

Text for the back of the book:

This book is designed and written specifically for the purpose of giving you the unbiased facts about each of eight major religions in the world today so as to inform you of the core beliefs of each of these belief systems. I have tried to prevent any and all biases from coming forth in my writing of this book, but I must admit up front that in the last chapter, I couldn't prevent a preconceived bias from showing up. But I believe that that is the only occurrence of such an incident. Please enjoy the book, and I hope that you find it to be interesting and informative.

'Are All Of These Equal?'

A comparative study of the beliefs of eight major religions!

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Introduction:

This book is designed to be a simple overview of the major beliefs of eight major religions in the world today. This book provides a basic framework of the beliefs of each of these eight religions. This is in no way designed or intended to endorse or disparage any specific belief system. (Disclaimer: This volume, unless otherwise noted, is composed entirely of AI-generated content.) This Introduction is not generated by artificial intelligence.

Chapter One: Buddhism

Buddhism does not have a single equivalent to a Bible or Quran. Instead, its core teachings were collected into vast canons. The oldest and most foundational collection is the Pali Canon (also known as the Tipitaka or Tripitaka). It is divided into three sections:

Vinaya Pitaka: The “Basket of Discipline” containing the rules and regulations for monks and nuns.

Sutta Pitaka: The “Basket of Discourses” containing the actual sermons, teachings, and dialogues of the Buddha.

Abhidhamma Pitaka: The “Basket of Higher Teachings” containing advanced philosophical and psychological analysis.

Here are ten core beliefs of Buddhism, taken from ‘Study Buddhism’ by Berzin Archives.

- Everyone would like to lead a happier life, but few know what that would mean or how to accomplish it.

- Our emotions and attitudes affect how we feel. With training, we can rid ourselves of negative ones and develop those that are healthier and more positive. Doing that will make our lives happier and more fulfilling.
- Disturbing emotions such as anger, fear, greed and attachment make us lose peace of mind and self-control. With training, we can free ourselves from being under their control.
- Acting compulsively out of anger or greed creates problems for us and leads to unhappiness. With training, we can learn to calm down, think clearly and act wisely.
- Positive emotions such as love, compassion, patience and understanding help us remain calm, open and clear, and bring us more happiness. With training, we can learn to develop them.
- Self-centered, selfish behavior and thought close us off from others and make us unhappy. With training, we can overcome them.
- Realizing that we are all interconnected and that our survival depends on each other opens our hearts and minds, helps us develop concern for others, and brings us more happiness.
- Most of what we perceive in ourselves and in others are projections of fantasy, based on confusion. When we believe that our projections correspond to reality, we create problems for ourselves and others.
- With correct understanding, we can rid ourselves of confusion and see reality. This enables us to deal calmly and wisely with whatever happens in life.
- Working on ourselves to become a better person is a life-long challenge, but the most meaningful thing we can do with our lives.

Chapter Two: Hinduism

Hinduism does not have a single, definitive main scripture. Instead, its vast collection of texts is divided into two primary categories: Shruti (“that which is heard”) and Smriti (“that which is remembered”).

1. Shruti (The Primary Revelation) The most authoritative and oldest texts are the Vedas, which are considered eternal, divine truths revealed to ancient sages.
2. Smriti refers to texts based on human memory, elaborating on and codifying the older Shruti (divine revelations like the Vedas).

Here are ten primary beliefs of Hinduism.

- There is only One Supreme Being.
 - Vedic Literatures are of divine origin.
 - Avatars of God: these are divine incarnations that appear at various times and in different forms for various purposes, such as the vanquishing of opposing forces.
 - We are Spirit souls.
 - Laws of Karma: Karma is viewed as a complex system of cause, effect, and reincarnation. Actions across lifetimes determine the circumstances of one's current and future lives.
 - Reincarnation: Reincarnation is viewed as the philosophical or religious belief that the soul or consciousness survives physical death and is reborn into a new body.
 - Elevating Consciousness through Deity Worship and Meditation.
 - Need for a bonafide guru (Spiritual Master).
- Four pillars of spiritual life.
 - 1) Satyam: Satyam is the truth – not what you think about it, but what it is; not your idea about it, but its reality.
 - 2) Saucham: Saucham is a Sanskrit word meaning purity, cleanliness, and clearness.
 - 3) Tapah: Tapah is a spectrum of practices ranging from asceticism, 'inner cleansing' to self-discipline by meditation practices.
 - 4) Dayah: Dayah is a core spiritual virtue and one of the "four pillars" of Hindu philosophy, requiring adherents to treat all living beings with kindness and empathy.
 - Purusharthas: purposes of human life, consisting of Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha.
 - 1) Dharma: (virtuous, proper, moral life) In Hinduism, dharma governs both the universe and individual behavior. It is considered one of the four primary goals of human life.
 - 2) Artha: (prosperity/work) In Hindu philosophy, Artha is the pursuit of material advantage, wealth, property, and economic security.
 - 3) Kama: (liberation, release, self-actualization) In Hinduism, Kama refers to the pursuit of desire, passion, love, sensual pleasure, and aesthetic enjoyment.
 - 4) Moksha: (liberation, release, self-realization) Moksha in Hinduism is oneness with supreme power and ultimate liberation from nature. Moksha is also release from

samsara and liberation from karma together with the attainment of Nirvana for the Hindu.

