ HANAFI

The Hanafi school is one of the four religious Sunni Islamic schools of jurisprudence (fiqh). It is named after the scholar Abū Ḥanīfa an-Nu‘man ibn Thābit (d. 767), a tabi‘i whose legal views were preserved primarily by his two most important disciples, Abu Yusuf and Muhammad al-Shaybani. The other major schools of Sharia in Sunni Islam are Maliki, Shafi‘i and Hanbali.

While the Hanafi madhab, along with other Sunni schools, utilizes qiyas (analogical reasoning) as a method of legal reasoning, Abu Hanifa himself relied extensively on ra’y (personal opinion). He also favored the use of istihsan, commonly known as juristic preference, which, in some circumstances, can operate to ameliorate harsh consequences that might otherwise flow from strict legal reasoning, and which is believed by some to be based on principles of equity as interpreted by the jurist. Hanafi doctrines have always been considered among the most flexible and liberal in Islamic law, including in the areas of criminal law, treatment of non-Muslims, individual freedoms, marriage and guardianship, and ownership and use of property.

Hanafi is the fiqh with the largest number of followers among Sunni Muslims. It is predominant in the countries that were once part of the historic Ottoman Empire, Mughal Empire and Sultanates of Turkic rulers in the Indian subcontinent, northwest China and Central Asia. In the modern era, Hanafi is prevalent in the following regions: Turkey, the Balkans, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, parts of Iraq, the Caucasus, parts of Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, parts of India and China, and Bangladesh.

## ❖ HANBALI

The Hanbali school is one of the four traditional Sunni Islamic schools of jurisprudence (fiqh). It is named after the Iraqi scholar Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), and was institutionalized by his students. The Hanbali madhhab is the smallest of four major Sunni schools, the others being the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'i.

Hanbali school derives Sharia predominantly from the Quran, the Hadiths (sayings and customs of Muhammad), and the views of Sahabah (Muhammad's companions). In cases where there is no clear answer in sacred texts of Islam, the Hanbali school does not accept jurist discretion or customs of a community as a sound basis to derive Islamic law, a method that Hanafi and Maliki Sunni fiqhs accept. Hanbali school is the strict traditionalist school of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam. It is found primarily in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, where it is the official fiqh. Historically, the Hanbali school was treated as simply another valid interpretation of Islamic law, and many prominent medieval Sufis, such as Abdul Qadir Gilani, were Hanbali jurists and mystics at the same time.

## ❖ MALIKI

The Mālikī school is one of the four major madhhab of Islamic jurisprudence within Sunni Islam. It was founded by Malik ibn Anas in the 8th century. The Maliki school of jurisprudence relies on the Quran and hadiths as primary sources. Unlike other Islamic fiqhs, a feature of the Maliki school is its reliance on the practice of the Companions in Medina as a source of law. Additionally, Malik was known to have used ray (personal opinion) and qiyas (analogy).

The Maliki madhhab is one of the largest group of Sunni Muslims, comparable to the Shafi'i madhhab in adherents, but smaller than the Hanafi madhhab. Sharia based on Maliki doctrine is predominantly found in North Africa (excluding northern and eastern Egypt), West Africa, Chad, Sudan, Kuwait, Bahrain, the Emirate of Dubai (UAE), and in northeastern parts of Saudi Arabia.

## ❖ SHAFI'I

The Shafi'i madhhab is one of the four schools of Islamic law in Sunni Islam. It was founded by the Arab scholar Al-Shafi'i, a pupil of Malik, in the early 9th century. The other three schools of Sunni jurisprudence are Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali.

The Shafi school predominantly relies on the Quran and the Hadiths for Sharia. Where passages of Quran and Hadiths are ambiguous, the school first seeks religious law guidance from Ijma – the consensus of Sahabah (Muhammad's companions). If there was no consensus, the Shafi'i school relies on individual opinion (Ijtihad) of the companions of Muhammad, followed by analogy.

The Shafi'i school was, in the early history of Islam, the most followed ideology for Sharia.[citation needed] However, with the Ottoman Empire's expansion and patronage, it was replaced with the Hanafi school in many parts of the Muslim world. One of the many differences between the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools is that the Shafi'i school does not consider Istihsan (judicial discretion by suitably qualified legal scholars) as an acceptable source of religious law because it amounts to "human legislation" of Islamic law.

## ✓ SHIA ISLAM

Shi'a Islam, also known as Shi'ite Islam or Shi'ism, is the second largest branch of Islam after Sunni Islam. Shia islam rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad's first true successor. Shias adhere to the teachings of Muhammad and the religious guidance of his family (who are referred to as the Ahl al-Bayt) or his descendants known as Shia Imams. Muhammad's bloodline continues only through his daughter Fatima Zahra and cousin Ali who alongside Muhammad's grandsons comprise the Ahl al-Bayt. Shia consider Ali to have been divinely appointed as the successor to Muhammad, and as the first Imam. Thus, Shias consider Muhammad's descendants as the true source of guidance.

Shia Islam is followed especially in Iran where Shia Islam is the state religion. Adherents are known as Shiites.

Although there are many Shia subsects, modern Shia Islam has been divided into three main groupings: Twelvers, Ismailis and Zaidis, with Twelver Shia being the largest and most influential group among Shia.

There are three fundamental principles of belief that both Sunni and Shia Islam agree upon: tawhid (unity of God), nubuwwah (prophecy), and maad (resurrection). To these the Shia add two other principles: imamah (the imamate) and adl (justice of God). Imamah is the authority and leadership of the imams, who are regarded as the Prophet's legitimate successors, inheriting his authority in both its spiritual and temporal dimensions.

Shiites share many beliefs regarding God with the Sunnis, but also believe in the Imams as entities in between God and mankind. The Neoplatonic trend is particularly pronounced in intellectual expressions of Ismailism.

Suffering and martyrdom are important elements of Shiite thought and religious culture. They form a crucial part in Shiite salvation history and serve as a spiritual perspective and moral ideal.

Shiite Islam has an elaborate apocalyptic vision with the Mahdi as the key protagonist. After the Resurrection, people will be judged according to their deeds and rewarded or punished in paradise or hell. Unlike Sunnis, Shiites acknowledge the possibility of intercession through the Imams.

In addition to the common Muslim events connected with the pilgrimage and fasting in Ramadan, Shiites commemorate Husayn's martyrdom and other events in early Islamic history, such as Muhammad's appointment of Ali as his successor at Ghadir Khumm.

#### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Shiites strive to live a moral life, the guidelines of which are defined in the Shariah (Islamic law) and exemplified in the lives of the Prophet and the imams. An imam is understood to be the embodiment of spiritual transcendence, wisdom, rationality, and justice. Stories of the imam's commitment to social justice and moral uprightness are widespread among Shiites.

#### SACRED BOOKS

The only sacred book accepted by both Sunnis and Shiites is the Koran. Yet each branch has its own collections of prophetic hadith (exemplary traditions). The four canonical Shiite collections, which also include the words of the imams, are *Kitab al-Kafi* by al-Kulayni (died in 939), *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih* by Ibn Babuyah (died in 991), and *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *al-Istibsar*, both by Shaykh al-Tusi (died in 1067). The *Nahj al-Balaqah*, a collection of Imam Ali's sermons, is another distinctively Shiite text. The *Sahifah Sajjadiyyah*, a book of hymns and prayers attributed to the fourth imam, Imam Sajjad (659–712/13), is widely used by Shiites in their devotional prayers and rituals.

Shiite sacred narratives often concern the family of Muhammad, most notably Ali (his son-in-law), Husayn (his grandson), and Fatima (his daughter). Another set of stories concerns the Imams and the return of the Twelfth Imam, known as the Mahdi.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

Shiism has no sacred symbols.

#### HOUSES OF WORSHIP

Shiites, like Sunnis, perform daily prayers in a mosque, which, in addition to being a holy place, usually serves as the local center of religious activities in each community.

#### HOLY SITES

The four holiest sites to Muslims are Mecca (Al-Haram Mosque), Medina (Al-Nabbawi Mosque), Jerusalem (Al-Aqsa Mosque), and Kufa (Kufa Mosque). In addition for Shias, the Imam Husayn Shrine in Karbal, Al Abbas Mosque in Karbala, and Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf are also highly revered.

Other venerated sites include Wadi-us-Salaam cemetery in Najaf, Al-Baqi' cemetery in Medina, Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, Kadhimiya Mosque in Kadhimiya, Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, Sahla Mosque and Great Mosque of Kufa in Kufa and several other sites in the cities of Qom, Susa and Damascus.

#### HOLY DAYS AND FESTIVALS

Shiite holidays and festivals may be divided into two categories: celebrations and occasions of mourning. In the first category, Shiites share with Sunni Muslims the celebration of the two major feasts of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha. In addition, they also celebrate an exclusively Shiite feast called Id al-Ghadir, which falls eight days after Id al-Adha and celebrates the Prophet's designation of Ali as his successor at Ghadir-i Khum.

Moreover, the birth of the Prophet (also recognized by Sunnis) and those of the imams are celebrated. Although not all these birthdays are recognized as major holidays, and few of them are publicly celebrated, the births of the Prophet and Ali, Husayn, and Mahdi (the first, second, and twelfth imams, respectively) are widely observed. During these holidays there are festive gatherings of families and friends, public distribution of sweets and special meals, and visits to elderly relatives. Because blessings are attributed to these days, people may perform special prayers or even fast. In public gatherings speakers usually recite poetry praising the imam being honored, after which the crowd may chant one or two phrases.

Commemoration of the deaths of the Prophet and the imams constitutes the second set of Shiite holidays. Mourning ceremonies for the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, and Husayn are the main public events observed by all Shiites. On these occasions devout Shiites wear black clothing and participate in public ceremonies, which are held in almost every neighborhood by devout families or local religious organizations and mosques.

#### MODE OF DRESS

No specific mode of dress is adopted by ordinary Shiites. Shiite clergy are distinguished from laypersons by their professional dress, which consists of a long gown (aba) and a turban (ammamah). The color of the turban, black or white, indicates whether the person is a sayyid. The sayyids (who wear black turbans) claim genealogical ties to one of the descendants of the Prophet.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

The Shiite school of law confirms the dietary regulations prescribed in the Koran and elaborated in the Shariah. As such, it does not differ from the four Sunni schools of law on what types of food are halal (permissible) or haram (forbidden). Drinking water, however, has special meaning for a devout Shiite: It reminds him or her of the suffering of Imam Husayn and his companions, who were denied access to water for some days prior to their massacre in Karbala. Shiites teach their children from an early age that before drinking water they should say, "May I drink in remembrance of Husayn."

#### RITUALS

The most distinctive Shiite rituals take place during the first ten days of the month Muharram and culminate on the tenth day (Ashura). Depending on the community, the rituals take place in private houses, courtyards of mosques, community or special Muharram centers, in markets, and on the streets.

Twelver Shiism shares with Sunni Islam the fundamental rituals of daily prayer, fasting in the month of Ramadan, hajj (pilgrimage), and payment of zakat. There are, however, minor differences in the performance of prayers. Although the times of day, number of prayer units (rakah), prayer content, and postures are the same, Shiites usually, but not necessarily, shorten the waiting time (one to two hours among Sunnis) between the noon and afternoon prayers by saying them a few minutes apart. The waiting time is similarly shortened between the evening and night prayers. The Shiite call to prayer (adhan), moreover,

states Ali's name following that of the Prophet. Shiites refrain from crossing their hands over their chests or abdomens during prayer, and they insist that during the prostration phase the fore-head should be placed on nonanimal, natural objects, mostly dust, stone, or the earth. Out of practicality small blocks of baked mud, called muhr, are used, preferably made from turbat-e Karbala (dust from the earth of Karbala).

Shiites are also required to pay khums, a tax that amounts to one-fifth of their total annual savings and of any net increase in their property. This practice is mentioned in the Koran and was performed during the Prophet's time. Khums, zakat, and other religious donations are paid to a marja al-taqlid (who functions as a representative of the hidden twelfth imam) and are used for helping the needy and for establishing and maintaining mosques and religious education centers.

There are no fundamental differences in burial rites between Shiites and Sunnis. Shiites observe a longer period of mourning and hold special ceremonies on the third, seventh, and fortieth days following a death, as well as on the anniversary. They also often visit the tombs of their deceased relatives, whose burial markers, engraved with biographical information, are kept in good condition for many generations.

#### rites of passage

There are no distinctive Shiite rites of passage.

#### women

The presence of women depends on the setting. As during prayer in the mosque, women often participate in a separate area. Usually it is assumed that they do not practice self-flagellation themselves and refrain from observing these rituals if the men who expose the upper half of their bodies are not family members, although the latter expectation is often not fulfilled. The actors in taziyah plays are exclusively male, even those who play female characters.

## ❖ ISMA'ILISM

It is the second largest part of the Shia community, after the mainstream Twelvers.

The Ismailis Religion get their name from their acceptance of Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far as the divinely appointed spiritual successor to Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq. They differ from the Twelvers, who accept Mūsā al-Kāzim, younger brother of Ismā'īl, as the true Imām.

Though there are several beliefs within the Ismailis the term in today's vernacular generally refers to the Nizari path, which recognizes the Aga Khan as the 49th hereditary Imam and is the largest group among the Ismailis.

While some of the branches have extremely differing exterior practices, much of the spiritual theology has remained the same since the days of the faith's early Imāms.

In recent centuries Ismailis have largely been an Indo-Iranian community, but are found in India, Pakistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, China, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, East Africa, Syria, and South Africa. Also in recent years emigrated to Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America.

In common with other Muslims, Ismailis believe in the oneness of God, as well as the closing of divine revelation with Muḥammad, whom they see as the final prophet and messenger of God to all humanity.

The Ismailis and the Twelvers both accept the same initial A'immah from the descendants of Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭimah az-Zahra and therefore share much of their early history. Both groups see the family of Muḥammad as divinely chosen, infallible, and guided by God to lead the Islamic community.

The faith developed into two separate directions: the metaphorical Ismaili group focusing on the mystical path and nature of Allah, with the "Imām of the Time" representing the manifestation of truth and reality.

The more literalistic Twelver group focusing on divine law (sharia) and the deeds and sayings (sunnah) of Muhammad and the Twelve Imams who were guides and a light to God.

Ismā'īlis believe the Qur'an was sent to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel over the course of 23 years. They believe that the Imam has the authority to interpret the Qur'an in relation to the present time.

Ismā'īlis believe numbers have religious meanings. The number seven plays a general role in the theology of the Ismā'īliyya, including mystical speculations that there are seven heavens, seven continents, seven orifices in the skull, seven days in a week, and so forth.

For this sect, the Imām is the manifestation of truth, and hence he is their path of salvation to God. Classical Ismā'īlī doctrine holds that divine revelation had been given in six periods (daur) entrusted to six prophets, who they also call Natiq (Speaker), who were commissioned to preach a religion of law to their respective communities.

In Ismailism, things have an exterior meaning, what is apparent. This is called zāhir.

In Ismailism, things have an interior meaning that is reserved for a special few who are in tune with the Imām, or are the Imām himself. This is called bātin.

The Ismailis have submitted the Qur'anic zakat, which is a purification due and not charitable alms, to the Imams since the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The zakat rates historically differed depending on the asset type - 2.5% of animals, 5% of minerals, and 10% of crops. Among Khoja Ismailis, the zakat is 12.5% of cash income and among other Ismailis of Iran, Syria, Central Asia, and China, the zakat is 10% of cash income and other %s of non-cash assets like crops and livestock.

The five prayer times are not explicitly mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān and are derived via interpretation. The Qur'ān only mentions three specific prayer times. As there are several possible interpretations, the Ismā'īlī Muslims follow the guidance of Mawlānā Ḥāḍir Imām who, as the legitimate authority and interpreter of the Qur'ān, has specified the number of prayers for his community to perform in the current times and contexts.

Ismailis pray in Jamaat Khana. Ismaili men and women pray in a joint session.

Agha Khan, being the religious ruler holds the most significant place in the Ismaili sect. The Imam decides names for the newly born babies and couples are allowed to marry after he gives permission.

Ismailis do not sacrifice their animals in the name of Allah.

Isamailis are very closely knit society. All the rich and influential help their community to keep it strong. Some of the ismaili in the northern parts of Pakistan are very mild in nature.

They do not get into feuds.

They are a female- dominated society as females are more educated and there are more girls' schools than boys' schools in that area.

The Ismailis of North have a closely knit social and security setup which does not allow any other religion or sect to interact with them at a personal level.

## ▪ MUSTAALI

The Musta'li are a sect of Isma'ilism named for their acceptance of al-Musta'li as the legitimate nineteenth Fatimid caliph and legitimate successor to his father, al-Mustansir Billah. In contrast, the Nizari—the other living branch of Ismailism, presently led by Aga Khan IV - believe the nineteenth caliph was al-Musta'li's elder brother, Nizar. Isma'ilism is a branch of Shia Islam. The Musta'li originated in Fatimid-ruled Egypt, later moved its religious center to Yemen, and gained a foothold in 11th-century Western India through missionaries.

### ○ ATBA-I-MALAK

The Atba-i-Malak jamaat (community) are a branch of Taiyabi Mustaali Ismaili Shi'a Islam that broke off from the mainstream Dawoodi Bohra after the death of the 46th Da'i al-Mutlaq, under the leadership of Abdul Hussain Jivaji in 1891. They have further split into two more branches, the Atba-e-Malak Badar and Atba-i-Malak Vakil. The Atba-i-Malak jamaat/community is based in Nagpur, India.

### ○ ALAVI BOHRA

The Alavi Bohras are a Taiyebi Musta'alavi Isma'ili Shi'i Muslim community from Gujarat, India. In India, during the time of the 18th Fatimid Imam Ma'ad al-Mustansir Billah around 1093 AD in Egypt, the designated learned people (wulaat) who were sent from Yemen by missionaries (du'aat) under the guidance of the Imam established a da'wah in Khambhat (Gujarat, India). Every New Year, the first ten days (asharah mubaarakah) of Muharram is marked by the historic event of the martyrdom of Imaam Husain (as), the son of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as) and the grandson of Prophet Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws), which is commemorated by setting up water stalls (sabeel) and doing mourning assemblies (majaalis-e-'azadari). In these ten days special morning discourses are held in the Main Mosque in the presence of Da'i-e-Mutlaq where Isma'ili-Taiyebi ideology and ethos is taught and a message of sacrifice and safeguarding ones belief is given taking into account the martyrdom of the people of Karbalaa.

Congregational prayers and assemblies are held chiefly on every Friday, first night of every Hijri month, first ten days of Moharram – commemoration of the martyrdom of Imaam Husain in Karbalaa.

Social gatherings take place mainly on the occasions of naming of the new born child and circumcision (aqeeqah and khatnah), birthdays (milaad), religious oath (mithaaq), marriage (waleemah), inauguration or opening ceremony of a new house or business (iftitaaah), commemoration of the late Da'i (urs), ritual food for a deceased person after 3 days, 40 days, 4 month 10 days and after a year (ziyaarat, chaalimu, cha-maasi, warsi), ritual food after the pilgrimage (wakeerah), engagement ceremony, joint ritual food in the month of Moharram and Ramazaan (niyaaz and iftaari). A ceremony of fixing the date for marriage is a special occasion for both the bride and bridegroom. Saiyedna call them along with their respective parents to perform this ceremony in which guidance is given to them to respect the needs of each other and share the responsibilities to form a peaceful home by acting as a sincere and loyal Alavi Bohra. A wedding card is first offered to Saiyedna and then only it is distributed among relatives and friends.

There are 12 most prime Prophetic Traditions (sunnat) which every Alavi Bohra has to follow and conform to them in his life. In it there are 6 types of relations with whom he has to build close, warm and amiable relationship. They are 1) Parents, 2) Wife and Children, 3) Neighbor, 4) Close relatives, 5) Servants and 6) Community members. Other 6 are based on social harmony and good character, they are 1) Always do good deeds, 2) Shun bad things, 3) Salute (say salaam) and be friendly to others, 4) Invite people and prepare food for them, 5) Visit a sick person and 6) Always speak truth and be honest.

Discipline is supreme in every walk of a believer's life. Etiquettes and well-defined rules (adaab) govern in meeting Saiyedna, visiting graves, taking meals, sitting in an assembly (majlis), sleeping, travelling, maintaining sexual relationship, acquiring lawful knowledge, answering nature's call (bayt ul-khalaa, toilet), mosque, walking with parents, visiting a sick person, preparation of Friday prayers, observing fast, reciting Qur'an, talking with elders, constructing a house, behaving with a guest etc.

Offering pilgrimages to the holy shrines of the Prophets, Faatemi Imaam (A'immat-e-Faatimiyeen), celebrated missionaries (du'aat-e-amjadeen) and devout saints (Mawaali-e-Tahereen) who acted and proved to be a role model by sacrificing their life and wealth in guarding the Da'wat and Isma'ili Taiyebi faith, plays an important role in the devotional life of Alavi Bohras. The places of pilgrimage abroad include Syria, Jordan, Karbalaa, Najaf, Bayt ul-Muqaddas, Misr and Yaman; while in India it includes Ahmedabad, Khambhat, Patan, Denmaal, Dongaam, Galiyakot, Kapadwanj, Umreth, Mai saheb etc.

## ○ DAWOODI BOHRA

The Dawoodi Bohras are a sect within the Ismā'īlī branch of Shia Islam. The largest populations of Dawoodi Bohras reside in India, Pakistan, Yemen and East Africa. There are also significant numbers living in Europe, North America, South East Asia and Australia.

The Dawoodi Bohra follow a sort of Shia Islam as propagated by the Fatimid Imamate in medieval Egypt. They pray three times a day, joining both afternoon prayers Zuhr and Asr, and both evening prayers Maghreb and Isha. They fast in the month of Ramadan, perform Haj and Umrah and give Zakat. The Dawoodi Bohras, being Ismailis and thus Jafaris, were included as Muslims in the Amman Message.

The Dawoodi Bohra community has been practicing this hidden ritual of female circumcision, also known as Female Genital Cutting (FGC), for centuries, with no public discussion on its need.

## ○ HEBTIAHS BOHRA

The Hebtiahs Bohra are a branch of Mustaali Ismaili Shi'a Islam that broke off from the mainstream Dawoodi Bohra after the death of the 39th Da'i al-Mutlaq in 1754. They are mostly concentrated in Ujjain in India with a few families who are Hebtiah Bohra.

## ○ SULAYMANI BOHRA

Sulaymani Bohras (Sulaymanis) are a Musta'li Ismaili community that predominantly reside in Saudi Arabia (Najran), Yemen, Pakistan and India. They are also called Makrami. They number between several hundred thousand and one million in Saudi Arabia alone. They belong to Tayyibi Ismailis, which bifurcated into various Bohras including major group Dawoodi Bohra.

## ■ NIZZARI

The Nizaris are the largest branch of the Ismaili Shi'i Muslims, the second-largest branch of Shia Islam (the largest being the Twelver). Nizari teachings emphasize human reasoning (ijtihad, the individual use of one's reason when using both the Quran and Hadith as resources), pluralism (the acceptance of racial, ethnic, cultural and intra-religious differences) and social justice. Aga Khan IV is their religious imam and leader.

Nizaris, like all Muslims, consider the Quran to be the word of God, it being the central religious text of Islam. Nizaris employ tafsir, the science of Quranic commentary for its zahir (outer, exoteric) understanding and tawil (esoteric exegesis) for its batin (inner, esoteric) understanding.

As with all shiite sects, the succession of leadership following the death of the prophet Muhammed is of major importance to Nizaris. Nizaris believe that at al-Ghadir Khumm, by God's direct command, Mohammad designated his cousin and son-in-law Ali - husband of his daughter Fatimah - as his successor. As such, Ali became both the spiritual successor and the first Imam in the continuing line of hereditary Imams which lead up to the present 49th imam Prince Shah Karim Al Hussaini.

The Nizari Ismaili tradition is unique in that it is the only tradition that bears witness to the continuity of the hereditary divine authority vested in the Imamim-Mubeen. In all the Sunni traditions, the Imamim-Mubeen is interpreted as the Quran itself; and in all the Shia traditions except the Shia Nizari tradition it is interpreted as the last Imam of a dynasty who went into occultation. However, in Nizari Ismailism, it is interpreted as a living human Imam who is never in occultation and who will never ever be absent from this world but will always be perpetually present and physically alive, and who is designated as the inheritor of the Imamate from father to son. This tradition has continued for almost 1400 years from Ali to the present Imam-of-the-Time, Prince Karim al-Hussaini Aga Khan, the 49th hereditary Nizari Imam and direct descendant of Mohammad through Ali and Fatima az-Zahra.

Isma'ilism holds that there are seven pillars in Islam, each of which possess both an exoteric outer (Zahir) expression, and an esoteric inner (Batin) expression.

Jama'at Khana are Isma'ili houses of prayer, study, and community. They usually contain separate spaces for prayer, and a social hall for community gatherings.

Marriage is a legal contract ("Nikah") between a consenting adult man and a woman, and it is not considered a sacrament in Islam as it is in Christianity and other religions. As a contract, it allows both parties to add certain conditions. Nizari ideals of marriage envision a long term union.

Since marriage is not considered a sacrament in Islam, Nizari Isma'ili consider secular court marriages in the west as valid legal contracts. However many Isma'ili couples in the west opt into both a court marriage to secure legal recognition in addition to a Nikah ceremony performed at a Jama'at Khana.

Unlike many other groups, inter-faith marriages are recognized by the community.

Nāndi is a ceremony in which food is symbolically offered to the Imām-e Zamān, and is subsequently auctioned to the congregation. Money obtained is forwarded to the Imām by officials.

Nizari use an arithmetic based Lunar calendar to calculate the year, unlike most Muslim communities who rely on visual sightings. A lunar year contains about 354 11/30 days, Nizari Isma'ili employ a cycle of 11 leap years (kasibah) with 355 days in a 30-year cycle. The odd numbered months contain 30 days and the even numbered months 29 days, the 12th and final month in a leap year contains 30 days.

Nizari use 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 24, 26, 29 respectively in their calculations.

## ❖ TWELVER

Twelver or Imamiyyah is the largest branch of Shia Islam. The term Twelver refers to its adherents' belief in twelve divinely ordained leaders, known as the Twelve Imams, and their belief that the last Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, lives in occultation and will reappear as the promised Mahdi. According to Shia tradition, the Mahdi's tenure will coincide with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Isa), who is to assist the Mahdi against the Masih ad-Dajjal (literally, the "false Messiah" or Antichrist).

Twelvers believe that the Twelve Imams are the spiritual and political successors to the Islamic prophet Muhammad. According to the theology of Twelvers, the Twelve Imams are exemplary human individuals who not only rule over the community with justice, but are also able to preserve and interpret sharia and the esoteric meaning of the Quran. The words and deeds (Sunnah) of Muhammad and the Imams are a guide and model for the community to follow; as a result, Muhammad and the Imams must be free from error and sin, a doctrine known as Ismah or infallibility, and must be chosen by divine decree, or nass, through Muhammad.

Twelvers make majorities among Muslims in Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Bahrain. Also, they make significant minorities in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Oman, UAE, Qatar, Nigeria, Chad, and Tanzania.

Iran is the only country with state religion as (Twelver) Shia Islam.

Twelvers share many tenets of Shia with related sects, such as the belief in Imams, but the Ismaili Shias believe in a different number of Imams and, for the most part, a different path of succession regarding the Imamate. They also differ in the role and overall definition of an Imam. Twelvers are also distinguished from Ismailis by their belief in Muhammad's status as the "Seal of the Prophets" (Khatam an-Nabiyyin), in rejecting the possibility of abrogation of Sharia laws, and in considering both esoteric and exoteric aspects of the Quran.

Alevis in Turkey and Albania, and Alawites in Syria and Lebanon, share belief in the Twelve Imams with Twelvers, but their theological doctrines are remarkably different.

The beliefs and practices of Twelver Shia Islam are categorised into:

- Theology or Roots of the Religion - five beliefs
- Ancillaries of the Faith or Branches of the Religion - ten practices

In Twelver Shia Islam, the ten Ancillaries of the Faith are the ten practices that Shia Muslims must perform.

According to Twelver doctrine, what is referred to as pillars by Sunni Islam are called the practices or secondary principles. There are three additional practices. The first is jihad, which is also important to the Sunni, but not considered a pillar. The second is Commanding what is just, which calls for every Muslim to live a virtuous life and to encourage others to do the same. The third is Forbidding what is evil, which tells Muslims to refrain from vice and from evil actions and to encourage others to do the same. Twelvers have five Principles of the Religion which relate to Aqidah.

Twelver Shi'ism is itself divided into a number of schools:

### Usuli

This school is the one to which the majority of Twelver Shi'is today belong. It is founded on certain principles (usul) of jurisprudence that allow the `ulama to deliver judgments on almost any question that comes before them. This school was revived in the 18th century by Vahid Bihbihani (1706-1792), but its current practices are based on the legal norms evolved by Shaykh Murtada Ansari (1799-1864).

### Akhbari

This school holds that legal rulings can only be given by the `ulama in cases where there are clear precedents established by the Traditions (akhbar) of the Imams. It was revived by Mulla Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1623) as a reaction to the great freedom given to jurists by the Usuli school. During the 17th and early 18th centuries, it became the predominant school in most parts of the Shi'i world but was then driven back by the resurgent Usulis under Bihbihani.

### Shaykhi

Whereas the Usuli majority and the Akhbaris disagree about jurisprudence, the Usulis and the Shaykhis disagree about doctrine. The Shaykhis assert that many of the doctrines that in orthodox circles are understood literally--for example, the concepts of Heaven, Hell, Resurrection, and the return of the Twelfth Imam--are all concepts that are to be fulfilled at the level of spiritual imagery

## ▪ ALAWITES



Zulfiqar, a stylised representation of the sword of Ali, is an important symbol for Alawites

The Alawis, also rendered as Alawites are a syncretic sect of the Twelver branch of Shia Islam, primarily centered in Syria. The eponymously named Alawites revere Ali (Ali ibn Abi Talib), considered the first Imam of the Twelver school. However, they are generally considered to be Ghulat by most other sects of Shia Islam. The sect is believed to have been founded by Ibn Nusayr during the 9th century, and fully established as a religion. Today, Alawites represent 11 percent of the Syrian

population and are a significant minority in Turkey and northern Lebanon. There is also a population living in the village of Ghajar in the Golan Heights. They are often confused with the Alevis of Turkey. Alawites form the dominant religious group on the Syrian coast and towns near the coast which are also inhabited by Sunnis, Christians, and Ismailis.

