

# Convergence: One Light Through Many Windows

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**Audience:** Every person who has ever looked at a night sky and felt the question form before the words could

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Dear seekers, believers, doubters, mystics, scientists, and everyone in  
between,

There is a question older than any religion, older than any philosophy, older than any civilization we know how to name.

It forms before language. It arrives in the body as an ache, as a pull, as a restlessness that persists even when everything in your life is arranged precisely the way you wanted it.

The question is not *what is true*.

The question is not *who is right*.

The question, in its oldest and most honest form, is this:

**Why is there something rather than nothing, and what does that mean for the way I should live?**

Every tradition on this page was born from that question.

Every inquiry on this page is still asking it.

This project — Convergence — is not an attempt to answer the question for anyone. It is an attempt to create a space large enough to hold all the answers that have ever been given, with enough reverence that no tradition feels diminished and enough honesty that no tradition can claim the space belongs only to them.

If that sounds simple, it is not.

If that sounds impossible, it is not either.

It is hard. It is necessary. And it is, we believe, one of the most important things a civilization can practice doing well.

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## The Problem We Are Starting With



Human beings have organized their deepest beliefs into traditions across the entire span of known history. These traditions have produced music, architecture, mathematics, medicine, art, philosophy, law, agriculture, astronomy, ethical systems, and communities of practice that sustained people through unimaginable suffering and celebrated with them in moments of unimaginable joy.

They have also, periodically, been used to justify violence, conquest, exclusion, and dehumanization.

This is not unique to religion. It is the dual nature of every powerful human system: the same fire that heats your home can burn it down. The same institutional loyalty that builds cathedrals can wall out strangers. The same conviction that sustains a person through persecution can, when that persecution ends, become the conviction that justifies persecuting others.

Understanding this dynamic is not the same as condemning religion.

It is, in fact, the beginning of taking religion seriously.

Convergence begins here — with clear eyes about the full history — not to produce cynicism, but to produce the kind of respect that can survive contact with reality. A reverence that has never been tested is not reverence at all. It is sentimentality dressed in sacred language.

We do not want sentimental religion. We do not want naive science.

We want the kind of encountering that happens when an honest mind meets a tradition that has been lived by millions of people across centuries, and asks: *what did they know that I do not know yet?*

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# What Science Brings to This Conversation



There is a false story told about science and religion, and it goes like this: once upon a time, religion explained the world, and then science came along and explained it better, and therefore religion is obsolete.

This story is not just wrong. It is not even an interesting misunderstanding. It mistakes what religion is for.

A sonnet does not explain photosynthesis.

An equation does not explain grief.

A laboratory result does not explain why beauty makes us want to weep.

These are not failures. They are the shapes of different kinds of truth, each perfectly designed for something specific, each useless outside its domain when forced to substitute for the other.

Science is the most powerful methodology human beings have ever developed for asking *how*: how do stars form, how does DNA replicate, how do glaciers move, how does a particular intervention change a specific outcome. When it operates within its domain — careful observation, testable hypotheses, reproducible results, honest accounting of failure — it is breathtaking in its precision and breathtaking in its humility. Good scientists will tell you with delight how much they do not yet know.

Religion, and the broader category of spiritual inquiry, is primarily engaged with *why* and *how to live*: why does this all matter, what am I obligated to do with my existence, who do I belong to, what is sacred, what is my relationship to suffering, to death, to joy, to the stranger at my door. These are not questions that wait for laboratory results. They are questions that the species has been answering and re-answering since before we had writing.

Convergence treats science and religion as different disciplines addressing partially overlapping territory.

Where they overlap, we welcome honest collision.

Where they do not overlap, we welcome each doing what it does best.

This is not compromise. This is the recognition that reality is large enough to require more than one way of attending to it.

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## The Frame: One Light Through Many Windows



Imagine a building with many windows.

Each window is differently made: one is the deep blue and red of medieval stained glass, one is the intricate geometric tile-work of a mosque, one is the simple unadorned glass of a Quaker meeting house, one is the carved wooden screen of a Hindu mandir, one is the paper and bamboo of a Shinto shrine, one is the pointed Gothic arch of a cathedral, one is the colored light of a Buddhist temple at dawn, one is the plain stone of a synagogue that has been rebuilt three times and still stands.

The light outside is one light.

It does not change depending on which window it passes through.

But you would never know that by looking at any single window from inside.

From inside the medieval cathedral, the light is sacred reds and blues, and it falls on stone floors worn smooth by a thousand years of worship. From inside the mosque, the light fractures into repeating mathematical perfection, and it falls on calligraphy that says *there is no God but God*. From inside the Quaker meeting house, the light is simple and clear, and it falls on silence.

The light is one. The windows are many. The room inside each window is a civilization of meaning-making.

Convergence is built on this image.

We do not claim that all religions are the same.

They are not.

They differ in cosmology, in practice, in community organization, in their accounts of suffering and redemption, in their relationship to death, in their ethics, in their aesthetics.

