



Welcome to World Religions

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I. What is
a religion,
anyway?

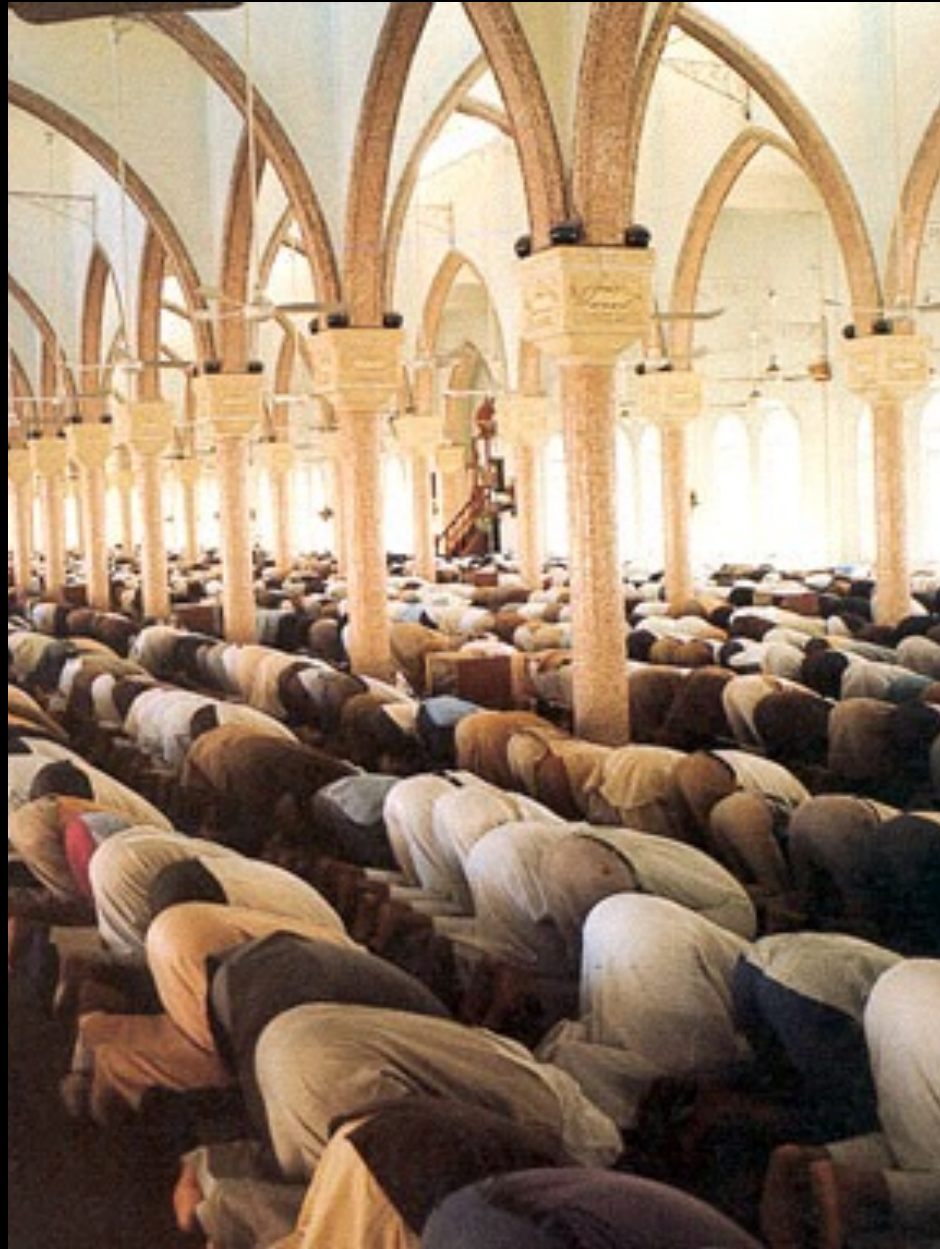
“A religion is a system of beliefs and practices that provides values to give life meaning and coherence by directing a person toward transcendence.”

