

Belief Systems

Note: *Not all individuals who hold these beliefs or follow these belief systems are abusive. These are spiritual beliefs that people use to abuse others.*

**This document does not list all spiritual beliefs and specific groups.*

A

Asatru-An old Norse word (Scandinavian) which means “belief in the Gods.” These are the old Norse and Germanic gods and goddess known collectively as Aesir or Asa. Asatru is also an Icelandic word, where it was accepted as a legitimate religion in 1972. The religion, Asatru also referred to as Wor Tru “our faith” or Forn Sed, “ancient customs/ways,” is revealed in Norse mythology, the Elder Edda (poetry) and the Younger Edda (prose). Modern day Asatru is based on reconstruction from historical sources. There is no founder who made revealed pronouncements. There is no central authority that establishes teachings or beliefs.

Assemblies of God-A worldwide group of Christians who follow the Pentecostal faith. Assemblies of God was started in 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas when Pentecostal leaders who wanted to work together under one group got together.

Astara-Means “a place of light” and is taken from the name of the Greek goddess of divine justice, Astraea. Astara was born to help seekers find the light they search for while in this life. This religion also seeks to assist individuals to find the power that lies within them, helping them reach into the infinite and breathe into them the God; forces of love, life and light. Astara was established in October 1951. Members are in 85 countries.

Astrology-The study of stars and planets with the belief that their position and movement affect human lives and personalities. Astrologers can also use the stars as a divination tool to predict the future in general or that of a specific person or place (like a city/state).

B

Badimo-A form of ancestor worship of the Tswana people of Botswana.

Baha’i-Believe that in every age God sends messengers called “Manifestations of God”. Each messenger builds upon the Messages of those gone before. Although each is different, all are animated by the Spirit of God. This is basic to their belief in the oneness of God, the oneness of religious and the oneness of mankind.

Buddhism-Religion or philosophy inspired by the fifth-century-B.C. teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (also known as Gautama Buddha, or “the enlightened one”). Buddhism focuses on the goal of spiritual enlightenment centred on an understanding of Gautama Buddha's Four Noble Truths on the nature of suffering and on the Eightfold Path of spiritual and moral practice, to break the cycle of suffering. Buddhism ascribes to a karmic system of rebirth. Several schools

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and sects of Buddhism exist, differing often on the nature of the Buddha, the extent to which enlightenment can be achieved (for one or for all) and by whom (religious orders or laity).

C

Cao Dai-A nationalistic Vietnamese sect, officially established in 1926, that draws practices and precepts from Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Catholicism.

Catholic Church-The Catholic Church, known as the Roman Catholic Church, is one of the largest Christian denominations in the world. The Catholic Church is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and traces its origins back to the Apostles, such as Saint Peter, whom Catholics consider the first Bishop of Rome. The Pope, as the Bishop of Rome and the spiritual leader of the Church, is believed to be the successor of Saint Peter.

Chondogyo-Or the religion of the Heavenly Way: based on Korean shamanism, Buddhism, and Korean folk traditions, with some elements drawn from Christianity. Formulated in the 1860s, it holds that God lives in all of us and strives to convert society into a paradise on earth that will be populated by believers transformed into intelligent moral beings with a high social conscience.

Christianity-Descending from Judaism, Christianity's central belief maintains that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures, and that his life, death, and resurrection are salvific for the world. Christianity is one of the three monotheistic Abrahamic faiths, along with Islam and Judaism, that trace their spiritual lineage to Abraham of the Hebrew Scriptures. Christianity's sacred texts include the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

The Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science)-The church was founded to "commemorate the word and works of our master Jesus Christ which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost elements of healing." From the manual of the Mother Church by M.B. Eddy the major teachings of the church include the following:

- To take the inspired word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal life.
- Acknowledge and adore our supreme God, his son and Christ, the Holy Ghost or divine comforter and man in God's image and likeness.
- We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that cast out of evil as unreal. But belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts.
- The atonement of Jesus Christ is evidence of divine, efficacious love, unfolding man's unity with God through Jesus Christ, through Truth, Life, and Love as demonstrated by the Galilean Prophet in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death.
- The crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.
- The adherent solemnly promises to watch, and pray for that "Mind" to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; and to be merciful, just and pure.