What we claim is something smaller and more verifiable:

that many of the fundamental questions these traditions are addressing are the same questions,

that many of the virtues these traditions cultivate are recognizable across their differences,

and that encountering another tradition's honest answer to a shared question is one of the most powerful experiences of intellectual and

spiritual expansion a human being can have.

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## The Traditions

### *Hinduism — The Oldest Living River*



To encounter Hinduism honestly is to encounter something that does not resolve into a single definition.

It is the world's oldest living religious tradition — not the oldest religion in the world that survives in fragments, but the oldest continuous practice of human beings engaging with the sacred that is still actively lived. People are being born into it today. Temples are being built. Pilgrims are walking paths their grandparents walked. Scholars are arguing about texts composed thousands of years before Christianity or Islam existed.

Hinduism contains multitudes. It contains rigorous philosophical schools that are among the most sophisticated intellectual traditions in human history — Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita, Dvaita, Nyaya, Samkhya, Mimamsa, Yoga, each with centuries of commentaries and counter-commentaries. It contains popular devotion of the most intimate kind — the bhakti tradition, which says that the divine responds to love, that the infinite can be approached with a garland of flowers and a full heart. It contains the Upanishads' radical insight that *Atman is Brahman* — that the individual self is identical with the universal ground of being — one of the most astonishing intellectual leaps any tradition has ever made.

It contains the Mahabharata, the longest poem in human history, which contains within it the Bhagavad Gita: a conversation between a prince about to fight his own family in a just war and the god who has become his charioteer. In the middle of a battlefield, between two armies, as the conch shells blow and the arrows are nocked, a god explains the nature of action, duty, self, and liberation. This is one of the most extraordinary literary and spiritual artifacts our species has produced.

Convergence approaches Hinduism not as a museum exhibit but as a living tradition with its own terms, its own internal debates, and its own ongoing evolution. It is not monolithic. It is not to be summarized in a paragraph. It is to be encountered.

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## *Buddhism — The Path Through Suffering*



Buddhism begins with one of the most honest observations in the history of human thought: suffering exists.

Not suffering as punishment. Not suffering as spiritual test. Suffering as a basic feature of conscious existence in a world of impermanence, attachment, and inevitable loss. The Buddha — the historical Siddhartha Gautama, who lived in northern India around the 5th century BCE — did not begin by promising comfort. He began by looking at life clearly enough to name what everyone already knew but most systems preferred not to lead with.

And then he did something more remarkable: he said the path through suffering was available to everyone, that it did not require a priest or a caste or a sacrifice, that it was a matter of understanding and practice, and that the understanding could be verified by anyone willing to look.

Buddhism spread from India to Sri Lanka, to Southeast Asia, to China, to Korea, to Japan, to Tibet, to the West — and in each place it met the local culture and adapted. Theravada carries the oldest textual tradition. Mahayana expanded the vision of liberation to include all beings, not just monastics. Vajrayana developed elaborate visualization practices and the transmission of wisdom through lineage. Zen stripped it to the bone: sit, breathe, attend. Pure Land offered devotion as its own path to liberation.

These are not competing religions. They are branches of a single tree that grew across the world's most diverse continent over two and a half millennia.

What they share: the recognition that the mind is the territory of liberation, that compassion is not optional but structural, that wisdom and virtue are not opposed but identical, and that the present moment is the only place where any of this can be practiced.

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## *Christianity — The God Who Entered the Story*



Christianity is the world's largest religion, and like all large things, it is not one thing.

At its center is a claim that remains, after two thousand years, one of the most radical and strange propositions in the history of ideas: that the ground of all being, the infinite source of all existence, became a human being. Not a king. Not a philosopher. A carpenter's son in an occupied province, who ate with people no one else would eat with, who healed people no one else would touch, who told stories that overturned every assumption about who God loved, who was arrested by the collaborating authorities of empire and religion, and who was executed in the way reserved for rebels and slaves.

And then, Christianity claims, he came back.

The claim is not the point of Convergence. The claim is the territory of theology, and Christians have been developing, debating, and refining their theology since the letters of Paul and the councils of the early church. What interests Convergence is what this story has produced: two thousand years of human beings organizing their lives around the conviction that love is cosmically real, that the poor and the sick and the stranger are sites of encounter with the divine, and that death is not the final word.

This conviction has produced extraordinary things: the abolition movement, which drew on Christianity to call slavery an abomination before God; the hospital, which emerged from the Christian conviction that caring for the sick was sacred work; the university, which grew from cathedral schools; some of the most magnificent music ever composed; the art of the Renaissance; and ordinary, daily acts of kindness that no one recorded because they were simply what it meant to be a neighbor.

