

Religion



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FIGURE 7.1 Frankfurt, Germany. Only a small percentage of traditional-minded Islamic women in the Middle East cover their faces. In Europe the percentage is even smaller—far less than 1 percent of the total Islamic population in Europe. Nonetheless, the presence of niqabs and burqas have generated controversy in some European countries.

estimated 1900 French Muslim women covered their face, accounting for less than 0.0003 percent of the population of France at the time (some argue the number was even lower).

The bans have sparked debate in Europe about religious liberty and its limits. This debate reminds us that religion can unite and divide. In this chapter, we study the origins, diffusions, and transformations of the world's great religions, their regional patterns and cultural landscapes. Even when secularism is rising, appreciating the role of religion in culture is essential to understanding human geography.

What the burqa or niqabi means to Muslim women and how it is perceived varies across Europe. While much of Europe's history, art, and architecture is religious, church attendance is low and the role of religion in society is declining as the region has become increasingly secular. Migrants from North Africa and Southwest Asia who were invited into Europe as guest workers after World War II brought Islam to cities in northern and western Europe through relocation diffusion.

While Muslims comprise less than 5 percent of the population of Europe and Muslims who wear the burqa or niqabi are a fraction of that, several countries in the European Union have passed laws banning traditional face coverings in public places. The main targets are burqas or niqabi worn by observant Muslim women (**Fig. 7.1**). France banned the burqa in 2011 when an

CHAPTER OUTLINE

7.1 Describe the nature of religion and its cultural significance.

7.2 Describe the distribution of major religions and the factors that shaped their diffusion.

- The World Map of Religions Today
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- From the Hearth of the Huang He Valley
- From the Hearth of the Eastern Mediterranean
- Beyond the Major Religious Hearths

7.3 Explain how cultural landscapes reflect religious ideas and practices.

- Sacred Sites

- Landscapes of Hinduism and Buddhism
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- Conflicts Along Religious Borders
- Israel and Palestine
- Nigeria
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- Conflicts in the Face of Migration
- Religious Fundamentalism and Extremism

7.1 Describe the Nature of Religion and Its Cultural Significance.

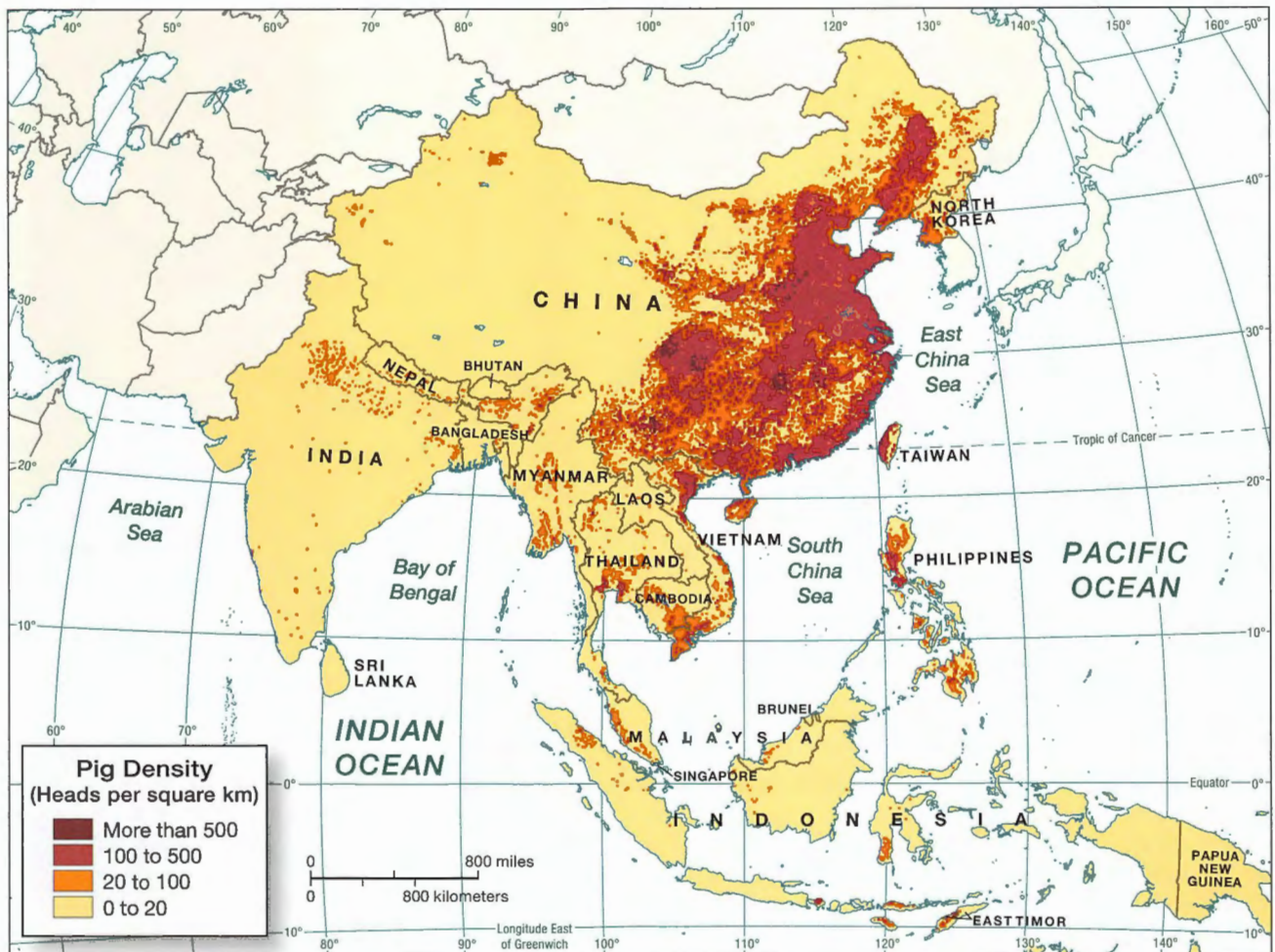
Religion and language lie at the foundation of culture: Both shape and reflect identity. Every hearth of urbanization (see Chapter 9) developed with a religion and a language. Like languages (Chapter 6), religions constantly change as a result of diffusion, evolving practices, and mixing with other religions and philosophies. Religion and language often diffuse together. Romance languages from Europe, including Spanish and Portuguese, diffused to South America and Central America with Roman Catholicism during colonization (**Fig. 7.2**). Arabic diffused with Islam to Southeast Asia during the spice trade. The Hindi language diffused with Indian migrants to east Africa, as did the Hindu religion.

Geographers Robert Stoddard and Carolyn Prorak define **religion** as “a system of beliefs and practices that attempts to order life in terms of culturally perceived ultimate priorities.” Stoddard and Prorak explain that the idea of “perceived ultimate priorities” is often expressed in terms of “should.” People explain and justify how they and others “should” behave based on their religious beliefs. From eating habits to dress codes, religions set standards for followers’ behaviors (**Fig. 7.3**). The idea



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FIGURE 7.2 Cuzco, Peru. The Cuzco Cathedral and the Church de Compania de Jesus stand in the central square. Cuzco was the historic capital of the Inca Empire. Spanish colonizers brought the Catholic Church to this square, which was a plaza during Incan times. Cuzco served as a secondary hearth for Catholicism. From here, the Spanish brought the Catholic Church to its colonies in South America.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2004. <http://www.fao.org/geonetwork/srv/en/main.home?uid=d533b4d0-88fd-11d1-a88f-000d939bc5d8>. Reproduced with permission.

FIGURE 7.3 Pork Production and Religious Prohibitions. Pork is the most common meat source in China, but pork production is slim to none in predominantly Muslim countries, including Bangladesh and Indonesia and in the predominantly Hindu country of India, where pork consumption is prohibited for religious reasons.



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A common ritual is prayer at mealtime, at sunrise and sundown, at night upon retiring, or when waking in the morning (**Fig. 7.6**).

In some places, formal religion has become less significant. **Secularism** refers to the indifference to or rejection of formal religion. The most secular countries are found in Europe. A 2018 Pew study focused on a decade's worth of surveys in more than 100 countries to explore how important religion is in people's lives (**Figure 7.7**). Among the wealthiest countries surveyed, the United States had the highest level of religiosity, with 53 percent of Americans surveyed saying that religion is very important in their lives. Only 11 percent of people surveyed in France, 10 percent in Sweden, and 7 percent in the Czechia said the same thing. Survey respondents

FIGURE 7.4 Agra, India. Many of the world's best known buildings have religious significance. The Taj Mahal is one of these, a white-marble mausoleum and mosque built in the seventeenth century to house the tomb of a Mughal emperor's wife.

that a "good" life has rewards and that "bad" behavior risks punishment has enormous influence on cultures and on how people behave and view the behavior of others.

Cultural landscapes are marked by religion, including churches, synagogues, temples and mosques, cemeteries and shrines, statues, symbols, and mausoleums (**Fig. 7.4**). Other more subtle markers of religion dot the cultural landscape. Residents of Catholic neighborhoods may have statues of the Virgin Mary in their gardens or front yards. In India, small altars with statues or icons of Hindu gods often stand in front of homes or along roadsides. In Buddhist Thailand, spirit houses are built in auspicious locations in front of homes and businesses to attract good spirits to the place who will in turn keep out bad spirits (**Fig. 7.5**). Stores, including restaurants with Kosher foods (Judaism) or halal butcher shops that prepare meat according to religious law (Islam), signal religion in the cultural landscape. Cultural landscapes can also signal religion by the absence of certain features. The absence of stores selling alcohol or of works of art with people in them is typical of Islamic areas, where drinking alcohol and drawing images of the human form are generally forbidden. Religion is also embedded in physical landscapes. We can see religion in the worship of ancestors, who are thought to inhabit mountains, animals, or trees.

Religious practices such as ritual and prayer are found in most religions. Religious rituals mark important events in people's lives: birth and death, becoming an adult, or marriage. Many rituals occur at regular intervals: in the days of rest in Christianity and Judaism, at certain times of the day in Islam, or during astronomical events in Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity.



Photo by E.H. Foubert. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.5 Bangkok, Thailand. Religion can be seen in large spaces, like the Taj Mahal, and also in small spaces, like spirit houses that stand in front of homes and businesses in Southeast Asia.

in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, Southwest Asia, South Asia, and South America more strongly agreed that religion is very important in their lives: 98 percent in Senegal, 80 percent in Bangladesh, 93 percent in Indonesia, 90 percent in Honduras, and 72 percent in Brazil.

Survey respondents in Europe largely did not see religion as very important in their lives, but religion certainly played a critical role in European history. During the Middle Ages and into the colonial period, the Christian Church was a dominant force politically, economically, and culturally, and much of the art, architecture, history, customs, and cultural norms derive from Christianity. Even in secular societies, what people eat (e.g., pork or no pork), when they rest (e.g., on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday), and what they regard as proper behavior (e.g., males taking multiple wives or not) are influenced by religion.



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FIGURE 7.6 New York, New York. A Muslim man takes a break from serving food off a vendor cart to pray on a busy Manhattan street.

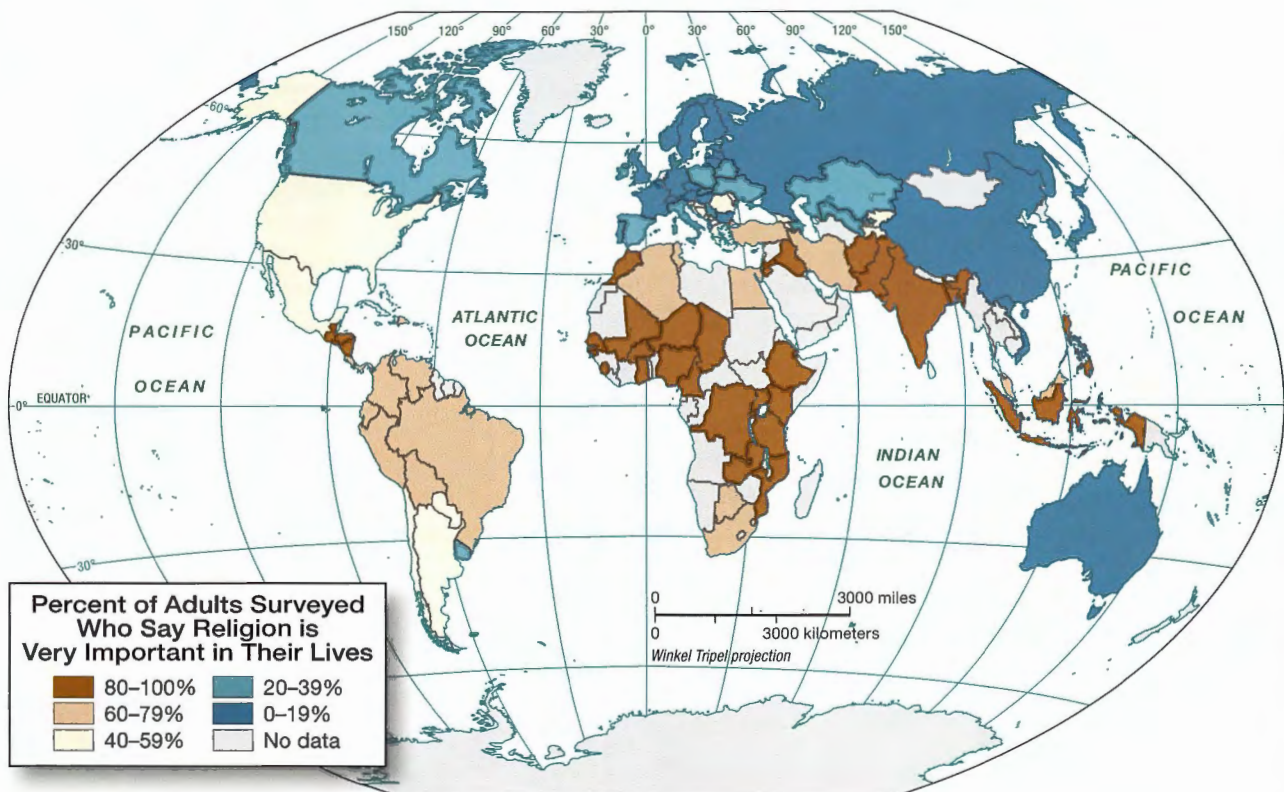


FIGURE 7.7 Percent of Adults Surveyed Who Say Religion is Very Important in their Lives. Using surveys from countries across the world, this map shows the percent of people surveyed in each country who said religion is very important in their lives. The countries reporting the highest percentage of people who see religion as very important in their lives are in South Asia and Africa. The countries with the lowest percentages are in Europe and East Asia.

