

Social and Spiritual Development Strand  
Spiritual and Moral Education

Unit 1: Spiritual and Moral Education

## **Module 1.2: Spirituality in Traditional and Contemporary Melanesia**



**Lecturer Support Material**

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## Unit outline

Unit	#	Modules
Unit 1	1.1	Morality and Ethics in Contemporary Society (Core)
Spiritual and Moral Education	1.2	Spirituality in Traditional and Contemporary Melanesia (Core)

## Icons



Read or research



Write or summarise



Activity or discussion



Suggestion for lecturers

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# Module 1.2 – Spirituality in Traditional and Contemporary Melanesia

Different societies and groups formulate and communicate their spiritual concerns, understandings, beliefs and principles in a variety of ways. They are passed on in the form of laws, rules, codes of behaviour and charters. Each generation of people enters into a heritage of accumulating experience, understanding, knowledge, values and beliefs.

Spiritual beliefs have both a personal and a social dimension. For example, each individual's values and beliefs are developed and nurtured within particular social and cultural contexts. Education institutions provide one of the significant social contexts in which values and beliefs are acquired, nurtured and expressed.

Most communities experience some tension between 'traditional' values and 'emerging' or 'changing' values. This tension is often very strong in societies experiencing rapid change in lifestyle opportunities, available resources and technological development.

## Objectives

Pre-service teachers who complete this module will:

- Have a general understanding of spirituality in today's world context
- Have a general understanding of spirituality in past world context's including Melanesia
- Be familiar with and understand a selection of stories and sacred writings
- Develop a set of universal values
- Have an appreciation of their own and other religious traditions
- Develop a range of skills which enhance their interpersonal and social relationships
- Develop and use their increasing capacity for imagination and insight.
- Exercise their skills in personal reflection and application

## Teaching Module 1.2

Lecturers will draw on their professional expertise to develop a range of teaching and learning strategies that are suitable for their particular students. In terms of classroom interactions, these must include the active promotion of the right of all students to express their views. To achieve this, students need to learn how to listen to one another and to give others a fair hearing.

Classes, therefore, should provide students with opportunities to practise such basic skills as reasoning, cooperating, empathising and negotiating with others.

Stories are very powerful tools in teaching and learning because they are entertaining and hold the reader's interest. Stories that deal with spiritual and moral issues provide a context in which to examine values and beliefs. The characters in the stories may behave badly or well. Either way they can lead to discussion of spiritual or moral issues by students. Cultural stories are particularly powerful in this respect.


Here are some of the ways stories can be used in spiritual and moral education:

Story type	Possible use
Traditional stories	Traditional stories are highly valuable because many of them illustrate values in some way, either positive or negative. These stories can be read, used as the basis of discussion, acted out or illustrated for classroom use.
Stories from world religions	Sacred writings are valuable sources of stories illustrating a range of spiritual and moral beliefs and practices. These stories can be compared and used as the basis of discussion, as well as acted out or illustrated for classroom use.
Modern stories	Stories written by today's authors cover similar themes to traditional and sacred stories but the context is often more valid for students.
Student's personal recollections	When spiritual and moral values are explored by students, they will be able to find examples in their own lives, either being used or not applied well. Writing and/or talking about their own experiences helps to deepen their understanding.
Creating stories	Stories can be created in response to a problem posed (by the lecturer or students) to show how the application of spiritual and moral values can solve the problem or how lack of values can create bigger problems. This can be done individually or in groups.

A number of traditional stories and sacred writings are included in the additional support material for this module. A selection of these can be printed for use in class or lecturers can source stories from college library resources.

**Bible references** are provided in the additional support material (but not typed up). Most lecturers will have many more ideas about suitable bible references to support the learning in this module.

## Module 1.2: Content

 These definitions are limited because of the complexity of defining such personal concepts. They are best used as a basis for discussion and further development.

**Spirituality** is a way of life or belief based on a person's ultimate relation to a supernatural being, the universe or a god or gods. It is a life process, not a series of good deeds. It is an attitude of the heart that is lived out and a recognition of the interrelatedness of all things.

**Christian spirituality** is rooted in religious, moral, cultural and social contexts. It suggests that we must not allow false goods – ambition, greed, anxiety – to rule our lives; that we must be open and trustful of others – not unfaithful, unreliable or disloyal; we must not assume that religion is just a private affair and therefore condone the structural injustices of our society. Rather it demands active involvement for the good of all.

The key dimensions of spirituality are:

- Vision – the capacity to see where we are going, to strive for a desired good
- Volition – the expression of our willpower
- Ethics and values – our moral conduct and patterns of living
- Relationships with the Creator – recognition of God as the source of goodness and healing power
- Change - what we do and how we do it
- Work from principle - recognising fundamental truths

**Religion** is difficult to define because it means so many things to different people. One definition is that religion is faith in a divinely created order of the world, agreement with which is the means of salvation for a community and thus for each individual who has a role in that community. In this sense the term applies principally to such systems as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which involve faith in a creed, obedience to a moral code set down in sacred Scriptures, and participation in a cult.

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### 1.2 Activity 1

*In small groups, ask five people of different ages and backgrounds the question- 'What is religion?' As a class, try to produce a definition based on responses to your survey question.*

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## Beliefs

**i** Studying this module should provide an opportunity for students to appreciate the universality of core spiritual and moral beliefs. Encourage open-minded discussion and a spirit of tolerance in all discussion and other activities.

### Traditional religions

Traditional religions are those religions that have remained in their original socio-cultural environment, although still developing or changing. There is no agreement on a single name to be used when referring to these religions. Whereas in Africa these religions are ordinarily referred to as "African Traditional Religions", in Asia they are called 'Tribal Religions and Folk Religions', in America 'Native Religions and Afro-American Religions', and in Oceania 'Indigenous Religions'.

Traditional religions generally have a clear belief in one God, in a Supreme Being who goes by such names as Great Spirit, Creator, the Great One, the Mighty Spirit, the Divine, the Transcendent, the One who lives above, Heaven etc. There is also a belief in other beings which are above humankind but are less than the Supreme Being. They may be called spirits. Deceased adult relatives, i.e. ancestors, are also objects of belief.

Cult or worship in traditional religions is directed generally to the spirits and the ancestors and sometimes to God. It takes the form of prayer especially in the family, worship at shrines and communal sacrifices. Fear of the evil spirits or ancestors motivates many acts of worship.

Traditional religions do not generally have revealed books. The riches of their contents, and their many values, are more often found in their celebrations, stories and proverbs, and conveyed through attitudes, customs and codes of conduct. It is rare that a traditional religion traces itself back to a founder.



#### Bear Dance

Native Americans dramatize religious myths and the natural processes of the Earth with costumed dances and other rituals. This lithograph depicts a bear dance, where members of a particular indigenous people wear masks of bear heads and perform a dance that imitates the movement of the bear. Many peoples believe that such rituals allow them to tap the powers of great spirits and bring good luck to their people.