Church of God in Christ-A branch of Christianity that is mostly made up of African-American Pentecostals. Bishop Charles Harrison Mason began COGIC in Memphis, Tennessee, in the year 1897. The COGIC puts a lot of emphasis on being spiritually passionate, having lively prayer, and believing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints-In 1847, to escape persecution, members of the church migrated westward, initially settling in what is now Salt Lake City, Utah, and subsequently colonised much of the intermountain West. In 2010 membership was over 14 million worldwide with a presence in 127 countries and written Church materials translated into 166 languages.

Church of Satan-Satanism is at base a rational philosophy of pragmatism, materialism and scepticism, generally promoting a libertarian point of social view with an emphasis on law and order to maintain the "social contract" all people accept by participating in civilization. Satan in Hebrew means the adversary or accuser, and LaVey felt that there was a need for a perspective that opposed all forms of spiritual belief - either Western or Eastern, and that included opposing the then current "occultism fad" that was growing in the mid 1960s. Satanism is a counter-position to spiritual beliefs, since Satanists see themselves as being carnal - they do not believe that there is any form of the spiritual, but that does not mean that Satanists wish to eradicate other religious perspectives, or to convert people of faith. The Satanic position is "live and let live," so long as other religions do not try to force Satanists into their beliefs through involuntary conversion or legislation of them.

Confucianism-An ideology that humans are perfectible through self-cultivation and self-creation; developed from teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. Confucianism has strongly influenced the culture and beliefs of East Asian countries, including China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Cult-Generally considered to be a religious, spiritual, or philosophically fringe belief system developed, perpetuated, espoused, and or enforced by a singular, charismatic leader. The public perception is that people who join cults are "brainwashed" or otherwise forced to stay with the group after being lured in by false promises or the idyllic facade of the group. While this has been true for some cults, it is just as likely that a group considered to be a cult is a small coalition of people with the same uncommon philosophy that choose to live, work, and/or worship together as they have not found acceptance or satisfaction within mainstream religion or society. The exact definition of what constitutes a "cult" is debated.

D

Druidry-The religion of the priesthood of the pre-Christian Celtic peoples, its name meaning "oak-wisdom." It is a polytheistic, non-dualist, non-sexist, non-racist, scientific, holistic, and ecologically oriented faith, with members throughout the world. Druidry focuses on "right practice" rather than on "right belief" in any specific doctrine, so there is no standard set of beliefs. As part of the modern Neo Pagan movement, Druidry is concerned with the natural world and the earth; additionally, while Druidry typically does not claim an unbroken line of practitioners from pre-Christian Europe, it finds a great deal of inspiration there. Druids typically seek to deepen their practice by using archeology and scholarship regarding the Celtic world to develop practices that have meaning to modern individuals.

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E

Esoteric/Esotericism-Esoteric topics are usually, but not always, religious or spiritual in nature. If a topic is only studied or understood by a few people it is generally considered esoteric. Many occult topics are esoteric but not all and some esoteric traditions are occult in nature but certainly not all of them. “Esoteric” is generally discussed along with “mysticism”.

F

Flagellants-Are practitioners of a form of mortification of the flesh by whipping their skin with various instruments of penance.[1] Many Christian confraternities of penitents have flagellants, who beat themselves, both in the privacy of their dwellings and in public processions, to repent of sins and share in the Passion of Jesus.[

Freethinkers-A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief. Freethinkers include atheists, agnostics and rationalists.

G

Gaianism-An earth-centred philosophical, holistic, and spiritual belief that shares expressions with earth religions and paganism while not identifying exclusively with any specific one.[1][2] The term describes a philosophy and ethical worldview which, though not necessarily religious, implies a transpersonal devotion to earth as a superorganism. Practitioners of Gaianism are called Gaians (or Gaianists).

Gnosis-For Gnostics themselves, Gnosis refers to a profound and sacred inner process that unfolds between what one is as Consciousness and what one is as Divinity. The result is that the Gnostic can have direct and personal experience of Divinity, but more importantly, Divinity can gain knowledge of himself through his vehicle: the Human Consciousness. What this implies for the Gnostic is that the Kingdom of Heaven is within oneself; hence, the frequent reference within the Gnostic teachings to an inscription from the Oracle at Delphi: “Man, Know thyself and you will know the universe and its gods.”

