

LESSON 25: Creation in Genesis



REFERENCE

Page 286-7 [THE BIBLE AMONG OTHER TRADITIONS]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Map
- (1) LSM: 'The Near East'
- (2) LSM: 'Myth'
- (3) Bibles

AIM

- To help learners understand the Genesis story of creation as a mythical account, by placing it alongside other creation myths

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand the concept 'myth'.
- KUI Learners understand the creation account in Genesis as myth and read it accordingly.

TEACHER'S NOTE

When people say of a story, "It's only a myth", they have a misguided understanding of the nature of myth. Myths are stories that are "more than true". Here are two definitions for you to ponder:

- A myth is often thought to be a lesson in story form, which has deep explanatory or symbolic resonance for preliterate cultures, who preserve and cherish the wisdom of their elders through oral traditions by the use of skilled story tellers. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth)
- A myth is a story that has been told and re-told for centuries and which seems rooted in universal human experiences that people want to re-experience in new forms again and again. (www.austin.cc.tx.us/sbramme2/Glossary.htm)

This lesson helps learners understand that the story of creation in the Bible is mythological.

LESSON OUTLINE

I The Near East

- i. Divide learners into three, six or nine groups for this exercise, depending on the size of the class.
- ii. Throughout its history, Israel was in contact with neighbouring peoples and was familiar with their chief literary works. Using a map, show the learners how Israel, founded in the land of Canaan, lay between the two civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia which included Babylon and Assyria.
- iii. Allocate Canaan, Egypt, and Mesopotamia to the groups for study.
- iv. Give each learner a copy of the Lesson Materials page 'The Near East'.
- v. Ask them to read their section of the page, noting the links suggested with the biblical text.
- vi. Invite group leaders to report on these links.
- vii. Conclude by summarizing how the biblical text was influenced by the literary works of Israel's neighbours.

2 Myth

To understand these stories, and similar ones found in the Bible, we need to understand what kind of literature they are.

- i. Begin by posing these two questions: What do you understand by a myth? Does the Bible contain myth? Why do you say so? Invite a short discussion.
- ii. Give each learner a copy of the Lesson Materials page 'Myth'.
- iii. Ask them to read it silently, and then to write down the understanding of myth they have gained from the reading.
- iv. Invite a few learners to share their insights.
- v. Offer learners either or both of the definitions included in the Teacher's Note.

3 Story of Creation in the Bible

- i. Learners read the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2.
- ii. Learners share how they understand or view the stories, listing what they think God is saying to us through them.
- iii. Conclude by discussing: The biblical creation stories are good examples of myth.

OTHER IDEAS

4 Religious Truth

Different groups read the two Genesis creation accounts, trying to identify the religious truths that these accounts teach us. They are suggested in the table below. Alternatively, present the tables and ask learners to identify where these ideas appear in the respective creation stories.

BIBLICAL CREATION STORIES	
[Gen 1:1-2:4]	[Gen 2:5-25]
<p>God created the world. Everything God made was good. God created man and woman as equals. God created us to be master of the earth. God created us in his own image. The word of God has the power to do what it says. One day a week has been blessed and made holy.</p>	<p>God created the world. Mankind lives with the breath (life) of God. Mankind's condition was perfect for living in. God created us to take care of the world. God gives us rules about how to use the earth. Man and woman are made for each other. Mankind lived originally in a state of innocence.</p>

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- Etienne Charpentier. 1989. 'A people stamped by the mentality of the Near East' in *How to Read the Old Testament*. New York: Crossroad, p 18-20
- Etienne Charpentier. 1989. 'Myth' in *How to Read the Old Testament*. New York: Crossroad, p 21



Lesson Materials



The Near East

Egyptian hymn to the sun god Aten

Here are some extracts from this hymn composed by Pharaoh Akhenaten.

*You shine out in beauty on the horizon of heaven,
O living disc, the beginning of life.
When you have appeared on the eastern horizon,
you have filled every land with your perfection.
When you set on the western horizon,
the earth lies in darkness as in death.
The earth lies in silence,
for the one who created it has gone to rest on his horizon.
Then the earth becomes bright: you have arisen on the horizon.
As solar disc, you shine by day.
Men awaken and stand on their feet.
Their arms are bent in worship,
because you appear.
The whole land goes to work.
All beasts are satisfied with their pasture,
the trees and plants become green.
The birds flutter in their nests,
raising their wings in worship before your spirit.
The ships sail upstream and down.
The fish in the river dart before your face.
You make the seed grow in women,
make fluid into mankind.
How manifold are your works!
They are hidden from the face of man.*

Throughout its history, Israel was in contact with neighbouring peoples and was familiar with their chief literary works. We shall have occasion to reread some extracts from them. Here I shall try to put these great civilisations in context.

Egyptian thinking was shaped by the country. The Egyptian lived in a radiant land of the world: he felt a degree of anxiety as he watched the sun setting in the evening, though experience had taught him that it would appear the next morning, having conquered the powers of the night. Divinised under various names, the sun was the first of the gods, who had engendered other gods and men. In the adjacent box you can read some passages of the great hymn to the sun god composed about 1350 BC by Pharaoh Akhenaten; the author of Psalm 104 may have been inspired by it.

The Nile tended to flood, but this happened at fixed times and the floods brought the fertile alluvium and the water needful for life.

The Egyptian temperament was naturally optimistic, the gods were good and watched over men. After death, a new and splendid life awaited the faithful, even if this life was somewhat impersonal.

In contrast, **Mesopotamian thinking**/...

Lesson Materials

THE NEAR EAST (cont.)

In contrast, **Mesopotamian thinking** was by and large fundamentally pessimistic. Those who lived in this area inhabited a valley in which the floods were unpredictable, sometimes producing real 'deluges' of which many traces have been found in archaeological excavations. There were frequent invasions of nomads from the Arabian desert, or surging in from the plains of Iran.

So, too, the Mesopotamian gods were usually capricious, constantly struggling among themselves: man tends to appear as a terrified mortal seeking to avoid the repercussions of their anger. According to the Gilgamesh epic, the gods have given him death for his portion and they have filled him with deceit. The kingdom of the dead is a sorry one: the shades of the dead are reunited for a joyless destiny.

Here are some of the great myths from which we shall have occasion to quote extracts.

The epic of Atrahasis (which means the very intelligent) is known to us from a copy found in Babylon and dating from 1600 BC in this long poem of 1645 lines, we are shown the gods wearied by all the chores they have to do. They decide to create man to do the work, they form him of clay mixed with the blood of a god whose throat has been cut.

But mankind proliferates/...

The organisation of the universe in Babylon

The poem Enuma Elish tells of the birth of the gods through Apsu, the male principle, and Tiamat, the female principle. Tiamat wants to destroy the young gods, who are disturbing her. They delegate their power to Marduk (the god of Babylon). He kills Tiamat and the gods allied with her. Then he forms the world from her body.