The larger point is that organized religion is a powerful force in shaping human societies, beliefs, and behaviors. Religion has been a major force in combating social ills, helping the poor, promoting the arts, educating the disadvantaged, and advancing medical knowledge. However, religion has also blocked scientific study, encouraged the oppression of parts of society, supported colonialism, and condemned women to inferior roles. Religion can help create harmony or division.

TC Thinking Geographically

Examine figures 7.4 and 7.5. Religion can be seen in large features on the **cultural landscape**, like the Taj Mahal, and in small features on the landscape, like spirit houses. Think about your own neighborhood or town. Describe and explain the patterns of large and small religious features in the cultural landscape of your neighborhood.

7.2 Describe the Distribution of Major Religions and the Factors That Shaped Their Diffusion.

Religions are commonly grouped into three broad categories based on the number and form of deities. Followers of **monotheistic religions** worship a single deity. Believers in **polytheistic religions** worship more than one deity. **Animistic religions** are centered on the belief that inanimate (nonliving) objects, such as mountains, boulders, rivers, and trees, possess spirits and should be revered.

Almost all religions were animistic, polytheistic, or both throughout most of human history. Around 3500 years ago, a monotheistic religion developed in Southwest Asia called Zoroastrianism. Some scholars think that the monotheism of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be traced to Zoroastrian influences. Others believe that Judaism was the first monotheistic religion. Whichever the case, the eventual diffusion of Christianity and Islam spread monotheistic ideas across the world. This marked a major theological shift from the long dominance of polytheistic and animist beliefs in most places.

By 500 BCE (Before the Common Era), four major hearths of religion and philosophy had developed (**Fig. 7.8**).

A **hearth** of Greek philosophy developed along the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Hinduism came from a hearth in South Asia, along the Indus River Valley. Judaism originated along the eastern Mediterranean; and Chinese philosophy took root in the Huang He Valley. These early established religious and philosophical hearths profoundly influenced other religions and places, as the arrows in Figure 7.8 show. Greek philosophy and Judaism together influenced Christianity. By 500 BCE, four hearths of religious and philosophical thought that still influence culture today were well established: Chinese philosophy, Hinduism, Judaism, and Greek philosophy. Philosophies and religions diffused from these hearths, affecting one another and giving rise to new religions. The two religions with the greatest number of adherents today, Christianity and Islam, are both called Abrahamic faiths because they go back to Judaism, which was founded on a covenant between Abraham and God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize Abraham as their first prophet.

Source: Adapted from: Albert M. Craig, William M. Graham, Donald Kagan, Stephen Ozment, and Frank M. Turner. *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 7th ed., New York: Prentice Hall, 2006.

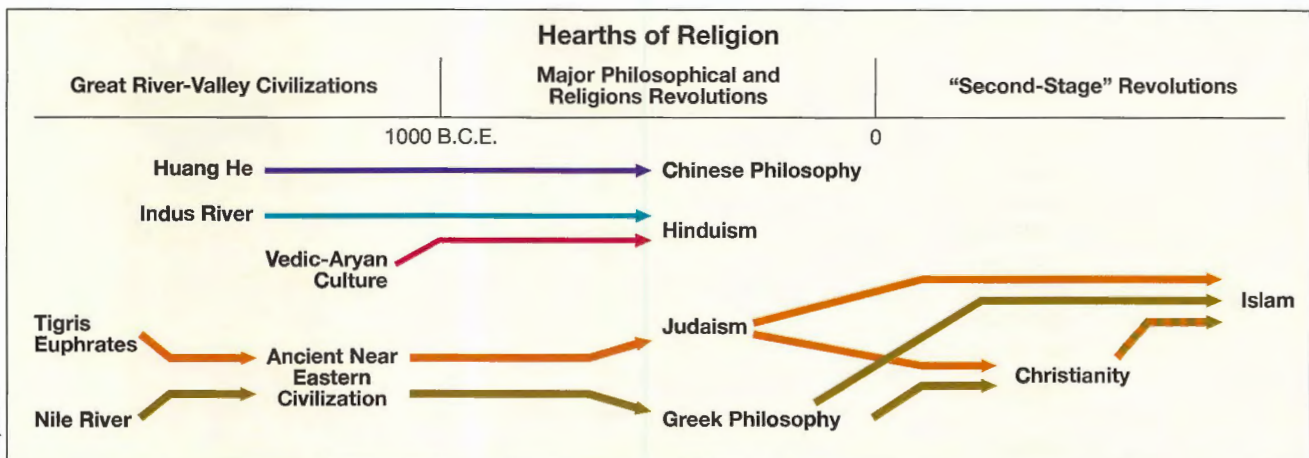


FIGURE 7.8 Hearths of Major World Religions. By 500 BCE, Chinese philosophy, Hinduism, Judaism, and Greek philosophy were established.

The World Map of Religions Today

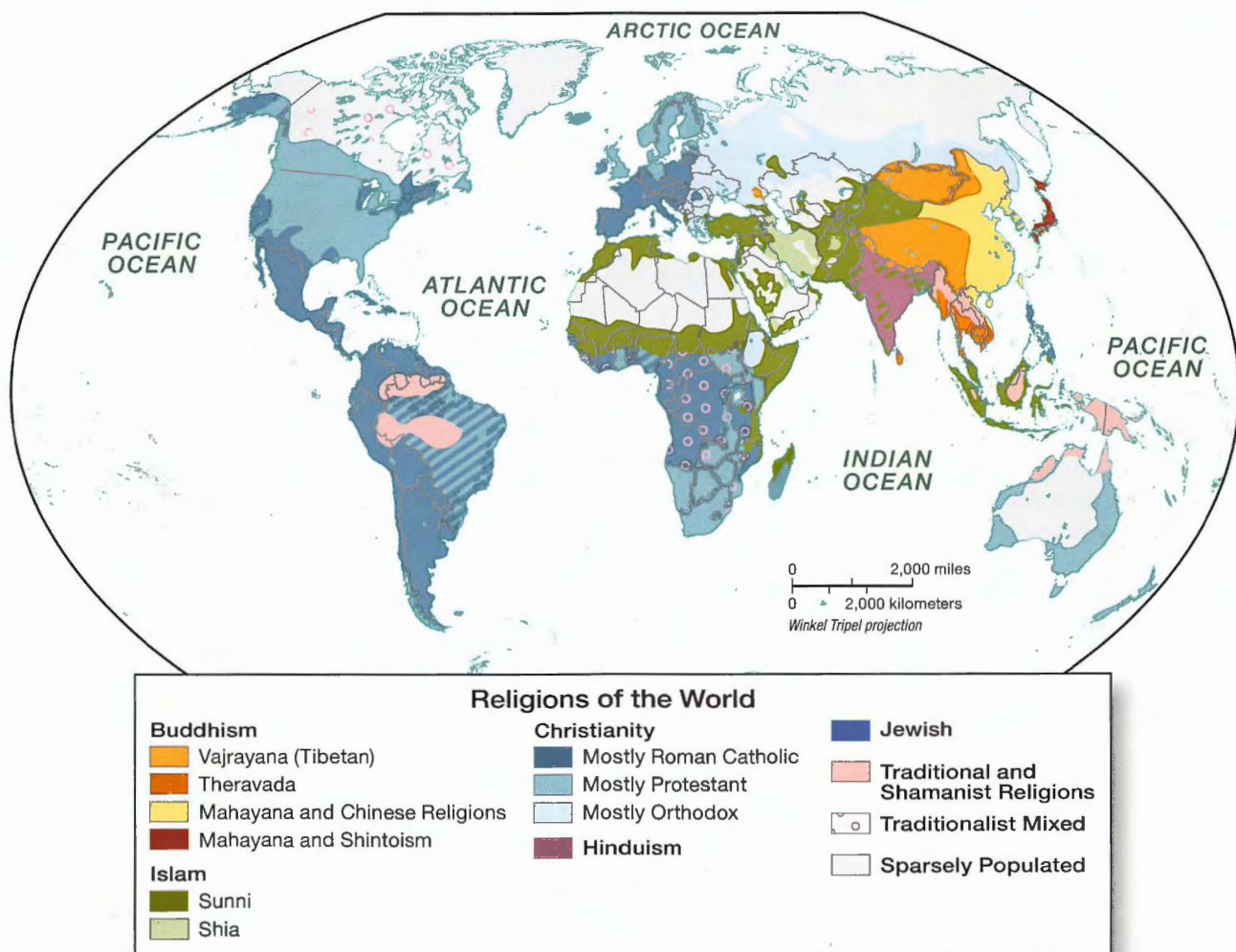
Figure 7.9 shows the distribution of the major religions. Many factors help explain the distributions shown on the map, but all of the widespread religions share one characteristic: They are all universalizing religions. **Universalizing religions** actively seek converts because they view themselves as offering belief systems that are universal—appropriate for everyone. Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism all fall within this category, and their universalizing character helps explain their widespread distribution.

Universalizing religions are relatively few in number and of recent origin. Throughout human history, most religions have not actively sought converts. Rather, each culture or ethnic group had its own religion. In an **ethnic religion**, followers are born into the faith from a given group, while conversion may be possible, converts are not actively sought. Ethnic religions

tend to be spatially clustered—as with traditional religions in Africa and South America (250 million followers). The principal exception is Judaism (14.5 million adherents), an ethnic religion whose followers are widely scattered as a result of forced and voluntary migrations.

A global scale map of religions, like Figure 7.9, is a generalization, and caution must be used when interpreting it. First, the shadings show the major religion in an area and so mask minority religions, many of which have a significant number of followers. India, for example, is depicted as a Hindu region (except in the northwest), but Islam and Sikhism attract millions of adherents there. Of the 1.2 billion people in India, upwards of 172 million are Muslims, which makes India the third largest Muslim country behind Indonesia and Pakistan.

Second, some of the regions shown as belonging to a particular religion are places where faiths have arrived relatively recently. In 1900, neither Christianity nor Islam had many



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FIGURE 7.9 World Religions. The most widespread world religions are universalizing religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Christianity diffused globally through European colonization. Islam diffused early on through conquest and later through trade. Buddhism diffused and mixed with local cultures, creating different regional forms.

followers in sub-Saharan Africa, though Islam had many followers in North Africa. By 2010, the number of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa had grown from 11 million to 234 million, and the number of Christians had grown from 7 million to 470 million.

In these places traditional religious ideas influence the practice of the dominant faith. Many self-declared Christian and Muslim Africans, for example, continue to believe in traditional powers. A 2010 Pew Research survey of 25,000 people in 19 African countries found that “large numbers of Africans actively participate in Christianity or Islam yet also believe in witchcraft, evil spirits, sacrifices to ancestors, traditional religious healers, reincarnation and other elements of traditional African religions.” The survey found that 25 percent of the Christian Africans and 30 percent of the Muslim Africans they interviewed believed in the protective power of sacrifices to spirits or ancestors. The country with the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with this statement was Tanzania with 60 percent, and the lowest was Rwanda with 5 percent.

In Cameroon, 42 percent of those surveyed believed in the protective power of sacrifices to spirits or ancestors. For example, the Bamileke tribe in Cameroon lives in an area colonized by the French, who brought Catholicism to the region. The Bamileke are largely Christian today, but they also continue to practice aspects of their traditional animist religion. Ancestors are still very important, and many believe that ancestors decide everything for them. It is common to place the skull of a deceased male tribal member in the basement of the home of the family’s oldest living male. Birth practices also reflect traditional religious practices. The Bamileke bury the umbilical cord in the ground outside their home so that the baby remembers where he or she came from. Members of the Bamileke tribe also commonly have two weddings today: a Christian ceremony in the church and a traditional tribal ceremony.

Finally, Figure 7.9 fails to capture the growth of secularism, especially in Europe. In some areas many people have moved away from organized religion entirely. France appears on the map as a Roman Catholic country, yet many people in France profess adherence to no particular faith, and only 11 percent of French people say religion is very important in their lives.

Despite these limitations, the map of world religions illustrates important aspects of human geography. The map shows how far Christian religions have diffused (2.3 billion adherents worldwide, according to a 2015 Pew study), the extent of the diffusion of Islam (1.8 billion), the connection between Hinduism (1.1 billion adherents) and India, and the continued importance of Buddhism (500 million followers) in much of Asia.

From the Hearth of South Asia

Hinduism **Hinduism** is the third largest religion after Christianity and Islam, in terms of number of followers. It is one of the oldest religions, dating back over 4000 years. Its roots are in the Indus River Valley of what is today part of Pakistan.

Hinduism is unique in several ways. The religion does not have a single founder, a single theology, or a single origin story. The common account of the history of Hinduism holds that the religion arose in the Indus River cities, including Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Ancient practices included ritual bathing and belief in reincarnation, or at least a long journey after death. Aryans from the northwest invaded (some say migrated) into the Indus region and gave the name *Hinduism* to the diverse religious practices of those who lived along the Indus River.

Despite uncertainties about its beginnings, Hinduism is no longer associated with its hearth in Pakistan. Pakistanis are primarily Muslim and, as Figure 7.9 demonstrates, Indians are primarily Hindu. Archaeologists think that flooding along the Indus may have led to migration of early Hindus eastward to the Ganges River. The Ganges is Hinduism’s sacred river. Hindus regard its ceaseless flow and spiritual healing power as earthly manifestations of God.

Hinduism defies the western classifications of monotheistic vs. polytheistic and of ethnic vs. universalizing. Hinduism looks to be polytheistic because of the presence of many gods. However, many Hindus see their religion as monotheistic. Hindus often believe in a supreme god who is represented by multiple gods. How the supreme god is seen in Hinduism varies regionally, just like all other aspects of Hinduism. Different regions and people of India are tied to different gods. Groups within cities and villages hold festivals for gods who have been important or popular in their region. Who celebrates a certain festival varies, too; it may be a group of women or men, and they may be from a lower caste or higher caste.

Western academics usually define Hinduism today as an ethnic religion because Hindus do not actively seek converts. Yet historical evidence shows Hindus migrating into Southeast Asia and diffusing their religion, as a universalizing religion would, before Buddhism and Islam took root there (**Fig. 7.10**). Although Hinduism is now more of an ethnic religion, it has millions of followers in South Asia, extending beyond India to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

Hinduism does not have a prophet or a single book of scriptures, although most Hindus recognize the sacredness of the Vedas, four original texts with later additions that make up Hinduism’s “Books of Knowledge.” Hinduism is a conglomeration of beliefs characterized by a great diversity of forms and practices.