### Melanesian spirituality

Melanesian religions contained a multiplicity of gods, culture heroes and spirits with varied characters and roles. Particular powers were associated with creation, war, fertility, prosperity and welfare. A variety of rites and sacrifices were practised to ensure the group's success and well-being. Most important in terms of bringing success and blessing were the spirits of the dead. The dead whose names were remembered were usually still seen as part of the



community and their hurt feelings could bring on trouble, for example, the coastal Roro of Papua one could easily expect difficulties from a family member killed unexpectedly (by a crocodile, a spear from behind).

Melanesians lived in close relationship with the natural environment of which they felt an integral part. Their lives were influenced by the:

- Struggle for existence and the fear of attack
- Important events of birth, marriage and death and by
- Intricate systems of inheritance and land tenure, by
- Great ceremonial gift exchanges and by
- Bonds of kinship and obligation

In this closed universe the spirits of the living and dead existed side by side. Above it were the great deities which had created the forests, swamps, mountains, rivers, and crops, as well as the tools and implements by which the crops were tilled. In many societies each specific resource had a creator deity. Only the help of these deities could ensure that crops properly ripened, that enemies were confounded or that the lakatois safely reached their destination. In turn this help could only be enlisted by properly invoking it through the correct rituals and incantations taught to men by the deities in the far gone past. The spirits of the ancestors, unlike the deities, had created nothing but acted as guardians of the living, watching over their vital interests, warning them of dangers in war and peace, or aiding them in the search for forest foods.

The world was full of hostile forces, for even when all ritual had been faithfully observed there was the possibility that success might be denied through the sorcery of a nearby tribe or from an immediate personal enemy in one's own tribe. For this reason Melanesians carefully guarded the disposal of own personal effects. Locks of hair, finger or toenail clippings, bits of skin, in an enemy's possession, whether near or distant, could perhaps work mortally against them. There was great significance attached to the power of thoughts or dreams.

The working of sorcery and numerous other injuries, real or imagined, invariably led to the 'pay-back' by which all injuries were precisely if impersonally avenged. Thus a man of one tribe whose wife was stolen by a man from another might not kill the actual offender, but just someone from the same tribe. More often than not his kinsmen undertook the task for him. For example, in the days of early European contact many whites killed natives in necessary or too hasty self-defence. It has then happened that the first Europeans to return to the area some time afterwards were in turn killed in revenge although they themselves had behaved in exemplary fashion and were in no way responsible for the original killings.

The presence of missionaries in the 19th century led to the widespread abandonment of many aspects of traditional beliefs in favour of Christianity. Today Christianity is the dominant religion of the region. A degree of independence has, however, been established within Melanesian Christianity through the formation of indigenised churches and theologies.

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 **1.2 Activity 2**

*What aspects of traditional spirituality described above are still practised today?*

*Describe a traditional religious ritual or story that is still important in a community in PNG.*

*What were 'cargo cults'? How did they blend with traditional beliefs?*

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## Aboriginal beliefs - the Dreaming

Aborigines have the longest continuous cultural history of any group of people on Earth - dating back 65,000 years. The 'Aboriginal Dreamtime' is that part of aboriginal culture which explains the origins and culture of the land and its people.

The Dreamtime contains many parts: It is the story of things that have happened, how the universe came to be, how human beings were created and how the Creator intended for humans to function within the cosmos. As with all other cultures - it speaks of Earth's Creation by Gods and Goddesses - some of whom were kind hearted - while others were cruel.

In the Aboriginal worldview, every meaningful activity, event, or life process that occurs at a particular place leaves behind a vibrational residue in the earth. The shape of the land -- its mountains, rocks, riverbeds, and waterholes -- and its unseen vibrations echo the events that brought that place into creation. Everything in the natural world is a symbolic footprint of the spiritual beings whose actions created our world.

Aboriginal oral traditions which describe the origin of Australia from ancient times are frequently dramatic, involving great beings and amazing events. They also contain the ancient racial memory of a people whose traditions and culture remained largely unaltered for thousands of years, with accounts of great geological changes--the rising of the seas, the change from lush vegetation to desert, and the eruption of volcanoes as well as the very first arrival of humans on the continent.

The expression 'Dreamtime' is most often used to refer to the 'time before time', or 'the time of the creation of all things', while 'Dreaming' is often used to refer to an individual's or group's set of beliefs or spirituality. For instance, an Indigenous Australian might say that they have Kangaroo Dreaming, or Shark Dreaming, or Honey Ant Dreaming, or any combination of Dreamings pertinent to their 'country'. However, many Indigenous Australians also refer to the creation time as 'The Dreaming'.

What is certain is that 'Ancestor Spirits' came to Earth in human and other forms and the land, the plants and animals were given their form, as we know them today. These Spirits also established relationships between groups and individuals, (whether people or animals) and where they travelled across the land, or came to a halt, they created rivers, hills, etc., and there are often stories attached to these places.



*Aboriginal Painting - Snake and Witchetty Grub Dreaming.*

*Barney Daniels Tjun-Gurrayi/Robert Harding Picture Library*

The Dreamtime stories have been handed down through the ages and are an integral part of an Indigenous person's 'Dreaming'.

Legends of the 'Dreamtime' are handed down by word of mouth and by totem from generation to generation. Each tribe has its individual dreamtime although some of the legends overlap. Each dreamtime involves some secret rituals and rites, and some classified as 'Men's Business' and some as 'Women's Business'. Colourful, symbolic and enthusiastic dancing and corroborees are used to pass on the stories of the creation.

### **The Rainbow Serpent**

The Rainbow Serpent came from Northern Australia in an era when the country was in its dreaming origins. As it travelled throughout the length and breadth of the country it created, as it writhed over this land, the mountainous geographic locations by pushing the land into many ranges and isolated areas. The Great Dividing Range is said to be a creation of the Rainbow Serpents movements. Throughout its journey over and under the land it created rivers, valleys, lakes and was also careful to leave many areas flat, whilst shaping various land gradients for future water run offs. After it was satisfied with what it did it came to a point in Central Australia where it ceased to create any more geographical landforms. From its inside spirit people came out and began to move all over this country to create many different lifestyles, speak many languages and thus to evolve as different but similar entities in their own allotted Dreaming home lands.

## **African traditional religions**

A supreme power, ruling over everything and everyone, and there at the beginning of time, appears to be a feature of all African religions. It goes under many different names, and it varies considerably from society to society, as to how near or how remote this supreme power is. The Abaluyia of Kenya, the Bambuti of the Congo area, and the Galla of Ethiopia are among those who pray directly to the supreme deity on a regular basis. In other cultures, the supreme being cannot be approached directly. The Igbo, of south-eastern Nigeria, talk about

'the rich man' who can only be approached through his many servants. Most societies have a host of different intermediaries who can be consulted.