*Marduk strengthened his hold on the
vanquished gods,
and turned back to Tiamat whom he
had bound.*

*With his unsparing mace he crushed
her skull,*

*then the lord rested and
contemplated her corpse,
intent on dividing the form and doing skilful
works.*

*He split it like a dried fish,
set up one half and made it the
firmament,
drew a skin over it, posted guards
and instructed them not to let its
water escape.*

(Near Eastern Religious Texts, p. 83)

One might compare this myth with the story in Gen.1 and also with a different myth often represented in Egyptian sculpture.

The organisation of the universe in Egypt



Shu, the god of the air separates Nut, his daughter, the heavenly vault from Geb his son the earth

Lesson Materials
THE NEAR EAST (cont.)



But mankind proliferates, makes trouble and wearies the gods, who inflict various scourges, culminating in the flood. However, the god Ea warns a man who builds a boat, and puts his family in it, along with a pair of every animal.

Nature myths in Canaan

A poem found at Ugarit celebrates Baal and Mot. Baal is the god of storms and rain, Mot is the god of death. So here we have an evocation of the agonising problem of fertility. Baal aids men by making the soil fertile with his rain; in this way he has been absorbed by Mot, the god of the underworld. Will the water remain captive in the earth, bringing about a drought?

This extract from the poem shows El, the supreme God, guessing that Baal will be reborn, that the rain will return.

Someone announces the dream that El is going to have:

*If the all-powerful Baal is alive,
if the prince, the lord of the earth,
exists,
in a dream, kindly El benign,
the heavens rain down fat,
the torrents flow with honey.*

El has this dream and rejoices:

*In a dream, the kindly El benign,
in a vision the creator of creatures
sees
the heavens rain down fat,
the torrents flow with honey.
Joyfully the kindly El cries out,
'Now I can sit and rest,
for all-powerful Baal is alive,
the prince exists: the Lord of the*

The poem Enuma Elish (named after its first two words, meaning 'when on high') is also very ancient, in its present form it must have been written about 1 100 BC. At the very beginning there were two sexual principles, Apsu, the sweet water, and Tiamat (whose name can be found again in the tehom - abyss - of Gen. 1.2), the salt waters of the sea. All the gods take their origin from these. Because they annoy her, Tiamat wants to kill them, but Marduk overcomes her, divides her in half like an oyster, and makes her into the vault of heaven. Then he creates man from the blood of a rebel god.

The Gilgamesh epic is beyond question the most famous work from ancient Mesopotamia. Created in Sumer, it developed over more than a thousand years in Assyria and Babylon, and was known by the Hittites, having been copied again in Palestine. In its present form it is composed of twelve cantos.

Gilgamesh, a Sumerian hero, becomes unbearable to the gods because of his pride. They produce a rival, Enkidu, a monster living with the wild beasts. He is humanised by a woman and becomes a friend of Gilgamesh: together, they accomplish all kinds of exploits.

However, one day/...

Lesson Materials

THE NEAR EAST (cont)

However, one day Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh discovers the atrociousness of death and sets off in search of immortality. The hero of the flood gives him the secret of the herb of life. Gilgamesh succeeds in getting hold of it, but a serpent snatches it from him, and Gilgamesh has to resign himself to death

Canaanite thought has been better known since the discovery, in 1929, of the library of the city on Ugarit, present-day Ras Shamra in Syria. The heyday of Ugaritic civilisation was in 1500 BC, about the time of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The chief god is called El, often presented in the form of a bull. (One of the names for God in the Bible is Elohim, a solemn plural of the word El - the equivalent of our 'royal we'.) This religion pays homage to the deified forces of nature: Baal, god of storm and rain, sometimes called 'the rider on the clouds' (like God in Ps. 68.5), and Anath, his sister, later called Astarte: she is the goddess of war, love and fertility.

Israel, and above all the kingdom of Samaria, was to be attracted by Canaanite religion and the sexual cult offered to the naked goddess in the high places, with its rites aimed at obtaining fertility for land and flocks.

We shall discover the nature of biblical thinking as we go along. However, it is good to emphasise here a basic feature which distinguishes it from the other patterns of thinking to which I have referred.

Shema Israel, Adonai hedad! Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one! That is the essential faith of the people as Deuteronomy puts it (6.4). Israel is aware of being addressed by its God, and the people respond to him in love. By way of a caricature, we might represent mythical thought by an arrow which begins with man and returns to him: man projects a deity on to the beyond and then by means of ritual, he tries to gain control over this deity, to enlist his service.

In the Bible, the arrow goes the other way. God addresses man and man responds. Here ritual becomes the expression of the response. The ritual may be the same, but it has changed its meaning. Here is an example. A child may give its mother a bunch of flowers in order to be allowed to go to the cinema, the same child may give the same bunch of flowers to its mother on Mothering Sunday. In the latter case this is a disinterested gesture meant to express a response to its mother's love. It is a form of recognition. That is the basic attitude of eucharist, thanksgiving, to which we shall have occasion to return later.

However, now that we have put these various tools in our luggage, it is time to set off to discover the Bible.

© Etienne Charpentier. 1989. 'A people stamped by the mentality of the Near East' in *How to Read the Old Testament*. New York: Crossroad, p 18-20

Lesson Materials



Myth

On a number of occasions we have come across the word 'myth'. What does it mean?

The ancient myths appear as stories presenting gods, goddesses and ancient heroes. On a first reading we may be somewhat disconcerted, but we shall very soon be caught up in them, because we can see that they are concerned with the great questions that we ask ourselves and which are taken further here: Where does the world come from? Why does man exist at all? Why is there suffering and death? Why is there this mysterious attraction between the sexes? What relationship do human beings have with the divine?

However, instead of discussing these problems in profound and difficult books, as happens today, the myths discuss them in 'strip cartoons'

Let's take a present-day example: the Miss World contest. In a time when royalty hardly exists any more, a queen is chosen and surrounded by her courtiers.

Our existence is often a grey one, with all the tedium of daily life; this queen is crowned and receives magnificent presents. All this helps to put this contest in another world, a dream world, an unreal world. But it expresses the desire of every woman to be beautiful, to be rich, to succeed, and the desire of every man to admire feminine beauty. However, there is another side to it. A woman might be alienated by this myth, might no longer be free to be herself. For example, we can see how girls copy the hair-style of Miss World or try to reproduce her measurements, though it may not suit their kind of beauty. The photo-romances in some magazines in which the secretary marries the boss's son play the same role: they allow the secretary to dream, perhaps enable her to live, but she does so in a dream world, and in the end she neglects her work and thinks of nothing but how to seduce her boss's son.

Putting it at its simplest, we might say: myth consists of taking a great question that we ask ourselves and projecting it, in the form of a story, on an unreal world, on a time before time began, the time of the gods when man did not yet exist. This history of the gods is our own, transposed into another setting. In that way it becomes the model that man must copy.

For example, people ask about the meaning of the attraction between the sexes or how to obtain fertility. They imagine a world outside time, in which gods and goddesses fall in love, have intercourse, and produce children. If they are fertile, our soil and our flocks will also be fertile, since these deities are simply the unreal transposition of our existence. It is therefore necessary to compel them to be fertile: the aim of religious rites is to force the gods to come together in intercourse. Union with sacred prostitutes, in Babylon or the high places of Canaan, was not an orgy, but a religious rite aimed at securing the fertility of the soil.