Alawites identify as Shiite Muslims. Like other Muslims, the Qur'an is their primary holy book, and Muhammed is recognized as the Prophet of God. But Alawite theology and rituals break from mainstream Shiite Islam in several remarkable ways. For one, the Alawites reject sharia.

Alawite women eschew the hijab.

The Alawites also drink alcohol in their rituals; while other Muslims abstain from alcohol, Alawites are encouraged to drink socially in moderation.

They also believe in reincarnation.

Other beliefs and practices include: the consecration of wine in a secret form of Mass performed only by males; frequently being given Christian names; entombing the dead in sarcophagi above ground; observing Kha b-Nisan (Nowruz or Akitu), Epiphany, Christmas and the feast days of John Chrysostom and Mary Magdalene; the only religious structures they have are the shrines of tombs; the book Kitab al Majmu, which is allegedly a central source of Alawite doctrine; and the belief that women do not have souls.

Alawites have historically kept their beliefs secret from outsiders and non-initiated Alawites, so rumours about them have arisen. At the core of Alawite belief is a divine triad, comprising three aspects of the one God. These aspects or emanations appear cyclically in human form throughout history.

## ❖ ZAIDIYYAH

Zaidiyyah or Zaidism is one of the Shia sects closest in terms of theology to Hanafi Sunni Islam. Zaidiyyah emerged in the eighth century out of Shi'a Islam. Zaidis are named after Zayd ibn 'Alī, the grandson of Husayn ibn 'Alī and the son of their fourth Imam Ali ibn 'Husain. Followers of the Zaydi Islamic jurisprudence are called Zaydi and make up about 42% of Muslims in Yemen, with the vast majority of Shia Muslims in the country being Zaydi.

Zaydi fiqh is similar to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence. Zaidis dismiss religious dissimulation (taqiyya).

Of the Shi'a, Zaidis are most similar to Sunnis since Zaydism shares similar doctrines and jurisprudential opinions with Sunni scholars.

Traditionally, the Zaydi believe that Muslims who commit major sins without remorse should not be considered Muslims nor be considered kafirs but rather be categorized in neither group.

In the context of the Shi'a Muslim belief in spiritual leadership or Imamate, Zaydis believe that the leader of the Ummah or Muslim community must be Fatimids: descendants of Muhammad through his only surviving daughter Fatimah, whose sons were Hasan ibn 'Alī and Husayn ibn 'Alī. These Shi'a called themselves Zaydi so they could differentiate themselves from other Shi'is who refused to take up arms with Zayd ibn Ali.

## ✓ AHMADIYYA

This Ahmadiyya Religion was founded in the 19th century with the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in what is now Pakistan. He proclaimed that he was the Mujaddid (divine reformer) and believed in the second coming or Mahdi as awaited by Muslims. They consider themselves as leading the revival and peaceful propagation of Islam.

The Ahmadiyya consider themselves as Muslims and to be practicing Islam in the truest form. This is not accepted by mainstream Muslims and in fact the parliament of Pakistan have declared they are indeed non-Muslims and in 1984 the Ahmadiyya Religion were outlawed and their lives were considered criminal.

Persecution and systematic persecution have caused many to migrate to the west.

After the death of the first successor of Ghulam Ahmad the movement split into two groups based on interpretations of the original prophethood and the rules of succession. The two groups were the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Ahmadi Muslims share the foundational tenets of Islam with orthodox Muslims.

- The 5 Pillars (Kalima, Prayer, Fasting, Zakaat, Hajj)
- The 6 Articles of Faith (Unity of God, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, The Last Day, Divine Decree)
- The declaration of faith, or Kalimah, is the same for Ahmadi Muslims as it is for the orthodox. This declaration is that, "There is none worthy of worship except God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God."
- Ahmadis pray the five daily prayers as do Sunnis and Shias. In fact, you'll notice subtle gestural differences between Sunni and Shia during prayer that you won't find between Sunni and Ahmadi.
- Ahmadis accept the first four successors of Muhammad (Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib) as the "Rightly Guided" caliphs of Islam, just like the Sunni and unlike the Shia.<sup>6</sup>
- Ahmadis read the same Qur'an as used by the Sunni and the Shia. The Arabic is the same, word for word and vowel for vowel. Every Muslim group however, has their preferences on which translations more accurately convey the spirit of the Qur'an.

So what sets Ahmadis apart?

- Most Ahmadis believe that their founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was a prophet. Not a prophet in the traditional sense of starting a new religion or bringing a new divine book; but rather in the sense of one who is merely a reviver of the faith, and who is subservient to the religion's founding prophet (Muhammad, in this case). The smaller Lahori sect of the Ahmadis (see Article Focus, below) believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was only a mujaddid<sup>7</sup> and not a prophet.
- Ahmadis believe that prophethood is an indication that one may have been given the ability to make prophecy. Further, prophets of God get to commune more frequently with God.
- The Qur'an refers to Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets. Orthodox Muslims interpret the Arabic word for 'seal' as synonymous with 'last'. On this basis, the orthodox considers the Ahmadiyya belief in the continuation of any prophethood, heretical.
- Ahmadis believe that although no new religious law (scripture) is ever coming to humanity, divine revelation continues. God hasn't suddenly stopped communicating with his creation.
- Ahmadis, like other Muslims, believe that Jesus did not die on the cross. Orthodox Muslims believe Jesus was taken physically up into Heaven, to return in Latter Days. Ahmadis believe that this return is allegorical, since they believe Jesus to have already died a natural death (which was not on the cross, but naturally, after a migration to India). According to Ahmadis, the return of Jesus is a metaphor for someone coming from God who would reflect the qualities of Jesus, but be born from amongst the Muslims in Latter Days to revive the religion of Islam.

## ✓ **BLACK MUSLIMS (disambiguation)**

Black Muslims may describe any black people who are Muslim, but historically has been specifically used to refer to African-American Black nationalist organizations that describe themselves as Muslim. Some of these groups are not considered to be Muslim within mainstream Islam.

## ❖ **AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MUSLIM**

The American Society of Muslims was a predominantly African-American association of Muslims which was the direct descendent of the original Nation of Islam. It was created by Warith Deen Mohammed after he assumed leadership of the Nation of Islam upon the death of his father Elijah Muhammad. Imam W. Deen Mohammed changed the name of the Nation of Islam to the "World Community of Islam in the West" in 1976, then the "American Muslim Mission" in 1981, and finally the "American Society of Muslims".

The group largely accepted beliefs and practices based on mainstream Sunni Islam, abandoning many of the distinctive claims of the founders of the Nation of Islam. W.D. Mohammed retired as the leader of the association in 2003 and established a charity called The Mosque Cares.

The aims of the American Society of Muslims were to establish an Islamic community life (New Africa) in America and the promotion of a positive image of Al-Islam in America and the world. Its organized school accreditation, publications and business ventures relate to Islamic communal life in America, including the sale and circulation of Halal food.

## ❖ **FIVE-PROCENT NATION**



Five percent nation – emblem

The Five-Percent Nation, sometimes referred to as NGE or NOGE, the Nation of Gods and Earths, or the Five Percenters, is a movement founded in 1964 in the Harlem section of the borough of Manhattan, New York City, by a former member of the Nation of Islam (NOI), Clarence 13X, who was named Clarence Edward Smith at birth, and who ultimately came to be known as Allah the Father.

Allah the Father, a former student of Malcolm X, left the NOI after a dispute with Elijah Muhammad over Elijah's teaching that the white man was the devil, yet not teaching that the black man was God. Allah the Father also rejected the assertion that Nation's biracial founder, Wallace Fard Muhammad, was Allah and instead taught that the black man was himself God personified. Members of the group call themselves Allah's Five Percenters, which reflects the concept that ten percent of the people in the world know the truth of existence, and those elites and agents opt to keep eighty-five percent of the world in ignorance and under their controlling thumb; the remaining five percent are those who know the truth and are determined to enlighten the rest.

The Nation of Gods and Earths teaches that black people are the original people of the planet Earth, and therefore they are the fathers ("Gods") and mothers ("Earths") of civilization.

The Nation teaches that Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabet, a set of principles created by Allah the Father, is the key to understanding humankind's relationship to the universe. The Nation does not believe in a mystery God but instead teaches that the Asiatic Blackman is God and his proper name is Allah, the Arabic word for "God".

Gods and Earths sometimes refer to themselves as scientists, implying their search for knowledge and proof.

The teachings of the Nation of Gods and Earths are passed on through a modern oral tradition. The advancement of a God or Earth is based on his or her memorization, recitation, comprehension, and practical application of the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet and also the 120 Lessons, sometimes referred to as degrees, a revised version of the Supreme Wisdom lessons of the NOI, originally written by Wallace Fard Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad.

The Five Percent is not a monolithic entity with a rigid ideology. Consequently, it is not possible to posit that Five Percenters all believe or espouse a particular thing. Each member is considered divine in his or her own right and, thus, establishes a way of life, philosophy, ontology, epistemology to fit one's existence based on one's study and personal and community analysis of particular laws, lessons, and sciences. The Gods' personal and communal intellectual development occurs through personal study of lessons, "builds" in local ciphers, and "Educational Show and Prove" sessions at Universal Parliaments.

The Five-Percent Nation holds events known as Universal Parliaments in various cities - usually once a month - to build on their interpretation of the Supreme Mathematics, lessons, and to discuss business concerning the NGE. These meetings usually take place in public areas and can be held anywhere.

The Show and Prove is an annual event that takes place in the Harlem section of Manhattan every second weekend in June. Gods and Earths converge from all over the world at Harriet Tubman Elementary School for this gathering, which includes a marketplace, performances, and speeches in the school's auditorium and a science fair in which children participate.

The Nation generally does not recognize traditional holidays, most notably those associated with religion such as Christmas or Easter. Instead, they change the meaning and celebrate how they want to. However, some regions where the Nation is active may hold events close to dates in honor of Allah the Father's birthday (February 22) or the official founding of the Nation (October 10).

Dietary laws of the Five Percent dictate that adherents are forbidden to eat pork or any pork-based by-products as well as all other scavengers (shrimp, crab, lobster, etc.). Many take further steps and eschew meat altogether, often opting for veganism or a raw food diet.

## ❖ MOORISH ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA



The generally-accepted flag of the Moorish Orthodox Church of America

The Moorish Orthodox Church of America is a syncretic, non-exclusive, and religious anarchist movement espousing a vast array of liturgical and devotional traditions laid over a theology that includes teachings gleaned from Moorish Science, Five Percenters, Theosophical mysticism, Hermeticism, Oriental Orthodoxy, the Episcopi vagantes movement, the League for Spiritual Discovery, Western esotericism, Discordianism, the teachings of Noel Ignatiev, Neotantra, Nizari Islam, Zoroastrianism, Sufism (particularly from the Sufi Order Ināyati, Chishti, Bektashi and Uwaisi traditions), Taoism, and Vedanta teachings.

The Moorish Orthodox Church was founded in New York City in 1962 primarily by Warren Tartaglia, beatniks, spiritual seekers, anarchists and members of the Noble Order of Moorish Sufis (a group that grew out of the Moorish Science Temple #13 in Baltimore on July 7, 1957).

Moorish Orthodoxy was founded to explore the more esoteric dimensions of Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science teachings, but quickly developed into a movement of spiritual exploration beyond its intended purpose, though it maintains Moorish Science as its core. After a long period of quiescence, the Moorish Orthodox Church of America experienced a small renaissance in the mid-1980s owing to the involvement of former members of the beat/beatnik movement, the counter-cultural hippie community, and the gay liberation movement, along with the continued involvement of Sultan Rafi Sharif Bey (who founded the Moorish League) and the prolific writings of Hakim Bey.

Moorish Orthodoxy embraces an anarchist model of organization, believing strongly in the concept that "you are, each one, a priest, just for yourself" as proclaimed in the Circle 7 Koran. As such, temples are mostly self-declared and/or choose to affiliate themselves and derive their "authority" through another temple and/or an autonomous charter-granting body. These temples also range in size (from one person to near a hundred), focus (Judaism, Christianity, Moorish Science, Zoroastrianism, Islam, etc.), membership credentials (the most popular being the "spiritual passport"), and name (lodge, temple, ashram, church, chapel, etc.) The most "organized" portions of Moorish Orthodoxy tend to be its Adept Chamber, in which bodies are established for the formal study and exploration of both the core and fringes of various spiritual systems. The current bodies of the Adept Chamber are the Order of the Paraclete (Christian), the Fatamid Order (Islam), the Order of Jerusalem (Judaism), the Sabian Order (Paganism and Western Esotericism), with their own initiation rites and rituals.

The M.O.C.A. is an inter-faith syncretic religion which teaches and combines the teachings of different faith as One faith often focusing on what most people would call heretical.

Most members of the Moorish church and the Moorish sufis will say that they are Monotheists but when they say this they mean the One-connection of everything. Some members are deeply religious while some are non-religious but what is and what isn't is only defined by that single person.

## ❖ MOORISH SCIENCE TEMPLE OF AMERICA

Moorish Science Temple of America, U.S. religious movement founded in Newark, N.J., in 1913 by Timothy Drew (1886–1929), known to followers as Noble Drew Ali and also as the Prophet. Drew Ali taught that all blacks were of Moorish origins but had their Muslim identity taken away from them through slavery and racial segregation. He advocated that they should “return” to the Islam of their Moorish forefathers, redeeming themselves from racial oppression by reclaiming their historical spiritual heritage. He also encouraged use of the term “Moor” rather than “black” in self-identification. Many of the group’s formal practices were derived from Muslim observances. Rigorous obedience to the Prophet’s regulations was required, and certain foods were forbidden.

Noble Drew Ali believed that African Americans had lost their true religious identity as a result of slavery. An important component of the belief system was the idea of casting off oppressive identities. As a result, members of the Moorish Science Temple often changed their names.

The group’s sacred text was the Holy Koran, which was distinct from the Qur’ān of orthodox Islam and which members considered to have been divinely revealed by Allah to Drew Ali. The work begins with a long narrative spanning from the Fall of Man to the Resurrection of Jesus; it includes moral instructions by Drew Ali and closes with a prophecy of the imminent “uplift of fallen humanity.”

Some traditional teachings of Islam were incorporated by Ali and his followers, such as reverence for Allah and the Islamic understanding of free will. Ali wrote his own version of the Qu’ran, called the Circle Seven Koran. According to scholars, this text was used for daily guidance, and unlike traditional Islam, there was no reference to the hadith. The group created their own flag, a red flag with a green star. Each point of the star was representative of one of the community’s ideals: love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice.

Drew Ali moved his organization several times and ultimately settled in the mid-1920s in Chicago, where he found success. He died under mysterious circumstances during a period of internal strife, and the Moorish Science Temple of America split into several factions. The Nation of Islam grew out of the contested succession to Drew Ali and became a separate organization in Detroit in 1932. Several men claimed to carry on the spiritual lineage of Noble Drew Ali and founded similar organizations. In the early 21st century the largest of those - the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc. - operated a prison ministry and a theological seminary, the University of the Moorish Science Temple of America.

## ❖ NATION OF ISLAM



The Nation of Islam, abbreviated as NOI, is an African American political and religious movement, founded in Detroit, Michigan, United States, by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad on July 4, 1930. Its stated goals are to improve the spiritual, mental, social, and economic condition of African Americans in the United States and all of humanity. Critics have described the organization as being black supremacist and antisemitic.

The main belief of The Nation of Islam and its followers is that there is no god but Allah. Their most important worship is praying five times a day. The official beliefs as stated by the Nation of Islam have been outlined in books, documents, and articles published by the organization as well as speeches by Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, and other ministers.

The NOI teaches that Black people constitute a nation and that through the institution of the Atlantic slave trade they were systematically denied knowledge of their history, language, culture, and religion and, in effect, lost control of their lives. Central to this doctrine, NOI theology asserts that Black people’s experience of slavery was the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and therefore, black people are the seed of Abraham referred to in the Bible.

The Nation of Islam teaches that black people are the aboriginal people and that all other people come from them. Principles and Practices.

The Nation of Islam advocates a strict code of behavior, predicated on Islamic principles, that excludes the consumption of pork, coffee, tobacco and alcohol. It asserts high moral standards, and values education, modesty and manners, according to the sect’s official website. It also espouses a traditional definition of family and family roles. The Nation of Islam ascribes to the five pillars of Islam - belief in God’s oneness, prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage -- and has built a number of mosques throughout North America.

Religious practices

Required Daily Observances - For Nation of Islam (NOI) members, personal prayer is required five times a day. Ritual washing is required, as well as a clean place where the prayer can be made. Nation of Islam members face Mecca on a clean surface (e.g., prayer rug, towel, mat, carpet, or any other material that is kept clean and used only for this purpose), and prostrate

themselves before Allah as prescribed in religious law. Prayers can be made individually.

#### Required Weekly Observances

- Jumah Prayer.
- A time for study (preferably 2 study meetings per week).

Required Occasional Observances - In his letter of December 1, 1998, Louis Farrakhan stated that the Nation of Islam would begin to observe the fast during Ramadan, a month in the Arabic lunar calendar and the month in which Muslims throughout the world fast. The fast begins at dawn and ends at sunset. Depending on the sighting of the moon, the fast may be 29 or 30 days long. Eating and drinking stops at dawn. During the day no eating, drinking, or sexual activity can take place. At sunset, the fast is broken by eating fruits and drinking water or juice. The evening prayer is made, followed by a complete vegetarian meal.

#### Religious Holy Days

Savior's Day, February 26. The Nation of Islam celebrates the birthday of W. Fard Muhammad, who brought salvation, restoration, redemption, and reconciliation to them. This is a day free from work for NOI inmates.

Savior's Day, October 7. On October 7, the Nation of Islam celebrates the birthday of Elijah Muhammad. This began in 1985, since most current members have not met W. Fard Muhammad. Since most members have had their lives transformed through the work of Elijah Muhammad, this day is also celebrated. This is a day free from work for NOI inmates.

Holy Day of Atonement/Reconciliation, October 16. Undergirding the concept of atonement is perfect union with Allah.

#### Sacred writings

- Holy Qu'ran – Preferred translations are those of Maulana Muhammad Ali and Yusef Muhammad.
- Holy Bible.
- All revealed scriptures.

#### Dress code

Members of the NOI, the Black Muslims, are required to adhere to a strict moral, disciplinary and dress code. The typical dress code of male members is to suits and ties, and women members are required to wear modest clothing, typically long white gowns or saris.

## ❖ UNITED NATION OF ISLAM

The United Nation of Islam (UNOI) is a group based in Kansas City, Kansas. It was founded circa 1978 by Royall Jenkins, who continues to be the leader of the group and styles himself Royall, Allah in Person.

The beliefs of the UNOI are based on the beliefs of the NOI with considerable modifications by Jenkins. While believing that Allah came in the person of Wallace Fard Muhammad, founder of the NOI, Jenkins claims that he himself is Allah in his own person who is more powerful and who is given the task of coercing the submission of all things and perfecting everything used to magnify Him, after which men [specifically males] will all be God, or gods.

Jenkins stresses the relations between different races and sexes, referring extensively to black man, black woman, and white man.

Black men are said to be the real and original men, whereas white people are claimed to have been created by a scientist named Yakub 6,000 years ago, the same belief held, at least in a metaphorical sense, by followers of the NOI prior to the death of Elijah Muhammad. Jenkins also claims that black men created black women as a natural pleasure, that women are inferior, and that following female guidance leads to Hell. He believes that black women are in league with white men, whom he considers enemies, and condemns women seeking child support, custody, and alimony through courts.

## ✓ ISLAMISM



Islamism is a concept whose meaning has been debated in both public and academic contexts. The term can refer to diverse forms of social and political activism advocating that public and political life should be guided by Islamic principles or more specifically to movements which call for full implementation of sharia. It is commonly used interchangeably with the terms political Islam or Islamic fundamentalism. In academic usage, the term Islamism does not specify what vision of "Islamic order" or sharia are being advocated, or how their advocates intend to bring them about. In Western mass media it tends to refer to groups who aim to establish a sharia-based Islamic state, often with implication of violent tactics and human rights violations, and has acquired connotations of political extremism. In the Muslim world, the term has positive connotations among its proponents.

Different currents of Islamist thought include advocating a "revolutionary" strategy of Islamizing society through exercise of state power, and alternately a "reformist" strategy to re-Islamizing society through grass-roots social and political activism.

Islamists may emphasize the implementation of Sharia (Islamic law); pan-Islamic political unity, including an Islamic state; or selective removal of non-Muslim, particularly Western military, economic, political, social, or cultural influences in the Muslim world that they believe to be incompatible with Islam.

The relationship between the notions of Islam and Islamism has been subject to disagreement.

The strength of Islamism also draws from the strength of religiosity in general in the Muslim world.

Islamism, or elements of Islamism, have been criticized for: repression of free expression and individual rights, rigidity, hypocrisy, lack of true understanding of Islam, misinterpreting the Quran and Sunnah, antisemitism, and for innovations to Islam (bid'ah), notwithstanding proclaimed opposition to any such innovation by Islamists.

## ❖ AHL AL-HADITH

Ahl al-Hadith first emerged in the 2nd/3rd Islamic centuries as a movement of hadith scholars who considered the Quran and authentic hadith to be the only authority in matters of law and creed. Its adherents are also known as traditionalists and traditionists (from "tradition" as a translation of the word hadith).

In jurisprudence Ahl al-Hadith opposed contemporary jurists who based their legal reasoning on informed opinion (ra'y) or living local practice, referred to as Ahl ar-Ra'y. In matters of faith, they were pitted against the Mu'tazilites and other theological currents, condemning many points of their doctrines as well as the rationalistic methods they used in defending them. The most prominent leader of the movement was Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Subsequently, all Sunni legal schools gradually came to accept the reliance on the Quran and hadith advocated by the Ahl al-Hadith movement, while al-Ash'ari (874-936) used rationalistic argumentation favored by Mu'tazilites to defend most tenets of the Ahl al-Hadith doctrine. In the following centuries the term ahl al-hadith came to refer to the scholars, mostly of the Hanbali madhhab, who rejected rationalistic theology (kalam) and held on to the early Sunni creed. This theological school, which is also known as traditionalist theology, has been championed in recent times by the Salafi movement. The term ahl al-hadith is sometimes used in a more general sense to denote a particularly enthusiastic commitment to hadith and to the views and way of life of the Salaf (exemplary early Muslims).

## ❖ GHAIR MUQALLIDISM

Ghair Muqallid scholars (Aalim) take the ruling directly from Quran and sunnah. In matters of fiqh, they follow any imam and scholar whose ruling is in accordance to Quran and sunnah. They have respect for all the imams and great scholars. But they give preference to Quran and Authentic sunnah over the views of imams.

### ▪ **DEOBANDI**

*Deobandi is a revivalist movement within Sunni (primarily Hanafi) Islam. It is centered in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, has recently spread to the United Kingdom, and has a presence in South Africa. The name derives from Deoband, India, where the school Darul Uloom Deoband is situated. The movement was inspired by scholar Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (1703–1762), and was founded in 1867 in the wake of the failed Sepoy Rebellion in northern India a decade earlier.*

*The Deobandi movement sees itself as a scholastic tradition, situated within orthodox Sunni Islam. It grew out of the Islamic scholastic tradition of Medieval Transoxania and Mughal India.*

*Deobandis are strong proponents of the doctrine of Taqlid. In other words, they believe that a Muslim must adhere to one of the four schools (madhhabs) of Sunni Islamic Law and generally discourage inter-school eclecticism. They themselves are predominantly followers of the Hanafi school.*

*In tenets of faith, the Deobandis follow the Maturidi school of Islamic theology. Their schools teach a short text on beliefs by the Maturidi scholar Nasafi.*

### ▪ **YIHEWANI**

*Yihewani is an Islamic sect in China. Its adherents are called Sunnaiti. It is of the Hanafi school, one of the six major schools of Islam. It is also referred to as "new sect" " or "Latest sect". Ikhwan (Yihewani), together with Qadim (Gedimu) and Xidaotang, are the three major sects of Islam in China. The Yihewani sect was labeled as the new teaching (xinjiao). In 1937 it divided into two groups.*

*The follower of the sect radically opposed Qadeem's tradition which was influenced by Chinese culture. They put emphasis on the principle of "following the book and eliminating customs". Though the founder of the movement was inspired by the salafi movement, this reform movement, unlike that of the Wahhabis, did not oppose Sufism, but rather rejected the excessive veneration to Sufi masters and to their graves. They strictly follow Hanafi school of fiqh and emphasize the Ash'ari and Maturidi creeds.*

## ❖ MUWAHHIDISM

The Muwahidin or Muwahid Muslims are a Muslim restoration movement that accepts mainstream Islam. The place an emphasis on the concept of tawhid. Muwahidists believe that the Muslim faith has gradually been mixed with many cultural traditions. They want to return the Muslim faith back to its original foundations. This means the worship of Allah. They acknowledge the 5 pillars of Islam.

## ❖ SALAFI MOVEMENT

The Salafi movement or Salafist movement or Salafism is a reform branch or revivalist movement within Sunni Islam that developed in Egypt in the late 19th century as a response to European imperialism. However, some sources cite its roots in the 18th century Wahhabi movement. It advocated a return to the traditions of the salaf, who are the first three generations of scholars after the Prophet Muhammad.

The Salafist doctrine is centered around the concept of looking back to a prior historical period in an effort to understand how the contemporary world should be ordered. They reject religious innovation or bid'ah, and support the implementation of sharia (Islamic law).

The movement is often divided into three categories: the largest group are the purists (or quietists), who avoid politics; the second largest group are the activists, who get involved in politics; the third group are the jihadists, who form a minority. In legal matters, Salafis are divided between those who, in the name of independent legal judgement (ijtihad), reject strict adherence (taqlid) to the four Sunni schools of law (madhahib), and others who remain faithful to these.

The majority of the Salafis in the Gulf states reside in Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Salafi literalist creed has also gained some acceptance in Turkey.

At times, Salafism has been deemed a hybrid of Wahhabism and other post-1960s movements. Salafism has become associated with literalist, strict and puritanical approaches to Islam - and, particularly in the West, with the Salafi Jihadis who espouse violent jihad against those they deem to be enemies of Islam as a legitimate expression of Islam.

## ❖ WAHHABISM

Wahhabism is an Islamic doctrine and religious movement founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab started a reform movement in the remote, sparsely populated region of Najd, advocating a purging of such widespread Sunni practices as the veneration of saints and the visiting of their tombs and shrines, all of which were practiced all over the Islamic world, but which he considered idolatrous impurities and innovations in Islam (Bid'ah).

Today Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab's teachings are the official, state-sponsored form of Sunni Islam in Saudi Arabia. With the help of funding from Saudi petroleum exports (and other factors), the movement underwent "explosive growth" beginning in the 1970s and now has worldwide influence.

The "boundaries" of Wahhabism have been called "difficult to pinpoint", but in contemporary usage, the terms Wahhabi and Salafi are often used interchangeably, and they are considered to be movements with different roots that have merged since the 1960s. However, Wahhabism has also been called "a particular orientation within Salafism", or an ultra-conservative, Saudi brand of Salafism.

The majority of Sunni and Shia Muslims worldwide disagree with the interpretation of Wahhabism, and many Muslims denounce them as a faction or a "vile sect". Islamic scholars, including those from the Al-Azhar University, regularly denounce Wahhabism with terms such as "Satanic faith".

Wahhabism has been accused of being "a source of global terrorism", inspiring the ideology of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and for causing disunity in Muslim communities by labelling Muslims who disagreed with the Wahhabi definition of monotheism as apostates (takfir) and justifying their killing. It has also been criticized for the destruction of historic shrines of saints, mausoleums, and other Muslim and non-Muslim buildings and artifacts.

## ✓ KHAWARIJ

Khārijite, Arabic Khawārij, the earliest Islamic sect, which traces its beginning to a religio-political controversy over the Caliphate.

The basic doctrine of the Khārijites was that a person or a group who committed a grave error or sin and did not sincerely repent ceased to be Muslim. Mere profession of the faith - "there is no god but God; Muhammad is the prophet of God" - did not make a person a Muslim unless this faith was accompanied by righteous deeds.

The second principle that flowed from their aggressive idealism was militancy, or jihad, which the Khārijites considered to be among the cardinal principles, or pillars, of Islam. The Khawarij decreed that if committing cardinal sins become common in a Muslim land then it deserved to be considered dar harb, literally a land of war and those who live in it forfeit their lives and possessions.

The placing of these two principles together made the Khārijites highly inflammable fanatics, intolerant of almost any established political authority. They incessantly resorted to rebellion and, as a result, were virtually wiped out during the first two centuries of Islam.

Because the Khārijites believed that the basis of rule was righteous character and piety alone, any Muslim, irrespective of race, colour, and sex, could, in their view, become ruler - provided he or she satisfied the conditions of piety. This was in contrast to the claims of the Shī'ites (the party of Muhammad's son-in-law, 'Alī) that the ruler must belong to the family of the Prophet and in contrast to the doctrine of the Sunnis (followers of the Prophet's way) that the head of state must belong to the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh.

The Kharijite theology was a radical fundamentalism, with uncompromised observance of the Quran in defiance of corrupt authorities. Kharijites considered moderate Muslims to be "hypocrites" and "unbelievers" who could be killed with impunity. The Khawarij made takfir - declaring a person to be Kafir - of the main body of believers. The Kharijite held that only the most pious members of the community could be entrusted with political power.

The term Kharijites became a designation for Muslims who refused to compromise with those who differed from them. The uncompromising fanaticism of the original Kharijites was indicative of the fervor with which the tribal Arabs had accepted the missionary ideology of Islam.

Some observers compare today's radical Salafis with the ancient Khawarij terrorist sect, since they pioneered the political killing of Muslims considered heretic.

## ❖ IBADI

The Kharijites Islamic sect survived into the twentieth century in the more moderate form of Ibadī Islam and its members are to be found today in North Africa and in Oman and in parts of East Africa, including the island of Zanzibar. The Ibādīs do not believe in aggressive methods and, throughout medieval Islam, remained dormant. Because of the interest of 20th-century Western scholars in the sect, the Ibādīs became active and began to publish their classical writings and their own journals.

