

# GOD'S Facebook

**Creating a Friendship of Civilizations  
in a Terror-ridden World**

**NAJMUS SAQUIB, PH.D.**

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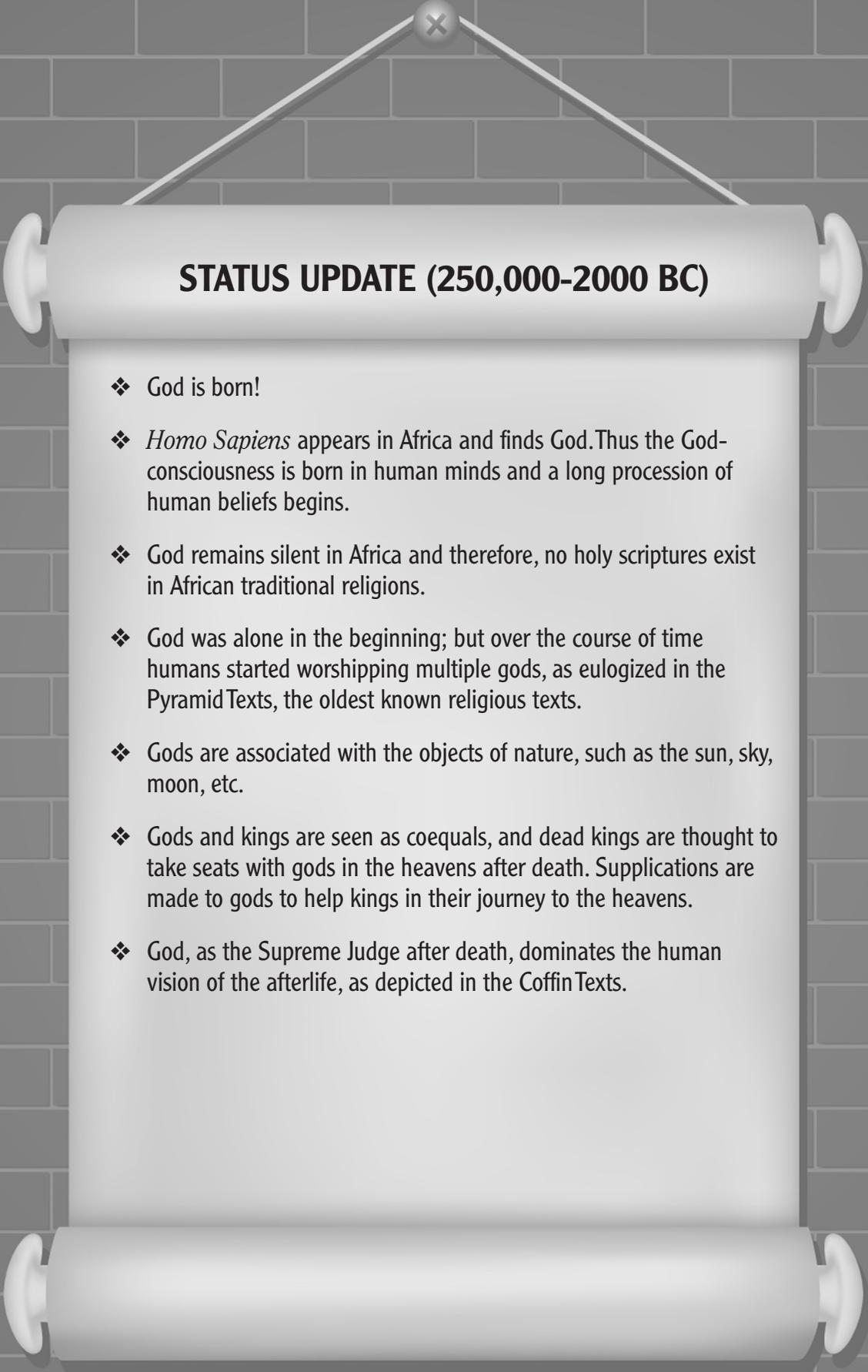
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## God is Born (250,000 to 2000 BC)

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“The history of the cosmos  
is the history of the struggle of becoming.  
When the dim flux of unformed life  
struggled, convulsed back and forth upon itself,  
and broke at last into light and dark  
came into existence as light,  
came into existence as cold shadow  
then every atom of the cosmos trembled with delight.  
Behold, God is born!  
He is bright light!  
He is pitch dark and cold!”

—D. H. LAWRENCE (1885-1930), GOD IS BORN



## STATUS UPDATE (250,000-2000 BC)

- ❖ God is born!
- ❖ *Homo Sapiens* appears in Africa and finds God. Thus the God-consciousness is born in human minds and a long procession of human beliefs begins.
- ❖ God remains silent in Africa and therefore, no holy scriptures exist in African traditional religions.
- ❖ God was alone in the beginning; but over the course of time humans started worshipping multiple gods, as eulogized in the Pyramid Texts, the oldest known religious texts.
- ❖ Gods are associated with the objects of nature, such as the sun, sky, moon, etc.
- ❖ Gods and kings are seen as coequals, and dead kings are thought to take seats with gods in the heavens after death. Supplications are made to gods to help kings in their journey to the heavens.
- ❖ God, as the Supreme Judge after death, dominates the human vision of the afterlife, as depicted in the Coffin Texts.

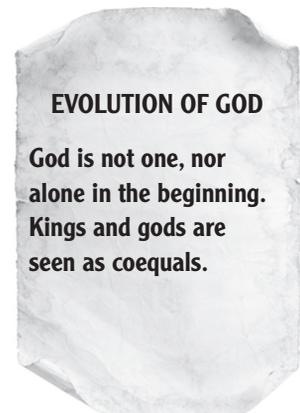
## WALL OF MORTALS: THE PYRAMID TEXTS (2400 BC)

**T**he Pyramid Texts, a collection of ancient Egyptian religious texts, is the oldest known religious text collection in the world. It is carved on the walls and tombs of the pyramids at Saqqara, located 30 km south of modern-day Cairo, Egypt.

The oldest of the Pyramid Texts date between 2400 and 2300 BC. The texts refer to different Egyptian gods, but the most prominent mention is of the god Osiris, who would become the most important deity throughout the height of Egyptian civilization. The story of creation in the Pyramid Texts explains that the sun god, Re, as Atum, rose out of Nu (the primal nothingness), and created Shu and Tefnut from his spittle. From their union came Geb, the earth god, and his wife, Nut. Their children were the first gods on earth: Osiris and his sister and wife Isis; and Set (brother of Osiris) and his sister and wife Nephthys. According to Egyptian belief, all the pharaohs descended from these four gods.

The Pyramid Texts were first discovered in 1881 by Gaston Maspero, and translations were made by Kurt Heinrich Sethe (in German), Louis Sleepers (in French), and Raymond O. Faulkner and Samuel Alfred Browne Mercer (in English). These religious texts are made up of distinct utterances without any narrative interconnection. To date, 759 utterances have been translated into English.

These magical spells were supposed to help the deceased king in his journey into the heavens. They describe Osiris as a judge of the dead in the afterlife, the lord of love and mercy. The Egyptian kings were thought to be associated with Osiris in death and to inherit eternal life.



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**NOTE FOR READERS:** Most of the utterances begin with the expression “To say”, indicating that the words are to be recited by someone, often a priest or the deceased king himself in the first person when he meets the gods at the gates of heaven. The abbreviation “N.” in the translations is a surrogate for the name of the kings in whose pyramid the text was found. Therefore, the abbreviation “N.” should be read as “I” or “Me” or “My”, or also can be substituted with the name of the king.

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### BIRTH OF DECEASED KING AS A GOD IN HEAVEN

“To say:

The face of heaven is  
washed; the vault of heaven is bright;

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*The earliest religious text*

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A god is brought to birth by the sky  
Upon the arms of Shu and Tefnut, upon the arms of N.  
“Great wbn,” say the gods;  
“Hear it, this word which N. says to thee;  
Let thy heart be glad for this N.,  
For this N. is a Great One, the son of a Great One;  
N. is with thee; take this N.  
For life, joy, and eternity, with thee.”  
“Khepri, hear it, this word,  
Which is spoken to thee by N.;  
Let thy heart be glad for N.,  
For N. is a Great One, the son of a Great One;  
N. is with thee; take him with thee.”  
“Nun, hear it, this word,  
Which is spoken to thee by N.;  
Let thy heart be glad for N.,  
For N. is a Great One, the son of a Great One;  
N. is with thee; take him with thee.”  
“Atum, hear it, this word,  
Which is spoken to thee by N.;  
Let thy heart be glad for N.,  
For N. is a Great One, the son of a Great One;  
N. is with thee; take him with thee.”

— PYRAMID TEXTS: UTTERANCE 570  
[TR. BY SAMUEL A. B. MERCER]



### COFFEE BREAK

**The Earliest Conception of God:** The pyramid texts open the window to the earliest human conception of God. It is noteworthy that placating God(s) was as important at the dawn of human civilization as it is now. One way of placating is to praise God(s), which is a common thread across all ancient and modern religions.