So all these mythical stories/...

Lesson Materials
MYTH (cont)

So all these mythical stories are extremely serious: they are the first reflections of humanity. We can understand why the Bible took up this language to express its own reflections. However, it transformed the language profoundly. To put it briefly, one might say that it made the photo-romance into a psychological novel.

If we read a good psychological novel, a romance, we will find a couple, with their joys and their problems. . . At first sight it may look just like a photo-romance, but in fact it is the opposite. It does not offer us escape into a dream; on the contrary, it recalls us to our everyday life because it is made up of a thousand and one observations by the author, taken from the lives of different couples. So he compels us to reflect on our existence and take it in hand.

Inspired by these great myths, notably in the creation stories, the Bible rethinks them as a function of its faith in a sole God who intervenes in our history and wills for man to be free.

© Etienne Charpentier. 1989. 'Myth' in *How to Read the Old Testament*. New York: Crossroad, p 21

LESSON 26: Creation and Evolution



REFERENCE

Page 287 [THE BIBLE AMONG OTHER TRADITIONS]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) LSM: 'The Origin of Life'
- (2) Newsprint and kokis

AIM

- To help learners, by using the creation story, see and understand that the Bible does not disagree with Science

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand the difference between scientific facts and creation myths.
- DAP Learners appreciate that science is not necessarily in conflict with Christian faith.

TEACHER'S NOTE

The aim of the lesson is to clarify that there isn't a necessary conflict between scientific theory and biblical teaching. They relate to truth in different ways. Religious myth does not claim to be factually true, and hence verifiable by Science. Scientific theory, on the other hand, does not claim to be absolutely and irrevocably true. In fact, it is constantly being revised in the light of new evidence. The theory of evolution does give us a probable description of how the Universe has developed, but this description does not contradict the profound truth that the creation myths of Genesis teach.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Evolution

Introduce the topic by asking learners to discuss the following questions briefly:

- What do you understand by evolution?
- What have you heard about evolution in the media recently?
- Does a belief in evolution conflict with a belief in creation?
- Do you have any concerns about this issue? What are they?

2 The Origin of Life

- Divide learners into groups of five and ask each group to elect a group leader.
- Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'The Origin of Life' and ask them to read in silence.
- Then ask them to discuss the points provided at the end (1.7). They write the group responses on newsprint.
- Invite the group leaders to report.
- Conclude with a general discussion, taking the opportunity to clarify any misunderstanding.

3 Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by summarising all the points made during the group reporting and general discussion. They might read as follows:

- There are many creation myths, each attempting to make sense of the world as the people experience it.
 - The biblical creation myth is unique in that it is illuminated by a belief in Yahweh.
 - It is not in contradiction with Science.
 - Evolution is a plausible theory which we may or may not accept.
-

OTHER IDEAS

4 Literary Traditions

Alert the class to the complexity of the Genesis creation myth by pointing out that it combines two separate accounts, as they saw in the previous lesson. These two accounts come from different literary traditions – the Priestly (P), and the Yahwist (J), after the German form of the word. The whole Torah or Pentateuch, which opens with Genesis, actually interweaves four traditions, the other two being the Elohist (E) and the Deuteronomist (D).

5 The Monkey Trial

As a way of discussing the apparent conflict between Science and Scripture, you could use the famous ‘Monkey Trial’ which was held in Dayton, Tennessee in July 1925. John Thomas Scopes was accused of teaching evolution in violation of Tennessee law. His chief counsel was Clarence Darrow. Here is the Anti-Evolution Bill adopted by the state of Tennessee:

Section 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, That it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals and all other public schools of the State which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the state, to back any theory that denies the story of the creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

Section 2. Be it further enacted, That any teacher found guilty of the violation of this act, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be fined not less than one hundred dollars and not more than five hundred dollars for each offense. . . .

MATERIALS

LEARNER

Barry and Keane. 1981. ‘The Origin of Life’ in *Word and Life*. Durban: Unity Publications, p 219-223



Lesson Materials



The Origin of Life

1.1 Introduction

When we ask: "How did life begin?" we are asking a scientific question and we go to science to find the answer. When, however, we ask, "Who is responsible for the origin of life?" we are asking a religious question, and this is where the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of the Church come in.

1.2 Let us have a brief look at what science says about the development of the world. We need to have Diagram A in front of us as we do this (diagram A on the third page). Scientists don't seem to be quite certain how the universe (and the earth) really originated. There is the "big bang" theory which says some primordial matter exploded and the various particles (heavenly bodies) are still moving out and away from each other. It seems, however, that over 5000 million years ago what is now the earth was a mass of hot gas, which is said to have broken off from the sun and started revolving in space. Gradually the gas began to cool down and become solid and rock about 4000 million years ago (in fact, the earth has not yet completely cooled down, for at the core of the earth we still have molten rock or metal which makes its appearance in volcanoes, etc.)

The first plants appeared about 3000 million years ago. About 500 million years ago we discovered the first traces of animal life, and man arrived about 4 to 2 million years ago. One could say, considering the great age of the earth, that man has just arrived - and is the infant of the universe.

This process of gradual development from simple to more complex forms of life we can term evolution. It is still happening. Perhaps there are many million years ahead for ever-neater developments. In this sense the work of creation is not complete. This means that creation, including man, is not yet a finished product. It is limited and imperfect, perhaps even relatively primitive! God did not complete the work of creation some time in the past, as a watchmaker makes a watch and considers the job completed, except for winding it up to keep it moving. God is still creating, helping us to grow and develop until perfection is achieved.

It is not easy for us to imagine a process such as evolution happening over thousands of millions of years. Our brains don't seem to be able to take in the vastness of it all. For this reason it may help us to put the vast expanse of evolution into a time scale of one year. Let us say that the earth cooled down on January 1, then plant life appears on July 1, animal life on November 10, man at 22h40 on the last day of the year, and Christ twelve seconds before midnight! What really happened before the earth was a gaseous mass is a matter more or less of conjecture. So, too, with the future that is ahead of us - hence the question marks on the chart (overleaf).

1.3 The appearance of the first cell/...

Lesson Materials



THE ORIGIN OF LIFE (cont)

1.3 The appearance of the first cell

When the earth first formed, temperatures were so high that water could not exist as a liquid, and water is basic to all known life. A dense cloud of water vapour enveloped the earth.

It excluded the sunlight and made the earth a dark, bleak, barren waste, much like the present state of the planet Venus. When the temperatures fell below the boiling point of water, rain must have fallen for thousands of years until virtually the whole of the earth's surface - save for the highest mountain peaks - was covered by the primeval ocean. After further cooling over the ages, atoms of matter were able to form more complex molecules. (At the higher temperatures these would have broken up.) About 3,500 million years ago, somewhere in this primeval ocean, these molecules developed to such a state of complexity that they could re-produce themselves by splitting up. This was the first critical stage in evolution for it was the start of life.

1.4 The development of life

Simple cells gradually came together to form organisms, like minute jellyfish, evolving into more complex forms. The appearance of the first vertebrates, viz. primitive fish, about 500 million years ago, heralded the beginnings of more complex nervous systems centred on a spinal cord.