Ibadites refer themselves back to the Kharijites but reject their aggressive methods. There is a Kharidjite majority in Oman and, there are significant Kharidjite minorities in Algeria (in the Mزاب, more than 100,000). Some 40,000 Berber-speaking Ibadī people living on Jerba (Djerba) Island in Tunisia still kept to austere Kharidjite beliefs in the mid-1980s.

Ibadī leadership is vested in an imam, who is regarded as the sole legitimate leader and combines religious and political authority. The imam is elected by a council of prominent laymen or shaykhs.

Adherence to Ibadism accounts in part for Oman's historical isolation.

Considered a heretical form of Islam by the majority Sunni Muslims, Ibadīs were not inclined to integrate with their neighbors.

## ✓ SUFISM



Sufism or as it is also known taṣawwuf is generally believed to be the mystical dimension of Islam.

An adherent of this religion is known as a Sufi. Some of the faithful use this term only for those who have attained the goals of the Sufi tradition. Another name used for the Sufi seeker is dervish.

The religion originated between 661 to 759 BC and was an answer to the worldliness of many Muslims.

As stated classical Sufi scholars have defined it as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God." Alternatively, in the words of the renowned Darqawī Sufi teacher Ahmad ibn Ajība, "a science through which one can know how to travel into the presence of the Divine, purify one's inner self from filth, and beautify it with a variety of praiseworthy traits."

According to some modern proponents, such as Idries Shah, the Sufi philosophy is universal in nature, its roots predating the arising of Islam and the other modern-day religions; likewise, some Muslims feel that it is outside the sphere of Islam, although generally scholars of Islam contend that it is simply the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam.

While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God and will become close to God in Paradise, after death and after the "Final Judgment", Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the Divine Presence in this life.

The chief aim of all Sufis is to seek the pleasing of God by working to restore within themselves the primordial state of fitra, described in the Qur'an. In this state nothing one does defies God, and all is undertaken by the single motivation of love of God. A secondary consequence of this is that the seeker may be led to abandon all notions of dualism or multiplicity, including a conception of an individual self, and to realize the Divine Unity.

Scholars and adherents are unanimous in agreeing that Sufism cannot be learned through books. To reach the highest levels of success in Sufism typically requires that the disciple live with and serve the teacher for many years.

Sufi beliefs are based firmly in orthodox Islam and the text of the Quran, although a few Sufi teachers have strayed too close to monism or pantheism to remain within the orthodox fold.

The core principles of Sufism are tawakkul (absolute trust in God) and tawhid (the truth that there is no deity but God).

Sufis could be described as devout Muslims; praying five times a day, giving to charity, fasting etc, they adhere strictly to the outward observance of Islam. But they are distinctive in nurturing theirs and others' spiritual dimension. They are aware that one of the names of the Prophet was Dhikr Allah (Remembrance of God).

Like all Muslims, Sufis have looked to the scripture of Islam for inspiration and justification for their particular interpretation of how to practice religion. A number of verses in the Quran are cited by Sufis to illustrate the legitimacy of an esoteric interpretation of scripture.

Most holy sites in Sufism are shrines dedicated to various Sufi Saints - spiritually elevated ascetics from various mystical orders within Islam. Shrines are widely scattered throughout the Islamic world. Pilgrimages to them are known as Ziyarat. Traditional annual commemorations of the saint's death held at his shrine are known as Urs. In several countries, the local shrine is a focal point of the community, with several localities named specifically for the local saint.

Dhikr as practised by Sufis is the invocation of Allah's divine names, verses from the Qur'an, or sayings of the Prophet in order to glorify Allah. Dhikr is encouraged either individually or in groups and is a source of tranquillity for Sufis.

Sufi practices have their foundation in purity of life, strict obedience to Islamic law and imitation of the Prophet. Through self-denial, careful introspection and mental struggle, Sufis hope to purify the self from all selfishness, thus attaining ikhlas, absolute purity of intention and act. "Little sleep, little talk, little food" are fundamental and fasting is considered one of the most important preparations for the spiritual life.

Mystical experience of the divine is also central to Sufism. Sufis are distinguished from other Muslims by their fervent seeking of dhawq, a "tasting" that leads to an illumination beyond standard forms of learning. However, the insight gained by such experience is not valid if it contradicts the Qur'an.

The Sufi way of life is called a tariqah, "path." The path begins with repentance and submission to a guide (sheikh or pir). If accepted by the guide, the seeker becomes a disciple (murid) and is given instructions for asceticism and meditation. This usually includes sexual abstinence, fasting and poverty.

The culmination of the path is ma'rifah (interior knowledge, gnosis) or mahabbah (love), which implies a union of lover and beloved (man and God). The final goal is annihilation (fana'), primarily of one's own qualities but sometimes of one's entire personality. This is often accompanied by spiritual ecstasy or "intoxication."

After the annihilation of the self and accompanying ecstatic experience, the mystic enters a "second sobriety" in which he re-enters the world and continues the "journey of God."

A central method on the Sufi path is a ritual prayer or dhikr. It consists in a repetition of either one or all of the most beautiful names of God, or of a certain religious formula, such as the profession of faith: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet." A rosary of 99 or 33 beads has been in use since as early as the 8th century for counting the thousands of repetitions.

Mystical sessions of music and poetry called sama (or sema) were introduced in Baghdad in the mid-9th century with the purpose of achieving an ecstatic experience. Narcotics have sometimes been introduced as part of the method, but this is considered a degeneration of the practice.

The well-known "Whirling Dervishes" are members of the Mevlevi order of Turkish Sufis, based on the teachings of the famous mystic Rumi (d.1273). The practice of spinning around is the group's distinctive form of sama. The whirlers, called semazens, are practicing a form of meditation in which they seek to abandon the self and contemplate God, sometimes achieving an ecstatic state. The Mevlevi sect was banned in Turkey by Ataturk in 1925, but performances for tourists are still common throughout the country.

The clothing worn for the ritual and the positions of the body during the spinning are highly symbolic: for instance, the tall camel-hair hat represents the tomb of the ego, the white cloak represents the ego's shroud, and the uplifted right hand indicates readiness to receive grace from God.

#### Food Symbolism and Rituals

Sugar and other sweet foods represent the sweetness of piety and community with God, while salt symbolizes purity and incorruptibility. Bread is regarded as sacred in Islam and is treated reverentially. Through the pronouncement of Bismallah during the bread-making process, the bread is imbued with spiritual power or baraka, which is shared by those who eat the bread. The transformation of the raw wheat to finished bread is used as an analogy for Sufi spiritual development.

Sufi ritual observances (dhikr) are concerned with remembrance of God through exaltation and praise. Singing, dancing, and drumming are commonly part of such rituals, as is sharing of food. For example, ashura is a dish that takes its name from the festival celebrated by all followers of Islam. During preparation of the ashura, Mevlevi Sufis stir the pot in a special way while pronouncing the name of God. Sharing the ashura then becomes a way of spreading remembrance of God in the form of bodily nourishment.

#### Holidays and Festivals

Sufis observe general Muslim holidays and festivals. Ashura has particular significance for Sufis and Shi'a. In addition, they celebrate numerous saints' days, or moulids. Major moulid festivals attract hundreds of thousands of people and can last for two to three weeks. Sufi orders set up hospitality stations (khidamet) in public buildings, in tents, or simply on cloths spread on the ground. Drink and (usually) food are offered to passers-by, and must be accepted as the food contains the baraka of the saint being honored and therefore confers spiritual blessing on the recipient. For the poor, these stations provide an additional opportunity for physical as well as spiritual nourishment.

#### Fasting and Feasting

Fasting is an essential feature of Sufism, especially during the forty-day retreat undertaken by initiates in many orders. Early Sufis placed great emphasis on asceticism in the pursuit of self-control and suppression of worldly desires. Eating was seen to be an important source of potential harm to the new initiate, and there are many Sufi stories of extreme restraint. Later, excessive fasting came to be viewed as unfavorably as excessive eating, for the message of the adab was one of moderation.

## ❖ CHISHTI ORDER

The Chishtī Order is a Sufi order within the mystic Sufi tradition of Islam. It began in Chisht, a small town near Herat, Afghanistan about 930 CE. The Chishti Order is known for its emphasis on love, tolerance, and openness. The Chishti Order is primarily followed in Afghanistan and South Asia. It was the first of the four main Sufi orders (Chishti, Qadiriyya, Suhrawardiyya and Naqshbandi) to be established in this region. Moinuddin Chishti introduced the Chishti Order in Lahore (Punjab) and Ajmer (Rajasthan), sometime in the middle of the 12th century CE. He was eighth in the line of succession from the founder of the Chishti Order, Abu Ishq Shami. There are now several branches of the order, which has been the most prominent South Asian Sufi brotherhood since the 12th century. In the last century, the order has spread outside Afghanistan and South Asia.

## ❖ MEVLEVI ORDER

The Mawlawīyya / Mevlevi Order is a Sufi order in Konya (modern day Turkey) founded by the followers of Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi-Rumi, a 13th-century Afghan poet, Islamic theologian and Sufi mystic.

The Mevlevi are also known as the Whirling Dervishes due to their famous practice of whirling as a form of dhikr (remembrance of God). Dervish is a common term for an initiate of the Sufi path; the whirling is part of the formal Sama ceremony and the participants are properly known as semazen-s.

In 2008, UNESCO confirmed "The Mevlevi Sema Ceremony" as amongst the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The Mevlevi life is based on "adab and erkan" (discipline and rules of conduct).

In their conduct, they are very kind, graceful, and discreet and they never go to extremes in behaviour or in speech. In salute, they place their right hand on their heart and incline their head slightly, implying "you are in my heart". Even their handshake is peculiar to their discipline. They seize and kiss the back of each others hands, indicating mutual respect and equality. This is a greeting from "soul to soul" and denotes equality of existence. Every part of the Mevlevi system of behavior bears a symbolical meaning, such as taking soft steps or showing respect to their daily appliances, and they can be observed in the act of the whirling dervishes in 'Sema' rituals, which are considered an extension of their daily lives.

The Sema came to symbolize Mevlevi Order for it is the oldest ritual of the Order. Accompanied by music and systemized by certain rules, the "whirling" act has, in time, become more majestic, impressive, and appealing. Pir Adil Chalabi (died 1490), one of Hz. Mevlana's great-grandchildren, more or less finalized the form, as performed today, of "Sema". In time it was transformed into a 'ritual' by Mevlevis.

Each act in this ritual bears a meaning and is carried out in grace. From the dervish's garments to each of his movements, and from the particular shape of the Mevlevihane to the colours of the "post", all is symbolic.

## ❖ NAQSHBANDI

The Naqshbandi or Naqshbandiyah is a major Sunni spiritual order of Sufism. It got its name from Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari and traces its spiritual lineage to the Islamic prophet Muhammad, through Abu Bakr, the first Caliph and Muhammad's companion. Some Naqshbandi masters trace their lineage through Ali, his son-in-law and successor, in keeping with most other Sufis.

In Sufism, as in any serious Islamic discipline such as jurisprudence (fiqh), Quranic recital (tajwid), and hadith, a disciple must have a master or sheikh from whom to take the knowledge, one who has himself taken it from a master, and so on, in a continuous chain of masters back to Muhammad.

In the Naqshbandi tradition the dhikr is practiced in silence. The silent dhikr produces in the heart an intense and imperishable impression.

Two most important Naqshbandi orders were established in China: Ma Laichi founded Khufiyya Menhuan order and Ma Mingxin founded Jahriyya Menhuan order among the Chinese speaking Muslim Hui people.

## ▪ JAHRIYYA

Jahriyya is a menhuan (Sufi order) in China, commonly called the New Teaching (Xinjiao). Founded in the 1760s by Ma Mingxin, it was active in the late 18th and 19th centuries in what was then Gansu Province (also including today's Qinghai and Ningxia), when its followers were involved in a number of conflicts with other Muslim groups and in several rebellions against

China's ruling Qing dynasty.

This contrasted with the more typical Naqshbandi practice of performing it silently, as observed by the Khufiyya or Old Teaching.

Ma Mingxin opposed the emphasis that the Khufiyya members placed of the veneration of the saints, construction of grandiose elaborately decorated gongbeis, and the enrichment of religious leaders at the expense of their adherents.

Jahriyya has had a history of over 230 years in China. Among the four Sufi orders in China, the adherents of Jahriyya are more than any of the other three and Jahriyya is practiced in many places in China.

## ▪ KHUFIYYA

Khufiyya is a Sufist order of Chinese Islam. It was the first Sufist order to be established within China and, along with Jahriyya, Qadariyya, and Kubrawiyyah, is acknowledged as one of the four orders of Chinese Sufism.

Adherents of Khufiyya dwell mainly in Northwestern China, especially Gansu province.

The order follows the school of Hanafi in terms of jurisprudence. Traditional beliefs within the order claim the origin of Khufiyya to be Abu Bakr. In addition, the doctrines of Khufiyya are influenced by Confucianism, the Confucian approach or way of expounding Islamic sacred texts known as "Yiru Quanjing".

Ma Laichi founded Khufiyya Menhuan after his return to China from Hajj. The Khufiyya Menhuan he established was named Huasi Menhuan which was the core of Khufiyya movement in Chinese Islam. The feature of Huasi Menhuan is its adherents' emphasis on silent Dhikr (invocation of God's name), stronger participation in the society, veneration of saints and seeking inspiration at their tombs (Gongbei). Huasi Menhuan requires to recite Dhikr (Zikr) silently in the morning and evening, do voluntary prayers at night. Dhikr is taught to followers in a secret way.

The head of Huasi Menhuan is called Taiye who is regarded as a saint and after he dies, a Gongbei will be built on his tomb. Senior members of Huasi Menhuan is named Laorenjia.

Khufiyya is believed to have 20 branches, scattered in the provinces of Northwest China's Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Southwest China's Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces.

## ❖ QADIRIYYA

The Qadiriyya are members of the Qadiri tariqa (Sufi order). The tariqa got its name from Abdul Qadir Gilani (1077–1166, also transliterated Jilani), who was from Gilan. The order relies strongly upon adherence to the fundamentals of Islam.

The order, with its many offshoots, is widespread, particularly in the Arabic-speaking world, and can also be found in Turkey, Indonesia, Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Balkans, Russia, Palestine, Israel, China, and East and West Africa.

Qadiri leadership is not centralised. Each centre of Qadiri thought is free to adopt its own interpretations and practices.

The symbol of the order is the rose. A rose of green and white cloth, with a six-pointed star in the middle, is traditionally worn in the cap of Qadiri dervishes. Robes of black felt are also customary.

Names of God are prescribed as chants for repetition by initiates (dhikr). Formerly, several hundred thousand repetitions were required, and obligatory for those who hold the office of sheikh.

Any man over the age of eighteen may be initiated. They may be asked to live in the order's commune (khanqah or tekke) and to recount their dreams to their sheikh.

Celibacy, poverty, meditation, and mysticism within an ascetic context along with worship centered on saint's tombs were promoted by the Qadiriyya among the Hui in China. In China, unlike other Muslim sects, the leaders (Shaikhs) of the Qadiriyya Sufi order are celibate. Unlike other Sufi orders in China, the leadership within the order is not a hereditary position; rather, one of the disciples of the celibate Shaikh is chosen by the Shaikh to succeed him. The 92-year-old celibate Shaikh Yang Shijun was the leader of the Qadiriya order in China as of 1998.

## ❖ SUHRAWARDIYYA

The Suhrawardiyya is a Sufi order founded by the Sufi Diya al-din Abu 'n-Najib as-Suhrawardi (1097 – 1168 CE). It is a strictly Sunni order, guided by the Shafi'i school of Islamic law (madhhab), and, like many such orders, traces its spiritual genealogy (silsila) to Ali ibn Abi Talib through Junayd Baghdadi and al-Ghazali.

The order's ritual prayers (dhikr) are based upon thousands of repetitions of seven names of God, identified with seven "subtle spirits" which in turn correspond to seven lights.

It played an important role in the formation of a conservative 'new piety' and in the regulation of urban vocational and other groups, such as trades-guilds and youth clubs, particularly in Baghdad.

## ❖ TARIQA

A tariqa is a school or order of Sufism, or specifically a concept for the mystical teaching and spiritual practices of such an

order with the aim of seeking Haqiqa, which translates as "ultimate truth".

A tariqa has a murshid (guide) who plays the role of leader or spiritual director. The members or followers of a tariqa are known as muridin (singular murid), meaning "desirous", viz. "desiring the knowledge of knowing God and loving God" (also called a Faqir).

Although practices, appearances and internal structures of different orders may vary from one to another, there are no fundamental differences between the tariqas, as the ultimate goal for the seekers on different spiritual paths is essentially the same. The variations have nothing to do with religious principles. In basic principle, the Sufi orders are essentially the same, just as the differences in names among madhahib, or schools of law, refer to methods and not to the essence of religion, which is uniform.

## ❖ TIJANIYYAH

The Tijāniyyah is a sufi tariqa (order, path) within Sunni Islam, originating in North Africa but now more widespread in West Africa, particularly in Senegal, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Chad, Ghana, Northern and South-western Nigeria and some part of Sudan. The Tariqa order is also present in the state of Kerala in India. Its adherents are called Tijānī. Tijānī attach a large importance to culture and education, and emphasize the individual adhesion of the disciple (murīd). To become a member of the order, one must receive the Tijānī wīrd, or a sequence of holy phrases to be repeated twice daily, from a muqaddam, or representative of the order.

The most important communal event of the year for most Tijānī groups is the Mawlid an-nabawī, or the celebration of the birth of Muḥammad, which falls on the night of the 12th of the Islamic month of Rabī' al-'Awwal (which means the night before the 12th, as Islamic dates start at sundown and not at midnight). Throughout the year, local communities organize smaller Mawlid celebrations. These meetings usually go from about midnight until shortly after dawn and include hours of dhikr and poetry chanting and speeches about the life of Muḥammad.

## ✓ QURANISM

### ❖ QURANISM

Quranism describes any form of Islam that accepts the Quran as revelation but rejects the religious authority, and/or authenticity of, the Hadith collections. Quranists follow the Quran alone; they believe that its message is clear and complete, and that it can therefore be fully understood without referencing the Hadith. They say that the Hadith literature was forged, as it had been written 250+ years after the death of the prophet Muhammad.

There are significant differences between Quranists in their interpretation of Islam.

Quranist often state that all Abrahamic religions are one deriving this idea from the word 'Islam' meaning submission to god. Quranists are also very open to non-believers and atheists as according to the Qur'an, believing a non-believer is allowed so long as one doesn't hide the truth.

Quranism is similar to movements in other religions such as the Karaite movement of Judaism and the Sola scriptura view of Protestant Christianity. Hadith rejection has also been associated with Muslim modernists.

As many Quranists have a very individualistic interpretation of the Qur'an, rejecting sectarianism and organised religion as a general rule, it is difficult to gather an accurate estimate of the number of Quranists in the world today by doing a study of the Quranist organisations that exist. Another difficulty in determining their prevalence is the possible fear of persecution due to being regarded as apostates and therefore deserving of the death penalty.

## ❖ UNITED SUBMITTERS INTERNATIONAL

United Submitters International (also called the Submitters) is a reformist moderate Islamic religious community, and is a branch of Quraniyoon. It is inspired by the work of Rashad Khalifa. Submission is a religion whereby one recognizes God's absolute authority, and reaches a conviction that only God possesses all power; no other entity possesses any power that is independent of Him.

The original group attended a mosque in Tucson, Arizona, which was founded by Dr. Rashad Khalifa in the United States. Khalifa is regarded by some in this movement as God's messenger of the Covenant, who claims to be prophesied in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Quran. The majority of Muslims consider this view as heretical.

Rashad Khalifa also translated the Quran in modern, easy to understand, English. His authorized English version of the Quran can be found online.

Khalifa was notable for being both a practicing Muslim and an absolutist rejector of hadith and sunnah. He argued foremost that hadith and sunnah were condemned by the Qur'an Alone ideology. He also argued that the hadith and sunnah were not credible, and that much of the elaborate structure of religious and family law, sharia, erected on the basis of the hadith, was not binding

on Muslims. Indeed, he argued that the Qur'an alone was sufficient as a basis for Islam. His ideas have clearly had some influence, even outside his group of Submitters, but it would be difficult to quantify it. He promoted the slogan: The Qur'an, the whole Qur'an, and nothing but the Qur'an.

Khalifa distinguished between "messengers" and "prophets", arguing that prophets brought down scriptures from God while messengers did not. He considered Muhammad to be the final Prophet (delivering the final scripture; Qur'an) but not the last messenger. He proclaimed that every prophet is a messenger but every messenger is not necessarily a prophet.

Khalifa claimed that it was wrong to mention any name besides the name of God in any of the worship practices, including the salat, or daily prayer, and the shahadah, or confession of faith. The usual forms of prayer and confession mention Muhammad. Removing Muhammad's name was not well received by other Muslims.

Dr. Khalifa was assassinated on January 31, 1990.

# 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.

Absolute monotheism is the main tenet of Judaism. Religious practice consists primarily in abiding by the body of prescriptions and prohibitions laid down by the Supreme Being, the details of which are to be found in the traditional literature as it is interpreted by the duly authorized persons, the rabbis. In non-Orthodox practices of Judaism the adherence to details of this ritual is selective.

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.

## BELIEFS

The core beliefs of Judaism include belief in one God, belief in the accuracy of the Hebrew Bible, belief in the prophets, belief that a messiah will come, and belief in the last judgment and resurrection.

## NAME OF GOD

Jews use the name God, although common names for God found in the Hebrew Bible include Yahweh and Elohim.

## HOLY DAYS AND FESTIVALS

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.

**The Sabbath**, the seventh day of the week, is the paradigm for all holidays in Judaism. The Sabbath is marked by a cessation of work and mundane activity and by dedication to worship, thanksgiving, study of the Torah, and reaffirmation of Israel's covenant with God.

The Jewish liturgical calendar essentially has five major festivals and two principal minor festivals. While on the Sabbath all work is forbidden, on the major holidays the preparation of food is permitted. The major holidays are **Rosh Hashanah**; **Yom Kippur**, which is regarded as the Sabbath, with all work whatsoever forbidden; **Sukkoth**; **Passover**; and **Shabuoth**. In biblical times the latter three were celebrated by pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem. The two principal minor festivals introduced by the rabbis are **Hanukkah** and **Purim**, which do not carry the prohibition against working or engaging in mundane activities. Similar rules apply to other minor festivals and fast days.

**The Jewish New Year, or Rosh Hashanah**, falls on the 1st of the month of Tishri, which generally corresponds to a day in September. Literally "head of the year," the holiday is also known as the Day of Judgment (Yom Ha-Din), on which a person stands before God, who judges his or her personal repentance. God's judgment is dispensed 10 days later, on **Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement**. Rosh Hashanah is a festive celebration of divine creation and, at the same time, a solemn reckoning of one's sins. The period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is known as the Days of Awe and is devoted to penitential prayer, which culminates with the fasting and intense expression of contrition and atonement that mark Yom Kippur. On this, the holiest day of the Jewish year, on which God's judgement is cast, Jews pray to be pardoned for their sins and for reconciliation with God.

Five days after Yom Kippur, on the 15th of Tishri, the autumn festival of **Sukkoth (Tabernacles)** takes place. Lasting a week, the festival is marked by the construction of provisional booths, or sukkahs (from the Hebrew sukkoth), as a reminder of the structures in which the Israelites dwelt during their 40 years' journey in the wilderness (Lev. 23:42). The roof of the sukkah, in which a person is to eat and, if possible, sleep for the duration of the festival, is to be made from things that grow from the ground, a symbol of God's care for the earth and its inhabitants. On the last day of the festival, called Hoshanah Rabbah (Great Hosannah), hymns are sung appealing to God for deliverance from hunger. Sukkoth is followed immediately by Shemini Atzeret, the "eighth day of assembly," on which God is entreated to bestow rain to ensure a good harvest, and the next day is Simhat Torah (Rejoicing of the Torah). On this day the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah is completed, hence the rejoicing.

**Hanukkah (Dedication)** is a winter festival that begins on the 25th of Kislev, the second month after Tishri. It celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucids, although greater import is attached to the rededication of the Temple. According to the Talmud, the Maccabees could find ceremonial oil for only one night, but by a miracle its flames lasted for eight days until

a fresh supply could be obtained. In commemoration of the miracle, lights are kindled in Jewish homes during the eight nights of Hanukkah, customarily in a special candelabrum.

**Purim**, or the Feast of Esther, falls on the 14th of Adar, the fifth month after Tishri. This festival commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from Haman, the chief minister of the king of Persia, who cast lots (Hebrew, purim) to determine the date on which the Jews in the kingdom would be killed. The Book of Esther is read in the synagogue on the night of Purim and on the next morning. In general a carnival mood prevails, and many people, including children, dress in costumes.

**Passover** takes place from the 15th to the 22nd (in the Diaspora from the 15th to the 23rd) of Nisan, the seventh month after Tishri.

The Hebrew name for the holiday, Pesach, denotes the lamb offered on the even of the festival during the time of the Temple. With a change in one vowel, the name becomes the past tense of the verb pasach (to pass over), alluding to God's having passed over the houses of the Children of Israel when he slew the firstborn of the Egyptians (Exod. 12:13). After the destruction of the Second Temple, the principal ritual focus of the holiday was transferred to the prohibition against eating leavened bread, with matzo becoming a symbol of affliction and poverty. A seder, or festive meal and religious service, is held in the home on the first night of Passover in Israel and for the first two nights in the Diaspora. At the meal the Haggadah relating the story of the Exodus, along with legends and homiletic commentaries on the Passover ritual, is recited.

**Shabuoth** falls on the 6th (in the Diaspora on the 6th and 7th) of Sivan, the ninth month after Tishri. It takes place 50 days after the Omer (sheaf of barley) was taken to the Temple on the second day of Passover. (Hence, it is called Pentecost in Christian sources.) Although there are no special rituals to mark Shabuoth, many customs have evolved over the centuries. The eating of dairy dishes, some especially prepared for the day, is a particularly popular custom. The Kabbalist custom of devoting the entire night of Shabuoth to Torah study was later adopted by other Jewish communities.

#### 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.

#### 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. In the modern period Ultra-Orthodox Jews, especially Hasidim, have adopted special dress as a way of securing their religious identity, especially in the face of secularization and acculturation.

#### 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.

#### 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

Daily prayer is at the heart of Jewish life. Observant Jews attend formal prayer services three times each day. The evening prayer service is called Ma'ariv, the morning service Shacharit, and the afternoon service Minchah. The fourth prayer, Mussaf added on Shabbat and holidays. (The Jewish day is considered to run from sundown to sundown. Accordingly, the Jewish Sabbath, or Shabbat (day of rest), begins at sundown on Friday and continues to sundown on Saturday.)

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).

A crucial part of a Jewish prayer service is reading from the Torah, which is divided into sections so that the entire Torah is read in the span of a year. Also read is a passage from the twenty-one books of the Prophets (Nevi'im). These readings are accompanied with great ceremony, as the Torah is carried around the room and then set on a bimah, or podium, where a member of the congregation (group of worshippers) is often given the honor of reciting a blessing over it.

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.

## RITUALS

Jewish ritual life embraces both the home and the synagogue, where the rituals are woven into the liturgy, and virtually all festivals are celebrated in both through prescribed rituals and prayers. In Judaism births, marriages, and deaths are noted with prescribed liturgies and rituals. All of these are rich in symbols.

## 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 zaved 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.

#### SIMBOLS

Judaism has a number of symbols, including the Magen David (Star of David), the mezuzah, the menorah, and such articles of clothing as the yarmulke.

#### SEX

All sexual or even erotic contact outside marriage is proscribed, and marriage is prescribed, preferably at an early age. Within marriage, sexual intercourse is limited by an additional period of purification after the cessation of menstruation. Yet sexual intercourse is not limited to the purpose of propagation but includes the mutual satisfaction of man and woman.

## ✓ CONSERVATIVE (MASORTI) JUDAISM

Conservative Judaism (known as Masorti Judaism outside North America) is a major Jewish denomination, which views Jewish Law, or Halakha, as both binding and subject to historical development. The Conservative rabbinate employs modern historical-critical research, rather than only traditional methods and sources, and lends great weight to its constituency when determining its stance on matters of Law. The movement considers its approach as the authentic and most appropriate continuation of halakhic discourse, maintaining both fealty to received forms and flexibility in their interpretation. It also eschews strict theological definitions, lacking a consensus in matters of faith and allowing great pluralism.

The principle founders of Conservative Judaism were Zecharia Frankel (1801-75) who founded the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau in 1854 and Solomon Schechter (1849 -1915) in the USA.

The largest center today is in North America, where its main congregational arm is the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the New York-based Jewish Theological Seminary of America operates as rabbinic seminary. Conservative Judaism is estimated to represent close to 1.1 million people, both more than 600,000 registered adult congregants and many non-member identifiers.

The term "conservative" was meant to signify that Jews should attempt to conserve Jewish tradition, rather than reform or abandon it, and does not imply the movement's adherents are politically conservative.

Conservative Judaism is a form of traditional Judaism that falls halfway between Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism. It is sometimes described as traditional Judaism without fundamentalism.

Conservative Judaism largely upholds the theistic notion of a personal God.

Conservative Jews regard the Torah as both divine and human, but having divine authority. They believe the Torah was revealed by God but is a human record of the encounter between humanity and God, and the Jewish people's interpretation of God's will. They accept that the commandments in the Torah record the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

Local communities and rabbis work together to decide on the practice to be followed in particular synagogues.

Conservative services are quite traditional, and mostly in Hebrew.

Conservative Jews regard Jewish law as binding, but are willing to modify it when circumstances require. Change is only accepted after very careful consideration, and in response to fundamental changes in society and knowledge.

One area of Jewish law that the Conservative movement has reassessed concerns the Sabbath. There is general agreement that driving is not permitted on the Sabbath.

Conservative Jews continue to uphold most of the central rites of rabbinic Judaism, although the clergy generally play a central role with the congregation often reduced to the vicarious role of spectators in many rituals that require knowledge of Hebrew and rabbinic texts.

#### WOMEN

Women and men can play an equal part in Conservative worship. Some Conservative synagogues let men and women sit together, others segregate the genders. However, women count as part of the minyan and can say the Mourner's Kaddish in their own right.

The movement accepts women rabbis, although this change caused some American rabbis to break away to found the Union for Traditional Judaism.

#### SACRED BOOKS

Conservative Jews have the same sacred books as all other Jews: the Tanach (Hebrew Bible), which includes the Torah (the five books of Moses), and the Talmud (the body of Jewish law and lore).