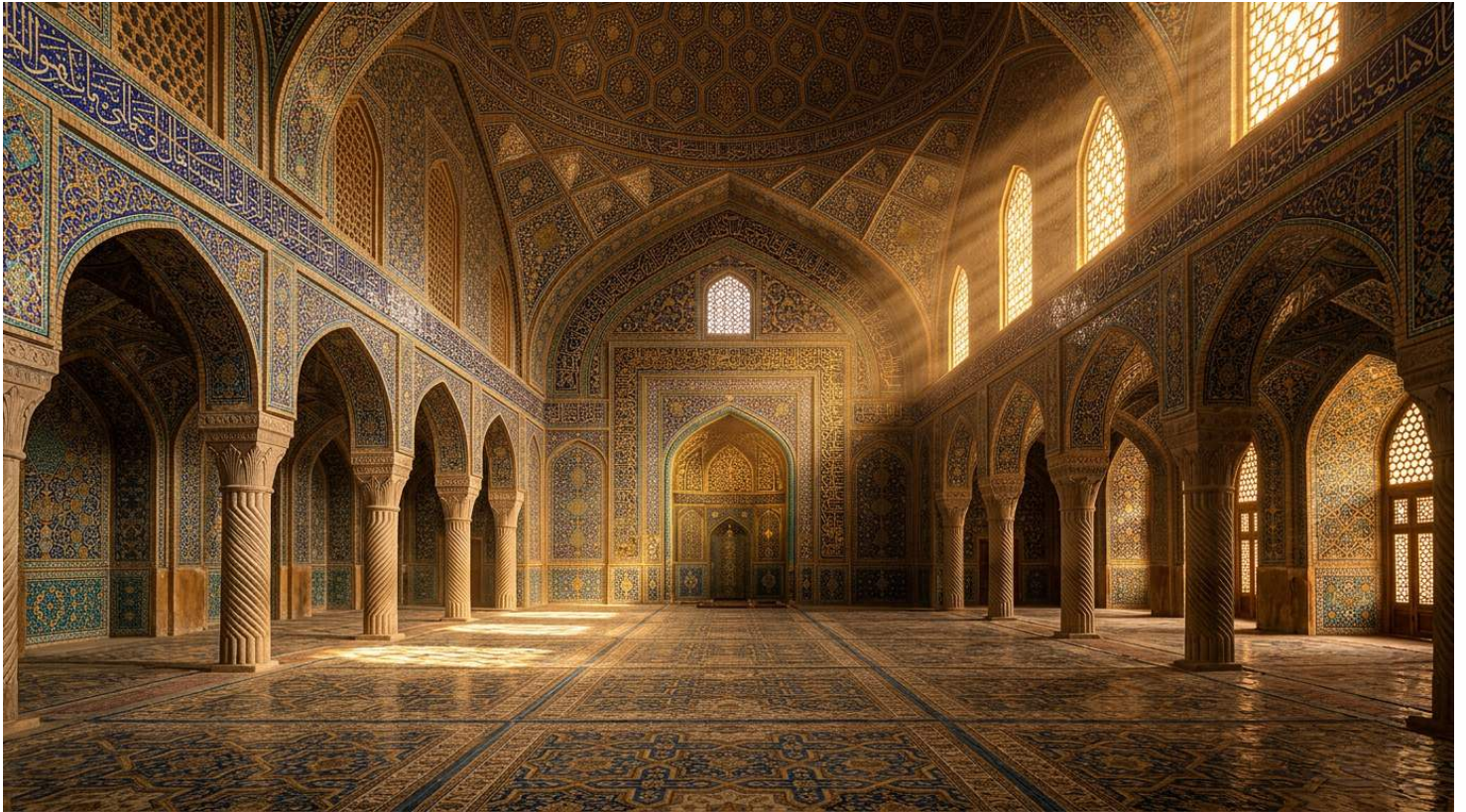
It has also produced the Crusades and the Inquisition and the residential schools and the weaponization of piety in the service of empire. The tradition carries both.

Convergence does not flatten this. It holds the full shape of the tradition and asks: what is the living core that persists when the accretions of power and politics are stripped away?

The living core, as best as we can identify it, is a God who takes suffering seriously, a call to love that does not distinguish between the deserving and undeserving, and a practice of forgiveness radical enough to be called revolutionary.

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## *Islam — Surrender as the Highest Act*



The Arabic word *Islam* means submission, or surrender — and this is not a metaphor for defeat.

It is a description of what the tradition understands to be the highest possible relationship between a finite being and the infinite one: not the pretense of equality, not the negotiation of terms, but the full recognition of what is actually the case. You are finite. The divine is infinite. You are contingent. The divine is necessary. To live in alignment with this recognition — to orient every act of your life toward it — is what it means to be Muslim.

The Quran, which Muslims believe is the direct word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the early 7th century CE, is not just a scripture in the Western sense. It is a sound as much as a text. It is meant to be recited, and its Arabic is considered untranslatable in its full beauty — what you read in translation is a guide to the meaning, not the thing itself. Muslims have memorized it in its entirety for fourteen centuries. Children learn it. Old men recite it on their deathbeds. The sound of it being chanted in a mosque at the hour of dawn is something that, if you have heard it, you do not forget.

