Available from the authors who defined the course...

**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION:**
A READER, 12e
©2009
Samovar | Porter | McDaniel
496 Pages | Paperbound
0495554189 | 9780495554189

The perfect partner to enhance your students’ learning experience!

Order the reader packaged with the main text.
Use ISBN: 0495782262 | 9780495782261

*Readers in countries and cultures to truly reflect the diversity in intercultural communications.*

In the Twelfth Edition, you’ll find:

- Thirty of the 47 readings are entirely new to this edition, and 25 were written exclusively for the text. Six authors have revised selections that appeared in previous editions.
- Expanded international coverage includes work from prominent scholars from Germany, Korea, China, Japan, Kenya, Israel, and India.
- Numerous new essays on religion, world view, identity, and spirituality introduce topics that reflect culture’s most important beliefs and profoundly influence how people communicate.

Order a review copy today!
Visit [http://servicedirect.cengage.com](http://servicedirect.cengage.com) or fax a request to 1.859.647.5020.

**Communication Between CULTURES**

Larry A. Samovar
San Diego State University, Emeritus

Richard E. Porter
California State University, Emeritus

Edwin R. McDaniel
Aichi Shukutoku University

WADSWORTH
CENGAGE Learning

Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States
Contents

Preface xi

CHAPTER 1 COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE: THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE 1

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION PRESENT AND FUTURE 2

Globalization 2

World Trade and International Business 3

Technology and Travel 4

Competition for Natural Resources 6

International Conflict and Security 7

Environmental Challenges 8

World Health Issues 8

Shifting Populations 9

Immigration 9

The Aging U.S. Population 10

Multicultural Society 11

DEFINING OUR TERMS 12

Intercultural Communication 12

The Dominant Culture 12

Co-Cultures 13

COMMUNICATION 14

The Functions of Communication 15

Communication Allows You to Gather Information About Other People 15

Communication Helps Fulfill Interpersonal Needs 15

CULTURE 22

Defining Culture 23

The Basic Functions of Culture 24

Elements of Culture 24

History 25

Religion 25

Values 25

Social Organizations 26

Language 26

Characteristics of Culture 28

Culture Is Learned 27

Culture Is Shared 36

Culture Is Transmitted from Generation to Generation 36

Culture Is Based on Symbols 37

Culture Is Dynamic 38

Culture Is an Integrated System 39

STUDYING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION 40

Individual Uniqueness 40

Communication Establishes Personal Identities 15

Communication Influences Others 15

Communication Defined 16

Principles of Communication 16

Communication Is a Dynamic Process 16

Communication Is Symbolic 16

Communication Is Contextual 18

Communication Is Self-Reflective 19

We Learn to Communicate 19

Communication Has a Consequence 20
The family also teaches gender roles, views on individualism and collectivism, perceptions of aging, and social skills.

History and culture are intertwined.

The study of intercultural communication and the study of history go hand in hand.

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us knowledge of antiquity.

The influence of history is difficult to explain, because it contains all of the deep structure elements of culture.

A culture's history affects individual perception and behavior and how people relate to other cultures.

Historical events help explain the character of a culture.

History is a key element in developing a culture's identity, values, goals, and expectations.

**ACTIVITIES**

1. Ask someone from a different culture some specific questions about child-rearing practices. You might inquire about methods of discipline, toys, games, stories, topics discussed at the dinner table, and so forth.
2. Working in small groups, have each person discuss the "stories" that helped form his or her family and cultural identity.
3. Assemble a small group of people from a variety of cultures and try to answer the following questions:
   a. What sort of family interactions influence gender roles?
   b. How do family interaction patterns influence relations between young people and the elderly?
   4. Pair off in class or out of class with someone from a culture different from your own. Find out as much as you can about the history of your partner's culture. Try to isolate examples of how your partner's cultural values have been determined by historical events.

**DISCUSSION IDEAS**

1. What are some ways in which a person's family influences his or her cultural identity?
2. Examine the deep structure of your culture(s) and explain how it influences intercultural communication.
3. Compare how the following approaches to parenting would deal with aggressive behavior among children: authoritarian, laissez-faire, collectivist, and individualist.
4. How can the different historical legacies of the United States and the Islamic world promote conflict?
5. Can you think of some ways that globalization will change our traditional notion of what is considered a family?

In the introduction to the last chapter we pointed out that family, community (country), and worldview (religion) were three of the earliest markers in the evaluation of what we now call culture. We noted that these three social organizations work in combination to transmit the most important beliefs of a culture. Having earlier explained family and community in detail, we now turn our attention to the topic of worldview.

**Worldview**

There are perhaps as many definitions of worldview as there are definitions for the words "communication" and "culture." Many of the definitions are general, such as the one offered by Peoples and Bailey: "The worldview of a people is the way they interpret reality and events, including images of themselves and how they relate to the world around them." Other definitions, such as the one advanced by Ishii, Cooke, and Klopf, are more specific: "Worldview is a culture's orientation toward God, humanity, nature, questions of existence, the universe and cosmos, life, moral and ethical reasoning, suffering, death, and other philosophical issues that influence how its members perceive their world." Perhaps the most succinct and useful definition for our purposes is the one suggested by Walsh and Middleton: "A worldview provides a model of the world which guides its adherents in the world." The appeal of this definition is found in the use...
of the world guide, which indicates that worldview functions as a guide to help people determine what the world looks like and how they should function within that world. In this sense, worldview is at the core of human behavior since it helps define perceptions of reality and instructs the individual on how to function effectively within their perceived reality.

**Worldview and Culture**

The relationship between worldview and the study of intercultural communication cannot be overstated. Most experts agree that culture supplies most of a person's worldview. And more importantly, at least for the purposes of this book, it is a worldview that is shared by others. Remember that, as we noted in Chapter 1, culture is often described as a shared mindset. As Haviland, Prinz, Walpach, and McBride point out, worldviews represent "the collective body of ideas that members of a culture generally share concerning the ultimate shape and substance of their reality." It is these collective ideas that members of each culture use "in constructing, populating, and anticipating social worlds." Kraft makes the same point in the following manner: "Every social group has a worldview—a set of more or less systematized beliefs and values in terms of which the group evaluates and attaches meaning to the reality that surrounds it." This connection to culture is even more obvious if you recall that culture is automatic and unconscious; therefore, so are most worldviews. Hall reinforces this point when he writes: Often, worldviews operate at an unconscious level, so that we are not even aware that other ways of seeing the world are either possible or legitimate. Like the air we breathe, worldviews are a vital part of who we are but not a part we usually think much about.7

Dana further underscores the significance of worldview to the study of intercultural communication by reminding you of the collective nature of worldview:

Worldview provides some of the unexamined underpinnings for perception and the nature of reality as experienced by individuals who share a common culture. The worldview of a culture functions to make sense of life experiences that might otherwise be construed as chaotic, random, and meaningless. Worldview is imposed by collective wisdom as a basis for sanctioned actions that enable survival and adaptation.8

**Expressions of Worldview**

As our earlier discussion indicated, worldviews deal with a broad range of topics, such as

- What is the purpose of life?
- Is the world ruled by law, chance, or "God"?
- What is the right way to live?
- How did the world begin?
- What happens when we die?

At the same time as they deal with these types of momentous questions, worldviews also govern life in small ways and provide direction for the more practical features of living. As Hoebel writes, "in selecting its customs for day-to-day living, even the little things, the society chooses those ways that accord with its thinking and predilections—ways that fit its basic postulates as to the nature of things and what is desirable and what is not."9 The pervasive impact of worldview is so extensive that Olavseth concluded that a culture's worldview even influences the social, economic, and political life of a nation.10

**The Importance of Worldview**

The importance of examining the crucial issues associated with worldview is clearly identified by Pennington: "If one understands a culture's worldview and cosmology, reasonable accuracy can be attained in predicting behaviors and motivations in other dimensions.11 For our purposes, "predicting behavior" is a kind of shorthand for understanding how other people perceive the world and communicate within that world. You can see both the perceptual and communicative components of worldview in the following examples.

- The Islamic worldview provides insight into the Islamic culture's perception of women. As Banuas points out, "Generally speaking, woman as an individual was subordinate to man both by the Quran and the Hadith. God created woman from a fragment of man's body that she might serve him."12
- You can also observe a culture's worldview as it applies to the perception of nature. For example, many environmentalists disapprove of the biblical tradition that tells people that God wants them to be masters over the earth. They say that the following admonition from Genesis promotes a worldview that perceives nature and the environment in a somewhat different light: "Then shall God bless them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."13
- As noted, other worldviews produce different attitudes toward nature. The Shinto religion encourages an aesthetic appreciation of nature in which the focus is on reality and not heaven—a reality that makes nature supreme. Shintoism prescribes an aesthetic love of the land, in whole and in part. Every hill and lake, every mountain and river is dear. Cherry trees, shrines, and scenic resorts are indispensable to a full life. People perceive them as lasting things among which their ancestors lived and died. Here their ancestral spirits lock on and their families still abide. People thus preserve nature so that nature can preserve the family.14

Another link between worldview and behavior can be seen in how a culture perceives the business arena. In two classic texts, Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, the bond between religion, commerce, and production is examined. Both authors conclude that there is a direct connection. Bartels reaffirms that link to contemporary times when he writes, "The foundation of a nation's culture and the most important determinant of social and business conduct are the religious and philosophical beliefs of a people. From these beliefs spring role perceptions, behavior patterns, codes of ethics and the institutionalized manner in which economic activities are performed."15 Even the manner in which a culture conducts its business can be reflected in its worldview. For example, if a culture values "out-of-awareness" processes and intuitive problem solving, it might reach conclusions in a manner much different from that of a culture that values the scientific method. Nisbett provides a succinct summary of these differences:

Thus, to the Asian, the world is a complex place, composed of continuous substances, understandable in terms of the whole rather than in terms of the parts, and subject more to
collective rather than personal control. To the Westerner, the world is a relatively simple place, composed of discrete objects that can be understood without undue attention to context, and highly subject to personal control. Very different worlds indeed.16

We have attempted in this introduction to make it clear that worldview, perception, and communication are bound together. Gold illustrates this relationship between one's spiritual view and how that worldview determines the manner in which people live:

Ask any Tibetan or Navajo about one's place in the scheme of things and the answer will inevitably be that we must act, speak, and think respectfully and reasonably toward others. Navajos say that we are all people: earth-surface walkers, swimmers, crawlers, flyers, and sky and water people. Tibetans know that we are human, animal, worldly gods and demigods, ghosts and hell beings, and a host of aboriginal earth powers. Regardless of category or description, we're all inextricably connected through a system of actions and their effects, which can go according to cosmic order or fall out of synchrony with it.17

Forms of Worldview

We have already said that your worldview originates in your culture, is transmitted via a multitude of channels, is composed of numerous elements, and can take a variety of forms.14 Of this “variety of forms,” experts seem to believe that the most significant of these worldview forms can be classified as either religious or nonreligious (often referred to as secular and humanistic).15 As you would suspect, religious and nonreligious worldviews intersect on a number of different questions, yet they often have dissimilar answers for inquiries concerning life, death, human nature, ways of knowing, and the like. Let us pause for a moment and look at these two worldviews in general terms before we move to a specific analysis of each of them.

RELIGION AS A WORLDVIEW

Religion as a worldview has been found in every culture for thousands of years. As Haviland and his colleagues specify, “worldview is intricately intertwined with religious beliefs and practices.”16 Put in slightly different terms, “All societies have spiritual beliefs and practices [generally referred to as] religion.”17 The human need to confront important issues is so universal that there is no known “group of people anywhere on the face of the earth who, at any time over the last 10,000 years, have been without some manifestation of spirituality or religion.”18 And, as is the case with all deep structure elements, the long history of religion is directly tied to culture. Coogan repeats the same important point when he writes, “A belief in the existence of a reality greater than the human has served as a definer and creator of cultures.”19 Because religion is such a vital characteristic of culture, we shall, later in this chapter, spend a great deal of time looking at how religion shapes a culture’s view of reality.

SECULARISM AS A WORLDVIEW

The idea of secularism has been a part of the human experience for as long as people have been concerned with questions about the meaning of life and explanations about death. As early as circa 400 B.C.E., Plato even talked about the portion of humankind that did not believe in the existence of any of the gods. As Markham points out, this worldview “traces its roots from ancient China, classical Greece and Rome, through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to the scientific revolution of the modern world.”20 Like traditional religions, secularism has experienced times of great interest as well as periods of decline. Recently, at least in the United States, two events have again brought the topic of secularism to the forefront. These occurrences have been the current debate of creationism versus evolution and the thrust of religion into the political arena. The popularizing of these two issues has also produced a flood of new books on the topic of secularism. It should not be surprising that people are curious about the topic, since there are millions of people who adhere to some kind of secular philosophy and worldview that claims a disbelief in or denial of the existence of God, or who profess to be nonreligious.21

We should point out that, as with traditional religions, there are many definitions for the term secularism. In addition, there are a host of words and phrases used to describe this worldview (such as atheism, agnosticism, deism, and secular humanism). However, like religious traditions, secularism, regardless of the name it goes by, does have some core beliefs. For example, as we mentioned earlier, at the heart of secularism “is the view
SPIRITUALITY AS A WORLDVIEW

While the notion of spirituality is a concept that has been discussed for over a thousand years, recently the concept has reemerged and gained a large following, especially in the United States. Part of that appeal is that spirituality, especially as defined by its followers, directly relates to the American value of individualism. This is because at the core of this worldview is the belief that each person can use his or her individual resources to discover inner peace. Thomas Paine, the American pamphleteer and the author of Common Sense, expressed this same view when he remarked, “My own mind is my own church.” Carvalho and Robinson underscore this important distinction between religion and personal spirituality when they write:

Religion is typically experienced within a social institution with commonly shared traditions, sacred texts, beliefs, and worship practices. Religious institutions usually have a governing structure with designated leaders. Spirituality, on the other hand, is a part of each person that searches for purpose, meaning, worth, and wonder, often in quest of an ultimate value or the holy.

As you can tell from what we have written about spirituality, it is more of a personal search rather than a way of having the answers to life’s most questions imposed by something outside the person. Followers of this approach would say that knowing yourself will give you a sense of purpose, allow you to achieve your full potential, and connect you to others and a “higher source.” They would also say that your spirituality can be expressed in a host of ways, ranging from contemplation and art to meditation, prayer, and even traditional religious worship.

This brief analysis of spirituality should show you that it contains a number of notions that are general and hard to pin down, which are the source of its appeal. It also should be noted that spirituality has many of the same goals found in organized religions (inner peace, a link with nature, a search for meaning, etc.). The major difference, as we noted, is that spirituality uses some typical methods of achieving those goals.