### TO MAKE A LIBATION

“To say:  
Thy water belongs to thee; thine abundance belongs to thee;  
The efflux goes forth from the god,  
The secretion which comes out of Osiris,  
So that thy hands may be washed,

# 4

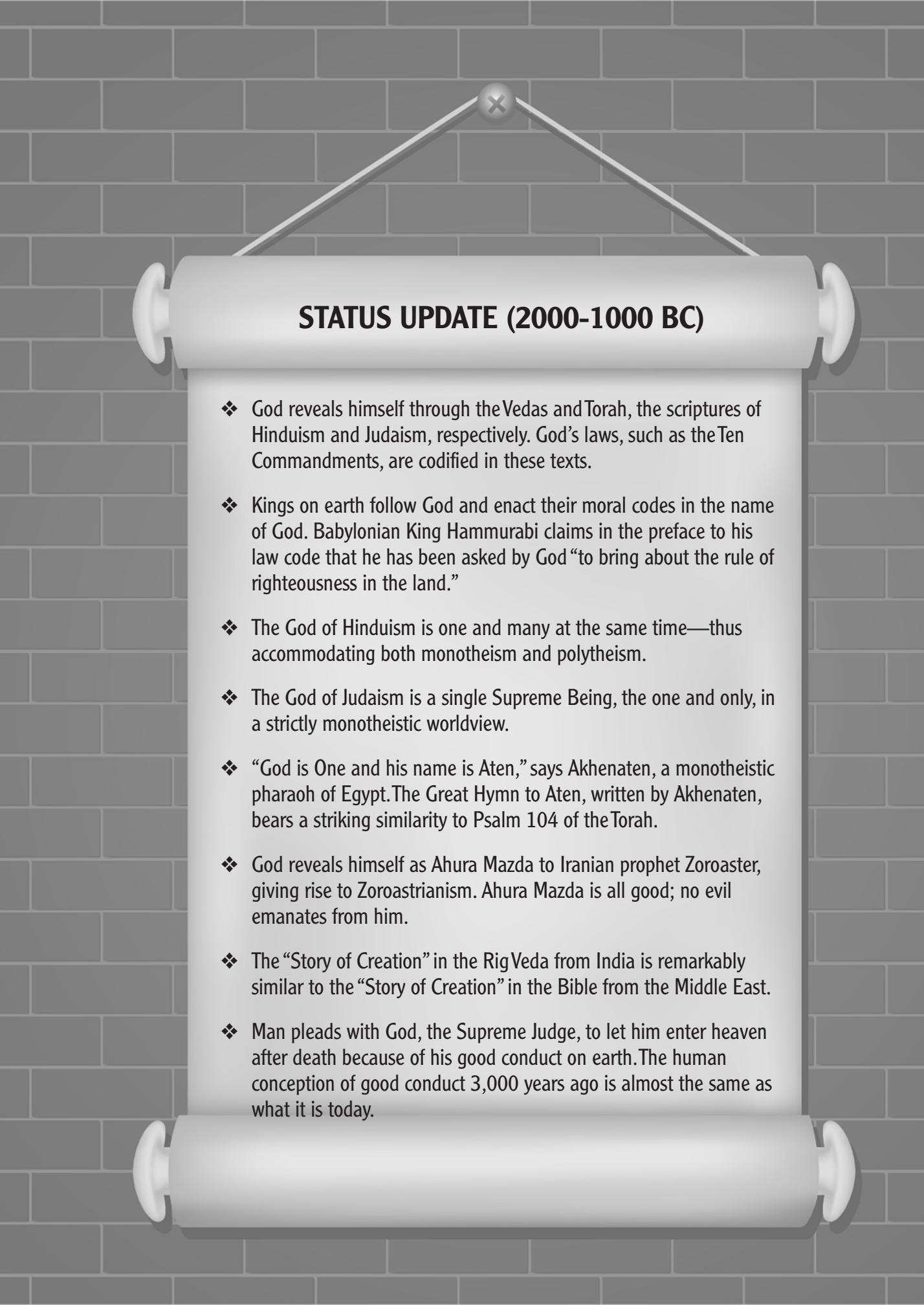
## God Gives Us Religions (2000 to 1000 BC)

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“From the time when Man became truly conscious of his own self, he also became conscious of a mysterious spirit of unity which found its manifestation through him in his society... Somehow Man has felt that this comprehensive spirit of unity has a divine character which could claim the sacrifice of all that is individual in him, that in it dwells his highest meaning transcending his limited self, representing his best freedom.

Man’s reverential loyalty to this spirit of unity is expressed in his religion; it is symbolized in the names of his deities. That is why, in the beginning, his gods were tribal gods, even gods of the different communities belonging to the same tribe. With the extension of the consciousness of human unity his God became revealed to him as one and universal, proving that the truth of human unity is the truth of Man’s God.”

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941), RELIGION OF MAN  
*[1930 Hibbert Lecture at Oxford University]*



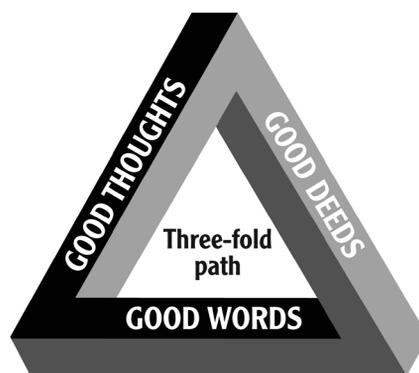
## STATUS UPDATE (2000-1000 BC)

- ❖ God reveals himself through the Vedas and Torah, the scriptures of Hinduism and Judaism, respectively. God's laws, such as the Ten Commandments, are codified in these texts.
- ❖ Kings on earth follow God and enact their moral codes in the name of God. Babylonian King Hammurabi claims in the preface to his law code that he has been asked by God "to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land."
- ❖ The God of Hinduism is one and many at the same time—thus accommodating both monotheism and polytheism.
- ❖ The God of Judaism is a single Supreme Being, the one and only, in a strictly monotheistic worldview.
- ❖ "God is One and his name is Aten," says Akhenaten, a monotheistic pharaoh of Egypt. The Great Hymn to Aten, written by Akhenaten, bears a striking similarity to Psalm 104 of the Torah.
- ❖ God reveals himself as Ahura Mazda to Iranian prophet Zoroaster, giving rise to Zoroastrianism. Ahura Mazda is all good; no evil emanates from him.
- ❖ The "Story of Creation" in the Rig Veda from India is remarkably similar to the "Story of Creation" in the Bible from the Middle East.
- ❖ Man pleads with God, the Supreme Judge, to let him enter heaven after death because of his good conduct on earth. The human conception of good conduct 3,000 years ago is almost the same as what it is today.

## HOLY WALL: THE AVESTA – ZOROASTRIAN SCRIPTURE (~1100 BC)

The Avesta is the most sacred collection of texts of Zoroastrianism. The most important portion of the Avesta is the Gathas, which are hymns thought to have been composed by Zarathustra (Zoroaster) himself. The verses of the Gathas are devotional. Some verses are directly addressed to the Omniscient Creator Ahura Mazda and expound on the divine essences of truth (Asha), the good mind (Vohu Manah), and the spirit of righteousness.

Zoroaster described the human condition as the mental struggle between Asha (truth) and Druj (lie). According to him, humankind's purpose is to attain Asha, and he postulated a three-fold path: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.



### MESSAGES FROM AVESTA

“May the Wise, Ruling-at-will God  
grant radiant happiness to the person  
who radiates happiness to any other person at large.”

– AVESTA, GATHAS  
(Tr. BY ALI A. JAFAREY)



“Righteousness is the best good. It is radiant happiness.  
Radiant happiness comes to the person to whom  
righteousness is for the sake of the best righteousness alone.”

– AVESTA, GATHAS  
(Tr. BY ALI A. JAFAREY)

“Wise God, I approach You  
through good mind.  
Grant me through righteousness  
the blessings of both existences,  
the material and the mental,  
so that I lead my companions to happiness.”

– AVESTA, GATHAS  
(Tr. BY ALI A. JAFAREY)

“Hear the best with your ears  
and ponder with a bright mind.  
Then each man and woman, for his or her self,

“He is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the Self within all beings, watching over all works, dwelling in all beings, the witness, the perceiver, the only one, free from qualities.”

– SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD 6.11  
(Tr. By MAX MULLER)



### COFFEE BREAK

**How Many Gods are There?** *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, one of the sacred Hindu texts from the pre-Buddhist era, answered this question in an enigmatic story:

“Now Vidagdha, Sakala’s son, asked him, “Yajnavalkya, how many gods are there?”

Following the text of the Veda, he replied, “303, and 3003, as are mentioned in the Vedic hymn of the Visvadevas.”

“Right,” replied Vidagdha, “but how many gods are there really, Yajnavalkya?”

“Thirty-three.”

“Right,” he assented, “but how many gods are there really, Yajnavalkya?”

“Six.”

“Right,” he answered, “but how many gods are there really, Yajnavalkya?”

“Two.”

“Right,” Vidagdha replied, “but how many gods are there really, Yajnavalkya?”

“One.”

“You are the blue butterfly, the green-eyed parrot and the lightning cloud. You are the seasons and the seas. You are the one without any beginning; you are omnipresent; all the worlds are born out of you.”

– SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD  
(Tr. By MAX MULLER)

“In the highest golden sheath there is the Brahman without passions and without parts. That is pure, that is the light of lights, that is it which they know who know the Self.

The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, and much less this fire. When he shines, everything shines after him; by his light all this is lighted.

That immortal Brahman is before, that Brahman is behind, that Brahman is right and left. It has gone forth below and above; Brahman alone is all this, it is the best.”

– MUNDAKA UPANISHAD, 2:2:9-11  
(Tr. By MAX MULLER)

“Thou art indeed the manifested Brahman. Of thee will I speak. Thee will I proclaim in my thoughts as true. Thee will I proclaim on my lips as true.”

– TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD 1:1:1  
(Tr. By MAX MULLER)

“I cannot say that I know Brahman fully. Nor can I say that I know him not. He among us knows him best who understands the spirit of the words: “Nor do I know that I know him not.”“

– KENA UPANISHAD 2:2  
(Tr. By MAX MULLER)



“Eye cannot see him, nor words reveal him;  
By the senses, austerity, or works he is not known.  
When the mind is cleansed by the grace of wisdom,  
He is seen by contemplation--the One without parts.”

– MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

“That which is beyond this world is without form and without suffering. They who know it, become immortal, but others suffer pain indeed.  
That Bhagavat exists in the faces, the heads, the necks of all, he dwells in the cave (of the heart) of all beings, he is all-pervading, therefore he is the omnipresent Siva.”

– SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD 3:10-11  
(Tr. By MAX MULLER)

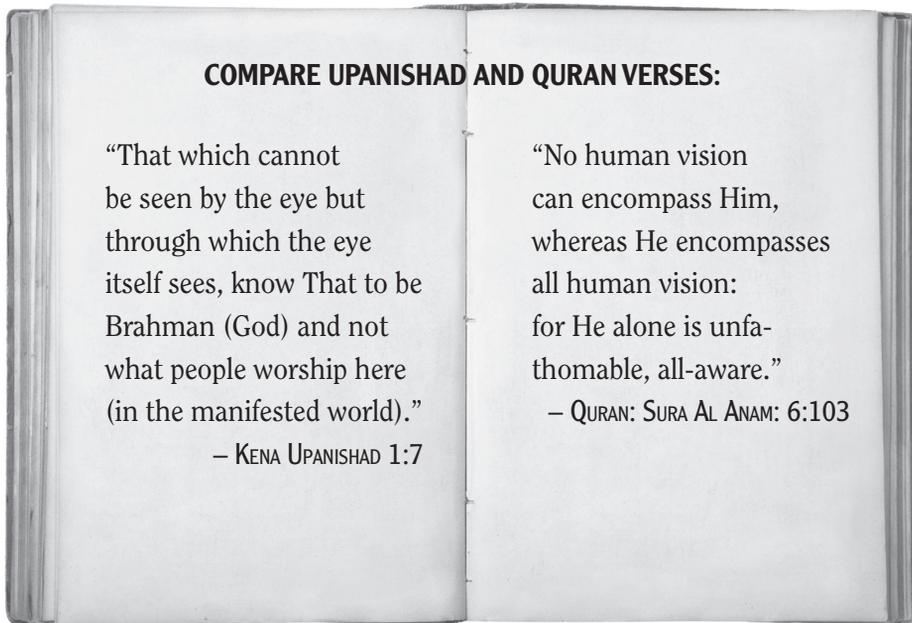


“He created all this, whatever is here. Having created it, into it, indeed, he entered. Having entered it, he became both the actual and the beyond, the defined and the undefined, both the founded and the unfounded, the intelligent and the unintelligent, the true and the untrue.”

– TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD, 2:6-1

“Man becomes true if in this life he can apprehend God; if not, it is the greatest calamity for him.”

– UPANISHAD



### TEN COMMANDMENTS OF HINDUISM

There are no such things as the ten commandments of Hinduism in any of its scriptures. However, several Hindu thinkers have articulated the ten commandments of Hinduism in an effort to encapsulate the essence of Hinduism. Since Hinduism is a very open religion, without any formal clergy or religious authority, individual opinions and interpretations abound on all religious matters.

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*There is no such thing as ten commandments in Hinduism, but people created their own lists.*

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Professor V. Krishnamurthy (1927–) postulated the ten commandments of Hinduism and divided them into three head and seven describing commandments.

According to Krishnamurthy, the three head commandments are:

1. Omnipresence of Reality
2. Purification of Mind
3. Dharma (Divine Laws)

The seven describing commandments emanate from the three head commandments and they are:

1. Karma Yoga (Actions)
2. One God with many names and forms
3. Avatara (Divine Manifestations)
4. Nama Smarana (Divine Remembrance or Recitation of Divine Names)
5. Surrender
6. Self Revelation

“Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, comes of Her own accord where fools are not respected, grain is well stored up, and the husband and wife do not quarrel.”

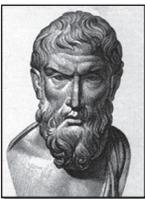
– CHANAKYA (350 BC-283 BC)

*[Adviser and prime minister of the first Maurya Emperor Chandragupta of India]*

“Almighty God, Thou who art impartial,  
And dost appoint the virtuous among men as Thy Assistants.”

– CHU YUAN (332 BC- 295 BC)

*[One of the greatest Chinese poets, who drowned himself in despair. His death is commemorated each year on the fifth day of the fifth moon by dragon boat races]*



“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?

Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

Then he is malevolent.

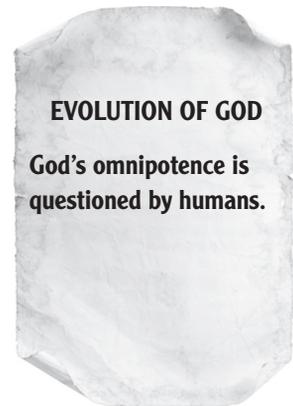
Is he both able and willing?

Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?”

– EPICURUS (341 BC- 270 BC)

*[Greek philosopher, founder of Epicureanism]*



“If the gods listened to the prayers of men, all men would quickly have perished: for they are always praying for evil against one another.”

– EPICURUS (341 BC- 270 BC)

“A strict belief in fate is the worst kind of slavery; on the other hand, there is comfort in the thought that God will be moved by our prayers.”

– EPICURUS (341 BC- 270 BC)



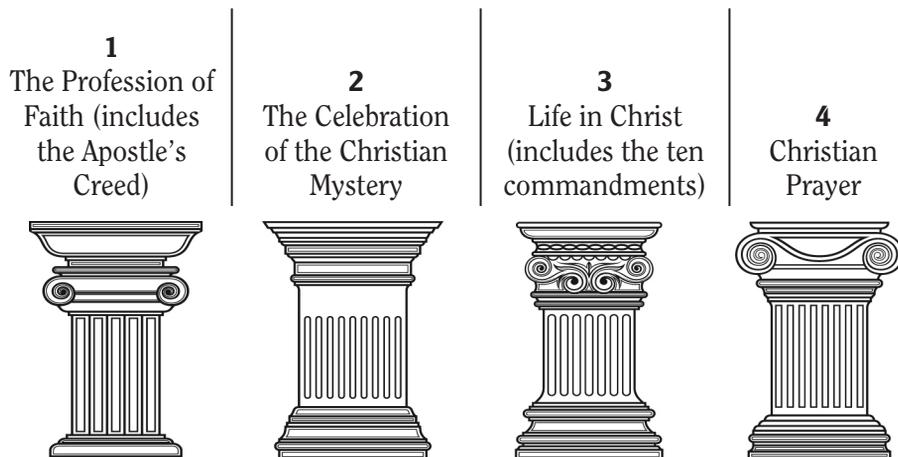
### COFFEE BREAK

**First Edict on Religious Tolerance:** The Indian King, Ashoka The Great, was the first monarch to issue an official edict on religious tolerance.

“Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, honors both ascetics and the householders of all religions, and he honors them with gifts and honors of various kinds. But Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, does not value gifts and honors as much as he values this

## THE FOUR PILLARS

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is divided into four parts, which are sometimes referred to as the four pillars of Christian faith. These parts are:



### FOUR PILLARS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

#### MESSAGES FROM BIBLE

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”

– BIBLE: 3 JOHN, 1:11  
(KING JAMES BIBLE (KJV), 1769 EDITION)

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

– BIBLE: PSALMS 1:1 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

– BIBLE: ISAIAH 41:10 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“[Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord [is] my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

– BIBLE: HEBREWS 13:5-6 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“The kingdom of God is within you.”

– BIBLE: LUKE 17:21 (KING JAMES BIBLE)



“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

– BIBLE: I JOHN 4:8 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“With men this is impossible; but, with God all things are possible.”

– BIBLE: MATTHEW 19:26 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

– BIBLE: ROMANS 8:28

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

– BIBLE: ISAIAH 1:16-17 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

– BIBLE: PROVERBS 1:7 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

”Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

– BIBLE: ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14 (KING JAMES BIBLE)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

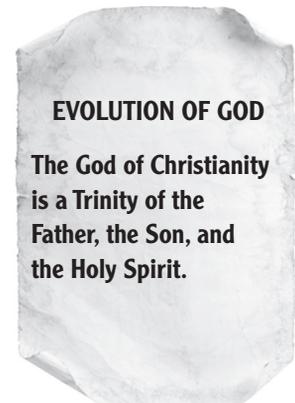
– BIBLE: PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

“For what can be known about God is plain to [all], because God has showed it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

– BIBLE: ROMANS 1.19-20

“Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don’t worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm. For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land.”

– BIBLE: PSALM 37:7-9



“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

– BIBLE: PROVERBS 3:5-6

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”

– BIBLE: EPHESIANS 5:25

“Your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle, quiet spirit, is of great worth in God’s eyes.”

– BIBLE: 1 PETER 3:4

“If you love me, keep my commands.”