H

Hermeticism-Any of the beliefs, philosophies, practices, or tenets related or attributed to the fictional figure of Hermes Trismegistus. Core texts include the “Hermetic Corpus”, the “Emerald Tablet”, and “The Kybalion”. The first two are either lost, reconstructed, or fabricated and the latter was published under a pseudonym in the early 20th century.

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While Hermeticism contains many aspects and interpretations, it is generally concerned with the idea that there is one true religion involving a singular, transcendent god or force that permeates all life and being. This religion was explained to man aeons ago and the information retained in ancient knowledge.

Hinduism-Originating in the Vedic civilization of India (second and first millennium B.C.), Hinduism is an extremely diverse set of beliefs and practices with no single founder or religious authority. Hinduism has many scriptures; the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad-Gita are some of the most important. Hindus may worship one or many deities, usually with prayer rituals within their own home. The most common figures of devotion are the gods Vishnu, Shiva, and a mother goddess, Devi. Most Hindus believe the soul, or atman, is eternal, and goes through a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara) determined by one's positive or negative karma, or the consequences of one's actions. The goal of religious life is to learn to act so as to finally achieve liberation (moksha) of one's soul, escaping the rebirth cycle.

I

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness-Krishna consciousness meant to be conscious of god. It is recorded in the Vedic scriptures (Veda means knowledge), many of which are acknowledged to be at least 5,000 years old (3,000 BC) in written history alone. Previous to 3,000 BC there was a disciple succession of spiritual masters who passed on Krishna consciousness and this disciple succession continues until the present day. Historically, the Movement is known as the Vaishnava religion. Vaishnave means personal servant of God, the same God of the Bible and Koran. The modern spread of Vaishnavism outside of India was first due to the inspiration and teachings of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534 AD), which were later taken up in the mid 19th century by Bhaktivinoda Thakur, who translated Vaishnave works intended for the English speaking countries.

Inuit Beliefs-A form of shamanism (see below) based on the animistic principles of the Inuit or Eskimo peoples.

Islam-One of the three monotheistic Abrahamic faiths, Islam originated with the teachings of Muhammad in the seventh century. Muslims believe Muhammad is the final of all religious prophets (beginning with Abraham) and that the Qu'ran, which is the Islamic scripture, was revealed to him by God. Islam derives from the word "submission," and obedience to God is a primary theme in this religion. In order to live an Islamic life, believers must follow the five pillars, or tenets, of Islam, which are the testimony of faith (shahada), daily prayer (salah), giving alms (zakah), fasting during Ramadan (sawm), and the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj).

J

Jainism-Originating in India, the Jain philosophy believes in an eternal human soul, the eternal universe, and a principle of "the own nature of things." It emphasises compassion for all living things, seeks liberation of the human soul from reincarnation through enlightenment, and values personal responsibility due to the belief in the immediate consequences of one's behaviour. Jain

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philosophy teaches non-violence and prescribes vegetarianism for monks and laity alike; its adherents are a highly influential religious minority in Indian society.

Jehovah's Witness-Jehovah's Witnesses are organised into 97 branches, each including at least one nation, around the world. Branches are composed of districts, districts of circuits, and circuits of congregations. In the United States there are currently 32 districts and 337 circuits. Each circuit includes approximately 22 congregations. The Watchtower Society has emphasised the nearness of the end of the world. This belief is one reason Jehovah's Witnesses have been so zealous in outreach. It also explains why they are encouraged to avoid as many "worldly involvements" as possible. Children are discouraged from participating in extracurricular school activities. Since they believe government/social systems are a part of the satanic order, Witnesses do not vote, salute, or pledge allegiance to any flag or sing national anthems. Witnesses reject the Trinity, stating that Jehovah is no Babylonish triad of Gods, no God of three persons in one individual. Jehovah is only one God, one person. God is a personal being who cannot have any being equal to him. Jesus, therefore, is a created being, known in his pre-existence as Michael the Archangel. Jesus gave up his divinity and lived as a perfect human being on earth. Jesus died on a "torture stake" as a corresponding ransom for Adam's sin. Witnesses reject Jesus' physical resurrection in favour of a spiritual resurrection with temporary visible manifestations. Christ may be called the Son of God but not God the Son. The impersonal "holy spirit" (Witnesses do not capitalise the name) "is the invisible active force of the Almighty God which moves His servants to do His will." Three things are necessary for salvation which includes faith in Jehovah, faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice, and good works. Good works include immersion baptism by a male Witness, active association with the Watchtower Society, righteous conduct, and consistent proclamation of God's Kingdom. Most Witnesses expect to "live forever in paradise on earth." Jehovah's Witnesses reject hell as a place of eternal punishment. They believe that a just loving Jehovah will simply annihilate individuals who reject him. Prior to annihilation at the final judgement, most persons, it is believed, will have a final opportunity to accept Jehovah.