(note: the majority of this entire chapter came from my personal research on Wikipedia and the web)

Chapter Three: Jehovah's Witnesses

The main religious text of Jehovah's Witnesses is the Bible. While they accept all 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, they primarily use and distribute their own version called the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

Here are ten core beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses:

- Theocracy: Theocracy is an approach to government in which state officials claim to receive direct and immediate divine guidance.
- The Trinity: They do not think of Jesus as God, and they teach that the Holy Spirit is simply God's "active force."
- God's Name: The word "Jehovah" is a transliteration of the Hebrew name for God, YHWH.
- Jesus: Jesus is not considered to be God. Instead, He was the first of Jehovah's creations, and subsequently created everything else.
- Armageddon: The battle of Armageddon will take place in the 6,000th year. All governments will be destroyed, the majority of mankind will die, and those left will reign with Jesus for the final one thousand years.
- The Millennium: Those who survived the battle—along with those believers who are resurrected from previous generations—will live on earth under Jesus' reign for one thousand years.
- Afterlife: Those who survive Armageddon are divided into a two-class structure: the Anointed Class—144,000 people who will reign eternally with Jesus—and the "great crowd," who will continue to live on earth during the millennial reign.
- Holidays: Witnesses do not celebrate any holidays, including birthdays.
- Government: Jehovah's Witnesses are officially neutral in all political matters, which has had wide-ranging practical consequences.

- Blood Transfusions: One of the most controversial practices of the religion is the prohibition of blood transfusions.

(note: the majority of this chapter came from my own research on the web)

Chapter Four: Mormonism

The main religious text of the Latter Day Saint movement is The Book of Mormon, published by Joseph Smith in 1830. It is considered a foundational volume of scripture alongside the Bible, serving as an additional testament of Jesus Christ. Here are ten beliefs of the LDS church.

Scriptures Beyond the Bible: Mormons accept the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price as holy scriptures alongside the Bible.

God Was Once a Human Being: Joseph Smith taught that God was once mortal but achieved exaltation and now has a physical body of flesh and bone.

The Social Trinity: Unlike traditional Christian denominations, Mormons believe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct beings, united in purpose but not essence.

Jesus as the Literal Son of God: Mormons view Jesus as the literal Son of God, a distinct divine being who enables humanity's salvation.

Salvation: Salvation requires faith in Jesus but also living a righteous life, following particular rules, and performing specific rituals.

Eternal Families: Families are central to Mormon theology; temple rituals seal families together for eternity, uniting them beyond this life.

The Word of Wisdom: The LDS Church teaches a health code prohibiting alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco.

Modern Prophets and Revelation: Mormons believe in continuing revelation, where modern-day prophets, starting with Joseph Smith, guide the church.

Temple Ordinances: Key temple rituals include endowment (spiritual teachings and promises) and sealing (eternal marriage and family unity).

Missionary Work : Missionary work is a (obligatory) cornerstone of Mormon practice.

(the preceding chart came from an article entitled, 'Mormon Beliefs: 10 Key Beliefs of the LDS Church'

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Chapter Five: Islam

The major holy text of Islam is the Quran (also spelled Qur'an or Koran). Muslims believe it is the literal word of God (Allah) as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years.

The ten core teachings of Islam include:

- Worship Only Allah: Do not associate any partners, idols, or false gods with Him.
- Honor Your Parents: Treat them with utmost kindness, respect, and obedience, especially in their old age.
- Protect Human Life: Do not unlawfully take a life. (This extends to not killing children out of fear of poverty).
- Avoid Immorality and Obscenities: Stay away from shameful acts, adultery, and indecent behavior, whether committed openly or in secret.
- Protect the Vulnerable: Do not misuse the property of orphans; instead, manage it righteously until they reach maturity.
- Deal Honestly in Business: Give full measure and weight when trading or measuring out items.
- Be Just and Truthful: Always speak the truth and act justly, even if it goes against your own interests or those of your relatives.
- Fulfill Your Promises: Keep the covenants and promises you make, especially those made in the name of Allah.
- Follow the Right Path: Remain steadfast on the righteous path and avoid paths or groups that will lead you away from it.

- Practice Fairness and Justice: Do not burden any soul beyond what it can bear, and act with fairness in all interpersonal interactions.

Chapter Six: Catholicism

The term “Apocrypha” does not refer to a single book, but rather a collection of ancient Jewish and early Christian writings. The specific texts vary depending on the religious tradition, divided mainly into Old Testament-era writings and New Testament-era gospels or epistles.

Old Testament Apocrypha (Deuterocanon):

These are historical, wisdom, and prophetic texts written during the intertestamental period (between the Old and New Testaments).

Status: These texts are considered fully canonical scripture by the Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches. They were historically included in the King James Bible but are generally omitted from modern Protestant Bibles.