The Enduring Significance of Religion

You will recall that in the last chapter we talked about a culture’s deep structure and the social institutions that are part of that structure. Religion, as we pointed out, is one of those institutions. Kautzky makes us important point in the following manner: “For the vast majority of people worldwide, their religious tradition—like family, tribe, or nation—makes them in the world. Religious traditions provide structure, discipline, and social participation in a community.” And, indeed, the author Thomas Friedman used the colorful image of an olive tree and its deep and stable roots in the title of his book The Lexus and the Olive Tree to underscore the powerful and enduring quality of religion to a collection of people. You can see the importance of religion’s collective force in the word “religion” itself. The word religion comes from the Latin word religare, which means “to tie.” The obvious implication is that a religion ties people to what is sacred.

What is intriguing about religion is that it has been linking people together while creating and preserving their cultures’ worldviews for thousands of years. Whether through institutions such as the Catholic Church, spiritual and social leaders like the Buddha and Confucius, or the teachings of the Bible, Vedas, Koran, Torah, and the Ching, people have always felt a need to look outside themselves for the values they use to manage their lives. It appears that for thousands of years billions of people have agreed, consciously or unconsciously, with the Latin proverb that tells you, “A man devoid of religion is like a horse without a bridle.” Perhaps religion’s most enduring aspect has been its attempt to address questions about morality and immortality, suffering, and the origins of the universe. As Malekhi notes, “Religion provides explanations and assigns values to otherwise inexplicable phenomena.” Religion helps its adherents deal with issues related to human conduct by serving “as a mechanism of social control” by

REMEMBER THIS

Spirituality attempts to focus on the sacred aspects of life instead of the materialistic ones. Unlike organized religion, spirituality seeks to challenge the individual rather than the collective. In addition, spirituality does not expect or require a distinguishing format or traditional organization.
establishing notions of right and wrong, transferring part of the burden of decision making from individuals to supernatural powers, and reducing "stress and frustration that often leads to social conflict." Nanda adds to the list of functions religion provides when he observes that religion "deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the origin of society and groups within the society, the relationship of individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of human kind to nature." You will notice that the items highlighted by Nanda offer credence to the basic theme of this chapter: that the deep structure of culture deals with issues that matter most to people. Whether they are wondering about the first cause of all things, or the reason for natural occurrences such as comets, floods, lightning, thunder, drought, famine, disease, or an abundance of food, many people rely on religious explanations. Smith eloquently expresses the steadfast importance of religion to the psychological welfare of most people:

When religion jumps to life it displays a startling quality. It takes over. All else, while not silenced, becomes subdued and thrown into a supporting role. It calls the soul to the highest adventures it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks, and deserts of the human spirit.86

Language and the Study of Intercultural Communication

It is very likely that you have asked yourself the following question: "Why am I studying about religion in a course dealing with intercultural communication?" We would suggest such a query is a good one, and one worthy of an answer. Our reply comes in two parts. First, religion, perception, and behavior are inexplicably linked. Second, never in the history of civilization has the behavioral dimension of religion been so widespread, relevant, and volatile.

RELIGION AND BEHAVIOR

Speaking of the long history of religion, Osbourne offers an excellent preview to the notion that religion and behavior can not be separated when he writes, "Worship of the sacred was not something separate from the daily life—it was life."95 What Osbourne is saying is that religion not only deals with "cosmic" issues, but also focuses on personal and cultural matters. This significance can be found in the words of Smith when he writes, "The surest way to the heart of a people is through their religion." The "heart" that Smith speaks of is not theology but the emotional dimensions of religion. Grondona makes the same point when he asserts, "Throughout history, religion has been the richest source of values."96 This connection between values and religion is also made by Smart: "Western culture is bound up with Catholicism and Protestantism; Sri Lankan civilization with Buddhism; the modern West with humanism; the Middle East with Islam; Russia with Orthodoxy; India with Hinduism; and so on."97

Prothero becomes even more specific when highlighting the bond between religion, culture, and behavior:

To understand foreign policy on Tibet, for example, one needs to know something about Buddhist monasticism and the Dalai Lama. To follow the ramifications of the 'under God' language of the Pledge of Allegiance, one needs to know something about the nuances of both atheism and polytheism. And to fully engage in debates about war in Iraq, one needs to be informed about jihad and the Islamic tradition of martyrdom (a tradition, it might be noted, that Muslims adapted from Christians and Jews).98

What we want you to take away from this section is the realization that religion involves both theology and everyday experiences. As Lamm observes, "It is clear that religion and culture are inextricably linked.94" Grange takes much the same stance when he observes that "religion and civilization seem to have gone hand in hand in the evolution of human society to an extent that one could conclude that they are coequal and conterminous."99

THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

From globalization to the rise of religious extremists, to domestic changes in demographics, to debates between secularists and evangelical Christians, you are confronted with the importance of religion at every turn. Braswell buttresses our position when he writes, "Peoples of religion are no longer long distances from each other. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians are highly mobile populations that have crossed geographical and cultural boundaries to meet and live among each other.100 Richter and his coauthors state it this way, "The chances are that the new neighbor who moves next door may be a Christian, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, or Jain. Thus learning about religions new to us may, in our global society, be simply inescapable."101 This need for learning becomes more critical when you consider the degree of violence now associated with asserting religious convictions. Kimball makes the same point rather bluntly when he writes, "With globalization a defining reality in our world today, it is urgent for us to assess the real and potential dangers posed by extremists with particular religious traditions."102 There are, of course, a multitude of examples where religious clashes and dangers can be observed. In Iraq, for instance, clashes between Shiites and Sunnis have caused thousands of deaths.103 Much of northern Nigeria is plagued by deadly violence involving Christians and Muslims.104 Relations between many Catholics and Protestants remain tense in Northern Ireland. Iran and Israel exchanged spiteful and vengeful words over a conference, held by Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, intended to prove that the Holocaust never occurred.105 In the United States there are countless reports documenting the negative treatment of American Muslims.106

We end this section by restating our conviction that understanding what people believe about how the world looks and operates is important to the study of intercultural communication. As Padri reminds us, "The study of religion ... prepares us to encounter not only other centers and calendars, and numerous versions of the sacred and profane, but also to decipher and appreciate different modes of language and behavior. Toward that end, knowledge about others plays its indispensable role."107
Selecting Worldviews for Study

With thousands of religions, cults, movements, philosophies, and worldviews to choose from, how can we decide which orientations to examine? From animism to Zoroastrianism, from Rastafarianism to Scientology, from secularism to the approximately eight hundred religious denominations found in the United States alone, how do we choose which worldviews to include and which to exclude? Drawing on the research of religious scholars, we have decided to examine Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. And while we grant the importance of other religious traditions and worldviews, our decision was based on three widely accepted criteria—numbers, diffusion, and relevance.

First, while statistics of the world's religions are only approximations, most studies reveal that worldwide, Christianity and Islam have over a billion followers each, and there are over 800 million Hindu devotees. Second, by including diffusion as a criterion, we are referring to the notion of dispersion of a religion throughout the world. For example, while the Jewish population is numerically small (approximately 14 million worldwide), Jews are spread throughout the world. In fact, because of thousands of years of persecution and a long history of moving from country to country, only one-third of all Jews live in Israel. The rest can be found in hundreds of other places throughout the world. Propelled by missionary zeal, Christianity and Islam are also diffused throughout the world. In fact, although many Africans, such as the Yoruba and the Nuer, still follow traditional religions, most Africans, because of colonization and missionaries, are either Christians or Muslims.

Finally, the six traditional religions are worthy of serious study because they are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. As Carmody and Carmody note: "When we speak of the great religions we mean the traditions that have lasted for centuries, shaped hundreds of millions of people, and gained respect for their depth and breadth." Because of this respect and longevity, we agree with Smith when he states that these "are the faiths that every citizen should be acquainted with, simply because hundreds of millions of people live by them." 65

In the remainder of the chapter, we will endeavor to acquaint you with these six faiths. But before we talk about each of the major traditions in detail, we need to mention their similarities. We have said repeatedly that it is often similarities rather than differences that lead to intercultural understanding.

Religious Similarities

It should not be surprising that there are numerous similarities among the world's great religions since they all have the same major goal—to make life and death comprehensible for their followers. As Kimball points out, "Despite distinctive worldviews and conflicting truth claims," most "religions function in similar ways and even share some foundational teachings." 66

Let us now look at some of these similarities.

SPECULATION

Most people, from the moment of birth to the time of their death, ask many of the same questions and face many of the same challenges concerning bewilderments and uncertainties about life. As Osborne notes, "They all express awe and humility before

the mysteries of the universe." 67 From creation stories, such as the Bible's book of Genesis, to detailed descriptions of heaven and hell, all religions assist us in understanding where people come from, why they are here, what happens when they die, and why there is suffering. In short, it falls to religion to supply the answers to these difficult and universal questions.

SACRED SCRIPTURES

At the heart of each of the world's main religious traditions lies a body of sacred wisdom—wisdom that must be transmitted to the tradition's current members and to the generations that follow. In this sense, "A religion's scriptures are the repository of its essential principles and the touchstone for its formulations of doctrine." 68 As Crim points out, "Sacred scriptures express and provide identity, authorization, and ideals for the people of the tradition." 69 It is important to notice that the word "sacred" is used when describing these writings. Matthews clearly identifies why that word is used: "Each religion believes its sacred writings have divine or spirit-inspired origin. They were either written or spoken by God, written by divinely guided humans, or spoken by teachers of deep spiritual insight." 70 In nearly all instances those "insights" are directly linked to specific individuals who are recognized as having special significance. These individuals are often called the "founders" of the religion. They are authority figures who provide guidance and instruction. For Jews it is Abraham and Moses. In the Muslim faith, it is a supreme all-knowing God, called Allah in Arabic, who used Muhammad as a conduit to deliver his important message. In some cases, the wise counsel comes from a philosopher such as Buddha or a sage such as Confucius. For Christians the authority is Jesus, "the Son of God." It is important
to remember that these authorities are significant "because they found or heard some message or teaching from God, from gods, or from human wisdom deeper and more profound than most people have ever experienced." Regardless of the person, all traditions have someone to turn to for emotional and spiritual direction.

Although later in the chapter we will say more about sacred writings, and the people associated with them, for now let us briefly touch on some important religious texts as a means of underscoring the notion of commonality while at the same time increasing your knowledge of worldviews different from your own. The Bible, consisting of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew, and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, originally written in Greek, serves as the textual centerpiece of Christianity. For Jews, the Hebrew Bible, which comprises the books of the Old Testament, is an important document that has lasted thousands of years and offers guidance even today. The Koran, which Muslims believe was dictated to the prophet Muhammad by God, is written in classical Arabic. For Muslims, according to Crystal, "the memorization of the text in childhood acts simultaneously as an introduction to literacy." In Hinduism, the sacred writings are found in the Vedas, including the Bhagavad-Gita. These divine wisdoms cover a wide range of texts and are written in Sanskrit. The Pali Canon, based on oral tradition, contains the teaching of Buddha. "Pali became the canonical language for Buddhists from many countries, but comparable texts came to exist in other languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, as the religion evolved." For the Confucian tradition, people turn to the Analects, a collection of works that has for centuries helped shape the thoughts and actions of billions of people.

RITUALS

We begin our discussion of religious rituals by turning to one of the "authorities" we have just mentioned—Confucius. In Analects 8.2, Confucius noted the value of ritual when he said, "Without ritual, courtesy is tiresome; without ritual, prudence is tiring; without ritual, bravery is quarrelsome; without ritual, frankness is hurtful." Rituals, whether they be diminutive or essential, are practiced by all religions. Smart offers an excellent restatement of this idea when he writes:

Most place a heavy emphasis on ritual. The Catholic is enjoined to attend Mass weekly. The Muslim is told to pray five times daily, according to a set formula. The Hindu attends temple rituals frequently. The Theravada Buddhist will often make a trip to the temple to pay his or her respects to the Buddha. The Protestant typically has a worship service with a sermon as a vital part of their ritual.

Just what are these religious rituals? In their strictest form, "Ritual consists of symbolic actions that represent religious meaning." The function of ritual to a religion and culture is clearly spelled out by Maleij: "Ritual recalls past events, preserving and transmitting the foundations of society. Participants in the ritual become identified with the sacred past, thus perpetuating traditions as they re-establish the principles by which the group lives and functions." By engaging in rituals, members not only recall and reaffirm important beliefs; they also feel spiritually connected to their religion, develop a sense of identity by increasing social bonds with those who share their views, and sense that their life has meaning and structure. According to Hewland and colleagues, "Rituals, or ceremonial acts, are not all religious in nature... . Ritual serves to relieve social tensions and reinforce a group's collective bonds. More than this, it provides a means of marking many important events and lessening the social disruption and individual suffering of crises such as death." As you might expect, rituals, like so many aspects of culture, are not instinctive, so in order to endure they must be passed from one generation to the next.

As we noted in our introduction to this chapter, rituals take a variety of forms. They include traditions such as the lighting of candles or incense, the wearing of certain attire, and sitting, standing, or kneeling during prayer. There are rituals dealing with space (Muslims turning toward Mecca when they pray) and others that call attention to events (Christians celebrating Christmas and Easter, and Jews marking the importance of Passover).

The most common of all rituals are rites of passage that mark key stages in the human cycle of life. According to Angrosino, "rites of passage are social occasions marking the transition of members of the group from one important life stage to the next. Birth, puberty, marriage, and death are transition points that are important in many different cultures."

Rituals can also be indirect. A good example of an indirect ritual is the Japanese tea ceremony. At first glance, it would appear that the tea ceremony is simply the preparation and drinking of tea, but the importance of the ritual to Buddhism is far greater. As Paden notes:

Every detailed act, every move and position, embodies humility, restraint, and awareness. This framing of ordinary action in order to reveal some deeper significance—in this example the values are related to the Zen Buddhist idea of the absolute in the ordinary—is a common element of ritual behavior.

ETHICS

Robinson and Rodrigues are correct when they write, "Religion has played a prominent role in the regulation of human behavior. Almost every religious tradition discriminates
between acceptable and unacceptable conduct." In Matthew 19:16, when Jesus is asked, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" you can see the link between ethics and religion as it applies to Christianity. These ethical teachings about what is right and wrong also have much to say about a culture's core values.

In most instances the bond between religion and ethics can be seen in specific religious laws. In Judaism, for example, there are "not merely the Ten Commandments but a complex of over six hundred rules imposed upon the community by a Divine Being." When you talk to Muslims, the association between religion, law, and behavior is also apparent. Smart makes this very clear when he writes: "Islamic law has traditionally been controlled by the Law, or sharia, which shapes society as both a religious and a political society, as well as shaping the moral life of the individual—prescribing that he should pray daily, give alms to the poor, and so on, and that society should have various institutions, such as marriage, modes of banking, etc." The Hindus also have strong ethical precepts tied directly to their religion. As Matthew points out:

Hinduism has a rich moral code. In the Vedas, dharma is the principle of right order in the universe; all things conform to its control. For the individual, the principle of right action is dharma. Dharma is incorporated in the life of individuals.