At the root of Hinduism is *karma*, the idea that the collective impact of physical and mental actions shapes what happens. According to Hindu thought, all beings have souls and are arranged in a hierarchy. The ideal is to move upward in the hierarchy and then escape from the eternal cycle of *reincarnation* through union with Brahman (the universal soul). A soul moves upward or downward according to an individual’s behavior during his or her life. Good deeds and adherence to the faith lead to a higher level in the next life, whereas bad behavior leads to demotion to a lower level. All souls, those of animals as well as humans, participate in this process. The principle of reincarnation is thus a cornerstone of Hinduism.



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FIGURE 7.10 Siem Reap, Cambodia. The extensive number of temples in and around Angkor Wat, Cambodia, include both Hindu and Buddhist symbols. The Bayon temple, shown here, was built with 54 towers, each with 2, 3, or 4 faces like these, to represent a *bodhisattva* (person on the path to enlightenment) known as Avalokiteshvara. A later king converted the empire back to Hinduism and altered the Bayon temple and others by adding Hindu symbols.

Hinduism's doctrines are closely bound to India's caste system, for castes are steps on the universal ladder. The **caste system** locks people into particular social classes and imposes many restrictions, especially in the lowest castes and in those considered beneath the caste system, Dalits. Until a generation ago, Dalits could not enter temples, were excluded from certain schools, and were restricted to performing the most unpleasant tasks. The coming of other religions to India, the work of the famous spiritual and political leader Mahatma Gandhi, affirmative action policies of the Indian government, the expansion of higher education, and the growth of India's economy have helped loosen the social barriers of the caste system. Through affirmative action policies, seats in universities and jobs in government are reserved for peoples belonging to lower castes and to Dalits.

Diffusion of Hinduism Hinduism began in its hearth along the Indus River in modern-day Pakistan and diffused first to the Ganges River and then throughout South Asia and into Southeast Asia. Hinduism first attached itself to traditional faiths and then slowly replaced them. Later, when Islam and Christianity diffused into Hindu areas, Hindu thinkers attempted to integrate some Islamic and Christian teachings

into their own. For example, elements of the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus's sermon in which he described God's love for the poor and the peacemakers) now form part of Hindu preaching, and Christian teachings contributed to the weakening of caste barriers. In other instances, the confrontation between Hinduism and other faiths created faiths bearing elements of each: a **syncretic** religion. The interaction between Hinduism and Islam gave rise to Sikhism, whose followers disapprove of the worship of idols and dislike the caste system, but who retain the concepts of reincarnation and karma.

Given its current character as an ethnic religion, it is not surprising that Hinduism's geographical extent is somewhat limited. Indeed, throughout most of Southeast Asia, Buddhism and Islam overtook the places where Hinduism had diffused during its universalizing period. In overwhelmingly Muslim Indonesia, the island of Bali remains a Hindu outpost (**Fig. 7.11**). Bali became a refuge for Hindu holy men, nobles, and intellectuals during the sixteenth century, when Islam diffused through neighboring Java, which now retains only architectural remnants of its Hindu age. Since then, the Balinese have developed a unique faith, still based on Hindu principles but mixed with elements of Buddhism, animism, and ancestor worship. Religion is extremely important in Bali. Temples and



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.11 Bali, Indonesia. The town of Ubud in central Bali is dotted with Hindu temples. Hinduism arrived in Southeast Asia some 2000 years ago. It was gradually replaced by Buddhism, and then Islam came to the southern parts of the region. Bali became a refuge for believers in Hinduism. It is the one place in Indonesia where Hinduism continues to dominate today.

shrines dominate the cultural landscape, and participation in worship, festivals, and other ceremonies is almost universal.

Outside South Asia and Bali, Hinduism's presence is relatively minor. Migrants from India have brought Hinduism to pockets around the world through relocation diffusion. During colonialism, the British forcibly migrated indentured laborers from their colony in India to their colonies in eastern Africa, Southeast Asia, and Caribbean America (**Fig. 7.12**). More recently, significant numbers of Indian Hindus have voluntarily migrated to Europe and North America, primarily for work in medicine or technology. Because Hinduism is not a universalizing religion today, relocation diffusion has produced pockets rather than regions of Hinduism.

Buddhism **Buddhism** splintered from Hinduism over 2500 years ago, when it developed in a hearth in northern India as a reaction to questions about Hinduism's teachings. For example, reformers questioned Hinduism's strict social hierarchy that protected the privileged. Prince Siddhartha Gautama, heir to a wealthy kingdom in what is now Nepal, was profoundly shaken by the misery he saw around him, which contrasted sharply with the splendor and wealth in which he had been raised. Siddhartha came to be known as Buddha, the enlightened one, and he founded Buddhism. He may have been the first prominent Indian religious leader to speak out against Hinduism's caste system. Salvation, he preached, could be attained by anyone, no matter what his or her caste.

Enlightenment would come through the Eightfold Path, including right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness, and right samadhi (concentration or absorption through meditation).

After Buddha's death in 487 at the age of 80, the faith grew rather slowly until the middle of the third century BCE, when the Emperor Ashoka became a convert. Ashoka was the leader of a large and powerful Indian empire that extended from the Punjab to Bengal and from the Himalayan foothills to Mysore. He ruled his country in accordance with Buddhism and also sent missionaries to carry Buddha's teachings to distant peoples (**Fig. 7.13**).

Over a span of about 10 centuries, Buddhism spread as far south as Sri Lanka and later advanced north into Tibet and east into China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Although Buddhism diffused to distant lands, it began to decline in its hearth in northern India. During Ashoka's rule, there may have been more Buddhists than Hindus in India, but later Hinduism gained ground. Today Buddhism is practiced by relatively few in India, but it thrives in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, Nepal, Tibet, and Korea. Along with other faiths, Buddhism is part of Japanese culture.

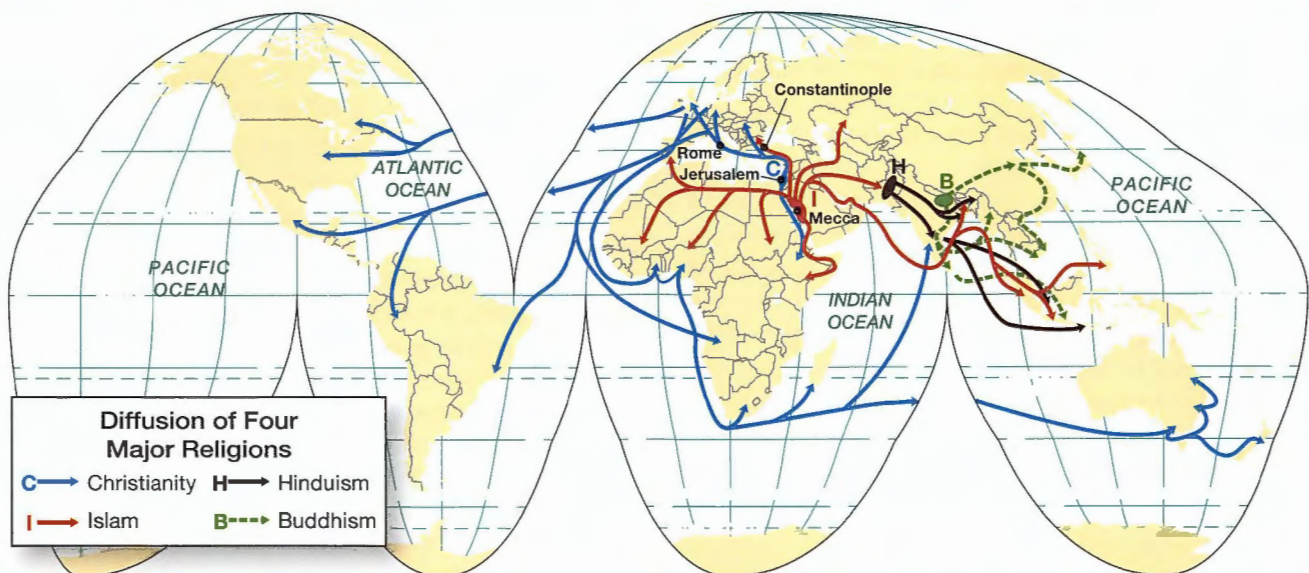
Like Christianity and Islam, Buddhism changed as it grew and diffused. Its branches have some 500 million adherents, with Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism being the largest branches. *Theravada* Buddhism translates as "the way of the elders." It spread first to Sri Lanka, and from there to Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. Theravada Buddhism holds that salvation is a personal matter, achieved through good behavior and religious activities, including periods of service as a monk or nun. Theravada Buddhists tie their teachings to the historical Buddha; they see themselves as followers of true Buddhism.



Photo by A.B. Murphy, © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.12 Singapore. The city-state was a British colony, but in the 19th and early 20th centuries, many Indians came from South Asia to work for the British, and millions of Chinese moved to Singapore as well. The city's landscape bears witness to this migration history. Not far from this Hindu temple is a major Buddhist temple, and churches are found throughout the city as well.

Mahayana Buddhism was the second form of Buddhism established in northern India, and it diffused into China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Mahayana Buddhism translates as "the greater vehicle," and the idea is that more people can achieve enlightenment through its teachings than through the strict teachings of Theravada Buddhism. The Buddha is regarded as a divine savior, and other great Buddhists are regarded as *bodhisattvas* (those who have reached enlightenment) and are worshipped along with the Buddha. Mahayana Buddhists do not serve as monks, but they spend much time



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FIGURE 7.13 Diffusion of Four Major World Religions. The hearths and major routes of diffusion are shown on this map. It does not show smaller diffusion streams: Islam and Buddhism, for example, are gaining strength in North America, although their numbers are still comparatively small.



Sean Pavone/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 7.14 Kyoto, Japan. A torii marking the transition from this world into a sacred space, leads to the Fushimi Inari Taisha shrine, which is part of a shrine complex that dates to 711. The shrine draws several million worshippers over the Japanese New Year.

in personal meditation and worship, believing that achieving enlightenment helps all beings on Earth. Mahayana Buddhism was influenced by indigenous Chinese and Japanese religions, including Taoism and Shintoism.

The third largest branch of Buddhism is *Vajrayana* (Tibetan), which emphasizes the role of the guru or lama as religious and political leader. Vajrayana Buddhism was the last branch to be established, diffusing north from India into Tibet and Mongolia. Gurus in Vajrayana Buddhism use mantras, tantras, and meditation to help followers achieve enlightenment faster than the bodhisattva approach in Mahayana Buddhism, which can take several lifetimes.

Buddhism has become a global religion over the last two centuries, diffusing to many areas of the world, but not always peacefully. Governments have attacked the religion in Cambodia, Mongolia, and Vietnam. Militant Buddhists in Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand have used violence to advance political causes.

Shintoism Buddhism mixed with a local religion in Japan, producing a new ethnic and syncretic religion, **Shintoism**, that includes nature and ancestor worship (**Fig. 7.14**). The Japanese emperor made Shintoism the state religion in the nineteenth century, giving himself the status of divine-right monarch. At the end of World War II, Japan separated Shintoism from the emperor, taking away the state sanctioning of the religion. At the same time, the role of the emperor in Japan was diminished and given more of a ceremonial status. Some 100 million Japanese are Shinto adherents. Most Japanese observe both Buddhism and Shintoism.

From the Hearth of the Huang He Valley

Taoism While the Buddha's teachings were gaining converts in India, two major schools of Chinese philosophy,

Taoism and Confucianism, were forming. The beginnings of **Taoism** are unclear, but scholars trace the religion to an older contemporary of Confucius, Lao-Tsu, who published a volume titled *Tao te ching*, or "Book of the Way." Lao-Tsu focused on the proper form of political rule and on the oneness of humanity and nature. People, he said, should learn to live in harmony with nature. This emphasis gave rise to **Feng Shui**—the art and science of organizing settlements, buildings, or living spaces to channel the natural life forces in favorable ways. According to tradition, nothing should be done to nature without consulting the *geomancers*, people who know the desires of the powerful spirits of ancestors, dragons, tigers, and other beings that occupy the natural world and can give advice on Feng Shui.

Among the Taoist virtues are simplicity, spontaneity, tenderness, and tranquility. Competition, possession, and even the pursuit of knowledge are discouraged. War, punishment, taxation, and ceremonial ostentation are viewed as evils. The best government, according to Lao-Tsu, is the least government. Thousands of people began to follow Taoism. Taoist temples include statues of deities who teach specific lessons, along with the yin-yang symbol to remind followers of the duality of life, and swords to remind adherents that struggle is part of life.

Confucianism Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BCE. His followers used his teachings to construct a blueprint for Chinese civilization in philosophy, government, and education. In religion, Confucius questioned some traditional Chinese beliefs, among them the belief in heaven and the existence of the soul, ancestor worship, sacrificial rites, and shamanism. The real meaning of life lay in the present, not in some future abstract existence, and service to people should supersede service to spirits.

Confucianism is mainly a philosophy of life. Like Taoism, it had great and lasting impacts on Chinese life. Appalled at the suffering of ordinary people at the hands of feudal lords, Confucius urged the poor to assert themselves. He was not a prophet who dealt in promises of heaven and threats of hell. He denied the divine ancestry of China's aristocratic rulers, educated the landless and the weak, disliked supernatural mysticism, and argued that human virtues and abilities, not heritage, should determine a person's position and responsibilities in society.

Confucius came to be revered as a spiritual leader after his death in 479 BCE, and his teachings diffused widely throughout East and Southeast Asia. Followers built temples in his honor all over China. From his writings and sayings emerged the Confucian Classics, 13 texts that became the focus of education in China for 2000 years. Over the centuries, Confucianism (with its Taoist and Buddhist ingredients) became China's state ethic, although the Chinese emperors modified Confucian ideals over time. For example, one emperor made worship of and obedience to the emperor part of Confucianism. In government, law, literature, religion, morality, and many other realms, the Confucian Classics were the guide for Chinese civilization.

Diffusion of Chinese Religions Confucianism diffused early into the Korean Peninsula, Japan, and Southeast Asia, where it has long influenced the practice of Buddhism. More recently, Chinese immigrants brought Chinese religions to parts of Southeast Asia and helped to introduce their principles in Europe, North America, and beyond.

The diffusion of Chinese religions even within China has been tempered by the Chinese government's efforts to suppress religion. The communist government that took control of China in 1949 attempted to ban religion from public practice. But after guiding all aspects of Chinese education, culture, and society for 2000 years, Confucianism did not fade easily from the Chinese consciousness.