#### **The Yoruba of Nigeria**

In Yoruba belief, the prime mover is Oludmare, who gives life to the newborn and consigns the wicked to a place of punishment after death. But beneath Oludmare are hundreds of deities, or 'orisas'. Each has a different province, for example, Orunmila knows every language of earth, Ogun is concerned with iron making and hunting, Shango (or Chango) is a manifestation of Oludmare's anger, drawing on thunder and lightning to express this.

There are many stories which explain conflict, sin, disorder in this world and the general alienation of human beings from their Creator. Often this has resulted from humans acting in some way to disappoint or anger God. The Judaic-Christian tradition takes up the same theme with Eve breaking the harmony of Paradise by eating from the tree of knowledge. The Barotse, of Zambia, were similarly punished for eating animals, when they were expressly forbidden from doing so.

Besides praying to God and the deities, there is a common theme of sacrifice in African religions, echoed in ancient religions throughout the world. Sacrifice is about giving something up that is very precious for any number of reasons including continuing good fortune and avoidance of distaste. The sacrifice may be in the form of food, or drink (home made or imported from the West), it may be an animal, or even a human being. With the Dinka, of Southern Sudan, the sacrifice will be their most valued possession: cattle. Sacrifice can be something you only do in a time of crisis or something you do every day, a form of insurance policy to guard against things going wrong.

Religion in Africa is not a discreet human activity, separate from other aspects of living. This is in contrast to many branches of Christianity, where the spiritual is separate from the physical, and heaven is entirely separate from earth. In African traditional religion, as in many other ancient belief systems in other parts of the world, religion, or the spiritual permeates every aspect of life.

The landscape is a source of spiritual contemplation and worship. The Gikuyu of Kenya, for example, pray facing Mount Kenya. The Shona, of Zimbabwe, have sacred hills and caves. The Lugbara and Langi, both from Uganda, venerate sacred rocks. The landscape may also be populated by many spirits, some good, and some bad. The ancestral spirits also mediate between this world and the spirit world. When alive these ancestors led lives judged to be honourable and well respected. They are well placed to give advice and warnings. They are, in many ways, as real to the people who talk to them, as the living.

Illness is a particular area where the physical and spiritual meet. There is no fixed demarcation between body and soul. In Africa, illness may be treated with herbs very successfully. However, often it will have a spiritual dimension. It may be seen as a punishment from God or the deities, or it might be the result of ill will from an enemy. In this case, some form of spiritual power will be needed to combat it; a medicine man or woman will then be consulted.

There is a common belief that if the illness has been brought about by an enemy, then the likelihood is that the enemy consulted a witch. The concept of witchcraft is a complicated one.

People judged to be witches are usually women. They are outsiders; they may be very old, or very ugly, without children or family. They may admit to witchcraft, they may not. The point is they are seen as a threat to the community. The issue is obscured by a belief that the witch not only operates secretly at night, she may not even know that she is a witch. It's hard to get a fair trial once accused of witchcraft.

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 **1.2 Activity 3**

*Read the descriptions of Aboriginal and African beliefs again and identify the similarities with traditional and contemporary Melanesian beliefs.*

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## Christian Religions

### Orthodox Eastern Church

With 158 million followers, the Orthodox Eastern Church is the second largest Christian community in the world. It began its split from the Roman Catholic Church in the fifth century; the break was finalized in 1054. The followers of the Orthodox Church are in fact members of many different denominations, including the Church of Greece, the Church of Cyprus, and the Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodox religion holds biblical Scripture and tradition, guided by the Holy Spirit to be the source of Christian truth. It rejects doctrine developed by the Western churches. Orthodox doctrine was established by seven ecumenical councils held between 325 and 787 and amended by other councils in the late Byzantine period.

### Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church, with 900 million followers, is the largest Christian church in the world. It claims direct historical descent from the church founded by Jesus, represented by the apostle Peter. The Pope in Rome is the spiritual leader of all Roman Catholics. He administers church affairs through bishops and priests. Members accept the gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible, as well as the church's interpretations of these. God's grace is conveyed through the seven sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist (or communion) that is celebrated the regular service or worship (Mass). The other five sacraments are confirmation, penance, holy orders, matrimony, and anointing of the sick. Redemption through Jesus Christ is professed as a method of obtaining salvation (which is necessary to ensure a place in heaven after life on earth).



### Baptism of Christ

The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) all describe accounts of Jesus' baptism, which signifies, according to some Biblical scholars, Jesus' acceptance of the divine plan for him to die for the sins of others. Immediately following the baptism, the gospels describe the opening of the heavens and the descent of the Holy Spirit, which would alight throughout the world after Jesus had attained glory. Baptism of Christ, a panel by Piero della Francesca, painted in about 1445, clearly depicts the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descending into the world as John baptizes Jesus.

Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York

### Amish Mennonites

Founded in Switzerland in the 1500s after secession from the Zurich state church; the followers of Jacob Ammann broke from the other Mennonites in Switzerland and Alsace in 1693; most Amish Mennonites emigrated to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century. The Bible is the sole rule of faith; beliefs are outlined in the Dordrecht Confession of Faith (1632); Mennonites shun worldly ways and modern innovation (education and technology); the sacraments are adult baptism and communion.

### Baptists

Founded by John Smyth in England in 1609 and by Roger Williams in Rhode Island in 1638. The Baptist Church has 31 million members, and no creed; authority stems from the Bible. Most Baptists oppose the use of alcohol and tobacco. Baptism is by total immersion.

### Church of Christ

Organized by Presbyterians in Kentucky in 1804 and in Pennsylvania in 1809. The Church of Christ has 1.6 million members. Members believe in the New Testament, and they follow what is written in the Bible without elaboration. Rites are simple. Baptism is of adults.

### Anglican Church

King Henry VIII of England broke with the Roman Catholic Church with the Act of Supremacy in 1534, which declared the king of England to be the head of the Church of England. Supremacy of the Bible is the test of doctrine. Emphasis is on the most essential doctrines and creeds and on the Book of Common Prayer. Services range from spartan to ornate, from liberal to conservative; baptism is of infants. The Church of England is part of the Anglican community, and is represented in the United States mainly by the **Episcopal Church**.

### Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church is based on the writings of Martin Luther, who broke with the Roman Catholic Church and led the Protestant Reformation. Faith is based on the Bible and the Augsburg Confession, written in 1530. Salvation comes through faith alone. Services include the Lord's Supper (communion). Lutherans are mostly conservative in religious and social ethics; infants are baptized, the church is organized in synods.