When continents formed, and when climatic conditions were suitable, some forms of life, both plant and animal, contrived to adapt themselves to a terrestrial existence (about 400 million years ago). The first terrestrial creatures were amphibians which had to return to the water to lay their eggs. The advent of the first reptiles marked an important development; a shelled egg and drought-resistant skin rendered complete terrestrial existence possible. These reptiles proliferated into many different forms, e.g., flying reptiles, dinosaurs, lizards, all of which were cold-blooded. This latter characteristic prevented them from adapting to the cooling climatic conditions and led to the extinction of many species, including the dinosaurs (130 million years ago.)

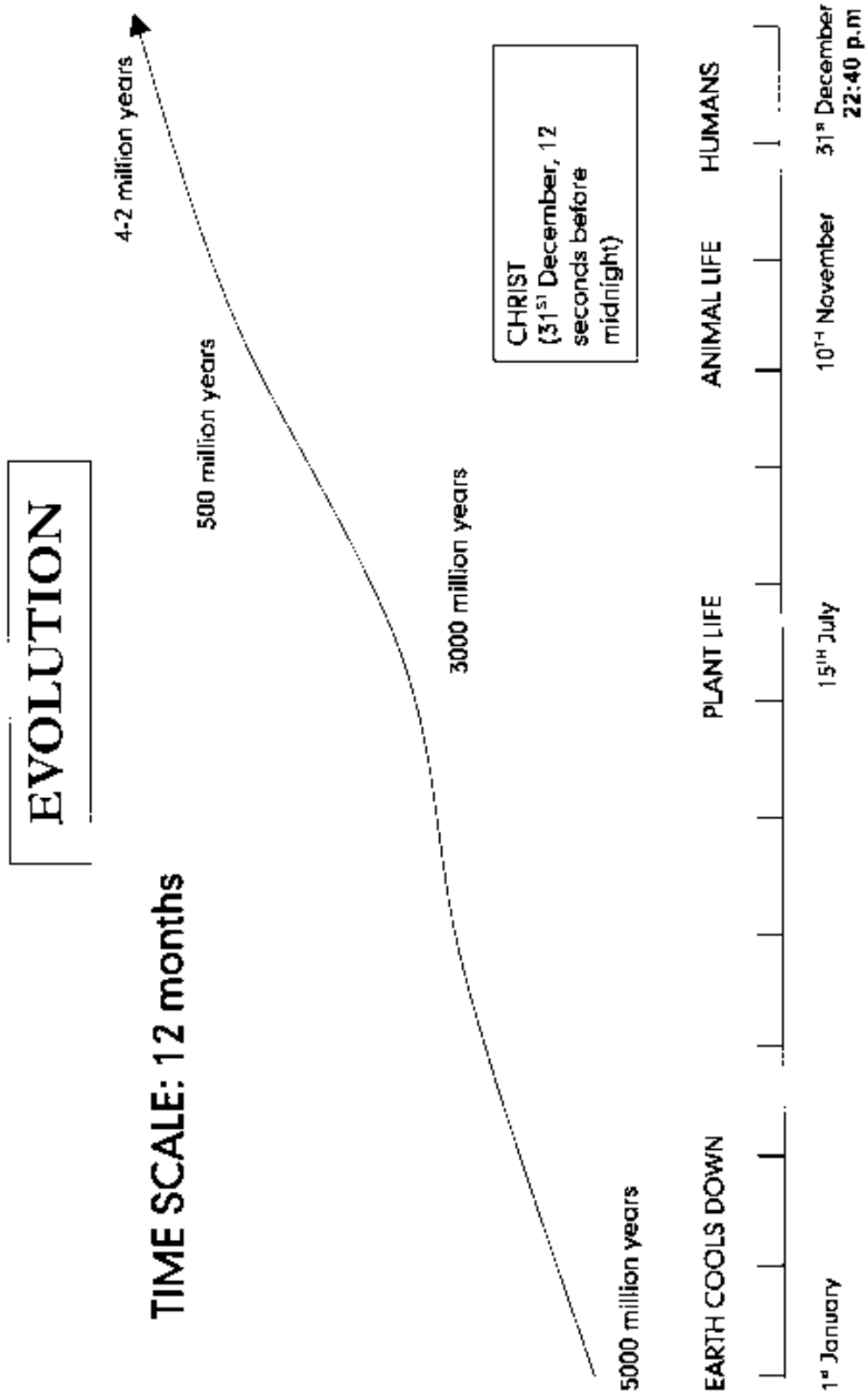
In the meantime there emerged small rodent-like creatures which were ideally adapted to the temperatures since they were warm-blooded (i.e., their body temperature remained constant).

Another characteristic of these "mammals" was that they bore their young internally rather than by laying eggs. These mammals proliferated into many different forms, which became the forerunners of most of the animals found today.

Diagram A/...

Lesson Materials
 THE ORIGIN OF LIFE (cont)

Diagram A



Lesson Materials



THE ORIGIN OF LIFE (cont)

1.5 The advent of man

Among the animals, the primates stand out because of their distinctive features, i.e., their large braincases and hands with thumbs to enable them to climb. Their evolution was mainly cerebral, that is, involved the brain and the central nervous system, whereas other mammals evolved along more specific lines to adapt to particular conditions, e.g., the horse which lived in the grasslands lost its fingers and developed hooves and long legs to enable it to escape from predators.

About one million or two million years ago, cerebralisation among some of the primates had reached such a level of complexity that another critical change occurred, the birth of reflective thought, the first men. For the first time there was self-consciousness among the living creatures. For example, your pet dog knows that you are feeding him; but with this new development there came also the ability to think about one's thoughts (man knows that he knows). Man can reflect on his experiences and actions and learn from them. He can reflect on his own thinking process and this makes him unique. He can think, reflect and love as no other creature is capable of. He has, also, a language, a culture, a sense of time and history, a sense of future and immortality. In short, he has a *God-given soul*.

1.6 Christianity and evolution

There can be no conflict between Christianity and the evolutionary view of the world. Because recorded history is only a split second in geological time (a few seconds in our twelve-month diagram scale), it is impossible to detect any evolutionary development in the universe until the sciences of geology and palaeontology revealed it in recent times. In the past, therefore, Christian teaching was, of necessity, explained in terms of a static view of the universe - a view which saw no fundamental changes occurring in man since creation.

The Bishops of Vatican Council II responded to this situation by stating: “. . . . the human race has passed from a rather static concept to a more dynamic evolutionary one. In consequence there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as important as can be calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis.” (Par. 5)

No one has endeavoured more to express Christian faith in an evolutionary light than P. Teilhard de Chardin (1881 - 1955). This learned Jesuit priest dedicated a lifetime to palaeontological research and produced a vision of the universe in which the scientific evidence of the past complemented the basic tenets of Christianity. His writings, published only after his death, have inspired many by their message of optimism for the future of man. The following is a simplified and abridged presentation of T. de Chardin's thought. God, having posited the universe at the beginning of time, is bringing his creation back to himself through the process of evolution.

There are a number/...