Feng Shui is also still a powerful force today, even in burial traditions. Where Chinese who follow Feng Shui have the means to buy large burial plots, entire cemeteries and individual burial plots are aligned with Feng Shui teachings (Fig. 7.15). Even in more densely populated places with large Chinese populations, like Hong Kong and Singapore, burial practices follow Feng Shui. Geographer Elizabeth Teather studied the rise of cremation and columbaria (resting places for ashes) in Hong Kong. She investigated the impact Feng Shui has had on city structures and the continued influence of Chinese religious beliefs on burial practices. Traditional Chinese beliefs favor a coffin and burial plot aligned with Feng Shui teachings. However, with the growth of China's population, the government has encouraged cremation in recent decades. Burial plots in cities like Hong Kong are scarce and their costs are high.

Teather explains that although cremation is on the rise in Hong Kong, traditional Chinese beliefs are dictating the final resting places of ashes. Most Chinese people have a "cultural need to keep ancestral remains appropriately stored and in a single place." In North America and Europe, many families scatter the ashes of a loved one, but a Chinese family tends to keep the ashes together in a single identifiable space so that family members can visit the ancestor during annual commemoration periods. Teather describes how Feng Shui masters are consulted in the building of columbaria and how Feng Shui helps dictate the price placed on the niches for sale in the columbaria, with the lowest prices for the niches near the "grime of the floor."

From the Hearth of the Eastern Mediterranean

Judaism Judaism grew out of the belief system of the ancient Hebrews living in Southwest Asia about 4000 years ago. The roots of the Jewish religious tradition lie in the teachings of Abraham (from Ur), who is credited with uniting his people to worship only one god. According to Jewish teaching, Abraham and God had a covenant in which Jews agreed to worship only one God and God agreed to protect Abraham and his Hebrew tribe, the Jews. Judaism teaches rituals including daily prayer,

observance of the Sabbath, and dietary practices. Judaism instructs followers to love their neighbor, pursue justice, and to give to charity.

Moses led the Jews from Egypt, where they had been enslaved, to Canaan. Over time, Jews built a central place of life and worship in and around Jerusalem, but then fell victim to a series of foreign powers. The Romans destroyed their holy city in 70 CE and drove the Jews out of Jerusalem and the holy land. Jews retained only a small presence in the holy land until the late nineteenth century.

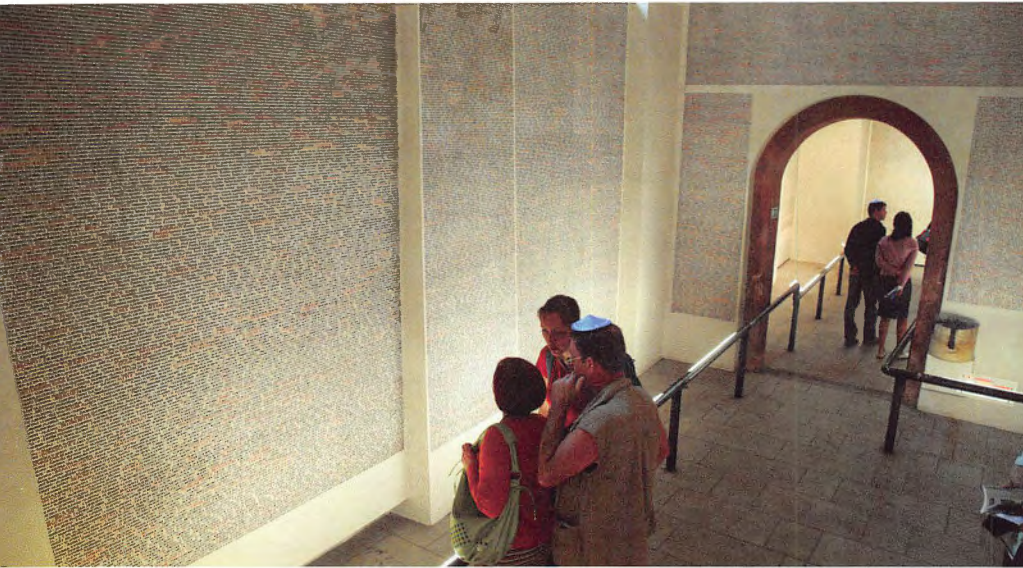
Our map shows that because of centuries of migration and persecution, Judaism is not limited to contiguous territories (Fig. 7.16). Followers of Judaism are distributed throughout parts of the Middle East and North Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Europe, and parts of North and South America (Fig. 7.9). According to *The Atlas of Religion*, of all the world's 14.5 million Jews, 39.3 percent live in the United States, 44.5 percent live in Israel, and then in rank order, less than 5 percent live in France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Russia. Judaism is one of the world's most influential religions, although it claims only 14.5 million adherents.

During the nineteenth century, a Reform movement developed to adjust Judaism and its practices to current times. However, many, fearing that reform would cause a loss of identity and cohesion, became part of an Orthodox movement that



Aliaksandr Mazurkevich/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 7.15 Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand. This Chinese cemetery follows the principles of Feng Shui. The shape of the graves, the mountains in the background, and the way the grass is maintained are following principles of Feng Shui.



Kumar Sriskandan/Alamy Stock Photo

the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim were persecuted, denied citizenship, driven into ghettos, and massacred.

In the face of constant threats, Jews were sustained by extraordinary efforts to maintain a sense of community, a focus on the Torah, and a desire to return to the Holy Land. The desire for a homeland for the Jewish people in the Holy Land developed into the ideology of **Zionism**, a movement that began in the nineteenth century.

The horrors of the Nazi campaign against Jews from the 1930s through World War II, when the Nazis killed some 6 million Jews, persuaded many Jews to adopt Zionism. Jews from all over the world concluded that their only hope of survival was to establish a strongly defended country in the

FIGURE 7.16 Prague, Czechia. The Pinkas Synagogue was built in 1535 and founded by a prominent Jewish family in Prague. The Jewish quarter in Prague was part of a vibrant ethnic neighborhood with thousands of families that worshiped in several synagogues. After the Holocaust, the Pinkas Synagogue was transformed into a memorial for 80,000 Jews from the area who were killed during the Holocaust. Names of the victims line the walls of the interior of the Pinkas.

sought to retain traditional practices and ideas (**Fig. 7.17**). Between those two poles is a sector that is less strictly orthodox, but not as liberal as that of the reformers. It is known as the Conservative movement. Significant differences in ideas and practices are associated with these three branches, but Judaism is united by a strong sense of ethno-cultural distinctiveness.

Diffusion of Judaism The large-scale migration of Jews after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem is known as the **diaspora**—a term that now signifies the spatial dispersion of any ethnic group. The Jews who went north into central Europe came to be known as *Ashkenazim*, and the Jews who traveled across North Africa and into the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) are called *Sephardim*. For centuries, both

holy land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Aided by sympathetic members of the international community, the Zionist goal of a Jewish state became a reality in 1948. The United Nations passed a resolution carving out two states, Israel and Palestine, along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

While adherents to Judaism live across the world, many Jews have moved to Israel since its establishment in 1948. The Israeli government passed the Law of Return in 1950, which recognizes the rights of every Jew to immigrate to Israel. Since the fall of communism in the former Soviet Union in 1989, more than 1 million people have migrated from the former Soviet Union to Israel. Jewish migration to Israel continues. In 2018, nearly 30,000 Jews migrated to Israel, including 10,500 from Russia, 6500 from Ukraine, and 3500 from the United States and Canada.

Author Field Note Eating Kosher in Long Beach, New York

“The Orthodox Jewish community in Long Beach, New York, is large enough that the Dunkin’ Donuts on Beech Street is kosher. Supervised by a rabbi, kosher-prepared foods follow strict requirements of what foods can be eaten, what can be eaten together, how animals are slaughtered, and how foods are prepared. In addition to the kosher Dunkin’ Donuts, another sign of the large Orthodox Jewish community in Long Beach is the Eruv, a line encircling the town that distinguishes private space from public space. The Eruv is not noticeable, unless you are looking for it, as it generally follows utility lines and the boardwalk. But the Eruv creates a private space that allows Orthodox Jews to carry keys, foods, and even babies on the Sabbath.”

— E. H. Fouberg

Photo by E.H. Fouberg, © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



FIGURE 7.17 Long Beach, New York.

Christianity Christianity began in the same hearth in the Mediterranean as Judaism; indeed, it was an offshoot of Judaism. Like Judaism, Christianity is a monotheistic religion that stems from a single founder, in this case, Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem and traveled through the holy land preaching, performing miracles, and gaining followers. Christian teachings hold that Jesus is the son of God, placed on Earth to teach people how to live according to God's plan. Christians celebrate Easter as the day Jesus rose from the dead after being crucified three days prior (Good Friday). According to Christian teaching, the crucifixion of Jesus fulfilled an ancient prophecy and gave Jesus's followers the promise of eternal life.

Christianity took root in various cities, most importantly Rome and Byzantium (later Constantinople, now Istanbul in Turkey). At the end of the third century, the Roman Emperor Diocletian attempted to keep the empire together by dividing it for purposes of government. Then, when the Roman Empire collapsed, western Europe, centered on Rome, transitioned into the Middle Ages, while eastern Europe became the new focus of the Byzantine Empire (Fig. 7.18).

The split into west and east at the end of the Roman Empire became a cultural fault line over time. It was formally recognized in 1054 CE when the **Roman Catholic Church** formally separated from the **Eastern Orthodox Christian Church**.

Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church is one of the three major branches of Christianity. It suffered historical blows, however, first when the Ottoman Turks expanded into south-eastern Europe in the late fourteenth century and took Constantinople in 1453, and then when the Soviet Union suppressed Eastern Orthodox churches in the twentieth century. During the Soviet period, many churches were torn down, and most others were either boarded up or converted to practical uses such as storage sheds and even livestock barns.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, however, the Russian Orthodox Church revived, and many churches were rebuilt and reopened. Within 10 years, Vladimir Putin rose to power in part by forging a close alliance with leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church. Putin regularly refers to the importance of the Orthodox Church to Russian society.

The Roman Catholic Church claims the most adherents of all Christian denominations (more than 1 billion). Centered in Rome, Catholic theology teaches the leadership of the pope in interpreting Jesus's teachings and in navigating through the modern world. The power of the Roman Church peaked in the Middle Ages, when the church controlled sources of knowledge and worked with monarchs to rule much of western Europe.

During the Middle Ages, Roman Catholic authorities often wielded their power autocratically and distanced themselves from the masses. Moreover, the widespread diffusion of the Black Death caused many Europeans to question the role of religion. The Roman Catholic Church also experienced divisions within its hierarchy, as evidenced by the Western Schism during the early 1300s, which at one point resulted in three people claiming to be the pope.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others challenged fundamental teachings of Roman Catholicism, leading to the Protestant Reformation—*protesting* the power of the church's leader and seeking to *reform* the teachings of the church. **Protestant** denominations, including the Lutheran church, the Church of England, and the Methodist church, compose the third major branch of Christianity. Like Buddhism's challenge to Hinduism, the Protestant Reformation affected Roman Catholicism, which answered some of the challenges to its theology and political structures in the Counter-Reformation.

Christianity is the largest and most widely dispersed religion. Christian churches claim more than 2.3 billion adherents,

including some 565 million in Europe and Russia, 804 million in the Americas, 516 million in sub-Saharan Africa, and 285 million in Asia. Christians thus account for nearly 40 percent of the members of the world's major religions.

Roman Catholicism continues to have the largest number of followers. Figure 7.9 reveals the strength of Roman Catholicism in parts of Europe and North America, as well as throughout much of Middle and South America. By contrast, Protestant churches dominate in significant parts of North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Eastern Orthodoxy attracts as many as 250 million adherents—mostly in Europe, Russia, and its neighboring states, but it has some presence in Africa (where a major cluster exists in Ethiopia) and North America.



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FIGURE 7.18 The Roman Empire, Divided into West and East. This map reflects the split in the empire, with the western empire focusing on Rome and the eastern empire focusing on Constantinople.

Author Field Note Hearing Familiar Hymns in Vaitape, Bora Bora

“I found myself on the tiny South Pacific island of Bora Bora on a Sunday morning. As I strolled around the island’s largest city, Vaitape, I heard Christian hymns being sung by a congregation—sounds that transported me back to places halfway around the world. Rounding a bend, I came upon this church, built by French missionaries about 10,000 miles (16,000 km) from their homeland. The impact missionaries had on this and many other South Pacific islands has been profound and long lasting.”

– A. B. Murphy



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.19 Vaitape, Bora Bora.

Diffusion of Christianity Christianity spread through contagious, hierarchical, stimulus, and relocation diffusion. In western Europe, Paul of Tarsus brought Christianity through his travels, creating secondary hearths. From those new hearths in Europe, Christianity diffused contagiously. As Christianity diffused to more remote locations over time, stimulus diffusion occurred when Christianity mixed with local religions and re-adopted **sacred places** as Christian in places like Ireland. Later still, European colonization brought Christianity to the Americas with migration, spurring relocation diffusion.

In the case of the Eastern Orthodox faith, contagious diffusion took place from Constantinople to the north and north-east. The Protestant branch of Christianity began in several parts of western Europe and expanded to some degree through contagious diffusion. Much of its spread in northern and central Europe, however, was through hierarchical diffusion. First, political leaders would convert—sometimes to escape control from Rome—and then the population would gradually come to accept the new state religion.

The worldwide diffusion of Christianity (Fig. 7.10) occurred during the era of European colonialism beginning in the sixteenth century—often through relocation diffusion. Spain invaded and colonized Middle and South America, bringing the Catholic faith to those areas. Protestant refugees, especially those oppressed for their beliefs, came to North America in large numbers.

The Christian faith today has over 33,000 denominations. Hundreds of these proselytize (purposefully spread religious teachings) around the world. This effort creates a complex geographical distribution of Christians within the spaces that Figure 7.9 shows as Christian. Christian missionaries created an almost worldwide network of missionaries during the colonial period that endures and continues to expand today (**Fig. 7.19**).

Islam Like Christianity, **Islam**, the youngest of the major religions, also had a single founder—in this case Muhammad, who was born in Mecca in 571 CE. According to Muslim belief, Muhammad received the truth directly from Allah (God) in a series of revelations that began when the Prophet was about 42 years old. During these revelations, Muhammad spoke the verses of the Qur’an (Koran), the Islamic holy book.

Muhammad admired the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity; he believed that Allah had already revealed himself through other prophets, including Judaism’s Abraham and Christianity’s Jesus. However, Muhammad came to be viewed as the one true prophet among Muslims.