For the Buddhist, ethical values can be found in Buddha's listing of the four great virtues that all people should strive for: "benevolence, compassion, joy in others' joy, and equanimity." While the words might change, the central message about ethics from Confucius is much the same as the one found in other traditions. Matthews summaries those principles words in the following paragraph: "The word "reciprocit" is a good description for Cynic ethics. People should avoid doing to others what they would not want done to them. They should do those things that would like done to themselves."

It is intriguing to discover that many ethical standards, such as Buddha's notion of "joy in others' joy," the Confucian idea of "reciprocit," and the Golden Rule, are found in one form or another in all cultures. As Smith notes, the message of ethics "pretty much tells a cross-cultural story." For example, in addition to the ideal of a Golden Rule, Smith says that all religions declare that people should avoid murder, thieving, lying, and adultery. In addition, they all stress the virtues of "honesty, charity, and veracity."

According to Coogan, what they all seek to accomplish by the formation of ethical principles is to "enable their adherents to achieve the ultimate objective of the tradition—the attainment of salvation, redemption, enlightenment, and the 'liberation of the soul.'"

SAFE HAVEN
All religions provide their members with a sense of security. MacCausan summarizes this sense of security: "Religious beliefs offer the comforting sense that the vulnerable human condition serves a great purpose. Strengthened by such beliefs, people are less likely to collapse in despair when confronted by life's calamities."

Before we begin our discussion of the great religions of the world, we need to ask you to keep a few points in mind. First, remember that religion is but one kind of worldview, and even a secular person who says, "There is no God!" has likely found answers to the larger questions about the nature of truth, how the world operates, life, death, suffering, and ethical relationships. One clear example of a secular worldview would be an extreme form of materialism. According to Smart, materialism is a worldview "that has many of the same appurtenances of a religion." That is to say, its adherents have rituals, ethical precepts, and the like. The important point, as noted by Riliefer, is to "realize that everyone has a worldview whether or not he or she can recognize or state it." Second, as Hendry says, "Religion pervades many spheres that others might call secular and it cannot easily be separated from them." It is often difficult to draw a line between secularism and a subtle manifestation of religion. What one person might call "religion" or "worldview," another person might call "philosophy." For example, when a group of people prefers intuitive wisdom to "scientific facts" as a means of discovering reality, they may do so without evoking the teachings of Buddhism or Hinduism. For our purposes, the labeling is not merely as important as the notion that a culture's heritage includes ways of dealing with timeless and fundamental questions.

Finally, it is not our intent to offer a course on world religion, but rather to isolate those aspects of worldview and religion that are most important to the study of intercultural communication. Hence, we have omitted much of the theology and dogma of the world's great religions and concentrated on ways in which religion "gets acted out." As Coogan notes, "The world's major religious traditions have both reflected and shaped the values of the societies in which they have been an inseparable element." In short, we, like Smith, believe that the locus of religion is in the person and in human interaction.

Christianity

We start with Christianity, which is the largest of all the traditions; over one-third of the world's population claims some sort of affiliation with it. In a relatively short period of time, Christianity has spread its beliefs throughout the world. There are thousands of groups or denominations that can be classified as Christian. For example, the World Christian Encyclopedia lists 33,000 different Christian denominations worldwide. Historically, Christianity has been composed of three major branches: these are the Roman Catholic Church, under the guidance of the pope in Rome; the Eastern Orthodox Churches, with members concentrated in Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, the Balkan, and Central Asia; and Protestantism, which embodies a host of denominations such as Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. While each of these branches and each of its subsets, has some unique features, they nevertheless share many rituals, beliefs, traditions, basic characteristics, and tenets. In fact, one of the strengths of Christianity throughout the centuries has been its ability to maintain its basic core while being adaptive and varied. As Wilson points out, "Christianity can be seen for what it was historically and what it continues to be today: a living, ever-changing religion which, like any other religion, owes its vitality to its diversity."
CORE ASSUMPTIONS

At the heart of Christianity is a set of three fundamental principles, all of which point to the notion that Christianity offers its followers beliefs, a way of life, and a community of people. These three common features have their roots in the theology of Christianity. Hale expands on these basic assumptions in the following paragraph:

Essentially, Christianity is a monotheistic tradition centered on faith in God (the eternal creator who transcends creation and yet is active in the world) and in Jesus Christ as the savior and redeemer of humankind. Christianity holds that God became incarnate—fully human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Christians believe that Jesus died on a cross and was resurrected, physically rising from the dead. The belief in the Trinity, the sacred mystery of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one, trine (“three-in-one”) God is central to the Christian tradition. 90

As you can observe from the above summary, Christians believe in a single God who created the universe and also “gave the world” his only son, Jesus Christ. Nuss and Nuss emphasize the importance of Jesus to Christianity when they note, “In the belief that Jesus is the clearest portrayal of the character of God all the rest of Christian doctrine is implied.”91 An essential part of that doctrine is the belief that humans are created “in the image of God.” As such, “humans differ from all other animals in that they have responsibility to God. Humans are accountable for how they live their lives.”92

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

Of the thousands of directives that Jesus and his apostles carried to the world, let us select a few of those that have most shaped the Christian tradition and apply them to the study of intercultural communication.

Organized Worship. For Christians the church serves a variety of purposes. Not only is it a “house of worship” and a place of great reverence, but it is also a kind of community—a place where people gather in groups and share a common identity. For our purposes it is the social dimension of Christianity that offers insights into the components of aspects of that tradition. What we are suggesting is stated by Braywell when he writes, “Christianity is a communal faith. It is a faith that emphasizes the community, the church.”93 So deeply rooted is the idea of a communal spirit in Christianity that in the Bible (Acts 4:32-37), St. Luke portrays the origin of the church as a “group of Christians who shared everything they had, and lived in a common house.”94 Even today you can observe the strong influence of cooperative spirit in how many churches have special services for young children, special sanctuaries for baptisms, and numerous social gatherings.

This view of “community” we just described has a theological foundation. Christian theology believes in organized worship as a means of proclaiming God’s message.95 As Carman and Carman note, “Jesus’ view of the self was relational. The self was not a momial existing in isolation.”96 Jesus believed that “the closer people drew to God, the closer they could draw to one another.”97 Remember that even at the Last Supper, Jesus shared his final meal with his twelve disciples rather than being alone. Our point is that this notion of organized worship has contributed to the social dimension of Western cultures. Americans are social creatures and belong to numerous clubs, committees, and organizations. The French historian de Tocqueville pointed out two hundred years ago that Americans had a large series of networks and associations that went well beyond their family unit. Perhaps one reason for such behavior can be found in comparing Christianity to most Asian religions. In Asia, one’s spiritual life is conducted in solitude; in the West, God’s “message” is shared with others. Stated another way, we are comparing a single person in meditation to a collection of people in prayer.

Individual. At the same time that Christianity encourages community, it also stresses the importance and uniqueness of each individual. Most scholars maintain that Christianity and Judaism were the first religions that placed “greater emphasis on the salvation and responsibility of the self.”98 As McGuire points out, Christianity “is characterized by an image of the dynamic, multidimensional self, able (within limits) to continually change both self and the world.”99 In short, Christianity and Judaism are the religious traditions that “discovered the individual.”100 Before the arrival of these two religions, people were seen as members of tribes, communities, or families, and behaved in ways that reflected the collective nature of their existence. While family and community remained important, as it is even today, Christianity highlighted the significance of each person. An example of the power of self can be seen in the view of salvation, particularly for Protestants. Salvation “is achieved by our own efforts alone and there is a tendency for deeds to count more than prayers.”101 Even the Bible carries examples of individualism. As Woodward notes, “The Gospels are replete with scenes in which Jesus works one-on-one healing this woman’s sickness, forgiving that man’s sins, and calling each to personal conversion.”102 Summarizing this important point, Woodward adds, “Christianity discovers individuality in the sense that it stresses personal conversion.”103 You can also see the importance of the individual in the part of Christianity that begins with the assumption that the world is real and meaningful because God created it. Human beings are significant because God created them in his image. The Christian God is a personal God who desires a relationship with his creation.104 In a culture that values individualism, Christianity is an especially appealing religion in that each person can have a one-on-one bond with God.

Doing. Western culture, as we will discuss in Chapter 5, is one that encourages activity and action. Some of the roots of this approach to life can be found in Christianity, particularly in the manner in which Jesus lived his life. “In Christianity ‘living in the world’ rather than withdrawal from the world was emphasized.”105 From the beginning “the Jesus movement began to send out emissaries” to bring the news about Jesus to all who would listen.106 Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples, once said of Jesus, “He went about doing good.”107 You can further see the link between “doing” and Christianity in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of nations.” Romans 10:13-15 carries much the same message about “doing” when it says, “And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach and bring glad tidings.’ There are, of course, many other examples of Christianity as a religion with a long tradition of action. For instance, during the Roman era, sick people were cast into the streets because the Romans feared death might result if they remained near a sick person. However, Christians would take a committed role and try to nurse the sick.108 These are not isolated examples. By all accounts, Jesus would speak with prostitutes, go into people’s homes and eat, travel about, and talk to strangers in public places.109

The Future. Throughout this book, we discuss cultural attitudes toward time. From those discussions, and from your own observations, you can conclude that Americans...
are future oriented—they are always concerned with what will happen next, rather than what is happening in the present. We suggest that one of the reasons for this behavior might have its roots in Christianity. Put in slightly different terms, one of the lessons of Christianity is that the future is important. As Muck points out, for Christians “no matter what happened in the past, it is the future that holds the greatest promise.” 41 God forgives mistakes and offers repentance and incentive to move forward. As Blanche and Parker note, “Christians hold that those who repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ will be forgiven and will join him in heaven after death.” 42 In this sense, the individual is destined to move on. Even the notion of a heaven accents the future. You can see that emphasis on the future in Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In short, built into Christian ideology is a positive and optimistic outlook toward the future—a belief that things will be better in the future.

Gender. The perception and treatment of women, like most characteristics of Christianity, have been altered and modified with each passing century. However, the enduring legacy for Christian women is, of course, the Garden of Eden story found in Genesis. Many still use this interpretation of womanhood to define women's place within the family, church, and society. Those that adhere to a somewhat fundamentalist belief regarding women turn to the words of Paul when he speaks in 1 Timothy:

I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but it was through Eve that sin entered the world. And Adam died because he was deceived, but Eve with her son, 1 Timothy 2:11-13

Paul also writes that wives should remain “at home” and be “subject to their husbands,” 1 Peter 3:1-2. Ephesians 5:22 is an often-quoted verse used by those who employ a historical analysis of women and the church. This verse says, “The man is the head of the woman just as the church is the head of the church, . . . just as the church is subject to Christ, so must women be to their husbands in everything.”

While these sorts of examples are often used to justify placing women in subordinate positions, recent events and a new interpretation of the Bible reveal a view of women that is more consistent with current perceptions. For example, in many Protestant denominations, the number of women clergy is growing rapidly. Some contemporary biblical scholars have even asserted that Jesus might well have been a feminist and to justify their claim, offer examples such as those presented here. First, prior to the coming of Jesus, Roman society regarded women as inherently inferior to men. Third, Christians married divorce before divorce ended. Roman men married young as young as ten or eleven years old. Jesus challenged these practices. Wrote one biblical scholar, “The new religion offered women not only greater status and influence within the church, but also more protection as wives and mothers.”

Second, although he called only men to be his disciples, Jesus readily accepted women into his circle of friends and disciples. 43 Defying customs, Jesus invited women to join him at meals. All of this leads Murphy to note, “Women were often prominent in the accounts of his ministry, and he acknowledged the oppression they face.” 44 Finally, Jesus helped define a new role for women by giving them greater responsibility. For example, they “shared with men the cultural responsibility for teaching children, as reflected in the proverb: ‘My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.”


courage. one of the most enduring legacies of the Jesus story is the message of courage in the face of adversity, which characterizes how Jesus lived and died. courage is also a trait that runs throughout the American character. As Carmony and Carmony note, “Jesus was courageous.” 45 A careful reading of the life of Jesus reveals a man who would not be intimidated by his opponents and repeatedly demonstrated strength and courage in the face of overwhelming odds. Jesus was preaching against what was established doctrine during this period in history. France, writing about Jesus, notes, ‘He aroused the opposition of leaders.” 46 France adds, “He seemed to delight in reversing accepted standards, with his slogan: ‘The first shall be last, and the last first.’” 47 Even his practice of mixing with ostracized groups such as the poor and prostitutes was brave. Bravery is a powerful value in the American culture. Here, again, you can see the link between worldview and communication styles.

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

In some cultures, people see death as a natural and unavoidable consequence of being born. In other cultures, people do not perceive death as an end to their existence, but rather as the beginning of yet another “life.” Regardless of what explanation is advanced, religious and secular traditions attempt to enlighten their members as to what death is. Kramer maintains that explanations of death, regardless of the tradition, examine the following five questions:

What is the purpose of death? Does existence end at death? If not, what happens after death? Are we re-embodied in a similar form or in a different form? Is there a final judgment? And how are we to prepare for our own dying?

The Christian answer to these five questions is not a simple one. That is to say, because of the large variety of Christian denominations and the various interpretations of both the Old and New Testament, there are numerous explanations of the “afterlife.” However, at the core of Christian thought, there is a belief in heaven, and in the belief that this is possible through the caring and loving creator. Many turn to John 14:1-6 for the following words of guidance and inspiration: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” A similar passage is found in John 11:25-26: for the following words of guidance and inspiration: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” A similar passage is found in John 11:25-26: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? These words tell Christians that death is not something to be feared. As Wilson points out, “The Christian churches teach that the human soul is immortal and was originally destined to spend eternity in the presence of God in heaven.” 143 So important is the notion of heaven that some religious scholars have found that the words heaven and eternal life are mentioned over six hundred times in the New Testament. Angrosino describes this important relationship between God and heaven in the following manner:

The aim of the Christian is to be with God in heaven for all eternity. To that end, Christians have focused on three theological virtues, so called because they derive from God, are defined in relation to God, and are believed to lead to God. These virtues are faith, hope, and charity.
While heaven awaits those who have lived virtuous and righteous lives, "those who are wicked will endure in hell." Because the idea of hell was a late arrival to Christianity (not introduced until the writings of Luke and Matthew), there are a number of versions and descriptions of what hell is and how one becomes a candidate for this "nightmare." In some of the early descriptions, particularly those advanced by Luke, details are scarce and never graphic. But other accounts of hell, especially those suggested by Matthew, are much more explicit and detailed. According to Panat, Matthew argues, again and again, that Hell exists, is sheer torture, and is reserved for the damned who will be cast into the furnace of fire; there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Not only do portrayals of hell differ, but who goes to hell instead of heaven is left to some mild speculation. In most accounts, hell is reserved for people who die without accepting Christ or who have "sinned" and not repented. There is yet another more modern argument that suggests that a loving God would not be party to anything as cruel and sordid as hell, and therefore God needs to be trusted. Regardless of how heaven and hell are defined in various Christian traditions, one conclusion is obvious—Christian doctrine maintains that there is an afterlife, which, as we shall see later in the chapter, is not the case in all religious traditions.