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

Like all traditional Jews, Conservative Jews revere as sacred symbols the Torah scrolls and other holy books, such as prayer books and the Talmud. Other symbols include the menorah (a candelabra with nine lights used in Jewish worship), the mezuzah (a parchment scroll containing sections from the Torah that is affixed to the doorpost of one's home as a sign of faith), and tefillin (phylacteries, or leather boxes containing scriptural passages that are worn on the head and left arm).

#### HOLY DAYS AND FESTIVALS

For Conservative Jews the 25-hour Shabbat (Sabbath), from sundown each Friday until an hour after sunset on Saturday, is the most sacred day besides Yom Kippur (the day of atonement). The Conservative movement follows the traditional Jewish calendar in celebrating the biblical high holidays of Rosh Hashanah (the new year) and Yom Kippur; the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks), and Sukkoth (Tabernacles); and the minor festivals of Hanukkah and Purim. Contemporary innovations in the Jewish calendar include the celebration of Israeli Independence Day and the commemoration of Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day).

#### MODE OF DRESS

Conservative Jews do not have a distinctive dress. For daily prayer men, boys over the age of 13, and some women wear tefillin; for daily, Shabbat, and festival prayer men and some women wear talitot (prayer shawls). Men and many women cover their heads for prayer, and some Conservative Jews wear head coverings at all times. In the vast majority of Conservative synagogues, the rabbis and cantors wear the same ritual garb as the congregants, except on the high holidays, when the clergy wear white robes.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Ideally Conservative Jews adhere to the laws of kashruth, which require that only biblically acceptable meats and fish be eaten, that meat be slaughtered according to rabbinic law, and that meat and dairy foods not be eaten together at the same meal. On the festival of Passover, stricter rules apply. Many Conservative Jews do not follow kashruth stringently.

#### RITUALS

Conservative synagogues hold prayer services three times a day, with a fourth prayer service added on Shabbat and festival days.

While decorum was important in early congregations, contemporary services emphasize informality, lay participation, and singing, and on Shabbat and festival days the rabbi often conducts a study session rather than a formal sermon. The basic liturgy, spoken in Hebrew, is the same in all congregations, but some large synagogues run "parallel services" with different styles of worship that may include study, music, or increased family participation.

#### RITE OF PASSAGE

Conservative Jewish rites of passage include *brit milah* (circumcision) for boys and a special baby-naming ceremony, often called *simhat bat* (the joy of a daughter), for girls. *Simhat bat*, an outgrowth of the Jewish feminist movement, was created in the early 1970s and became widely observed in the late 1980s. When boys and girls turn 13, they celebrate their bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvahs, respectively, officially assuming religious duty and responsibility.

Traditional but personalized wedding ceremonies include a chuppah (canopy), a *ketubah* (the Aramaic wedding document), and the traditional seven benedictions. After the death of a close relative (a parent, spouse, child, or sibling), Conservative Jews "sit shiva," or stay home, for seven days, which is followed by 30 days of intense mourning, or a year of mourning when each parent dies. As part of the mourning process, the kaddish prayer is recited in the synagogue three times a day.

The larger majority of Conservative Jews today do not participate in daily services, and those who do attend morning services at the synagogue are usually mourners observing the obligatory recitation of the Kaddish prayer for the dead. Most Conservative synagogues struggle to maintain the minimum quorum of ten persons in order to conduct daily services.

The only significant departure among Conservative Jews from the traditional rabbinic theology about the afterlife is a rejection of a literal belief in the notion of the "resurrection of the dead" during the Messianic era.

The most dramatic and significant difference between the Conservative and Orthodox movements centers on the role of women in Jewish religious life. Except for a few traditionalist holdouts, mostly in Canada, almost all Conservative synagogues practice full gender egalitarianism.

## ✓ HUMANISTIC JUDAISM



The humanorah, which is the primary symbol of the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Humanistic Judaism is a Jewish movement that offers a nontheistic alternative in contemporary Jewish life. It defines Judaism as the cultural and historical experience of the Jewish people and encourages humanistic and secular Jews to celebrate their Jewish identity by participating in Jewish holidays and lifecycle events (such as weddings and bar and bat mitzvahs) with inspirational ceremonies that draw upon but go beyond traditional literature.

Humanistic Judaism doesn't proclaim that there is no God, but it does do without God. It sees no evidence for the existence of a supernatural being. Most Humanistic Jews regard the question of God's existence as either meaningless, or irrelevant.

It finds no meaning in the worship of God, whether or not God exists. So Humanistic Jews do not pray or refer to God or the supernatural, or use worshipful or prayer-like language.

It gives no moral authority to God.

The symbol of Humanistic Judaism combines a human being with the ceremonial Jewish candlestand or menorah, to powerful symbolic effect.

Humanistic Jews believe that the human moral code comes from people and from the world in which they live.

Humanistic Jews find spiritual satisfaction in secular celebrations of Jewish holidays, study and discussion of Jewish and broader human issues, and action for social justice.

Humanistic Jews celebrate the traditional Jewish festivals, but with the supernatural elements removed.

They see these festivals as a way of commemorating the shared history, memories, and culture of the Jewish people, and as a way of sharing togetherness with the Jewish community.

Family rituals such as Bar Mitzvahs are a way for a family to restate their values and their togetherness.

The Society condemns gender discrimination in all its forms, including restriction of rights, limited access to education, violence, and subjugation.

Rabbi Sherwin Wine (1928-2007) founded the first Humanistic Jewish congregation in 1963, and helped establish the Society for Humanistic Judaism in 1969.

Marriage in Humanistic Judaism reflects our humanistic philosophy. A Humanistic Jewish marriage stresses equality, friendship, loyalty, honesty, and individual growth.

**Intermarriage**

Humanistic Jewish ceremonies respect the differing backgrounds and culture of each partner. Rituals or symbols from both family backgrounds may be used provided they have meaning and relevance and are explained. Humanistic clergy uses only non-theistic language, while co-officiants are asked to use theistic language common to both traditions represented. This includes the celebration of marriages where each partner comes from a different religious or cultural background and marriages between couples of the same gender. There is both a right and obligation for Secular Humanistic Jewish leaders to celebrate, officiate, or co-officiate marriages for couples from mixed heritage traditions who do not convert. Humanistic Jewish clergy has adopted positions on intermarriage and co-officiation.

### **Wedding Ceremonies**

Humanistic Jewish wedding ceremonies are tailored to the needs of the couple. Parents and fathers do not "give away" their daughters. Ceremonies reflect the family culture and traditions of both partners. Humanistic Jewish weddings include symbols and traditions from Jewish wedding ceremonies that have value and meaning to the couple. These can include, but are not limited to, a huppa (canopy), a Humanistic Jewish ketuba (marriage contract), use of the Hebrew language, a ring exchange, drinking from a cup of wine, seven Humanistic blessings, and breaking of a glass (often by each partner).

### **Divorce**

Humanistic Jews do not require a rabbinic signature or statement when a marriage ends. It is an emotional and legal decision that does not require ceremonial involvement on the part of rabbis and leaders. Humanistic Jews continue to welcome divorced individuals as part of the community and congregation.

### **Rite of passage**

Humanistic Jews engage actively in Judaism throughout their lives by celebrating the cycle of life within a Jewish context. Humanistic rabbis and madrikhim(ot) (ordained ceremonial leaders) participate in birth celebrations, coming of age ceremonies (bar/bat mitzvah and confirmation), adoption to Humanistic Judaism (conversion), weddings and commitment ceremonies, intermarriage and co-officiated intermarriage ceremonies, same-sex marriage ceremonies, and divorce, funeral and memorial services and customs, including interment of cremated remains, as well as many other ways to acknowledge significant life moments.

### **Ceremonies**

In Humanistic Judaism, life ceremonies are designed specifically to meet the very human needs of those participating in the ceremony. Well-trained leaders will listen carefully to what the individuals and families need and work with them to develop a ceremony that meets those needs, while being consistent with the values and philosophy of Humanistic Judaism.

Most celebrations may, but need not, be conducted by a rabbi or an ordained ceremonial leader (madrikh/a).

### **Circumcision and B'rit Mila**

When a male child is born, the families are encouraged to decide whether to circumcise their child separate from the type of ceremony they will choose to celebrate their child's birth. Passionate arguments for and against circumcision and for and against b'rit mila (covenant of circumcision) abound. Since a b'rit mila is a covenant with God, the ceremony is not consistent with the beliefs held by most Humanistic Jews. Yet, whether to circumcise the male child is another decision that parents must make.

### **Humanistic Birth Celebrations**

A Humanistic birth celebration has two functions: to name and to welcome. In the welcoming portion of the ceremony, grandparents, parents, siblings, other relatives, and the Humanistic Jewish community publicly acknowledge the event, symbolizing their commitment to the child's welfare.

A birth celebration is held about a month after the baby is born, in order to give the infant and parents time to adjust to their

new life together. The celebration may be held in the home, temple, or other public place. It is not necessary that a rabbi or madrikh(a) (ceremonial leader) officiate.

### **Bar and Bat Mitzvah**

For Humanistic Jews, the bar or bat mitzvah (often referred to as the “mitzvah”) marks the advent not of adulthood but of adolescence – a period of searching for one’s identity and life path. Thirteen year olds can respond to more challenging tasks than were expected of them as children; they can demonstrate greater independence and depth of thought, competence, and commitment. A Humanistic bar or bat mitzvah provides public encouragement and recognition of the development of these capacities on the road to maturity. It signifies a young person’s desire to become more responsible for his or her own decisions and actions, and to identify with the many previous generations of the Jewish people who have done so. For Humanistic Jews, bar or bat mitzvah is interpreted to mean “son or daughter of responsibility.”

### **Funerals and Memorial Services**

A Humanistic funeral or memorial service (a ceremony at which the body is not present) reflects Humanistic Judaism’s realistic and respectful acceptance of death. Its purposes are to celebrate the life of the deceased and, through the presence and support of family and friends, to help the bereaved accept their loss and focus their memories of the dead in a meaningful way.

Cremation - forbidden in the Orthodox, or rabbinic, tradition - has become an increasingly acceptable option in a secularized society and can be an appropriate choice for Humanistic Jews.

Humanistic Judaism encourages the performance of funeral or memorial rites in a simple, dignified, unostentatious manner. Services may be held before or after burial, cremation, or donation. The service may, but need not, be conducted by a rabbi or an ordained ceremonial leader (madrikh/a). A friend or family member may officiate, and a eulogy or eulogies may be delivered by one or more of those present.

The Kaddish and most other traditional Jewish liturgical materials are inappropriate for a Humanistic ceremony. Humanistic Jews have a variety of alternatives to the traditional liturgy. Many Humanistic Jews choose to recite a Humanistic Kaddish.

## ✓ **JEWISH RENEWAL**

Jewish Renewal is a recent movement in Judaism which endeavors to reinvigorate modern Judaism with Kabbalistic, Hasidic, and musical practices. Specifically, it seeks to reintroduce the "ancient Judaic traditions of mysticism and meditation, gender equality and ecstatic prayer" to synagogue services.

## ✓ **ORTHODOX JUDAISM**

Orthodox Judaism is a collective term for the traditionalist branches of Judaism, which seek to maximally maintain the received Jewish beliefs and observances and which coalesced in opposition to the various challenges of modernity and secularization. Theologically, it is chiefly defined by regarding the Torah, both Written and Oral, as literally revealed by God on Mount Sinai and faithfully transmitted ever since. Other key doctrines include belief in a future resurrection of the dead, divine reward and punishment, the Election of Israel and an eventual restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem under the Messiah.

Orthodox Judaism advocates a strict observance of Jewish Law, or Halakha, which is to be interpreted only according to received methods and canonical sources due to its divine character. Orthodoxy considers Halakha as eternal and beyond historical influence, being applied differently to changing circumstances but basically unchangeable in itself.

Orthodox Judaism believes that both the Written and Oral Torah are of divine origin, and represent the word of G-d. This is similar to the view of the Conservative movement, but the Orthodox movement holds that such information (except for scribal errors) is the exact word of God and does not represent any human creativity or influence.

Orthodox Jews reject the changes of Reform Judaism and hold fast to most traditional Jewish beliefs and practices.

Orthodox Judaism has held fast to such practices as daily worship, dietary laws (kashruth), traditional prayers and ceremonies, regular and intensive study of the Torah, and separation of men and women in the synagogue. It also enjoins strict observance of the sabbath and religious festivals and does not permit instrumental music during communal services.

Orthodox Jews celebrate the Sabbath and biblical festivals, and strictly observe its restrictions by refraining completely from any manner of labor or commerce. Unlike Reform and liberal Conservative Jews, the Orthodox also continue to sanctify the "exile days" added to all of the biblical pilgrimage festivals, and to observe the four fast days connected to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

The Orthodox community centers on two religious institutions: the Shul (synagogue) and the Yeshiva (Torah study-house). In striking contrast to the ornate cathedral-like temples of classical Reform Judaism, Orthodox synagogues tend to be modest structures that contain absolutely no iconography. A small number of the world's largest modern Orthodox synagogues do have stained glass windows whose abstract art does not contain any human or animal images.

Aside from daily worship, Orthodox Jews uphold hundreds of religious rites and ceremonies. All males keep their heads covered and wear fringes on their undergarments and phylacteries at morning services; women bathe in the mikvah, or ritual bath, after their monthly period; and the descendants of the biblical Cohanim (priests) still bless the congregations during

festival services.

The Orthodox Community is the least structured of all the denominations of contemporary Judaism. While there are a number of rabbinical organizations and synagogue councils, none is officially recognized by all Orthodox Jews.

The most revered members of the Orthodox community are its rabbis, whose main credential is their scholarship in Torah. Rabbis in Orthodox communities are seen primarily as teachers of Torah and religious judges. While cantors once played a greater role, the large majority of Orthodox synagogues no longer employ cantors at all, and services are led by laymen.

True to its origins as a separatist movement, Orthodox Judaism is almost exclusively concerned with the internal welfare of the observant Jewish community and the State of Israel. It rejects interfaith theological dialogue and shuns religious interaction with non-Orthodox Jews.

One of the hallmarks of Orthodox Jews is an openness (and encouragement) to question what it is that God requires of us, and then to answer those questions within the system that God gave us.

Among the major movements only Orthodoxy has preserved the "mystical" foundations of Jewish theology, most obviously in the Chasidic movements though no less so in many yeshiva movements, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi.

many Orthodox Jews are recognizable by their distinctive garments worn for reasons of ritual, tradition or modesty. In particular,

Orthodox Judaism is the largest Jewish religious group, estimated to have over 2 million practicing adherents and at least an equal number of nominal members or self-identifying supporters.

Orthodox Judaism affirms monotheism, the belief in one God.

#### MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Orthodox code of conduct in both the ritual and moral realms is based upon a strict adherence to Jewish law, which determines what constitutes morality in every aspect of life. Issues concerning family relationships, sexuality, and conduct in business, among many others, are discussed and adjudicated in exquisite detail within Jewish sources, beginning with the Bible and extending to the responsa (answers to follower's questions) of modern rabbis.

#### GENDER ROLES

Gender roles are clearly and strictly divided in Orthodoxy, in accordance with Talmudic law. Women's roles in public religious life are strongly curtailed, as priority is given to their domestic and child-rearing duties. However, there is a rapidly growing trend among modern Orthodox Jews in Israel and America for a more inclusive role for women in public religious services.

#### SACRED BOOKS

In Orthodox Judaism both the written law (Torah) and the oral law (finally written down c. 500 c.e. in the Talmud) are considered sacred; the latter in particular is an essential source of study throughout a Jewish man's life. Because of the complexity of the oral law, various attempts were made from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries to summarize its rulings in comprehensive legal codes. The most recent and authoritative of these is Rabbi Joseph Caro's sixteenth-century work the Shulkhan Arukh ("Set Table"). It remains the foundation of the Orthodox Jewish lifestyle. These and other authoritative texts are considered fixed and binding for all time, reflecting God's will.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

Orthodox Jews do not have any sacred symbols that differ from those of other Jewish movements.

#### PRAYING

Orthodox Jews pray three times daily, and are constantly praising and thanking God through a regimen of mandatory berachot, or blessings. There is no human experience that does not require a blessing. Through this constant recitation of benedictions, Orthodox Jews remain ever aware of, and thankful, to God.

#### HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Orthodox Jews usually gather for prayer in a synagogue. Synagogues are situated in the center of an Orthodox community to enable worshipers easy access by foot on Sabbaths and festivals, when traveling by automobile is forbidden as a violation of the Sabbath rest. Men and women sit in separate sections, and no human images are allowed in the sanctuary. Sometimes prayer takes place in the beit midrash (house of study) or in a yeshiva (institution of higher Jewish learning), where students live and study on a daily basis over many years.

For many Orthodox Jews, living in Israel, the Holy Land, is encouraged, and visiting there on a regular basis is common.

Within Hasidic and Oriental communities the graves of especially notable rabbis or biblical figures are considered holy places, worthy of pilgrimage.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Holidays and festivals are the same for Orthodox Jews as for members of other Jewish movements. Orthodox Jews might differ from others in the manner and duration of their holiday observance. Out of respect for tradition Orthodox Jews living in the Diaspora, and many Conservative Jews as well, observe each holiday for two days (rather than one, as specified in the Torah). Some Haredi Jews refuse to mark modern holidays, such as Israel's Independence Day, because they were ordained by the government of the secular State of Israel rather than by God.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Orthodox (and some non-Orthodox) men cover their heads with kippot, and some cover these with black hats or a type of fur hat. More stringently Orthodox men often wear black suits, and many Hasidic men wear suits that are reminiscent of the style Polish nobility wore in the 18th century, when Judaism began. Many Orthodox men also wear a , a four-pointed garment with fringes on the corners, underneath their shirt - sometimes the fringes hang out from the shirt, but sometimes they are not visible. Many Orthodox women eschew pants and instead stick to dresses and skirts. In addition, Orthodox women generally wear modest clothes that cover much of their bodies, although how much is covered varies dramatically from community to community. In some ultra-Orthodox communities, women are discouraged from wearing bright, attention-getting colors. Once married, most Orthodox women cover their hair, whether with a hat, wig or scarf.

Modern Orthodox men and women might dress entirely in the fashion of the country in which they reside, albeit with a more

modest cut of clothing. In general, men will put on a skullcap while eating and praying, if not all the time, and women will cover their hair during prayer or all the time.

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Orthodox Jews are generally meticulous in their observance of kashruth (Jewish dietary laws), seeing it as an essential expression of holiness commanded in sacred text as well as a means of cultural separation. The range of observances varies widely. Those in the Modern Orthodox world would try to eat only in kosher homes and establishments, but given no alternative, might eat uncooked, vegetarian, or dairy foods in a non-kosher environment. The majority of Orthodox Jews, however, confine themselves to homes or restaurants where the dietary laws are observed. Because there are different levels of scrupulousness regarding kashruth, those in the Haredi communities are even more stringent about where and what they will eat. In addition, blessings of gratitude are supposed to be recited before and after every meal as well as upon ingesting any food or drink.

#### MARRIAGE

For Orthodox Jews, marrying outside the faith would be forbidden.

Wedding - <http://www.jewishweddingtraditions.org/orthodox-jewish-wedding>

Orthodox Judaism does not accept the concept of same-sex marriage.

#### DIVORCE

Divorce is permitted among Orthodox Jews, but only is religiously recognized when a husband grants a "get," the document formally dissolving a religious marriage. Denying these documents is putting women in marital limbo.

#### RITUALS

Orthodox Judaism is characterized by adherence to traditional practices, such as strict observance of the Sabbath and holidays, kashruth (dietary laws), and taharat hamishpakhah (commandments relating to family purity). Many engage in daily worship, regular and intensive study of sacred texts, and acts of charity. Modesty (tsniut) is an essential value, leading to a less public role for women within the synagogue as well as separation of the sexes during worship services and often in school classrooms after a certain age. Many rituals incumbent upon men, such as reading from the Torah or putting on the prayer shawl (tallith) or the phylacteries (tefillin), are largely frowned upon or forbidden for Orthodox girls and women.

Orthodox Jews firmly reject burial practices such as cremation, embalming, and even autopsies (except under certain exceptional conditions) as violations of Jewish law and expressions of disrespect to the deceased.

#### rites of passage

Orthodox Jews observe the same basic ceremonies (circumcision, bar/bat mitzvah, wedding, burial) as other Jews, differing in the degree to which they adhere to traditional custom and what role women and girls may play. The influence of feminism on liberal Jews has led to greater emphasis in the Orthodox world on ceremonies marking rites of passage for girls, such as naming and bat mitzvah, though more so in the Modern Orthodox than in the Haredi community.

## ❖ HAREDI JUDAISM

Haredi Judaism is a broad spectrum of groups within Orthodox Judaism, all characterized by a rejection of modern secular culture. Its members are often referred to as strictly Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox in English, although the term "ultra-Orthodox" is considered pejorative by many of its adherents. Haredim regard themselves as the most religiously authentic group of Jews, although this claim is contested by other streams.

Haredi Judaism is not an institutionally cohesive or homogeneous group, but comprises a diversity of spiritual and cultural orientations, generally divided into a broad range of Hasidic sects, Litvishe-Yeshivish streams from Eastern Europe, and Oriental Sephardic Haredim. These groups often differ significantly from one another in their specific ideologies and lifestyles, as well as the degree of stringency in religious practice, rigidity of religious philosophy, and isolation from the general culture that they maintain.

The majority of the Haredim worldwide live in neighborhoods in which reside mostly other Haredim.

Haredi life, like Orthodox Jewish life in general, is very family-centered. Boys and girls attend separate schools, and proceed to higher Torah study, in a yeshiva or seminary, respectively, starting anywhere between the ages of 13 and 18. A significant proportion of young men remain in yeshiva until their marriage (which is usually arranged through facilitated dating). After marriage, many Haredi men continue their Torah studies in a kollel. Studying in secular institutions is often discouraged, although educational facilities for vocational training in a Haredi framework do exist.

Haredi families (and Orthodox Jewish families in general) are usually much larger than non-Orthodox Jewish families, with as many as twelve or more children.

Haredi Jews are typically opposed to the viewing of television and films, and the reading of secular newspapers and books. There has been a strong campaign against the Internet, and internet-enabled mobile phones without filters have also been banned by leading rabbis. The Internet has been allowed for business purposes so long as filters are installed.

The standard mode of dress for males of the Lithuanian stream is a black suit and a white shirt. Headgear includes black fedora or Homburg hats, with black skull caps under their hats. Beards are common among Haredi Jewish men, and most Hasidic males will never be clean-shaven. Women adhere to the laws of modest dress, and wear long skirts and sleeves, high necklines, and, if married, some form of hair covering. Haredi women never wear trousers, although a small minority do wear pajama-trousers within the home at night.

Haredi women often dress more freely and casually within the home, as long as the body remains covered in accordance with the halakha. More "modernized" Haredi women are somewhat more lenient in matters of their dress, and some follow the latest trends and fashions while conforming to the halakha.

Education in the Haredi community is strictly segregated by sex. The education for boys is primarily focused on the study of Jewish scriptures, such as the Torah and Talmud, while girls obtain studies both in Jewish education as well as broader secular subjects.

Haredi communities are primarily found in Israel, North America, and Western Europe. Their estimated global population currently numbers 1.5 - 1.8 million, and, due to a virtual absence of interfaith marriage and a high birth rate, their numbers are growing rapidly. Their numbers have also been boosted by a substantial number of secular Jews adopting a Haredi lifestyle as part of the Baal teshuva movement.

## ❖ HASIDIC JUDAISM

Hasidism, sometimes Hasidic Judaism, is a Jewish religious group. It arose as a spiritual revival movement in contemporary Western Ukraine during the 18th century, and spread rapidly throughout Eastern Europe. Today, most affiliates reside in the United States, Israel and the United Kingdom. Israel Ben Eliezer, the "Baal Shem Tov", is regarded as its founding father, and his disciples developed and disseminated it. Present-day Hasidism is a sub-group within Ultra-Orthodox ("Haredi") Judaism, and is noted for its religious conservatism and social seclusion. Its members adhere closely both to Orthodox Jewish practice - with the movement's own unique emphases - and the traditions of Eastern European Jews, so much so that many of the latter, including various special styles of dress and the use of the Yiddish language, are nowadays associated almost exclusively with Hasidism.

Hasidim, the adherents of Hasidism, are organized in independent sects known as "courts" or dynasties, each headed by its own hereditary leader, a Rebbe. Reverence and submission to the Rebbe are key tenets, as he is considered a spiritual authority with whom the follower must bond to gain closeness to God. The various "courts" share basic convictions, but operate apart, and possess unique traits and customs. Affiliation is often retained in families for generations, and being Hasidic is as much a sociological factor - entailing, as it does, birth into a specific community and allegiance to a dynasty of Rebbes - as it is a purely religious one. There are several "courts" with many thousands of member households each, and dozens of smaller ones.

Traditionally, a married Hasidic man wears a long beard, braids of hair hanging down from his temples, a dark suit, and on the Sabbath a large fur hat called a shtreimel. The Hasidim believe that their dress proclaims that they are servants of God. It reminds non-Jews and themselves that they are part of a religious discipline that appreciates separateness.

There is probably little difference in the fundamental beliefs between Orthodox Judaism and Hasidic Judaism. There is great distinction between the two lifestyles and religious practices. The Hasidim carefully keep the Torah commandments and Talmudic instructions in all areas, even in those less suitable for modern Western society.

The total number of Hasidim, both adults and children, is estimated to be above 400,000.

### MARRIAGE

Boys and girls are segregated at a very early age and never participate in activities where the sexes are mixed. Ideally neither male nor female has any sexual experience before marriage, the average age of which is young - usually between the ages of eighteen and twenty - but varies with the particular Hasidic sect. Dating and falling in love are as foreign to the Hasidim as they are the norm in the larger secular culture. The selection of a mate is arranged through the aid of friends and members of the community who act in the capacity of shadchan, or marriage broker. There is a tendency to prefer marriages within the same sect or at least within sects sharing a similar ideology. Although intermediaries bring the couple together, the latter do meet and are given the opportunity to talk and judge the other's suitability as a marriage mate. Such encounters often consist simply of conversations in the living room of the girl's family, although some might take a stroll unescorted. In some instances, notably among the Lubavitcher, the couple might go for a drive or meet in a public setting. After a few meetings between a prospective bride and groom, a decision regarding marriage is reached. It will require approval by the respective families, and the rebbe's blessing will be sought. Procreation, God's commandment, is one of the most important functions of the Hasidic family, and couples strive to have children as soon as possible. Most forms of birth control are religiously forbidden and the tendency is toward large families. Although rates of separation and divorce remain low, they may increase as the Hasidim respond to social and economic changes in the world around them.

### DOMESTIC UNIT

The family is a central institution in the Hasidim's efforts to ensure conformity to a prescribed lifestyle, as it is the first and most enduring locus of the socialization process. Structurally speaking, the Hasidic family appears to be much like its traditional North American counterpart. Its organization shows a division of labor whereby the husband and father serves as the overall supervisor in religious matters, and the wife and mother is charged with keeping the house and ensuring that the children adhere to the prescribed religious precepts.

## ❖ MODERN ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Modern Orthodox Judaism is a movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to synthesize Jewish values and the observance of Jewish law, with the secular, modern world.

Modern Orthodox Jews follow the orthodox tradition, and integrate fully into modern society. They dress modestly and conservatively, but otherwise dress the same as non-Jewish people. They don't hold themselves from normally studying secular subjects, from dealing with non-Jewish people, and some tend to be more liberal politically.

They don't live in their own exclusive communities, although they usually live in cities where there are many Jews (since Judaism is as community religion, not just a personal one). They believe that the commandment to not become like the surrounding nations has less to do with outward things such as one's clothing or hair style, and more to do with not taking on cultural traditions of other nations that go against the Torah commandments. They are also very focused on doing good not only for their own Jewish people, but for the whole world, since Jews are to be 'a light to the nations.' Therefore they are very focused on education, research, science, technology - to develop advancements in these areas that are a benefit to all people in the world.

## ✓ RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM

Reconstructionist Judaism is a modern Jewish movement that views Judaism as a progressively evolving civilization and is based on the conceptions developed by Mordecai Kaplan (1881 - 1983). The movement originated as a semi-organized stream within Conservative Judaism and developed from the late 1920s to 1940s, before it seceded in 1955 and established a rabbinical college in 1967.

There is substantial theological diversity within the movement. Halakha, the collective body of Jewish Law, is not considered binding, but is treated as a valuable cultural remnant that should be upheld unless there is reason for the contrary. The movement also emphasizes positive views toward modernity, and has an approach to Jewish custom which aims toward communal decision-making through a process of education and distillation of values from traditional Jewish sources.

Reconstructionist concepts of God are radically different from those of most Jews, or indeed most people who say they "believe in God".

Reconstructionists reject the idea of a God who can break the laws of nature and act like a person, or who chose the Jewish People and gave them the Torah.

Most Reconstructionists see God not as a being, but as a power, process or force that works through nature and human beings.

Reconstructionist organisations reflect this by being highly democratic and inclusive. They allow access and participation to everyone on an equal basis, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Mixed faith families are also welcome. People who aren't Jews can also take part to a great extent. Non-Jews are accepted as full members of the movement.

Reconstructionist worship uses both Hebrew and English. Men and women can play an equal part in services.

In line with the reconstructionist approach to religion, worship, prayer and rituals are not seen as unchanging practices that God has commanded the Jews to carry out. Instead, they are ceremonies that the Jewish people have devised over time to aid their religious lives.

Reconstructionists don't believe that they must pray in order to comply with religious law, but they do regard prayer as being very important, because it is a way of finding and expressing meaning and values. Since there is no God who actually hears or answers prayer, the effect of prayer is the change that it brings about in the person doing the praying, or in the praying community as a whole.

## ✓ REFORM JUDAISM

Reform Judaism is a major Jewish denomination that emphasizes the evolving nature of the faith, the superiority of its ethical aspects to the ceremonial ones, and a belief in a continuous revelation not centered on the theophany at Mount Sinai. A liberal strand of Judaism, it is characterized by a lesser stress on ritual and personal observance, regarding Jewish Law as non-binding and the individual Jew as autonomous, and openness to external influences and progressive values.