Here’s ten core beliefs of the Catholic Church:

- The Trinity: The fundamental doctrine that there is one eternal, omnipotent God who exists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.
- The Incarnation of Jesus: The belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on human flesh, was born of the Virgin Mary, and is both fully God and fully man.
- The Paschal Mystery: The core of Christian salvation, encompassing the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, which frees humanity from sin.
- The Seven Sacraments: Instituted by Christ, these are the primary channels of divine grace. They include Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist (Holy Communion), Penance (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.
- The Real Presence (The Eucharist): The teaching that the bread and wine used during Mass truly become the literal body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.
- Papal Infallibility and the Church: The belief that Christ established the Catholic Church as the “Body of Christ” on Earth, led by the Pope (the Bishop of Rome

and successor to Saint Peter), who is preserved from error when defining doctrines of faith and morals.

- **Salvation by Grace and Works:** The belief that salvation is a free gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ, but it also requires an active response of love, good works, and participation in the sacramental life of the Church.
- **Scripture and Sacred Tradition:** The belief that divine revelation is transmitted through the written Word of God (the Bible) as well as the unbroken oral and written traditions passed down from the Apostles.
- **Communion of Saints:** The spiritual union of all faithful followers of Christ, both the living on Earth, the souls being purified in Purgatory, and the saints already in Heaven.
- **Life Everlasting:** The belief in the resurrection of the body and that after death, individuals face a particular judgment by Christ leading to Heaven (for those in a state of grace), Purgatory (for final purification), or Hell (for willfully and permanently rejecting God).

Chapter Seven: Judaism

Judaism is an ancient monotheistic religion centered around the covenant between God and the Jewish people. It emphasizes ethical action, the study of sacred texts like the Torah, and observing commandments (mitzvot) to bring holiness into the world.

Here's a list of ten core beliefs that Judaism is founded on.

- **The Existence of God:** There is a single, supreme Creator who brought all things into being.
- **Absolute Monotheism:** God is one, unique, and indivisible. There are no other deities, and He cannot be divided into parts.
- **Incorporeality:** God has no physical body or form, meaning He is beyond human attributes.
- **Eternity:** God has no beginning and no end; He is the ultimate, eternal existence.
- **Divine Communication:** God communicates with humans through prophecy, allowing His will to be known.
- **The Supremacy of Moses's Prophecy:** Moses was the greatest of all the prophets, and his revelations are fundamentally true.
- **Divine Origin of the Torah:** The written and oral Torah—including the commandments—was divinely given to Moses and remains the authentic, unchanging word of God.
- **Omniscience:** God is fully aware of all human deeds and thoughts at all times.

- Justice and Retribution: God rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those who transgress them.
- The Coming of the Messiah and Resurrection: There is a belief that the Messiah will eventually come to redeem the world, accompanied by the ultimate resurrection of the dead.

Chapter Eight: Protestantism

Protestantism is a major branch of Christianity that emerged from the 16th-century Reformation. Its core beliefs center on salvation through God's grace alone, the acceptance of the Bible as the only infallible authority, and the "priesthood of all believers," meaning individuals can connect with God directly without intermediaries.

The following are ten core beliefs of Protestantism:

- Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone): The Bible is the supreme, infallible, and ultimate authority for Christian faith and practice, taking precedence over church tradition.
- Sola Fide (Faith Alone): Justification (being made right with God) is received by faith in Jesus Christ alone, apart from any human effort, rituals, or good works.
- Sola Gratia (Grace Alone): Salvation is an entirely unearned, free gift of God's unmerited favor and love, not a reward for human merit.
- Solus Christus (Christ Alone): Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and humanity. Salvation and forgiveness are achieved exclusively through His sacrifice.
- Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone): All glory, honor, and praise for salvation belong to God alone, as the initiative and execution of redemption are entirely His.
- Priesthood of all Believers: Every individual Christian has direct access to God and does not need to go through an earthly priest or intermediary agent to seek forgiveness or intercede with God.
- Universal Trinitarian God: God is an eternal, co-equal Trinity: one God consisting of three distinct persons—the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.
- The Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, born of a virgin. His sinless life, death on the cross, and bodily resurrection paid the penalty for humanity's sin.

- Two Primary Sacraments: Most Protestants recognize only the two sacraments directly instituted by Jesus in the Bible: Baptism and Holy Communion (the Eucharist/Lord's Supper).
- The Church as the Body of Christ: The "church" is defined by the community of believers united by faith in Jesus Christ rather than a specific physical building, hierarchy, or allegiance to a Pope.

Chapter Nine: Benediction

I want to close this book out with prayer, and I will be praying according to my belief in Jesus Christ. It's my sincere prayer that no one is offended by my praying to Jesus, but I refuse to bow my personal beliefs to the opinions of others. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, I come before You, first just thanking You for the privilege of praying for all of these people who are searching for the truth. I ask You to begin with me. What I mean by that is, if I am wrong, show me. Show each individual reading this book the truth about who You are, and again, I ask You to start with me. You know that all I want is to know the truth, and for everyone else to know the truth, as well. I believe that I have found the Truth in You, Jesus, but I am willing to change if You show me that I need to. Just be magnified and glorified, in Jesus' name, Amen.