Judaism

Although there are fewer than fifteen million Jews worldwide, representing less than 2 percent of the world's population, their geographical distribution and their interest in politics, arts, literature, medicine, finance, and the law have, for several thousand years, made them an important and influential group in whichever country they lived in. Prothero makes the same point when he notes that Judaism is "the smallest in terms of adherents but one of the most historically influential." Smith estimates "that one-third of our Western civilization bears the marks of its Jewish ancestry." In addition, Judaism "generated the religious outlook that gave birth to Christianity and Islam." Judaism is believed to have been founded in approximately 1500 B.C., when twelve nomadic tribes came to Canaan from Mesopotamia. Later, many of them settled in Egypt, where they were held as slaves until they fled to Jerusalem in about 1200 B.C. Under the guidance and leadership of Moses, the Jewish religion began to take shape. In its nearly four thousand years of historical development, the Jewish religion and the people who practice it have exhibited not only a penchant for continuity but also a remarkable adaptability. Tozer speaks of this persistent ability to adapt in the following manner:

The Jewish faith developed over a 4,000-year period. Over that span of time, it has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt and persevere, to absorb elements from the civilizations and cultures which it has come in contact with, but to also retain its own unique identity and heritage.

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

Judaism is one of the three monotheistic world religions, the others being Christianity and Islam. At the foundation of all monotheism is the notion of universalism, which means a belief that if there is only one God, then this God is the God of all humans. However, Judaism, as Tozer notes, "combined monotheism with a specific type of particularism." This uniqueness is at the core of Judaism, as Banks says, "At the heart of the Jewish religion lies the existence of a covenant between God and his people." Matlin and Magida offer an excellent summary of the covenant in the following explanation:

Central to this covenant is the concept of being 'chosen' as a people, for as Moses tells his people in the Bible, "The Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth." (Deuteronomy 12:2) In Jewish theology, this distinctive consideration was never meant to give special advantages to the Jews, but only to increase their responsibilities and therefore their hardships. From circumcision to the keeping of the Sabbath, signs of the covenant abound in Jewish culture and religion. It is this covenant that is at the heart of why Jews consider themselves God's "chosen people."

The Jewish worldview is expressed through a number of concepts basic to the faith: (1) Jews "believe in one universal and eternal God, the creator and sovereign of all that exists." (2) Humans are inherently pure and good and are given free will. (3) There is no belief in original sin. (4) One can, however, commit sin by breaking the commandments, and (5) humans must be obedient to the God-given commandments in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). These five concepts compose a belief system stressing the secular notions that order must be maintained if Jews are to have a collective and peaceful life.

Judaism, like the other major traditions, has experienced a series of different offshoots and forms since its initial inception. While the core of the religion has remained the same since its inception, Judaism has now branched into three large groups: Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Judaism. The Orthodox tradition is the oldest of the three branches and was the only form of Jewish practice prior to the eighteenth century. Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) came directly from God and not only contains spiritual advice such as the Commandments, but also laws regarding daily practices and dietary recommendations (no shellfish or pork, etc.). For nearly all Orthodox Jews, religious services are still conducted in Hebrew.

Reform Judaism was an attempt in the late eighteenth century to modernize many of the long-established Jewish practices so that Jews worldwide could better assimilate into non-Jewish communities without losing their Jewish identity. Conducting prayer services in the local language has been one of the major attempts at making Judaism more progressive. In addition, the use of choirs and musical instruments, and allowing men and women to sit together, are part of the Reform movement.

Conservative Judaism, particularly in the United States, was intended to find a middle ground between the basic traditions of the Orthodox and the modern appendages associated with the Reform movement. Conservatives believe that many of the rules, rituals, and traditions of the Orthodox practice are necessary if Jewish identity is to be maintained. Yet they also hold that Jews must adapt to present-day realities if Judaism is to appeal to each new generation.

It is worth repeating that the two so-called modern branches still believe in the basic laws and teachings of Judaism and have only altered the outward expressions and appearances of the Jewish religion. In short, regardless of what branch of Judaism one follows, it is clear that the Jewish faith is unique in that it is both a culture and a religion. It is common, for example, to find nonreligious Jews who identify fully with the
culture but not with the theology. Fisher and Lusker elaborate on this point: "Judaism has no single founder, no central leader or group making theological decisions. Judaism is a people, a very old family. This family can be defined either as a religious group or a national group." 111 Judaism penetrates every area of human existence, providing humankind with a means of communicating with both the secular and transcendental world. 112

**Cultural Manifestations**

**Oppression and Persecution.** One of the most enduring manifestations of the Jewish tradition has been a history of thousands of years filled with oppression and persecution. As Ehrlich notes, "All too often the story of Jews has been presented as a litany of disasters." 113 Van Doren confirms the same idea: "The history of Judaism and the Jews is a long, complicated story, full of blood and tears." 114 Any review of Judaism's past reveals that as early as 1500 B.C. the pharaohs of Egypt made an effort to kill all Jewish males. More hatred and massive killings of Jews occurred during the Spanish Inquisition in 1478, and in 1523 an essay by Martin Luther further intensified hostility against the Jews. Throughout all these experiences Jews continued to believe that God is using them and that suffering, oppression, and persecution were built into the Jewish faith. 115 Finger and Telephkin offer an excellent summary of the long-standing persecution of Jews: Only the Jews have had their homeland destroyed (twice), been dispersed wherever they have lived, survived the most systematic attempts in history (aside from that of the Nazis) to destroy an entire people, and been expelled from nearly every nation among whom they have lived. 116

And while such actions punctuated Jewish history for thousands of years, it was the Holocaust and the extermination of six million Jews in Europe that told the Jews that anti-Semitism follows them wherever they go. Matthews, in just two sentences, captures the horrors rained upon the Jews during the Holocaust: "In camps such as Auschwitz, they were gassed, and their clothes, possessions, and even body parts were salvaged for the Nazi war effort. Bodies were burned in crematoriums." 117 Even today news reports speak of anti-Semitism being on the rise again in parts of Europe.

What you see is a religious group that, for thousands of years, has experienced murder, exile, and discrimination simply because of its religion. The result of these experiences is that today many Jews have a difficult time trusting non-Jews. Van Doren notes that, in spite of all these hardships:

- Jews are still essentially the same stubborn, dedicated people, now and forever affirming the same three things: First, they are a people of the law as given in the only books of Moses. Second, they are the chosen people of God, having a covenant with him. Third, they are a witness that God is and will be forevermore. 118

Learning. The Jewish essayist and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel quotes a Jewish saying: "Adam chose knowledge instead of immortality." This saying highlights that a love of learning has been a hallmark of the Jewish religion and culture since its very beginning. As Bravewell notes, "Judaism centers on the worship of God, the practice of good deeds, and the love of learning." 119 For thousands of years Jews have made the study of the Talmud (a holy book of over five thousand pages) an important element of Jewish life. 120 Some Hebrew translations of the word Talmud actually use the words "learning," study," and "teaching." 121 The Jewish prayer book speaks of "the love of learning" as one of three principles of faith. 122 Rosten points out that "As early as the first century, Jews had a system of compulsory education." 123 Jews even have a proverb that states, "Wisdom is better than jewels." Because of this cultural and religious characteristic, it is common for Jews to seek professions centering on education, law, medicine, literature, and the like.

**Justice.** The pursuit of justice is another manifestation of the Jewish faith. It is also a characteristic deeply rooted in Jewish history. An individual's responsibility and moral commitment to God and other people are detailed in Jewish religious writings. As Markham points out, "The God of Israel taught through his prophets that worship of God without social justice is worthless." 124 In fact, one of the four categories of Jewish law is actually "to ensure moral treatment of others." 125 You can see this concern for justice in everything from ancient Jewish writings to the active role Jews played during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. So deep-seated is this basic precept that Smith believes much of Western civilization owes a debt to the early Jewish prophets for establishing the notion of justice as a major principle for the maintenance of "social order." 126

**Family.** As you saw in the last chapter, all societies value the family, but for Jews the family is the locus of worship and devotion. One way they dealt with centuries of hardships was to turn inward and look to the family for strength and courage. On nearly every occasion, be it in the home or the synagogue, the family is the active participant in Jewish life. From circumcision to Passover seders (ceremonial dinners), to bar or bat mitzvahs, to marriage and death, to the treatment of the elderly, the family and religion are strongly bound together. Rosten offers a clear digest of this link:

For 4,000 years, the Jewish family has been the very core, heart, and soul of Judaism's faith and the central reason for the survival of the Jews as a distinct ethnic group. The Jewish home is a temple, according to Talmudic law, custom, and tradition. 127

The emotional tie to family grows out of two very diverse historical events. First, Jews trace their origins to a single location that gave them a sense of community from the very outset of their existence. Second, while they began in a single location, because of oppression and persecution, Jews have been forced to scatter throughout the world. Because of this tending apart of their culture, Martin and Magida point out that "They share a sense of community with and responsibility for Jews throughout the world." 128

**Life Cycles.** Closely related to the importance of family is the emphasis Jews place on four life cycles—birth, adulthood, marriage, and death. All of these passages are directly related to Judaism because they "emphasize religious themes." 129 Each of the four observances offers insight into the Jewish character by underscoring some things Jews deem important.

The first ceremony is the circumcision of the male eight days after birth. Robinson and Rodrigues offer an excellent synopsis of the connection between this ritual and the Jewish faith:

In some ways circumcision celebrates less the birth of the child than the admission of that child into the membership of a religious people. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant.
we have a situation where "Judaism contains a range of beliefs, from no view of an afterlife to a belief in the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul." 174

The two extreme positions—physical resurrection, and no concept of a personal life after death—are associated with two of the movements we discussed earlier. Orthodox Jews are more likely to "believe in bodily resurrection and physical life after death," while Reform Jews usually believe "that a person lives on in his accomplishments or in the mind of others." 175 Because of this lack of preoccupation with an afterlife, Matthews maintains that "Jewish services lack specific descriptions of life beyond death." 176 Another manifestation of a lack of literature and materiality about an afterlife is the realistic view about death that Jews often adopt. For Jews, death is a natural process and not viewed as an adversary. As Kramer points out, "The writer of 2 Samuel 14:14 says: 'We must all die; we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.' 177

Islam

Perhaps at no other time in the history of humankind has it been more important for all citizens of the world to understand the Islamic faith. Hence, we agree with Smith when he says, "Islam is a vital force in the contemporary world." 178 Yet it seems that much of the world does not know about the Islamic faith, and what is known is often colored by hysteria and oversimplification. Noss and Noss are correct when they write:

The heart of Islam is well hidden from most Westerners, and the outer images of Islamic countries present bewildering contrasts: steamy syriodons ordering the lash for prostitutes, camel drivers putting down prayer mats in the desert, a sophisticated royal prince discussing international investments, and fiercely national libertarians proclaiming equality and denouncing Western values. 179

What appears to have happened is that the events of September 11, 2001, the rhetoric coming from Iran, and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have forced the world to focus on the available information about Muslims, even though much of it is incomplete, false, or misleading. As Belt states, Islam is "the most misunderstood religion on earth." 180

The statistical and demographic impact of Islam throughout the world only serves to underscore our need to learn more about this religious tradition. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, with about 1.5 billion followers scattered throughout the world. 181 This figure comprises over 20 percent of the world's population. We used the word "scattered" as a way of pointing out that the largest share of Muslims, nearly 80 percent, live in places other than Arab lands. 182 Because of immigration, a substantial portion of that percentage lives in the United States. In fact, Islam will soon be the second most commonly practiced religion in the United States, with nearly seven million members. 183 What these large numbers of Muslims mean to most Americans is that face-to-face contact is increasing at a rapid rate. Following the events of 9/11, immigration to the United States from Muslim countries dropped dramatically. However, by 2005, the downward trend had reversed. According to Department of Homeland Security figures, in that year "more people from Muslim countries became legal permanent U.S. residents—nearly 96,000—than in any year in the previous two decades. More than 40,000 [Muslims] were admitted [in 2005], the highest annual number since

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Although we have just finished talking about death as the final stage in the Jewish cycle of life, we need to add a few more ideas to this inevitable event. What is interesting about Judaism and death is that there is no one simple explanation regarding their view of an afterlife. There are very few references to life after death in traditional Jewish writings. In fact, "The Torah, the most important Jewish text, has no clear reference to afterlife at all. 184 Because of this lack of a precise explanation about death,
the terrorist attacks. This number does not include all the Muslim students who are American citizens. In short, whether on the international level or on college campuses, contact with Muslims has become a fact of life. Therefore, we believe that a basic knowledge of Islamic perceptions and beliefs is essential if you are to become a successful intercultural communicator.

ORIGINS

We made an important point in the last chapter about the connection between history, family, and religion. This point is made clear by Sedgwick: “Just as the events of Jesus’ life matter to a Christian, and just as the history of Israel matters to a Jew, so the events of early Islam matter to a Muslim. These events, then, are important for us as we try to understand Islam.” So essential is history to the study of Islam that we dedicated an entire section to this topic in the previous chapter. However, now we need to return briefly to that history, this time from a religious perspective. Woodward provides a summary of the early origins of Islam, which date back thousands of years:

The Arabs were mostly polytheists, worshiping tribal deities. They had no sacred history linking them to one universal god, like other Eastern peoples. They had no sacred text to live by, like the Bible; no sacred language, as Hebrew is to Jews and Sanskrit is to Hindus. Above all, they had no prophet sent to them by God, as Jews and Christians could boast.

This initial animistic polytheistic period, with its intertribal hostility, images of carved gods, and major class differences, was fertile ground in which to bring forth a new religion. The process of beginning a new theology was greatly expedited by the arrival of Muhammad (A.D. 570–632). Early in his life, Muhammad was a person known for great insight. For example, as Mir points out, “Muhammad had never taken part in the idol worship of his tribe” and even questioned the legitimacy of such idols. Throughout much of his adulthood, he would retreat into a cave near his home and engage in prayer and meditation. It was during one of these meditative sessions that “the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him that God had chosen him to be His messenger to all mankind.”

This epic event was to cast Muhammad forever as the messenger of God. Muslims believe that their God, Allah, had spoken to human beings many times in the past through other prophets. However, it was Muhammad who delivered the religious message and established the social order that was to become Islam. Muhammad was troubled by the idolatries of the Arabs and concerned about the fate of his people on judgment day. These two issues caused Muhammad to suffer a kind of spiritual crisis. After a series of revelations, however, Muhammad became persuaded that there was only one God, and that that God was Allah. From that point on, Muhammad began to preach about the power of Allah. Because he believed that community and religion were one and the same, Muhammad established the city-state that became known as Medina. This fusion of church and state was unique in Muhammad’s time.

Along with “God’s message,” Muhammad was able to preach what was to become known as particularism. According to McGuire, “Religious particularism seems to require a sense of opposition: one’s own religion is seen as superior over some other.” This strong element of religious particularism in Muhammad’s message encouraged missionary expansion. Muhammad’s message was so powerful that when it combined with missionary zeal, within a few centuries Islam was able to establish a presence in Europe, North Africa, Persia, Jerusalem, Damascus, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe, Egypt, and Turkey. As we noted earlier, the growth and popularity of Islam has continued even today, Muslims now “form the majority in more than fifty countries and a substantial minority in many others.”