After his visions, Muhammad doubted that he was chosen to be a prophet, but was convinced by further revelations and subsequently devoted his life to fulfilling the divine commands. In those days the eastern Mediterranean and the Arabian Peninsula were in religious and social disarray, with Christianity and Judaism coexisting with polytheistic religions. As Muhammad’s opponents began to combat his efforts, the Prophet was forced to flee Mecca, where he had been raised, for Medina, and he continued his work from this new base.

Many principles of Islam are revisions of Judaic and Christian beliefs and traditions. The central principle is that there is one god, who occasionally reveals himself through prophets, such as Abraham, Jesus, and Muhammad. Another is that earthly matters are profane (not sacred); only Allah is pure. Allah’s will is absolute; he is omnipotent and omniscient. Muslims believe that all humans live in a world that was created for them, but only until the final judgment day.

Muslims observe the “five pillars” of Islam (repeated expressions of the basic creed, frequent prayer, a month of

daytime fasting, almsgiving, and, if possible, at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in one's lifetime). The faith dictates behavior in other spheres of life as well. Islam forbids alcohol, smoking, and gambling. In Islamic settlements, people build mosques to observe the Friday prayer (Friday being the holy day); mosques also serve as social gathering places (**Fig. 7.20**).

Islam, like all other major religions, divided over time—most obviously into **Sunni** and **Shi'ite** (Shiah) branches. The Sunni branch is much larger and includes various subgroups; the smaller Shi'ite branch is concentrated in Iran and surrounding areas. Smaller sects of Islam include Wahhabis, Sufis, Salafists, Alawites, Alevis, and Yazeedis.

The division between Sunni and Shi'ite occurred almost immediately after Muhammad's death and was associated with conflict over his succession. Muhammad died in 632 CE. To some, the rightful heir to the Prophet's caliphate (area of influence) was Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali. Others preferred different candidates who were not necessarily related to Muhammad. The ensuing conflict was marked by great upheaval and lasting doctrinal disagreements. The Sunni Muslims eventually prevailed in many places, but the Shi'ite Muslims, the followers of Ali, survived in some areas.

Early in the sixteenth century, an Iranian (Persian) ruling dynasty made Shi'ite Islam the only legitimate faith of that empire—which extended into what is now southern Azerbaijan, southeastern Iraq, and western Afghanistan and Pakistan. This gave the Shi'ite branch unprecedented strength and created the foundations of its modern-day culture region centered on the state of Iran.

Shi'ite veneration of the descendants of Muhammad has contributed to a much more centralized and hierarchical clergy than in the Sunni world. In Shi'ite areas, the religious leaders are called imams. Shi'ites treated the early imams as the sole source of true knowledge, and their successors continue to have great social and political authority. Sunni Islam is less centralized; an imam is simply a religious leader or scholar. Nonetheless, the Sunni branch has given rise to stricter, in some cases radically conservative, offshoots of the religion.

Diffusion of Islam By the time of Muhammad's death in 632 CE, Muhammad and his followers had converted kings on the Arabian Peninsula to Islam. The kings then used their missionaries, traders, and armies to spread the faith across the Arabian Peninsula through

conversion and conquest. Moving west, Islam diffused across North Africa and beyond.

By the early ninth century, the Muslim world included emirates extending from Egypt to Morocco, a caliphate occupying most of Spain and Portugal, and a unified realm encompassing Arabia, the Middle East, Iran, and most of what is today Pakistan. Ultimately, the Muslim realm extended from Morocco to India and from Turkey to Ethiopia. Later, as Muslim traders settled trading ports in Southeast Asia (**Fig. 7.21**), they established new secondary hearths of Islam, from which the religion spread through contagious diffusion. Recent diffusion of Islam into Europe (beyond Spain and Portugal), South Africa, and the Americas has largely been from migration and relocation diffusion.

Today, Islam, with more than 1.8 billion followers, ranks second to Christianity in global number of adherents. It is the fastest growing of the world's major religions, dominating in northern Africa and Southwest Asia, extending into Central Asia, the former Soviet Union, and China, and including clusters in Indonesia, Bangladesh, and the southern Philippines. Islam is strongly represented in India, with over 172 million adherents, and in North Africa, where nearly two-thirds of the population is Muslim. Islam has followers in Bosnia and Albania, and it has substantial numbers of adherents in the United States and western Europe (**Fig. 7.22**).

The largest Muslim country is actually outside of the Middle East: Indonesia (in Southeast Asia), where more than 87 percent of the population is Muslim. In fact, of Islam's 1.8 billion followers, more than half live outside Southwest Asia and North Africa.



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.20 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The sprawling National Mosque serves as a landscape reminder of Islam's dominant religious role in the country.

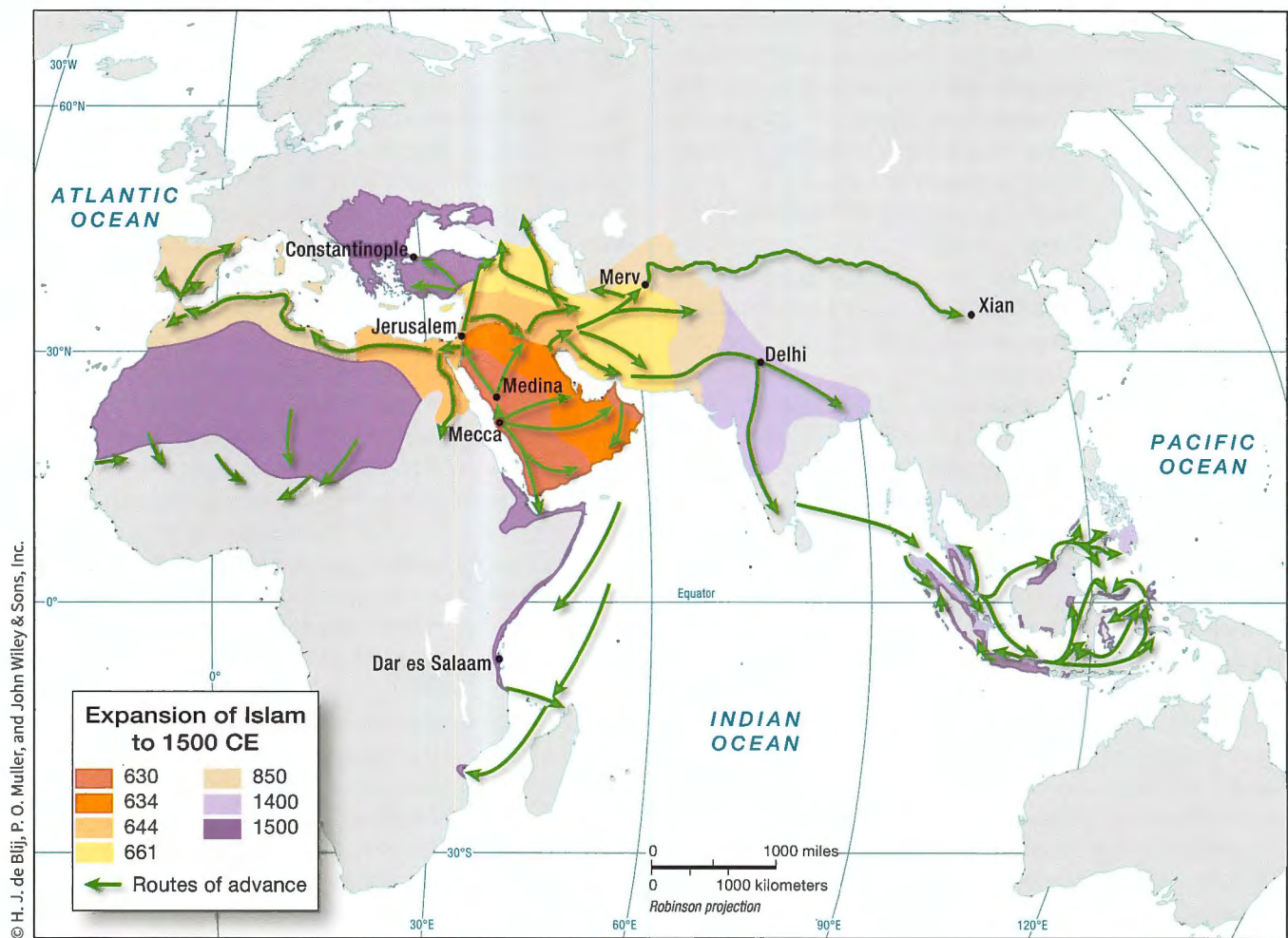


FIGURE 7.21 Diffusion of Islam. The map shows the diffusion of Islam from 600 CE to 1500 CE. The hearth of Islam was established by 630. By 644, Islam diffused into Egypt and the Levant. By 900, Islam reached Spain, North Africa, and Central Asia. By 1400, Islam reached Indonesia through trade. Islam diffused into Southeast Europe, South Asia, and North Africa by 1500.



Photo by A.B. Murphy, © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.22 London, England. This mosque in East London serves the United Kingdom's largest Muslim community. It attests to the scale of Islamic migration to the United Kingdom since World War II. Global religions are not grouped into neat geographical spaces; they are now found side by side all over the world.

Beyond the Major Religious Hearths

Indigenous and Shamanist Religions Figure 7.9 identifies large areas in Africa and several other parts of the world as “Indigenous and Shamanist.” **Indigenous religions** are local in scope (they are ethnic religions), they typically treat nature as having divine properties, and they are passed down through family units and groups (tribes) of indigenous peoples. We do not group indigenous religions together because they share a common belief system, but because they share the same pressures from the diffusion of global religions—and they have survived (**Fig. 7.23**).

Shamanism is a faith in which a community places great trust in a shaman—a religious leader, teacher, healer, and visionary. Shamans have appeared at various times in Africa, Native America, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, and these appearances had similar effects on the cultures of widely scattered peoples. Unlike Christianity or Islam, shamanist faiths are small and comparatively isolated, most likely because they have not developed elaborate bureaucracies and do not send representatives abroad.

Shamanism is a traditional religion, an intimate part of a local culture and society, but not all traditional religions are shamanist. Many traditional African religions involve beliefs in a god as creator and provider, in divinities both superhuman and human, in spirits, and in a life hereafter. Christianity and Islam have converted some followers of traditional religions, but as the map indicates, indigenous religions still dominate in significant areas (Fig. 7.9).

The Rise of Secularism A world map of religion can be misleading because many people in areas shown as Christian or Buddhist do not in fact follow those faiths. Even the most careful analysis of religious membership produces about 4 billion followers of major religions—in a global population of over 7 billion. Hundreds of millions of peoples are not counted in this figure because they practice traditional religions. But even when they are taken into account, additional hundreds of millions do not practice a religion at all.

Even church membership figures do not accurately reflect the number of active members of a church. When polled about their churchgoing activities, fewer than 10 percent in Scandinavia reported frequent attendance. In France and Great Britain, around 10 percent of the population reported attending church at least once a month. The lack of active members underscores the rise of **secularism**—indifference to or rejection of organized religious affiliations and ideas.

The level of secularism throughout much of the Christian and Buddhist worlds varies from country to country, as it does regionally within countries. In North America, for instance, a survey published in 2018 asked whether people felt religion was very important to them. Only 27 percent of Canadians agreed with this statement, whereas 53 percent of Americans did.

The French government recently banned the wearing of overt religious symbols in public schools. The stated goal was to remove the “disruption” of Muslim girls wearing hijabs (head scarves), Jewish boys wearing yarmulke (skullcaps), and Christian students wearing large crosses to school. The French government stated that banning all religious symbols was the only egalitarian approach. In other cases, however, the state targets a more specific population. That was the case in 2009 when the Swiss voted to ban the construction of new minarets.

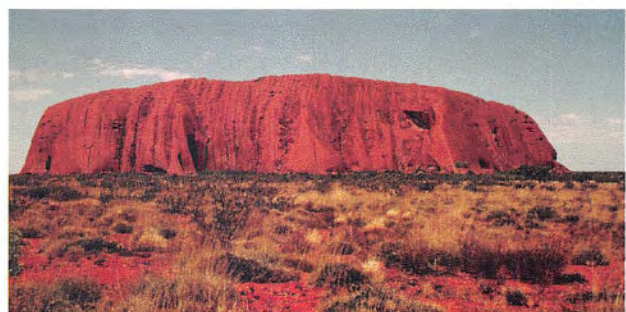
Polls showing responses to questions about the importance of religion do not give us the complete picture. The 27 percent of Canadians who state that religion is very important to them would be much lower if we removed recent or second-generation immigrants from the tally. Immigrants often hold on to their religions more intensely, in part to help them ease into a new place and to link to a community in their new home. Thus, Buddhists and Hindus on Canada’s west coast and Muslims in the eastern part of Canada have a higher rate of adherence to their religion than many long-term residents.

Author Field Note Climbing Uluru, Australia

“Arriving at the foot of erosion-carved Uluru just before sunrise, I do not find it surprising that this giant monolith, towering over the Australian desert, is a sacred place to local Aboriginal peoples. Throughout the day, the changing sun angle alters its colors until, toward sunset, it turns a fiery red that yields to a bright orange. At night it looms against the moonlit, starry sky, silent sentinel of the gods. Just two years before this, my first visit in 1987, the Australian government had returned Ayers Rock (named by European settlers after a South Australian political leader) to Aboriginal ownership and reclaimed its original name, Uluru. Visitors continued to be allowed to climb to the 1100 feet (335 m) to the top, from where the view over the desert is awesome.

My day had begun eventfully when a three-foot lizard emerged from under my motel-room bed, but the chain-assisted climb was no minor challenge either. At the base, you are warned to be ‘in good shape’ and some would-be climbers don’t make it, but the rewards of persisting are dramatic. Uluru’s iron-rich sandstone strata have been sculpted into gullies and caves, the latter containing Aboriginal carvings and paintings, and on the broad summit there are plenty of places where you can sit quietly to contemplate historic, religious, and cultural significance of a place that mattered thousands of years before globalization reached Australia.”

– H. J. de Blij



© H. J. de Blij

FIGURE 7.23 Uluru, Australia.



Photo by A.B. Murphy, © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.24 Leeds, England. A couple of decades ago, the building shown here was a functioning church. As the congregation shrank, it could no longer stay open. The building was still in good shape and its location near a major university inspired an entrepreneur to turn it into a club. Since its purchase in 2005, the former church has been home to two nightclubs: first Halo and now Church.