**Methodist Church**

Methodism was founded by the Reverend John Wesley, who began evangelistic preaching with the Church of England in 1738. A separate Wesleyan Methodist Church was established in 1791. The name comes from the founders' desire to study religion "by rule and method" and follow the Bible interpreted by tradition and reason; worship varies by denomination within Methodism (the United Methodist Church is the largest congregation). Methodists have Communion and they perform baptism of infants and adults.

**Pentecostal churches**

The churches grew out of the "holiness movement" that developed among Methodists and Protestants in the first decade of the twentieth century. Pentecostals believe in baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, faith healing, and the second coming of Jesus. Of the various Pentecostal churches, the **Assemblies of God** is the largest. Services feature enthusiastic sermons and hymns, and Pentecostals practice adult baptism and communion.

**Presbyterian Church**

John Knox founded the first Presbyterian Church in Scotland in 1557. For members of the Presbyterian Church, faith is in the Bible. Sacraments are infant baptism and communion. The church is organized as a system of courts in which clergy and lay members (presbyters) participate at local, regional, and national levels. Services are simple, with emphasis on the sermon.

**Seventh Day Adventist Church**

This church grew out of the teachings of William Miller in the 1840s. It was formally founded in North America in 1863. For adherents, the Bible is the only creed. They emphasize the second coming of Jesus. Members abstain from alcoholic beverages and tobacco. They baptise infants and have communion.

**United Church of Christ**

This church was formed in 1957 by the union of the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches. Belief in the Bible is guided by the Statement of Faith (written in 1959). The church is organized by congregations, which are represented at a general synod that sets policy. Services are simple, with emphasis on the sermon. They practice infant baptism, and communion.

**Christian-based communities****The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)**

The Mormon Church was founded by Joseph Smith, in upstate New York in 1830, then in Ohio in 1831. After two more attempts to establish a permanent home for the church (the second one resulting in Smith's death at the hands of a mob), the Mormons trekked to Utah under the leadership of Brigham Young, and established headquarters in what was to become Salt Lake City in 1847. Faith is based on the Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price, all of which are considered scripture as well as the Holy Bible. Stress is placed on revelation through the connection of spiritual and physical worlds and through proselytising. Members abstain from alcohol and tobacco and believe in community and self-reliance. Mormons have baptism, the laying on of hands, and communion. They have a temple for certain secret ceremonies, including baptism for the dead.



### Jehovah's Witnesses

This church was founded by Charles T. Russell in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Members believe in the imminent second coming of Christ and the potential salvation of mortal souls during the millennium. All members are ministers who proselytise their faith with door-to-door missionary work. Members refuse service in the armed forces, will not salute national flags or participate in politics, will not accept blood transfusions (but will accept all other forms of medical treatment), and discourage smoking, drunkenness, and gambling.

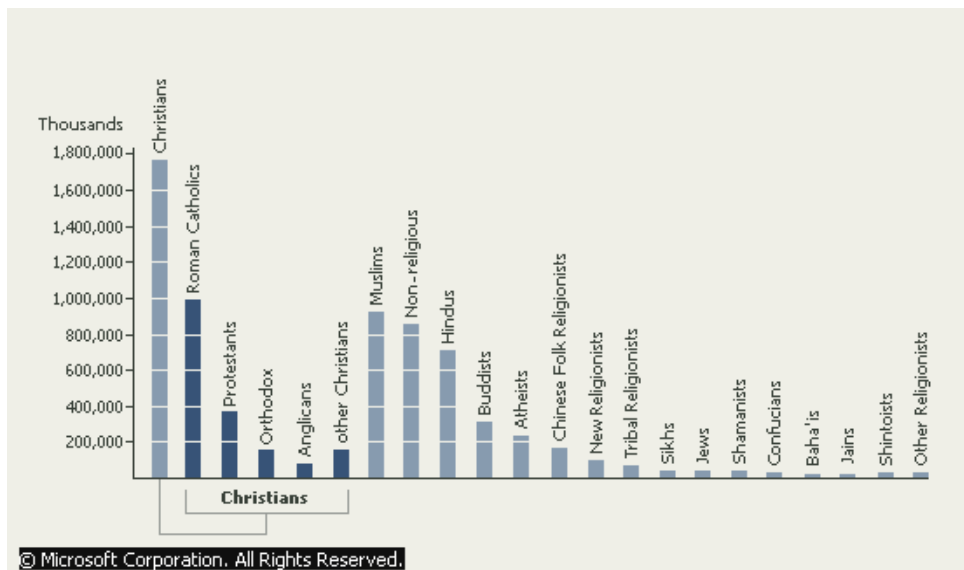
### Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

The Quaker church was founded by George Fox in England in the seventeenth century. He preached a doctrine of Inner Light, and inveighed against organized churches. The Friends believe in reliance on the Inner Light, the voice of God's Holy Spirit experienced within each person. Meetings are characterized by quiet meditation without ritual or sermon. Quakers are active in peace, education, and social welfare movements. They refuse to bear arms or take oaths.

## 1.2 Activity 4

*The main divisions of the Christian church are Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. However, recently there has been more emphasis on the fact that all these Christian churches have a lot in common. List some of the beliefs and practices the Christian churches have in common.*

*Find out when, where and why the Salvation Army was founded and what type of work it does in these times.*



### Numbers of followers of all religions

The spread of religions occurred mainly due to human migration and missionary work. The chart above shows the number of believers of each of the world religions in thousands. Over one-third of the world's population adheres to a form of Christianity.



Latin America has the largest number of Christians, most of whom are Roman Catholics. Islam is practised by nearly one-fifth of the world's population, most of whom live in parts of Asia and the Middle East. Judaism, though a major world religion, has fewer followers than Hinduism, Buddhism, and various other religions practised primarily in Asia. Atheists and those who consider themselves non-religious make up more than one-fifth of the world's population.

## World belief systems

### **Baha'i**

Baha'i has more than 5 million followers. It was founded by Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, who took the name Baha'u'llah (Glory of God) while in exile in Baghdad. Baha'u'llah's coming had been foretold by Mirza Ali Mohammad, known as al-Bab, who founded Babism in 1844, from which the Baha'i faith grew. The central tenets of the Baha'i faith are the oneness of God, the oneness of humanity, and the common foundation of all religion. Baha'ists also believe in the equality of men and women, universal education, world peace, and the creation of a world federal system of government.

### **Buddhism**

Buddhism has 307 million followers. It was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha (Enlightened One), in southern Nepal in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. The Buddha achieved enlightenment through meditation and gathered a community of monks to carry on his teachings. Buddhism teaches that meditation and the practice of good religious and moral behaviour can lead to Nirvana, the state of enlightenment, although before achieving Nirvana one is subject to repeated lifetimes that are good or bad depending on one's actions (karma). The doctrines of the Buddha describe temporal life as featuring "four noble truths": Existence is a realm of suffering; desire, along with the belief in the importance of one's self, causes suffering; achievement of Nirvana ends suffering; and Nirvana is attained only by meditation and by following the path of righteousness in action, thought, and attitude.