Lesson Materials

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE (cont)

There are a number of very significant stages in this return of the world to God. The first important step is the birth of life from inanimate matter which he called the "biogenesis". As living things become more and more complex, there is a corresponding increase in their degree of consciousness, which, in man, reaches a critical stage, the birth of reflective thought (*anthropogenesis*). Teilhard de Chardin points out that, with the advent of man, the evolutionary process has by no means stopped. Just as there has been a biogenesis, we are now witnessing what Teilhard called the *noogenesis*. After the manner of billions of interconnected neurones in the brain, noogenesis represents the interconnection of billions of brains.

Through the whole of evolution, Teilhard says, there is just one single energy at work. When it links atoms together it is a physical energy; but, at the stage of Man, it is love. It is this same energy which is at work throughout the world. It is only with love and through Christ that Man will be able to build the next steps of his own evolution.

COSMOGENESIS * BIOGENESIS * ANTHROPOGENESIS * CHRISTOGENESIS

Teilhard's Omega point (end point) of the evolution of the universe corresponds to the second coming of Christ, the PAROUSIA spoken of by St. Paul. This *Christogenesis* is the taking up of the stuff of the universe through mankind and Christ, its head, into the Blessed Trinity:

"Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to Himself. God made peace through His Son's death on the cross, and so brought back to Himself all things, both on earth and in heaven's (Col 1:20)

"God's plan, which He will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head." (Eph 1:10)

1.7 Discussion points

1. Do you see any points of contact between the theory of evolution and the Genesis story?
2. Does evolution do away with the notion of a creator?
3. Discuss any difficulties you might have about the evolution of man from some more primitive form of life.

LESSON 27: World Religions: Hinduism and Buddhism



REFERENCE

Page 288 [THE BIBLE AMONG OTHER TRADITIONS]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) LSM: 'Some World Religions'
- (2) LSM: 'An Overview of Hinduism'
- (2) LSM: 'An Overview of Buddhism'

AIM

- To provide learners with a knowledge of other religions and a sense of tolerance towards those of different beliefs

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners have a basic knowledge of Hinduism and Buddhism.
- DAP Learners show appreciation for religious diversity.
- SKL Learners demonstrate behaviours that show tolerance towards people of faiths different to their own.

TEACHER'S NOTE

Lesson 27 and 28 aim at familiarising learners with other major religions of the world. Lesson 27 will deal with Hinduism, the most ancient of these religions, and with Buddhism which is historically related to it. Lesson 28 will consider the youngest of the world religions, namely Islam. If there are learners of these faiths in the class, ask them to share what may be significant to the lessons. Get them to help other learners fill in the exercise table. Use this opportunity yourself to demonstrate appreciation and understanding of other faiths.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

Begin the lesson by asking learners to team up with 1 or 2 others. Ask them to discuss the following questions:

- How did the world begin?
- Why were we human beings created?
- Where do we come from?
- What happens to us when we die?

After 5 minutes, stop the discussion. Ask learners if, within their groups, they all agreed on the answers. If they did, explain that they will not always find that people who will agree with them on all these issues. This is as a result of differences in our faiths. Explain that you'll be exploring some of the major religions of the world, and noting their similarities and differences.

2 Hinduism and Buddhism

Learners will work in the small groups already established.

Distribute the following Lesson Materials pages: 'Some World Religions', 'An Overview of Hinduism', and 'An Overview of Buddhism'. The first of these is a table which the learners will complete as they read the second, and then the third pages.

GRADE 10 Scripture

Introduce the three pages before the exercise begins so that the learners have a clear focus. Suggest that the small groups share the tasks of reading, finding information, and recording. Tell learners not to worry if they do not find all the required information. (You could supply what's missing yourself later, or set it as a homework research exercise.)

3 Recapitulation

Set aside some time before the lesson ends to go through the table with the learners, correcting mistakes and/or filling in missing details.

4 Tolerance and Understanding

Explain that it is important to show tolerance of faiths to which we do not belong. Tolerance grows with understanding. Showing tolerance is a sign of respect for others, and showing respect is a fundamental attitude among many believers. Read the following excerpt from the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate*, paragraph 2.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all humankind. Yet she proclaims and is duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life [Jn 14:6]. In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself [2Cor 5:18-19], human beings find the fullness of their religious life. The Church therefore urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

OTHER IDEAS

5 Internet sites

Further information on world religions can be found at the following websites:

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religions>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/world_religions
- <http://www.materdei.ie/LOGOS>

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'Some World Religions'
- <http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/> An Overview of Hinduism
- <http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/> An Overview of Buddhism



Lesson Materials



Some World Religions

Characteristic	Hindus (Hinduism)	Buddhists (Buddhism)	Muslims (Islam)
God's name/s			
Founder(s) of the faith?			
Names of their sacred writings?			
Their faith community			
Their holy place(s)			
Significant festivals			
Significant beliefs			
Rites of Passage: Birth			
Rites of Passage: Initiation			
Rites of Passage: Death			

Lesson Materials



An Overview of Hinduism

Early History of Hinduism

Hinduism is derived from the Persian word for Indian. It differs from Christianity and other Western religions in that it does not have a single founder, a specific theological system, a single system of morality, or religious organization. Its roots are traceable to the Indus valley civilization circa 4000 to 2200 BCE. Its development was influenced by many invasions over thousands of years. One of the major influences occurred when Indo-Europeans invaded Northern India (circa 1500 to 500 BCE) from the steppes of Russia and Central Asia. They brought with them their religion of Vedism. These beliefs became mixed with the indigenous Indian native beliefs.

During the first few centuries CE, many sects were created, each dedicated to a specific deity. Typical among these were the Goddesses Shakti and Lakshmi, and the Gods Skanda and Surya. Hinduism grew to become the world's third largest religion, claiming about 13% of the world's population. They form the dominant religion in India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Hindus totalled 157,015 in Canada's 1991 census.

Sacred Texts

The most important of all Hindu texts is the Bhagavad Gita which is a poem describing a conversation between a warrior Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna. Vedism survives in the Rigveda, a collection of over a thousand hymns. Other texts include the Brahmanas, the Sutras, and the Aranyakas.

Hindu Beliefs and Practices

- At the heart of Hinduism is the monotheistic principle of **Brahman**, that all reality is a unity; the entire universe is one divine entity. Deity is simultaneously visualized as a triad:
- **Brahma** the Creator who is continuing to create new realities
- **Vishnu**, the Preserver, who preserves these new creations. Whenever dharma (eternal order, righteousness, religion, law and duty) is threatened, Vishnu travels from heaven to earth in one of ten incarnations.
- **Shiva**, the Destroyer, is at times compassionate, erotic and destructive.

Simultaneously, many hundreds of Hindu Gods and Goddesses are worshipped as various aspects of that unity. Depending upon one's view, Hinduism can be looked upon as a monotheistic, trinitarian or polytheistic religion.