– BIBLE: JOHN 14:15

[NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)]



“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

– BIBLE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13

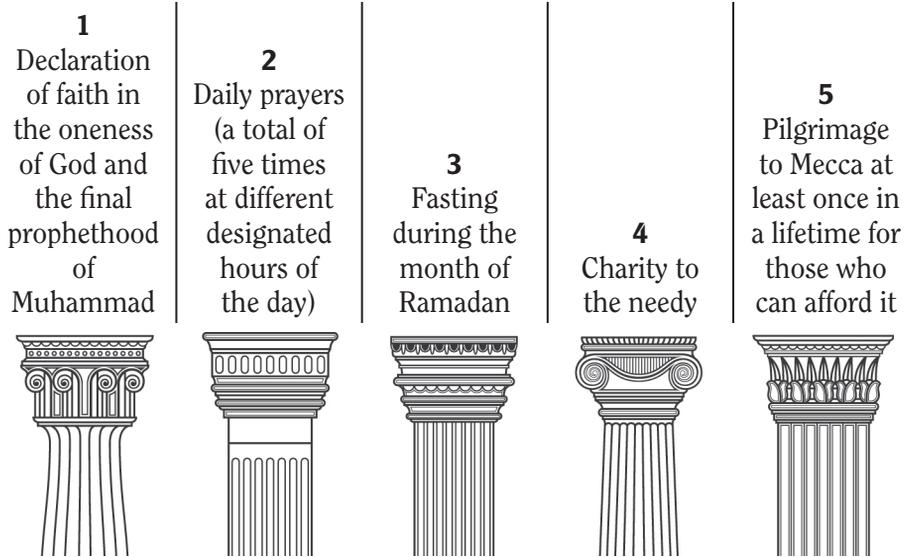
## HOLY WALL: THE QURAN - MUSLIM SCRIPTURE

**T**he Quran, also called the Holy Quran, is the holy scripture of Islam. Muslims believe that the Quran is the word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad through the angel Jibrail (Gabriel) over a period of 23 years (610–632 AD). Muslims also believe in the continuity of God’s revelations with those of other earlier prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus), regarding the Quran as the final revelation of God in the same line of revelations. The Quran was written down by the Prophet’s companions during his lifetime and was later formalized into a single book by the third Caliph Uthman during his reign (644–656 AD).

The text of the Quran consists of 114 chapters or suras of varying length. The total number of verses in the Quran is slightly more than 6,200, with some controversy among Muslim scholars about the exact number. The Quran is regarded as a miracle of God and the best form of Arabic poetry. It describes itself as a book of guidance and emphasizes the moral lessons of its narratives, without necessarily giving specific details of an event.

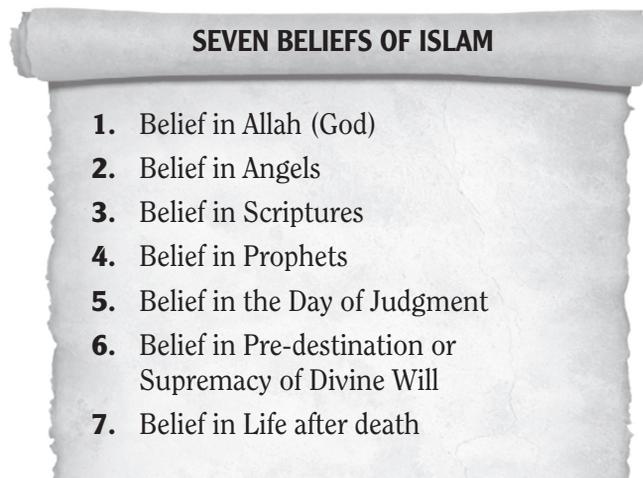
## FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The five pillars of Islam are the five basic acts that every Muslim must follow. These are:



## SEVEN BASIC BELIEFS (AMANTU) OF MUSLIMS

Muslims's belief statement includes seven basic beliefs and a testimony, which is codified in a Al-Imanul Mufassal (the statement of faith), nicknamed Amantu:



## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE QURAN

The Quran, like the Bible, includes hundreds of commandments. Some Muslims believe that the Quran has equivalents for all the Ten Commandments of the Bible. The closest the Quran comes to issuing a subset of the ten commandments in one place is in Chapter 6, Sura Al-Ana'm, Verses 151 to 153. It is interesting to note that, in the very next

“Indeed, those who submit themselves absolutely to GOD alone, while leading a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord; they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.”

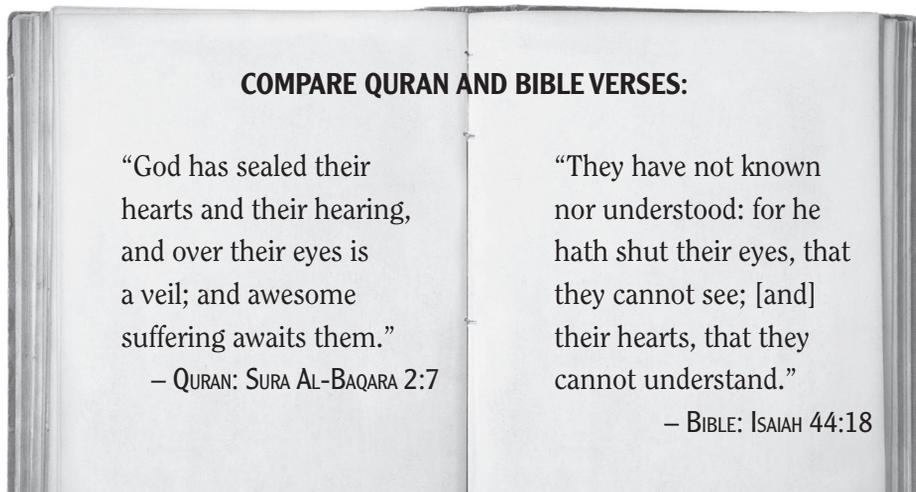
– QURAN: SURA AL-BAQARA: 2:112

“To GOD belongs the east and the west; wherever you go there will be the presence of GOD. GOD is Omnipresent, Omniscient.”

– QURAN: SURA AL-BAQARA: 2:115

“Allah. There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong). Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution. From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens.”

– QURAN: SURA AL-IMRAN: 3:2-5  
(TR. BY A. YUSUF ALI)



#### **COFFEE BREAK**

**Islamic Pluralism:** According to the Quran, Muslims are not supposed to distinguish between the Abrahamic prophets.

“There are only three kinds of persons: those who serve God, having found Him; others who are occupied in seeking Him, not having found Him; while the remainder live without seeking Him, and without having found Him.”

– BLAISE PASCAL (1623-1662)

“The vastness, beauty, orderliness of heavenly bodies, the excellent structure of animals and plants, and other phenomena of nature justly induce an intelligent, unprejudiced observer to conclude a supreme, powerful, just, and good Author.”

– ROBERT BOYLE (1627-1691)

*[Natural philosopher, chemist, physicist, inventor, and theologian. Formulated Boyle's Law of Chemistry]*



### COFFEE BREAK

**Spinoza's God:** Albert Einstein once famously said: “I believe in Spinoza's God.” Philosopher Baruch Spinoza was a rationalist and believed that God, man, and Nature are all part of one substance. He wrote: “By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself. By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence. By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.” This is his famous pantheistic (all is God) doctrine. Spinoza equated God with Nature, and wrote: “That eternal and infinite being we call God, or Nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists.” It is interesting to note that his friends who published his writings after his death left out the “or Nature” clause from the more widely accessible Dutch version (but not the Latin version) out of fear of religionists' reactions. During his life, Jews excommunicated him and Christians accused him of atheism because he didn't believe in a Christian God. Later scholars called Spinoza a “God-intoxicated man.”

“Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived.”

– SPINOZA (1632-1677)

*[Benedictus de Spinoza, Dutch philosopher who was excommunicated from the Jewish community of his native Amsterdam]*

“God exists only philosophically.”

– SPINOZA (1632-1677)



### COFFEE BREAK

**Strange Coincidence:** Compare the following quote from Spinoza with what Xenophanes said two-thousand years before Spinoza.

“I believe that, if a triangle could speak, it would say, in like manner, that God is eminently triangular, while a circle would say that the divine nature is eminently



“The only points in which I differ from all ecclesiastical teaching is that I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God, I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic code, or told the historians what they say he did about woman, for all the religions on the face of the earth degrade her, and so long as woman accepts the position that they assign her, her emancipation is impossible.”

– ELIZABETH CADY STANTON (1815-1902)

*[American social activist, abolitionist, suffragist, and author of Woman’s Bible]*

“These familiar texts are quoted by clergymen in their pulpits, by statesmen in the halls of legislation, by lawyers in the courts, and are echoed by the press of all civilized nations, and accepted by woman herself as “The Word of God.” So perverted is the religious element in her nature, that with faith and works she is the chief support of the church and clergy; the very powers that make her emancipation impossible. When, in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, women began to protest against their civil and political degradation, they were referred to the Bible for an answer. When they protested against their unequal position in the church, they were referred to the Bible for an answer.”

– ELIZABETH CADY STANTON (1815-1902)



“The only difference between us is, we say that these degrading ideas of woman emanated from the brain of man, while the church says that they came from God.”

– ELIZABETH CADY STANTON (1815-1902)

*[In response to the women critics of Woman’s Bible]*

“God conceived the world,--that was poetry;  
He formed it,--that was sculpture;  
He colored it,--that was painting;  
He people it with living beings,  
--that was the grand, divine, eternal drama.”

– CHARLOTTE SAUNDERS CUSHMAN (1816-1876)

*[American stage actress]*



“Women and God are the two rocks on which a man must either anchor or be wrecked.”

– FREDERICK WILLIAM ROBERTSON (1816-1853)

*[Known as Robertson of Brighton, English divine]*

“It’s only by forgetting yourself that you draw near to God.”

– HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

*[American writer and philosopher]*

<b>GOD IN DIFFERENT FAITHS</b>	
Faith	Conception of God
<p style="text-align: center;">Hinduism</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">(~1900 BC)</p>	<p>The God of Hinduism is one and many at the same time. Hinduism is very permissive in its conceptualization of the divine. Some Hindus believe in a single creator God, Ishwar, who is the Supreme Being and the absolute reality without beginning and without end. Some Hindus believe that the universe is divided into three separate worlds (lokas) and that three primary gods rule those worlds: Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Preserver), and Shiva (Destroyer). These gods are assisted by consort goddesses: respectively, Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvathi. Yet others believe in an elaborate hierarchy of gods who, in the minds of believers, may or may not be manifestations of a single Supreme God. Hindu mystics see God as an all-encompassing existence—“ishavasyam idam sarvam”—which means that everything in this world is covered and filled with Ishwar.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Judaism</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">(~1800 BC)</p>	<p>The God of Judaism is a single Supreme Being in a strictly monotheistic worldview. His name is YHWH (meaning “I am”). He is self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, perfect, infinite, just, and merciful. He is non-physical and neither male nor female. He is incomprehensible to humans. This God is interested in individual humans, who can build personal relationships with God.</p> <p>Jewish mystics see God as Ein Sof (meaning “endless”) and believe that the ultimate goal of a human being is union with God. This God is simple as well as infinitely complex.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Zoroastrianism</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">(~1100 BC)</p>	<p>The God of Zoroastrianism is a single creator God, Ahura Mazda, or the “Wise Lord.” He is omniscient but not omnipotent, a marked departure from Abrahamic religions. Ahura Mazda is incomprehensible, unchanging, omnipresent, and the source of all goodness and happiness. He is an upholder of truth and a friend of the just man. Ahura Mazda is uncreated and so is his rival, Angra Mainyu, the evil spirit.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Jainism</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">(~600 BC)</p>	<p>God of Jainism is a set of high morals, not a creator, protector, or destroyer God. According to Jainism, a human being can become a god if he or she can attain godliness by freeing up the soul through infinite bliss, infinite peace, and infinite wisdom. Therefore, all liberated human souls are gods (tirthankaras) whose numbers increase as more and more humans liberate their souls from the cycle of suffering and rebirth. The God of Jainism is not a heavenly entity and is neither omniscient, nor omnipotent, nor the law-giver of humans. In that sense, Jainism is non-theistic.</p>

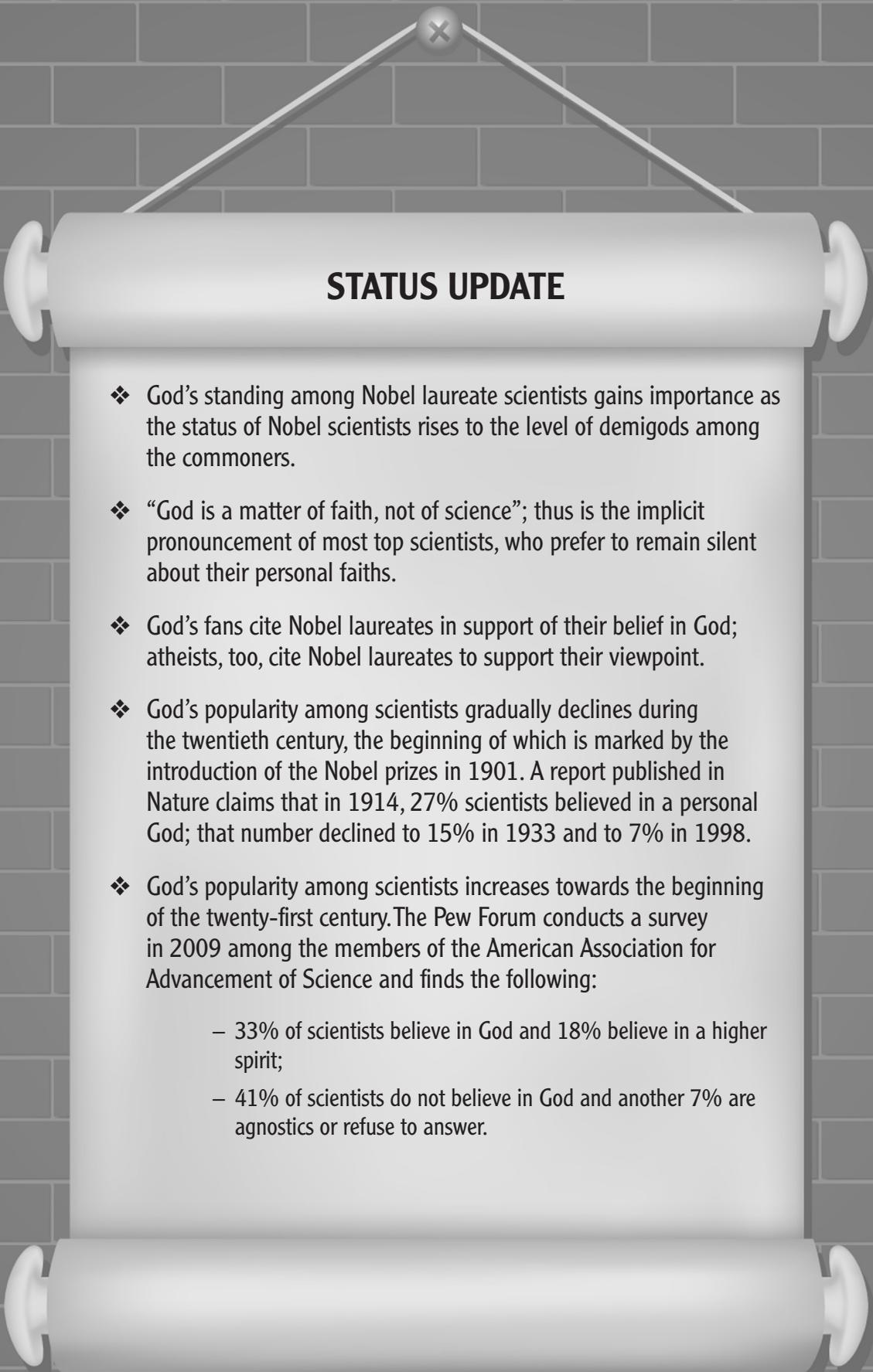
10

# God of Nobel Laureates

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“Who made the World? Religion answers: “He!”  
But who made Him? Was it eternity,  
Or Space, or Chaos that produced the seed  
Of that immortal essence? could they breed  
With darkest night, themselves inanimate,  
The ruling power of universal Fate?  
Or is Creation’s spirit but a part  
Of the crude matter? Could that rubbish start,  
Unconscious of itself, the wondrous Whole,  
And set a seal as of immortal soul  
On endless worlds, so overwhelming grand  
That grasping thought, unable to expand.”

—ALFRED NOBEL (1833-1896)



## STATUS UPDATE

- ❖ God's standing among Nobel laureate scientists gains importance as the status of Nobel scientists rises to the level of demigods among the commoners.
- ❖ "God is a matter of faith, not of science"; thus is the implicit pronouncement of most top scientists, who prefer to remain silent about their personal faiths.
- ❖ God's fans cite Nobel laureates in support of their belief in God; atheists, too, cite Nobel laureates to support their viewpoint.
- ❖ God's popularity among scientists gradually declines during the twentieth century, the beginning of which is marked by the introduction of the Nobel prizes in 1901. A report published in Nature claims that in 1914, 27% scientists believed in a personal God; that number declined to 15% in 1933 and to 7% in 1998.
- ❖ God's popularity among scientists increases towards the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Pew Forum conducts a survey in 2009 among the members of the American Association for Advancement of Science and finds the following:
  - 33% of scientists believe in God and 18% believe in a higher spirit;
  - 41% of scientists do not believe in God and another 7% are agnostics or refuse to answer.

## WALL OF MORTALS: GOD OF NOBEL SCIENTISTS

“As we conquer peak after peak we see in front of us regions full of interest and beauty, but we do not see our goal, we do not see the horizon; in the distance tower still higher peaks, which will yield to those who ascend them still wider prospects, and deepen the feeling, the truth of which is emphasized by every advance in science, that ‘Great are the Works of the Lord’.”

– SIR JOSEPH J. THOMSON (1856-1940)

*[British physicist, credited with the discovery of electron, isotopes, and mass spectrometer, winner of 1906 Nobel Prize in Physics]*



### COFFEE BREAK

**Personal or Professional Opinion?:** In this era of specialization, there are very few polymaths—people who have expertise in a wide array of subjects—unlike what used to be the case prior to the eighteenth century. In addition, most scientists today are too busy with their professional work to think adequately and meaningfully about God or religion. However, there is great hunger among both religious and non-religious commoners for scientific geniuses’ opinions on God. Ordinary people often seek justifications for their point of view in such opinions. It should be noted that these opinions are, on many occasions, purely personal and are not connected with or based on the individual’s scientific expertise and insights.

“This day relenting God  
Hath placed within my hand  
A wondrous thing; and God  
Be praised. At His command,  
Seeking His secret deeds  
With tears and toiling breath,  
I find thy cunning seeds,  
O million-murdering Death.  
I know this little thing  
A myriad men will save.  
O Death, where is thy sting?  
Thy victory, O Grave?”

