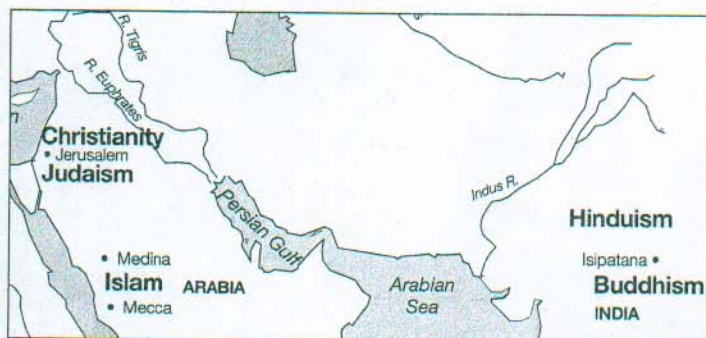


The Emergence and Spread of Belief Systems

FIVE GREAT RELIGIONS					
	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism
FOUNDERS	Siddhartha Gautama, known as Buddha	Jesus Christ	Unknown	Mohammed	Abraham and Moses
PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGIN	Northern India about 500 B.C.E.	Palestine about 30 C.E.	India before 1500 B.C.E.	Arabia 622 C.E.	Palestine about 2000 B.C.E.
HOLY BOOKS		Holy Bible (Old & New Testaments)	The Vedas	Koran	Torah
SYMBOLS	Wheel of life	Cross		Crescent	Star of David
BASIC BELIEFS	Right thinking, speech, and action lead to enlightenment	Salvation of the souls of those who have faith in Christ	Reincarnation ; good or bad fortune (karma) comes from good or bad behavior	One God, Mohammed his prophet; five obligations for the Faithful	One God, who gave the law to his people

The development of belief systems is a major theme in human history. Belief systems are the structures that groups or individuals create in order to fulfill their religious faith. The table shows five of the world's principal belief systems. As the map indicates, they all originated in southwest or southern Asia. These five religions evolved over a relatively short space of time—between 2000 B.C.E. and 622 C.E. *The Coach* uses two chapters to cover this historical period, but these religions are treated together here so that they may be compared.



12 Which three major religions originated in the Middle East?

- A Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam
- B Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam
- C Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism
- D Christianity, Islam, and Judaism

13 Unlike the other major religions, Hinduism

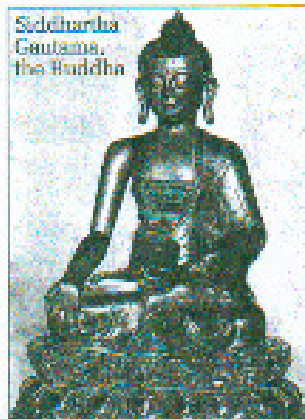
- A has no holy books
- B stresses belief in one God
- C was founded after the end of the Neolithic period
- D was not developed by anyone that we can identify

Hinduism and Buddhism

Unlike other belief systems, Hinduism does not have a founder. It originated in the beliefs and practices of the people who lived in India before 400 B.C.E. From them, Hinduism adopted the belief in several gods (the most important were Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu), and in the idea of **reincarnation**. This teaches that when a being dies, his/her/its soul is reborn in another body. This is painful for the soul which yearns to end the reincarnation process by achieving unity with the universal spirit. The kind of body that a soul is reborn into depends on **karma**. This means that the soul of an individual who lives an evil life may be reborn as a lowly creature, but the soul of someone whose life is filled with good deeds will be reborn into a higher social class and move closer to universal oneness. Good deeds consist of a life filled with prayer, self-denial, and the rejection of worldly goods.

The founder of Buddhism was an Indian prince called **Siddhartha Gautama**. When Gautama learned that suffering and poverty exist, he wanted to understand how suffering could be ended. After years of meditation and fasting, he reached a new understanding of the human condition. In the **Four Noble Truths**, he taught his followers:

- all beings suffer—it is part of being human
- people are driven by worldly desires which cause the soul to be reincarnated
- by eliminating desire, people can eliminate suffering
- desire can be eliminated by truthfulness, resisting and freeing the mind of



evil, not harming others and working for their well being, respecting life, controlling one's thoughts, and meditation.

Many Buddhist teachings (Buddha means "Enlightened One") are derived from Hindu beliefs. But the Buddha did not believe in the Hindu gods who brought warfare and good fortune, nor in the Hindu **varna** system which teaches that a person's destiny depends on the caste into which he or she is born. Hinduism is deeply rooted in Indian cultural practices and did not spread much beyond India. But Buddhist monks carried their master's ideas to China, Japan, Indochina, and Korea.

14A Which of the Hindu beliefs did Buddhists share?

14B Did the Buddhist version of this belief differ from the Hindu version? If so, how?

14C Which Hindu beliefs did Buddhists NOT share?