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

As is the case with all religious traditions, the major premises at the heart of the Islamic worldview are far more complex and numerous than the four assumptions we have selected to summarize. However, the four that follow do deserve to be called “core assumptions,” for they are the most basic articles of faith for this religion.

One God. The central pronouncement of Islam is that there is only one God. Calverley summarizes this fundamental notion in the following manner: “Islam always has taught that there is one God, that there is only one God. The first half of the Muslim creed says: 'There is no god at all but Allah.'” In the Koran the idea is stated as follows: “He is God, the One God to Whom the creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him.” So powerful is this simple premise that Muslims believe the greatest of all sins occurs when a person gives even the smallest share of Allah’s exclusive and unique sovereignty to something else or to another body.

Submission. This next assumption grows out of the overarching precept of one God—a God that the followers of Islam believe they should submit to. Daniel and Mahdi offer an excellent synopsis of this important belief:

Islam itself means ‘submission’ to God and His will. The Koran emphasizes over and over the majesty of God, the beneficence that He has shown to human beings in particular, the acts of obedience and gratitude that creatures owe in return to their Creator, and the rewards that await the faithful at the end of time.

As you will see later in this chapter, the main elements of submission are represented by a commitment to engage in and practice the Five Pillars of Islam.

Fatalism. So prevalent is their belief in the supremacy of God that most Muslims consider that events in life are predetermined by the will of Allah. Perhaps the most repeated statement among committed Muslims is “if God wills it.” Farah points out that “The sayings of the Prophet are replete with his insistence on God’s role as preordainer and determiner of all that takes place.” For example, in the Koran you can read some of the following admonitions: “No soul can ever die except by Allah’s leave and at a time appointed.” “Thy God hath created and balanced all things, and hath fixed their destinies and guided them.” This orientation of fatalism can also be seen in the saying “in sha Allah” (if God wills it). The word instalke is also used with great frequency and translates as “God willing.” These usages represent the Islamic theological concept that destiny unfolds according to God’s will.

Judgment. One of the most important components of Islamic teaching centers on the notion of impending judgment. What this means is that there will be a day when all Muslims will stand before God and be judged. On that day a person’s deeds will be
evaluated. As Halverson notes, "Those whose good deeds outweigh bad deeds will be rewarded in Paradise, and those whose bad deeds outweigh their good will be judged to hell. Whether one's good deeds outweigh one's bad deeds is a subjective manner, though, known only by God. It appears that the key question in God's decision is, "Did the person recognize God alone and endeavor to live by Allah's commands?" The Koran makes it very clear that merely professing Islam is not enough. In fact, some of the cruelties of all punishments in the afterlife fall on those who were hypocrites during their lives. We will have more to say about this idea of judgment later in the chapter, when we examine how Islam perceives death and the afterlife.

SUNNI AND SHIITE

Background. We agree with Coeana when he writes, "An understanding of the events that occurred right after Muhammad's death is crucial to an understanding of the contemporary Muslim world." Those events serve as the source for one of the major divisions in the Islamic world—the division between Sunni and Shiite. While this momentous event was discussed in Chapter 2, we feel that the significance of this separation and of Muhammad's death is worth noting again.

Muhammad died without announcing to the whole community of Muslims his choice of successor. The disagreement over what principle should be employed in naming a successor threatened to divide the community at once: within a short time, it led to the major division that continues until the present time with little signs of healing. What happened is that the Sunni Muslims wanted Muhammad's successor to be elected. The Shiites thought the heir should come through Muhammad's family line via "Muhammad's son-in-law." The ramifications of this split contributed to major theological and physical clashes between the two groups that continue even today.

Similarities. While significant differences have endured since 632, Sunni and Shiites do have much in common. Daniel and Mahdi elaborate this point when they write, "They use the same text of the Koran, believe in the same notion of God, venerate the same prophet, perform the same number of daily prayers (albeit with minor differences in the ritual), pray in the same direction to the same God, fast the same number of days, etc." They also share a common "ethic, law, language, cuisine and apparel." Differences. In spite of the similarities we have just mentioned, it is the schism between the two groups, which goes back almost fourteen centuries, that leads Ghosh to write, "The war between Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites has left the US's hopes of building a stable Iraq in ruins. Now it is threatening to spread throughout the Middle East and beyond." We have already alluded to the basic core of the disagreement earlier in this section. Simply stated, the Shiites, who represent only 10 to 15 percent of all Muslims, regard themselves as the most pious, holy and God-to-God of all Muslims. Shiites also believe that inspired members of the Prophet Muhammad's family. Shiites also believe that inspired members of the Prophet Muhammad's family. Shiites also believe that inspired members of the Prophet Muhammad's family. However, the Shiites take an opposite position. That is, they have believed for centuries that when Muhammad died, his successor should have been elected. They are also

hold that Jesus was the Messiah and that his authority should be endowed on their leaders. In the West, Islam is often controversial. Muslims are often perceived as a "family of believers." One of the major unifying features of this "one" is the Five Pillars of Islam. Five Pillars of Islam are (1) the profession of faith, (2) prayer, (3) alms, (4) fasting, and (5) pilgrimage. While Islam is not one of the pillars of Islam, we will include a discussion of this important concept because of the controversy and confusion surrounding this word.

Statement of Belief (Shahadah). Repetition of the creed (Shahadah), often called the Profession of Faith, means uttering the following statement: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah." This short sentence represents a condensed synopses of Islamic fundamental beliefs. The first part of this pronouncement expresses the primary principle of monotheism, and the second element reinforces the Muslim belief in Muhammad, thus validating the Koran. These words, in Arabic, are heard everywhere Muslims practice their faith. They are the first words a child hears after his or her birth and are repeated throughout his or her life.

Prayer (Salat). Prayer is a central ritual, performed five times a day—at dawn, at noon, in the mid-afternoon, after sunset, and before retiring—in response to a prayer call from the mosque. The prayer ritual is very structured, as is described by Nydell:

Prayer is regulated by ritual washing beforehand, a predetermined number of prostrations and recitations, depending on the time of day. The prayer ritual includes standing (facing toward Meca), bowing, touching the forehead to the floor (which is covered with a prayer mat, rug, or other clean surface), sitting back, and holding the hands in cupped position, all while reciting sacred verses. Muslims pray in a mosque, in their home or office, or in public places.
Almsgiving (Zakat). This pillar is predicated on the belief that “[c]ompassion toward weak and defenseless persons of the community is a reflection of the compassion of God.”

Like so much of ritual, there are some deeper meanings imbedded in the act of almsgiving. Schneider and Silverman offer part of that importance when they write: “Consideration for the needy is part of Islam’s traditional emphasis on equality. In the mosque, all are equal; there are no preferred places for the rich or men of influence—all kneel together.”

In addition, the almsgiver is figuratively God himself. Put in slightly different terms, “Whosoever receives the alms is in theory benefitting not from the generosity of the immediate donor but from the mercy of God.”

Fasting (Sawm). Fasting is a tradition observed during the holy month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During this period, Muslims do not eat, drink, engage in sexual activity, or smoke between sunrise and sunset. Exceptions are made for individuals in ill health and those who are traveling. The act of fasting is believed to serve a number of purposes. First, it eliminates bodily impurities and initiates a new spiritual awakening. Second, as Nidell notes, “The purpose of fasting is to experience hunger and deprivation and to perform an act of self-discipline, humility, and faith.”

Ramadan is not only a religious experience for Muslims, but during the period there is “a great emphasis upon social and family ties.” Farsoun underscores this communal aspect of fasting: “In the evening after breaking the fast, Muslims socialize, discussing family, community, national and international affairs and reaffirming their values, customs and traditions.”

Pilgrimage (Hajj). The fifth pillar of Islam involves a pilgrimage to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) that every Muslim, if financially able, is to make as evidence of his or her devotion to Allah. The trip involves a series of highly symbolic rituals designed to bring each Muslim closer to Allah. For example, the rituals begin “with the donning of the ihram, a white garment; this is a rite of ritual purification that symbolizes a turning away from worldly concerns.” Everyone wears the same color ihram, which in the belief that “This reduces rich and poor, young and old, as well as different nationalities, to the same undimensioned status.” The pilgrims also circle the Ka’ba (a simple square stone building believed to have been built by Abraham, who struggled against idol worship) seven times. This ritualistic act, much like the actions associated with all the other pillars of Islam, reaffirms the strong belief Muslims have in their religion. Canon and Meirat speak of the power of these pillars when they note, “The five pillars act as a tapestry that gives Muslims a portrait of their task in life, a journey that they hope ends as it begins—as a newborn baby free from all sins.”

Jihad

Jihad is, as Elias points out, “one of the most misinterpreted concepts in Islam.” Part of the misinterpretation is self-induced by Islamic extremists when they employ the word as a rhetorical device to inflame the passions of their followers and to threaten their adversaries. The world has seen this confrontational use of the word on numerous occasions. For example, at one time the former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called for a “jihad to liberate Jerusalem.” Obama bin Laden used the word as a rallying cry to justify the September 11th attack on the United States. Even today, Iran’s leaders and the opposition forces fighting in Afghanistan are invoking the notion of a Jihad against Israel and the United States. By linking Jihad to martyrdom, they create a powerful weapon. Another parallel reason for the confusion surrounding the term can be traced to the lack of knowledge about Islam on the part of Westerners. Gordon sketches out these misinterpretations in the following manner: “Jihad is a complex term that has too often been reduced in the Western media and popular imagination to but one of its meanings, namely ‘holy war,’ the slogan of the modern radical Islamic movement.”

Part of the misunderstanding we have been discussing has plagued Islam for centuries. It seems that a reading of the Koran and interpretations advanced by imams reveals two meanings for the word, both of which are used by followers of the faith. One, inner Jihad, deals with the individual, and describes “the function of the individual who must strive constantly to live up to the requirements of the faith” and battle “against his or her lesser nature.” The second interpretation of Jihad is often referred to an outer Jihad.

The Islamic notion of Jihad includes more than one interpretation. What are some of those interpretations?
CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

A Complete Way of Life. The most profound and significant cultural manifestation of Islam is how it is a complete way of life. It must be remembered that Muhammad, who was Allah's messenger, was both a political and a religious prophet. In Islam, religion and social membership are therefore inseparable. Islam instructs people to be to the best way to carry out their lives in private, social, economic, ethical, political, and spiritual arenas. As Richter and his colleagues note, "Islamic law makes no distinction between religion and society, but governs all affairs, public and private." Nydell further develops this idea in the following manner: "An Arab's religion affects his or her whole way of life on a daily basis. Religion is taught in school, the language is full of religious expressions, and people practice their religion openly, almost obsessively, expressing it in numerous ways." Simply put, Islam is "a total way of life, pervading every aspect of a believer's day to day behavior in the narrow sense." Viewed from this perspective, Islam is a codification of all values and ways to behave in every circumstance, from child rearing to eating, to preparing for bed, to the treatment of homosexuals, to views toward modesty.

The channeling of most behavior through religion can be seen in the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. For example, Angrosino points out, "The Islamic revolution in Iran is perhaps the most conspicuous example of religion as a political force in the modern world. It is, indeed, the prototype of the 'political Islam' (sometimes referred to as 'fundamentalist Islam') that has become such a major force in our own time." The same link between Islam and non-religious activity is manifested in the manner in which some Muslims perceive the business arena. For example, because Muslims are forbidden by Islamic law to charge interest on loans, banking practices can be problematic when Westerners attempt to do business in Islamic countries.

Like so many worldviews that are a complete way of life, Islam is taught from infancy. You will recall that we mentioned that the first words chanted in the ear of a Muslim infant are "La ilaha ila'llah" (There is no god but God). Luther summarizes Islam as a religion that stresses "(1) a feeling of dependency on God; (2) the fear of God's punishment on earth as well as the hereafter; and (3) a deep-seated respect for tradition and for the past." This sort of all-inclusive religious orientation provides its members with "an immense body of requirements and prohibitions concerning religion, personal morality, social conduct, and political behavior. Business and marital relations, criminal law, ritual practices, and much more were covered in this vast system.

Gender. The topic of gender differences, as it applies to Islam, is a difficult one to examine for a number of reasons. First, we as Westerners are examining this subject as "outsiders" and, therefore, must be wary of applying Western models to the Islamic culture's perception and treatment of women. While most Americans might find it strange for an entire group of women to cover their hair with the hijab, Muslim women might have a hard time understanding why so many women in the United States dye their hair. Second, broad generalizations regarding gender often overlook regional differences. For example, a village woman of rural Afghanistan is very different from a well-educated Palestinian who is socially and politically

CONSIDER THIS

What is meant by the phrase "Islam is a complete way of life"?
active. Within Iraq, women are now taking a role in the new National Assembly, and women in Kuwait recently were granted voting rights. Women have held high government positions and even been heads of state in places such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Turkey. Nydell develops this important idea about regional differences and how they have affected Arab society: "The degree to which women have been integrated into the workforce and circulate freely in public varies among the Arab countries. In Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, educated women have been active at all levels of society."

In spite of the examples we just cited, we agree with Gordon when he notes, "The role of women in Islamic society is a hotly debated topic within and outside the Islamic world." Contributing to the debate is the fact that the Koran and other religious teachings offer a variety of interpretations on the subject of women. For instance, some Islamic scholars point to the Koran to demonstrate that women must give their consent in marriage, are included in inheritance, and even note that the Koran "teaches" that men and women have equal religious rights and responsibilities. However, many believe that the Koran, and the teachings of annas, who serve as interpreters of the law and traditions, take a different view regarding the perception and treatment of women. They point to numerous verses in the Koran that make it apparent that "men are clearly depicted as superior to women." Sedgwick summarizes that restricted view of women when he writes, "Islam takes it as axiomatic that men are stronger than women, not only physically but also mentally and morally, and that women are therefore in need of male protection and guidance." Signs of this viewpoint flourish within the Muslim faith. For example, according to Islamic tradition, women cannot go out without a guardian. Men, however, "are permitted to leave the homes of the Koran only in the company of their wives and other women." In most countries, "Islam encourages women to pray at home instead of at the mosques with the men." Even outside the religious context there is, at least by Western standards, a great discrepancy between the accepted behavior of men and women. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission noted that few Arab countries permit women to vote and that women hold less than 5 percent of the government or parliament seats in their countries.

The way Muslim women dress, and the rationale for that dress, is yet another cultural statement about the role of gender in Islamic culture. You have most likely seen Arab women wearing the hijab to cover their heads, and caftans and abayas as outer garments that conceal nearly all of their skin. The reason for this modesty is found in the Koran, which instructs women to "cover their adornments" and to "draw their veils over their bosoms." They are also called upon "to be modest in public and conceal their charms from all but their own men." This attitude is expressed today with the following proverb: "A woman is like a jewel: You don't expose it to thieves."