Islam gave the world algebra. It preserved and transmitted the learning of ancient Greece when Europe was otherwise occupied. It produced the great polymaths of the medieval period who were simultaneously theologians, physicians, mathematicians, and philosophers — al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd — figures who shaped both Islamic civilization and European intellectual history. It produced Rumi, whose poetry on the nature of love and longing remains among the most widely read poetry in the world.

It produced also the daily practice of five prayers, which is one of the most elegant spiritual technologies ever devised: five times a day, no matter where you are in the world, you stop what you are doing and remember what is most important. The interruption is the point.

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## *Judaism — The Covenant People*



Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic traditions in the world, and it is also one of the most radically specific.

Most religious traditions have universalist ambitions: they address themselves to all of humanity. Judaism has historically been organized around a particular people with a particular covenant with a particular God — and yet the insights that emerged from this particularity have been among the most influential in the intellectual and moral history of the species.

The covenant at Sinai, as described in the Torah, is not a private arrangement. It is a contract with explicit terms: the people will live according to the law, and God will be their God. The law — the Torah and its interpretations across millennia — is one of the most elaborate and sustained projects of ethical reasoning in human history. It asks: what does it mean to live rightly in every domain of life? How should you treat the stranger, the poor, the widow, the orphan, the animal, the earth? It answers not in vague principles but in specific, arguable, revisable rules that communities have been debating and developing since before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

This capacity for argument — the recognition that disagreement in the service of truth is sacred — is one of Judaism's great gifts to human civilization. The Talmud is not a record of conclusions. It is a record of arguments, with the dissenting opinions preserved alongside the majority views, because the minority opinion might be right, and even if it is not right now it might be right later, and even if it is never right, the argument itself is sacred.

Judaism survived the destruction of its temple, the dispersion of its people across every continent, the most systematic attempt to exterminate a people in modern history, and emerged on the other side still arguing, still remembering, still observing Shabbat at sundown on Friday wherever in the world its people happen to be.

That is not survival. That is a different kind of thing. That is the stubborn insistence that the covenant has not been broken.

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## *Sikhism — Service as Worship*



Sikhism was born in the Punjab in the late 15th century, in the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, and it is one of the youngest of the major world religions and one of the most elegant in its central commitments.

At its core is a refusal of the distinctions that organized religious and social life in 15th-century South Asia. Guru Nanak declared: there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim. Not because these traditions do not exist, but because before God, the distinctions that human beings use to exclude each other dissolve. The divine is *Ik Onkar* — the one formless reality — and the recognition of this oneness does not grant superiority to any group, any caste, any priesthood, any gender.

The langar — the community kitchen — is perhaps the most remarkable institutional expression of this theology in the world. Every Sikh gurdwara maintains a free kitchen that feeds anyone who comes, regardless of religion, caste, status, or circumstance. You sit on the floor. You are given simple food. You eat alongside strangers. This is not charity in the sense of the fortunate giving to the unfortunate. It is a communal enactment of the theological truth that we are all equal before the one reality.

The Sikh tradition also carries the teaching of *seva* — selfless service — as one of the highest forms of worship. You do not serve God by separating yourself from the world and attending to your spiritual purity. You serve God by washing the dishes in the langar, by attending to the sick, by standing up for the dignity of those whose dignity is being denied.

In the tradition of *miri-piri* — the unity of the temporal and the spiritual — Sikhism refuses the separation of religious and worldly life. You are a saint and a soldier. You care for your soul and your neighbor. You do not choose between prayer and action. You are both.

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## *Taoism and Confucianism — The Great Pattern and the Great Relationship*



China's two great philosophical and religious traditions begin from different observations about reality and arrive at complementary wisdoms.

Taoism begins with the recognition that there is a pattern underlying all things — the Tao, the Way — that cannot be fully captured in language but can be approached through careful attention to how things move, how water finds its level, how a tree roots itself, how the seasons turn without forcing. The *Tao Te Ching*, attributed to Laozi, is one of the most translated texts in world literature after the Bible, and this is not because it is easy. It is because it says something true about the limits of effort, the nature of yielding, the power that comes from not grasping.

Taoism gave the world a model for governance that does not control but creates the conditions for things to flourish. It gave Chinese medicine its framework of balance and flow. It gave Chinese calligraphy and painting their aesthetic of the empty space as meaningful. It gave the tradition of the hermit scholar who retreats from the world not to escape it but to understand it better, and then returns.

Confucianism begins not with the cosmic but with the relational. What does it mean to be a son? A father? A student? A teacher? A citizen? A ruler? The five relationships — ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, elder and younger sibling, friend and friend — are not hierarchies of domination but networks of mutual obligation. The son owes the father respect and care. But the father owes the son modeling and nurture. The ruler owes the subject good governance. The subject owes the ruler loyalty only when the governance is just.

This relational ethics, developed over two and a half millennia, became the spine of East Asian civilization. It is not individualism. It is not collectivism in the Western political sense. It is a vision of the person as fundamentally relational — constituted by their relationships, responsible to them, growing through them.