– SIR RONALD ROSS (1857-1932)

*[Received the 1902 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology. On August 20, 1897, Ross made his landmark discovery that malaria is transmitted to people by Anopheles mosquitoes. On that day of discovery, he wrote the above poetic words in his Journal.]*

“Both religion and science need for their activities the belief in God, and moreover God stands for the former in the beginning, and for the latter at the end of the whole thinking. For the former, God represents the basis, for the latter – the crown of any reasoning concerning the world-view.”

– MAX PLANCK (1858–1947)

*[German physicist, known as the founder of the quantum theory; winner of 1918 Nobel Prize in Physics]*

“All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.”

– MAX PLANCK (1858-1947)

“To me it is unthinkable that a real atheist could be a scientist.”

– ROBERT ANDREWS MILLIKAN (1868–1953)

*[American physicist, President of CalTech from 1921 to 1945, winner of 1923 Nobel Prize in Physics]*

“I have never known a thinking man who did not believe in God.”

– ROBERT ANDREWS MILLIKAN (1868–1953)

“I have, in effect, fingerprinted God in the heavens. I found a Creator continually on the Job. I bear witness that the teachings of science are extraordinarily like the preaching of Jesus in that nature is at bottom benevolent and good.”

– ROBERT ANDREWS MILLIKAN (1868–1953)

“The need of God expresses itself in prayer. Prayer is a cry of distress; a demand for help; a hymn of love. Prayer gives us strength to bear cares and anxieties, to hope when there is no logical motive for hope, to remain steadfast in the midst of catastrophes.”

– ALEXIS CARREL (1873–1944)

*[French surgeon, biologist, and eugenicist, winner of 1912 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology]*

“It is, of course, a waste of time to talk to children of theology and duty. But we should follow Kant’s advice and present God to them very early indeed as an invisible father who watches over them and to whom they can address prayers. The true mode of honoring God consists in fulfilling His will.”

– ALEXIS CARREL (1873–1944)

“It is sheer pride to believe oneself capable of correcting nature, for nature is the work of God. To command nature, we must obey her.”

– ALEXIS CARREL (1873–1944)

“The more I work with the powers of Nature, the more I feel God’s benevolence to man; the closer I am to the great truth that everything is dependent on the Eternal Creator and Sustainer; the more I feel that the so-called science, I am occupied with, is nothing

but an expression of the Supreme Will, which aims at bringing people closer to each other in order to help them better understand and improve themselves.”

– GUGLIELMO MARCONI (1874–1937)

*[Italian inventor, known for invention of radio telegraphy, winner of 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics]*

“Every step, science makes, brings us ever new surprises and achievements. And yet science is like a faint light of a lantern flickering in a deep and thick forest, through which humanity struggles to find its way to God. It is only faith that can lead it to light and serve as a bridge between man and the Absolute.

I am proud to be a Christian. I believe not only as a Christian, but as a scientist as well. A wireless device can deliver a message through the wilderness. In prayer the human spirit can send invisible waves to eternity, waves that achieve their goal in front of God.”

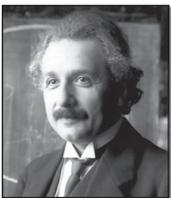
– GUGLIELMO MARCONI (1874–1937)



### COFFEE BREAK

**Einstein’s God:** Albert Einstein obtained the stature of a God of Science among the public and science enthusiasts of the late twentieth century. He didn’t believe in a personal God, nor did he like to be called an atheist.

In 1929, Boston’s Cardinal O’Connell attacked Einstein and his General Theory of Relativity. The Cardinal warned that the theory “cloaked the ghastly apparition of atheism”, and was “befogged speculation, producing universal doubt about God and His creation.” On April 24, 1929, Rabbi Herbert Goldstein of New York sent a telegram to Einstein: “I believe in Spinoza’s God, Who reveals Himself in the lawful harmony of the world, not in a God who concerns Himself with the fate and the doings of mankind.” Rabbi Goldstein then defended Einstein against Cardinal O’Connell’s attack and wrote: “Spinoza, who is called the God-intoxicated man, and who saw God manifest in all nature, certainly could not be called an atheist. Furthermore, Einstein points to a unity. Einstein’s theory if carried out to its logical conclusion would bring to mankind a scientific formula for monotheism.” Einstein chose to remain silent on the Rabbi’s last point.



“I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts, the rest are details.”

– ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879-1955)

*[German born American theoretical physicist, known for the theory of relativity, regarded as the father of modern physics, the most famous scientist of modern age, winner of 1921 Nobel Prize in Physics]*



“A scientist who believes in god suffers from schizophrenia.”

– JACQUES MONOD (1910-1976)

*[French biologist, winner of 1965 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology]*

“I strongly believe in the existence of God, based on intuition, observations, logic, and also scientific knowledge.”

– CHARLES HARD TOWNES (1915-)

*[American physicist, known for his work on maser and quantum electronics, winner of 1964 Nobel Prize in Physics. He gave the above answer to the inquiry, “What do you think about the existence of God?”]*



### COFFEE BREAK

**Value of Scientists' Opinion:** “In 1916, when scientists were emerging as the high priests of a new technological culture, everybody cared about what they thought and believed, But the prestige of science peaked in 1960 and has been declining ever since. Do people still care whether scientists believe in God? I’m not so sure.”

– GEORGE MARSDEN (1939-)

*[American Professor of History at University of Notre Dame]*

“I think only an idiot can be an atheist. We must admit that there exists an incomprehensible power or force with limitless foresight and knowledge that started the whole universe going in the first place. He gave the above answer to the inquiry, “What do think about the existence of God?””

– CHRISTIAN ANFINSEN (1916–1995)

*[American biochemist, winner of 1972 Nobel Prize in Chemistry]*

“This kind of belief [in God] is damaging to the well-being of the human race.”

– HERBERT HAUPTMAN (1917-)

*[American mathematician, known for developing mathematical methods that revolutionized the whole field of chemistry, winner of 1985 Nobel Prize in Chemistry; answering a student’s question “Can you be a good scientist, and believe in God?”]*

“God is Truth. There is no incompatibility between science and religion. Both are seeking the same truth. Science shows that God exists.”

– SIR DEREK BARTON (1918–1998)

*[British organic chemist, winner of 1969 Nobel Prize in Chemistry]*

“As I have already stated, God is Truth. But does God really have anything to do with man? Certainly I cannot believe that God accepts only one religion, or one sect, as the only group authorized to speak for man. I would believe that God accepts all, even those who pretend not to believe. Morality and religion interact and much beneficial human behavior results from this interaction.”

– SIR DEREK BARTON (1918–1998)

# 11

## God of Children and Teenagers

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“Where have I come from, where did you pick me up?”  
the baby asked its mother.

She answered, half crying, half laughing,  
and clasping the baby to her breast -

“You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling;  
you were in the dolls of my childhood’s games;

And when with clay I made the image of my god every morning,  
I made and unmade you then.

You were enshrined with our household deity,  
in his worship, I worshipped you.”

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941): THE BEGINNING

## WALL OF MORTALS: CHILDREN'S HANDWRITING

The following quotes, selected from multiple sources for the sake of illustration, outshine all the others in this book in terms of touching one's heart. These quotes demonstrate a simplicity that can be found only in the world of children.



“Dear GOD: Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?”

– LUCY

*[quoted in Hample & Marshall (1991)]*

“In heaven, everything's magical. If you wish for an apple, God will give you a whole tree.”

– RIZWANUL (AGE 11), MUSLIM, BANGLADESH

*[quoted in Landy (2001)]*

“Dear God: Help me to not wet my bed anymore. I keep getting whippings, but I still can't stop.”

*[quoted in www.goddirect.org]*

“Dear God: Do you have a giant computer or do you count all the people of the world on your fingers? Love.”

– WILLIAM (AGE 6)

*[quoted in Heller (1994)]*



### COFFEE BREAK

**I Am Drawing God:** A 10-year-old girl is hard at work in class drawing a picture. The teacher approaches and asks, “What are you doing?”

The girl replies, “I am drawing God.”

“But nobody has ever seen God,” says the teacher.

The girl looks up and responds, “You will in a minute.”

*[quoted in “God Lives in Glass” by Robert Landy]*

“Dear GOD,  
Are you happy and healthy with all the people up there with you?”

– JACOB

“I am tired of you” said the black girl. “You always come back to the same bad manners. I don't believe you ever made anything. Job must have been very stupid not to find you out. There are too many old men pretending to be gods in this forest.”

She sprang at him with her knobkerry uplifted; but he dived nimbly under the table, which she thought must have sunk into the earth; for when she reached it there was nothing there. And when she resorted to her bible again the wind snatched thirty more pages out of it and scattered them in dust over the trees....”

### **A DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN**

Sir Allama Iqbal (1877-1933) is the most celebrated Pakistani Muslim poet, philosopher and political thinker. He used poetry to raise self-awareness among Muslims for reformation and reconstruction of Islamic philosophy and ethics. His God is a reachable God with whom he can have a dialogue. In 1909, he published a book titled “*Shikwa*” (Complaint), which caused a stir among the Muslim community, because of its bluntness in questioning God (Allah) for letting down the Muslims. Critics argued that the book was rude and accusatory to Allah. Four years later, in 1913, he published “*Jawab-e-Shikwa*” (Allah’s Response to Complaint), wherein God pointed out the weaknesses of Muslims and asked them to introspect and change themselves if they want to improve their current status in the world.

His “Dialogue Between God and Man” is a short poem where God and Man engages into a very interesting discussion, as given below in M. Hadi Hussain’s translation from the original Persian.

