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**BIGRELIGIONCHART**

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BIGRELIGIONCHART						
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Belief & Followers	Origins & History	God(s) & Universe	Human Situation & Life Purpose	Afterlife	Practices	Texts
<p><b>Aladura</b></p> <p>Followers: 1 million</p>	<p>Various prophet-healing churches founded since c.1918, West Nigeria.</p>	<p>Generally monotheistic; a mix of Anglican, Pentecostal and traditional African beliefs.</p>	<p>Strong emphasis on healing and salvation in this life through prayer, fasting and other rituals.</p>	<p>Not stressed; views vary.</p>	<p>Spiritual healing is central. Mix of Anglican and African rituals; a prophet plays key role.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Asatru</b></p> <p>Followers: unknown</p>	<p>Revival of Norse and Germanic paganism, from 1970s Scandinavia and USA.</p>	<p>Polytheistic, Norse gods and goddesses, Norse creation myths.</p>	<p>Salvation or redemption not emphasized. Fatalistic view of universe.</p>	<p>Valhalla (heaven) for death in battle; Hel (peaceful place) for most; Hifhel (hell) for the very evil.</p>	<p>Sacrifice of food or drink, toast to the gods, shamanism (atypical), celebration of solstice holidays. Nine Noble Virtues is moral code.</p>	<p><i>Eddas</i> (Norse epics); the Havamal (proverbs attributed to Odin)</p>
<p><b>Atheism</b></p> <p>Followers: 1.1 billion (this figure includes agnostic and non-religious, which tend to be grouped on surveys)</p>	<p>Appears throughout history (including ancient Greek philosophy), but especially after the Enlightenment (19th cent).</p>	<p>There is no God or divine being. Beliefs about the universe usually based on latest scientific findings.</p>	<p>Since there is no afterlife, this life is of great importance. Only humans can help themselves and each other solve the world's problems.</p>	<p>none</p>	<p>none</p>	<p>Key works include those by Marx, Freud, Feuerbach and Voltaire. Notable modern authors include Richard Dawkins and Carl Sagan.</p>

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<b>Baha'i</b> Followers: 5-7 million	Founded by Bahá'u'lláh, 1863, Tehran, Iran.	One God, who has revealed himself progressively through major world religions.	The soul is eternal and essentially good. Purpose of life is to develop spiritually and draw closer to God.	Soul leaves body and travels towards or away from God. Heaven and hell are states of being.	Daily prayer, avoidance of intoxicants, scripture reading, hard work, education, work for social justice and equality.	Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and other Bahá'í leaders
<b>Bön</b> Followers: 100,000	Indigenous religion of Tibet.	Non-theistic Buddhism, but meditation on peaceful and wrathful deities.	Purpose is to gain enlightenment.	Reincarnation until gain enlightenment	Meditation on mandalas and Tibetan deities, astrology, monastic life.	Bonpo canon
<b>Buddhism</b> Followers: 360 million	Founded by Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India.	Varies: Theravada atheistic; Mahayana more polytheistic. Buddha taught nothing is permanent.	Purpose is to avoid suffering and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth, or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit.	Reincarnation (unlike Hinduism with no surviving soul) until enlightenment	Meditation, mantras, devotion to deities (in some sects), mandalas (Tibetan)	Tripitaka (Pali Canon); Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra; others.