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## *Indigenous and Earth-Based Traditions — The Web of Belonging*



There is no single "indigenous tradition." There are thousands of them, distributed across every continent, each specific to a place, a people, a language, a way of attending to the particular land that has been inhabited for generations beyond counting.

What they share, at the risk of generalization that flattens crucial differences, is this: a refusal to treat the natural world as background to the human drama.

In most indigenous cosmologies, the world is not an object to be managed or a resource to be extracted. It is alive. Not in a metaphorical sense. Alive in the sense that it has agency, intention, relationship, and claim on human conduct. The river is not just water. The forest is not just timber. The mountain is not just mineral. They are entities with their own standing, and the human community exists within a web of relationship with them that generates obligations.

This is not primitive animism, a stage of religious evolution that rational humanity has moved past. It is an epistemology — a way of knowing — that pays attention to things that Western science and Western religion have historically under-attended to, and that are now urgently relevant: the interconnection of ecological systems, the long-term consequences of extractive relationships with the land, the importance of place and belonging as constituents of human health.

The recovery of indigenous wisdom is not about cultural tourism or spiritual appropriation. It is about recognizing that the species has been running a civilization experiment on the assumption that the natural world is a resource, and the results of that experiment are now visible, and some of what people whose traditions were nearly destroyed know about a different relationship with the living world may be necessary for the survival of everyone.

Convergence holds indigenous traditions with particular care, knowing that these traditions were systematically targeted for destruction within living memory, and that the people who carry them deserve to be heard on their own terms, not translated into the conceptual languages of traditions that tried to eliminate them.

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## Science as Inquiry into the Sacred



There is a phrase attributed to various sources, and it describes something real: the universe is matter that has evolved to the point where it can observe itself.

This is not poetry. This is what is happening right now, as you read these words. The atoms in your eyes, forged in the cores of ancient stars that no longer exist, arranged over billions of years of biological evolution into a reading brain, are the universe's mechanism for understanding what it is. When a human being contemplates the night sky, the night sky is, in some profound sense, contemplating itself.

This is one of the most remarkable things science has revealed.

It is also, when you sit with it long enough, an observation with spiritual weight. Not because it proves any particular religious claim. But because it places the human being in a relationship with the cosmos that is neither central nor trivial — we are not at the center, but we are not irrelevant either. We are, for now, the instrument through which this extraordinary process of physical reality understanding itself is advancing.

The history of science is also, if you tell it honestly, a history of wonder. Of people being stopped cold by something they observed, unable to dismiss it, driven to understand it more precisely, and finding at the end of their precision not closure but a deeper mystery. Newton described gravity with equations that worked perfectly, and could not explain what gravity was. Quantum mechanics describes the behavior of particles with unmatched precision, and the meaning of what it describes remains, a century later, a matter of genuine philosophical dispute among physicists.

The best scientists carry a particular kind of humility — not the false humility of pretending not to have achieved something, but the honest recognition that every answer opens more questions, and that the questions at the edge of what is known are the most interesting place in human intellectual life.

This is not so different from what the great mystics said.

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## The Shared Themes



Across every tradition in this project, across the disciplined inquiry of science, certain themes appear again and again. Not because the traditions borrowed from each other (though sometimes they did), but because they were all, in their different ways, attending to the same fundamental features of conscious human experience.

### *Compassion*

Every major tradition has compassion — *karuna* in Buddhism, *chesed* in Judaism, *agape* in Christianity, *rahman* in Islam, *daya* in Hinduism and Sikhism — as a central virtue. This is not coincidence. The traditions that have survived are the ones that told their communities to care for each other and for strangers. The traditions that reduced suffering lasted. This is an empirical observation across cultural evolution.

### *Impermanence*

Everything passes. The Buddhist tradition makes this foundational: impermanence is not a tragedy, it is a feature of reality, and the suffering caused by pretending otherwise is the central problem Buddhism addresses. But every other tradition also holds this: the Stoics with their *memento mori*, the Torah with its insistence on Shabbat as a practice of releasing the work of the week, the Islamic recognition that only God is eternal, the Indigenous traditions that frame the individual life within the long cycles of the land.

## *Practice*

None of these traditions are purely intellectual. They are all *practices*. Daily prayer. Meditation. Sabbath keeping. Pilgrimage. Fasting. Service. The traditions understand something that neuroscience is confirming with increasing precision: the mind is shaped by what it repeatedly does. You become what you practice. The person who has prayed every day for fifty years is not the same kind of person as the person who has never prayed. The quality of attention that regular sitting meditation develops is measurable and real.

## *The Stranger*

Every tradition at its best makes a claim about the stranger — the person outside your community, your family, your tribe. Judaism: you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt. Islam: whoever believes in God and the last day should honor their neighbor. Buddhism: may all beings be free from suffering — all, without exception. Christianity: whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me. Sikhism: langar — feed everyone, no exceptions.

The stranger is a test. Every tradition knows this. The stranger tests whether your ethics are real or only apply to people like you.