Islam

Milestones in the History of Islam						
600	650	700	750	800	1250	
622 Hijrah to Yathrib	635 Koran compiled	661 Calif Ali killed; Umayyad dynasty begins	716 Moslems conquer Spain	747 Umayyads defeated; Abbasid califate at Baghdad	786-809 Calif Harun al-Rashid makes non-Arabs equal with Arabs	1258 Mongols destroy Baghdad; end of Abbasid califate
624 Medina Compact	632 Mohammed dies; Abu Bakr first calif	680 Ali's son, Hussein, murdered; split between Sunni and Shiite Moslems	732 Moslem defeat at Battle of Tours halts spread of Islam into France			
630 Mecca becomes Islam's spiritual center	631 Islam spreads across Arabia					

In 613, an Arab named **Mohammed** began preaching in the city of Mecca. He taught that there was one God whom everyone should worship and obey, that those who believed in God were equal, that the rich should share their wealth with the poor, and that God judged people according to their deeds. Most Meccans opposed these ideas, so Mohammed and his followers went to Yathrib which became the center of Islam under its new name, Medina. In the Medina Compact, Mohammed decreed that the community would be ruled by the law and scriptures he had received from God (they were later recorded in the **Koran**). As judge and commander, he would settle all disputes.

Islam spread first to Mecca, then across Arabia, and then throughout the Middle East and beyond. The murder of the fourth calif and his son (Mohammed's descendant) by the troops of the Umayyad calif caused a deep division within the faith. A majority of Moslems (**Sunni**) believed that any devout Moslem could serve as calif. The **Shiites** stressed the spiritual aspects of leadership and insisted that only Mohammed's descendants could be califs. The division continues today; the Shiites, who live mainly in Iran and Iraq, stress suffering and martyrdom as the hallmarks of Islam.

The Koran teaches similar moral values to Judaism and Christianity: kindness to others and condemnation of cruel and criminal behavior. It decrees that the word of Mohammed is law in private and public life and it lists the Five Pillars of Islam, the five duties all Moslems must follow:

- Faith in one God, the God of Christians, Jews, and Moslems, whose prophets include Moses and Jesus, and the last and greatest of them, Mohammed
- Prayer offered five times a day in the direction of Mecca
- Alms-giving to the poor
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan
- Annual pilgrimage to Mecca (the **hajj**)

The Koran also includes laws relating to diet, family life, and property ownership.

16 Which event was the most important for Shiite Moslems?

- A Mohammed's journey to Medina
- B the murder of Ali and his son
- C the spread of Islam beyond the Middle East
- D the victory of the Abbasids

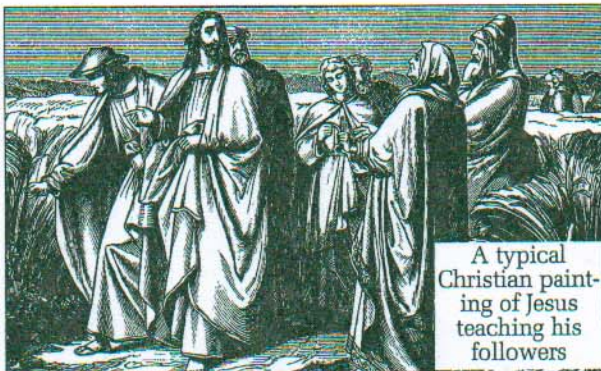
Judaism and Christianity

Judaism is the faith of the Jewish people. It is based upon a compact between God and the ancient Israelites that is described in the Bible. In return for worshiping Him only and obeying His laws, God promised special honor to the Jewish people and a homeland in Canaan (Palestine).

The first five books of the Bible are known as the **Torah**. They describe the early history of the Israelites and the religious and ethical laws received by the prophet **Moses** at Mount Sinai. The Torah teaches that man is made in God's image and is therefore uniquely precious. It stresses that people have a commitment to obey the law and to work with God for the betterment of mankind. Other books of the Bible describe the teachings of prophets who, acting as God's spokesmen, urged the Israelites to remain faithful to Him or be punished.

The Jews were driven from Palestine first by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and then, following an unsuccessful rebellion in 132 C.E., by the Romans. After this latter exile, communities of Jews were scattered around the Mediterranean and the Middle East. But they continued to study the Torah in home and in special schools called **yeshivas**. Between 200 and 500, learned **rabbis** wrote commentaries on the Torah. The **Talmud** is a collection of these writings.

Jesus was a Jew who was raised in Palestine. He preached that God was for-



A typical Christian painting of Jesus teaching his followers

giving and compassionate when people repented of their sins, and that people should behave with loving kindness towards each other. Jesus claimed that he was the son of God, and the followers of Jesus believed he was the **messiah**, the savior of the Jews. This troubled Roman rulers who feared he might cause political unrest. Accordingly, he was crucified in 33 C.E.; but Christians believe that he rose from the dead after three days.

While Jesus lived, his followers were Jews who remained within Judaism. After his death, the apostle **Paul** spread his message among **gentiles**. He preached that God sent Jesus to bring **salvation** to mankind. Paul preached to small Christian communities (after his death, Jesus was known as Christ) in the Mediterranean world; the apostle **Peter** allegedly set up a church in Rome. Many Christians including Paul and Peter were **martyred** (killed for their beliefs). But the faith became legal in the Empire in 322 and spread throughout Europe. European missionaries later spread the teachings of Christianity through Asia, America, and other parts of the world.

15A Identify one belief shared by Judaism and Christianity.

15B What did the Apostle Paul tell people about Jesus?