<b>Cao Dai</b> Followers: 4-6 million	Founded in 1926, Vietnam by Ngo Van Chieu and others, based on a séance.	God represented by Divine Eye. Founders of Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity venerated, and saints including Victor Hugo.	Goal is peace and harmony in each person and in the world. Salvation by "cultivating self and finding God in self."	Reincarnation, karma. Eventual attainment of nirvana or heaven.	Hierarchy similar to Roman Catholicism. Daily prayer. Meditation. Communication with spirit world (now outlawed in Vietnam).	Caodai canon
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<b>Chinese Religion</b> Followers 394 million	Indigenous folk religion of China.	Dualistic yin and yang; mythological beings and folk deities.	Purpose is a favorable life and peaceful afterlife, attained through rituals and honoring of ancestors.	Judgment, then reincarnation or brief hell until a Buddhist-type paradise.	Ancestor worship, prayer, longevity rituals, divination, prophecy and astrology, feng shui.	None
<b>Chopra Center</b> Followers: unknown	Founded by Deepak Chopra in 1991, California	Monism - God or Supreme Reality pervades all things; all is unity	Humans have limitless potential, but do not recognize this. Health and success can be had by focusing on whole self (mind, body, spirit).	Reincarnation	Yoga, meditation, massage, nutrition, mindfulness, detox sessions, positive thinking.	Deepak Chopra's many books, like the <i>Seven Spiritual Laws of Success</i>
<b>Christianity</b> (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) Followers: 2 billion	Founded by Jesus Christ in c. 30 AD, Israel.	One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	All have sinned and are thereby separated from God. Salvation is through faith in Christ and, for some, sacraments and good works.	Eternal heaven or hell (or brief purgatory).	Prayer, Bible study, baptism, Eucharist (Communion), church on Sundays, holidays.	The Bible (Old and New Testaments)
<b>Christian Science</b> Followers: 150,000 - 400,000	Founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879, Massachusetts.	One God. No Trinity (in traditional sense). Matter and evil do not exist.	Salvation is "Life, Truth, and Love understood and demonstrated as supreme over all; sin, sickness and death destroyed."	Heaven is not a place but a state of mind	Healing through prayer and knowledge, Sunday services, Bible and <i>Science &amp; Health</i> reading.	Christian Bible, <i>Science &amp; Health with Key to the Scriptures</i>
<b>Confucianism</b> Followers: 5-6 million	Founded by Confucius (551-479 BC), China	Not addressed	Purpose of life is to fulfill one's role in society with propriety, honor, and loyalty.	Not addressed	Honesty, politeness, propriety, humaneness, loyalty perform societal role	<i>Analects</i>

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<b>Deism</b> Followers: unknown	Popularized in the 18th-century. Enlightenment under Kant, Voltaire, Paine, Jefferson, and others	One Creator God who is uninterested in the world. Reason is basis for all knowledge.	Not addressed	Not addressed	None prescribed, although some deists practice prayer.	Thomas Paine's <i>The Age of Reason</i> and similar texts
<b>Druze</b> Followers: 500,000	Al-Darazi in 11th century, Cairo, Egypt. Roots in the Isma'iliyya sect of Shia Islam.	Universal Intelligence ( <i>al-Aql al-Kulli</i> ) or Divine Essence (akin to Neoplatonism), of which al-Hakim is believed to be an incarnation.	Live a good life for a favorable reincarnation. Await the re-appearance of al-Hakim (a Fatimid caliph who disappeared in 1021), who will usher in a Golden Age for true believers.	Reincarnation. Heaven is a spiritual existence when one has escaped reincarnation. Hell is distance from God in.	Modest lifestyles, fasting before Eid al-Adha. Beliefs and practices are hidden for protection from persecution. Special group of initiates called <i>uqqal</i> .	<i>Al-Naqd al-Khafi</i> (Copy of the Secret); <i>Al-Juz'al-Awwal</i> (Essence of the First)
<b>Eckankar</b> Followers: 50-500,000	John Paul Twitchell in 1965, Las Vegas.	The Divine Spirit, called "ECK"	"Each of us is Soul, a spark of God sent to this world to gain spiritual experience." Salvation is liberation and God-realization.	Reincarnation. Soul is eternal, on a spiritual journey. Liberation possible in a lifetime.	Spiritual Exercises of ECK: mantras, meditation, and dreams. These enable Soul travel and spiritual growth.	<i>Shariyat -Ki-Sugmad</i> and books by Harold Klemp
<b>Epicureanism</b> Followers: unknown	Epicurus in c.300 BC, Athens.	A deistic sort of polytheism: the gods exist, but take no notice of humans.	Materialism: everything is made of atoms, including gods and the soul.	No afterlife. The soul dissolves when the body dies.	Pursue pleasures (friendship, tranquility) and avoid pain.	Letters and <i>Principal Doctrines</i> of Epicurus
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<b>Falun Gong</b> Followers: 10 million	Li Hongzhi in 1992 in China	Countless gods and spiritual beings. Demonic aliens.	The Falun (wheel) is an energy source located in the navel. Goal is spiritual transcendence, achieved by practicing Falun Gong.	Not addressed	Five exercises to strengthen the Falun. Cultivation of truthfulness, benevolence and forbearance.	<i>Zhuan Falun</i> and other writings by Master Li
<b>Gnosticism</b> ancient form extinct  Followers: small modern revival groups	Various teachers including Valentinus, 1st-2nd cents. AD	The supreme God is unknowable; the creator god is evil and matter is evil.	Humans can return to the spiritual world through secret knowledge of the universe.	Return to the spiritual world.	Asceticism, celibacy	Gnostic scriptures including various <i>Gospels</i> and <i>Acts</i> .