## *The Present Moment*

Scientific attention is inherently about the present moment: careful observation of what is actually happening, not what we expect or fear or hope. The contemplative traditions — meditation, Shabbat, the Sufi practice of presence, the Indigenous practice of careful land-reading — are also about the present moment. The mystical traditions across every religion converge on a similar insight: that the sacred is not elsewhere. It is here, in this moment, in this breath, in this encounter, if you can be present enough to receive it.

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# What Convergence Is Building



Convergence is a long project.

We are building resources that allow anyone — regardless of their background, their tradition, their skepticism level — to encounter the world's religious and philosophical traditions with respect, depth, and intellectual honesty.

This means:

**Tradition pages.** Each major tradition gets a full, dedicated exploration — written in a way that people inside the tradition can recognize as sincere, and people outside can enter without needing prior knowledge. The tradition pages are not encyclopedias. They are invitations.

**Shared theme pages.** The themes that appear across multiple traditions — compassion, pilgrimage, sacred text, ritual, service, contemplation, death and what comes after, the question of evil, the nature of the divine — get their own pages, where the different traditions' answers sit in conversation with each other. These are not comparison grids. They are explorations.

**Science and inquiry pages.** The major domains of scientific inquiry — cosmology, biology, consciousness, ecology, physics — get explored in terms of what they have revealed and what they make more mysterious. These pages are not designed to subordinate religion to science or science to religion. They are designed to show scientific inquiry as a human practice with its own wonder, humility, and relevance to the deepest questions.

**Cross-tradition encounters.** What happens when Rumi reads the Psalms? What happens when a quantum physicist reads the Upanishads? What happens when a Buddhist teacher encounters the theology of the cross? These encounters — imagined, historical, and real — are some of the most fertile places for understanding what each tradition is actually claiming.

**Visual narratives.** Images have a power that language cannot replicate. The experience of seeing a Buddhist monk sweeping a courtyard at dawn, a Jewish family at Shabbat, a muezzin at the top of a minaret at sunrise, a scientist at a telescope at midnight — these images communicate something about the quality of attention these practices cultivate that a paragraph cannot quite reach.

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## An Honest Word About What This Is Not



Convergence does not claim that all religions are the same.  
They are not, and pretending otherwise dishonors them all.

Convergence does not claim that religious truth claims can be verified or falsified by science.  
Science is not the right tool for that question.

Convergence does not claim that the traditions never do harm.  
They do, and have, and an honest account of each tradition includes that history.

Convergence does not claim to be neutral.

We are not. We believe that encounter across difference is better than isolation within it. We believe that respect is better than contempt. We believe that curiosity is better than dismissal. These are not neutral positions. They are commitments.

What we are trying to be is fair. To describe each tradition in a way that those inside it can recognize. To name the hard things — the history of exclusion, the abuse of institutional power, the weaponization of faith — without using them to dismiss the living, breathing reality that millions of people organize their deepest commitments around.

This is a high bar. We will not always clear it.  
But it is the right bar to aim for.

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## The Experience We Want You to Have



When you come to Convergence, we want you to leave knowing one thing you did not know before.

Not about a tradition. Not about a doctrine. One thing about the way human beings are. One thing about the range of answers that have been given, with genuine wisdom and genuine love, to the questions you also carry.

We want you to feel what it is like to be a student again — to encounter something that does not map onto your existing categories and to stay with it long enough to let it teach you something.

We want believers to find here a space that honors their tradition without flattering it, that tells the truth about its history without reducing it to that history, and that might show them something beautiful in a tradition they previously knew only as alien or threatening.

We want skeptics to find here a challenge to the easier forms of dismissal — to meet the tradition not in its worst historical expressions but in its living, thoughtful, best-practiced form, and to ask whether their skepticism has encountered this or only a caricature of it.

We want learners to find here a map, a starting point, a set of invitations to go deeper into territory that most curricula and most conversations leave almost entirely unexplored.

We want all of you to come away with the sense that the world's traditions are part of your inheritance as a human being — not because you must believe any of them, but because they represent the accumulated, hard-won wisdom of billions of people who have been asking the same questions you ask, and whose answers deserve more than dismissal.

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# Where We Are Right Now: An Honest Assessment



As of early 2026, Convergence is in active development. What exists today:

**The overview.** The main page presents the frame — the one light through many windows — and introduces the major traditions and the shared themes. It is not yet complete, but the architecture is clear and the direction is set.

**Tradition pages.** We are building these one at a time, with care. Our commitment is depth over breadth: better to have three traditions well-represented than twelve traditions sketched. The ones that are farthest along are the ones you will find most fully developed. The ones that are less complete are being worked on.

**Image work.** The visual language of Convergence is still being assembled. We have a clear direction: reverence, plurality, warmth, civilizational scale, the human face of religious practice. The images are not there to decorate. They are there to do what images do — to communicate beyond language.

**Cross-tradition exploration.** The comparison work is the most complex, and it is the last to be fully realized. It requires having done the tradition work well first, so that the comparisons illuminate rather than distort.

**What is not yet complete:** Most of it. This is honest. The vision of what Convergence can become is larger than what exists today. The direction is clear. The commitment is real. The work continues.