In some countries, antireligious ideologies have contributed to the decline of organized religion. Maoist China's drive against Confucianism had sweeping effects, and China continues to suppress organized religious practices, as reports of religious persecution continue to emanate from the country. As we have seen, the case of the Soviet Union is different; despite decades of religious suppression there, church membership rebounded after the collapse of communist rule.

Other forces have led to the decline in organized religion in many of the areas labeled as Catholic and Protestant in Figure 7.9. From North America to western Europe to Australia, congregations have shrunk (Fig. 7.24). Even if people continue to be members of a church, their participation in church activities has declined.

The growth of secularism is more muted in strongly Catholic areas outside North America and Europe. The Catholic Church remains strong in the South and Middle America, although it has lost some followers in response to its teachings on restricting birth control and the church's sexual abuse scandals. While some of those who have left the Catholic Church have become more secular, many others are turning toward evangelical Christian denominations.

Traditions associated with religion are also weakening throughout much of the Christian world. For example, there was a time when almost all shops and businesses were closed on Sundays, preserving the day for sermons, rest, and introspection. Today, shopping centers are mostly open as usual, and Sunday is increasingly devoted to business and personal affairs. To witness the rise of secularism among Christians in America firsthand, explore your town, city, or suburb on a Sunday morning: How many people are wearing casual clothes and hanging out at the coffee shop reading newspapers, and how many people are attending church services?

Even as secularism is on the rise in the United States, many people remain deeply rooted in their religious beliefs—sometimes more fervently than ever. Religious traditions are stronger in some cultural regions of the United States than in others. Sunday observance continues at a high level, for example, in the Mormon culture area. Even though mainline churches are closing churches in some parts of the United States and western Europe, many evangelical and other alternative churches are growing rapidly. Entire industries, such as Christian music and Christian publications, depend on the growing commitment of many Americans and Europeans to their religion.

The trend toward secularism is not confined to the Christian world. Secularism is also growing in South Korea, where half of the population does not profess adherence to any particular religion. But although major faiths are experiencing an overall decline in followers, several smaller religions are growing in importance, including Baha'i, Cao Dai, Jainism, and the Spiritual Church of Brazil.

TC Thinking Geographically

Religions can spread through contagious, hierarchical, stimulus, and relocation **diffusion**. Think about Chapter 2 and the **population pyramids** of Europe. Determine how the aging of Europe is impacting Christianity in the region. Then, consider how modern forces of contagious, hierarchical, stimulus, and relocation diffusion are impacting patterns of religions and secularism in Europe.

7.3 Explain How the Cultural Landscape Reflects Religious Ideas and Practices.

Religion has a clear presence in the cultural landscape—in houses of worship such as churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples; cemeteries dotted with religious symbols and icons; and stores designated for sales of religious goods. When adherents voluntarily travel to a sacred site to pay respects or participate in a ritual, the travel is called a **pilgrimage**. Pilgrimage routes are evident in the cultural landscape. Geographers who study religion are interested in pilgrimage and its impacts on place, people, religion, culture, and environment.

Sacred Sites

Sacred sites are places or spaces that people infuse with religious meaning. Members of a religious group may define a space or place as sacred out of either reverence or fear. If a sacred site is revered, adherents may make a pilgrimage to the site for rejuvenation, reflection, healing, or fulfillment of a religious commitment.

In ancient history, physical geographic landscape features such as buttes, mountain peaks, and rivers were often chosen as sacred sites. As universalizing religions diffused across the world, many sacred sites were abandoned or altered. Geographer Mary Lee Nolan studied Irish sacred sites and observed that many of the remote physical geographic features of the Irish landscape were sacred to the Celtic people (**Fig. 7.25**). When Roman Catholicism diffused to Ireland, however, the Catholic Church usurped many of these features, infusing them

with Christian meaning. Nolan described the marriage of Celtic sacred sites and Christian meaning:

The early Celtic Church was a unique institution, more open to syncretism of old and new religious traditions than was the case in many other parts of Europe. Old holy places, often in remote areas, were “baptized” in the new religion or given new meaning through their historical, or more often legendary, association with Celtic saints. Such places were characterized by sacred site features such as heights, insularity, or the presence of holy water sources, trees, or stones.

Nolan contrasted Irish sacred sites with those in continental Europe, where sacred sites were typically built in urban, accessible areas. In continental Europe, Nolan found that the bones of saints or images were typically brought to a place to give it religious meaning.

In many societies, special features in the physical landscape remain sacred to religious groups. Yet access to these features varies depending on ownership, environmental regulations, and the need or desire to control the flow of visitors. Geographer Kari Forbes-Boyte (1999) studied Bear Butte, a site sacred to members of the Lakota and Cheyenne people in the northern Great Plains of the United States. The site became a state park in the 1960s. Today both Lakota and Cheyenne people use Bear Butte in religious ceremonies, but it is also a popular recreational site. Nearby Devils Tower, a national

Guest Field Note Tying Cloth Offerings from Ireland to India to Eastern Russia

Mary Lee Nolan
Oregon State University

At St. Declan’s Holy Well in Ireland, I found a barbed wire fence substituting for the more traditional thorn tree as a place to hang scraps of clothing as offerings. This tradition, which died out long ago in most parts of Continental Europe, was one of many aspects of Irish pilgrimage that led me to speculate on ‘Galway-to-the-Ganges’ survival of very old religious customs on the extreme margins of an ancient Indo-European cultural realm. My subsequent fieldwork focused on contemporary European pilgrimage, but my curiosity about the geographical extent of certain ancient pilgrimage themes lingered. While traveling in Asia, I found many similarities among sacred sites across religions. Each religion has formation stories, explanations of how particular sites, whether Buddhist monasteries or Irish wells, were recognized as sacred. Many of these stories have similar elements. And, in 1998, I traveled across Russia from the remote Kamchatka Peninsula to St. Petersburg. Imagine my surprise to find the tradition

of hanging rag offerings on trees alive and well all the way across the Russian Far East and Siberia, at least as far as Olkon Island in Lake Baikal.



FIGURE 7.25 Ardmore, Ireland.



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.26 Jerusalem, Israel. The Western Wall (foreground, right), which is sacred to Jews, stands right next to the Dome of the Rock (background, left), which is sacred to Muslims.

monument, experiences the same pull between religious use by American Indians and recreational use by tourists.

Places such as Bear Butte and Devils Tower become sites of contention when one group sees the sites as sacred and another group does not. In other places, sacred sites may become contentious when adherents of more than one religious faith see them as significant. How a common sacred site is shared or debated depends on the larger geographical and historical context of political, economic and social connections between the groups. Vulture Peak in Rajgir (northeastern India), for example, is holy to Buddhists because it is the site where Buddha first proclaimed the Heart Sutra, a very important canon of Buddhism. Hindus and Jains also consider the site holy because they hold Buddha to be a god or prophet. The site has created little discord among religious groups, and pilgrims of all faiths peacefully congregate in the place year after year.

Sacred Sites of Jerusalem The ancient city of Jerusalem is sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jews saw Jerusalem as sacred and they maintained control over the site from 1200 BCE to the time of the diaspora. After the diaspora, Jerusalem remained sacred to Jews even though they did not control it. The Zionist movement recognized the sacredness of Jerusalem and sought a return of Jews to the Holy Land.

The most important sacred site for Jews is the Western Wall, at the edge of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (**Fig. 7.26**). The Temple Mount occupies the top of a modest hill where, according to the Torah (the sacred book of Judaism that is also part of the Old Testament of Christianity's sacred book, the Bible), Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac. On this hill, Jews built two temples, both destroyed by invaders. The Western Wall is all that remains of the second temple, and Jews gather there to remember the story of Abraham and the destruction of the

temples, and to offer prayers. Both men and women pray at the site, but they do so separately, and the area reserved for women is fairly small. Beyond personal prayer, the sacred site is a place to mourn and recognize the suffering of Jews over time.

For Christians, Jerusalem is sacred both because of the sacrifice Abraham was willing to make of his son at the Temple Mount and because Jesus's crucifixion took place just outside the city's walls. Jesus was then buried in a tomb that Roman emperor Constantine later marked with a basilica that is now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (**Fig. 7.27**). Christians believe that Jesus rose from that tomb on the day marked by the Easter celebration. For centuries the Roman, and then the Byzantine, Empires controlled the city and protected the sacred site.

In the seventh century, Muslim armies took control of Jerusalem from the Byzantine Empire. Muslims constructed a mosque



Mazur Travel/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 7.27 Jerusalem, Israel. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is sacred to Christians, who believe it is the site where Jesus Christ was resurrected. This structure inside the church is the tomb of Jesus.

called the Dome of the Rock adjacent to the Western Wall to mark the site where Muslims believe Muhammad visited heaven on his Night Journey in 621 (**Fig. 7.26**). The site Jews call Temple Mount is called al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) by Muslims.

In the Middle Ages, Christians and Muslims fought the Crusades over the question of who should control the sacred land of Jerusalem. Between 1095 and 1199, European political and religious leaders organized a series of Crusades to retake the holy land. The first Christian crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099, and Christians then ruled the city for almost 100 years. As the first crusaders traveled across what is modern-day Turkey on their way to Jerusalem, they also left conquests in their wake—laying claim to the city of Antioch and other strategically important sites. Some of the crusaders returned to western Europe, but many settled, mingled, and intermarried with the local people.

Muslims ultimately retook Jerusalem in 1187, and later Christian crusaders were unable to conquer it again. The Crusades helped strengthen a commitment by Christians to protect the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, even as they cemented a commitment by Muslims to protect the Dome of the Rock. Zionism represented a commitment by Jews to protect the Western Wall. The commitment by three major religions to protect and control their sacred sites has led to political turmoil that echoes far beyond Jerusalem, as we will see in the next major section of this chapter.

Landscapes of Hinduism and Buddhism

Traditional Hinduism is more than a faith; it is a way of life. Pilgrimages follow prescribed routes, and millions of people attend rituals. Festivals and feasts are frequent, colorful, and noisy. Hindus believe that the erection of a temple, whether modest or elaborate, bestows merit on the builder and will be rewarded. As a result, the Hindu cultural landscape—urban as well as rural—is dotted with countless shrines, ranging from small village temples to structures so large and elaborate that they are virtually holy cities.



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.28 Varanasi, India. Hindus perform morning rituals in the Ganges River at one of Hinduism’s most sacred places, the city of Varanasi, known as the city of Lord Shiva. For Hindus, the river itself is a sacred site.

The location of shrines is important because Hindus believe that holy places should not greatly disrupt the natural landscape. Whenever possible, a Hindu temple is located in a “comfortable” position, for example, under a large, shady tree. Hindus also tend to locate their temples near water because they believe that many gods will not venture far from water and because water serves the holy function of ritual bathing (**Fig. 7.28**). A village temple should face the village from a prominent position, and followers must make offerings frequently. Small offerings of fruit and flowers lie before the sanctuary of the deity honored by the shrine.

The cultural landscape of Hinduism is closely associated with that of India as a whole. As one travels through India, the Hindu faith is a visual as well as an emotional experience. Temples and shrines, holy animals by the tens of millions, distinctively garbed holy men, and the sights and sounds of long processions and rituals all contribute to a religious atmosphere (**Fig. 7.29**).

Author Field Note Celebrating the Bonalu Festival in Hyderabad, India

“In the summer of 2007, the newer, HITEC (high tech) city area of Hyderabad, India, was under construction. Migrant workers built new roads, apartment houses, and office buildings throughout the city. Beautiful homes reflected the wealth accrued by many. In front of the new homes, I saw Hinduism in the cultural landscape where owners built temples for their favorite Hindu god. In the older part of the city, I visited Golconda Fort, built more than 1500 years ago. On the day I was there, Hindu women participated in the Bonalu Festival as an act of honoring Mother Goddess. The women climbed nearly 400 steps to the top of the fort, carrying with them offerings of food. At the top, I was welcomed into the temple. I took off my shoes and took in a festival that began in the mid-1800s, when Hindu women began the festival to ward off the anger of the gods, as the city stood under the siege of the bubonic plague.”

– E. H. Fouberg



Photo by E.H. Fouberg. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.29 Hyderabad, India.

When Buddha received enlightenment, he sat under a large tree, the Bodhi (enlightenment) tree, at Bodh Gaya in India. The Bodhi tree now growing on the site is believed to be a descendant of the original tree. It has a thick, banyan-like trunk and a wide canopy of leafy branches. Because of its association with the Buddha, the tree is revered and protected. Buddhists make pilgrimages to Bodh Gaya and other places where Buddha may have taught beneath Bodhi branches. Along with Buddhism, the Bodhi tree diffused as far as China and Japan, its purposeful planting marking the cultural landscape of numerous villages and towns.

Buddhism's architecture includes some magnificent achievements, especially the famed structures at Borobudur in central Java (Indonesia). Buddhist shrines include stupas, bell-shaped structures that protect burial mounds. Buddhists also construct temples that enshrine an image of Buddha in his familiar cross-legged pose, as well as large monasteries that tower over the local landscape. The pagoda is perhaps Buddhism's most familiar structure. Its shape is derived from the relic (often funeral) mounds of old. Every fragment of its construction is a meaningful representation of Buddhist philosophy (Fig. 7.30).

We can also see evidence of religion in the cultural landscapes of the dead. Traditionally, Hindus, and more recently Buddhists and Shintoists, cremate their dead. Thus, crematoriums are found wherever a large group of Hindus, Buddhists, or Shintoists live. The Hindu crematorium in Kenya stands in stark contrast to much of the cultural landscape and signals the presence of a large Hindu population (see Fig. 7.31).