We need to mention once again that when evaluating gender differences, it is important to keep the host culture in mind and not let ethnocentrism cloud your evaluation. Eilis makes the same point when he writes, "Despite the egalitarian social structure that dominates the majority of Islamic societies, women from all backgrounds usually embrace rather than resist their religious tradition." Second, worldwide attitudes regarding gender roles are constantly in a state of flux—particularly as they apply to Islamic women. For instance, a 2007 report disclosed that Saudi Arabian society was deeply immersed in a debate over whether to grant women the right to drive. And in the United States, modesty swimsuits are now being sold so that Muslim women may enjoy the beach. While these changes seem minor, they do reflect, at least in the United States, a view that many "modern" Muslim women are joining the debate on gender issues.

Art and Architecture. An important part of Islamic culture is its distinctive art and architecture. Muslim countries, as Blum notes, are "rich in painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts." Through the use of brilliant colors and distinctive geometric patterns and shapes, Islamic art creates a vivid and instantaneous impact. Part of the special quality of Islamic art is its calligraphy. Calligraphy has always been thought of by Muslims as the most splendid form of art because of its relation to the Koran. In fact, much of the calligraphy contains phrases and sayings from the Koran.

The artistic magnificence of Arab art is, like nearly all aspects of Islam, directly connected to Islamic religion. The Koran, for example, "teaches that an object and its image are united." This would, in part, help explain why so little Arab art is representational rather than illustrative. By this we mean that in most Arab art forms the emphasis is on shapes, form, design, style, and calligraphy—not people, landscapes, or other representations of reality. In most strict Islamic homes, displaying photographs is prohibited. Whereas the Roman Catholic tradition has made wide use of depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints, Islam disallows the use of religious images of any kind. Peoples and Bailey explain this tradition:

The Koran prohibits the use of human images, which are viewed as idolatry. Thus many Islamic peoples extend this to include any pictorial representation of humans or animals. As a result, much of the art of Islamic peoples is devoid of naturalistic representations, focusing instead on elaborate geometric or curvilinear designs.

For centuries, Islamic architecture has been recognized as providing some of the most magnificent examples of human creativity. In fact, the earliest architectural testament of Islam, the Dome of the Rock, constructed in Jerusalem by the Muslim ruler Abd el-Malik around 690, is considered an architectural marvel even by today's standards. Scattered throughout the world are mosques that reflect the special style, colors, building materials, and the like that clearly mark Islamic architecture as striking, distinctive, and beautiful.

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

The idea of death and an afterlife are crucial elements of the Islamic religion. During the last decade, due to the prominence of suicide bombers, the Western world has become very interested in how the followers of Islam view death and an afterlife. Part of the curiosity is
trying to understand the motivation behind bombings that take the lives of women and children as well as that of the bomber. Looking at the concepts of the “final judgment” and the afterlife offers some clues to this complex question. According to Islamic teaching, as Kramer points out, on the Day of Judgment, “The dead will rise from their graves amid cataclysmic events which will disrupt the natural order. They will be judged according to the number of good and bad entries that have been recorded into a set of heavenly books by secretaries whose duty it is to record all human deeds.” With slight variations, Muslims, Jews and Christians believe that the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection) is when all people will be resurrected for God’s judgment according to their beliefs and deeds. Islam says that what we experience in the afterlife is a revealing of our tendencies in this life. Our thoughts, actions, and moral qualities are turned into our outer reality. The notion of a moral code, and its tie to an afterlife, is one of the most fundamental and crucial elements of Islamic doctrine. Islam writes, “Judgment, reward, and punishment are central points in Islam and are the foundation upon which its entire system of ethics is based.” The result of Allah’s judgment determines whether each person will be sent to heaven or hell. The Islamic teaching makes it very clear that these two places are poles apart. However, for many Muslims, their chances of going to heaven are greatly increased if one of their deeds involves taking their own life while killing “God’s enemies.” With heaven being a far better option than hell, the suicide bomber perceives that carrying out the deadly mission would increase chances of getting into heaven. Smith offers an excellent summary of the depictions of heaven and hell in the Koran—portrayals that contribute to a suicide bomber’s decision to seek martyrdom:

Depending on how it fares in the accounting, the soul will then report to Heaven or Hell. In the Koran these conditions are described with all the vividness of Eastern imagery. Heaven abounds in deep rivers of cool, crystal water, lush fruit and vegetation, boundless fertility, and beautiful mansions with gracious attendants. Hell’s portrayal is at times equally graphic with its account of molten metal, boiling liquids, and the fire that spills everything to pieces.

While many Muslim scholars point out that these two descriptions are only metaphors for an afterlife, the two depictions nevertheless underscore the importance of good and evil, and the consequences of each, in Islamic teaching. We should also note that there is debate among Muslim imams and scholars on the issues of suicide bombers, martyrdom, and Heaven. Some see the actions of these bombers as an extension of a Jihad against the enemies of Islam, while others maintain that the Koran does not approve of the killing of innocent people. Regardless of the authenticity of both positions, one thing seems certain: those who become suicide bombers, and engage in this horrific and gruesome act, do so because they believe their actions will be rewarded in heaven.

Hinduism

Hinduism, with almost a billion followers, is the world’s oldest known religion. There is a myth that Hindus are found only in India, but while about 80 per cent of the Indian population is Hindu, members of this religion are spread throughout the world. In fact, there are over 1.5 million Hindus practicing their religion in the United States. In spite of its many followers and long history, Hinduism remains the most difficult of all religious orientations for Westerners to understand. As Schroeder notes, “Defying straightforward explanations of Westerners, it is neither a creed nor an institution, and it includes a vast array of beliefs and deities.” Some of the reasons for the differences between Western views and Hinduism are mentioned by Namgyal: “Hinduism is somewhat difficult to define. The religion has no single founder, creed, teacher, or prophet acknowledged by all Hindus as central to the religion, and no single holy book is universally acclaimed as being of primary importance.” Boorstin buttresses this view when he writes:

Western religions begin with a notion that One—One God, One Book, One Son, One Church, One Nation under God—is better than many. The Hindu, dazzled by the wondrous variety of the creation, could not see it that way. For so multiplex a world, the more gods the better: How could any one god account for so varied a creation?

As you can see, this thing called Hinduism is difficult to pin down. As Smart points out, “Even to talk of a single thing called Hinduism can be misleading, because of the great variety of customs, forms of worship, gods, myths, philosophies, types of rituals, movements, and styles of art and music contained loosely within the bounds of a single religion.” Further, “Movements, deities, slates, and temples rise or fall on their own merits and according to how their believers support them. Patrons control their own temples and define what is considered proper.” What you are beginning to observe is that “Rather than a religion, Hinduism is more accurately described as a long-term accumulation synthesis of a number of religious viewpoints into a commonly accepted system of complementary means of salvation.” Notice the word “commonly accepted” in the last sentence, because despite the diversity, there is a general Hindu worldview. Let us now examine that worldview so you will better appreciate how people who hold this view perceive how the world operates and their place in that world.

ORIGINS

Providing an accurate history of the development of Hinduism is difficult. First, Hinduism had its beginnings long before people were employing written records. Second, the lack of a single founder and text makes it problematic to point to a specific chronology. Yet most historical theories trace the origins of Hinduism back to a time almost four thousand years ago when a group of light-skinned Aryan Indo-European tribes invaded what is now northern India. As these Aryans moved into the Indus Valley, "they mixed with native peoples, they shared customs, traditions, rites, symbols, and myths." What was unique about this blending is that each group contributed to it and received points of view from it. As you can observe, the origins of Hinduism history were "marked by remarkable personalities (although there must have been many) and great proselytizing movements, but rather by the composition of orally transmitted sacred texts expressing central concepts of what we now call Hinduism." Because of the message contained in these texts, and their significance to Hinduism, we now pause and examine a few of them.

SACRED TEXTS

Earlier we mentioned that in Hinduism there was not a single text such as the Bible or the Koran. This does not mean, however, that Hinduism is without any holy books.
CORE ASSUMPTIONS

As is the case with all religions, the messages and lessons advanced by the sacred texts, teachers, and prophets of Hinduism are numerous and beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter. However, Hinduism does contain some central teachings that you will find useful when interacting with someone who is a Hindu.

Divine in Everything. In many respects, Hinduism is a conglomeration of religious thought, values, and beliefs. Not only is there not a single founder, it also does not have an organisational hierarchy, such as that of the Catholic Church. Among the Hindus, one may find magic, nature worship, animal veneration, and an unlimited number of deities. Madhva and Madhavdharma summarise the worldview by pointing out that Hinduism teaches that God is within each being and object in the universe and transcends every being and object, that the essence of each soul is divine, and that the purpose of life is to become aware of that divine essence.

Narayanarayan further develops the issue of the divine when he writes, "The belief that the divine is not only beyond gender and name, but also beyond number, has resulted in its manifestation in many shapes and forms: as human or animal, as trees, or as combinations of these beings." This view of a vast number of deities makes Hindus among the most religious people in the world because they find the divine everywhere. As Boorstin notes, "The Hindu is dazzled by a vision of the holy, not merely holy people but places like the Himalayan peaks where the gods live, or the Ganges which flows from Heaven to Earth, or countless inconspicuous sites where gods or goddesses or unsung heroes showed their divine mettle."

Ultimate Reality. Hinduism is based on the fundamental assumption that the material world, the one we can touch and see, is not the only reality. Instead, they hold that there are other realities that lead to spiritual advancement, and reveal the true nature of life, the mind, and the spirit. The Hindu view is that "What we see as reality is the nearest illusion, a game, a dream, or a dance." Hindu are not satisfied with what they see or hear, as reflected in the Hindu saying, "He who the eye does not see, nor the tongue express, nor the mind grasp." Guidance for such an orientation even comes from the Bhagavad-Gita in the following advice: "A man of faith, intent on wisdom, His senses restrained, will wisdom win." Hindu believe that finding satisfaction in the material and physical world (the Western notion of reality) might gratify you temporarily, but eventually the satisfaction of that world will "wear out." To experience true happiness, bliss, or liberation (what the Hindus call moksha), one needs to discover the spiritual existence found outside traditional concepts of reality. Kumar and Seshi summarise: "The normative implication of this principle is that individuals should strive to unite their inner self with the ultimate reality. The attempt to realise this unity constitutes the heart of spiritualism in the Indian subcontinent."

Brahman. The notion of Brahman is actually an extension of our last paragraph, because "Brahman is the absolute or ultimate reality in Hinduism." According to Smart, this definitive reality is seen as "the sacred Power which is both the sacrificial process and in the cosmos." It is a special knowledge about "the truth of things" that allows someone to be enlightened. As Usha notes, Brahman is the "all-pervading transcendental Reality." Jain and Kusum vary on the offering of this important concept: "Brahman is the ultimate reality of life, a philosophical absolute, serene blissful, beyond all ethical or metaphysical limitations. The basic Hindu view of God involves infinite being, infinite consciousness and infinite bliss." Discovery of Self. One of the core components of Hinduism deals with self-delusion regarding the nature of life. As Hammer notes, Hinduism begins with the premise that "the ultimate cause of suffering is people's ignorance of their true nature, the Self, which is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, perfect, and eternal." The Upanishads, one of the sacred texts we discussed earlier, speak of the Self in the following poem: "Know this: The Self is the owner of the chariot, the chariot is the body, Soul (atmav) is the (body's) charioteer, Mind the reins (that curb it)."

To help one discover the "Self," Hinduism offers its followers some specific recommendations, an examination of which can provide non-Hindus with insight into this worldview. First, intellect is subordinate to intuition. Truth does not come to the individual; it already resides within each of us. The same point is made in the Bhagavad-Gita: "Meditation excels knowledge." The reason for meditation is that it clears your mind of all external thoughts and allows you to discover your true self. Hindus hold that you cannot be told about God, you must experience God from the inside. Hence, outward expression is secondary to inward realization. Second, the world is an illusion because nothing is permanent. All of nature, including human kin, is in an unending cycle of birth, death, and rebirth or reincarnation. Third, it is possible for the human to break the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation and experience an internal state of Hinduism
The concept of dharma, because of its influences on how people live and treat each other, represents an important concept of Hinduism. As DeGenova points out, "Dharma, perhaps the most influential concept in Indian culture and society, refers to actions characterized by consideration of righteousness and duty." The acting out of the duty that DeGenova mentions is yet another cultural manifestation of being Hindu. "Dharma is the cementer and sustainer of social life. The rules of Dharma have been laid down for regulating the worldly affairs of men." The ordering of dharma activity is so specific that, among other things, it provides people guidance on how to behave, perform their vocations, and act during various life cycles, and even how old people should treat those younger than them.

Dharma pertains to both religious and communal responsibilities. So powerful is dharma to Hindus that many believe it is the main pattern underlying the cosmos and is reflected in both the "ethical and social laws of humankind." An extension of the belief and command of dharma is the idea that if you go against dharma, which is seen as a cosmic norm, you will be producing bad karma. Because karma affects this life and subsequent lives (through reincarnation), most Hindus seek to live a virtuous life and follow their dharma.

Four Stages of Life. Another way in which Hinduism operates is seen in what are called "The Four Stages of Life." The four stages represent phases the individual must pass through as a means of gathering enough knowledge to become "free" and "spiritual." Kumar and Sethi point out that people have "specific responsibilities associated with each of these phases, and it is their duty to fulfill them." Before we mention the four stages, we should point out that very few people make it past stages one and two, since the last two stages make enormous demands on the individual. In abbreviated form, the stages are (1) student (studies the Vedas while serving an apprenticeship with a teacher), (2) householder (marries and tries to live a highly spiritual and ethical life), (3) forest dweller (this orientation is away from home and demands intensive studies and meditation), and (4) ascetic, an optional state when the Hindu is completely independent from all people and possessions and unites with Brahman.

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

Complete Way of Life. As is the case with so many religions, Hinduism pervades every part of a person's life. This is because the early stages of Hinduism saw a mixing of cultures and of gods. This mixing of religious ideas and civilizations created a worldview that was as much a social system as it was a religious orientation. Even today Hindus are often referred to as a complete way of life. Radhakrishnan, a former Oxford don and second president of India, observed, "Hinduism is more a culture than a creed." This creed forms the basis of a social system, and thereby governs the types of modalities of interaction even in contemporary society. In this sense, as Venkateswran points out, "Hinduism is not merely a religion. It encompasses an entire civilization and a way of life, whose roots date back prior to 3000 B.C." As Narayana notes, "The boundaries between the sacred and the non-sacred spheres do not apply to the Hindu traditions." As a complete way of life, Hinduism shows itself in a host of ways. For example, people engage in a large assortment of rites and festivals. In addition, while temples are a popular place for worship, it is the daily activity in the home that most reflects Hindu practices as an important and integral part of life. Henderson indicates the significance of the home in the following explanation: "Hinduism wears the face of family and home. A home's most sacred spot is its hearth. Most rituals occur amid daily life. The acts of bathing, dressing, and eating are connected to ritual purity."
In many religious traditions, meditation is employed to clear the mind of all external thoughts and to allow practitioners to discover their true selves.