### **Buddhist Cave Art**

Buddhist missionaries from India brought to China the practice of cutting temples from cliff walls. The earliest such cave temples in China were built in the 4th century in Dunhuang. They are decorated with relief carvings, paintings, and stone or stucco images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

Jean Kugler/FPG International, LLC

### Confucianism

A faith with 5.6 million followers, Confucianism was founded by Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Confucius's sayings and dialogues, known collectively as the Analects, were written down by his followers. Confucianism, which grew out of a tumultuous time in Chinese history, stresses the relationship between individuals, their families, and society, based on li (proper behaviour) and jen (sympathetic attitude). It is a practical, socially oriented philosophy. The overthrow of the Chinese monarchy and the communist revolution during the twentieth century have severely lessened the influence of Confucianism on modern Chinese culture.

### Hinduism

A religion with 648 million followers, Hinduism developed from indigenous religions of India in combination with Aryan religions brought to India c. 1500 B.C. and codified in the Veda and the Upanishads, the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. Hinduism is a term used to broadly describe a vast array of sects to which most Indians belong. The goals of Hinduism are release from repeated reincarnation through the practice of yoga, adherence to Vedic scriptures, and devotion to a personal guru. Various deities are worshipped at shrines; the divine trinity, representing the cyclical nature of the universe, are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer.

#### Shiva as Nataraja

The Hindu god Shiva was frequently portrayed in sculpture during the Chola dynasty (10th to 13th centuries). This bronze, c. 1000, shows Shiva dancing within a circle of fire. He holds a flame in one hand and a drum with the other. His foot rests on the demon of ignorance.

Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York



### Islam

Islam has 840 million followers. It was founded by the prophet Muhammad, who claimed receiving the holy scriptures of Islam, the Koran, from Allah (God) C. A.D. 610. Islam (Arabic for "submission to God") maintains that Muhammad is the last in a long line of holy prophets, preceded by Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. In addition to being devoted to the Koran, followers of Islam (Muslims) are devoted to the worship of Allah through the Five Pillars. The Five Pillars are: the statement, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet"; prayer, conducted five times a day while facing Mecca; the giving of alms; the keeping of the fast of Ramadan during the ninth month of the Muslim year; and the making of a pilgrimage at least once to Mecca, if possible. The two main divisions of Islam are the Sunni and the Shiite.

## Judaism

Stemming from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah, Judaism was developed from 2000 B.C. and has 18 million followers. Judaism espouses belief in a monotheistic God, who is creator of the universe and who leads His people, the Jews, by speaking through prophets. His word is revealed in the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), especially in that part known as the Torah. The Torah also contains the Ten Commandments. Jews believe that the human condition can be improved, that the letter and the spirit of the Torah must be followed, and that a Messiah will eventually bring the world to a state of paradise. Judaism promotes community among all people of Jewish faith, dedication to a synagogue or temple (the basic social unit of a group of Jews, led by a rabbi), and the importance of family life. Religious observance takes place both at home and in temple.



### Scroll of Esther

Purim, a feast commemorating the delivery of Persian Jews from destruction, is celebrated in synagogues every year with the reading of the Scroll of Esther, called the megillah. This 18th-century megillah, in the Jewish Museum in New York, is from Persia (Iran).

The Pierpont Morgan Library/Art Resource, NY

## Shinto

Shinto, with 3.5 million followers, is the ancient native religion of Japan, established long before the introduction of writing to Japan in the fifth century A.D. The origins of its beliefs and rituals are unknown. Shinto stresses belief in a great many spiritual beings and gods, known as Kami, who are paid tribute at shrines and honoured by festivals, and reverence for ancestors. While there is no overall dogma, adherents of Shinto are expected to remember and celebrate the kami, support the societies of which the kami are patrons, remain pure and sincere, and enjoy life.

## Taoism

Both a philosophy and a religion, Taoism was founded in China by Lao-tzu, who is traditionally said to have been born in 604 B.C. Its number of followers is uncertain. It derives primarily from the Tao-te-ching, which claims that an ever-changing universe follows the Tao, or path. The Tao can be known only by emulating its quietude and effortless simplicity. Taoism prescribes that people live simply, spontaneously, and in close touch with nature and that they meditate to achieve contact with the Tao. Temples and monasteries, maintained by Taoist priests, are important in some Taoist sects. Since the Communist revolution, Taoism has been actively discouraged in the People's Republic of China, although it continues to flourish in Taiwan.

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 **1.2 Activity 5**

*From the list above, identify the churches that are operating in PNG, especially in your local area.*

*Compare the practices and beliefs of three different churches in your community*

*Trace the foundation and development of one religion in PNG.*

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## New Age spirituality

The philosophies and practices of those known as followers of the New Age are not easily categorised. New Age teachings became popular during the 1970s as a reaction against established religions that they felt were not providing spiritual and ethical guidance. The New Age is a free-flowing spiritual movement with book publishers taking the place of central organisation; seminars, conventions, books and informal groups taking the place of sermons and religious services.

New Age practices and symbols include:

- Crystals - that possess healing energy
- Meditating – releasing oneself from conscious thinking
- Music – gentle melodic music for therapy and relaxation
- Divination – fortune telling
- Holistic health – treating the body, mind and spirit (through acupuncture, homoeopathy, iridology, reflexology)

## ***Symbols, rites and ceremonies***

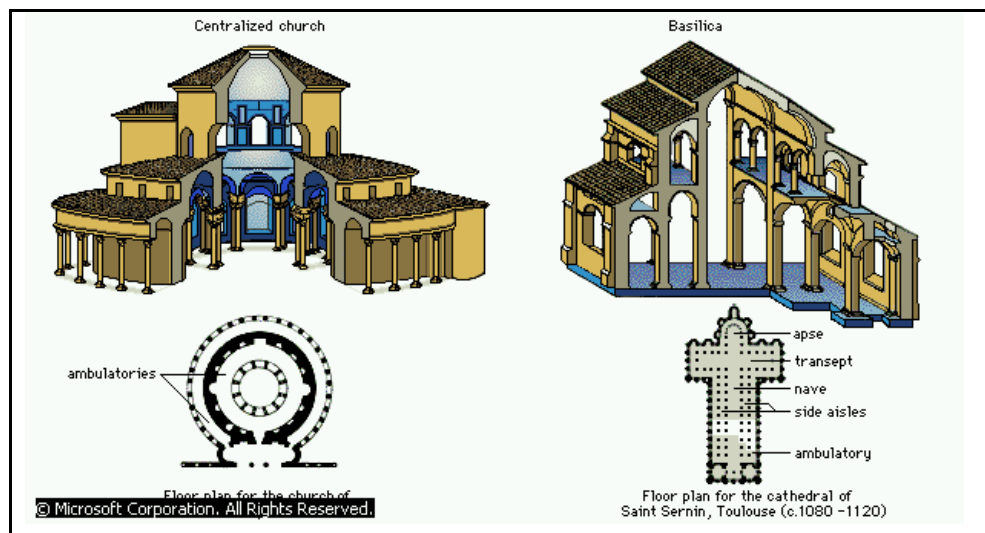
To understand religion we must understand what is meant by symbolism. A symbol is something which stands for something else. Your name is a symbol because it stands for you. Your smile is a symbol because it stands for happiness. Symbols are used a lot in religion particularly when people try to explain God. All human words were made up to describe earthly things and therefore they cannot be used directly to describe God who is believed to be superhuman, so when people say that God is our Father, they are using this as a symbol to stand for God. They are saying that they believe God is like the fathers that we know, only better. This is just one symbol for God. There are many others used by Christians.