Winfried Corduan



Multifaceted Nature of Religion*

- Ritual
- Stories
- Doctrinal
- Ethical
- Social
- Experiential



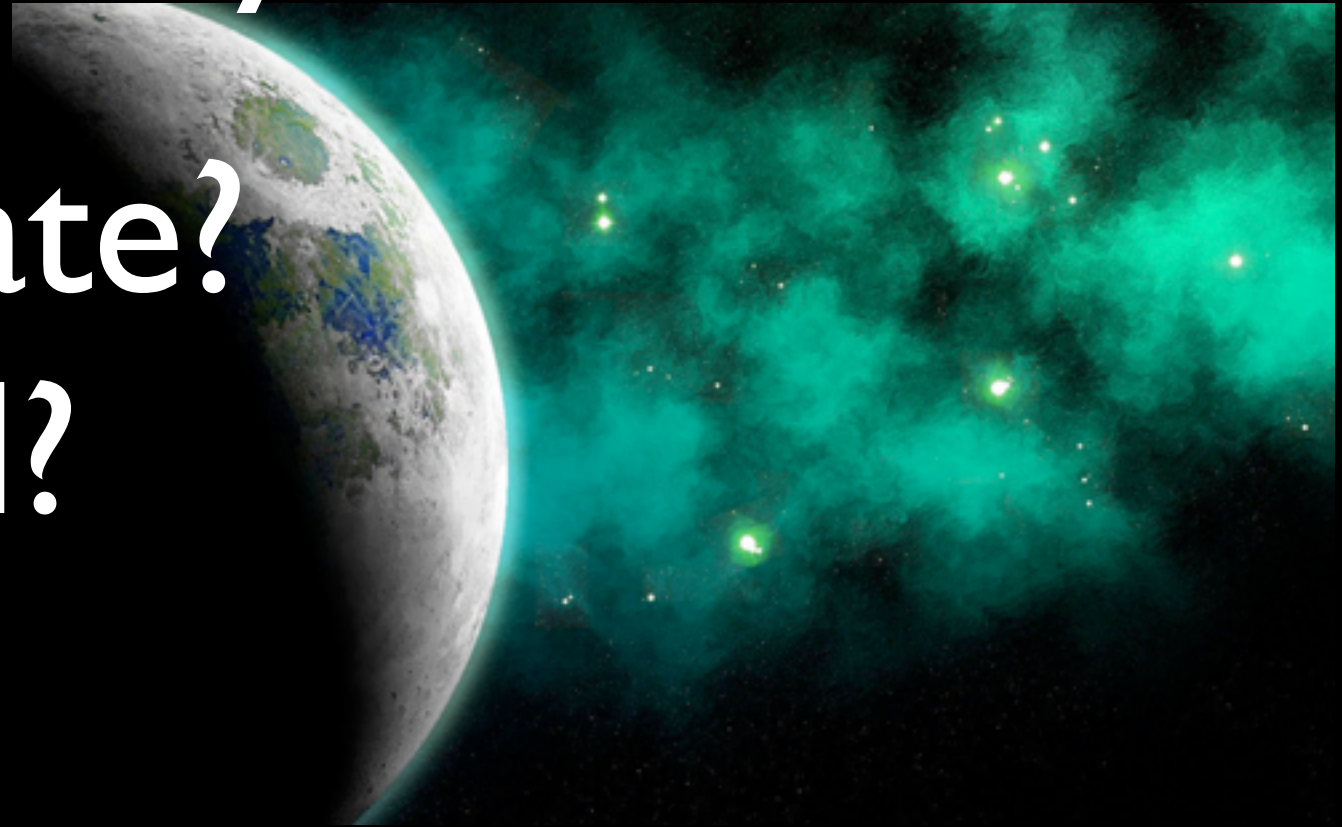
* Ninian Smart

Universal Questions

Universal Questions

I. Ultimate reality

What is ultimate?
Is there a God?



Universal Questions

2. Human Beings

What is a human?

Who am I?

What is my purpose?

What is the meaning of my life?



Universal Questions

3. The Human Condition

What is wrong with humanity?

Why is there so much suffering and death?