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

The core of a Hindu's conviction regarding death is summarized by Narayanan in one short statement: "Hindus believe in the immortality of the soul and in reincarnation." What this means is that even though the physical body dies, a person's soul does not have a beginning or an end but simply passes into another reincarnation at the end of this life. This general view about life and death grows out of a number of assumptions that are explained in the Upanishads. Let us examine some of these notions, because they offer valuable insight into how Hindus perceive the world. First, the Upanishads hold that since death is inevitable it should not be the cause of extended sorrow. Second, the true dimension of the individual does not actually die but rather takes on a new body. The reason for this Hindu belief is that "the Eternal Self (atman) is birthless and deathless, and cannot be destroyed." Third, if a person is ever able to experience the Eternal Self in a particular lifetime because of good karma, there will be no need to be born again since he or she will have realized Brahman (the absolute and supreme reality).

As already noted, Hinduism teaches that when the physical dimension of the person dies, his or her soul is released from "the body as if the body were a worn-out robe." Therefore, in most instances people are cremated in a robe—and as quickly after death as possible. In India, the ashes of the deceased person are taken by his or her relatives and scattered into a holy river such as the Ganges.

**Buddhism**

A fifth major religious tradition that can influence intercultural communication is Buddhism. Although the followers of Buddhism are small in number (about 400 million) when compared to that of Christianity, Islam, or Hinduism, Buddhism's impact on civilization has been profound. As de Bary points out, "By extending itself over so many cultural areas in South and East Asia, Buddhism has established a greater universality than any other religion in that part of the world." Buddhism has also spread well beyond Asia. As the followers of Buddhism moved to places like Europe and the United States, they brought their religion and adapted it to each new cultural setting. Markham confirms this idea when he writes, "Buddhism has proved to be very adaptable. It grew rapidly, developing significant forms for different cultures." In spite of its recognition as a major religious tradition, many Westerners find it difficult to understand Buddhism. Thera, quoting the philosopher T. H. Huxley, mentions some of the reasons Westerners are bewildered by Buddha's ideas:

Buddhism is a system which knows no God in the Western sense, which denies a soul to man, which counts the belief in immortality a blunder, which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice, which bids men look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation."

**ORIGINS**

While it is true that Western religions and Buddhism present very different ways of seeing the world, both share a profound core belief in the power and influence of a single individual. For Christians, Jesus is to whom people turn for personal guidance and a means of understanding the place of humans in the world. In Buddhism, as Armstrong points out, it is the Buddha that has for millions of human beings been "the person who has epitomized the human situation." Because Buddha had an influence on the world long before Muhammad and Jesus, we begin our exploration of this religion by examining the life of this extraordinary man.

Buddhism was founded by an Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama in about 563 B.C. The story of how he became known as the Enlightened One has three essential features. First, it is important to note that Prince Siddhartha was born into great luxury. His father was a king who had numerous mansions. As Siddhartha himself wrote, "I wore garments of silk and my attendants held a white umbrella over me." Second, in spite of all his lavish surroundings, the prince felt a deep discontentment with his life. Gautinkel offers an account of what was to become a major event in the founding of Buddhism:

At age 29 the married prince, disillusioned with his opulence, ventured out of his palace and for the first time encountered old age, sickness, and death. So moved was he by this brush with the painful realities of life that he left his comfortable home to search for an end to human suffering."

For the next six years, often called the Period of Enquiry, the Prince engaged in deep meditation and lived an austere life as he searched for answers to explain
the suffering he saw and find a means of alleviating that suffering. After examining his thoughts during this period, he emerged from his self-imposed seclusion and became Buddha. As Clark notes, "Siddhartha became a Buddha (Enlightened One) in a flash of insight one day while meditating. He immediately gathered his disciples and began to teach them what he had learned." This Great Renunciation produced an emotion within Siddhartha that some say formed one of the elements of Buddhism. According to Robinson, Johnson, and Thammassro, the emotion was the feeling of complete calm and "sense of serene confidence (pratipada) the prince experienced when he discovered there was a way to overcome the suffering of life." 974

The third and final feature of the story of Buddha focuses on how he spent his life after his personal revelation. Until his death at 80, Buddha traveled up and down the Ganges Valley sharing his insights with anyone who would listen. After his death, his message was carried by his students. Around 230 B.C., Buddhist missionaries were sent into Sri Lanka (previously called Ceylon). 975 Over the next six or seven hundred years, Buddhism spread across Southeast Asia, China, and Korea. By the time it reached Japan in the sixth century, Buddhism was firmly established across most of what we now call Asia. 976

**CORE ASSUMPTIONS**

As is the case with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, there are multiple forms of Buddhism (such as Theravada, Mahayana, Zen, Pure Land, Vajrayana, and Tibetan Buddhism). What happened is that each culture and country adapted their existing belief system to what Buddha offered. In spite of some minor differences, all the major schools of Buddhism share the same basic assumptions. Let us look at some of those assumptions:

First, Buddha made it clear that he was not a god but simply a man who became enlightened. While he could in some ways be perceived as a savior, his influence was not that of a supreme being in the traditional sense. As de Bary points out, Buddha's "powers are understood quite differently from the Judeo-Christian conception of God the Messiah, and attributes of the latter as Creator, Judge, Redeemer of chosen people, Father, Son, etc., are largely absent in Buddha." 977 When Buddha was asked if he was God, the answer he offered his followers demonstrates the importance of this crucial concept to the practice of Buddhism:

"Are you a god?" they asked.
"No."
"An angel?"
"No."
"A saint?"
"No."
"Then what are you?"
Buddha answered,
"I am awake." 978

That simple response, "I am awake," tells all those who seek Buddha that the answer to life can be found in the simple act of "waking up" and becoming aware of the truths that accompany being enlightened. 979

Second, Buddha taught that all individuals have the potential to seek the truth on their own. As Rahula notes, "He taught, encouraged, and stimulated each person to develop himself and to work out emancipation, for he has the power to liberate himself from all bondage through his own personal effort and intelligence." 980 Fisher and Lopater express this key concept in the following manner: "In its traditional form, it holds that we are capable of freeing ourselves from suffering lies only in our own efforts. The Buddha taught us that only in understanding how we create suffering can we become free." 981 It is often difficult for Westerners to understand this orientation since many Western religions stress community and direction from the clergy. Buddhism, on the contrary, challenges individuals to do their own religious seeking. A famous Buddhist saying is "Be lamps unto yourselves." This emphasis on self-reliance is explained by the Buddhist teacher Bhikkhu Bodhi when he writes, "For the Buddha, the key to liberation is mental purity and correct understanding; and for this reason he rejects the notion that we gain salvation by learning from an external source." 982 The words "external source" represent the essential message in Buddha's teaching, as you can observe in two celebrated Buddhist maxims that stress the same point: "Befare yourself to no external refuge. Work out your own salvation with diligence," and "You are your own refuge; there is no other refuge." 983 Bodhi explains this core assumption in the following manner:

The Buddha tests his teaching upon the thesis that with the right method man can change and transform himself. He is not doomed to be forever burdened by the weight of his accumulated tendencies, but through his own effort he can cast off all these tendencies and attain a condition of complete purity and freedom. 984

Finally, in Buddhism we see a worldview more concerned with humanism and the art of living daily life than with supernatural authority or even metaphysical conceptions. Buddha made no cosmic speculations about heaven and hell, death, or how the world was created. Instead he offered his followers a way to understand and cope with their present existence.

**The Four Noble Truths**

Much of Buddha's message can be found in the Four Noble Truths. Scholars maintain that from these Truths "we get a fairly good and accurate account of the essential teaching of the Buddha." 985 What is interesting about these Truths is that regardless of the type of Buddhism you select, the Four Noble Truths represent the "core of belief and practice to which all Buddhists adhere." 986 Definitions of what constitutes the Truths range from simple recipes for understanding what is wrong with the world to explanations of how it works. 987 Regardless of your interpretation of the Noble Truths, they "stand as the axioms of his (Buddha's) system, the postulates from which the rest of his teachings logically derive." 988 It is important to keep in mind that while the Four Noble Truths, and the discussion of the Eightfold Path that follows, are treated as separate categories, they are interconnected in that each flows seamlessly into the other.

The First Noble Truth (dukkha) is that life is suffering. As Buddha said in his early writings: "Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, losing, misfortune, grief, distress, and despair are suffering; not attaining what one desires is suffering." 989 The notion of suffering is not as narrow as the word would suggest. For example, "It includes not only acute or manifest states of mental or physical suffering, but also any degree
of unpleasantness, discomfort, dissatisfaction, anxiety, or unease. The rationale for Buddha's assertion that life is suffering is explained by Bodhi:

The reason all worldly conditions are said to be dukkha, unsatisfactory, or unsatisfied, is because they are all impermanent and unstable; because they lack any substantial or immovable self, and because they cannot give us lasting happiness; secure against change and loss.20

The teachers of Buddhism would point out that if your life is not characterized by some degree of suffering, you only need look at the world to see the suffering of others. Contrary to Western interpretation, Buddha's philosophy is not pessimistic. As Rahula notes, "First of all, Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. If anything at all, it is realistic, for it takes a realistic view of life and the world."21

The Second Noble Truth (sankha) concerns the origins of suffering. Buddha taught that much of our suffering is caused by craving, self-desire, envy, greed, and ignorance. Suffering could also come from seeking great wealth and status or "being ignorant of the nature of reality."22 Part of the delusion regarding reality is also not accepting our own impermanence. Buddha taught that overcoming craving, self-deception, and ignorance could be solved by developing the mind, thinking carefully, and meditating. These three practices would lead to true happiness and enlightenment.23

The Noble Truths are referred to as "the end of suffering," and follow quite logically from the second truth. This truth states that the cessation of suffering is possible. It becomes possible by removing the unhappiness caused by craving. Seeing clearly the truth of yourself, and the lack of a permanent self, can put an end to suffering. As Bodhi notes, "Freed from ignorance and craving, the arahant can never again be touched by fear, anxiety, disappointment, and worry."24

The Fourth Noble Truth is often called "the remedy" in that it is accomplished by following the Eightfold Path. In following the Path, you not only remove suffering but also can achieve nirvana.25 For Buddhists, nirvana is "described in part as the perfectly peaceful and enlightened state of transformed consciousness in which passions and ignorance are extinguished."26

Crim explains that "Nirvana was simply, directly, and absolutely the end of problems of ordinary human existence."27 The importance of the Fourth Noble Truth and its relationship to the Eightfold Path is highlighted by Rahula: "Practically the whole of teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself during forty-five years, deals in some way or other with this Path."28 Because of their importance to the Buddhist worldview, we turn to a brief discussion of the tenets of the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path. The Fourth Noble Truths deal with the symptoms that cause unhappiness and suffering, the Eightfold Path is the antidote. The elements that make up the Path are not seen as single steps, but rather as steps that are fused together—learned and practiced simultaneously. As Solé-Léris notes, "It must be clearly understood that, although the eight factors of the path are enumerated one after the other for purposes of explanation, the idea is not that they should be cultivated successively."29

1. Right view is achieving a correct understanding and accepting the reality and origins of suffering and the ways leading to the cessation of suffering. Often referred to as "right knowledge" or "complete view," this first principle implies an awareness of our type of "intellectual orientation" toward the Four Noble Truths.30 Specifically, "this involves developing the philosophical perspective that enables one to penetrate through one's deluded conceptions of reality."31 What Buddha offered to his followers was a perspective that gave them a kind of "map the mind can trust if we are to deploy our energies in the right direction."32

2. Right purpose is being free from ill will, cruelty, and untruthfulness toward the self and others. To follow in "the path," Buddha encouraged his followers to discover any "unwholesome" ways of thinking, "such as a desire to hide our feelings' imperfections," since these emotional obstructions hinder the development of a clear and peaceful mind.33 This step is discussed by some teachers as the "motivation step," given that Buddha saw this step as implying a sincere commitment to follow the Noble Path.

3. Right speech. Buddha stressed that people should use communication in the service of truth and harmony.34 Right Speech has four specific components. Let us look at how Bodhi explains these four, since they offer insight into how a Buddhist might use language.

Factor 3 is right speech (sammut vach), which has four components, each with a negative side and a positive side: (i) absence from false speech, and instead speaking the truth; (ii) absence from divisive speech, and speaking words that create harmony; (iii) absence from harsh speech, and speaking gently; (iv) absence from idle chatter, and speaking what is meaningful on the proper occasion.35

4. Right action, some have said, is Buddha's version of the Ten Commandments, for his fourth principle "aims at promoting moral, honorable and peaceful conduct."36 Among other things, this path calls for abstaining from the taking of life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from drinking intoxicants. What this step is asking you to do is learn self-control and be mindful of the rights of others.

5. Right livelihood means refraining from occupations that harm living beings—for example, selling of weapons, liquor, poison, slaves, or livestock.37 Buddha believed that these forms of livelihood were not conducive to spiritual progress.