**GOD:**

“I fashioned this world out of one and the same clay;  
You made Iran; Ethiopia and Tartary.  
From mere earth I made steel, pure and without alloy;  
You fashioned sword and arrowhead and musketry.  
You made the axe, with which you felled trees grown by me,  
And fashioned cages for my singing birds, born free.”

**MAN:**

“You made the night; I made the lamp that lights it up.  
You fashioned clay; I made of it a drinking cup.  
You made the wilderness, the mountain and the steppe;  
I fashioned garden, orchard, avenue and scape.  
I change dread poisons into panaceas, and  
I am the one who fashions mirrors out of sand.”

### **AN INTERVIEW WITH GOD BY AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST**

John Stanton, a Virginia based journalist, wrote that God consented to an interview with him and visited his home in Virginia in 2004. Here are some excerpts from Stanton’s report on the imaginary interview, published at <http://www.counterpunch.org/stanton12112004>.

# God of Computers, Bloggers, and Twitterers

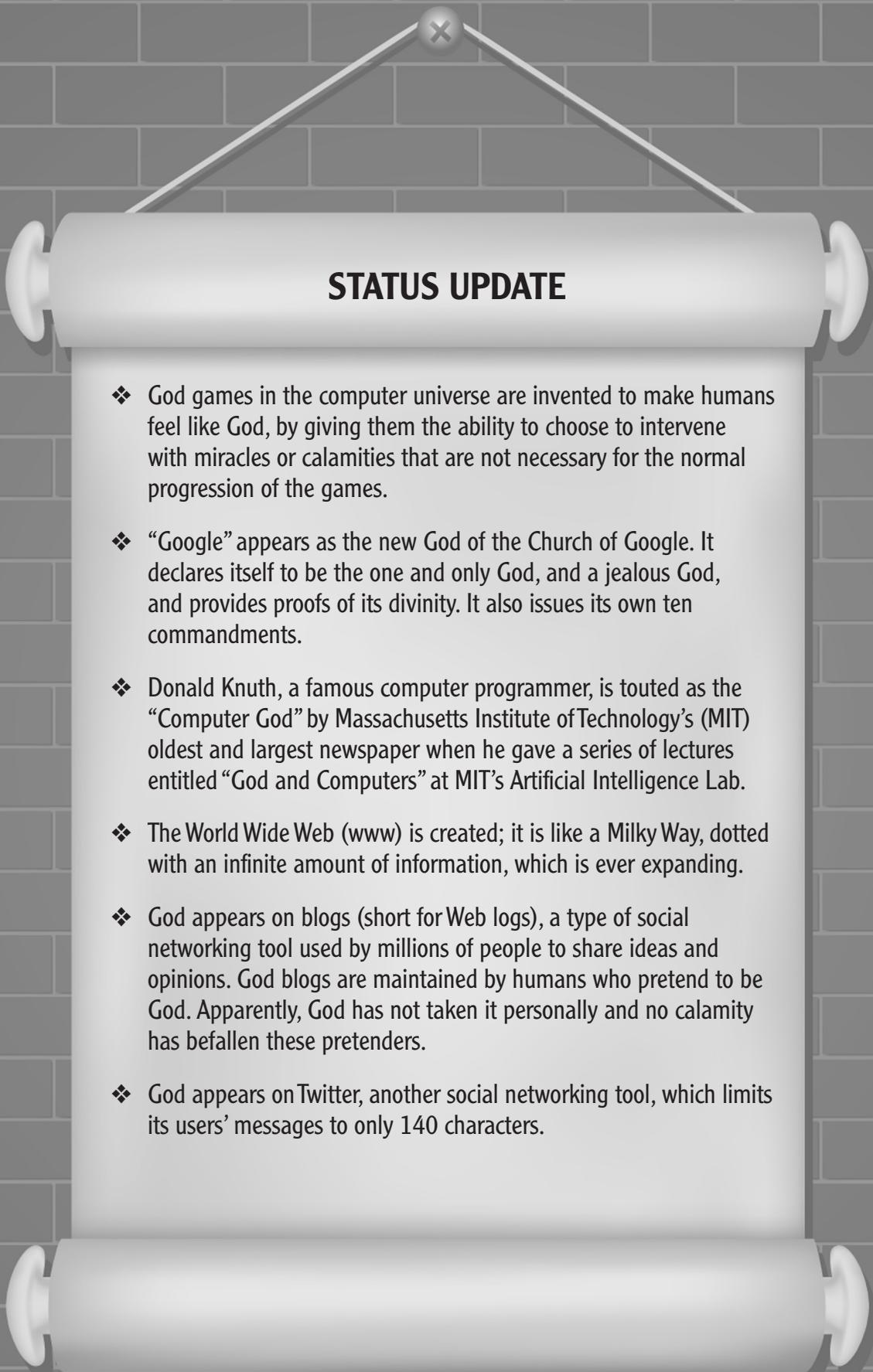
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“In any case, I think people who write programs do have at least a glimmer of extra insight into the nature of God for that very reason, because creating a program often means that you have to create a small universe.

I think it is fair to say that many of today’s large computer programs rank among the most complex intellectual achievements of all time. They’re absolutely trivial by comparison with any of the works of God, but still they’re somehow closer to those works than anything else we know.”

—DONALD KNUTH (1938-)

*Professor Emeritus of Computer Science at Stanford University,  
once called “The Computer God” because of his pioneering work in  
computer science*



## STATUS UPDATE

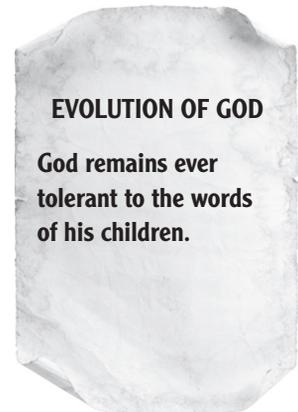
- ❖ God games in the computer universe are invented to make humans feel like God, by giving them the ability to choose to intervene with miracles or calamities that are not necessary for the normal progression of the games.
- ❖ “Google” appears as the new God of the Church of Google. It declares itself to be the one and only God, and a jealous God, and provides proofs of its divinity. It also issues its own ten commandments.
- ❖ Donald Knuth, a famous computer programmer, is touted as the “Computer God” by Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) oldest and largest newspaper when he gave a series of lectures entitled “God and Computers” at MIT’s Artificial Intelligence Lab.
- ❖ The World Wide Web (www) is created; it is like a Milky Way, dotted with an infinite amount of information, which is ever expanding.
- ❖ God appears on blogs (short for Web logs), a type of social networking tool used by millions of people to share ideas and opinions. God blogs are maintained by humans who pretend to be God. Apparently, God has not taken it personally and no calamity has befallen these pretenders.
- ❖ God appears on Twitter, another social networking tool, which limits its users’ messages to only 140 characters.

“Do you ever approach God as if he were a giant search engine? You tell him what you want and expect instant results. What if God doesn’t give you what you’re really looking for? That’s OK. There are lots of other “search engines” out there: parents, friends, the mall.”

– TRACY CARBAUGH IN CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM

“For women, understanding the long tradition of Goddess religion strengthens your connection with your own spiritual essence, regardless of what faith you belong to. Seeing the Goddess within, helps women to appreciate their own power, skill, heritage, and beauty.”

– ABBY WILLOWROOT IN SPIRALGODDESS.COM



“Prayer sometimes pays off, and sometimes doesn’t. This gives it the same reward pattern as a slot machine. A god who wanted to keep people praying couldn’t devise a better strategy.”

– 25YEARSOFPROGRAMMING BLOG.

“If gods do not exist, humans would create them because their own instincts would lead them in that direction. If gods do exist, humans inevitably would discover their existence because, again, their own instincts would lead them in that direction.”

–25YEARSOFPROGRAMMING BLOG

### HAIKU GOD ([HTTP://HAIKUGOD.BLOGSPOT.COM/](http://haikugod.blogspot.com/))

“The idea of God being E, electromagnetic energy, also fits well. After all, God appeared to Moses as electromagnetic energy (the burning bush).”

– PETER LEONARD, BLOGGER AT HAIKU GOD, AGE 64 IN 2009

“In fact, don’t believe anything, except that if you lose your I and experience not-I, you will know God. Belief (faith) is a way to the truth, it is not the truth.”