What is the problem and what is the solution?



Universal Questions

4. Morals and Values



What is moral behavior?

What should I value?

Universal Questions

5. Destiny

What is human destiny?



What is my own destiny---
what happens when I die?

Worldview



2. Why study other religions?



OUR RELIGIOUS
WORLD &
THE NEW GLOBAL
VILLAGE

Our Religious World

More than 8 in 10 (84%) worldwide identify with a religious group

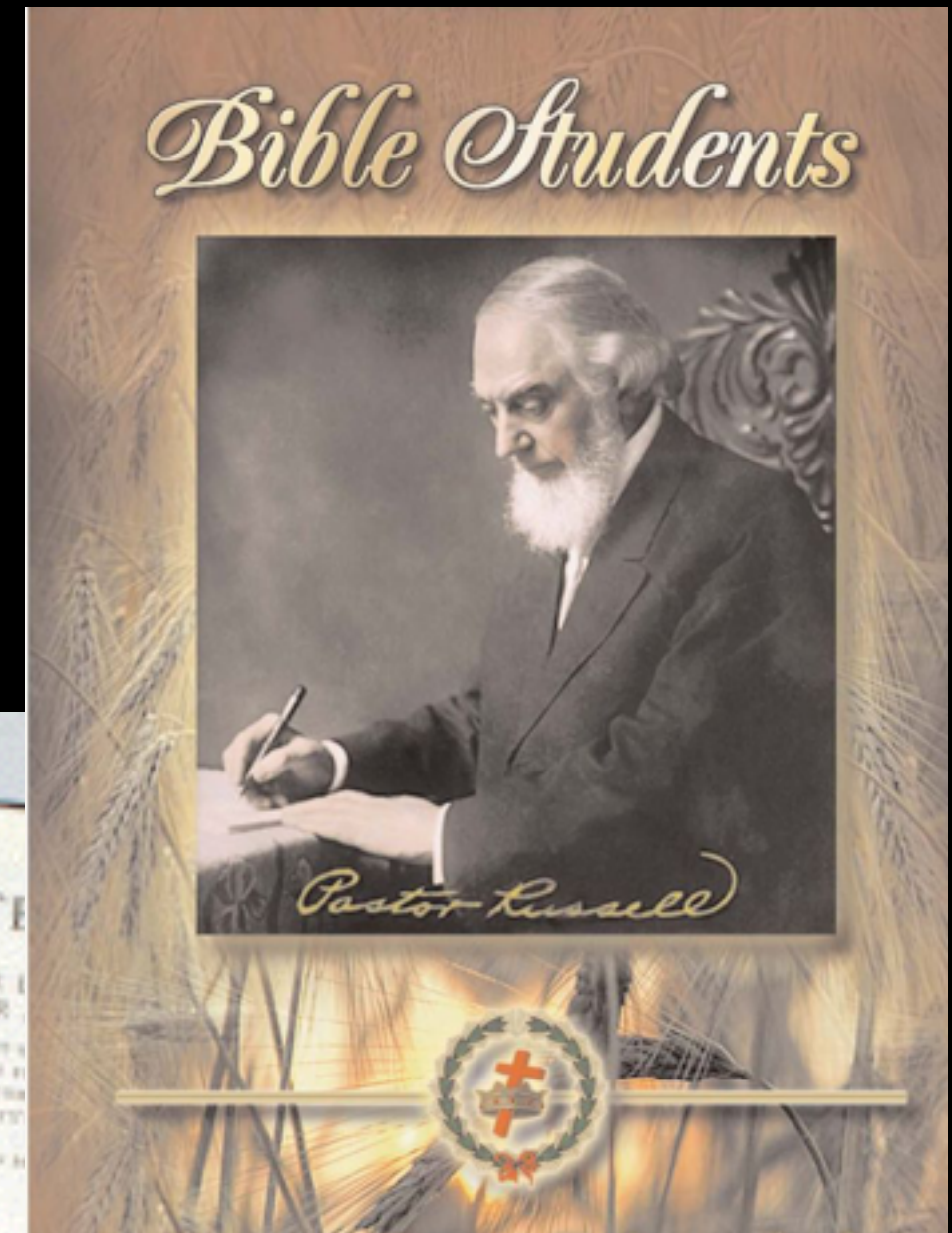
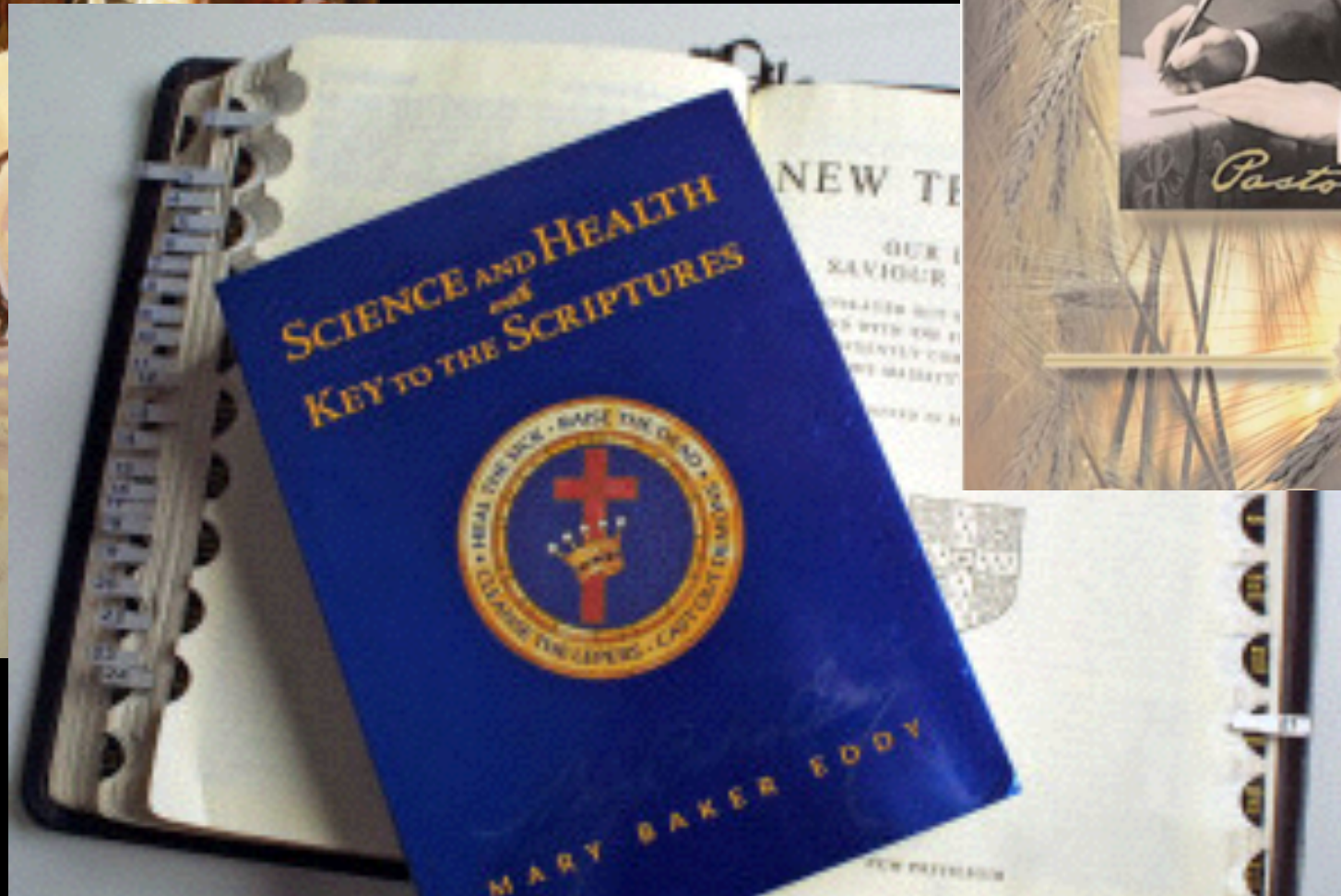