Traditional Melanesian religions produced a wide variety of religious art forms or symbols. Among the most important art forms in Melanesia are sculptures or masks depicting spirits or ancestors. These provide a dwelling place for the spirit and were regarded as a source of strength and beneficence. Other visual forms consist of ceremonial bowls, coconut drinking cups, shields, drums, belt ornaments, canoe prows which contain a variety of motifs.

In African traditional religions theatre, dancing, singing and music are communal forms of religious expressions. They may act as a prelude to war, celebrate a good harvest, and mark a birth, a marriage, or a death. Equally, works of art have traditionally had a religious significance.

## Religious buildings

A church is a building designed as a place of worship for Christians. In size and design, churches range from the small parish church of simple construction—just large enough to hold a small village congregation—to the huge and complicated cathedral, a church that is the seat of a bishop. Cathedrals were generally built as an ostentatious feat of architecture and to bestow prestige upon a city; with lavish decoration and with different spaces for various religious activities and observances. Because many branches of Christianity exist, no single type of church building predominates. Some Christians worship with little ceremony, some with elaborate ritual; some make use of statues and paintings, some do not. Thus, churches vary in appearance, having been planned to suit one or another kind of religious practice.



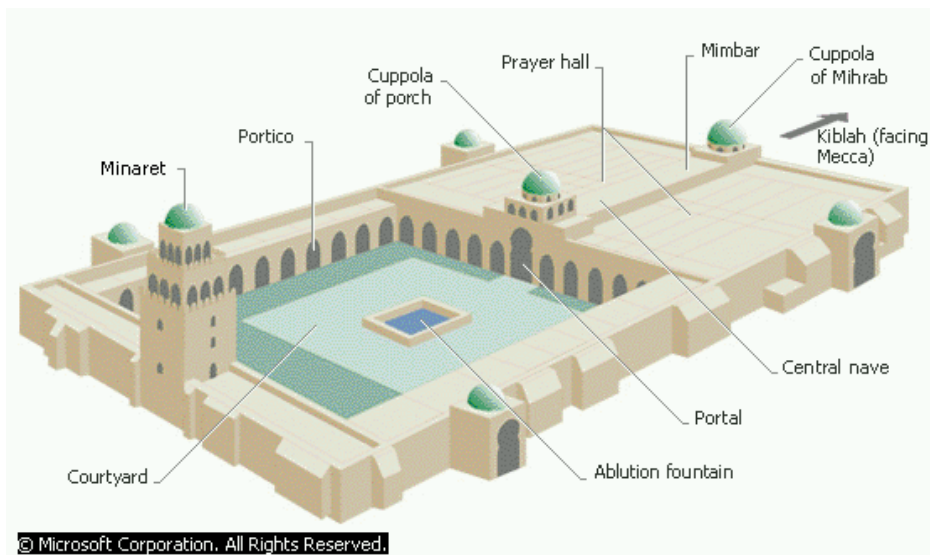
In general, two types of plans predominate: the basilica form, with a long axis running from a doorway centred at one narrow end to the altar at the other; and the centralized church, circular or polygonal in plan, with one large central space, usually with a dome overhead. The two basic shapes are combined in many different ways, and either one can be adjusted to a cross-like form by the addition of projecting wings, either in the form of a Greek cross (with arms of equal length) or a Latin cross (with one longer arm, the nave). Elaborate churches may have separate rooms for baptism, for treasures and relics, for robing the clergy, and for administration. They may also have more than one altar and subsidiary chapels.

## 1.2 Activity 6

*Below is a plan of a mosque. Find out which religion uses a mosque as a place of worship.*

*Find out about places of worship such as shrines and temples, used by other religions. Draw some typical designs and support your drawings with brief notes.*

*What do these symbols represent?*



### **Plan of a typical mosque**

The minaret is the first thing worshippers see when they approach a mosque. It is from here that callings to the mosque are made. The ablution fountain is where worshippers wash their hands, face, and feet before entering the prayer hall, in order to ensure that they are pure. The wall of the mosque that faces the direction of Mecca is called the kiblah. In the centre of the kiblah wall is the mihrab, or prayer niche, which is a very sacred area of the mosque. It is also important acoustically as it allows the voice to resonate during prayer. The mimbar is a pulpit from which the Friday sermon is preached.

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## The Christian faith and its symbols

### Prayer

Christians pray in order to be in a relationship with God. They believe that in this way they can come to know God better for themselves. When people pray they usually get into a special position. Some kneel down; others stand with their heads bowed, eyes closed and hands together. Positions like these help them to be still and to show their respect God. They may use a prayer book to pray from especially if they are praying with other people so that they can all say the same words. There are other objects which help people to pray, like prayer beads.

Christians bring anything and everything to God in prayer. This includes saying sorry for their wrong doings and asking for forgiveness. They praise God for his greatness and thank him for his goodness. They also ask him for help, both for other people and for themselves. The prayer they say most often is the Lord's Prayer.

### The church year

Christians have worked out their calendar so that they celebrate special festivals every year. The main ones are Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. There are also times to remember other events in the life of Jesus as well as important saints.

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## 1.2 Activity 6

*Divide into five groups to research one of the following events of the church calendar. Describe why the event is significant and how it is celebrated. Present your findings as an illustrated wall chart.*

- *Advent (Christmas)*
- *Epiphany*
- *Lent*
- *Jesus' Death*
- *Easter*

*What do Baptism and the Trinity symbolise?*

*What are the links between Christian events such as Christmas and Easter, and traditional or ancient rituals?*

*Select one occasion in the church year and describe the way your local church celebrates the event.*

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### Religious art

Many people find it easier to put across these religious ideas in pictures rather than in words. If you look at different paintings or statues of Mary with baby Jesus, you will see that the artists have expressed all sorts of ideas about them. Some make them very holy; others make them very human. Some show Jesus as real baby whereas others cannot think of him as a helpless baby because they believe he is the all-powerful God.