<b>Greek Religion</b>  Followers: ancient form extinct	Variety of religions of ancient Greeks	Olympic pantheon (Zeus, etc.) mixed with eastern deities like Isis and Cybele	Human life is subject to the whim of the gods and to Fate; these can be controlled through sacrifice and divination.	Beliefs varied from no afterlife to shadowy existence in underworld to a paradise-like afterlife (in mystery religions)	Animal sacrifice, harvest offerings, festivals, processions, dance, plays, in honor of the gods. Secret initiations and rituals in mystery religions.	Epic poems of Homer and Hesiod.
<b>Hare Krishna</b>  Followers: 250,000-1 million	Bhaktivedant a Swami Prabhupada, 1966, USA (with roots in 15th-century Hindu movement)	Krishna is the Supreme God.	Salvation from this Age of Kali is by a return to Godhead, accomplished through Krishna-Consciousness.	Reincarnation until unite with the Godhead	Chanting, dancing, evangelism, vegetarianism, temple worship, monastic-style living.	<i>The Bhagavad-Gita As It Is</i>

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<b>Hinduism</b> Followers: 900 million	Indigenous religion of India as developed to present day.	One Supreme Reality (Brahman) manifested in many gods and goddesses	Humans are in bondage to ignorance and illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth.	Reincarnation until gain enlightenment.	Yoga, meditation, worship devotion to a god or goddess, pilgrimage, live according to one's dharma (purpose/role).	<i>The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, etc.</i>
<b>Islam</b> Followers: 1.3 billion (Sunni: 940 million)	Muhammad, 622 AD, Saudi Arabia	One God (Allah in Arabic)	Humans must submit ( <i>islam</i> ) to the will of God to gain Paradise after death.	Paradise or Hell.	Five Pillars: Faith, Prayer, Alms, Pilgrimage, Fasting. Mosque services on Fridays.. No alcohol or pork. Holidays related to the pilgrimage and fast of Ramadan.	<i>Qur'an</i> (Scripture); <i>Hadith</i> (tradition)
<b>Jainism</b> Followers: 4 million	Mahavira, c. 550 BC, eastern India	The universe is eternal; many gods exist. Gods, humans and all living things are classified in a complex hierarchy.	The soul is uncreated and eternal and can attain perfect divinity. Purpose is to gain liberation from cycle of rebirth, by avoiding all bad karma, especially by causing no harm to any sentient being.	Reincarnation until liberation.	Monasticism under Five Great Vows (Non-Violence, Truth, Celibacy, Non-Stealing, Non-Possessiveness); worship at temples and at home. Meditation and mantras.	The teachings of Mahavira in various collections.