The cultural landscapes of Hinduism and Buddhism extend into Southeast Asia. Later, Islam replaced the South Asian religions in many of these places, and even later Christian missionaries gained adherents in Southeast Asia when Christian governments encouraged the migration of their people and their religion to their colonies. Today, we can stand in a city such as Singapore, study the cultural landscape, and see the influences of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

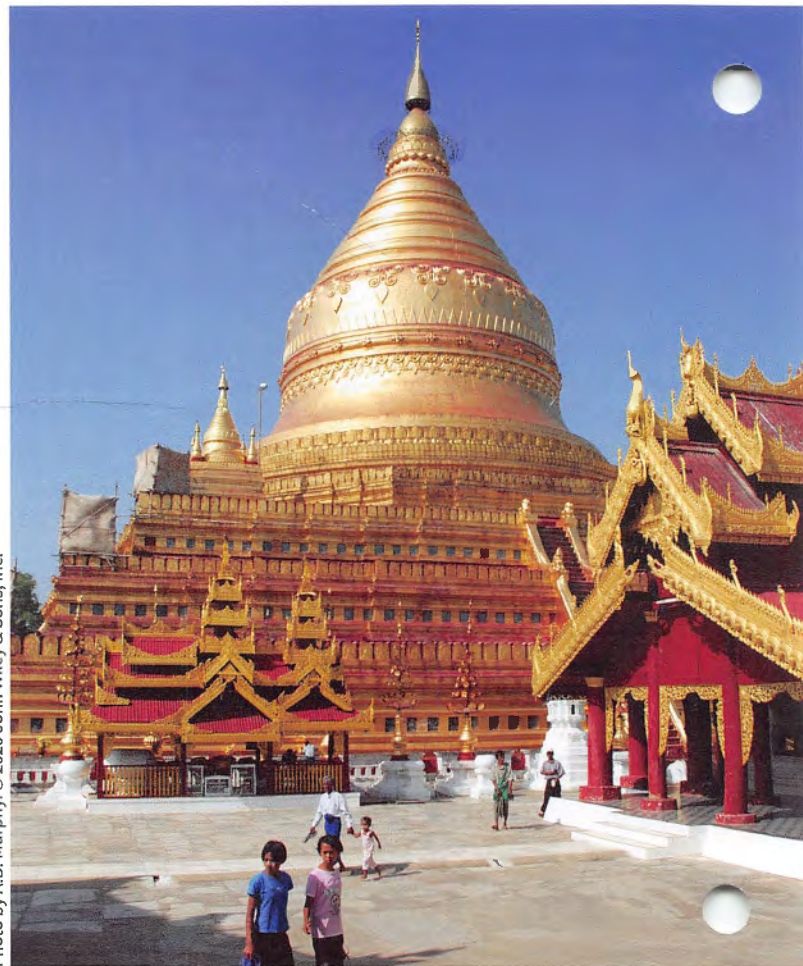


FIGURE 7.30 Yangon, Myanmar. In the heart of the city, the Shwedagon Pagoda is one of Southeast Asia's most spectacular Buddhist shrines. Its religious importance is striking: Eight hairs of the Buddha are preserved here. Vast amounts of gold went into the creation of the Shwedagon Pagoda; local rulers often gave the monks their weight in gold—or more. Today, the pagoda draws millions of visitors—both faithful Buddhists and tourists.

Author Field Note Seeing Hinduism in the Cultural Landscape of Mombasa, Kenya

“Each religion approaches the disposition of the deceased in its own way, and cultural landscapes reflect religious traditions. In largely Christian, Western religions, the deceased are buried in cemeteries. The Hindu faith, which is predominantly found in India, requires cremation of the deceased. When the British colonized both India and Kenya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they brought Indians to Kenya as ‘bonded laborers’ to lay the Kenya-Uganda railroad (Bhowmick 2008). The number of Indians in Kenya peaked at 175,000 in 1962 and is approximately 100,000 today, large enough to need a crematorium, the equivalent of a Hindu funeral home.”

– H. J. de Blij

© H. J. de Blij



FIGURE 7.31 Mombasa, Kenya



FIGURE 7.32 Antwerp, Belgium. The cathedral in Antwerp was built beginning in 1352 and still dominates the central part of town.

Landscapes of Christianity

The cultural landscapes of Christianity's branches reflect the changes the faith has undergone over the centuries. In medieval Europe the cathedral, church, or monastery was the focus of life. Other buildings clustered around the tower, steeple, and spire of the church, which could be seen (and whose bells could be heard) for miles (**Fig. 7.32**). In the square or plaza in front of the church, crowds gathered for ceremonies and festivals, and the church was always present—even if the event was not primarily religious. Good harvests, military victories, public announcements, and much else took place under the symbol of religious authority. Then in the colonial era, Europeans exported the ornate architecture of European Christian churches wherever they settled (**Fig. 7.33**).

The Reformation, the rise of secularism, and the decline of organized religion are reflected in the cultural landscape as well. Some of the ornate churches in the town squares of medieval cities now function as museums instead of serving active congregations. Other churches in secular regions are closing



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.33 Mombasa, Kenya. Built at the end of the nineteenth century, the neo-gothic Holy Ghost Cathedral reflects the European colonial imprint on the city. The sign in the street next to the cathedral serves as a reminder of a more recent external cultural influence—this time from China. The number of Chinese in the city is not large, but Chinese immigrants have found niches in the restaurant business and as purveyors of Chinese traditional medicine.

their doors or significantly reducing the number of religious services offered. However, not all of Europe's sacred sites have become secularized. Famous cathedrals continue to hold services while tourists marvel at the architecture and art. Moreover, other sacred sites of Christianity, such as churches for specific saints, places where significant events occurred, and Vatican City in Rome, are still major pilgrimage sites. When in Rome, the pope holds an outdoor service for pilgrims to Vatican City, attracting thousands of followers to St. Peter's Square each week (**Fig. 7.34**).



Giuseppe Ciccia/SOPA Images/ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo.

FIGURE 7.34 Vatican City. Pope Francis waves to pilgrims as he arrives in the Popemobile at St. Peter's Square for his weekly audience. Thousands gather each week to see the pope and hear him greet visitors in multiple languages.

Cities in Europe are also home to centuries-old Christian cemeteries. Traditionally, Christians bury, rather than cremate, their dead, and in Christian-dominated cities, cemeteries are often crowded with tombstones. Outside of European cities and in North America, Christian cemeteries can resemble large parks. They often reflect class differences, with some graves marked by simple tombstones and others by elaborate structures. With rising land-use pressures and the associated costs of burial, cremation is becoming increasingly common among Christians—particularly in North America and western Europe.

Christian Landscapes in the United States The United States, a predominantly Christian country, demonstrates considerable diversity in its religious cultural landscapes. In *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, geographer Wilbur Zelinsky constructed a map identifying religious regions in the country. **Figure 7.35** is a modified version of Zelinsky's map.

The New England region is strongly Catholic; the South's leading denomination is Baptist; the Upper Midwest has many Lutherans; and the Southwest is predominantly Spanish Catholic. The broad midland region from the Middle Atlantic to the Mormon region (in the western United States) has a mixture of denominations in which no single church dominates; this is also true of the West. As Figure 7.35 shows, some regions represent local clustering, such as the French Catholic area centered in New Orleans and the mixed denominations of peninsular Florida, where a large Spanish Catholic cluster has emerged in metropolitan Miami.

In a 2008 study, geographers Barney Warf and Mort Winsberg used data on religious adherents by U.S. county to discern which regions have the most and the least religious diversity. One way the authors mapped religious diversity is presented in **Figure 7.36**, a map showing counties with the least religious diversity in the darkest colors. In these areas, one religion accounts for 64 percent or more of all religious adherents

Source: Adapted from: W. Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, rev. ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 96.

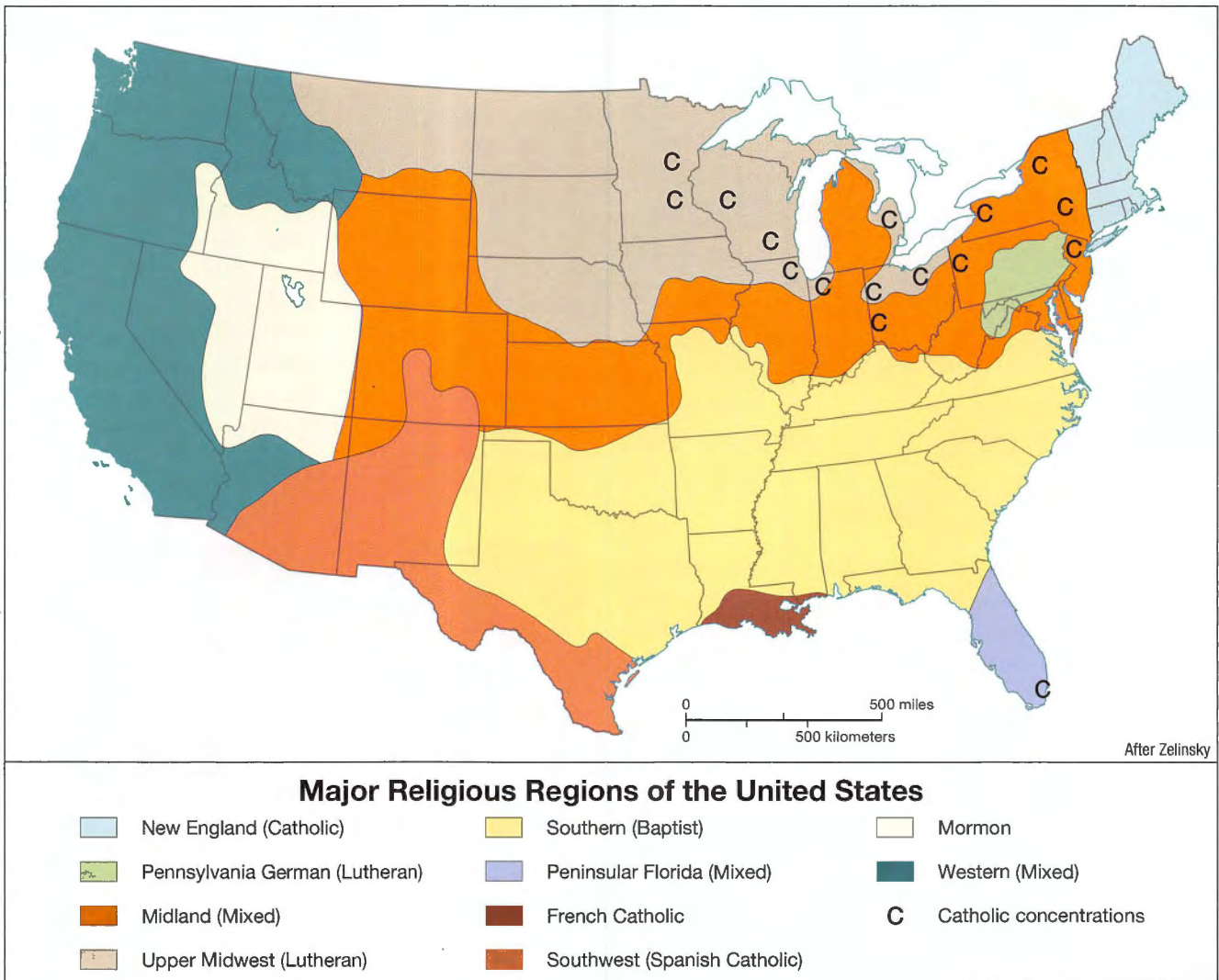


FIGURE 7.35 Major Religious Regions of the United States. A generalized map of the religious regions of the United States shows patterns and concentrations of the major religions.

in the county. In comparing Figure 7.35 to Figure 7.36, we can see that the Mormon region in Utah and southern Idaho, the Southern Baptist region in the South, and the Catholic region of the Northeast are some of the least diverse regions. There you can see the imprint of one major religion throughout the cultural landscape. By contrast, many lightly colored counties have a rich religious mix.

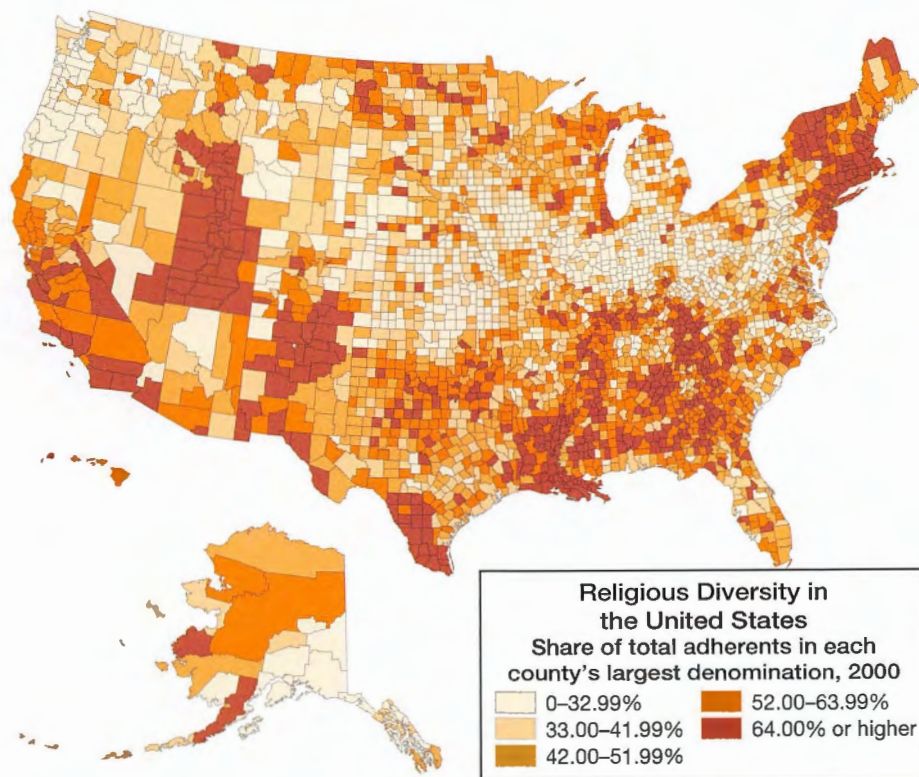
The plain white churches of the South and Lutheran Upper Midwest coincide with the Protestant Church's pragmatic spending of church money—not on art and architecture (**Fig. 7.37**). Conversely, many Catholic churches in the Northeast, Chicago, and other immigrant-magnet cities were built by migrants who spent their own money and used their building skills to construct ornate churches and dozens of cathedrals that tied them back to their countries of origin (**Fig. 7.38**).

The modern cultural landscape also bears witness to the rapid growth of evangelical Protestant dominations. Even in modest-sized cities, large evangelical churches with congregations over 10,000 people have sprung up in suburbs around cities (**Fig. 7.39**). And some large cities have evangelical churches that can accommodate services attended by thousands of followers. These churches are particularly widespread in the central and southern parts of the United States.

Landscapes of Islam

Elaborate, sometimes magnificently designed mosques whose balconied **minarets** rise above the townscape dominate Islamic cities, towns, and villages. Often the mosque is the town's most imposing and most carefully maintained building. Five times every day, from the towering minarets, the faithful are called to prayer. The sounds emanating from the minarets fill the streets as the faithful converge on the holy place to pray facing Mecca.