The Rigveda/...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF HINDUISM (cont)

The Rigveda defined five social castes. One's caste determined the range of jobs or professions from which one could choose. Marriages normally took place within the same caste. One normally was of the same caste as one's parents. In decreasing status, the five castes are:

- **Brahmins** (the priests and academics)
- **Kshatriyas** (the military),
- **Vaishyas** (farmers and merchants)
- **Sudras** (peasants and servants).
- **Harijan** (the outcasts, commonly known as the untouchables)

Although the caste system was abolished by law in 1949, it remains a significant force throughout India, particularly in the south. Humans are perceived as being trapped in samsara, a meaningless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. Karma is the accumulated sum of one's good and bad deeds. Karma determines how you will live your next life. Through pure acts, thoughts and devotion, one can be reborn at a higher level. Eventually, one can escape samsara and achieve enlightenment. Bad deeds can cause a person to be reborn as a lower level, or even as an animal. The unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, suffering are thus seen as natural consequences for one's previous acts, both in this life and in previous lives.

Meditation is often practiced, with Yoga being the most common. Other activities include daily devotions, public rituals, and puja a ceremonial dinner for a God.

Hindu Sects and Denominations

About 80% of Hindus are Vaishnavites, who worship Lord Vishnu. Others follow various reform movements or neo-Hindu sects.

Various sects of Hinduism have evolved into separate religious movements, including Hare Krishna, Sikhism and Theosophy. Transcendental Meditation was derived from a Hindu technique of meditation. The New Age movement has taken many of its concepts from Hinduism.

With thanks to the Religious Tolerance Organisation of Ontario for the information on this page

Lesson Materials



An Overview of Buddhism

History

Buddhism was founded in Northern India by the Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, about 563-483 BCE). At the age of 29, he left his wife, children and political involvement's in order to seek truth. This was an accepted practice at the time for some men to leave their family and lead the life of an ascetic. He studied Brahminism, but ultimately rejected it. In 535 BCE, he reached enlightenment and assumed the title Buddha (one who has awakened). He is also referred to as the Sakyamuni, (sage of the Sakya clan). He promoted The Middle Way, rejecting both extremes of the mortification of the flesh and of hedonism as paths toward the state of nirvana. He had many disciples and accumulated a large public following by the time of his death in his early 80's. Two and a half centuries later, a council of Buddhist monks collected his teachings and the oral traditions of the faith into written form, called the Tripitaka. This included a very large collection of commentaries and traditions; most are called Sutras (discourses).

Buddhist Beliefs

Buddhism is a religion which shares few concepts with Christianity. For example, Buddhists do not believe in a transcendent or immanent or any other type of God or Gods, or the need for a personal saviour. They do believe in reincarnation: the concept that one must go through many cycles of birth, living, and death. After many such cycles, if a person releases their attachment to desire and the self, they can attain nirvana.

The Buddha's **Four Noble Truths** may be described (somewhat simply) as:

- the universality of suffering
- the desire to have and control things which causes suffering
- the supreme truth and final liberation of nirvana which is achieved as the cause of suffering is eliminated. The mind experiences complete freedom and liberation
- the truth of the eightfold path leading to the cessation of suffering.

His **Eightfold Path** consists of:

- 1. right understanding
- 2. right thinking
- 3. right speech
- 4. right conduct
- 5. right livelihood
- 6. right effort
- 7. right mindfulness
- 8. right concentration

Buddhist Sects/...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF BUDDHISM (cont)

Buddhist Sects

Buddhism is not a single monolithic religion. Many of its adherents have combined the teachings of the Buddha with local religious rituals, beliefs and customs. Little conflict occurs, because Buddhism at its core is a philosophical system to which such additions can be easily grafted.

After the Buddha's death, splits occurred. There are now three main systems of thought within Buddhism which are geographically and philosophically separate. Each tradition in turn has many sects. One source (J.R. Hinnells, *A Handbook of Living Religions*, Penguin, 1991) divides the religion into three main groups by their location:

Southern Buddhism (known as Theravada Buddhism) has 100 million followers, mainly in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and parts of Vietnam. It started in Sri Lanka when Buddhist missionaries arrived from India. By the 15th century, this form of the religion reached almost its present extent.

Concepts and practices include:

- *Dana* - thoughtful, ceremonial giving
- *Sila* - accepting Buddhist teaching and following it in practice: refraining from killing, stealing, wrong behaviour, use of drugs. On special days, three additional precepts may be added, restricting adornment, entertainment and comfort.
- *Karma* - the balance of accumulated sin and merit, which will determine ones future in the present life, and the nature of the next life to come.
- The Cosmos - consists of billions of worlds grouped into clusters; clusters are grouped into galaxies, which are themselves grouped into super-galaxies. The universe also has many levels: four underworlds and 21 heavenly realms.
- *Paritta* - ritual chanting
- Worship - of relics of a Buddha, of items made by a Buddha, or of symbolic relics.
- Festivals - days of the full moon, and three other days during the lunar cycle are celebrated. There is a new year's festival, and celebrations tied to the agricultural year.
- Pilgrimages - particularly to Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka and India.

Eastern Buddhism/...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF BUDDHISM (cont)

Eastern Buddhism is the predominant religion in China, Japan, Korea and much of Vietnam. Buddhism's Mahayana tradition entered China during the Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE). It found initial acceptance there among the workers; later, it gradually penetrated the ruling class. Buddhism reached Japan in the 6th century. It underwent severe repression during the 1960's in China during the Cultural Revolution.

Eastern Buddhism contains many distinct schools: T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, Pure Land teachings, and the Meditation school. They celebrate New Years, harvest festivals, and five anniversaries from the lives of Buddha and of the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin. They also engage in Dana, Sila, Chanting, Worship and Pilgrimage.

Northern Buddhism has perhaps 10 million adherents in parts of China, Mongolia, Russia and Tibet. It entered Tibet circa 640 CE. Conflict with the native Tibetan religion of Bon caused it to go largely underground until its revival in the 11th century. The heads of the Gelu school of Buddhist teaching became the Dalai Lama, and ruled Tibet. It has been, until recently, wrongly dismissed as a degenerate form of Buddhism.

Ceremony and ritual are emphasized. They also engage in Dana, Sila, Chanting, Worship and Pilgrimage. They developed the practice of searching out a young child at the time of death of an important teacher. The child is believed to be the successor to the deceased teacher. They celebrate New Years, harvest festivals and anniversaries of five important events in the life of the Buddha. Buddhist and Tibetan culture suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution when an attempt was made to destroy all religious belief.

Buddhism in the West

Southern Buddhism became established in Europe early in this century. The Zen Buddhist tradition of Eastern Buddhism has also made inroads, particularly in North America. Canadian Buddhists totalled 163,415 in the 1991 census.

With thanks to the Ontario Religious Tolerance Site for this information

© <http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/>

LESSON 28: World Religions: Islam



REFERENCE

Page 288 [THE BIBLE AMONG
OTHER TRADITIONS]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) LSM: 'Some World Religions' (Lesson 27)
- (2) LSM: 'An Overview of Islam'

AIM

- To provide learners with a knowledge of other religions and a sense of tolerance towards those of different beliefs

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners have a basic knowledge of Islam.
- DAP Learners show appreciation for religious diversity.
- SKL Learners demonstrate behaviours that show tolerance towards people of faiths different to their own.