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<p><b>Jehovah's Witnesses</b></p> <p>Followers: 6.5 million</p>	<p>Charles Taze Russell, 1879, Pittsburgh</p>	<p>One God, Jehovah. No Trinity - Christ is the first creation of God; the Holy Spirit is a force.</p>	<p>Salvation is through faith in Christ and obeying Jehovah's laws. The End of the World is soon.</p>	<p>Heaven for 144,000 chosen Witnesses eternity on new earth for other Witnesses All others annihilated No hell.</p>	<p>No blood transfusions, celebration of holidays, use of crosses or religious images. Baptism, Sunday service at Kingdom Hall, strong emphasis on evangelism.</p>	<p><i>New World Translation of the Scriptures</i></p>
<p><b>Judaism</b></p> <p>Followers: 14 million</p>	<p>The religion of the Hebrews (c. 1300 BC), especially after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.</p>	<p>One God, Yahweh (YHVH).</p>	<p>Obey God's commandments, live ethically. Focus is more on this life than the next.</p>	<p>Not historically stressed. Beliefs vary from no afterlife to shadowy existence to the heaven</p>	<p>Circumcision at birth, bar/bat mitzvah at adulthood. Synagogue attendance. No pork or other non-kosher foods. Holidays related to historical events.</p>	<p>Bible (Tanakh) Talmud</p>
<p><b>Mayan Religion</b></p> <p>Followers: Historically, up to 2 million. Some survival today.</p>	<p>c.250 AD (rise of the Mayan civilization)</p>	<p>Many gods, including Itzamná, Kukulcán, Bolon Tzacab, and Chac</p>	<p>Appease and nourish the gods; determine luckiest dates for various activities.</p>	<p>The soul journeys through under-world; sacrificial victims and women who die in childbirth go to heaven.</p>	<p>Astronomy, divination, human sacrifice, elaborate burial for royalty, worship in stone pyramid-temples</p>	<p>Dresden, Madrid, and Paris codices; <i>Books of Chilam Balam; Popol Vuh; The Ritual of the Bacabs</i></p>

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<p><b>Mormonism</b> (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)</p> <p>Followers: 12.2 million</p>	<p>Joseph Smith, 1830, New York, USA</p>	<p>God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three separate individual beings</p>	<p>Humans existed as spirits before this life, salvation is returning to God. Salvation by faith in Christ, good works, ordinances, and evangelism.</p>	<p>All return to spirit world for period of instruction before resurrection. Mormons to heaven with God and families; others rewarded but not with God; hell for those who reject God</p>	<p>Abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, coffee and tea; baptism for the dead; eternal marriage; temple garments under daily clothes; active evangelism.</p>	<p>Christian Bible, <i>Book of Mormon</i>, <i>Doctrine and Covenants</i>, and <i>Pearl of Great Price</i></p>
<p><b>Nation of Islam</b></p> <p>Followers: Estimates range from 10,000 to 100,000</p>	<p>Wallace Fard Muhammad, 1930, Detroit, USA</p>	<p>"One God whose proper name is Allah." Wallace Fard Muhammad became the divine messiah and incarnation of Allah in 1930. The Earth is over 76 trillion years old and all land was once called "Asia."</p>	<p>"The Blackman is the original man" (<i>Message to the Blackman</i>). Live righteously and worship Allah.</p>	<p>Mental resurrection of the righteous. Black people will be mentally resurrected first.</p>	<p>Prayer five times a day. Work for the equality of the African race. Respect laws of the land, don't carry arms, don't make war. Healthy living and abstinence from alcohol, smoking and substance abuse. Modest dress.</p>	<p>Qur'an and writing of prophets Influential writings include Elijah Muhammad's <i>Message to the Blackman in America</i> (1965)</p>

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<b>New Age</b> Followers: 5 million (approx.)	Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant in the 19th C, Alice A. Bailey (1880-1949), flourished in 1970s and 80s	The Divine is an impersonal life force that pervades all things	Dawning of a New Age of heightened consciousness and international peace. Individuals can obtain a taste of the New Age through spiritual transformation. Evil comes from ignorance.	Reincarnation based on karma		
<b>New Thought</b> Followers: 160,000	Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-66) and others, late 19th century, USA.	Generally monism (all is One), but members might be theists, pantheists or panentheists. God is near; the universe is essentially spiritual.	Man is divine, essentially spirit, and has infinite possibility. Mind can control the body. Sin and sickness caused by incorrect thinking. Man can live in oneness with God in love, truth, peace, health, and prosperity.	"Life is eternal in the invisible kingdom of God."	Emphasis on spiritual and mental healing, but without rejection of modern medicine. Worship services; prayer for the sick; discussion of New Thought authors and ideas.	Writings of Quimby (such as the <i>The Quimby Manuscripts</i> ) and other New Thought authors