Our Religious World

- 2.2 BILLION CHRISTIANS
- 1.6 BILLION MUSLIMS (ISLAM)
- 1 BILLION HINDUS
- 300 MILLION TRADITIONAL CHINESE
- 100 MILLION TRIBAL
- 500 MILLION BUDDHISTS
- 25 MILLION SIKHS
- 14 MILLION JEWS
- 15 MILLION MORMONS

America's changing religious landscape

America's changing religious landscape



Swami Vivekenanda



“We Hindus have now been placed, under God’s providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the west are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves . . . enlightening the world on the problems of human existence. . . Once more, the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life.



“ I am anxiously awaiting for the day when mighty minds will arise, gigantic spiritual minds who will be ready to go forth from India to the ends of the world, to teach spirituality and renunciation, those ideas which come from the forests of India and belong to Indian soil only.



“Up India! And conquer the world with your spirituality! Ours is a religion of which Buddhism, with all its greatness is a rebel child and of which Christianity is a very patchy imitation.”



Swami Vivekenanda

America's changing religious landscape



1965 Immigration and Nationality Acts

America's changing religious landscape

- Christians: 243 million
- Jews: 5.7 million (2.7 million religious Jews)
- Muslims (Islam): 2.7 million (6.2 by 2030)
- Hindus: 1.8 million
- Buddhists: 3.6 million
- Sikhs: 300,000
- Other religions: 2 million
- “Unaffiliated”: 50.9 million

The global nature of the great commission

Jesus came toward them and addressed them. “All authority in heaven and on earth,” he said, “has been given to me. So you must go and make all the nations into disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe everything I have commanded you. And look: I am with you, every single day, to the very end of the age.” Matt. 28:18-20

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Greek “*ethne*”
ethnic groups

The challenge of the world's great religions

“For the first since the Constantine victory in AD 312 and its consequences, the Christian Church is heading toward real and spiritual encounter with the great non-Christian religions. The fast growing interdependency of the whole world forces the existence and the vitality of these religions upon us, and makes them a challenge to the church to manifest in new terms its spiritual and intellectual integrity and value.” Hendrik Kraemer

3. How can I best understand other religions?

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- Let each religion speak for itself.
- Be aware of significant diversity within the religions.
- Realize there may be tension between various branches of a particular religion.

3. How can I best understand other religions?

- Know that levels of adherence vary widely.
- Recognize that nobody fully lives up to the high ideals of their faith and every religion has members that give the religion a bad name.
- Acknowledge what is good.

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

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CREATION

- IMAGO DEI; all human beings are created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27)
- “There is within the human mind, and by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity.”
John Calvin

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

CREATION

- God has created human beings with a moral awareness. (Romans 2:14-15)

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

GENERAL REVELATION

- Romans 1:20; Ps. 19:1-4 God's eternal power and divine nature have been proclaimed through creation.
- Acts 14:15-17 God "has not left himself without testimony"

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

GENERAL REVELATION

- The religious dimension of human life is a response, to some degree, to God's general revelation.
- All truth is God's truth; some truth can be found in all religions.

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

THE EFFECTS OF SIN

- Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.”
- Isaiah 53:6 “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.”
- Romans 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

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THE EFFECTS OF SIN

- Sin has affected every aspect of the human person.
- Therefore, religion and religious expression manifest the effects of sin.

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

EVIL INFLUENCE

- 1 Corinthians 10:20 “The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God...”
- 2 Corinthians 4:4 “The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...”
- Religious activity and belief can be influenced by the Adversary.

4. What is a biblical approach to other religions?

Uniqueness of Christ

- “The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” John 1:14
- “I am the way, the truth and the life.” John 14:6

5. What should be my attitude toward people of other faiths?

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- First and foremost, love.
- Be humble and teachable.
- Live at peace.
- Treat others with gentleness and respect.

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Jeremiah 35



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- First and foremost, love.
- Live at peace.
- Treat others with gentleness and respect.
- Be humble and teachable.
- Stay on message.
- Rely on the Spirit
- Remember who is the enemy.

Next Week:



HINDUISM