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# The Road From Here

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In the next phase, Convergence will:

**Deepen the tradition pages** — moving from overview to genuine depth, adding primary text excerpts, historical timelines, the major figures, the internal debates, the key practices, the living contemporary expressions.

**Expand the cross-tradition work** — building the shared-theme pages with the full diversity of traditional responses to shared human questions, alongside scientific perspectives where they are genuinely relevant.

**Develop the visual catalog** — every tradition has its own visual language, its own sacred aesthetics, its own relationship to image and representation and the refusal of image. The visual catalog will honor these differences while creating a coherent experience across the whole project.

**Invite contribution** — the people most qualified to describe a tradition are the people who live it. We are building toward a contribution framework that invites practitioners, scholars, and engaged skeptics to participate in building this resource, with clear editorial principles that maintain quality and respect.

**Build for use** — Convergence is not meant to be read once. It is meant to be returned to. It is meant to be used in classrooms, in interfaith dialogue spaces, in families trying to explain to each other what they believe, in individual minds trying to locate their own questions on a larger map.

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# The Practices That Cross Every Tradition



One of the most striking observations that emerges from any honest study of the world's religious traditions is the degree to which they have independently developed similar practices — not because they borrowed from each other, though the cross-pollination of spiritual ideas across cultures is rich and real, but because the practices address fundamental features of human psychology that all traditions eventually had to reckon with.

## *Prayer*

Every tradition has some form of it.

The specific theology differs enormously: some traditions address prayers to a personal God who hears and responds; some address them to ancestral spirits; some use prayer as a form of meditation in which the words themselves, regardless of whether they are "heard," reshape the mind of the one saying them; some see prayer as participation in a cosmic conversation between the human and the divine.

What they share is the practice of regular, deliberate attention to what matters most — the discipline of stopping, in the midst of ordinary time, to remember something that ordinary time tends to obscure. Whether or not you believe that someone is listening, the effect on the person who prays is real and measurable. The person who has prayed every day for thirty years has practiced attending to what matters most, daily, for thirty years. That practice shapes a person in ways that do not require theological explanation to observe.

## *Fasting*

The voluntary restriction of food or other pleasures appears in nearly every tradition in the world: Ramadan in Islam, Yom Kippur in Judaism, Lent in Christianity, Ekadashi in Hinduism, the various fasting practices of Buddhism and Jainism, the indigenous vision quests that involve extended fasting, the Taoist practices of dietary restriction and purification.

The explanations for why fasting matters differ by tradition. But the practice itself appears to produce something consistent across the traditions that use it: a sharpening of attention, a clarifying of what is essential from what is merely habitual, a temporary dissolution of the comfort structures that normally separate a person from the deeper current of their experience.

Fasting is one of the practices where the contemplative traditions and neuroscience are in productive conversation: the physiological effects of caloric restriction on brain chemistry, alertness, and certain aspects of cognition are real and documented. Whether those effects translate into the spiritual clarity traditions report is not something neuroscience can fully address. But the traditions' observation that something happens when a person fasts is not simply pious imagination.

## *Sacred Text*

The majority of traditions have a central text or set of texts that function as the authoritative articulation of the tradition's understanding. The Quran in Islam. The Torah and Talmud in Judaism. The Bible in Christianity. The Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita in Hinduism. The Pali Canon and the Mahayana sutras in Buddhism. The Guru Granth Sahib in Sikhism. The Tao Te Ching and the I Ching in Taoism and Chinese religious philosophy.

Sacred text is not simply an old book that a tradition respects. It is a living relationship between a community and a document — a relationship that involves reading, interpreting, debating, memorizing, chanting, teaching, translating, and applying. The text is never finished. It generates commentary, which generates commentary on the commentary. Every generation finds something in it that previous generations did not fully see, and the tradition's engagement with its text is part of what keeps it alive over centuries.

The Protestant Reformation was in large part a dispute about who had the authority to interpret the text. The great rabbinic tradition is essentially an extended, multi-generational argument about what the text means and requires. The debates between Buddhist schools about the nature of the Buddha-nature and the meaning of key sutras have been ongoing for two thousand years. Theological controversy is not a failure of the tradition. It is the tradition working, through argument, to figure out what it actually believes.

## *Pilgrimage*

There is something fundamental in the human need to go somewhere — to move the body toward a place that is charged with significance, to make the journey itself part of the encounter with the sacred.

Islam's Hajj — the annual pilgrimage to Mecca that is one of the five pillars of the faith — is the largest regular gathering of human beings on earth, with more than two million pilgrims completing it each year. Judaism's three annual pilgrimage festivals — Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot — once drew the Jewish community to Jerusalem three times a year. Christianity's pilgrimage routes — Camino de Santiago, the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, Lourdes, Rome — carry millions of walkers every year. Hinduism has thousands of sacred sites spread across the subcontinent, each the destination of pilgrimage from nearby and distant communities. Buddhism's four major pilgrimage sites in India and Nepal attract millions annually.