The origins of Reform Judaism lay in 19th-century Germany, where its early principles were formulated by Rabbi Abraham Geiger and his associates; since the 1970s, the movement adopted a policy of inclusiveness and acceptance, inviting as many as possible to partake in its communities, rather than strict theoretical clarity. Its greatest center today is in North America.

Most Reform Jews agree that God did not reveal the Torah (the written Jewish law) to Moses at one definitive moment. Rather the Torah and the vast corpus of Jewish literature developed gradually, reflecting changes in the social and cultural life of the Jewish people.

Reform Judaism and Conservative Judaism have common roots - the reaction of Jews to social and political forces in nineteenth-century Europe. The Reform branch, however, does not believe that Jewish law (including, for example, its dietary restrictions) is binding. Reform Jews have also emphasized the ethical component of Judaism over ritual practices, and Reform institutions have given lay Jews more authority in determining the legitimacy of various religious practices and principles.

### SACRED BOOKS

The Reform movement has emphasized the importance of the Hebrew Bible (including the Torah) over the Talmud (comprising rabbinic discussions of Jewish law and practice). Early reformers felt the Talmud was overemphasized in traditional Jewish education, and Reform Jews have seen the Bible as having a more universal significance than the Talmud. The Reform movement has produced numerous prayer books for use in the home and the synagogue.

### SACRED SYMBOLS

Reform Jews have maintained traditional Jewish symbols, such as the menorah, but have sometimes interpreted them in a dramatically different way. They may see the Torah, the most sacred Jewish symbol, as an emblem of human freedom, whereas an Orthodox Jew may see it as representing the eternal commitment to Jewish law. Because the Reform movement stresses the autonomy of the individual, Reform Jews may interpret religious symbols in their own way.

#### HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Originally Jews named their houses of worship synagogues to distinguish them from the original Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 c.e. Reform Jews, however, traditionally called their houses of worship temples, indicating that these structures replaced the original Temple as their center for prayer and that they did not aspire to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple or to return to live in Israel even in a future messianic time. The contemporary Reform movement sees the local temple as a place for worship, study, and fellowship and uses "temple" and "synagogue" synonymously.

#### WHAT IS SACRED?

While the Torah and other religious articles have a degree of holiness, Reform Judaism discourages overly emphasizing symbols or places. The most sacred act is the study of the Torah, but all actions that do not violate human dignity are considered sacred and significant.

#### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Reform Jews observe all the major Jewish holidays, but shorten the length of Rosh Hashanah and Passover by a day. They also omit the festive seder meal on the second night of Passover. Reform Jews are not required to follow many of the traditional restrictions on behavior during Jewish holidays, such as not driving in cars and not writing.

#### MODE OF DRESS

Reform Jews dress like non-Jews as part of the movement's commitment to integrating into the host society (maintaining a distinctive religion, but not at the expense of social segregation).

#### DIETARY PRACTICES

Reform Jews do not generally observe kashruth, the strict Jewish dietary laws. Some abstain from certain types of foods that are regarded as particularly nonkosher, such as pork and sometimes shellfish. Most Reform synagogues prohibit the serving of such foods at temple-sponsored events and may also require the traditional separation of milk and meat so that everyone can eat freely regardless of their level of observance.

#### RITUALS

The Reform synagogue has services on Friday nights, and sometimes on Saturday mornings, in celebration of the Sabbath. The largest services are on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The style of ritual in Reform congregations has changed over the past 50 years from formal to participatory. Many contemporary Reform Jews have reembraced ritual practice, but because they are looking for spiritual meaning rather than a faithfulness to God's command, they do so selectively.

#### rites of passage

Reform Jews commemorate all the traditional Jewish rites of passage, but the Reform movement's flexibility allows members to individually design their rites to meet their spiritual needs. Reformers have also developed new rituals, believing that if a new ceremony is meaningful, there is no reason not to introduce it into practice. One nontraditional ritual is the passing of the Torah at many Reform bar mitzvahs (Jewish coming-of-age ceremonies). The grandparents hold the Torah and then hand it to the parents, who pass it to the 13-year-old, symbolizing the desire to pass Jewish family traditions from generation to generation.

## ➤ BETA ISRAEL OR FALASHA

Beta Israel, also known as Ethiopian Jews, are Jews whose community developed and lived for centuries in the area of the Kingdom of Aksum and the Ethiopian Empire that is currently divided between the Amhara and Tigray Regions of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Most of these peoples have emigrated to Israel since the late 20th century.

The Beta Israel lived in northern and northwestern Ethiopia, in more than 500 small villages spread over a wide territory, alongside populations that were Muslim and predominantly Christian. Most of them were concentrated in the area around and to the north of Lake Tana, in the Gondar region among the Wolqayit, Shire and Tselemt, Dembia, Segelt, Quara, and Belesa.

The most remarkable aspect of Beta Israel (Falasha) culture is their peculiar form of non-Talmudic Judaism, developed in isolation from the main currents of Jewish religious thought.

The Beta Israel made renewed contacts with other Jewish communities in the later 20th century. After Halakhic and constitutional discussions, Israeli officials decided on March 14, 1977, that the Israeli Law of Return applied to the Beta Israel. The Israeli and American governments mounted aliyah operations to transport the people to Israel. These activities included Operation Brothers in Sudan between 1979 and 1990 (this includes the major operations Moses and Joshua), and in the 1990s from Addis Ababa (which includes Operation Solomon).

The Beta Israel once spoke Qwara and Kayla, Agaw languages. Now they speak Amharic and Tigrinya, both Semitic languages. Their liturgical language is Ge'ez, also Semitic. Since the 1950s, they have taught Hebrew in their schools. Those Beta Israel residing in the State of Israel now use Modern Hebrew as a daily language.

#### PLACES OF WORSHIP

The synagogue is called masgid (place of worship), also bet maqdas (Holy house) or şalot bet (Prayer house).

#### FOOD

Ethiopian Jews were forbidden to eat the food of non-Jews. A Kahən eats only meat he has slaughtered himself, which his hosts

prepare both for him and themselves. Beta Israel who broke these taboos were ostracized and had to undergo a purification process. Purification included fasting for one or more days, eating only uncooked chickpeas provided by the Kahən, and ritual purification before entering the village.

Unlike other Ethiopians, the Beta Israel do not eat raw meat dishes such as kitfo or gored gored.

#### CALENDAR

The Beta Israel calendar is a lunar calendar of 12 months, each 29 or 30 days alternately. Every four years there is a leap year which added a full month (30 days). The calendar is a combination of the ancient calendar of Alexandrian Jewry, Book of Jubilees, Book of Enoch, Abu Shaker, and the Ge'ez calendar.

#### BEIEFS

They believe in the God of Israel; the Old Testament commandments are their guidelines.

#### FESTIVALS

The Beta Israel (Falasha) celebrate most festivals and fasts mentioned in the Torah, observe food taboos, and offer sacrifices, for example, on Easter (Fasika). Some religious holidays of the Falasha are not marked by other Jews, and the Falasha traditionally did not celebrate post-Exilic festivals such as Hanukkah and Purim.

#### CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision is carried out on the eighth day after birth, and the sabbath is closely observed.

#### FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

Female genital surgery, or female circumcision (otherwise known as genital mutilation), was normative among Beta Israel women.

#### HOLY BOOK

The Falasha Holy Book is the Ethiopian Bible (in Ge'ez), without the New Testament but with some Ethiopian Apocryphals. Their prayer service, prayer texts, and other religious books appear to be heavily influenced by medieval Ethiopian Christian sources. There is no clear evidence of a Hebrew tradition and of independent Jewish influence on the formation of Falasha Judaism.

#### RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Religious leadership was provided by "monks" and priests. These monks have disappeared since the late 1960s, but the priests still function as liturgical and community leaders. Since the mid-twentieth century, Falasha Judaism has been much influenced by Talmudic Judaism; religious practices not in accordance with it have, for the most part, been abandoned. In Israel, the priests are retrained as spiritual leaders. They learn rabbinical law, but few attain the status of rabbi.

#### MARRIAGE

The Falasha traditionally showed group endogamy. Marrying a Christian - although not an infrequent occurrence - was actively discouraged because of traditionally strong religious boundaries in matters of food taboos, ritual purity, and so forth. The Falasha do not marry relatives "within the seventh degree."

Although marriage is officially monogamous, in practice Beta Israel men sometimes entered polygamous unions with a second wife, or relations with a common-law wife, a concubine, a slave (barya), or simply a divorced woman (galamotta) who was searching for "protection" in Ethiopian terms.

In Beta Israel society, men had to gain sexual prowess. They were allowed to experiment during the stage of adolescence (goramsa), whereas females had to be virgins at marriage, which usually took place close after first menstruation. While males were expected to be sexually experienced, Beta Israel females could be excommunicated if they were not virgins at marriage. A bride who was not a virgin on her wedding day could be returned to her parents and might be cast out from the community.

The marriageable age for girls ranges from 14 to 20, for boys from 18 to 28.

Nowadays these rules have changed. Also, girls have demanded the right to choose their own partners, instead of following their parents' preference. There is also a tendency to delay the age of marriage.

The rate of divorce is relatively high, and almost all adults marry more than once. (This pattern shows little change in Israel.)

#### AFTERLIFE

The Beta Israel (Falasha) believe, in accordance with the tenets of the Bible, in life after death, and that the dead will be resurrected at the end of days.

#### DEATH

Burial takes place as soon as possible, even before all relatives may have arrived. Death is the strongest source of ritual pollution of living persons. Those having touched the corpse must remain in isolation for several days before rejoining the community. Eulogies on the deceased are given by various relatives on the day of the funeral or before. There is no particular veneration of the dead, as there is no clear idea of "lineage solidarity." Commemorative gatherings in honor of the dead person are held one week, one month, and one year after the burial.

One of the greatest changes which the Ethiopian Jewish community has undergone in Israel in their move from an underdeveloped

society to a modern, Western society is in the specific realm of family and personal relations. Female genital surgery is hardly performed in Israel and women express no desire to continue this practice. Girls can no longer marry at first puberty; in fact, it is illegal to marry in Israel until the age of seventeen. In addition, girls have to attend school until the minimum age of sixteen.

## ➤ **KARAITE JUDAISM**

Karaite Judaism or Karaism is a Jewish religious movement characterized by the recognition of the Tanakh alone as its supreme authority in Halakha (Jewish religious law) and theology. It is distinct from mainstream Rabbinic Judaism, which considers the Oral Torah, as codified in the Talmud and subsequent works, to be authoritative interpretations of the Torah. Karaites maintain that all of the divine commandments handed down to Moses by God were recorded in the written Torah without additional Oral Law or explanation. As a result, Karaite Jews do not accept as binding the written collections of the oral tradition in the Midrash or Talmud.

Karaite Judaism holds every interpretation of the Tanakh to the same scrutiny regardless of its source, and teaches that it is the personal responsibility of every individual Jew to study the Torah, and ultimately decide personally its correct meaning. Karaites may consider arguments made in the Talmud and other works without exalting them above other viewpoints.

Karaites believe they observe the original religion of Ancient Israel, as prescribed by God in the Tanakh and understood by the Israelites before the Pharisaic period. Karaites believe in one, eternal, omnipresent, incorporeal, and almighty God, Creator of the Universe, who gave the Tanakh to the Israelites through Moses and the Prophets. Karaites trust in Divine providence, and the majority hope for the coming of the Messiah.

The Karaite religion has three basic components. The first is the written text of the Bible. The second is hekesh, or analogy. The third is sevel hayerusha (lit., "burden of inheritance"). These are customs that have been transmitted from one generation to another that are viewed as not contradicting or concealing the intent of the biblical text.

### **HOUSE OF WORSHIP**

The Karaite synagogue is treated, as much as possible, as a microcosm of the Temple on the basis of a passage from Ezekiel (11:16).

The Karaites make every effort to maintain their synagogue in a state of purity for worshipers at the time of daily prayers, Shabbat (Sabbath), and holidays. Menstruating women and women who have just given birth are not allowed to enter the synagogue. Likewise, people who have recently engaged in sexual relations or come in contact with the dead are forbidden entry to this holy site. Those who do enter, males and females alike, must cover their heads and remove their shoes. The synagogue floor is covered with rugs and the worshipers pray facing Jerusalem and prostrate themselves facing the Ark as the priests prostrated themselves toward the Temple altar.

### **PRAYER**

The Karaites attempt to structure their prayer services after Temple activities. Two services are held every day, one at sunrise and one at sunset, to correspond with the times that sacrifices were performed at the Temple. On Shabbat and holidays, additional prayers are recited to replace the extra sacrifice that would have been offered. On these days a Torah scroll referred to as the "Sefer Kourban" (Sacrifice Book) is also removed from a glass case and opened in lieu of the Temple sacrifice.

### **REIGIOUS PRACTICES**

The Karaite calendar is lunar. The celebration of the New Year can fall on any day of the week, and thus the beginnings of many holidays may not always coincide with the Jewish calendar. Unlike rabbinic Jews, Karaites celebrate Passover and Sukkoth for seven days rather than eight, observe no fast before Purim, and do not celebrate Hanukkah as a holiday. Karaites have greater prohibitions regarding work on Saturdays, stricter rules about butchering cattle, and use the meat only of animals indicated in the Bible. As among Jews, circumcision of boys is performed on the eighth day after birth. Karaite liturgy is significantly different from that of rabbinic Jews. Their prayers consist of Biblical texts, psalms, and their own liturgical poetry. Karaitism is in essence a sect of Judaism—beliefs and practices do not go outside the framework of Judaism.

### **SHABBAT**

Shabbat is viewed as a time for spiritual pleasures rather than worldly pleasures. During Shabbat, Karaites attend synagogues to worship and to offer prayers. Their prayer books are composed almost completely of Biblical passages. Karaite Jews often practice full prostration during prayers, while most other Jews no longer pray in this fashion.

Unlike the Rabbinites, the Karaites strictly forbid sexual intercourse on Shabbat because it generates impurity and is considered a form of labor. Shabbat candles are not lit, and any use of fire is prohibited. Food is eaten cold.

Historically, Karaites refrained from using or deriving benefit from fire until the Sabbath ends, and accordingly their homes were not lit during the night of the Sabbath. Many modern Karaites today use a fluorescent or LED lamp powered by batteries, which is turned on prior to Shabbat. Many observant Karaites either unplug their refrigerators on Shabbat or turn off the circuit breakers. Karaites consider producing electricity to be a violation of Shabbat, no matter who produces it. Additionally, some Karaites view the purchasing of electricity that is charged on an incremental basis during the Shabbat as a commercial transaction that the Tanakh prohibits, no matter when the payment is made; the recording of the electric meter is considered by them to be a commercial transaction.

### **CALENDAR**

The Karaite calendar is based on the actual observance of the new moon or the possibility of the observance of the new moon based on available scientific data. The start of a new year in the first biblical month is based upon the observation of the agricultural stage of ripeness of the barley (called the Aviv stage).

Karaites recognize the 19-year cycle with seven leap months of 29 days each.

The Karaites of Trakai follow a "movable Shabbat" based on a lunar calendar that accommodates holidays and fast days - one might be on a Thursday and the next on a Sunday.

Holidays can fall on any day of the week, with the exception of Shuvuot (Feast of Weeks) because it is stated in Leviticus that the Omer should be counted from "the morrow of the Sabbath" (23:15). Passover and Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) are observed for seven days rather than eight.

Therefore, the dates of holidays do not necessarily coincide with those of the Rabbinites. The shofar (ram's horn) is not blown on Yom HaTeruah (Day of Shouting or Cheer, known to Rabbinites as "Rosh Hashannah") because neither the Temple nor the

Temple altar are still standing. Hanukkah is not celebrated because it is a holiday of postbiblical origin.

#### **PASSOVER**

Passover is a very central holiday for Egyptian Karaites because it serves as an allegory for their own historical exodus from Egypt. During the Passover seder, or meal, which is only held one night, the Karaites read from their own Haggadah that retells the story of the hasty departure of the Jews from Egypt in biblical times. Instead of wine, they drink a homemade grape juice from red, seedless raisins because they say that the juice would not have had an opportunity to ferment, and they eat bitter herbs and lamb. During Passover week, Karaites refrain from eating leavened bread, anything derived from soaked grains, or food prepared outside of the home.

#### **HOW TO BE KARAITE**

The Karaites trace descent patrilineally: a child must have a Karaite father to be considered a Karaite. Because the Karaites do not presently allow converts, membership in the group is determined by birth only.

#### **FORBIDDEN MARRIAGE**

Karaites have a category of forbidden marriages called gilui ariyot (incest) that differs from that of the Rabbinites and is cited as a central obstacle to intermarriage. In this category, men are prohibited from marrying their father's sisters or mother's sisters, and women are prohibited from marrying their father's brothers or their mother's brothers. The offspring of such unions would be considered mamzerim (bastards) and would be forever forbidden from taking a marriage partner.

#### **MARRIAGE**

Until the twentieth century, matrilineal and neolocal residence were the norm; that is, after marriage, the young couple lived with the parents of the bride or started a new household. Now nuclear families are the norm. The dominant figure in a family was the father. Karaites did have customary levirate marriage, though, as a rule, it was avoided by a ritual freeing of the parties from the obligation. Marriages were strictly monogamous. Divorces were prohibited. The parents of the groom, having chosen a bride, sent a matchmaker to her home. Upon agreement of both sides, a day was selected for the betrothal. After the betrothal, a date was set for the wedding, which might take place much later. The groom and his parents were expected to bring a bride-price (kalym ) for the bride. The bride brought a dowry, which was registered on the marriage document (chuppa yazysy ), into the groom's home. The marriage was performed under a canopy (chuppa ) in the presence of a clergyman and relatives on both sides.

For a marriage to take place, three conditions must be met. These include a written contract, mhar (bride-price), and sexual consummation. If a marriage is unsuccessful, Karaite law grants women the same rights to divorce as men. In the event that a husband refuses to deliver a get (bill of divorcement) to his wife, and the Karaite beit-din (religious court) agrees that a divorce is justified, then it will grant the couple a divorce by judicial decree. In Israel, because the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate has exclusive legal authority in matters of personal status concerning Jews, the Karaite beit-din is currently operating in a de facto rather than a de jure manner.

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#### **FAMILY/WOMAN**

The Karaite family is basically patriarchal.

Among the very religious, menstruating women must sleep and sit in separate spaces from men and are prohibited from entering the kitchen and engaging in food preparation for a seven-day period. These practices highlight the centrality of men in ritual roles because the practices are intended to help guard men from impurity so that they may participate in synagogue services.

Karaite women are allowed relative freedom of dress and may dispose of property without their husbands' permission.

#### **CLOTHING**

Traditional Karaite dress was similar to Tatar dress. In Poland Karaites wore European-style clothing. An indispensable object of masculine attire was the small Kolpak hat. Hakhamim wore high hats, Klobuk, and large gowns (djubbe ). Wide pants were included in both women's and men's costumes.

#### **FOOD**

The Karaite kitchen was constructed according to the laws of kashrut, as were the kitchens of Talmudic Jews. Karaite cooking was subject to a strong Turkish influence, however. For example, Karaites prepared katlaina (a cheese cake consisting of several layers), tutmac (a kind of macaroni), umach (dumplings), and other dishes.

## ➤ **NOAHIDISM**



Noahidism or Noachidism is a monotheistic ideology based on the Seven Laws of Noah, and on their traditional interpretations within Rabbinic Judaism. According to Jewish law, non-Jews are not obligated to convert to Judaism, but they are required to observe the Seven Laws of Noah to be assured of a place in the World to Come (Olam Haba), the final reward of the righteous. The divinely ordained penalty for violating any of these Noahide Laws is discussed in the Talmud, but in practical terms that is subject to the working legal system that is established by the society at large. Those who subscribe to the observance of these commandments are referred to as Bene Noach (B'nei Noah), Children of Noah, Noahides, or Noahites. Supporting organizations have been established around the world over the past decades, by either Noahides or observant Jews.

Historically, the Hebrew term Bene Noach has applied to all non-Jews as descendants of Noah. However, nowadays it is also used to refer specifically to those non-Jews who observe the Noahide Laws.

Noahides receive mentorship almost exclusively from Orthodox rabbis and therefore believe in Orthodox Judaism as the only true expression of Judaism (discounting Reform, Conservative, and other varieties). They believe strongly in the Jewish people as God's chosen nation, who are meant to guide the world towards a more perfect monotheism.

Noahide communities around the world are also notably messianic. They believe in a literal interpretation of Jewish prophetic scripture regarding the return of Jewish exiles to the Land of Israel, the building of the Third Temple, and the reestablishment of a Jewish kingdom as a prerequisite to messianic times. Many of these messianic beliefs are not entirely new for Noahides, but rather a continuation of their previous Evangelical doctrines.

Although Noahides adopt Jewish beliefs and rituals, most Noahides do not convert to Judaism because they make a distinction between Judaism and Jewishness. Noahides often view Jewishness a racialized ethno-national category primarily reserved for those who are "Jews by blood." Noahides, however, believe that they can participate in Judaism as a universal truth for all mankind by building a new Noahide religion centered around the Seven Laws of Noah.

The small percentage of Noahides who do eventually convert to Judaism primarily come from middle-upper class backgrounds (approximately two-three percent in most communities). Because Noahides only recognize Orthodox Judaism as authentic Judaism, they must seek out Orthodox conversions that often require expensive seminary studies and full time living in an observant Jewish community for at least a year. Because Orthodox Jewish conversions are lengthy and costly, only Noahides with financial means are able to relocate to Jewish communities and convert. There are also Noahide leaders who actively discourage conversion even amongst the economically privileged. Some Noahide preachers argue that Noahides have their own divinely sanctioned role in the world alongside the Jewish people, and that their goal is not to become Jews but to develop their own unique rituals and expressions of monotheism under the mentorship and guidance of Orthodox Jewish rabbis.

Around the world, tens of thousands Noahides are adopting Jewish rituals, studying Torah online, and establishing synagogues under the supervision of Orthodox rabbis. There is an ongoing and contentious debate amongst Noahides and Jewish rabbis concerning the degree to which Noahides should have access to Jewish ritual life. In many communities it is common to see Noahide men wearing yarmulkes and prayer shawls, married Noahide women covering their hair, Noahides observing the Sabbath and major Jewish holidays, and buying kosher food. However, the degree to which a particular Noahide community adopts Jewish traditions largely depends on the theological interpretations of their particular rabbinic mentors.

While some rabbis openly encourage Noahides to adopt Jewish ritual life, others, particularly from the Chabad orientation, discourage it and argue that Noahides should maintain clear distinctions between themselves and Jews. To this end, Chabad published a Noahide prayer book (2016) with new unique prayers and rituals written specifically for Noahide communities. For example, instead of keeping the Sabbath, a commandment restricted to Jews, the Chabad prayer book includes a new ritual for a Noahide "Seventh Day" celebration instead. In contrast to Chabad emissaries, who promote the observance of Jewish customs in a very limited way, some Israeli rabbis from the religious-nationalist sector encourage Noahides to take on more Jewish commandments, manner of dress, and holiday traditions.

## ➤ RABBINIC JUDAISM

Rabbinic Judaism or Rabbinism has been the mainstream form of Judaism since the 6th century CE, after the codification of the Babylonian Talmud. Growing out of Pharisaic Judaism, Rabbinic Judaism is based on the belief that at Mount Sinai, Moses received from God the Written Torah (Pentateuch) in addition to an oral explanation, known as the "Oral Torah," that Moses transmitted to the people.

Rabbinic Judaism contrasts with the Sadducees, Karaite Judaism and Samaritanism, which do not recognize the oral law as a divine authority nor the Rabbinic procedures used to interpret Jewish scripture.

Rabbinic Judaism is historically the most wide-spread and most representative form of Judaism. It accepts the canonized books of the Hebrew Bible as divine revelation and accords them uncontested authority.

## ➤ SAMARITANISM

The Samaritans are an ethno religious group of the Levant originating from the Israelites (or Hebrews) of the Ancient Near

East.

Samaritans believe that their worship, which is based on the Samaritan Pentateuch, is the true religion of the ancient Israelites from before the Babylonian captivity, preserved by those who remained in the Land of Israel, as opposed to Judaism, which they see as a related but altered and amended religion, brought back by those returning from the Babylonian Captivity. The Samaritans believe that Mount Gerizim was the original Holy Place of Israel from the time that Joshua conquered Canaan. The major issue between Jews and Samaritans has always been the location of the Chosen Place to worship God: Mount Zion in Jerusalem according to the Jewish faith or Mount Gerizim according to the Samaritan faith.

The Samaritans follow the Torah, or more accurately, the Samaritan Torah, which the Samaritans believe to be the original unchanged Torah, as opposed to the better known Torah used by Jews.

Samaritanism is internally described as the religion that began with Moses, unchanged over the millennia that have since passed.

Samaritans believe Judaism, as well as the Jewish Torah, has been corrupted by time and thus is no longer serving the duties God mandated on Mount Sinai.

Samaritans have a stand-alone religious status in Israel, and there are occasional conversions from Judaism to Samaritanism and vice-versa due to marriages. While the Israeli Rabbinic authorities consider Samaritanism to be a branch of Judaism, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel requires Samaritans to officially go through a formal conversion to Judaism in order to be recognized as Halakhic Jews.

Samaritans with Israeli citizenship are obligated to undertake mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces, while those with dual Israeli-Palestinian citizenship (living in Qiryat Luza) are generally exempted.

The Samaritan religion is based on some of the same books used as the basis of Judaism but differs from the latter. Samaritan religious works include the Samaritan version of the Torah, the Memar Markah, the Samaritan liturgy, and Samaritan law codes and biblical commentaries.

One of the biggest problems facing the community today is the issue of continuity. With such a small population, divided into only four families (Cohen, Tsedakah, Danafi, and Marhiv, a fifth family dying out in the twentieth century) and a general refusal to accept converts, there has been a history of genetic disorders within the group due to the small gene pool. To counter this, the Samaritan community has recently agreed that men from the community marry non-Samaritan (primarily, Israeli Jewish) women, provided that the women agree to follow Samaritan religious practices. There is a six-month trial period before officially joining the Samaritan community to see whether this is a commitment that the woman would like to take. This often poses a problem for the women, who are typically less than eager to adopt the strict interpretation of Biblical (Levitical) laws regarding menstruation, by which they must live in a separate dwelling during their periods and after childbirth. There have been a few instances of intermarriage. In addition, all marriages within the Samaritan community are first approved by a geneticist at Tel HaShomer Hospital, in order to prevent the spread of genetic disorders. In meetings arranged by "international marriage agencies", a small number of Ukrainian women have recently been allowed to marry into the community in an effort to expand the gene pool.

The Samaritan community in Israel also faces demographic challenges as young people leave the community and convert to Judaism.

The Samaritans have retained an offshoot of the Ancient Hebrew script, a High Priesthood, the slaughtering and eating of lambs on Passover eve, and the celebration of the first month's beginning around springtime as the New Year. Yom Teru'ah (the Biblical name for "Rosh Hashanah"), at the beginning of Tishrei, is not considered a New Year as it is in Rabbinic Judaism.

Passover is particularly important in the Samaritan community, climaxing with sacrificing up to 40 sheep. The Counting of the Omer remains largely unchanged, however the week before Shavuot is a unique festival celebrating the continued commitment Samaritanism has maintained since the time of Moses. Shavuot is characterized by nearly day-long services of continuous prayer, especially over the stones on Gerizim tradition attributes to Joshua. During Sukkot, the sukkah is built inside houses as opposed to traditional outdoor settings. The restrictions of Yom Kippur are more universal in Samaritanism, with even breastfeeding and the feeding of children being disallowed, and the separation of gender during services is never enforced.

Like the Jews, Samaritans keep the Sabbath, circumcise male children, and follow strict rules regarding ritual purity. They celebrate Passover, Pentecost, Yom Kippur, and other important holidays, but not Purim or Hannukkah. The priesthood remains a central office in their faith.

## ➤ SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

Second Temple Judaism is Judaism between the construction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, c. 515 BCE, and its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. The development of the Hebrew Bible canon, the synagogue, Jewish apocalyptic expectations for the future, and the rise of Christianity, can all be traced to the Second Temple period.

Second Temple Judaism was centered not on synagogues, which began to appear only in the 3rd century BCE, and the reading and study of scripture, but on the Temple itself, and on a cycle of continual blood sacrifice (meaning the sacrifice of live animals). Torah, or ritual law, was also important, and the Temple priests were responsible for teaching it, but the concept of scripture developed only slowly. While the written Torah (the Pentateuch) and the Prophets were accepted as authoritative by the 1st century CE, beyond this core the different Jewish groups continued to accept different groups of books as authoritative.

## ✓ ESSENES (HISTORICAL)

The Essenes were a sect of Second Temple Judaism which flourished from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD. The Jewish historian Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, and thousands lived throughout Roman Judaea, but they were fewer in number than the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the other two major sects at the time. Many separate but related religious groups of that era shared similar mystic, eschatological, messianic, and ascetic beliefs. These groups are collectively referred to by various scholars as the "Essenes". Some scholars claim they seceded from the Zadokite priests.

The Essenes have gained fame in modern times as a result of the discovery of an extensive group of religious documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are commonly believed to be the Essenes' library. These documents preserve multiple copies of parts of the Hebrew Bible untouched from possibly as early as 300 BCE until their discovery in 1946. Some scholars dispute the notion

that the Essenes wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Though the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls are not mentioned in the New Testament, they are described by Philo, Josephus, and Eusebius, a 4th-century Christian historian. With publication of the Essenes' own sectarian writings since the 1950s, however, they have become well known....

The Essenes clustered in monastic communities that, generally at least, excluded women. Property was held in common and all details of daily life were regulated by officials. The Essenes were never numerous; Pliny fixed their number at some 4,000 in his day.

Like the Pharisees, the Essenes meticulously observed the Law of Moses, the sabbath, and ritual purity. They also professed belief in immortality and divine punishment for sin. But, unlike the Pharisees, the Essenes denied the resurrection of the body and refused to immerse themselves in public life. With few exceptions, they shunned Temple worship and were content to live ascetic lives of manual labour in seclusion. The sabbath was reserved for day-long prayer and meditation on the Torah (first five books of the Bible).

Oaths were frowned upon, but once taken they could not be rescinded.

After a year's probation, proselytes received their Essenian emblems but could not participate in common meals for two more years. Those who qualified for membership were called upon to swear piety to God, justice toward men, hatred of falsehood, love of truth, and faithful observance of all other tenets of the Essene sect. Thereafter new converts were allowed to take their noon and evening meals in silence with the others.