TEACHER'S NOTE

Lesson 27 and 28 aim at familiarising learners with other major religions of the world. Lesson 27 dealt with Hinduism, the most ancient of these religions, and with Buddhism which is historically related to it. Lesson 28 considers the youngest of the world religions, namely Islam. If there are learners of this religion in the class, ask them to share what may be significant to the lessons. Get them to help other learners fill in the exercise table. Use this opportunity yourself to demonstrate appreciation and understanding of other faiths.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

Reproduce the diagram overleaf on newsprint or on the chalkboard. The historical time line gives a sense of when the different religions studied in this lesson and the previous one originate, and how they may relate to other religions.

2 Islam

- Learners will work in the small groups established in Lesson 7.
- Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'An Overview of Islam'. Learners will also need the Lesson Materials page 'Some World Religions' which they used in Lesson 7.
- Suggest that the small groups share the tasks of reading, finding information, and recording.
- Tell learners not to worry if they do not find all the required information. (You could supply what's missing yourself later, or set it as a homework research exercise.)

3 Recapitulation

Set aside some time before the lesson ends to go through the table with the learners, correcting mistakes and/or filling in missing details. Ask learners:

- What are some of the similarities between the religions you have looked at?
- What are some of the differences in these religions?

GRADE 10 Scripture

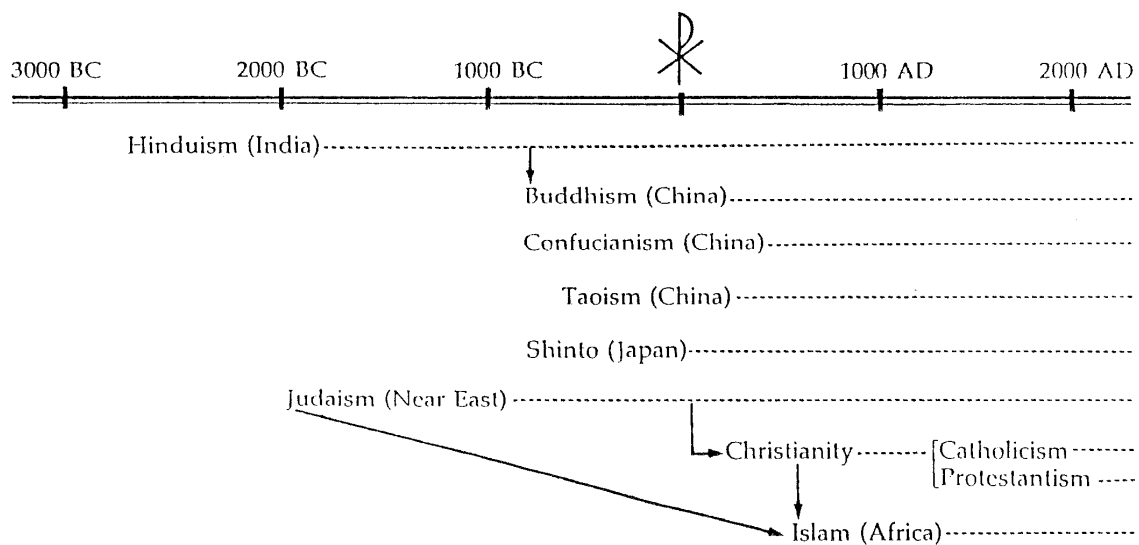
- How can you show tolerance towards other religions? Mentions some behaviours you could display? Practice on a partner.
- Why would you want to show tolerance? What are the benefits?

4 Reflection

Read the following as a conclusion to the lesson:

*Our first task in approaching
Another people,
Another culture,
Another religion,
Is to take off our shoes,
For the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves
Treading on people's dreams.
More seriously still
We may forget that GOD WAS THERE before our arrival.*

(Little Sister Madeleine of Jesus)



(Kieran Sawyer. 1978. *Developing Faith*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, p 45)

OTHER IDEAS

5 Internet sites

Further information on world religions can be found at the following websites:

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religions>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/world_religions
- <http://www.materdei.ie/LOGOS>

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- <http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/> An Overview of Islam



Lesson Materials



An Overview of Islam

Early History of Islam

It was founded in 622 CE by Mohammed the Prophet [pbuh] (circa 570 to 632 CE) in Medina. It is the youngest of the world's great religions. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. "Muslim" is an Arabic word that refers to a person who submits themselves to the Will of Allah. "Allah" is an Arabic word which means "the One True God." An alternate spelling for "Muslim" that is occasionally used is "Moslim"; it is not recommended because it is often pronounced "mawzlem": which sounds like an Arabic word for "oppressor". Some Western writers in the past have referred to Islam as "Mohammedism"; this is deeply offensive to many Muslims, as its usage can lead some to the concept that Mohammed [pbuh] the Prophet was in some way divine.

Little is known about Muhammad's childhood. He was orphaned at the age of 6 and brought up by his uncle. As a child, he worked as a shepherd. He was taken on a caravan to Syria by his uncle at the age of 9 (or perhaps 12). Later, as a youth, he was employed as a camel driver on the trade routes between Syria and Arabia. Mohammed [pbuh] later managed caravans on behalf of merchants. He met people of different religious beliefs on his travels, and was able to observe and learn about Judaism, Christianity and the indigenous Pagan religions.

After marriage, he was able to spend more time in meditation. At the age of 40, (610 CE), he was visited in Mecca by the angel Gabriel. He developed the conviction that he had been ordained a Prophet and given the task of converting his countrymen from their pagan, polytheistic beliefs and what he regarded as moral decadence, idolatry, hedonism and materialism.

He met considerable opposition to his teachings. In 622 CE he moved north to Medina due to increasing persecution. The trek is known as the Hegira . Here he was disappointed by the rejection of his message by the Jews. Through military activity and political negotiation, Mohammed [pbuh] became the most powerful leader in Arabia, and Islam was firmly established in the area.

By 750 CE, Islam had expanded to China, India, along the Southern shore of the Mediterranean and into Spain. By 1550 they had reached Vienna. Wars resulted, expelling Muslims from Spain and Europe. Since their trading routes were mostly over land, they did not develop an extensive sea trade (as for example the English and Spaniards). As a result, the old world occupation of North America was left to Christians.

Believers are currently concentrated/...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF ISLAM (cont.)

Believers are currently concentrated from the West coast of Africa to the Philippines. In Africa, in particular, they are increasing in numbers, largely at the expense of Christianity. Many do not look upon Islam as a new religion. They feel that it is in reality the faith taught by the ancient Prophets, Abraham, David, Moses and Jesus. Mohammed's [pbuh] role as the last of the Prophets was to formalise and clarify the faith and to purify it by removing foreign ideas that had been added in error.

Estimates of the total number of Muslims in the world vary greatly:

0.700 billion or more, Barnes & Noble Encyclopaedia 1993

0.817 billion, The Universal Almanac (1996)

0.951 billion, The Cambridge Factfinder (1993)

1.100 billion, The World Almanac (1997)

1.200 billion, CAIR (Council on American-Islamic relations)

At a level of 1.2 billion, they represent about 22% of the world's population. They are the second largest religion in the world; Christianity has 33% of the world's population. Islam is growing about 2.9% per year which is faster than the total world population which increases about 2.3% annually. It is thus attracting a progressively larger percentage of the world's population. The number of Muslims in North America is in dispute: estimates range from under 3 million to over 6 million. The main cause of the disagreement appears to be over how many Muslim immigrants have converted to Christianity since they arrived in the US. Statistics Canada reports that 253,260 Canadians identified themselves as Muslims (0.9% of the total population) during the 1991 census. Those figures are believed to be an under-estimate.