Pilgrimage is not tourism. The physical difficulty is often part of the point. The time taken from ordinary life is part of the point. The suspension of status and comfort — the leveling that happens when people of different class and background share a road and a destination — is part of the point. And the arrival, when it comes, at a place that has been walked toward for days or weeks or months, is an experience of arrival that cannot be replicated by any other means.

## *Service*

Every tradition that has lasted makes service — active, material care for other people — a central expression of its deepest commitments.

Not every tradition frames service in the same terms. Buddhism's bodhisattva ideal is the commitment to remain in the cycle of rebirth until all sentient beings are liberated. Islam's zakat — obligatory almsgiving — is one of the five pillars. Christianity's works of mercy (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned) are described by Jesus as the definitive test of faith. Judaism's tzedakah is not charity in the sense of optional generosity but justice — a right due to the recipient, not a gift from the giver. Sikhism's seva is the service rendered without expectation of return because service is worship.

The common thread: a tradition that teaches only its adherents to care for its own adherents has not yet understood what its own best insights require. Every tradition at its best moves toward a universal ethics of care — not because all traditions are saying the same thing, but because the logic of compassion, when followed far enough, keeps arriving at the same place.

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## The Hardest Questions: What Convergence Does Not Resolve



Convergence does not resolve every tension between traditions. It would be dishonest to claim otherwise.

**The question of exclusivity.** Some traditions teach that their path is the only path — that salvation or liberation or enlightenment is available only through specific practices, specific beliefs, or specific relationships with specific figures. This is not a fringe view held only by extremists. It is the sincere belief of hundreds of millions of people who have thought about it carefully. Convergence cannot simultaneously affirm the exclusive truth claims of all traditions, because those claims contradict each other. What Convergence can do is hold the conversation open — describe each tradition's claims honestly, acknowledge that people who hold them are not simply ignorant of alternatives, and create the conditions for encounter without demanding resolution.

**The question of harm.** Every tradition has been used to justify harm. The Inquisition. The caste system. The subjugation of women in multiple traditions. Forced conversion. Religious violence. These are not distortions of traditions by bad actors; in many cases, they were authorized by the traditions' own texts and their authorized interpreters. Convergence does not whitewash these histories. It also does not allow the history of harm to become the whole story of traditions that have also produced extraordinary care, extraordinary beauty, and extraordinary moral progress. Both are true simultaneously. Holding both is the discipline.

**The question of the supernatural.** Whether God exists, whether the soul persists after death, whether prayer has causal efficacy beyond the psychological, whether there is a transcendent reality beyond the physical — these are questions that Convergence does not answer. They cannot be answered by the kind of encounter this project facilitates. Science cannot answer them in the affirmative (though it can constrain certain claims). Individual religious experience cannot answer them definitively for anyone else. Convergence holds these questions as alive — as the questions that make the encounter between traditions and the encounter between religion and science most interesting — without pretending to resolve them.

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## The Role of the Skeptic



Convergence is not only for believers.

The honest skeptic — the person who does not believe that any religious tradition has access to revealed truth, who thinks the universe is fundamentally indifferent to human concerns, who regards the supernatural claims of religion as mythology rather than fact — has a legitimate place in this project.

Not as a debunker. Convergence is not a platform for the argument that all religion is delusion. That argument, however sincerely held, is not more honest than the arguments of the traditions. It is an interpretation — of the same evidence, with different assumptions about what the evidence means.

But as a genuine participant in the question. The skeptic who has read widely in the traditions, who has encountered the full depth and sophistication of what the best religious thinkers have actually argued, who has felt the pull of religious community and practice even without being able to affirm the beliefs — that person's perspective is part of the conversation. Their questions are good questions. Their discomfort with easy answers is productive discomfort.

The most valuable form of skepticism for a project like Convergence is not the dismissive kind — the kind that says "this is all primitive" and declines to look further. It is the rigorous kind — the kind that says "I don't accept your premises, but I want to understand exactly what you're claiming and why, and I want to engage with the strongest version of it rather than the weakest."

That kind of skepticism makes the conversation better. It forces traditions to articulate their actual claims rather than relying on social inertia to do the defending. And it keeps the conversation honest — which is the only kind of conversation that is ultimately worth having.

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## Our Promise



We are not promising a finished product.

We are promising a direction and a discipline.

We promise to describe every tradition in a way those inside it can recognize as honest.

We promise to name the hard history without letting it become the whole story.

We promise to treat science with the same respect we give the traditions — as a powerful, humble, extraordinary form of human inquiry.

We promise to never flatten difference in the name of harmony.

We promise to never use apparent difference as an excuse to stop listening.

We promise that this project is not complete until every major tradition on this planet has been engaged with on its own terms, with depth, with images, with primary voices, with the kind of attention that a tradition that has sustained billions of people across centuries deserves.

This is the work.

It is long work.

It is necessary work.

And we are grateful to be doing it.

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**With deep respect and continuing inquiry,**  
**David E. Sproule**  
and the Convergence community