Following the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (late 1940s and 1950s) in the vicinity of Khirbat Qumrān, most scholars have agreed that the Qumrān (q.v.) community was Essenian.

## ✓ PHARISEES (ANCESTOR OR RABBINIC JUDAISM) (HISTORICAL)

The Pharisees were at various times a political party, a social movement, and a school of thought in the Holy Land during the time of Second Temple Judaism. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Pharisaic beliefs became the foundational, liturgical and ritualistic basis for Rabbinic Judaism.

Their insistence on the binding force of oral tradition ("the unwritten Torah") still remains a basic tenet of Jewish theological thought.

One belief central to the Pharisees was shared by all Jews of the time is monotheism. This is evident in the practice of reciting the Shema, a prayer composed of select verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4), at the Temple and in synagogues. According to the Mishna, these passages were recited in the Temple along with the twice-daily Tamid offering; Jews in the diaspora, who did not have access to the Temple, recited these passages in their houses of assembly. According to the Mishnah and Talmud, the men of the Great Assembly instituted the requirement that Jews both in Judea and in the diaspora pray three times a day (morning, afternoon and evening), and include in their prayers a recitation of these passages in the morning ("Shacharit") and evening ("Ma'ariv") prayers.

According to Josephus, whereas the Sadducees believed that people have total free will and the Essenes believed that all of a person's life is predestined, the Pharisees believed that people have free will but that God also has foreknowledge of human destiny. According to Josephus, Pharisees were further distinguished from the Sadducees in that Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead.

## ✓ SADDUCEES (POSSIBLE ANCESTOR OR KARAITES JUDAISM) (HISTORICAL)

The Sadducees were a sect or group of Jews that was active in Judea during the Second Temple period, starting from the second century BCE through the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The sect was identified by Josephus with the upper social and economic echelon of Judean society. As a whole, the sect fulfilled various political, social, and religious roles, including maintaining the Temple. The Sadducees are often compared to other contemporaneous sects, including the Pharisees and the Essenes. Their sect is believed to have become extinct some time after the destruction of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, but it has been speculated that the later Karaites may have had some roots in - or connections with - Sadducaic views.

The religious responsibilities of the Sadducees included the maintenance of the Temple in Jerusalem. Their high social status

was reinforced by their priestly responsibilities, as mandated in the Torah. The priests were responsible for performing sacrifices at the Temple, the primary method of worship in ancient Israel. This included presiding over sacrifices during the three festivals of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Their religious beliefs and social status were mutually reinforcing, as the priesthood often represented the highest class in Judean society. However, Sadducees and the priests were not completely synonymous. Cohen points out that "not all priests, high priests, and aristocrats were Sadducees; many were Pharisees, and many were not members of any group at all."

The Sadducees rejected the Oral Law as proposed by the Pharisees. Rather, they saw the written Torah as the sole source of divine authority. The written law, in its depiction of the priesthood, corroborated the power and enforced the hegemony of the Sadducees in Judean society.

According to Josephus, the Sadducees believed that:

There is no fate.

God does not commit evil.

Man has free will; "man has the free choice of good or evil".

The soul is not immortal; there is no afterlife.

There are no rewards or penalties after death.

The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection of the dead, but believed in the traditional Jewish concept of Sheol for those who had died.

## ✓ ZEALOTS (JUDEA) (HISTORICAL)

The Zealots were a political movement in 1st-century Second Temple Judaism, which sought to incite the people of Judea Province to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from the Holy Land by force of arms, most notably during the First Jewish–Roman War (66–70). Zealotry was the term used by Josephus for a "fourth sect" or "fourth Jewish philosophy" during this period.

### ❖ SICARII (HISTORICAL)

The Sicarii were a splinter group of the Jewish Zealots who, in the decades preceding Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE, heavily opposed the Roman occupation of Judea and attempted to expel them and their sympathizers from the area. The Sicarii carried sicae, or small daggers, concealed in their cloaks. At public gatherings, they pulled out these daggers to attack Romans and Hebrew Roman sympathizers alike, blending into the crowd after the deed to escape detection.

The Sicarii were likely one of the earliest forms of an organized assassination unit of cloak and daggers, predating the Islamic Hashishin and Japanese ninja by centuries.

## ✓ MESSIANIC SECTS/ SECTS THAT BELIEVED JESUS WAS A PROPHET/MESSIANIC SECTS (HISTORICAL)

### ❖ EBIONITES (HISTORICAL)

Ebionites is a patristic term referring to a Jewish Christian movement that existed during the early centuries of the Christian Era. They regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah while rejecting his divinity and his virgin birth, and insisted on the necessity of following Jewish law and rites. They used only one of the Jewish–Christian gospels, the Hebrew Book of Matthew starting at chapter 3, revered James the brother of Jesus (James the Just), and rejected Paul the Apostle as an apostate from the Law. Their name suggests that they placed a special value on voluntary poverty. Ebionim was one of the terms used by the sect at Qumran that sought to separate themselves from the corruption of the Temple. Many believe that they were Essenes.

Since historical records by the Ebionites are scarce, fragmentary, and disputed, much of what is known or conjectured about the Ebionites derives from the Church Fathers, who wrote polemics against the Ebionites, whom they deemed heretical Judaizers. Consequently, very little about the Ebionite sect or sects is known with certainty, and most, if not all, statements about them are conjectural.

At least one scholar distinguishes the Ebionites from other Jewish Christian groups, such as the Nazarenes; other scholars, like the Church Fathers themselves from the first centuries after Christ, consider the Ebionites identical with the Nazarenes.

### ❖ ELCESAITES (HISTORICAL)

The Elcesaites, Elkasaites, Elkesaites or Elchasaites were an ancient Jewish Christian sect in Sassanid southern Mesopotamia. The name of the sect derives from the alleged founder: Elchasi, Elksai, or Elkesai. The sect is believed to be a faction of the Ebionites and was identified by early writers with the Sabians.

## ❖ NAZARENES (HISTORICAL)

The Nazarenes originated as a sect of first-century Judaism. The first use of the term "sect of the Nazarenes" is in the Book of Acts in the New Testament, where Paul is accused of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Then, the term simply designated followers of "Yeshua Natzri" (Jesus the Nazarene). They are described by Epiphanius of Salamis and are mentioned later by Jerome and Augustine of Hippo.

## ✓ SABBATEANS (HISTORICAL)

Sabbateans (Sabbatians) is a complex general term that refers to a variety of followers of disciples and believers in Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676), a Jewish rabbi who was proclaimed to be the Jewish Messiah in 1665 by Nathan of Gaza. Vast numbers of Jews in the Jewish diaspora accepted his claims, even after he became a Jewish apostate with his conversion to Islam in 1666. Sabbatai Zevi's followers, both during his "Messiahship" and after his conversion to Islam, are known as Sabbateans. They can be grouped into three: "Maaminim" (believers), "Haberim" (associates), and "Ba'ale Milhamah" (warriors).

Part of the Sabbateans lived on until well into the 20th century as Dönme.

## ❖ FRANKISM (HISTORICAL)

Frankism was a Jewish religious movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, centered on the leadership of the Jewish Messiah claimant Jacob Frank, who lived from 1726 to 1791. At its height it claimed perhaps 500,000 followers, primarily Jews living in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe.

# BABISM



A Bayanic Symbol, or Babism Symbol

Bábism is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion which professes that there is one incorporeal, unknown, and incomprehensible God who manifests his will in an unending series of theophanies, called Manifestations of God. It is an extremely small religion, with no more than a few thousand adherents according to current estimates, most of which are concentrated in Iran. It was founded by 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi who first assumed the title of Báb (lit. "Gate") from which the religion gets its name, out of the belief that he was the gate to the Twelfth Imam. However throughout his ministry his titles and claims underwent much evolution as the Báb progressively outlined his teachings.

A series of violent insurrections by the Bab's followers led to his arrest in 1845 and execution in 1850. The movement itself was violently persecuted, with its followers either exiled to Baghdad or imprisoned and executed. Among those exiled was Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, who in 1864 proclaimed himself to be the prophet foretold by the movement's founder. The movement then split between those who accepted Mirza Husayn's claim (later known as Baha'is) and the minority (the Azalis) who continued to follow the then leader Subh-i Azal. Since the 19th century the movement has declined in strength and today perhaps only a few hundred Babis remain.

The belief in Babism is centered around the Bab, who is considered to be the mirror of God.

Numbers play a sacred role in Babism, '19' being the most sacred. The year is therefore divided into 19 months, and every month is made up of 19 days. There are 19 members of the council that administer the community of the Babis. And the Bab had declared that there would be a span of 19 years from his death until the next human manifestation of God would arrive.

Every year all Babis between 11 and 42 years of age are expected to undergo a fast of one month (19 days; sunset 1 March to sunset 20 March). Fasting implies abstain from all food, liquid, and sex between dawn and dusk, focusing instead on the divine. Children were supposed to fast from dawn until noon for the first eleven days only, an acknowledgment of the arduousness of the task.

The Babis should not fear that which gives pleasure. Rich clothes, silken goods, embroideries and jewels not only may, but ought to be procured by the faithful, according to the measure of their resources.

The holy book of the Babis is the Bayan (Declaration).

Smoking is banned during the fast, as it is deemed to be an act of consumption.

Prayers are not compulsory, but advisable, and can be performed without ablutions. Babis pray 3-5 times daily.

Women do not have to wear veils, and enjoy relative freedom.

Travelling is restricted, especially sea travel.

Woman is respected, and she enjoys the same rights with man.

Marriage in Babism is obligatory. Marriage cannot be contracted without the consent of the young couple. Monogamy is recommended. There is only one exception made. If a wife be barren, a man is allowed to take a second wife without separating from the first one, but concubinage is strictly forbidden.

Babism reject easy divorce.

Women can have property in their own right.

The Babists believe in a future life and in eternity, but they do not admit the existence of Hell, or of Paradise, or of Purgatory.

Holy Days - February 26 - March 1: Festival of Ayyam-i-Ha; March 2-21: Nineteen-Day Fast; March 21: Naw-Ruz (New Year)

Babism is a very small religion with only a couple of thousands of followers. Most of them live in Iran.

## ✓ AZALI



Babi star

The Azali religion is an Iranian religion founded in 1860s by Subh-i-Azal.

Azali is a monotheistic religion, believing in one god. Its teaching comes from Abrahamic and old Iranian religions like Zoroastrianism and Indian like Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism Both Azali and Baha'i Faith split from religion of bayan (Babism), but some people categoring the Azali religion as one of Babism divisions.

The Azalīs rejected the divine claims of Bahā' Ullāh as premature, arguing that the world must first accept Bābī laws in order to be ready for "him whom God shall manifest."

The Azalīs have retained the original teachings of the Bāb's Bayān ("Revelation") and supplemented them with the instructions of Šobḥ-e Azal.

Azali Babism represents the conservative core of the original Babi movement, opposed to innovation and preaching a religion for a non-clerical gnostic elite rather than the masses. It also retains the original Babi antagonism to the Qajar state and a commitment to political activism, in distinction to the quietist stance of Baha'ism.

# BAHA'I FAITH



Bahai star

The Bahá'í Faith is one of the youngest of the world's major religions. It was founded in the 19th century by Bahá'u'lláh, who was born in Persia (modern day Iran) and is honoured by Baha'is as the latest in a line of messengers from God that includes Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ and Muhammad. This continuity is reflected in Baha'u'llah's teachings, which stress the oneness of the world's religions, and the oneness of humankind. Bahá'is strive to abolish all prejudices and to gain equality for all, regardless of race or sex. Bahá'is have no priesthood or liturgy. They come from many different cultural, racial, social and religious backgrounds and support democratically elected institutions at local, national and international levels. They are required to obey the government but may choose to abstain from partisan politics, which can be seen as creating disunity in the community. Baha'is integrate scientific attitudes into their faith and have an holistic approach to life.

Bahá'í teachings are in some ways similar to other monotheistic faiths: God is considered single and all-powerful. However, Bahá'u'lláh taught that religion is orderly and progressively revealed by one God through Manifestations of God who are the founders of major world religions throughout history; Buddha, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad being the most recent in the period before the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. As such, Bahá'is regard the major religions as fundamentally unified in purpose, though varied in social practices and interpretations. There is a similar emphasis on the unity of all people, openly rejecting notions of racism and nationalism. At the heart of Bahá'í teachings is the goal of a unified world order that ensures the prosperity of all nations, races, creeds, and classes.

## ABLUTIONS AND OBLIGATORY PRAYER

Bahá'is should perform ritual washing before reciting the obligatory prayer. If water is not available or cannot be applied to the hands and the face, the believer may recite 5 times the verse "In the name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure". The obligatory prayer is performed facing the holy shrine at Bahji in Israel. There are alternative forms of obligatory prayer. In the West the short form is usually recited, once in 24 hours, between noon and sunset. Those who are ill or over 70 are exempt. Menstruating women are exempt if they recite 95 times "Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendour and Beauty".

## BIRTH

Baha'is believe that the soul comes into being at conception. Methods of contraception that prevent implantation of the fertilised ovum are considered unacceptable. Sterilisation and abortion are forbidden except on compelling medical grounds.

## DEATH

The dead body should be washed and wrapped in a shroud of cotton or silk. A special ring is placed on the finger and the corpse is laid in a wooden coffin. Bahá'is may not be cremated or embalmed and may not be buried more than an hour's journey from the place of death.

The Baha'i faith does not prohibit donation of the body to medical science.

## FUNERAL CUSTOMS

Baha'i funeral services are normally held within two or three days after the death. Guests may dress according to personal preference and local custom. The family arranges for the officiate to read the prayers. One key requirement for a Baha'i funeral is reading of the Prayer for the Dead. The prayer, which includes six verses to be repeated 19 times each, is recited by one person on behalf of everyone present.

Baha'i funeral customs do not discourage non-believers from attending or being present when the Prayer for the Dead is read. If you are non-Baha'i attending a Baha'i funeral, please keep in mind that this is a sacred tradition and be appropriately respectful during the reading.

Bahá'í law specifies that Bahá'is should not be cremated. The body of the deceased is to be washed and wrapped in cotton or silk and placed in a coffin of wood, stone, or crystal, and a burial ring is to be placed on the finger. The body should not be transported more than an hour's distance from the place of death and should be buried facing the qiblah, the holiest place to Bahá'is.

## DIET

The Bahá'í faith does not ban any types of food - its scriptures declare all things should be "clean" - nor does it require anything to be eaten or drunk. The only dietary restrictions on Bahá'is involve a ban on alcohol and other substances that are significantly mind-altering, such as hashish, unless the substance has been prescribed by a physician as part of a medical treatment.

They practise moderation in diet. Some Baha'is are vegetarian.

## FASTING

During the fasting period (March 2-21), Bahá'is may not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. Fasting is not obligatory for those under 15 or over 70, for menstruating, pregnant or nursing women, for the sick or for travellers.

## FESTIVALS

The Baha'i New Year (Naw-Ruz) is on 21st March. No work is done on this day, and Baha'is may wish to be at home for this occasion. The period leading up to Naw-Ruz (2-20 March) is a period of reflection and preparation for the coming year, and it is marked by fasting. Another important festival period is Ridvan, from 21st April to 2nd May. This celebrates Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission. The 1st, 9th and 12th days within this festival are holy days on which work is suspended.

## GENDER ISSUES

Bahá'í teaching has always been that women and men are equal. It commands Bahá'is to educate women and give them the

opportunities that they need in order to take advantage of that equality.

#### GREETING

Some Bahá'ís might shake hands, some might bow, some might hug close friends. Often Bahá'ís will greet each other by saying "Alláh-u-Abhá".

#### IN BAHÁ'Í HOMES

There may be a plaque with the Arabic inscription "Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá" ("O Glory of the All Glorious").

#### INCARNATION

Bahá'ís believe that God cannot become incarnate in a human being.

#### MARRIAGE

Bahá'u'lláh highly praised marriage, discouraged divorce, and required chastity outside of marriage. Interracial marriage is also highly praised throughout Bahá'í scripture. The Bahá'í marriage ceremony is simple; the only compulsory part of the wedding is the reading of the wedding vows prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh which both the groom and the bride read, in the presence of two witnesses. The vows are "We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God." Baha'ís have free choice in marriage, but parental consent is sought to help create unity between the two families.

Interracial marriage is also highly praised throughout Bahá'í scripture.

#### DIVORCE

Bahá'ís disapprove strongly of divorce - Bahá'u'lláha and Abdu'l-Bahá made it clear that divorce is abhorred - but it is not banned.

There are no specific grounds for divorce laid down for Bahá'ís.

Bahá'ís wanting a divorce are required to announce their intention to divorce and then live apart for a year before they get it. During the year they should attempt a reconciliation with the help of the local spiritual assembly. This cooling-off period gives the couple a chance to put things right.

#### FAMILY LIFE

A strong family life is important to Bahá'ís because the family is seen as the fundamental building block of communities and nations. They believe that strong and loving families are essential for society to work properly.

#### DRESS CODE

Beyond the requirement that Bahá'ís dress modestly (a requirement that is itself defined according to local cultural norms) and cleanly, the Bahá'í faith does not prescribe a mode of dress for members. But Bahauallah specified that Bahá'ís should not allow themselves to be "playthings of the ignorant," suggesting that they should avoid fads and frivolous dress. They are exhorted to exercise moderation in all things.

#### CALENDAR

The Bahá'í calendar is based upon the calendar established by the Báb. The year consists of 19 months, each having 19 days, with four or five intercalary days, to make a full solar year. The Bahá'í New Year corresponds to the traditional Persian New Year, called Naw Rúz, and occurs on the vernal equinox, near 21 March, at the end of the month of fasting. Bahá'í communities gather at the beginning of each month at a meeting called a Feast for worship, consultation and socializing.

#### MEDICAL PROCEDURES

Blood transfusions and organ donations are allowed.

Bahá'u'lláh prohibited a mendicant and ascetic lifestyle. Monasticism is forbidden, and Bahá'ís are taught to practice spirituality while engaging in useful work.

#### rites of passage

The Bahá'í faith does not have a prescribed baptism, a rite of passage for youth, or a required ceremony for converts.

#### HOW TO BE BAHAI

When someone wishes to become a Bahá'í, he or she first declares his or her faith in some manner, often by signing an enrollment card. Sometimes one or more persons appointed by the local Spiritual Assembly meet with the declarant to make sure the person understands the Bahá'í faith, at least at a minimal level. Then the person is enrolled as a member of the Bahá'í community. Membership is clearly defined because it has privileges: Only members can attend Feast, vote or be voted for in Bahá'í elections, and contribute money to the Bahá'í faith.

#### PILGRIMAGE

Bahá'ís are encouraged to go on pilgrimage once in their lifetime if they are able. Pilgrimage to the Bahá'í World Center is a nine-day event that includes visits to various holy places, such as the tombs of the Bab and Bahauallah. Unlike the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, it can be performed any time of the year, but it requires submitting an application to the Universal House of Justice.

#### RELIGIOUS TEXTS

The most sacred text is the Kitab-i-Aqbas which was written by Bahá'u'lláh in 1873. This book of laws contains teachings on personal status, prophecies and outlines Baha'i religious practices. It also establishes Baha'i administrative institutions.

Gleanings from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'u'lláh's Prayers and Meditations, Epistle to the Son of Wolf, the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys are other holy texts that guide the lives of Bahá'ís.

#### SACRED PLACES

The two most holiest places in the Baha'i religion are the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre and the Shrine of Bab in Haifa, Israel.

The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh marks the location of Bahá'u'lláh's passing. Baha'is all around the world also pray towards the direction of this sacred place.

The Shrine of Bab contains the remains of The Bab. It is considered the second holiest place in the Baha'i faith for this reason, after the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

Baha'is pray and meditate at the Shrine of Bab and the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, including the surrounding gardens.

#### SACRED SYMBOLS

The Bahá'í faith has two sacred symbols that are variants of the Arabic word Baha (glory). The Greatest Name (ya Baha ul-abha, "O Glory of the Most Glorious"), written in calligraphic Arabic script, is often displayed on walls in a place of honor. The ringstone symbol, derived from the Arabic letters in Baha, is incorporated in jewelry and is sometimes placed on walls. Bahá'ís commonly use the nine-pointed star as the principal Bahá'í symbol, but it is not an official symbol of the faith.

Bahá'ís were painted and photographed, but pictures of him are regarded as too sacred to publish. Only a few copies exist. They are displayed only in the archives at the Bahá'í World Center, and only on special occasions, and are treated with great reverence. The same practices are followed with a painted portrait of the Bab. Many photographs and painted portraits of Abdul-Baha exist, as well as a short motion picture. The pictures are widely displayed but are treated with great respect.

#### WORSHIP

Bahá'ís do their acts of worship in their homes and in certain temples around the world. There are currently seven temples located around the world in North America, Australia, Uganda, Germany, Panama, Samoa, and India. These temples serve as a peaceful place in which Baha'is may reflect and meditate without interruption.

# DRUZE



Druze star



Flag of the Druze people

The Druze are an esoteric ethnoreligious group originating in Western Asia who self-identify as unitarians. Jethro of Midian is considered an ancestor of all people from Druze Mountain, who revere him as their spiritual founder and chief prophet.

The Druze faith is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion based on the teachings of high Islamic figures like Hamza ibn-'Ali ibn-Ahmad and Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, and Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle.

The Epistles of Wisdom is the foundational text of the Druze faith.

The Druze faith incorporates elements of Islam's Ismailism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Pythagoreanism, Hinduism and other philosophies and beliefs, creating a distinct and secretive theology known to interpret esoterically religious scriptures, and to highlight the role of the mind and truthfulness.

As a religious minority in every country they live in, they have frequently experienced persecution, except in Lebanon and Israel where Druze judges, parliamentarians, diplomats, and doctors occupy the highest echelons of society.

Even though the faith originally developed out of Ismaili Islam, Druze are not considered Muslims, although Al Azhar of Egypt recognizes them as one of the Islamic sects akin to Shiite Muslims.

The Druze faith is one of the major religious groups in the Levant, with between 800,000 and a million adherents. They are found primarily in Syria, Lebanon and Israel, with small communities in Jordan and outside Southwestern Asia. The oldest and most densely-populated Druze communities exist in Mount Lebanon and in the south of Syria around Jabal al-Druze (literally the "Mountain of the Druzes").

The Druze's social customs differ markedly from those of Muslims or Christians, and they are known to form a close-knit, cohesive community that does not allow anyone into, but also integrate fully in their adopted homelands.

Complicating their identity is the custom of taqiyya - concealing or disguising their beliefs when necessary - that they adopted from Ismailism and the esoteric nature of the faith, in which many teachings are kept secretive. This is done in order to keep the religion from those who are not yet prepared to accept the teachings and therefore could misunderstand it, as well as to protect the community when it is in danger. Druzes tend to follow the dominant religion of the country where they reside. The Druze worship as Muslims when among Muslims, and as Christians when among Christians. They allow no outside converts to their religion: one must be born into the Druze faith.

Druze in different states can have radically different lifestyles.

The seven duties that all Druze are required to observe are recognition of al-Hakim and strict adherence to monotheism; negation of all non-Druze tenets; rejection of Satan and unbelief; acceptance of God's acts; submission to God for good or ill; truthfulness; and mutual solidarity and help between fellow Druze. While they are respectful of other religions, the Druze are convinced that a severe judgment awaits all non-Druze.

Religious meetings are held on Thursday nights in inconspicuous buildings without embellishments or furniture, except a small lectern to lay books on during meditation.

They follow Sunni Hanafi law on issues which their own faith has no particular ruling.

Other influential figures of the religion include Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Alexander the Great and Akhenaten.

The Druze strictly avoid iconography but use five colors ("Five Limits" as religious symbol: green, red, yellow, blue, and white. Each haad is color-coded in the following manner:

Green for 'Aql "the Universal Mind/Intelligence/Nous",

Red for Nafs "the Universal Soul/Anima mundi",

Yellow for Kalima "the Word/Logos",

Blue for Sabiq "the Potentiality/Cause/Precedent", and

White for Tali "the Future/Effect/Immanence".

The Druzes do not recognize any religious hierarchy.

The tenets of the Druze religion are secret and mysterious, even to many Druze themselves, since the faith allows only a limited number of elite men and sometimes women, called uqqal ("the enlightened"), to study and learn all of its aspects. The uqqals oversee the religious life of their particular community, acting almost as intermediaries with God. Other Druze, known as the juhhal ("the unenlightened"), are not permitted to access the religion's six holy books but are given a simplified outline of their faith in the form of a strict code of moral and ethical behavior.

The Druze believe that rituals are symbolic and have an individualistic effect on the person, for which reason Druze are free to perform them, or not.

The community does celebrate Eid al-Adha, however, considered their most significant holiday.

## ESOTERICISM

The Druze believe that many teachings given by prophets, religious leaders and holy books have esoteric meanings preserved for those of intellect, in which some teachings are symbolic and allegorical in nature, and divide the understanding of holy books and teachings into three layers.

Druze do not believe that the esoteric meaning abrogates or necessarily abolishes the exoteric one. **SANCTUARIES**

The prayer-houses of the Druze are called khalwa or khalwat. Men and women may sit together, but with a divider between them. During the first part of the service, community affairs are discussed, and everyone may attend. However, the juhhal must leave when prayer, study, and meditation begin. The secrecy surrounding the Druze faith is meant to protect its followers from

persecution. The primary sanctuary of the Druze is at Khalwat al-Bayada.

#### SCRIPTURES

Druze Sacred texts include the Kitab Al Hikma (Epistles of Wisdom). Other ancient Druze writings include the Rasa'il al-Hind (Epistles of India) and the previously lost (or hidden) manuscripts such as al-Munfarid bi-Dhatihi and al-Sharia al-Ruhaniyya as well as others including didactic and polemic treatises.

#### REINCARNATION

Reincarnation is a paramount principle in the Druze faith. A male Druze can be reincarnated only as another male Druze and a female Druze only as another female Druze. A Druze cannot be reincarnated in the body of a non-Druze.

#### HOLY PLACES

Holy places of the Druze are archaeological sites important to the community and associated with religious holidays – the most notable example being Nabi Shu'ayb, dedicated to Jethro, who is a central figure of the Druze religion. Druze make pilgrimages to this site on the holiday of Ziyarat al-Nabi Shu'ayb.

#### POPULAR DRINKS

Matè is a popular drink consumed by the Druze brought to the Levant from Syrian migrants from Argentina in the 19th century. Mate is made by steeping dried leaves of yerba mate in hot water and is served with a metal straw (bambija or masassa) from a gourd (finjan). Mate is often the first item served when entering a Druze home. It is a social drink and can be shared between multiple participants. After each drinker, the metal straw is cleaned with a lemon rind. Traditional snacks eaten with mate include raisins, nuts, dried figs, biscuits, and chips.

#### DRESSES

Druze living in America typically wear Western dress. But in most of the Middle East women still wear the traditional long black or blue dress with a white head covering. Men, who often grow mustaches, have abandoned the shirwal (traditional baggy pants, tight around the ankles) for Western-style trousers, but shirwal still can be purchased in Middle Eastern shops. Men working in the fields usually wear the traditional red and white checkered kufiya on their heads.

#### NAME

The Druze are often given a name that could be Christian or Muslim.

#### HOUSES

In keeping with their belief in austerity, traditional Druze homes are sparsely furnished with low wooden tables and thin cushions lining the walls.

#### FAMILY AND COMUNITY DYNAMICS

The life of the average Druze revolves closely around his or her family and his or her relationship with other Druze. Apart from Thursday night religious meetings, the Druze enjoy spending time together through visits to each other's homes. Hospitality is an important feature of the culture. The Druze are known for their generosity and are guided by a sense of chivalry and honor. This concept compels the Druze to look after each other, including widows, orphans, and the destitute. If the extended family cannot take care of a member, the larger community will find a means of support.

#### BIRTH

The birth of a baby, especially a son, is cause for celebration, with a typical gathering including family members and friends and gift giving. Sons are considered an asset, socially and economically. If a Druze couple has only daughters, they keep having children until sons are born. This leads to large families. The average Druze family has five or six children.

#### CIRCUMCISION

Male circumcision, which is universal among Muslims, is not ritually practiced by the Druze. There is no ceremony for the circumcision of newborns, although it is practiced among those living in urban areas or outside the Middle East, mainly for hygienic reasons.

#### WEDDINGS

Weddings and funerals provide another opportunity to bond, and these usually involve the whole community. Marriage celebrations can be quite extensive, depending on the means of the families involved. Guests expect large quantities of food and drink. The dishes served are copious and extravagant and, unless there are too many disapproving attendees, wine and other spirits may be served. Although frowned upon, the Druze drink alcohol, the men more frequently than the women.

Both the bride and the groom are expected to be virgins at the time of marriage, although men find opportunities to engage in premarital sex. The subject of sexual relations is taboo in a traditional Druze household. Nothing of a physical or sexual nature is ever brought up in conversation, especially with elders. The telling of a slightly off-color anecdote is considered a breach of manners.

Polygamy, while permitted to Muslims, is forbidden among the Druze. The Druze may marry within their family, including first cousins. Marriage outside of the Druze faith is forbidden.

To keep marriage ties strong, a Druze will marry a spouse from another country rather than wed a local non-Druze. In an event arranged by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1993, seven Druze brides in elaborate white gowns crossed the Israel-Syrian border to marry bridegrooms in the Golan Heights, according to a report in the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California. From both sides of the cease-fire lines, hundreds of Druze danced and cheered as the couples married in the United Nations zone. The couples met each other through videotapes.

#### DIVORCE

Divorce is not easy for Druze. Although a Druze woman can initiate divorce proceedings, this is a rarity. The most frequent grounds for divorce by men are the failure of a wife to bear children, especially sons, disobedience, immodest behavior, or some chronic mental or physical illness that makes intercourse impossible. The wife may ask for divorce based on impotence, non-support, and desertion or lengthy absence. If a woman is divorced through her own failings, the husband is permitted to reclaim the dowry and the marriage expenses. In most cases, the Druze follow the custom of compensating the divorced wife for her "exertions." This benefit is especially important for the older woman who has few prospects of remarriage and cannot

return to her father's house or expect other support in her old age.

#### FUNERALS

Funerals are major events in the Druze community, even more so than marriage. Funeral arrangements are made immediately after death, and ceremonies are held that day, or the next day, at the latest. The body is washed and dressed in the finest clothes. At the funeral, women lament loudly and at length, and acquaintances tell stories of the departed's virtues. Bodies are interred above ground, marked by monuments ranging from the very simple to the highly elaborate.

#### THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Druze women have always had the right to own and dispose of property freely. Historically, a significant number of Druze women were literate and educated. At the end of the twentieth century, literacy was almost universal for people under the age of 25. But a Druze woman holding a full-time job was still the exception.

Marriage is expected of all Druze women at a relatively early age, usually between 17 and 21 years, although a few marry as early as 15 years of age. The marriage, which often is arranged by the families, is usually preceded by a two-year engagement. Marriage partners are chosen from eligible young people within the same community.

Although Druze women traditionally enjoy a privileged status of near equality with men, there is no compromise in the matter of female chastity. A young woman is expected to be faithful to her husband throughout her whole life. A woman's honor is the single most important factor in Druze family life, and its defilement is cause for great humiliation. If a woman's dishonor becomes public knowledge, it is the responsibility of her father or brother to take what is considered appropriate action in their culture. It is not unknown, even today, for a Druze woman living in the Middle East to be murdered by her nearest male relative for shaming the family.

In Israel, Druze judges have forced the government to waive the requirement for a Druze woman's photograph to appear on official documents, such as identity cards. They also object to male doctors attending or autopsying women. Many conservative Druze consider these acts as a shaming of a woman's honor, in addition to things such as going to a cinema. It is becoming more common, however, for women to leave the house with other women in pursuit of innocent pleasures such as shopping or going to lectures.

# MANDAEISM



Mandaean cross

According to most scholars, Mandaeanism originated sometime in the first three centuries AD, in Mesopotamia.

Mandaeanism or Mandaeanism is a gnostic religion with a strongly dualistic worldview. Its adherents, the Mandaeans, revere Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Noah, Shem, Aram, and especially John the Baptist.

Mandaeanism, as the religion of the Mandaean people, is based more on a common heritage than on any set of religious creeds and doctrines. A basic guide to Mandaean theology does not exist.

Mandaeans believe in marriage and procreation, and in the importance of leading an ethical and moral lifestyle in this world. They also place a high priority upon family life. Consequently, Mandaeans do not practice celibacy or asceticism. Mandaeans will, however, abstain from strong drink and red meat. While they agree with other gnostic sects that the world is a prison governed by the planetary archons, they do not view it as a cruel and inhospitable one.

The Mandaean Community is divided into priests and laity. There are three different ranks of priests. They include ordinary priests (tarmide, 'disciples, pupils'), bishops or 'treasurers' (ganzibre) and the 'head of the people' (rishama). The priest acts as the representative of heavenly messengers and angels (uthre) and thus he is equated with them repeatedly in the rituals.

The Mandaean worldview is stamped by gnostic dualism. A World of Light (nhura) and a World of Darkness (hshuka) exist in mutual hostility.

## BELIEFS

**Life** - Recognition of the existence of one God, whom Nasurai call "Hayyi" which in Aramaic means "the Living" or life itself. The Great Life (or Supreme Deity) is a personification of the creative and sustaining force of the universe, and is spoken of always in the impersonal plural, it remains mystery and abstraction. The modern Jewish practice of saying "To Life!" and of wearing the Chai (Life) letters as pendants may be related to this Mandaean reverence for Life. The symbol of the Great Life is flowing 'living' water or yardna. Because of this, flowing water holds a central place in all Nasurai rituals, hence the necessity of living near rivers.

**Light** - The second vivifying power is light, which is represented by a personification of light, Melka d Nhura (the King of Light) and the light spirits, who bestow health, strength, virtue and justice. In the ethical system of the Mandaeans, as in that of the Zoroastrians, cleanliness, health of body and ritual obedience must be accompanied by purity of mind, health of conscience and obedience to moral

laws. A phrase in the Manual of Discipline reads: that they may behold the Light of Life.

**Immortality** - The third important rite of the religion is the belief in the immortality of the soul, and its close relationship with the souls of its ancestors, immediate and divine. The fate of the soul is a chief concern, while the body is treated with disdain. Belief in the existence of the next life, in which there will be reward and punishment. The sinner will be punished in al-Matarathi and then enter Paradise. There is no eternal punishment because God is merciful and forgiving.

## PRAYER

Mandaeans must face the North (Pole) Star during prayers. This mis-conception of star worship comes from the fact that although the Mandaeans are monotheists, they pay adoration to the angels and the good and free spirits which they believe reside in the stars and from which they govern the world under the Supreme Deity. Kneeling and prostration during prayer is unknown, neither is the covering of the face with the hands at any time. The head is held erect, and the hands are not used. Priests are required to pray a different set prayer each day of the week. Prayer hours are dawn, noon and dusk.

## ASCETICISM

Asceticism, self-denial and simplicity as religious attitudes. There should be no sale of foodstuffs as these should be offered to the needy. There should be no embellishment of graves nor visiting them. A good deed should be done in secret and not for show.

## CIRCUMCISION

One of their inviolable beliefs was the integrity of the physical body. No part of it should be cut off, for just as God created the person sound and complete so should this trust be returned to him. Circumcision is included in this prohibition.

## RESPECT FOR RIVERS

Respect for and sanctification of rivers is such that Mandaeans always try to live near their banks. A major sin as mentioned in the Holy Books is that a person should urinate in a river. However, it is recommended to throw left-over food in water, especially the food remaining from ceremonies remembering a deceased person which will be eaten by the river fish. This is because the river or Yardna represents Life and Light from which everything was formed and so will return to it. - It involves communion with the Light World and the long departed Souls.

## BAPTISM

The central rite of the Mandaean cult is immersion in water, which is regarded not only as a symbol of Life, but to a certain degree as life itself. The chief purpose and significance of baptism is first that the neophyte, by immersion in the yardna, enters into close communion with the World of Light receiving physical well being, protection against the powers of death and promise of ever lasting life to the Soul. The second quality is purificatory, just as it washes away filth, infections and impurity from the body, it washes away transgressions and sins from the Soul. The greater the number of ablutions performed or received the better, for without baptism no Mandaean (or his Soul) may pass onto the next world. Baptism was at one time so essential such that unbaptised children were not considered to belong to the community. Baptism takes place on Sundays

(habshaba), the first day of the week, which is for the Mandaeans, a holiday.

#### ABSOLUTIONS

Ablutions (rishama) are performed before the prayers, and this means washing the face and the rest of the limbs while reciting certain prayers.

#### DIET & PURITY

Food is also ritually cleansed, such as fruits and vegetables before consumption. Other items like the rasta (robes) and kitchen utensils such as pots and pans undergo frequent ritual purifications. Salt is the only exception. Ganzivri (Bishops) and priests must only eat of the food they prepare themselves and their bread may not be baked with that of lay persons. For Ganzivri (Bishops) wine, coffee and tobacco are forbidden to them and they must avoid eating hot or cooked food. All their fruits and vegetables must be eaten raw. Water is the only beverage of a priest and this must be taken directly from the river or spring. The Mandaeans also use other terms to differentiate amongst themselves on basis of ritual cleanliness, Suwadi is used for laymen, Hallali is applied to ritually pure men, who of their own will follow a high religious standard, and of course Nasurai used for priests. Only that grows from a seed is lawful for food (hence a mushroom is forbidden). In practice little meat is eaten, and the attitude towards slaughter is always apologetic, perhaps because all original Nasurai were vegetarians and meat eating only crept in after a departure from their original faith. All killing and blood letting is supposedly sinful and it is forbidden to kill female beasts. Flies, scorpions and all harmful stinging things may be slain without sin. Under Mandaean customs every mother must suckle her own child, it is forbidden to act as a foster mother for hire. The child's education and upbringing is the duty of the father, until the child reaches the age of 15 (or 20 according to others, which was the age of adulthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Pythagorean tradition).

#### RISHAMA BAPTISM

The first of the miqvah purifications performed is the rishama (signing), the priests presence is not required, such that each man is his own priest. This should be performed daily, and with covered head, just before sunrise after the evacuation of the bowels and before all religious ceremonies.

#### TAMASHA BAPTISM

The second, the tamasha, is a simple triple immersion in the river, again this is performed without the aid of the priest or priestess. It must be performed by women after menstruation and after childbirth. Both man and woman must perform this abluion immediately after sexual intercourse, it must be performed after touching a dead body, after nocturnal pollution or any serious defilement or contact with a defiled person, as impurity is contagious - a person touching an unclean person, himself becomes unclean. These practices are related to the ritual purity laws of the Jews and were no doubt taught and practiced to some degree, and after their own fashion, by early Nazarenes.

#### MASBUTA BAPTISM

The third abluion, or 'full baptism', encompasses all aspects of baptism and must be performed by a priest or priestess. This abluion is known as masbuta (maswetta) includes the sacraments of oil, bread (known as pihtha) and water (from the river only, known as mambuha), the kushta (the hand grasp and kiss) and the final blessing by laying the right hand of the priest on the head of the baptized person. The masbuta should take place on Sunday, after major defilement's (i.e.. childbirth, marriage, illness and even after a journey) and especially for those who have lied or who have had violent quarrels, indeed after any action which is ashamed of. Major sins such as theft, murder, and adultery require more than one baptism.

#### CLOTHING

The rasta or ritual dress, also called the ustlia` in Mandaean texts, must be worn on all religious occasions such as baptism, marriage and death (in particular). It is a white dress, symbolic of the dress of light in which the pure soul is clad. All Mandaeans, laymen and priests, must possess one. The rasta consists of seven items for laymen and nine items for priests. though ritually clean, the rasta, except when new, is seldom white, it may not be washed with soap but may be washed in the river. It is the greatest misfortune for a person to die in his lay clothes, for his soul cannot reach Abathur. At one time the Mandaeans continually wore the rasta as it was a sin to wear a color. Wear white only, no colors are permitted regardless if they are natural or dyed. Of the fabrics, natural silk is most preferred and recommended, wool can only be used if shorn from a live animal, those that are fleeced after they die cannot be used to make clothing. No synthetic fiber's allowed i.e., nylon, rayon polyester etc. The Rule of the Garden of Peace mandates that all residents wear natural white clothing, just like the Mandaeans, ancient Essenes and ancient Pythagoreans.

#### BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

As death approaches the dying person is bathed, water is brought in from the river, the dying person is undressed and then washed with a threefold sprinkling from head to feet. He/she is then lifted and placed on clean bedding facing the North Star and is then dressed in a new rasta, with gold or gold threads sown on the right side of the stole and silver or silver threads sown on the left side. Weeping is forbidden. (To die at the sacred season of Panja means that the soul of the deceased will fly quickly to the worlds of light and escape the tortures and dangers of the purgatories. ) The dead person is interned facing north and the tomb goes unmarked - .. the body is dirt and rubbish, once the Soul has left it is a Mandaean saying. At the moment the body is being lowered into the tomb the lofani (ritual meal) is begun . A Zidqa Brikha, prayers and baptisms are also performed.

#### BANNERS

During the immersion ceremonies, a white silk banner, the dravsha, is erected on the bank of the pool to the south-east and right of the hut. The banner is purely a light symbol and the Mandaeans imagine the light of the sun, moon and stars as streaming from such banners. The silk is looped up so as not to touch the ground and then thrown around the peak, the end is fringed. A myrtle wreath is slipped over the peak of the banner, and, just beneath the cross (hidden from sight) a piece of gold wire called the aran dravshi, twisted into a 'letter' secures seven twigs of myrtle in place. The use of this cross emblem has confused many as to the Mandaean's relationship with Christianity. It is possible that it is pre-christian and may be an alternative source for the Christian use of the cross. It seems natural that something to hang one's clothing or prayer shawl on during Miqvah immersions would exist in a culture of daily immersers. The Seer Cayce told one woman that she helped prepare paintings for the walls, and

drawings that could be carried about, and were used as banners. (The Mandaens do not presently carry their dravsha banner in procession.)

#### **PRIESTHOOD**

Priesthood is allowable to both males and females within the Mandaean culture, and historically there have been female priests, or priestesses, although there are none known of at present. Priestly training begins in a boys early years, he puts on his rasta and acts as his fathers Shganda . He begins to learn his letters when he is 3 or 4 years old, when he is literate he is called a Yalufa. He begins to commit prayers and rituals to memory as soon as he can speak. A child destined for priesthood must not cut his hair or shave his beard. He must be without any physical blemish. He must be of pure Mandaean blood, his family must be physically and ritually immaculate for several generations back on both sides of the family. If any of his female ancestors within three generations were married when widows or non-virgins, then the would-be priest cannot be consecrated. When a boy has memorized enough of the rituals and prayers, acted in the proper manner of the Shganda under the guidance and instruction of the priest or Ganzivra, he becomes ready to receive initiation into the first degree of priesthood, becoming a Tarmida.

#### **NEW NAME**

Every Mandaean has two names, that of his earthly name (laqab) and the religiously important Malwasha (zodiacal name). The latter is his real name and is used on all religious occasions, this name is linked and derived from the mother and not the father. The priest uses the time of birth, the day, the zodiac sign and astrological chart to determine this name - but the giving of this religious name protects that person from the evil powers of the zodiac sign in which he was born - remember that the "12" and "7" are mentioned in the religious books as being evil and represent the zodiac signs and the then known planets, respectively. The purpose of the Malwasha is to protect that person from his star sign, the Malwasha is used in the religious ceremonies and prayers, the other name given by the parents is an earthly name of no significance to the religion.

#### **CELIBACY**

Celibacy is regarded as a sin, while the procreation of children is regarded as a religious duty. Women are not forced into marriages, although divorce is not accepted and only separation is sanctioned. Polygamy is not uncommon in the community, although this is a personal matter and is not universal.

#### **SCRIPTURES**

A. The Ginza Rba (The Great Treasure) or Sidra Rba (The Great Book). This consists of two parts, the right Ginza and the smaller left Ginza which is written upside down. The contents of the right side are mostly cosmogony, accounts of creation, prayers and legends. The second part (the left) deals only with the souls and its 'ascent' (masiqta) to the realm of light, its hymns are chanted during mass for the dead.

#### **PLACE OF WORSHIP**

A mandī is a place of worship for followers of Mandaicism. A mandī must be built beside a river in order to perform maṣbuta (or baptism) because water is an essential element in the Mandaic faith. Modern mandīs sometimes have a bath inside a building instead. Each mandī is adorned with a darfash, which is a cross of olive wood half covered with a piece of white pure silk cloth. The cross bears no relation to the Christian cross. Instead the four arms of the cross symbolise the four corners of the universe, while the pure silk cloth represents the Light of God.

## **✓ SABIANS**

The Sabians of Middle Eastern tradition were a religious group mentioned three times in the Quran as a People of the Book, "the Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians". In the hadith, they were described simply as converts to Islam. Interest in the identity and history of the group increased over time. Discussions and investigations of the Sabians began to appear in later Islamic literature.

Many scholars have identified the Sabians to be the Mandaens, a group of individuals adhering to a form of ancient Gnosticism.

A group of modern-day people based in Iraq call themselves Sabians and follow the teachings of John the Baptist. They are Mandaens (or Sabian Mandaens). They are more urban than other Mandaens living in southern Iraq, which perhaps explains why they prefer to be called Sabians. Due to their faith, pacifism and lack of tribal ties, they have been vulnerable to violence since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and numbered fewer than 5000 in 2007. They primarily live around Baghdad, where the last sheik resides who conducts services and baptisms. Many from the sect have moved from Baghdad to Kurdistan where it is safer.

Some sources say that the Sabians were star worshippers.

# RASTAFARI MOVEMENT



Rastafari - The Jewish Star of David



Rastafari - The Lion of Judah

Rastafari, sometimes termed Rastafarianism, is an Abrahamic religion. Classified as both a new religious movement and social movement. Rastafarianism was formulated amongst the dispossessed black population in Jamaica in the early 20th century. A variety of movements grew that sought to emphasise the dignity and pride of black inheritance and promised the possibility of African political and economic independence. Rastafarianism is thus a movement of people who are struggling to reclaim their African ancestry by identifying with African cultures and traditions including elements of the Shango religion of West Africa.

Marcus Garvey was a prominent figure within Rastafarianism who prophesied the crowning of a black king in Africa. Rastafarians believe this prophecy was fulfilled when Haile Selassie was crowned first of all King, and later Emperor, of Ethiopia in 1930. Haile Selassie was known as Ras (Prince) Tafari, hence the name of his followers. He is seen as being the direct descendant of kings David and Solomon, and is called 'Jah', or the living manifestation of God.

Rastafarianism is a way of life rather than an organised religion, and is guided by the concept of peace and love. Distrusting official hierarchy, the majority of Rastas are not affiliated to a particular group. However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is seen as their home.

The Bible is seen as the divine Word. It is interpreted by Rastafarians through collective reading, study and debate, which is known amongst Rastafarians as 'reasoning'. Rastafarians particularly emphasise the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation. Rastas prefer the term 'principles', rather than 'beliefs', holding that the latter implies doubt. Central principles are that God, Jesus, the Israelites and early Christians were black and that Christians misrepresent Jesus as a blue-eyed European; Rastafarians are true Jews; the Bible is authoritative and was written by and for black people; black people will only be free when they are back in Africa.

It is important to recognise the diversity within the faith, which is open to all members of society, black or white. Therefore the individual must be consulted, especially before medical treatment, as some may follow Old Testament laws more strictly than others.

## BIRTH

Most Rastafarians oppose contraception. Abortion is not usually considered acceptable. African traditions connected with the disposal of the placenta and umbilical cord may need to be observed. After giving birth the woman is considered unclean. Whilst in aftercare, Rastafarian Sisters need to have free flowing water close at hand.

## WORSHIP

Rastafari doesn't have a specific religious building that is set aside for worship. Rastafarians usually meet weekly, either in a believer's home or in a community centre.

The meetings are referred to as Reasoning sessions. They provide a time for chants, prayers and singing, and for communal issues to be discussed. Marijuana may be smoked to produce heightened spiritual states.

The music used at these meetings is known as Nyabingi, and so when meetings are mostly musical they are often referred to as Nyabingi meetings.

Meetings may also include large feasts.

## CLEANLINESS

During her menstrual period a woman is considered unclean and requires free flowing water. The same applies to men who are being treated for venereal diseases, or have a discharge.

Hair has much significance to Rastafarians. Uncut, matted hair in locks, known as dreadlocks, are common, especially amongst male Rastafarians. Dreadlocks are seen as a symbol of strength, representing breaking away from the 'Babylonian' system of western society. The uncut locks also represent the mane of the lion, the symbol of African strength and emancipation. Therefore, a Rasta's hair should be treated with respect, and all cutting of it should be avoided. Dreadlocks are often cleaned with olive or coconut oil. Frequently, beards are also left uncut.

## CLOTHING AND MODESTY

Some Rastafarians will wish to cover their hair, often with a hat (called a tam) bearing the four colours of especial importance to their faith. These colours are black, red, green and gold/ yellow, which stand respectively for: the black race; the blood of slavery; the promised land; and a golden future. Rastafarians often have other items with these colours too. All items bearing these four colours should be treated with respect.

Women are encouraged to dress modestly, and to refrain from wearing trousers or make-up. Sometimes Rastafarians, particularly women, will be unwilling to wear garments that have been worn by non-Rastafarian people. Disposable theatre gowns may therefore be preferred in hospital.

## DEATH

'Dead' and 'death' are words considered negative and are rarely used by Rastafarians, who follow the more positive concept of 'ever-living'. 'Passed' or 'passing' are terms often used, reinforcing the Rastafarian belief that life is eternal through the spirit. Some Rastas believe in reincarnation.

There are no religious rituals. No priest is required. If he is available the local head of the 'Twelve Tribes' may be sent for. Rastafarians have no objection to cremation but prefer burial. The 'Nazarite Vow', a principle adhered to by Rastas, enjoins the shunning of dead bodies, which may be prepared for burial by family members, or preferably an undertaker. Attendance at funerals is not emphasised, as Rastafarianism celebrates life, rather than death.

## DIET

Rastafarians often have a strong emphasis on living in harmony with the natural world, and accordingly most are vegetarians and some are vegans. Pork and pork products are banned. Fish must have fins and scales. The term used as a model for the ideal diet is 'Ital', meaning a saltless, vegetarian diet. 'Ital' also means natural food. Sometimes this is extended to include all canned or chemical food. Many Rastafarians abstain from alcohol and tobacco, although the use of cannabis is seen as being sanctioned by the Bible. This may need to be taken into consideration by health professionals when administering medicine.

## FASTS AND FESTIVALS

Rastafarians are required to fast and may choose to do this on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. It is important to consult the individual to assess their fasting habits. July 23 is the birthday of Haile Selassie, which has the importance of Christmas. November 2 is Haile Selassie's Coronation celebration. During October the Organisation of African Unity celebrates African Culture. The year's highlight is 7th January which is the Ethiopian Christmas. It is popularly known as Rasmus. Birthdays are not widely celebrated.

## RASTAFARIAN FESTIVAL/HOLLY DAYS

Ethiopian Christmas (January 7); Groundation Day (April 21); Emperor Haile Selassie birthday (July 23); Marcus Garvey's Birthday (August 17); Ethiopian New Year's Day (September 11)

## FOOD LAWS

Rastafarians eat strictly I-tal which means natural and clean

Early Rastafarians are unlikely to eat meat, scavengers or shellfish

Rastafarians do not eat pork

Rastafarians regularly eat fish, but will not eat fish more than twelve inches long

Rastafarians eat copious amounts of vegetables, as they are of the earth, and therefore good

Food is prepared without salt, and coconut oil is the most likely form of oil to be utilised

Rastafarians do not drink alcohol

They do not drink milk or coffee, but will drink anything herbal, grown from natural roots, e.g. herbal tea

Rastafarians consume plentiful amounts of fruit and fruit juice

## IN A RASTAFARIAN HOME

You might well see a picture of Haile Selassie, along with a copy of the Bible. The lion is also a Rastafarian symbol. There are often items in black, red, green and yellow. There may also be a flag, usually Jamaican or Ethiopian. Visitors may be asked to remove their shoes.

## MARRIAGE

Because of their distrust of formal procedures, there is no formal system of marriage within Rastafarianism. Marriage is looked upon as part of the establishment and is not, therefore, encouraged, but commitment to a partner is encouraged and sexual permissiveness is banned. A man and woman who cohabit are automatically viewed as husband and wife. A couple need stay together only for as long as both desire it.

## MEDICAL TREATMENT

Generally speaking, Rastas are distrustful towards western medicines and would often prefer alternative treatments such as herbalism, homeopathy and acupuncture.

Rastafarians are completely against any pig product, which includes transgenic hearts, kidneys and heart valves. It is permissible to accept transfusions and blood from family members. However, some will not accept blood transfusion, and some will. It is important to consult individuals. Rastafarians do not carry donor cards and are against any scientific use of the body after death. Prolonging life is considered unacceptable when the person remains in a vegetative state after every attempt has been made to help. Medicines that have damaging side effects should not be used. The use of marijuana to relieve pain would be preferred.

## RITE OF PASSAGE

### Birth

When a child is born into the Rastafari tradition he or she is blessed by elders in the community, during a Nyabingi session of drumming, chanting and prayer.

### Marriage

In Rastafari there is no formal marriage structure. A Rastafari man and woman who live together are regarded as husband and wife (unless, of course, they are related in some other way, such as mother and son).

If marriage does take place it is regarded as a social occasion rather than a religious event.

### Death

In Rastafari there is no funeral ceremony to mark the end of life. Rastafarians believe that reincarnation follows death, and that life is eternal.

## WORSHIP

As Rastafarianism is not an organised religion, there does not tend to be a specific place of worship.

Some communities will hold weekly meetings in a community centre or in a private house. These meetings include worship, the discussion of community matters and music. Women must cover their heads at these meetings.

## HAIR

Rastafarians are forbidden to cut their hair; instead, they grow it and twist it into dreadlocks.

## SACRED TEXT

The sacred text of Rastafarians is the Holy Piby, the "Black Man's Bible." It was compiled by Robert Athlyi Rogers of Anguilla from 1913 to 1917 and published in 1924. The Holy Piby is a version of the Christian Bible that has been altered to remove all the deliberate distortions that are believed to have been made by white leaders during its translation into English. The Ethiopian national epic, the Kebra Negast, is also respected by Rastas, but less so than the Bible.

#### WOMAN/MAN

Most Rasta's believe that females are not equal to men. They believe that a good woman must always respect men and do what they ask. This is very contrary to much of their other beliefs about people being equal. Rasta men often beat their wives for being lazy. Rasta men believe that being naked is good because you are closer to god in your natural state. However Rasta's believe that women should not show off their bodies. Rasta's belief of sexual contact also differs from men to women. Rasta men often have many different partners, while it is wrong for Rasta women to give more than a hand shake to more than one man.

#### SYMBOL

The lion is the symbol of Rastafari.

This lion represents Haile Selassie I, who is referred to as the 'Conquering Lion of Judah'. Rastafarians' dreadlocks represent the lion's mane.

# SAMARITANISM

The Samaritans are an ethno-religious group in Palestine and in Israel. Their religious center is Mount Gerizim in the vicinity of Nablus. Half of the community lives on the mountain, half lives in Holon, a southern suburb of Tel Aviv.

In the early twenty-first century the community comprises approximately 660 members.

The Samaritan religion is an outgrowth of the Israelite-Jewish religion as it existed around the beginning of the common era. It therefore has many features in common with Judaism, above all the belief in the first five books (the Pentateuch) of the Bible. As opposed to Judaism, though, the Samaritans never developed the institution of the rabbinate but are led by priests and a high priest.

The foundation of Samaritan beliefs and practices lies in the Pentateuch that the Samaritans have in common with the Jews. Thus the basic monotheistic outlook of Samaritanism is the same as in Judaism. Specific to the Samaritans is the belief, based on a slight difference in the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch, that the place chosen by God for his worship is Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem; it is on this mountain that the only legitimate sanctuary was to be built. The only prophet was, according to the Samaritans, Moses. He is the subject of extraordinary praise and admiration in Samaritan literature. In the end-times a prophet like Moses, the Taheb (the "returning one," from the Aramaic *twb*), will appear and bring back the Era of Divine Favor, or Rhwth - God will again be pleased (Aramaic *rd' y*) with his people. The concept of the Taheb underwent a development in the course of Samaritan history from a prophetic to an eschatological figure.

Samaritan practices, like their beliefs, have much in common with those of the Jews. Samaritans celebrate the feasts based in the Pentateuch but not festivals introduced into Judaism later, such as Purim and Hanukkah.

For the festival of Sukkot, or Tabernacles, the Samaritans build succot within their houses, using the "four species" mentioned in the Bible (Lv. 23:40) to make roofs, a custom that may date from the period of Byzantine persecutions.

The liturgy, other than the pilgrimage, is held in synagogues. Women attend synagogues on Yom Kippur only; at other times, including the Sabbath, they pray and read the Scripture at home.

The leaders of the community are the priests, headed by a high priest, now the oldest priest.

## HOUSE OF WORSHIP

The Samaritan synagogue is always oriented toward Mt. Gerizim. The worshipers stand on rugs spread out on the floor, and before one enters the synagogue he must remove his shoes. In addition, the worshipers must have a head covering while praying. Samaritan synagogues have no pews, so the worshipers pray on carpets spread on the floor; shoes are left at the entrance.

## BELIEFS

The principle beliefs of Samaritanism are as follows:

- There is one God, YHWH, the same God recognized by the Hebrew prophets. Faith is in the unity of the Creator which is absolute unity.
- The Torah is the only true holy book, and was given by God to Moses. The Torah was created before the creation of the world and whoever believes in it is assured a part in the World to Come. The status of the Torah in Samaritanism as the only holy book causes Samaritans to reject the Oral Torah, Talmud, and all prophets and scriptures except for Joshua, whose book in the Samaritan community is significantly different from the Book of Joshua in the Tanakh/Old Testament. Essentially, the authority of all post-Torah sections of the Tanakh, and classical Jewish Rabbinical works (the Talmud, comprising the Mishnah and the Gemara) is rejected. Moses is considered the only prophet who ever arose.
- Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem, is the one true sanctuary chosen by Israel's God. The Samaritans do not recognize the sanctity of Jerusalem and do not recognize Mount Moriah.
- The apocalypse, called "the day of vengeance".

## HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

The Samaritans have retained an offshoot of the Ancient Hebrew script, a High Priesthood, the slaughtering and eating of lambs on Passover eve, and the celebration of the first month's beginning around springtime as the New Year. Yom Teru'ah (the Biblical name for "Rosh Hashanah"), at the beginning of Tishrei, is not considered a New Year as it is in Rabbinic Judaism. The Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the Jewish Masoretic Text as well.

Passover is particularly important in the Samaritan community, climaxing with the sacrifice of up to 40 sheep. The Counting of the Omer remains largely unchanged; however, the week before Shavuot is a unique festival celebrating the continued commitment Samaritanism has maintained since the time of Moses. Shavuot is characterized by nearly day-long services of continuous prayer, especially over the stones on Gerizim traditionally attributed to Joshua. During Sukkot, the sukkah is built inside houses as opposed to traditional outdoor settings.

The restrictions of Yom Kippur are more universal in Samaritanism, with even breastfeeding and the feeding of children being disallowed, and the separation of gender during services is never enforced.

## Sabbath

The seventh day of the week serves as the basic rite for all Samaritan holidays and festivals. On the Sabbath the Samaritans hold four prayers. The first, which is held on the Sabbath eve, lasts for about an hour until the setting of the sun. The second is the Sabbath morning service, which begins, on regular Sabbaths, between three and four o'clock. The third is the afternoon prayer, which is held only on regular Sabbaths and those that fall during the counting of the Omer; it begins at noon and continues for about two hours. The fourth prayer is held at the end of the Sabbath and continues for about half an hour until the setting of the sun.

On Sabbaths and holidays the Samaritans dress in special clothing consisting of a long-sleeved, striped robe. During the prayers a long-sleeved white tallit made out of simple cloth is worn over the robe. The portion of the week is read at home by the head

of the family, after the service, from siddurim. Men perform the Sabbath prayers in the synagogue.

The Samaritans do not light fires on the Sabbath or travel. They eat hot meals prepared beforehand only on the Sabbath eve, when they also kindle the lights that will remain on throughout the Sabbath; neither do they leave the vicinity of their community. The priests wear white miters on the Sabbath, to distinguish from the red ones worn during the week. They also lead the services and religious rites and open the reading of the weekly portion.