<b>Rastafari</b> Followers: 1 million	Teachings of Marcus Garvey (1920s, Jamaica) and coronation of Haile Selassie (1930, Ethiopia)	God is Jah, who became incarnate in Jesus (who was black) and Haile Selassie.	Humans are temples of Jah. Salvation is primarily in this world and consists of liberation from oppression and return to Africa.	Some Rastas will experience "everliving" (physical immortality). Heaven is a return to Eden, which is in Africa.	Many practices based on Jewish Law. Abstinence from most or all meat, artificial foods, and alcohol. Use of marijuana in religious rituals and for medicine. Wearing of dreadlocks.	Holy Piby (the "Blackman's Bible"). The Ethiopian epic Kebra Negast also revered.
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<b>Satanism, LaVeyan</b> Followers: The Church of Satan doesn't make membership numbers public	The Church of Satan was founded in 1966 by Anton LaVey	Atheistic and/or agnostic	Nine Satanic Statements	N/A	Rituals, church meetings, questioning authority	<i>The Satanic Bible</i>
<b>Scientology</b> Followers: 70,000 or several million, depending on the source	L. Ron Hubbard, 1954, California	God(s) not specified; reality explained in the Eight Dynamics	Human consists of body, mind and thetan; capable of great things. Gain spiritual freedom by ridding mind of engrams.	Reincarnation	Auditing, progressing up various levels until "clear". Focus on education and drug recovery programs.	Writings of Hubbard, such as <i>Dianetics</i> and <i>Scientology</i>
<b>Seventh-day Adventists</b> Followers: 10 million	Rooted in Millerite movement; founded 1863 in New England; early leaders: Ellen White, Hiram Edson and Joseph Bates	One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	Second Coming of Christ is imminent; salvation is by faith in Christ; emphasis on quality of life both now and in afterlife	A "peaceful pause" after death until the return of Christ, then resurrection to judgment, followed by eternity in heaven or non-existence. No hell.	Sabbath observance on Saturdays; healthful lifestyle; baptism by immersion	Christian Bible; later prophets like Ellen White are inspired and authoritative when tested against Scriptures
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<p><b>Shinto</b></p> <p>Followers: 3-4 million</p>	<p>Indigenous religion of Japan.</p>	<p>Polytheism based on the <i>kami</i>, ancient gods or spirits.</p>	<p>Humans are pure by nature and can keep away evil through purification rituals and attain good things by calling on the kami.</p>	<p>Death is bad and impure. Some humans become kami after death.</p>	<p>Worship and offerings to kami at shrines and at home. Purification rituals.</p>	<p>Important texts are <i>Kojiki</i> or 'Records of Ancient Matters' and <i>Nihon-gi</i> or 'Chronicles of Japan'</p>
<p><b>Sikhism</b></p> <p>Followers: 23 million</p>	<p>Guru Nanak, c. 1500 AD, Punjab, India.</p>	<p>One God (Ik Onkar, Nam)</p>	<p>Overcome the self, align life with will of God, and become a "saint soldier," fighting for good.</p>	<p>Reincarnation until resolve karma and merge with God.</p>	<p>Prayer and meditation on God's name, services at temple (gurdwara), turban and five Ks. Balance work, worship, and charity.</p>	<p><i>Adi Granth (Sri Guru Granth Sahib)</i></p>
<p><b>Spiritualism , a.k.a. Spiritism</b></p> <p>Followers: 11 million</p>	<p>Modern movement: c.1850, USA, UK, France</p>	<p>Beliefs vary, but generally based in a Christian worldview.</p>	<p>Body and spirit are separate entities. Morality and contact with spirits affect afterlife.</p>	<p>A spiritual existence with access to the living. Condition depends on morality of life and advancement is possible.</p>	<p>Sunday services. Seances and other communication with departed spirits. Spirit healing.</p>	<p>No authoritative texts. Doctrine learned from spirit guides (advanced departed spirits).</p>

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<b>Stoicism</b> Followers: unknown	Zeno in c.313 BC, Athens.	Pantheism: the logos pervades the universe.	Purpose is happiness, achieved by virtue, i.e., living reasonably.	Possible continued existence of the Soul, but not a personal existence.	Ethical and philosophical training, self-reflection, careful judgment and inner calm.	Fragments of founders plus later writers like Seneca, Epictetus Aurelius.