– PETER LEONARD, BLOGGER AT HAIKU GOD, AGE 64 IN 2009

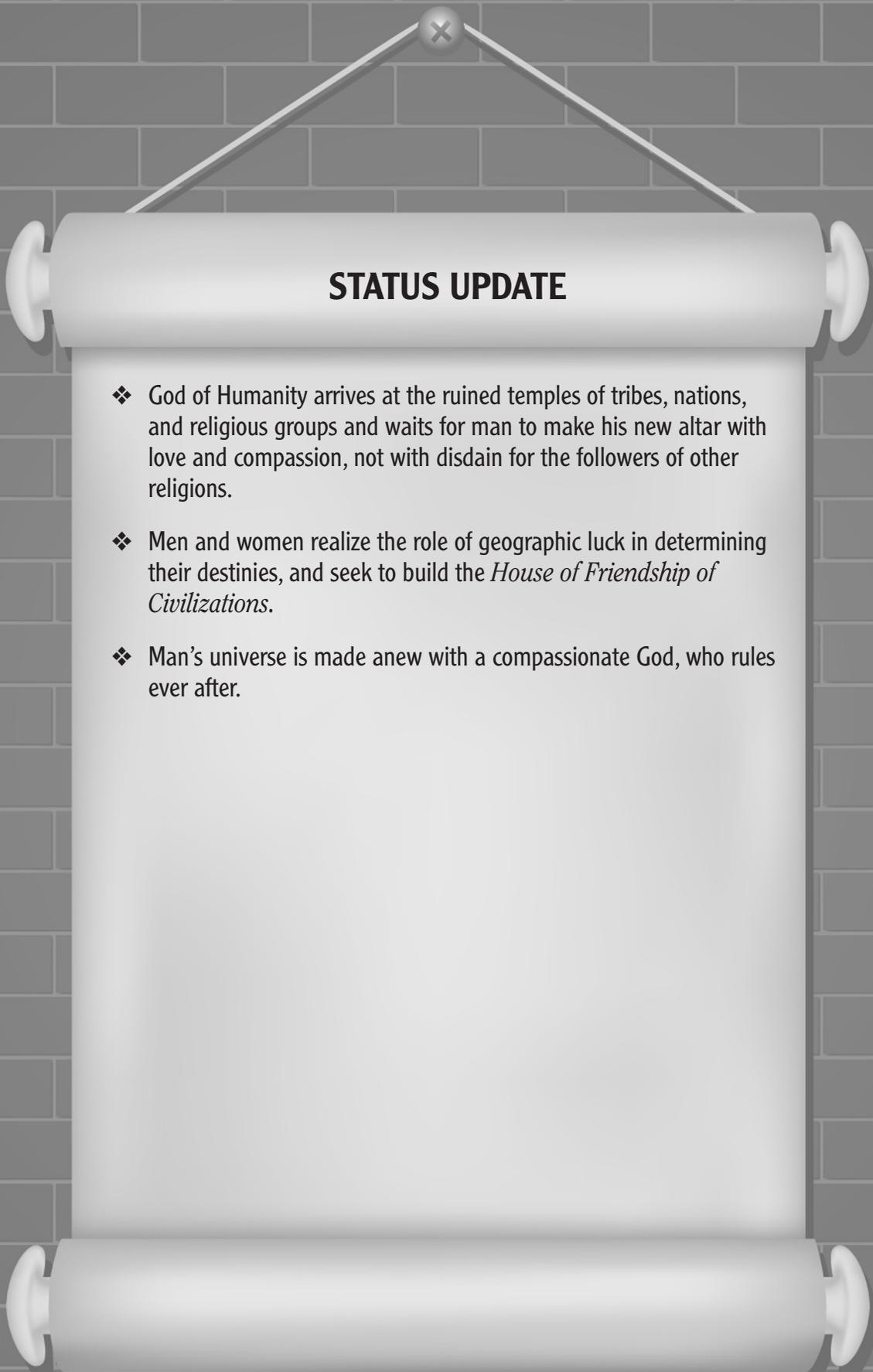
”I am the not-I  
masquerading as an I.  
Can you see through me?  
I’m in front of you  
I am behind your own eyes.  
Do not stop looking!  
I am the hearer  
I am also what you hear.  
Are you listening?  
Everywhere, nowhere

# God of the Future

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“I boasted among men that I had known you.  
They see your pictures in all works of mine.  
They come and ask me, ‘Who is he?’  
I know not how to answer them.  
I say, ‘Indeed, I cannot tell.’  
They blame me and they go away in scorn.  
And you sit there smiling.  
I put my tales of you into lasting songs.  
The secret gushes out from my heart.  
They come and ask me, ‘Tell me all your meanings.’  
I know not how to answer them.  
I say, ‘Ah, who knows what they mean!’  
They smile and go away in utter scorn.  
And you sit there smiling.”

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941)



## STATUS UPDATE

- ❖ God of Humanity arrives at the ruined temples of tribes, nations, and religious groups and waits for man to make his new altar with love and compassion, not with disdain for the followers of other religions.
- ❖ Men and women realize the role of geographic luck in determining their destinies, and seek to build the *House of Friendship of Civilizations*.
- ❖ Man's universe is made anew with a compassionate God, who rules ever after.

## THE FUTURE...

In the beginning, God spoke. Then Man spoke and Woman spoke. Then God, Man, and Woman all kept speaking for thousands of years. The words they spoke were thoughtful, vibrant, and variegated, offering a kaleidoscopic panorama of dizzyingly confounding expressions, which captured the fascinating metamorphosis of God in human consciousness through the ages. Some of these words were recorded, while some were lost. Some words have been interpreted, and some misinterpreted. Some words generated love, some words hatred. Some words made peace, some wars.

Today, as we reach the zenith of our technological world, we are still exploring who God is and what God wants. No end is in sight in this eternal quest for God. In *Why God Won't Go Away*, authors Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquill, and Vince Rause argue, "As long as our brains are arranged the way they are, as long as our minds are capable of sensing this deeper reality, spirituality will continue to shape the human experience, and God, however we define that majestic, mysterious concept, will not go away."

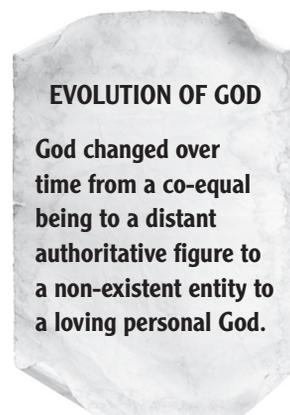
### DOES GOD HAVE A FUTURE?

In March of 2010, *ABC News Nightline* hosted a debate titled, "Does God have a future?" at the California Institute of Technology, where Michael Shermer, Deepak Chopra, Sam Harris, and Jean Houston faced off in front of a packed audience of 1,000. Shermer is a former fundamentalist Christian turned anti-religious skeptic and the founder of The Skeptics Society; Chopra is a New Age spiritual counselor, medical doctor, and author of several bestselling books; Harris is a neuroscientist, an outspoken atheist, and the author of the bestselling book *The End of Faith*; and Houston is a teacher, author, and philosopher.

*Nightline* had a provocative take on the issue, asking the audience: "Are we at a time in history when the argument can now actually be settled? Given all that we know today about the cosmos and life on Earth, is science killing God—or can it bring us closer to him? Does God—or should God—have a future?" Sam Harris answered the question, "Does God have a future?" in this manner: "Yes, as a fictional character." Jean Houston answered: "Yes. I am not sure about human beings having a future, but there is no issue around God."

The debate ended without any conclusion, as each participant promoted his or her own viewpoint rather than actually answering each other's.

Aside from these spirited debaters, there are those who take issue with the versions of God, not necessarily the notion of God. For example, Ophelia Benson and Jeremy Stangroom, who together wrote *Does God Hate Women?*, want the version of God that originated in a period when male superiority was taken for granted to go away, because in their opinion, that version is a historical God who hates women, and "[that] God has to go."

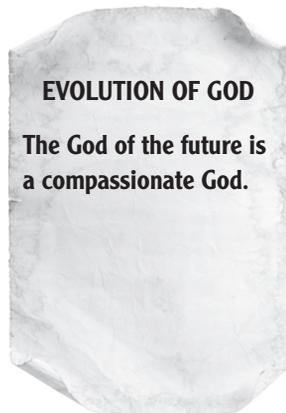


The major world religions share many similarities, but also exhibit many fundamental differences. Then why ignore those differences and create an artificial aura of sameness? In *God Is Not One*, bestselling author Stephen Prothero argues against the “Godthink that lumps all religions together in one trash can or treasure chest.” Prothero creates a new context for understanding the world’s religions and proposes a pragmatic approach, whereby the acknowledgment of religious diversity will be a building block for peaceful coexistence in the future. He argues: “The Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century popularized the ideal of religious tolerance, and we are doubtless better for it. But the idea of religious unity is wishful thinking nonetheless, and it has not made the world a safer place. In fact, this naïve theological groupthink—call it Godthink—has made the world more dangerous... Every day across the world, human beings coexist peacefully and even joyfully with family members who are very different from themselves. In New York, Mets fans and Yankees fans have learned to live and work alongside one another, as have partisans of Real Madrid and FC Barcelona in a football-loving Spain. And who is so naïve to imagine that the success of a relationship depends on the partners being essentially the same?... What is required in any relationship is knowing who the other person really is. And this requirement is only frustrated by the naïve hope that somehow you and your partner are magically the same. In relationships and religions, denying differences is a recipe for disaster. What works is understanding the differences and then coming to accept, and perhaps even to revel in them.”

Therefore, these differences should be recognized and accepted, but ought not be given too much value, as Indian President (1962–1967) and philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan once advised: “The name by which we call God and the rite by which we approach Him do not matter much... The doctrine we adopt and the philosophy we profess do not matter anymore than the language we speak and the clothes we wear.”

**A NEW PARADIGM**

Can we therefore create a new paradigm in this age of propaganda, where the agents of terror, bigotry, and violence are working hard to create and sustain a *Clash of Civilizations*? The realists among us may say that this clash is inevitable because of the nature of things as they are. But the poet in us knows that ‘reality’ is in fact a ‘creation’.” Age after age, the visionary men and women of religion and science alike proved that their faiths guided them to attain what seemed impossible by all the evidence of fact. Today, in a terror-ridden world, we are in need of a greater call of faith, which will say to us: Let us change the course of history by changing our mindsets about God and religion; let us turn those forces into “force multipliers” towards building a *Friendship of Civilizations* and altogether stop our march towards a *Clash of Civilizations*.



**GEOGRAPHIC LUCK**

The first change in our mindsets is to remind ourselves every day, by means of some active self-talk, that our God and our religious affiliations are an outcome of geographic