### **Festivals**

The Samaritans celebrate seven mo'adim, four of which are called mo'adim and three ḥaggim. The ḥaggim are the pilgrimages ordered in the Torah. The first mo'ed is Passover, which falls on the 15th day of the first month. On the eve of the festival, the Samaritans carry out the ceremony of the sacrifice on Mt. Gerizim. The second mo'ed is the Festival of the Seventh Month, which is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month and is parallel to the Jewish holiday of Rosh Ha-Shanah, except that it is celebrated for one day only. The third mo'ed is the Day of Atonement, which is celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month from evening to evening. The fourth mo'ed is Shemini Azeret, which is celebrated on the 22nd day of the seventh month. The first ḥag is Ḥag ha-Mazzot ("Feast of Unleavened Bread"), which is celebrated on the 21st day of the first month. The Samaritans make a pilgrimage to the top of Mt. Gerizim for the first time (in their cycle of ḥaggim). The second ḥag is the Festival of the Pentecost, which takes place on the day after the seventh Sabbath counted from the first Sabbath following Passover. As a result, it is traditional to celebrate this holiday on a Sunday. At this time the Samaritans make a pilgrimage for the second time. The third ḥag is Sukkot, which takes place on the 15th day of the seventh month, and the Samaritans make their third pilgrimage of the annual cycle. The Samaritans do not celebrate Purim or Ḥanukkah, because these holidays are not mentioned in the Pentateuch and were declared after the split between the Samaritans and the Jews. On the other hand, they celebrate the Independence Day of the State of Israel.

### **CIRCUMCISION**

The Samaritans are obligated to circumcise their sons at the age of eight days, for any male who is not circumcised eight days after birth is not considered an "Israel Samaritan". Because of the limited number of Samaritans who can perform the circumcision ceremony, this act has been handed over to non-Samaritans. The high priest officiates at the circumcision ceremony, which must take place immediately after morning prayers, at dawn. At the end of the ceremony, the high priest gives his blessing by reciting a poem on the subject ascribed to Markah (fourth century). The father of the infant then honors his guests and pays the high priest.

### **THE LAWS OF RITUAL IMPURITY AND PURITY**

These laws are completely binding within the Samaritan community. During her menstrual period, for seven days, the woman is obliged to remain separated from her family, who must wait upon her and supply all her needs. She is forbidden to touch any household vessels, and anything upon which she sits must be rinsed with water. On the seventh day she bathes in water and becomes clean at sundown. A man who has had a nocturnal emission must wash his body in water and is unclean until nightfall. He sits during prayers in a special place outside the worshipers' hall, is forbidden to raise his voice, and is forbidden to touch holy articles until evening comes. A woman giving birth to a son is unclean for 40 days, and if the child is a daughter she is unclean for 80 days, after which she purifies herself (Lev. 12 and 15). The redemption of the circumcised firstborn son takes place only after the mother is cleansed of impurity of her childbirth. The high priest collects the redemption money.

### **MARRIAGE**

Endogamous marriage is the rule; only Jews are allowed to marry in, and those who do (virtually all women) are expected to follow Samaritan religious beliefs and practices. Family relationships are now more egalitarian than in the past, when men dominated the family. Arranged marriages have given way to freedom of choice in selecting a spouse. Families are generally nuclear and small and provide the major arena for socialization into the Samaritan religion.

### **DIVORCE**

Divorce is very rare in the Samaritan community. Divorce releases from betrothal or marriage. Three cases are recognized by Samaritan halakhah: (1) abominable practices committed by either party, or by both together; (2) quarreling that makes life of either party unbearable; (3) immorality, i.e. rumors or proofs that either party maintains extramarital relations. In each case the cause must be confirmed by two or three witnesses. The high priest imposes upon the applicants a period for appeasement of at least a year, and when all efforts have failed the man and the woman go to the house of the high priest together with a limited number of relatives. The high priest reads the bill of divorce in the hearing of the couple, tears the marriage contract, and removes the rings from their fingers. The divorced woman may not remarry her husband if either she or he marries another after the divorce. The guilty party must pay damages, as fixed by the high priest.

### **MOURNING**

Samaritans bury their dead in their cemetery on Mount Gerizim. They place the corpse in a coffin with its head pointing in the direction opposite to the peak of Mt. Gerizim in order that his face should be toward the mountain. After the death, they read the Pentateuch all night long. On next morning they wash the corpse. Anyone touching it becomes unclean and is obliged to bathe. They place the body in the coffin and carry it to the cemetery. When the party returns from the burial, a family unrelated to the dead invites those who were at the funeral to a meal of comfort. Samaritans mourn their dead seven days. They do not stay indoors seven days as do Jews, but satisfy themselves by visiting the grave and delivering memorial addresses every morning and evening. On the seventh day the mourning is over. At the end of 30 days the relatives of the dead invite the Samaritans to a memorial meal, and this officially concludes the mourning ceremonies. They display no external signs of mourning for the dead, they tear no garment nor do they place earth upon the head. On the Sabbath the whole of the Pentateuch is read in the home of the relatives of the dead. This is repeated daily in order to purify the soul of the deceased. For a year after the death, no festivity takes place in the house of the deceased.

### **CALENDAR**

The Samaritan calendar is a hybrid, combining a lunar year of twelve months (each twenty-nine to thirty days long, adding up to 354 days) with a solar year calculated on a seasonal basis. Like the Jews, the Samaritans insert a "leap month" every few

years.

#### PILGRIMAGE

Three times a year - at Pesah-Massot, Shavu'ot, and Sukkot - the Samaritans make a pilgrimage to the top of Mount Gerizim. In the course of the pilgrimage they visit a number of sacred sites on the mountain, including the place where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac, and conclude the pilgrimage on the so-called Eternal Hill, a flat rock that the Samaritans associate with the most significant events in their religious history.

## SHABAKISM

Shabakism is the name given to the beliefs and practices of the Shabak people of Kurdistan region and around Mosul in Iraq. A majority of Shabaks regard themselves as Shia, and a minority identify as Sunnis. Despite this, their actual faith and rituals differ from Islam, and have characteristics that make them distinct from neighboring Muslim populations. These include features from Christianity including confession, and the consumption of alcohol, and the fact that Shabaks often go on pilgrimage to Yazidi shrines. Nevertheless, the Shabak people also go on pilgrimages to Shia holy cities such as Najaf and Karbala, and follow many Shiite teachings.

The organization of Shabakism appears to be much like that of a Sufi order: adult laymen (Murids) are bound to spiritual guides (pîrs or Murshids) who are knowledgeable in matters of religious doctrine and ritual.

The primary Shabak religious text is the Buyruk or Kitab al-Managib (Book of Exemplary Acts) and is written in Turkoman. Shabaks combine elements of Sufism with their own interpretation of divine reality. According to Shabaks, divine reality is more advanced than the literal interpretation of Qur'an which is known as Sharia. Shabak spiritual guides are known as Pirs, and they are well versed in the prayers and rituals of the sect. Pirs are under the leadership of the Supreme Head or Baba. Pirs act as mediators between divine power and ordinary Shabaks. Their beliefs form a syncretic that the beliefs of the Yarsan closely resemble those of the Shabak people.

Shabaks also consider the poetry of Ismail I to be revealed by God, and they recite Ismail's poetry during religious meetings.

The faith's primary religious text is the Bryuk, also known as the "Book of Exemplary Acts," written in Turkoman.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVRirIPEnR0>

Shabak men wear traditional Arab clothes and, other than the difference of language, their villages can hardly be distinguished from those of Arabs.

The Shabaks have special traditions, such as an annual holiday that commemorates the people who died that year.

Shabaks have a traditional burial ceremony called Jinanguan.

# YAZDANISM



Yazdânism, or the Cult of Angels, is a proposed pre-Islamic, native religion of the Kurds. The term was introduced by Kurdish scholar Mehrdad Izady to represent what he considers the "original" religion of the Kurds as the primary inhabitants of the Zagros Mountains, until their increasing Islamization in the course of the 10th century.

According to Izady, Yazdânism is now continued in the denominations of Yazidism, Yarsanism, and Alevism. The three traditions subsumed under the term Yazdânism are primarily practiced in relatively isolated communities, from Khurasan to Anatolia and parts of western Iran.

In Yazdani theologies, an absolute transcendental God (Hâk or Haq) encompasses the whole universe. He binds together the cosmos with his essence, and manifests as the heft sirr (the "Heptad", "Seven Mysteries", "Seven Angels"), who sustain universal life and can incarnate in persons, bâbâ ("Gates" or "Avatar").

Yazdânism teaches the cyclic nature of the world with reincarnation of the deity and of people being a common feature, traversing incarnations of the soul of a man into human form or an animal or even a plant. These religions also teach that there are seven cycles of the universe, six of which have already happened, while the seventh one is yet to unfold. In each cycle, there is a set of six reincarnated persons (one female, five male) who will herald the new cycle and preside over it (the seventh one in the set being the ever-lasting, the ever-present Almighty).

The principal feature of Yazdânism is the belief in seven benevolent divine beings that defend the world from an equal number of malign entities. While this concept exists in its purest form in Yârsânism and Yazidism, it evolves into "seven saints/spiritual persons", which are called "Yedi Ulu Ozan" in Alevism. Another important feature of these religions is a doctrine of reincarnation.

## ✓ **ALEVI (this is contested; most Alevi consider themselves to be Shia or Sufi Muslims, but a minority adhere to the Yazdani interpretation)**



Bağlamahas – Alevi powerful symbol of group identity

Alevism is a syncretic, heterodox form of Islam, following Shia, Sufi, Sunni and local traditions, whose adherents follow the mystical (bâtenî) teachings of Ali, the Twelve Imams, and a descendant - the 13th century Alevi saint Haji Bektash Veli.

Alevism is a syncretic religion, meaning their traditions and beliefs draw from a number of different faiths. Many Alevis will quite proudly attest to the fact that throughout its history it has incorporated elements from a diverse array of religions including but not limited to Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Altaic Shamanism.

Alevis are found primarily in Turkey among ethnic Turks and Kurds, and make up between 10-25% of Turkey's population, the largest branches of Islam there after the majority Sunni.

When it comes to belief in the almighty, Alevis do not promote fear of God. Instead they always say a person must love God.

### RITUALS

The Alevis do not build or use mosques but come together for worship in typical Turkish meeting houses, called cem evi, under the leadership of an elder, known as a dede. Once or twice a year the whole community gets together to pray and discuss social issues. Integrated in their many rituals are music and dance, indicating their relationship to Sufi worship.

Prayers have at some point in history been abolished, due to security, reflecting a problematic relationship with mainstream Islam.

Unlike most other Muslim practices, Alevi rituals are conducted mostly in Turkish, and some in Kurdish.

### LIFE STYLE

Alevis do not wear any distinctive dress, and cannot be discerned from other Muslim Turks. Central values to Alevism is that work and education are among the greatest acts.

### WOMAN

In Alevism, men and women are regarded as equals, in both sacred and secular spaces. Alevi women worship side by side with men (men and women pray together in the same room), are less likely to veil and more likely to freely interact with unrelated men. Alevi women are not required to wear a headscarf or other bodily coverings. Alevi women are free to dress in modern clothing, Alevi women are encouraged to get the best education they can, and Alevi women are free to go into any occupation they choose.

### FASTING

Alevis who fast generally do not observe their major fast for 30 days during the month of Ramazan. The main Alevi fast is held

during the first 12 days of the Muslim month of Muharrem (Muharrem or Mâtem Orucu), which comes 20 days after the Feast of Sacrifice (Kurban Bayramı). Then Alevi fast for 12 days in memory of the 12 imams and the martyr Hussein. Another Alevi fast is the three-day Hızır fast (Hızır Orucu), generally observed 13-14-15 February.

#### OFFERINGS

Alevi are not expected to give Zakat in the Islamic mode, and there is no set formula or prescribed amount for charity. A common method of Alevi almsgiving is through donating food (especially sacrificial animals) to be shared with worshippers and guests. Alevi also donate money to be used to help the poor, to support the religious, educational and cultural activities of Alevi centers and organizations (dergâh, vakıf, dernek), and to provide scholarships for students.

#### RELIGIOUS TEXTS

The Alevi do not acknowledge the Koran as God's word because they believe the text to have been corrupted by alterations. They recognize it, but it plays little role within their sacred texts. Most important of the latter are the Buyruks, which contain the basic principles of Alevi belief plus legends, guidelines for the rituals, religious poetry, moral advice, narratives from early Islamic history, and instructions for the "path." Buyruks are written in Turkish, but contain some prayers in Arabic. There are basically two kinds of Buyruk: those (the more frequent) traced back to the Safavids and called Şeyh Safi Buyruğu, and those attributed to the sixth Shiite Imam Jafar al-Sadiq.

#### CALENDAR OF FEAST

The Alevi calendar of feasts includes the Feast of Sacrifice (Kurban Bayramı). Nevruz, the Iranian New Year at spring equinox, which they equate with 'Ali's birthday, is celebrated with a special cem, the Nevruz Cemi. In the month of Muharrem, the time of mourning in remembrance of the passion of al-Husayn and the Battle of Kerbela (680 ad), Alevi fast for twelve days, the Fast of Grief (matem orucu). The end of this fast is celebrated with the Ashura feast. Iranian Shiites celebrate Ashura on the 10th of Muharrem, but Alevi three days later, after the fast. Another three-day fast is the mid-February Hızır fast in honor of the legendary Hızır, a popular helper-saint. The conclusion of the Hızır fast is celebrated with a special cem, the Hızır Cemi. Specifically Alevi feasts are in honor of Hacı Bektaş and his disciple Abdal Musa. Alevi also have an additional commemoration day in Muharrem for al-Husayn. Hıdrellez, the night of May 5th to 6th, is also observed: but this is not a uniquely Alevi celebration.

#### DEATH & MOURNING

The period of mourning lasts 40 days during which there is no music played and no poem reading. Alevi believe in reincarnation. In Alevi villages, no food is generally cooked in a home where there has been a death. In Elbistan, no food is cooked for three days; it is brought by neighbors. These visits are called sofralı gitme (loosely translated, "meal visits."). In Adana, this lasts for seven days, and is known as ölü aşı (dead person food). Seven, forty and fifty-two days after the death, meals are served, and aşure is made as well.

#### SACRED PLACES

Some of the most frequently visited sites are the shrines of Shahkulu and Karacaahmet (both in Istanbul), Abdal Musa (Antalya), Seyit Gazi (Eskishehir), the annual celebrations held at Hacibektas (16 August) and Sivas (the Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Etkinlikleri, 23-24 June).

#### IMPORTANT PLACES

For the Alevi, Karbala (the site where Ali's son Hussein was killed) in Iraq is an important place.

#### PILGRIMAGES

While Alevism does not recognize an obligation to go on pilgrimage, visiting ziyaret and performing dua at the tombs of Alevi-Bektaşlı saints or Pirs is quite common. Some Alevi make pilgrimages to mountains and other natural sites believed to be imbued with holiness.

#### MARRIAGE

In traditional Alevism marriage is regarded as a sacred institution. Alevi people are monogamous. So a person cannot marry more than once, unlike in Islam.

#### DIVORCE

Except in very exceptional circumstances no divorce or separation is allowed. In the Alevi faith, women are sacred and to divorce a woman is the most difficult thing.

#### DIET

Alevi dietary taboos are in accordance with Shia practice, though the consumption of alcohol is permitted and, in many groups is even part of the rites.

#### PLACE OF WORSHIP

Some of the differences that mark Alevi from mainstream Muslims are the use of cemevi halls rather than mosques. Alevi worship takes place in assembly houses (cemevi) rather than mosques. The explanation given for the deviations above is that mosques were desanctified when Ali was murdered in a mosque.

#### WORSHIP

They do not condemn Muslims who do worship in the traditional ways but consider the Alevi worship as being on a higher level and therefore closer to the divine. The central Alevi corporate worship service is the Cem ceremony.

#### CEM

The central ceremony of Alevism is the cem (ayin-i cem). These are held periodically, frequently once a year; but there are communities in which it is celebrated at shorter intervals, even weekly, especially in winter. Furthermore, there are special cems for certain feasts. Cems today are held in congregational houses (cemevi) built from the 1990s on for this purpose, in Turkey as well as in the diaspora. The ceremony, in which both men and women participate, is guided by the dede. The ritual language is usually Turkish; among the Kurdish Alevi either Turkish or Kurdish is used. The ceremony can begin only if all the members are in peace among themselves. If this is not the case, the problem between the two parties is referred to the dede, who publicly mediates and attempts to settle the conflict. The cem ceremony itself includes religious instruction, the

remembrance of the community's dead, the confession of individual wrongdoings and the intended amends for them, prayers, ritual dancing (semah), ritual drinking (dolu) of wine, arrack, or sherbet, the performance of religious songs (nefes/deyiş), a common meal (lokma), and animal sacrifice (kurban). An integral part of the cem are the "twelve services" (oniki hizmet) carried out by twelve helpers designated by the dede before the ritual. These services include supervision of the orderly run, the lighting of the "eternal light," lute music, the cleaning of the house of prayer, distribution of ritual food etc. Today, cems are open to the public, but for most of Alevi history, the ceremony was practiced secretly in private houses.

#### PRAYING

Alevis do not pray openly five times a day. They don't have special praying times. They pray when they want. An exact prayer form does not exist, except secde.

#### RELIGIOUS POETRY

Religious poetry plays an important role in Alevism, and these songs and poems are also an important part of Turkish folk poetry and folk music. They are called nefes ("breath") or deyiş ("saying") and are sung by bards (aşiks) at religious gatherings, backed by the saz, a long-necked lute. These songs and poems are a key to Alevi religious concepts and ideas.

For the Alevi, the bağlamahas become a powerful symbol of group identity.

## ✓ YARSANI



Tambur - sacred symbol of Yarsanism and is played during religious ceremonies

Yarsanism is a syncretic religion. Its followers, known as the Yarsani, are a religious group primarily found in western Iran and eastern Iraq, and are mostly ethnic Goran Kurds, though there are also smaller groups of Turk, Persian, Lori, Azeri and Arab adherents. The total number of Yarsanis is about 5,000,000, of which an estimated 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 are in Iran. Because many Yarsanis hide their religion due to fears of persecution by the Islamic Republic of Iran, there is no exact count of their population.

The central religious book of Yarsanis is called the Kalâm-e Saranjâm.

The goal of Yarsanism is to teach humans about how to achieve ultimate truth. Yarsani believe sun and fire are holy things and follow the principles of equalization, purity, righteousness, and oneness, which leads some researchers to find Mithraic roots in this religion.

The followers of Yarsanism perform their rituals and ceremonies in secret.

The Yarsani follow the mystical teachings of Sultan Sahak. From the Yarsani point of view, the universe is composed of two distinct yet interrelated worlds: the internal (Bâtinî) and the external (zâhirî), each having its own order and rules. Although humans are only aware of the outer world, their lives are governed according to the rules of the inner world.

Among other important pillars of their belief system are that the Divine Essence has successive manifestations in human form (mazhariyyat) and the belief in transmigration of the soul (dunaduni in Kurdish).

There is no compulsion or exclusion in Yarsan - anyone who chooses to follow its precepts is welcome. The Yarsani faith's features include millenarism, Innatism, egalitarianism, metempsychosis, angelology, divine manifestation and dualism. Many of these features are found in Yazidism, and they also have many things in common with Zoroastrians and Christians.

Yarsanism explicitly reject class, caste and rank, which sets them apart from the Yezidis and Zoroastrians.

#### HOLY SITES

Two important sanctuaries of the Yarsani are the tomb of Bâbâ Yâdgâr about 40km away from Sarpol-e Zahab in Kermanshah Province and the tomb of Dawoud at Zarde about three kilometres east of Sarpol-e Zahab. Another important shrine is that of Sultan Suhak in Sheykhān near Perdîvar bridge in Kermanshah Province. Also important are the tombs of Pir Benjamin and Pir Musi in the town of Kerend in Kermanshah Province, Iran.

#### PILGRIMAGE

All Yarsani males must pilgrimage to the shrine of the Sultan Sahak. This can be done at any time.

#### RELIGIOUS BOOK

Central religious book is called the Kalâm-e Saranjâm, written in the 15th century based on the teachings of Sultan Sahak.

#### CUSTOMS

One of Yarsani men's apparent signs is to have a full moustache, because in the holy book Kalâm-e Saranjâm it says that every man has to have a moustache to take part in their religious rites. The concourse of Yarsanis is called the "jam khana", they gather there and they use "Tambour" for meditation.

#### KHANDANS OR SPIRITUAL HOUSES

Yarsanism is organised into spiritual houses or Khandans. Every Yarsani therefore belongs to one specific khandan, which is led by a spiritual leader called a say-yed, to whom each member must swear obedience. The say-yed is the spiritual leader of the community and is normally present during the ceremonies attended by the followers. Say-yeds are the only ones allowed to have full access to the religious texts of Yarsanism, and have traditionally competed with each other to have the largest number of followers. The position of Say-yed is hereditary, being passed down through the generations from the original founders. As

the say-yed are considered spiritual 'parents', it is the tradition for them not to marry their followers.

#### THE 12 FAMILIES OF THE YARSANI

The original 7 families or Sadat-e Haqiqat established during the time of Sultan were Shah Ebrahim, Baba Yadegar, Ali Qalandar, Khamush, Mir Sur, Seyyed Mosaffa and Hajji Babu Isa. The 5 families established after Sultan Sahak are Atesh Bag, Baba Heydar, Zolnour, Shah Hayas and Hajj Nematollah.

#### KEY FIGURES

The Haft Tan "Seven Archangels" are key figures in the Yârsân belief system and their history. The only female among them is Khatun-e Rezbar, the mother of Sultan Sahak.

#### MARRIAGE

Yarsan people believe in monogamy that a man is permitted to marry only one wife. Temporary marriage isn't common among Yarsan people. Yarsan people don't consider religion as requirement part for marriages.

#### WORSHIP

In Yari religion practices (every Thursday) take place in Jamkhaneh (specific place for performing Yari praying like mosque ) But any place can act as a Jamkhaneh, provided that it has sufficient space for constructing circular seating (adaptation of sky circular) for participants. The circle center is considered to be God's place, from circle center God shines to all prayers similarly. Jamkhaneh ceremony has its own rituals In Jamkhaneh, Sarkalam (who prays for others) along with Tambour (a kind of music instrument such as guitar) playing reads kalameh haq (religious book). At the time of performance of blessing, participants are not allowed to leave the assembly. Until the ceremony ends, the number of participants should not be less than seven persons. The participants should be mature, wise Sarsepordan (literally a person who entrusts his head mean a process they should pass to allow to participate and inter to this religion something like Baptism in Christianity). Participants should observe the following rules: wearing cap to observe cleanliness, and wearing the fasting belt as a symbol of readiness to help other people and the connection of individual souls to each other's body.

#### FAST AND FESTIVALS

The followers of Yari are bound to fast for three days in Aban (October/November). This is observed because in this month Sultan Sahak and his followers were besieged. The followers give their spiritual and moral commitment to fasting, and after three days have a spiritual solidarity with the poor and indigent, and can understand their hunger. Thus on the day, which is called Khawendkar, a rooster and some of rice are blessed. The Yari are bound on this day not have any animosity towards none, and to kiss very sincerely the hands of all men and women old and young, for loyalty, peace and brotherhood.

Yarsan celebrate two festivals which are, Newroz (Kurdish New Year) and Xawenkar. Newroz is traditional and ancient Yersinias' national feast which is highly regarded as sanctified and special.

#### RELIGIOUS SONG

The Yari's religious songs called Kelam for the establishment of spiritual growth, to bind together the followers and to keep their moral commitments alive. The different songs are selected from the religious books and are accompanied by music on the Tambur. They can be sung in groups or solo.

There is a special sang for any certain ceremonial events like death, or praying and so on.

#### WOMAN

Women are not allowed to learn any of the secrets of the faith, or be active participants in the jams (although women do play music sometimes in larger performances). They function primarily as a support system for the men. They are not valued or given any special roles or rights, in spite of the belief that one of the divine incarnations was a woman. Generally, women are the most ignorant of the teachings of Sultan Sahak.

## ✓ YAZIDI



Melek Taus, Yazidy Holy Symbol

They practice a syncretic religion influenced by pre-Islamic Assyrian traditions, Sufi and Shiite Islam, Nestorian Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Their rich oral tradition is their primary way of passing on their beliefs, which makes it complicated for scholars and historians to pin down the nuances of their religion.

Yezidi's believe in one God (Xwede) who created the universe and then left it in the capable hands of his seven mightiest angels. God is uninterested in the affairs of earth, even if he is all forgiving and merciful. He has left the workings of the world to the governing of Tawsi Melek (the Peacock Angel) who is both his servant and an occasional manifestation of himself.

The central figure in the Yezidi faith is this Tawsi Melek. It is believed that Tawsi Melek is the Yezidi's direct connection with God. They pray to and venerate him as God, though they do recognize a distinction between the two. Some would refer to the peacock angel as God's 'alter ego'.

Yezidis believe that they are a separate people from all others that walk the earth. They consider themselves to be born only of Adam, not Adam and Eve, and therefore to marry or commune with a non-Yezidi is to lose the purity of their race. One cannot convert to Yezidism, but one can certainly and irrevocably be removed from it. They do believe in the eternity of the soul, but

not necessarily in heaven. Instead, souls transmigrate or are reincarnated, presumably back into the Yezidi community. The Yazidi community is based in Iraq, near their primary shrine, Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir's tomb in Lalish, near Mosul. Yazidis can also be found in Iran, Syria and Turkey, though many have migrated to Europe and America since the first Gulf War.

Their population is estimated to number as many as 600,000 people, though the recent violence in Iraq has most likely decreased their ranks.

**The Peacock Angel, Melek Taus** - The concept of Melek Taus is the most misunderstood part of the Yezidi religion, and is one of the reasons why their community has suffered such historical persecution. They believe that once God created Adam and Eve, he ordered the angels to bow to his creations. While the other angels did so, Melek Taus was the only one to refuse, because he believed that he should submit to no one but the Supreme God. He was then thrown into Hell, until his tears of remorse quenched the fires and he became reconciled to God. He now serves as an intermediary between God and humanity.

#### SCRIPTURES?ORAL TRADITION

Yezidi's don't have a written text that is has been passed down throughout the generations. Many of the traditions of their faith have been passed down through stories and songs that can only be spoken by their holy men.

#### RITUALS

Yezidis follow several rituals that are similar to other religions. They do pray, fast, observe holy days, and go on pilgrimages.

#### PRAY

No Yezidi is required to pray, nor are there set times of corporate or individual prayer. The most religious do pray at 5 times during the day; dawn, sunrise, noon afternoon and sunset. When they pray they must first wash their hands and face, cross their arms over their body, and lift their faces to the sun. There are no rote prayers to be said. All prayers are addressed to Tawsi Melek or Shams (the sun). Most prayers are completed while standing and are ended by kissing the hem of their garment or an east facing wall.

#### FASTING

Fasting is usually only done for three days every December. Again, this is not a requirement but something the most religious do. It is done in memory of Sultan Ezi. Those in higher levels of the religious and social strata do fast for 40 days during the summer and during the winter.

#### HOLY DAYS

The Yezidi holy day is Wednesday. Much like the sacred days of other religions, no work is to be done on the holy day. Those who are close enough to visit a shrine would do so on this day. However, there is no formal requirement to meet with other community members or have any kind of corporate worship. Each Yezidi is to pass the day as they wish. Other holy days require pilgrimages.

#### HOLY FESTIVALS

Yezidi religious year includes four holy festivals:

- The New Year
- The Feast of Sacrifice
- The Feast of Seven Days, Sept 23-30
- The first Friday of December feast following three days of fasting.

#### RITES OF PASSAGE

There are six rites of passage that all Yezidi males and most females will pass through. They are haircut, baptism, circumcision, brother (or sister) of the hereafter, wedding, and funeral.

#### FIRST HAIRCUT PARTY

Yezidi boys are not allowed to have their hair cut until they are six months to a year old. Tradition calls for the child's 'godfather' (brother of the hereafter) to cut off a portion of the forelock and keep it. Gifts are given to the boy's family and he is officially considered part of Yezidi society.

#### BAPTISM

Baptism at Lalish Girls must wait to join society until they can be baptized. This is usually done when they are very young, but can be done at any time in a person's life. The child (either male or female) is baptized in the waters of the baptistry of Lalish (the most holy shrine of the Yezidi). The only people present for the baptism are the holy man, the child, and the child's parents. Baptism is more than just joining society, it also indicates that the child is now a servant of Sultan Ezi.

#### CIRCUMCISION

Males are circumcised twenty days after their baptism. The parents choose a kefir for this occasion. The kefir is generally chosen from a caste with which the child is not permitted to intermarry as the kefir is considered a brother to the child. Often the kefir is someone from outside the Yezidi faith.

#### BROTHERS FOR THE AFTERLIFE

The brothers of the hereafter are chosen during a lifetime. Every Yezidi must have two to help and protect them as they navigate the rites of life. Men may only choose from the two upper classes of society, whereas women are free to choose any they wish. However, should a woman marry, her husband's brother or sister will then become her brother (or sister).

#### ARRANGED MARRIAGES

Most marriages happen young (15-16 years old) and are arranged by the fathers of the couple. There is a bride price paid by the groom's family and the wedding must be carried out by a holy man. The bride undergoes the application of henna, is arrayed in red and is escorted from her family home to that of her groom. There is usually a sheep slaughtered in sacrifice, followed by feasting and dancing. Marriage is only allowed within the Yezidi community, but even that is limited by castes and social standing. Marriages can occur at any time during the year, except in the holy month of April.

#### DEATH

A funeral does not denote the passing of a soul, but only the end of its time in that body. The soul will transmigrate to a new body after undergoing its Judgement Day and will have no remembrance of its previous life. The corpse is washed, dressed in a white shroud, and placed in a sarcophagus. Soil from the shrine of Sheik Adi is placed in the mouth, and the body is buried with its head facing east.

After the funeral, a seer is asked by the family to determine the destiny of the deceased. If the soul is seen to have entered returned as a Yezidi the family celebrates with a feast. If however, it is found to be housed in any other living being the family offers sacrifices to 'redeem' their soul. For one week after this, the brother of the hereafter visits the family. His job is to console, sing praise to Tawsi Melek, and share happy memories of the deceased. After four days, an ox is sacrificed on the tomb and its meat is given to passersby as alms.







