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## The Doctrine of Man: What do major religions say about man's destiny?

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**THE DOCTRINE OF MAN**  
**ARTICLE THREE**

**What do major religions say about man's destiny?**

A. Islam

The Koran rejects the notion of redemption; salvation depends on a man's actions and attitudes. However, *tauba* ("repentance") can quickly turn an evil man toward the virtue that will save him. So Islam does not hold out the possibility of salvation through the work of God but invites man to accept God's guidance.

The final day of reckoning is described in awesome terms. On that last day every man will account for what he has done, and his eternal existence will be determined on that basis: "Every man's actions have we hung around his neck, and on the last day shall be laid before him a wide-open book" (17.13).

Muslims recognize that different individuals have been given different abilities and various degrees of insight into the truth. Each man will be judged according to his situation, and every man who lives according to the truth to the best of his abilities will achieve heaven. However, infidels who are presented with the truth of Islam and reject it will be given no mercy.

The Koran has vivid descriptions of both heaven and hell. Heaven is depicted in terms of worldly delights, and the torments of hell are shown in lurid detail. Muslims disagree as to whether those descriptions are to be taken literally or not. (*The Spirit of Truth and The Spirit of Error*, Steve Cory, pamphlet)

Resurrection of bodies. Final day of reckoning and rewards. Eternal paradise for those who believe in Islam. Eternal hell for infidels, those who reject Islam.

B. Nation of Islam

The following is taken from their statement of faith. As can be seen, the American Version of Islam differs from traditional Islam.

We believe in the resurrection of the dead—not in physical resurrection—but in mental resurrection. We believe that the so-called Negroes are most in need of mental resurrection, therefore, they will be resurrected first.

Furthermore, we believe we are the people of God's choice, as it has been written, that God would choose the rejected and the despised. We can find no other persons fitting this description in these last days more than the so-called Negroes in America. We believe in the resurrection of the righteous.

We believe in the judgment; we believe this first judgment will take place as God revealed, in America.

C. Baha'i World Faith

The Baha'i believes in a personal immortality based on good works, with rewards for the faithful. Beyond that, little appears to be said. Nevertheless, what is said is once again difficult to reconcile with the Baha'i acceptance of all religions and its religious tolerance. For instance, Baha'i strongly reject reincarnation, which is accepted by hundreds of millions of Hindus and Buddhists, and they also reject the Christian concept of heaven and hell. Heaven and hell are more conditions of positive and negative actions, not places. But these are not real places. Heaven is knowing about God and doing what He wants. Hell is not knowing about God or not doing what He wants. A person who is happy and is obeying God is in heaven. A person is in hell when he dislikes others or himself, or is always unhappy.

Baha'is also offer a "second chance" for salvation after death. Prayer for the dead is recommended and specific prayers are offered. The living can pray for the dead, and when the living die they can continue to pray for those dead who are less advanced spiritually, so that "they can make progress." The dead can also progress by means of their own prayers. (*Encyclopedia of Cults*, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, p. 27, 1999)

#### D. Hinduism

The final goal of salvation in Hinduism is escape from the endless round of birth, death, and rebirth. That can mean an eternal resting place for the individual personality in the arms of a loving, personal God, but it usually means the dissolving of all personality into the unimaginable abyss of Brahman.

Four *yogas*, or ways of reaching such salvation, are described: (1) *jnana yoga*, the way of knowledge, employs philosophy and the mind to comprehend the unreal nature of the universe; (2) *bhakti yoga*, the way of devotion or love, reaches salvation through ecstatic worship of a divine being; (3) *karma yoga*, the way of action, strives toward salvation by performing works without regard for personal gain; and (4) *raja yoga*, "the royal road," makes use of meditative yoga techniques. *Raja yoga* is usually viewed as the highest way, but for the majority of people, who cannot become wandering monks, the other ways are considered valid.

Most Hindus consider that they have many incarnations ahead of them before they can find final salvation, although some sects believe that a gracious divinity will carry them along the way more quickly. (*The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error*, Steven Cory, pamphlet)

Reincarnation into a better status (good karma) if person has behaved well. If one has been bad, he can be reborn and pay for past sins (bad karma) by suffering.

#### E. Hare Krishna

Chanting Krishna's name constantly, total devotion to Krishna, worshipping images, and obeying the rules of ISKCON throughout many reincarnated lives, releases a follower from bad karma.

Those who are unenlightened continue in endless reincarnation (rebirth on earth) based on the sinful acts of a person's previous life.

#### F. Buddhism

People do not have a soul or spirit. However, one's desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person. No heaven or hell.

Buddhism sees ignorance rather than sin as the roadblock to salvation. That is, the belief that the world and self truly exist keeps the illusory wheel of existence rolling; only destruction of that belief will stop the mad course of the world.

Its doctrine is summed up in the Four Noble Truths: (1) life is basically suffering, or dissatisfaction; (2) the origin of that suffering lies in craving or grasping; (3) the cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of craving; and (4) the way to cease craving and so attain escape from continual rebirth is by following Buddhist practice, known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

Original Buddhist teaching and the Theravada place emphasis on the individual monk working through self-control and a series of meditative practices that progressively lead him to lose a sense of his grasping self.

The Mahayana school began with the insight that the ideal of the monk striving only for his own salvation was selfish and did little for the majority of men. Mahayanists eventually came to pose a vast number of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, "heroes of the faith," who reached the point of nirvana but refused to enter it until the rest of mankind was brought along with them. To varying degrees they can graciously grant aids to salvation to those who petition them.

*Nirvana* literally means "blowing out," as with the flame of a candle. That is, nothing can be said about it except that it is a transcendent, permanent state.