Judaism-One of the first known monotheistic religions, likely dating to between 2000-1500 B.C., Judaism is the native faith of the Jewish people, based upon the belief in a covenant of responsibility between a sole omnipotent creator God and Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism's Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh. Divine revelation of principles and prohibitions in the Hebrew Scriptures form the basis of Jewish law, or halakhah, which is a key component of the faith. While there are extensive traditions of Jewish halakhic and theological discourse, there is no final dogmatic authority in the tradition. Local communities have their own religious leadership. Modern Judaism has three basic categories of faith: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform/Liberal. These differ in their views and observance of Jewish law, with the Orthodox representing the most traditional practice, and Reform/Liberal communities the most accommodating of individualised interpretations of Jewish identity and faith.

K

Kabbalah/Cabala/Qabalah-An esoteric tradition based on Judaic "merkabah" mysticism and other Jewish cultural and religious ideas. The origins are purported to be thousands of years old having been transmitted orally for most of that time. Textual evidence of core kabbalistic beliefs, i.e. its defining characteristics, date to the late 12th century in the south of France.

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Kimbanguism-A puritan form of the Baptist denomination founded by Simon Kimbangu in the 1920s in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Adherents believe that salvation comes through Jesus' death and resurrection, like Christianity, but additionally that living a spiritually pure life following strict codes of conduct is required for salvation.

Kirant-The belief system of the Kirat, a people who live mainly in the Himalayas of Nepal. It is primarily a form of polytheistic shamanism but includes elements of animism and ancestor worship.

L

Lutheranism-A major branch of Protestantism that identifies primarily with the theology of Martin Luther, the 16th-century German monk and reformer whose efforts to reform the theology and practices of the Catholic Church launched the Reformation in 1517.

M

Messianic Judaism (MJ)-Is the religion of the followers of Yeshua (Jesus) who desire to recover the Hebrew roots of their faith, worshipping and living in accordance with the Torah (Law) of Moses as taught by Yeshua and His disciples. In the 1st Century CE (AD), MJ was one of the many sects of Judaism. As such, it adheres to many of the tenants and practices of ancient Judaism. In modern times, MJ differs from traditional Judaism by its confession of Yeshua as the promised Messiah of the Hebrew prophets, and the acceptance of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) as authoritative. The heart of MJ is the belief that there is only one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that He has revealed Himself through His creation, His word (the Bible, with the Torah as the first and foundational revelation), and in His Son, Yeshua our Messiah. MJ affirms that salvation is by faith alone and not based upon one's ethnicity. Therefore both Jews and non-Jews who confess Yeshua as the Messiah, and accept forgiveness of sins through His work of salvation, are equally part of the family of God, sharing in all of the privileges and responsibilities of covenant membership.

Modekngei-A hybrid of Christianity and ancient Palauan culture and oral traditions founded around 1915 on the island of Babeldaob. Adherents simultaneously worship Jesus Christ and Palauan goddesses.

Moorish Science Temple of America-The Moorish Science Temple of America (MST of A) was founded by Prophet Noble Drew Ali who was considered by the members to be Allah's last Prophet in these days. It was founded in Newark, New Jersey in 1913. The Prophet taught his revelation to the true and divine creed of Islam to his followers and all that attend the meetings. In 1925, The Holy Prophet moved to Chicago, Illinois, and set up the headquarters of the Moorish Science Temple of America at the Supreme Grand Major Temple. He incorporated the MST of A in the state of Illinois in 1926. The MST of A has grown to over 260 Temples and Branch Temples around the country since its conception.

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Moravian Church-Believe in following the teachings of Christ as laid out in the New Testament. They believe that the New Testament guides followers to Jesus by encouraging them to act as Jesus instructed them to. They believe that everyone is spiritually equal.

Mysticism-A religious practice where the goal is a direct experience with God, a god, or gods.

A person may be considered a mystic or practitioner of mysticism if they have had a direct experience with God or a god, actively try to have such an experience, or write theology or philosophy that discusses how and why to do so. Mysticism is often associated with the Abrahamic Faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) but is not exclusive to these religions.