<b>Taoism</b> Followers: 20 million (394 million adherents of Chinese religion)	Lao-Tzu, c. 550 BC, China.	Pantheism - the Tao pervades all. Yin-yang - opposites make up a unity.	Purpose is inner harmony, peace, and longevity. Achieved by living in accordance with the Tao.	Revert back to state of non-being, which is the other side of being.	Attitude of detachment and non-struggle; Tai-chi, acupuncture, and alchemy to help longevity.	<i>Tao Te Ching, Chuang-Tzu</i>
<b>Unification Church</b> Followers: Over 1 million (3 million acc. to official sources)	Sun Myung Moon, 1954, South Korea.	Monotheism, with the duality of God (esp. masculine and feminine) emphasized. No Trinity doctrine.	Purpose is true love and world peace instead of selfish love. True love and the kingdom of God on earth will be restored by the creation of "true families."	Eternal life in a spirit world.	Blessing Ceremony	<i>The Divine Principle</i> (1954) by Rev. Moon.
<b>Unitarian Universalism</b> Followers: 800,000	Formal merger of Unitarians and Universalists in 1961, USA.	Not specified. Members might believe in one God, many gods, or no God.	Salvation is "spiritual health or wholeness." Members seek "inner and outer peace," insight, health, compassion and strength.	Few believe in hell - "Universalism" indicates the belief that all will be saved.	Church services have elements from various religions. Emphasis on social justice;. Most UUs are anti-death penalty and pro-gay rights.	Many sacred texts;. The Bible is most used text.

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<p><b>Wicca</b></p> <p>Followers: 1-3 million</p>	<p>Based on ancient pagan beliefs, but modern form founded early 1900s. Founder generally said to be Gerald Gardner.</p>	<p>Polytheism, centered on the Goddess and God, each in various forms; also a belief in a Supreme Being over all</p>	<p>"If it harms none, do what you will."</p>	<p>Reincarnation until reach the Summerland</p>	<p>Prayer, casting a circle, Drawing Down the Moon, reciting spells, dancing, singing, sharing cakes and wine or beer</p>	<p>No sacred text; foundational texts include <i>The Witch Cult in Western Europe</i> and <i>The God of the Witches</i></p>
<p><b>Zoroastrianism</b></p> <p>Followers: c. 200,000</p>	<p>Zoroaster in c.6th cent. BC, Persia. Official religion of ancient Persia. May have influenced Judaism and Vedic religion.</p>	<p>One God, Ahura Mazda, but a dualistic worldview in which an evil spirit, Angra Mainyu, is almost as powerful.</p>	<p>Humans are free to do good or evil, must choose the side of good.</p>	<p>Judgment followed by heaven or hell. Hell is temporary until final purgation and return to Ahura Mazda.</p>	<p>Good deeds, charity, equality, hard work.</p>	<p><i>Zend Avesta</i></p>

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