Sacred Texts

There are two texts:

- The Qur'an are the words of Allah. This was originally in oral and written form; they were later assembled together into a single book, the Qur'an. Its name is often spelled "Koran" in English. This is not recommended, as some Muslims find it offensive.
- The Hadith, which are collections of the sayings of Mohammed [pbuh]

Muslim Beliefs and Practices

Muslims follow a lunar calendar which started with the hegira, a 300 mile trek in 622 CE when Mohammed [pbuh] relocated from Mecca to Medina.

A Muslim's duties as described in the Five Pillars of Islam are:

- to recite at least once during their lifetime the shahadah (the creed: "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his Prophet"). Most repeat it at least daily.

to perform the salat/...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF ISLAM (cont.)

- to perform the salat (prayer) 5 times a day. This is recited while orienting one's body towards Mecca. It is done in the morning, at noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset and just before sleeping.
- to donate regularly to charity through zakat, a 2.5% charity tax, and through additional donations to the needy as the individual believer feels moved.
- to fast during the month of Ramadan [begins December 20th 1998 (Year 1419)]. This is believed to be the month that Mohammed [pbuh] received the Qu'ran from Allah.
- if economically and physically, to make at least one Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca

Jihad (struggle) is probably the most misunderstood religious word in existence. It often mentioned on Western TV and radio during news about the Middle East, where it is implied to be a synonym of "holy war" - a call to fight against non-Muslims in the defence of Islam. The vast majority of Muslims have an entirely different definition of Jihad. It is seen as a personal, internal struggle with one's self. The goal may be achievement in a profession, self-purification, the conquering of primitive instincts or the attainment of some other noble goal.

Common beliefs:

- strict monotheism. God is the creator, is just, omnipotent and merciful
- respect for earlier prophets and belief in their teachings: Abraham, Moses and Jesus
- that Mohammed [pbuh] is the last of the prophets
- belief in the existence of Satan who drives people to sin
- that Muslims who sincerely repent and submit to God return to a state of sinlessness
- belief in Hell where unbelievers and sinners spend eternity
- belief in Paradise, a place of physical and spiritual pleasure where the sinless go after death
- abstinence from alcohol and gambling
- rejection of racism
- avoid the use of alcohol, other drugs, eating of pork, etc.
- avoid gambling
- that Jesus is a prophet. They regard the Christian concept of the deity of Jesus to be blasphemous
- that Jesus was not executed on the cross

Originally, in Islamic countries, there was no separation between religious and civil law, between Islam and the state. Turkey and some other countries have become secular states during this century. This is a controversial move in Islamic circles.

With thanks to the Religious Tolerance Organisation of Ontario for the information on this page
© <http://re-xs.uconn.edu/>

Divisions in Islam/...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF ISLAM (cont.)

Divisions in Islam

There are two principal divisions in Islam – between the Sunni and the Shia. About 90% of Muslims are Sunni; the remaining 10% are Shi'ite, and they are largely concentrated in the area that today is called Iran, with significant numbers in parts of present-day Iraq and South Asia. The origins of this split lie in a difference of interpretation over religious and political authority after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Sunni Muslims see religious authority as vested in the *ulema* (the collective of religious and legal scholars, and separate this from the political leadership of the Caliph. In contrast, Shia Muslims place both political and religious authority in the figure of the Imam or Ayatollah.

The points that follow try to present the story of this split and the different understandings of religious and political authority in Islam:

1. Basically, Shia's believe that Ali, the first cousin of the Prophet, the Prophet's son-in-law, and the first male Muslim, who became the 4th Caliph, should have been the first. In this way, religious and political leadership would have been vested in one person from the 'house of the Prophet' – and the Imam would have also been the Caliph. Instead, three Caliphs preceded Ali – Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman.
2. Although Sunni and Shia acknowledge the political leadership of these three Caliphs, those who became known as Shi'ites only accepted the religious leadership of Ali.
3. For various reasons, there was a great deal of strife in the early Muslim community and among the various Arab regional clans. And this has a bearing on what follows.
4. Uthman was murdered, and Ali succeeded him as Caliph. However, Ali, in turn was assassinated, as was his son Hassan.
5. On Ali's assassination, Mu'aliwah became Caliph. He was succeeded on his death by his son, Yazid.
6. However, some Muslims had levelled a charge of tyranny at Mu'aliwah's Caliphate, and were unhappy with the succession of his son. If Ali had been the first Caliph, then his son Hussain would have succeeded him as Caliph. Ali's son, Hussain, led his family and followers to war against Yazid's army. At Karbala, in 680 CE, Hussain's army was outnumbered and defeated. He died, and after the battle his body was beheaded. This martyrdom of Hussain, together with that of Ali, along with the idea of loyalty to 'the house of the Prophet' are at the core of Shia identity. Ashurah, or the 10th of Muharram, marks the death of Hussain at Karbala. And while many Sunnis also venerate Hussain, this commemoration can lead to violence between Sunni and Shia Muslims in some areas.

7./...

Lesson Materials

AN OVERVIEW OF ISLAM (cont.)

7. In contrast, the Sunni conception of religious authority is different to that of the Shia. Religious authority is vested in the collective ulema (religious and legal scholars) and the Caliph seen largely as a political figure.
8. The male line of descent from Ali died out. The Shia response to this to suggest that an Imam had been 'occulted' – i.e. hidden – and that at the appropriate time would reveal themselves as a prophetic leader (*mahdi*) to Muslims. (There are various views and differences among Shia on this.)
9. Sunnis view the history of Islam as one of steady expansion; Shia as one of persecution and martyrdom.
10. Sunnis hold strongly that all Muslims have direct access to God through their prayers; Shi'ites don't dispute this but, because religious leadership is vested in an individual, practices such as the veneration of the tombs of saintly figures, or intercessory prayer through these 'saints', have developed.
11. More recently, this Shia conception of leadership explains why Ayatollah Khomeini could pronounce a *fatwa* (judgement) on the writer Salman Rushdie for blasphemy. (His novel, *Satanic Verses*, from a Shia point of view can be seen as impugning the 'house of the Prophet'.)

However, it's important not to exaggerate these differences – all Muslims accept the Shari'ah (religious law which covers acts of worship, including the '5 pillars', and human relations); geography, local custom and tradition, and the jurisprudential school prevalent in any area (i.e. the distribution of the Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi'i, and Hanafi schools among the Sunni; the Jaferi school among Shia – each of which arises in the effort to make Shari'ah applicable to everyday life) generally explain whatever differences there are between Muslim communities.

Sufism

Sufism is a mystic tradition in which followers seek inner knowledge directly from Allah through meditation and ritual and dancing. They developed in the 7th century CE as an ascetic reaction to the formalism and laws of the Qur'an.