N

Native American-There are over 500 recognized tribal nations in the United States and dozens of tribal linguistic groups, each with varying religious and spiritual practices associated with the culture. In the Pacific Northwest, the primary language group is the Salishan, a linguistic and cultural grouping that stretches from the Coast of Washington State into Montana. In contemporary Indian Country, the Pacific Northwest is now home to tribal members originating from hundreds of tribes throughout North America.

Neoplatonism-Was founded in the third century by Plotinus, and developed by a number of his contemporaries or near contemporaries. Neoplatonic works are based on the philosophical works of Plato, particularly those relating to his theory of forms and the difference between absolute and perceived reality.

O

Odinist-Odinism is a pagan religion and is based on the ancient religious and moral concepts of the northern IndoEuropean tribes or nations. These people have practised Pagan beliefs since antiquity.

P

Plymouth Brethren-A loosely organised body of Christians founded in Plymouth, England, about 1830, having no ordained ministry, no formal creed or ritual, and accepting the Bible as the only guide.

Positive Christianity-Was a religious philosophy supported by Alfred Rosenberg, the man seen as being the intellectual heavyweight of the Nazi Party. Positive Christianity had existed prior to the rise of the Nazi Party but Rosenberg believed that the party should adopt it as the religious way ahead. The party did adopt it in 1920 in its '25 Point Programme'.

Q

Quartodecimanism-The name given to the practice of celebrating the death of Christ on the day of Passover

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R

Rastafarian-The religion is of Caribbean origin. It started in Jamaica and was named after Ra Tafari who was crowned Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia in November 1930. The religion is based on a vision of Black domination.

S

Seventh-Day Adventist-They are strict religionists who base their faith on the bible, emphasise a second coming of Jesus Christ, and observance of Saturday as their day of worship. They are evangelistic, conducting missionary activity in 184 countries of the world. The church was organised in 1863. An important figure in the formation of the Adventist church organisation was Ellen G. White, who gave guidance to the group of men studying what would become the doctrines of the church as she received visions of instruction from the lord. She and her husband, James, began the publishing work, now expanded into close to 100 publishing establishment's scattered around the world. Mrs. White's inspired guidance and encouragement also were instrumental in starting the vast medical program and extensive elementary through university level education systems now carried on worldwide

Shintoism-A native animist tradition of Japan, Shinto practice is based on the premise that every being and object has its own spirit or kami. Shinto practitioners worship several particular kamis, including the kamis of nature, and families often have shrines to their ancestors' kamis. Shintoism has no fixed tradition of prayers or prescribed dogma and is characterised by individual ritual. Respect for the kamis in nature is a key Shinto value. Prior to the end of World War II, Shinto was the state religion of Japan and bolstered the cult of the Japanese emperor.

Sikhism-Founded by the Guru Nanak (born 1469), Sikhism believes in a non-anthropomorphic, supreme, eternal, creator God; centering one's devotion to God is seen as a means of escaping the cycle of rebirth. Sikhs follow the teachings of Nanak and nine subsequent gurus. Their scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib -- also known as the Adi Granth -- is considered the living Guru, or final authority of Sikh faith and theology. Sikhism emphasises equality of humankind and disavows caste, class, or gender discrimination.

Society of Friends-Christian group that arose in mid-17th-century England, dedicated to living in accordance with the "Inner Light," or direct inward apprehension of God, without creeds, clergy, or other ecclesiastical forms. As most powerfully expressed by George Fox (1624–91), Friends felt that their "experimental" discovery of God would lead to the purification of all of Christendom. It did not. But Friends founded one American colony and were dominant for a time in several others.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)-A Protestant Christian denomination and one of the largest Baptist groups in the United States. The SBC is an autonomous organisation composed of individual Baptist churches that voluntarily cooperate for common missions, ministries, and doctrinal beliefs. It is known for its conservative theological positions and evangelical focus. The primary focus of the Southern Baptist Convention is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and promote missions and evangelism both domestically and internationally. The denomination

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places a strong emphasis on personal conversion through faith in Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible as the Word of God.

T

Thelema-A religion and philosophy based on the writings of Aleister Crowley concerning the seeking and expression of one's True Will, or destiny.

