

Devotion

Obedience, Reverence
Universal Worship, May 9, 2021

HINDUISM:

For even if the greatest sinner worships me with all his soul, he must be considered righteous, because of his righteous will. And he shall soon become pure and reach everlasting peace. For this is my word of promise, that he who loves me shall not perish.

-Bhagavad Gita , Chapter 9, verses 30–31

BUDDHISM:

"I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows me the way in this life.

I take refuge in the Dharma, the way of understanding and love.

I take refuge in the Sangha, the community that lives in harmony and awareness.

In Buddhism, our faith is concrete, not blind, not a leap. It is formed by our own insight and experience. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we express trust in our capacity to walk in the direction of beauty, truth, and deep understanding, based on our experience of the efficacy of the practice. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we enter the path of transformation, the path to end suffering. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we focus our energies on building a community that dwells in mindfulness, harmony, and peace.

- Thich Nhat Hanh: *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*

ZOROASTRIANISM:

Therefore, as a consecration does Zarathushtra dedicate to Mazda the life-breath of his whole being, as well as the first fruits of his Good Mind. To Asha he offers his deeds and words, and his willing obedience, comprising all his power.

-Yasna 33:14 (trans. FA Bode, adapted)

TAOISM:

Imagine a nebulous thing
here before Heaven and Earth
silent and elusive
it dwells apart and never varies
it travels everywhere and isn't harmed
it could be the mother of us all
not knowing its name
I call it the Tao
forced to name it
I name it great

great means ever-flowing
ever-flowing means far-reaching
far-reaching means returning
the Tao is great
Heaven is great
Earth is great
the king is also great
the realm contains four great things
of these the king is only one
Humanity imitates Earth
Earth imitates Heaven
Heaven imitates the Tao
the Tao imitates itself
-Taoteching 25 (trans. Red Pine, adapted)

INDIGENOUS:

In the life of the Indian there was only one inevitable duty - the duty of prayer - the daily recognition of the Unseen and Eternal. His daily devotions were more necessary to him than daily food. He wakes at daybreak, puts on his moccasins and steps down to the water's edge. Here he throws handfuls of clear, cold water into his face, or plunges in bodily. After the bath, he stands erect before the advancing dawn, facing the sun as it dances upon the horizon, and offers his unspoken orison. His mate may precede or follow him in his devotions, but never accompanies him. Each soul must meet the morning sun, the new sweet earth and the Great Silence alone!

Whenever, in the course of the daily hunt the red hunter comes upon a scene that is strikingly beautiful or sublime - a black thundercloud with the rainbow's glowing arch above the mountain, a white waterfall in the heart of a green gorge; a vast prairie tinged with the blood-red of sunset - he pauses for an instant in the attitude of worship. He sees no need for setting apart one day in seven as a hold day, since to him all days are God's."

-Ohiyesa, a Santee Dakota physician and author, from "Touch the Earth" by T.C. McLuhan

JUDAISM:

Regarding how many ways is the accounting of a man with himself on his duties to G-d, I say, that the ways of accounting in this matter are numerous. However, among them, I will expound thirty ways whereby it will become clear through them, what a man is obligated to his G-d, when he puts them to heart and takes on himself to reflect on them and remember them always.

THE FIRST: (Obligation to serve G-d for creating him, elevating him over other creations, and taking care of his needs) When a man reflects on his own matter, and considers the first beginning of his being, his emergence from non-existence to existence, from nothing to something, without his meriting any of this, but rather solely out of pure kindness of the Almighty, out of His benevolence and generosity. And when he will see with his understanding that he is more important in his matter, more exalted in level, and more elevated in form over the animals, plants, and inanimate objects, he will realize that he is under an obligation to thank his Creator, blessed be He.

-Duties of the Heart 8:3 (trans. sefaria.org)

CHRISTIANITY:

And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

-Mathew 6: 5-14

ISLAM:

Likewise, there came no messenger unto those before them, but that they said, "A sorcerer or one possessed."

Do they exhort one another to it? Nay, they are a rebellious people

So turn away from them, for thou shalt not be blamed

And remind, for truly the Reminder benefits the believers
I did not create jinn and mankind, save to worship Me
I desire no provision from them; nor do I desire that they should feed Me
Truly God is the Provider, the Possessor of Strength, the Firm.
-Quran 49:10 (trans. Study Quran)

TRUTH:

Devotion is the tuning of the heart to its natural pitch; in other words, the healthiest condition possible in humanity is that in which devotion has blossomed. It is devotion alone that buries our false self, be it devotion to a human being or to God. If truth is ever to be seen it is in devotion; for the world of heart is a different world from the world in which we all live; its law is different, the weather there is different, its sky is different, its sun and moon are different. The nature of that world is different; it is a world in itself. By devotion, heaven is brought to earth.