## 1.2 Activity 7

*Make a collection of Christmas cards and examine the pictures on them. What are the main religious images portrayed? What other symbols/images are used to represent Christmas?*

*Make a collection of crosses. Sketch some of the different shapes and styles. Copy two different images of Jesus on the cross.*

## Religious rites

A rite is a formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or is customary in religious or other solemn use. Within the rite there are certain rituals, that is, established procedures and actions for the ceremony.

Ritual plays a major part in all traditional religions, although ritual is not recognized as in any way different from practical activity. It is rather an attempt to influence or harmonize oneself with the course of nature by dramatized or symbolic enactment of such fundamental events as the daily rising and setting of the sun, the alternation of the seasons, the changing phases of the moon, and the annual planting and harvesting of crops. Ritual is the acting out of the great mythical themes that take the place of religious doctrines. Ritual can be described as an art form expressing and celebrating humanity's meaningful participation in the affairs of the universe and the gods.

In cultures wherein this type of feeling about the world prevails, no department of life is specifically recognizable as religion. Religion as a specific activity does not exist, and members of such cultures would have the greatest difficulty in talking about their religion. Symbolic forms on spears, boats, and household utensils are not just decorations but functional parts of the object.

Buddhism is not a 'public' religion and does not regard rites and ceremonies as of any assistance in attaining spiritual understanding. The lifestyles of Hindus, on the other hand, are highly ritualised. Hindus practice life-cycle rituals and rituals to demonstrate devotion to a god/goddess. Christianity, Judaism and Islam also have many rites – rites of passage, personal devotion and public worship – that overlap and complement each other.


## 1.2 Activity 8

*Choose two rites from the list below and describe the rituals and ceremonies that characterise them.*

Brit Milah	Bar Mitzvah	Shabbat
Baptism	Eucharist	Christmas
puja	salat	Five Pillars



## ***Myths, legends and stories***

 A selection of stories and extracts from sacred writings are included in the additional support materials provided with this module. Many more examples should be available in college libraries. Refer to the notes at the beginning of this module for ideas for using stories in spiritual and moral education.

Myth is a complex of stories handed down from generation to generation to represent the meaning of the world. The mythical gods and heroes personify the heavenly bodies, the elements, and the spirits of the crops and herds, and myths provide explanations of the ways of nature.

Such stories are considered true by both the narrator and the audience, and tell of the creation and regulation of the world. Mythical tasks are usually performed by a deity (god or goddess) who exists in chaos, in a void, or in some other world. With a series of offspring and companions, the deity gives form to the world and introduces life to it, then proceeds on a series of adventures and struggles in which he or she does such things as creating the sun, the moon, water, or fire; regulating the winds; defeating monsters; and teaching mortals how to hunt and plough.

### THE CREATION MYTH OF BASHONGO

In the beginning, in the dark, there was nothing but water, and Bumba was alone. One day Bumba was in terrible pain. He stretched and strained and vomited up the sun.

After that, light spread over everything. The heat of the sun dried up the water until the black edges of the world began to show. Black sandbanks and reefs could be seen. But there were no living things. Bumba vomited up the moon and then the stars, and after that the night had its light also. Still Bumba was in pain.

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## **1.2 Activity 9**

*Find examples of creation stories from traditional Melanesian and other cultures. Discuss the common elements contained in these stories and explain why they were told.*

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## **Legends**

Legends are folk history, and even when dealing with religious subject matter they differ from myth in that they tell about what has happened in the world after the period of its creation is over. They are believed by both narrator and audience and encompass a great variety of subjects: saints; werewolves, ghosts, and other supernatural creatures; adventures of real

heroes and heroines; personal reminiscences; and explanations of geographical features and place names (called local legends).

## Sacred writings and stories

### The Bible

The Bible is a religious book used by Christians and Jews. It is read in practically all services of public worship, its words form the basis for preaching and instruction, and it is used in private devotion and study. The writings are inspired by God and express the Jewish and Christian faith. They were written by human authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The language of the Bible has informed and shaped the prayers, liturgy, and hymnody of Judaism and Christianity. Without the Bible, these two religions would have been virtually speechless.

It is commonly known that the Bible, in its hundreds of different translations, is the most widely distributed book in human history. Moreover, in all its forms, the Bible has been enormously influential and not only among the religious communities that hold it sacred. The literature, art, and music of Western culture in particular are deeply indebted to biblical themes, motifs, and images. Translations of the Bible, such as the Authorized Version (or King James Version, 1611) and Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German (first completed in 1534), not only influenced literature but also shaped the development of languages. Such effects continue to be felt in emerging nations, where translations of the Bible into the vernacular help to shape linguistic traditions.



This illuminated manuscript, St Mark Writing His Gospel, comes from a leaf of a 13th-century Byzantine psalter. According to tradition, during the 1st century AD Mark produced the second Gospel of the New Testament, relying upon the teachings of St Peter. Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York

The Bible is like a complete library. There are 66 books altogether, divided into two main sections – the Old and the New Testament. It is not all the same type of writing. Some parts are history, some are poetry and there are a number of exciting stories. There are also collections of laws and the sayings of important people called prophets.

The Old Testament was written originally in Hebrew (the language of the Jews) and begins with the story of creation. The New Testament was written originally in Greek and is about the life of Jesus and the people who began to follow him and tell the world about him. Both sections were later translated into Latin and from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, into most of the languages of the world.

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 **1.2 Activity 10**

*What important Jewish law is found in Deuteronomy 6: 4-5?*

*Tell the story found in Jonah 1: 2 – 3: 3 in the form of a simple picture book.*

*Read the Epic of Gilgamesh (additional resources) and the story of Noah (from the Bible). Record the similarities and differences in the stories.*

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**Buddhist stories**

Buddhism does not have one single authoritative sacred book, but a large body of sacred writings, based on orally transmitted stories and written down between 600 and 900 years after the death of Buddha (c. 483 BC). Sacred writings are not regarded as the ultimate authority in Buddhism. That role is taken by the experience of individual Buddhists. Buddhism has numerous traditions and there is often disagreement between adherents of the main schools. Each has its own set of scriptures and the tale of the Bodhisattva as the Preacher of Patience (additional support material) is a famous one with many versions and variants.

**Taoist writings**

The Daodejing (*Classic of the Way and its Power*), written in the 6th century BC and attributed to Chinese philosopher Laozi (Lao-tzu), is one of the most influential works in Chinese literature and philosophy. Dao, the key term and the subject of the entire work, is translated as “the way”. The language of the Daodejing sets it apart from other works of Chinese philosophy of this period; it frequently employs poetic devices such as rhyme and parallel sentences. Its many paradoxical statements reveal a mysticism that contrasted with the more secular and practical focus of Confucianism, the other major system of thought in China at that time.