Theosophy-Is based on the writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Theosophy probably bears the most Eastern influences of any path in the Western Occult Tradition. Theosophists seek knowledge of their higher, more spiritual selves, of which our common personality and consciousness are generally unaware.

U

United Church of Christ-Was formed in 1957 through the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. The UCC is rooted in the Congregationalist tradition, which emphasises the autonomy of local churches and democratic decision-making. The denomination's unity is based on the belief in the essential oneness of the Church in Jesus Christ.

Unity-A religious movement that does not require its followers to become members or to hold a fixed set of beliefs. Unity describes itself as "the religions of the written word." In the 1880's, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, co-founders of Unity, discovered new truths about life and health. After the both experienced healings from limiting physical conditions, they began a ministry of praying for the sick and teaching classes in their Kansas City home.

V

Vaudois-A Christian sect of dissenters that originated in southern France in the late 12th century adopted Calvinist doctrines in the 16th century.

W

Wahhabism-A reformist religious movement within Sunni Islam, based on the teachings of 18th-century Hanbali cleric Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (c. 1703–1792).[4][b] The movement was initially established in the central Arabian region of Najd and later spread to other parts of the Arabian Peninsula,[c] and is today followed primarily in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

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Wicca-Is not a religion that worships or even acknowledges the devil. The gods of Wicca are in no way related to Satan, the devil, satanic practices, or any such personification or evil. Wiccans and witches believe in the primary of personal responsibility and do not believe in such a concept to avoid responsibility for their own actions, and certainly do not offer homage to it.

World Wide Church of God-A study in transition, progression and change. It was founded in the 1950s and 1960s by Herbert W. Armstrong who strongly opposed traditional doctrines and teachings of the protestant church. Following the death of Armstrong in 1986, Joseph Tkach Sr. became head of the World Wide Church of God (WCG). Mr. Tkach would usher in sweeping doctrinal and theological changes to WCG. Under Tkach leadership the focus of the church became the Gospel of Jesus Christ and grace and not prophecy or the millennium, issues heavily emphasised by Armstrong. Today, Jesus Christ is recognized as Lord and Savior who gives instruction for all areas of life. Additionally there is a very strong emphasis placed on prayer and individual study of the scriptures as dynamics for spiritual growth.

X

Y

Ying And Yang-A Taoist belief that the universe is made up of pairs of opposing forces, like male and female, positive and negative. One's task is to harmonise these forces, both within one's body and in the rest of the universe. A mythical "Yellow Emperor" wrote: "The principle of Yin and Yang is the foundation of the entire universe. It underlies everything in creation. It brings about the development of parenthood; it is the root and source of life and death. It is found with the temples of the gods...Heaven was created by the concentration of Yang, the force of light, earth was created by the concentration of Yin, the forces of darkness. Yang stands for peace and serenity; Yin stands for confusion and turmoil. Yang stands for destruction; Yin stands for conservation. Yang brings about disintegration; Yin gives shape to things..."

Z

Zoroastrianism-Originating from the teachings of Zoroaster in about the ninth or 10th century B.C., Zoroastrianism may be the oldest continuing creedal religion. Its key beliefs centre on a transcendent creator God, Ahura Mazda, and the concept of free will. The key ethical tenets of Zoroastrianism expressed in its scripture, the Avesta, are based on a dualistic worldview where one may prevent chaos if one chooses to serve God and exercises good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Zoroastrianism is generally a closed religion and members are almost always born to Zoroastrian parents. Prior to the spread of Islam, Zoroastrianism dominated greater Iran. Today, though a minority, Zoroastrians remain primarily in Iran, India (where they are known as Parsi), and Pakistan.

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Zwinglianism-A branch of the ancient protestants; so called from Ulric Zuinglius, a divine of Switzerland, who received the doctor's cap at Basil in 1501. Possessing an uncommon share of penetration and acuteness of genius, he declaimed severely against indulgences, the mass, the celibacy of the clergy, and other doctrines of the Roman church. He differed from Luther in supposing only a figurative presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist; and simply considered it as a pious remembrance of Christ's death, and in the benefits it procured to mankind. He denied that either of the sacraments confers grace, and had some peculiar notions on the doctrines of original sin, grace, &c. He was also for removing out of the churches many things which Luther was disposed to treat with toleration and indulgence; such as images, altars, wax-tapers, and other ceremonies.

The religious tenets of this denomination were, in most other points, similar to those of the Lutherans.