6. Right effort are "summarised in four terms: avoiding and overcoming unwholesome states of mind, while developing and maintaining wholesome states of mind."38 Letting the mind experience anger, agitation, and even dullness, Buddha believed, would obstruct one's effort in that it would keep a person from "cultivating mindfulness and concentration."39

7. Right mindfulness is, as Solé-Léris notes, "the mindful, unbiased observation of all phenomena in order to perceive them and experience them as they are in actual fact, without emotional or intellectual distortions."40 This step goes to the heart of the Buddhist idea that liberation is accomplished through a mind that is aware of the moment. Gunaratana offers an excellent summary of mindfulness in the following paragraph:

Mindfulness is paying moment-to-moment attention to what is. A mindful mind is precise, penetrating, balanced, and unsheltered. It is like a mirror that reflects without distortion whatever stands before it.41

8. Right concentration, although it comes as the final entry in the Eightfold Path sequence, is one of the most important. In everyday terms, right concentration begins with meditation, which is complete attentiveness on a single object and the achievement of purity of thought, free from all hindrances and distractions. When the mind is still,
according to Buddha, "the true nature of everything is reflected." Newberg underscores the significance of this idea regarding reality when he writes, "For the Buddhists, who do not have a concept of God that in any way resembles Christianity, meditation was a means to connect with the underlying reality of life." 994

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

The Improbability of Language. One of the teachings of Buddha that can influence inter-cultural communication centers on the Buddhist view toward language. Buddhism requires abandonment of views generated by the use of ordinary words and scriptures. In Buddhism, "language is considered deceptive and misleading with regard to the matter of understanding the truth." 995 Brabant-Smith offers much the same idea when he notes, "Ordinary language tends to deal with physical things and experiences, as understood by ordinary man; whereas Dharma language (Buddha's teaching) deals with the mental world, with the intangible non-physical world." 996 This notion finds expression in two famous Buddhist statements: "Beware of the false illusions created by words," and "Do not accept what you hear by report." 997 These sayings reflect Buddha's belief that there is a supreme and wonderful truth that words cannot reach or teach—that is transmitted outside of ritual and language. A Buddhist teacher expressed it this way: "A special transmission outside the scriptures; No dependence upon words or letters; Direct pointing at the mind of man; Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood." 998

Impermanence. While we have already alluded to the notion of impermanence, we briefly return to it again since it is one of the Buddhist ideas that is translated into action. That is to say, accepting the view that all people and events are transitory gives the Buddhist an outlook on life that perceives all events and people to be fleeting, and therefore subject to change. Buddha once wrote, "Snow falls upon the river, white for an instant then gone forever." 999 It was his way of stressing the impermanent nature of all things. He taught that everything, both good and bad, is always changing—always in a state of flux. Buddha believed that recognizing that nothing is permanent would encourage his followers to appreciate the moment, accept the tentative nature of life, and treat other people with kindness. Moving the notion of impermanence to a code of conduct that might influence onlookers, Buddha told his followers that "People forget that their lives will end soon. For those who remember, quarrels come to an end." 1000 This idea regarding the unpredictable character of life is eloquently stated by the second-century Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna: "Life is so fragile, more so than a bubble blown to and fro by the wind. How truly astonishing are those who think that after breathing out, they will surely breathe in again, or that they will awaken after a night's sleep." 1001

Karma. Buddha's teaching regarding karma is important because it sets the tone for ethical standards. The word karma, for the Buddhist, "is used to denote volitional acts which find expression in thought, speech or physical deeds, which are good, evil or a mixture of both and are liable to give rise to consequences, which partly determine the goodness or badness of these acts." 1002 The key word in the preceding definition is "volition." What Buddha was trying to teach his followers was that people make choices and that those choices have consequences—for other people as well as for the person who generates the action. This way of thinking is often referred to as the law of action and reaction. Buddha also taught "that individuals have within themselves the potential to change their own Karma." 1003 Hence, Buddha rejected the notion of divination and appealing to a higher source for good karma. Buddha stated, "All beings are the owners of their deeds (Karma), the heirs of their deeds; their deeds are the words from which they spring. ... Whatever deeds they do—good or evil—of such they will be the heirs." 1004 When Buddha speaks of "heirs," he is referring to the concept that the manifestations of one's karma remain beyond the physical death of the person. In fact, karma can span many lifetimes. Bodhisattas underscores this key point when he writes:

The only thing we own that remains with us beyond death is our karma, our intentional deeds. Our deeds continue, bringing into being a new form of life until all craving is extinguished. We are born and evolve according to the quality of our karma. Good deeds will produce a good rebirth, bad deeds a bad rebirth. 1005

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Having just mentioned karma, we now turn to the Buddhist view of death, which is directly tied to the notion of karma. Although Buddha did not spend a great deal of time on the subject of death, his teachings on two subjects are significant: (1) the physical act of dying and (2) the concept of rebirth. Buddha's realistic explanation of the physical component of death is explained by Crum: "The classical Buddhist view of death is that it is an unavoidable feature of existence and it can cause anguish only when one attempts, in whatever way, to elude it, even if it is by way of mental speculation on the nature of death or an eternal soul." 1006

The reason there is not a soul in the Buddhist worldview is that the body is mortal; therefore, when a person dies all consciousness and all mental activity end. To have a soul implies that there is a version of the self that survives the physical dimension of death. Although in Buddhism there is never a discussion of a soul, at least in the traditional sense, there is an explanation regarding an afterlife—one that is linked to the person's karma. According to Buddhism, death is only an end to a temporary phenomenon. In some ways Buddhists perceive death as ending one chapter and starting another. To stay with the analogy of chapters, it should be pointed out that there can be many chapters because the person might be born over and over in different times and forms. When the organic life ends, the forces of karma take over because they have not been destroyed—this is rebirth. Alternatively, as Ottama states it, "our past karma is rebirth itself." 1007 It is believed that the person's past deeds, both wholesome and unwholesome, play a role in how many times he or she is reborn. As long as the person is greedy, manifests hatred, does not control immoral behavior, and continues to engage in self-delusion, he or she will continue to produce bad karma. Once there is enough good karma, the person will experience nirvana. As noted earlier, nirvana in its undamaged state is complete bliss. More specifically, nirvana is freedom from unhappiness, a different mode of existence, and a way of seeing the world in its true nature. 1008

The actual funeral rite in the Buddhist religion varies from culture to culture and is influenced by which type of Buddhism the deceased practiced. However, in most instances
the funeral is seen not merely as an end of life but also as a transition to another life. This somewhat ritualized rite of passage includes the family and friends coming together to pay their respects before the body is cremated or disposed of in another manner.

Confucianism

As is the case with all religious traditions, Confucianism, for thousands of years, has had a major role in shaping the culture and history of millions of people. Taylor makes the same important point when he writes, "The Confucian influence has stretched across the broad sweep of history from its founding to the contemporary age. Today, it is even discussed in Western circles because of its global impact on the diversity of cultures and their worldviews." In modern terms, Taylor is saying that "many analysts who have studied the East Asian economic miracle over the past three decades have concluded that Confucian values like emphasis on the future, work, achievement, education, merit, and frugality have played a crucial role in East Asia's national development." The importance of Confucianism to the study of communication is made clear by Cuddy and Kim when they write, "Confucianism influences behavior in most Asian cultures and influences the behavior of Asians living in non-Asian cultures."

Although Confucianism has a profound influence throughout the world, its greatest impact for thousands of years has been on the people of China. As Barry, Chen, and Wang note, "If we were to describe in one word the Chinese way of life for the last two thousand years, the word would be Confucian." The roots of Confucianism are planted so deep in China that even during the antireligious period of Communism, the leaders borrowed the Confucian notions of selflessness, allegiance, and deference to help accomplish their purpose of controlling the masses.

We should point out that Confucianism, at least in the conventional sense, is not thought of as a formal religion. In fact, it began as "a system of social and political concepts for the proper management of society," and it is still often considered a social and political philosophy. Confucius himself was as far as to "discourage prayer." But, if Confucianism is not a religion, then what is this worldview that in one form or another touches on "one billion people?" Crim gives a partial answer to the question when he writes that it is "a system of social, political, ethical, and religious thought based on the teachings of Confucius and his successors." Notice that he uses the words "religious thought" instead of the word "religion."

CONFUCIUS THE MAN

As was the case with Buddhism, Confucianism centers on the teachings of a single man: Confucius (Kong Fuzi). The importance of this man is noted by Scarborough when he writes, "Confucius is perhaps the most influential individual in Asian history, not so much for his views on government as for his teachings on the proper relationships and conduct among people." In spite of the meaning of his life to world history, "our knowledge of the life of Confucius is somewhat sketchy, and life with legends." Confucius was born in 551 B.C. in the small feudal state of Lu, which is now the Shandong province in eastern China. Confucius dabbed at various careers early in his life, and held several government positions. However, at around the age of thirty, he turned to teaching. What Confucius taught grew out of his observations about the human condition in China during his lifetime. As Crim notes, "Confucius was witness to the political disintegration of the feudal order, an era characterized by the hegemony of various states and almost constant internecine warfare." In response to these observations, Confucius asserted that government must be founded on virtue, and that all citizens must be attentive to the duties of their position. As McClelland points out, "People were impressed by his integrity, honesty, and particularly his pleasant personality and his enthusiasm as a teacher. Three thousand people came to study under him and over seventy became well-established scholars." These followers are important to Asian history because they carried on the work of Confucius after his death.

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

There are a number of overriding principles that help explain Confucianism. First is the supposition that people are basically good and only have to learn, by example, what constitutes correct behavior. Confucius even suggested how to bring about this correct behavior. Specifically, he said that the best "way to actualize the goodness is through education, self-reflection, self-cultivation, and by behavior in accordance with the established norms of the culture." Second, Confucius stressed a deep commitment to social harmony. That harmony meant fulfilling the familial and secular obligations needed to live and work together. As Soong points out, "Confucian ideology provides the framework in which both live in a benevolent relationship." In carrying out these relationships, Confucianism emphasizes the individual's social relations and social responsibility over self-consciousness people perceive themselves according to their social responsibilities and abilities as opposed to their individual being. As Yung notes, "Confucianism is a philosophy of human nature that considers proper human relationships as the basis of society." These "proper" relationships involved such things as the protection of "face," dignity, self-respect, reputation, honor, and prestige.

THE ANALECTS

Confucius did not write down his philosophy. Therefore, the details of his teaching have come to us through his disciples. The most influential and far-reaching of these collections is the Analects, which literally means "discussions over Confucius' words." These books were not written in a systematic and structured fashion. Rather, the Analects were written over a fifty-year period and consist of twenty books. Today, the Analects continue to exert considerable influence on Chinese and East Asian values and behavior. The books teach basic Confucian values in the form of aphorisms, sayings, stories, proverbs, and the like. The importance of this work to Chinese culture was demonstrated when quotes from the Analects were used in the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

As we have already indicated, Confucianism teaches that the proper and suitable foundation for society is based on respect for human dignity. That respect stresses the proper hierarchy in social relationships among family members, community, and superiors. Confucius set forth a series of ideals that structured much of his thought about these
relationships. An understanding of some of these teachings will help you appreciate Asian perception and interaction.

Jen (humanism). Most scholars agree that the idea of jen is the cornerstone of what Confucius taught. At its core, jen is related to the concept of reciprocity. Jen, as Smith points out, "is the ideal relationship which should pertain between individuals."43 In Confucius philosophy, jen "defines the basic relationship between people in a way that respects the moral integrity of the individual and his or her relations with others."44 The basic belief in the integrity of all people is a reflection of the premise that people are by nature good, and jen is meant to mirror that goodness. This means that regardless of one's status or personality, conflict can and should be avoided. In its place people should strive for harmony in their interactions with other people.

Li (rituals, rites, proprieties, conventions). Li is the outward expression of good manners—the way things should be done. As Conard succinctly states, "Li is the principle of doing the right thing at the right time."45 It has to do with "rules" of harmony that a person follows "in the home, the society, and the empire."46 In contemporary times, li could be something as straightforward as not interrupting the person you are talking with or bowing as a correct greeting.

Te (power). Te literally means power. But for Confucius it was power that was properly employed for the betterment of everyone. He strongly believed that "leaders must be persons of character, sincerely devoted to the common good and possessed of the character that compels respect."47

Wen (the arts). Confucius had great reverence for the arts. As Gannon points out, Confucius saw the "arts as a means of peace and as an instrument of moral education."48 You can further observe that veneration in the following quotation: "By poetry the mind is aroused; from music the spirit is received. The odes quicken the mind. They induce self-contemplation. They teach the art of sensibility. They help to sustain reverence. They bring home the duty of serving one's parents and one's prince."49

CONFUCIANISM AND COMMUNICATION

As is the case with all the worldviews we have examined, Confucianism influences perception and communication in a variety of ways. First, Confucianism teaches, both directly and indirectly, the notion of empathy. For example, jen is often thought of as "the capacity to measure the feelings of others by one's own."50 This is the definition of empathy.

Second, when communicating, those who follow Confucian philosophy would be concerned with status and role relationships. Remember, it was the goal of Confucius "to make social relationships work without strife"51 and part of that working is manifested in proper status and role relationships. Chi and Hong explain this key element when they note, "It prescribes different obligatory requirements for different role relationships; for example, loyalty of the ruler to his ruler, filial piety of son and daughter to their parents, respect for brothers and trust for friends."52 These different role relationships influence everything from differentiated linguistic codes (words showing respect and rank)53 to "paternalistic leadership" in business and educational settings.54

Third, Confucian principles manifest great concern for ritual and protocol. As we noted earlier, social etiquette was an important part of Confucian teaching. Novak reminds us that "in Confucius's view, attentive performance of social ritual and everyday etiquette shapes human character in accordance with archetypal patterns."55 In the business context, according to Beamer and Varner, ritual and protocol can be seen in the fact that when negotiating, the Chinese "have a preference for form."56 This desire for form and correct manners, the Chinese believe, will preserve harmony among the participants.

Finally, Confucian philosophy would tend to encourage the use of indirect instead of direct language. In North America, people often ask very direct questions, are sometimes blunt, and frequently use the word "no." Confucian philosophy, on the other hand, encourages indirect communication. For example, "In Chinese culture, requests often are implied rather than stated explicitly for the sake of relational harmony and face maintenance."57 Yum makes much the same point while demonstrating the link between Confucianism and talk:

The Confucian legacy of consideration for others and concern for proper human relationships has led to the development of communication patterns that preserve one another's face. Indirect communication helps to prevent the embarrassment of rejection by the other person or disagreement among partners.58

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Our discussion of death as applied to Confucianism will be very brief when compared to our discussion of death in the other five religious traditions. The reason for the brevity is simple, Confucius was not interested in death or an afterlife. The essence of his view of death is often summarized in a famous exchange Confucius had with one of his disciples:

Chi I (Tzu I) asked about serving the spiritual beings. Confucius said "If we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?" I venture to ask about death." Confucius said, "If we do not know about life, how can we know about death?"59

As you can observe from the above dialogue, Confucius showed little interest in the topic of death. He believed that death came with dignity if persons had fulfilled their responsibilities to their family and to society. Taylor abstracted this same view when he wrote that Confucius "is only concerned with the moral transformation of the physical world in which we currently live—not with attempting to reach a better place after death."60

Why do cultures conceive of death in so many different ways? Which orientation comes closer to your conception of death?
**ACTIVITIES**

1. In a small group, try to answer the following question: Why has religion been so relevant to human-kind for more than ten thousand years?

2. Attend a religious service of a faith that is very unfamiliar to you, and try to determine the rituals and messages that might influence perceptions of members of that faith.

3. In a small group, discuss what aspects of religion are most directly related to perception and communication.

4. In a small group, discuss the following topic: “How does my view of death compare with the beliefs found in the six great religious traditions”? As part of your discussion, include your observation on how a person’s perception of death might influence his or her behavior.

5. In a small group, discuss the common principles and practices you see among all of the major religions.

**DISCUSSION IDEAS**

1. Explain how understanding the religious aspect of a particular culture’s lifestyle might help you understand that culture’s worldview.

2. Explain the phrase “religion is only one kind of worldview.” What is the link between religion and the values of a culture?

3. What common set of ethics can you identify from the six religious traditions discussed in this chapter?

4. Explain the similarities and differences between Sunni and Shites.

---

**SUMMARY**

- **Worldview** is a culture’s orientation toward God, humanity, nature, the universe, life, death, sickness, and other philosophical issues concerning existence.

- Although worldview is communicated in a variety of ways (such as secularism and spirituality), religion is the predominant element of culture from which one’s worldview is derived.

- Although all religions have some unique features, they share many similarities. These include, among other things, speculation about the meaning of life, sacred scriptures, rituals, ethics, and a safe haven for their members.

- The six most prominent religious traditions are Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. These traditions present their members with advice on how to live life and with explanations about death.