**Koran - the scriptures of Islam**

The Koran (Arabic, al-Qur’an) is the chief sacred text of Islam. The Arabic name indicates something “read” or “recited”. It is applied to the book which contains what Muslims believe are a series of revelations made by Allah (God) to Muhammad during his career as a prophet in Mecca and Medina in the first decades of the 7th century.

The revelations were in Arabic and, according to the most usual Muslim view, were made through the angel Gabriel (Jibrail). Traditionally it has been held that when Muhammad proclaimed the revelations to his followers they were remembered by heart or sometimes written down on such things as palm leaves, fragments of bone, and animal hides. After Muhammad’s death in AD 632 his followers began to collect these revelations and they were finally put together, to form the Koran as we know it, around AD 650.

In content it consists mainly of moral and ethical commands and recommendations, warnings about the coming last day and final judgement, stories about prophets before Muhammad and the peoples to whom they were sent, and rules regarding religious life and such things as marriage, divorce and inheritance. Its fundamental message is that there is only one God, the

creator of everything, who alone must be served by correct worship and behaviour. This God is constantly merciful and has continuously called mankind to worship him through a series of prophets whom he has sent. These prophets have been rejected over and over again by sinful peoples whom God has therefore punished. The general themes of the Koran and many of its illustrative stories are shared with Jewish and Christian scripture, but they are often developed in a distinctive way.

The Opening, the first chapter, represents to Muslims the essence of the Koran. It has been compared to the Lord's Prayer of the Bible, and forms a central part of all Muslim worship.

### Chapter 1: "The Opening"

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1.1: All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

1.2: The Beneficent, the Merciful.

1.3: Master of the Day of Judgment.

1.4: Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help.

1.5: Keep us on the right path.

1.6: The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours. Not [the path] of those upon whom Thy wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray.



## 1.2 Activity 11

*Write out the words of the 'Lord's Prayer' and compare them to 'The Opening'*

## Spiritual qualities/values

The word 'values' can have different meanings for different people but basically our values are the principles or ideals that guide our decisions and actions. We express our values in the way we think and act. Our values have developed as a result of all the influences which have affected us and as guides to behaviour, our values have the potential to evolve and mature as our experiences evolve and mature. (Our values are modified as experiences accumulate and change.) Particular values are essential to living with others. They include compassion, cooperation, self-esteem, caring, and honesty.

## Values in traditional religions

In many traditional societies, there is a strong sense of the sacred. Religion permeates life to such an extent that it is often difficult to distinguish between strictly religious elements and local custom. Authority is not seen as something secular but is regarded as a sacred trust. People of traditional religions show great attention to the earth. They respect life and celebrate its

important stages: birth, entrance into adulthood, marriage, death. There is a strong sense of the family, which includes love of children, respect for the elders, and a community link with the ancestors.

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 **1.2 Activity 12**

*Using library sources and the descriptions of religions in this module, identify the core values common to most societies and religions.*

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## ***Christian living in Melanesia***

### **Traditional religions in a period of change**

Traditional religions have in the past formed one piece with the cultures of the people who practised them. Among these peoples, the same word was often used for religion, custom and culture. These forces and values held their societies together. The meeting with Christianity, other religions and also with western culture, and especially with modern science and technology and urbanisation, has affected these societies and their traditional religions. Nevertheless, the influence of traditional religions remains strong, particularly at moments of crisis.

Many recent converts to Christianity come from a background of traditional religions. This is true not only in those Churches where the Gospel has been preached only within the last century or so, but also in some countries where the Church has been established for many centuries. At some important moments in their lives (such as sickness, danger, marriage, birth of a child, funeral of a relative) they tend to have recourse to practices of their traditional religions or to prayer houses, healing homes, witchcraft, 'prophets' or fortune-tellers.

### **Christianity in Melanesia**

There are over twenty sects and creeds of the Christian faith in Papua New Guinea. In these circumstances Christian doctrine does not remain untouched for when it is transplanted to a different world of enduring traditional values it inevitably undergoes a change after a period of time, into something rather different from the original. As in Africa and in parts of Asia, Christianity has developed indigenous church doctrines.

Unlike the western concept of the universe as a closed system, the Melanesian view of the universe is not a systematic one, but freely admits features which seem to be contradictory, enabling people to adopt the Christian God without any sense of incongruity with their basic religion. By adopting the external forms of Christianity and by transferring to the Christian saints the attributes of their deities, they continue to worship the latter under the guise of venerating the saints.

According to representatives of the Catholic Church, Christianity should pay great attention to the traditional religions and the cultures which go along with them and should aim at influencing the whole of life and producing integrated persons, rather than have people live parallel lives, at different levels. Christianity should respect the religions and cultures of peoples and preserve everything that is noble, true and good in their religions and cultures. With those who wish to become Christians, and those who have already converted from traditional religion, care must be taken in order to present the Gospel in the most appropriate manner so that Christianity may have deeper roots among that people

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## 1.2 Activity 13

*Read the following scenarios and discuss the values held by the different participants. Can you see any conflict between values and behaviour?*

<b>Scenario 1:</b>
Every morning the participants commenced their five-day workshop with fifteen minutes or more of prayer. On two evenings of the workshop, hotel management were called to the rooms of some of the male participants. Complaints had been made about loud, aggressive behaviour and the use of obscene language. The men, all married, were found to have a supply of alcohol and prostitutes in their rooms.
<b>Scenario 2:</b>
Each semester experienced male and female teachers come to Port Moresby to pursue their studies. The men are free to come and go as they please, the women are locked in their dormitories by 10pm.  One weekend a group of female teachers decided to have an evening out. They made arrangements to stay in a hotel because they would not be back by 10pm. They enjoyed their dinner and were listening to music and dancing when they were approached by a group of men from the same course. The men were drunk and would not leave the women alone. The women fled to their room. The men banged on the door and used obscene language until they were chased away by the management.  On Monday at assembly the women were shamed in front of the whole college, accused of entertaining men, suspended from classes and told to write to their husbands. Nothing happened to the men.

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The worldview of Western Christians tends to have separate compartments for the sacred and the secular. The economic, social, medical and educational impact of the West on Melanesia has led to a similar compartmentalisation in the worldview of many Melanesians. Rather than being deeply integrated into the whole of life, as was traditional religion it seems that Christian faith has become a Sunday-only ritual activity.

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 **1.2 Activity 14**

*Discuss the following statements*

*'Melanesians today, because they are Christians, must question their clannic egoism'.*

*'Politics for the Melanesian Christian, is not a means to get the best for one's community, but to serve the whole nation.'*

*What do these statements mean? How do the expectations behind them differ from traditional beliefs and practices?*

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