At the height of Islam's expansion into eastern North Africa and southern Europe, Muslim architects incorporated earlier Roman models into their designs. The results included some of the world's greatest architectural masterpieces, such as the Alhambra Palace in Granada and the Great Mosque of Cordoba in Spain. Islam's prohibition against depicting the human form led to the wide use of geometric designs and calligraphy—the intricacy of which is truly astounding (**Fig. 7.40**). During the eleventh century, Muslim builders began glazing the tiles of domes and roofs. To the beautiful arcades and arched courtyards, they added the exquisite beauty of glass-like, perfectly symmetrical cupolas. Muslim architecture represents the unifying concept of Islamic monotheism: the perfection and vastness of the spirit of Allah.



Source: Adapted from: B. Warf and M. Winesberg, "The Geography of Religious Diversity in the United States," Professional Geographer, 2008.

FIGURE 7.36 Religious Diversity in the United States. The counties shaded in the darkest color have the least diversity in religions. The counties shaded in the lightest color have the most diversity within them. Compare and contrast with Figure 7.35 to explain which major religions in the United States are the dominant religions in counties with low religious diversity.



Photo by E.H. Foubberg. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.37 Brown County, South Dakota. The Scandinavian Lutheran Church was founded by immigrants from northern Europe. The simple architecture of the church is commonly found in Protestant churches in the Great Plains.

Islam achieved its greatest artistic expression, its most distinctive visible element, in architecture. Even in the smallest town, the community helps build and maintain its mosque. The mosque symbolizes the power of the faith and its role in the community. Its importance in the cultural landscape confirms the degree to which, in much of the Muslim world, religion and culture are one.

The physical landscape of Mecca, Islam's holiest city, bears witness to one of the best-known pilgrimages in the modern world, the **hajj**. The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. Each year, over 2 million Muslims from outside of Saudi Arabia and over 1 million from inside the country make the pilgrimage to Mecca (**Fig. 7.41**). The hajj requires the faithful to follow certain steps of reverence in a certain order and within a certain time frame. As a result, the pilgrims move from Mecca through the steps of the hajj en masse.

In 2015, over 4000 pilgrims were trampled to death as hordes of people followed the steps of the pilgrimage. The Saudi government now restricts the number of visas granted each year to Muslims from outside the country. Yet the number of pilgrims continues to climb, and the services needed for Muslim pilgrims now employ four times as many people in Saudi Arabia as the oil industry does. The landscape around Mecca reflects the growing number of pilgrims year-round, as towers of apartment buildings and hotels encircle the sacred city.

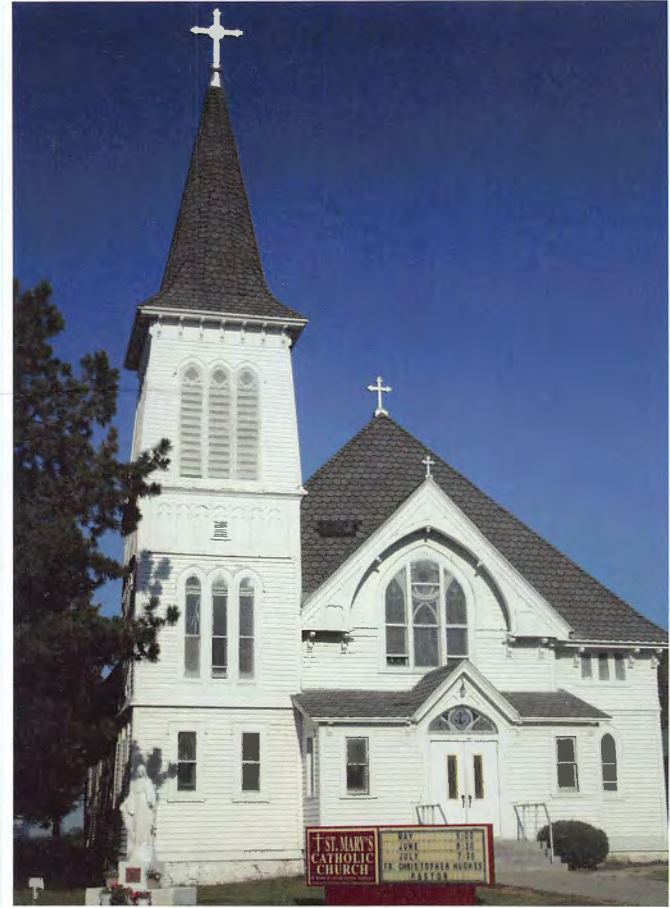


Photo by E.H. Foubberg. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.38 Zell, South Dakota. St. Mary's Catholic Church was built by nuns in 1875 to serve Catholic immigrants and Native Americans. The more ornate architecture and stained glass of St. Mary's Church is commonly found in Catholic churches in the Great Plains.



Timothy Fadek/Corbis News/Getty Images

FIGURE 7.39 Houston, Texas. Pastor Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston is one of the biggest mega churches in the United States. Mega churches are defined as non-Catholic churches with at least 2000 weekly attendants. Estimates of weekly attendance at Lakewood church are as high as 50,000 people.

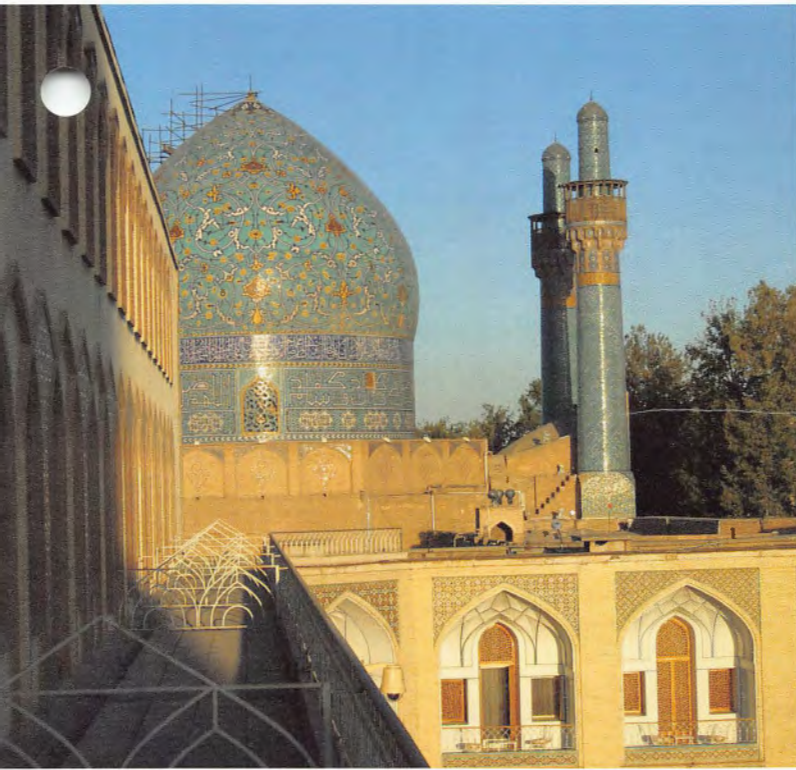


FIGURE 7.40 Isfahan, Iran. The dome of this mosque demonstrates the geometric art evident in Muslim architecture. The towers to the right of the dome are minarets from which the call to prayer is broadcast.

Photo by A.B. Murphy, © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



FIGURE 7.41 Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Pilgrims circle the holy Kaaba in the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the hajj.

TC Thinking Geographically

Choose a pilgrimage site, such as Mecca, Vatican City, or the Western Wall, and describe how the act of pilgrimage (in some cases by millions of people) alters this place's **cultural landscape** and environment.

7.4 Identify and Describe the Role Religion Plays in Political Conflicts.

Religious beliefs and histories can bitterly divide peoples who speak the same language, have the same ethnic background, and make their living in similar ways. Such divisions are not only between followers of different major religions (like Muslims and Christians in the former Yugoslavia). They sometimes emerge among believers of the same overarching religion. Indeed, some of the most destructive conflicts have pitted Christian against Christian and Muslim against Muslim.

Religious conflicts usually involve more than differences in spiritual practices and beliefs. Religion serves as a symbol of a wider set of cultural and political differences. The “religious” conflict in Northern Ireland is not just about different views of Christianity, and the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India has a strong political dimension. Nevertheless, in these and other cases, religion serves as the principal symbol separating competing groups.

Conflicts Along Religious Borders

A comparison between Figure 7.9 and a world political map reveals that some countries lie entirely within the realms of individual world religions and others straddle **interfaith**

boundaries (the boundaries between the world’s major faiths). Many countries that straddle interfaith boundaries have experienced divisive cultural forces—particularly when the people see their religious differences as a primary source of social identity. This is the case in several African countries straddling the Christian–Muslim interfaith boundary (**Fig. 7.42**). In India, where Hindu nationalism is deeply rooted, close to 200 million Muslims live in a state that resulted from the 1947 partition of South Asia into largely Hindu (India) and Muslim (East and West Pakistan¹). Other countries with major religious disputes straddle **intrafaith boundaries**, the boundaries within a single major faith. Intrafaith boundaries include divisions between Christian Protestants and Catholics (Northern Ireland), divisions between Muslim Sunnis and Shi’ites (Iraq).

Israel/Palestine and Nigeria provide examples of interfaith conflicts, whereas Northern Ireland is an example of an intrafaith conflict. In each case, religious difference is not the only factor driving the conflict, but it plays a powerful symbolic role. Interface areas, where interfaith and intrafaith boundaries occur, may be peaceful, or they can play host to violent political conflict.

¹East Pakistan is now Bangladesh.



FIGURE 7.42 African Transition Zone. The divide shown on the map marks interfaith boundaries between religions. Considerable conflict has occurred in the transition zone.

Israel and Palestine

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the history of the conflict over the sacred space of Jerusalem. Israel and Palestine are home to one of the most contentious religious conflicts today. After World War I, European colonialism came to a region that had previously been controlled and fought over by Jews, Romans, Christians, Muslims, and Ottomans. A newly formed League of Nations (a precursor to the United Nations) recognized British control of the land, calling the territorial mandate

Palestine. At that point, the vast majority of people living in the land were Muslim Palestinians.

The goal of the British government was to meet Zionist goals and to create, in Palestine, a national homeland for the Jewish people (who had already begun to migrate to the area). The British explicitly assured the world that the religious and civil rights of existing non-Jewish peoples in Palestine would be protected. The British policy did not produce a peaceful result, however. Civil disturbances erupted almost immediately, and they became much worse after the Holocaust and World War II, when

many more Jews migrated to flee persecution and concentration camps in Europe. Between 1914 and 1946, the Jewish population of Palestine grew from around 60,000 to over 528,000.

In 1948, the British mandate ended, shortly after the newly formed United Nations voted to partition Palestine. The Zionist dream of a State of Israel was realized when the United Nations created two independent, noncontiguous states: Israel and Palestine (see Fig. 3.26). Even before the partition, Palestinians and surrounding Arabs opposed the large-scale migration of Jews to the area. Arabs rejected the UN plan, citing the UN Charter's Article 1(2) that recognizes the right to self-determination of peoples. After the British ended their mandate, Israel declared independence, using the borders designed by the United Nations. Immediately, Arabs fought against the Israeli state, and Israel won lands between 1948 and 1949.

During two wars in 1967 and 1973, Israel decisively won military victories and expanded Israeli territory. In the course of these wars, Palestinians lost their lands, farms, and villages, and many migrated or fled to refugee camps in neighboring Arab states. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon attacked Israel, and Israel fought back, gaining control of the Gaza Strip and Sinai from Egypt, the West Bank and Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. In the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Syria and Egypt launched surprise attacks on Israel on an Israeli high holy day, and Israel won the war.

The international community calls the lands Israel gained through the 1967 and 1973 wars the Occupied Territories. The primary concern of Palestinians and Arab countries since 1973 has been the growing presence of Israelis in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Israeli government has built **settlements** for Israelis across the West Bank, which has increased tensions on the ground as Palestinians continue to lose land and control. Settlements include housing developments enclosed in walls that are patrolled by the Israeli military, along with streets, sewer and water extended to each settlement.

Through the settlement policy, Israel has extended control over Jerusalem, expanding the city into the West Bank and razing Palestinian houses along the way. At the same time, the Israeli government has restricted new building by Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The situation has produced considerable conflict, with Palestinians claiming oppression and violence by Israel and Israelis claiming a right to recover their historic homeland and to defend themselves from Palestinians who are hostile to their presence.

Efforts at peace between Israel and Palestine have often been led by U.S. presidents, though with few successes. In 1978, a peace accord agreed to by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and negotiated by U.S. President Jimmy Carter lowered tensions between Israel and Egypt. In what became known as the Camp David Accords, Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and Egypt recognized Israel as an independent country. The peace was short-lived. Palestinians spontaneously launched what became known as the first intifada, including boycotts, demonstrations, and attacks on Israelis, in the 1980s.



AP Images/IDF, Handout

FIGURE 7.43 Erez Crossing, Gaza Strip. The Israeli Army withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, after occupying the territory for 38 years. Israeli troops demolished the Israeli Army liaison offices on September 9, 2005, in preparation for completing the Israeli retreat from the Gaza Strip on September 11, 2005.

In 1993, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization agreed to the Oslo Accords, facilitated by U.S. President Bill Clinton. The Palestinian Authority was recognized and allowed to practice limited self-government over the Occupied Territories of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The second intifada began in the 2000s when peace negotiations broke down. Both sides blame each other for the break-out in violence in the second intifada. Violence in the second intifada escalated to individual Palestinians and Palestinian terrorist organizations like Hamas using suicide bombings and sniper attacks and the Israeli military using force (defined by Palestinians as excessive) and cracking down on movement of Palestinians in response to Palestinian demonstrations. Nearly 5000 Palestinians died, including over 1200 children. Over 1100 Israelis died and thousands more were wounded.

In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and Palestine took control of 223 square miles (360 square kilometers). Israel evacuated the settlements that had been built there, burned down the buildings that remained (**Fig. 7.43**), and in 2007 granted autonomy to Gaza. The Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip rejoiced—visiting the beaches that were previously open only to Israeli settlers and traveling across the border into Egypt to purchase goods. Their joy was short-lived, however. Gaza became economically isolated, the standard of living dropped, and continued conflict with Israel made the situation worse. The Israeli government now tightly controls the flow of Palestinians and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip. Gaza is surrounded by fences, and in some places a wall—with landmines in certain areas.

In the face of these developments, Palestinians have dug dozens of tunnels between Egypt and Gaza to bring arms, fuel, and goods to the Hamas government in Gaza. But in 2014, Egypt followed Israel's lead and declared Hamas to be a terrorist organization. Egypt then moved to shut down the flow of goods through the tunnels. This did little to ease conflict along the Gaza-Israel border, however. In recent years Palestinians in Gaza have periodically fired missiles into Israeli territory, and Israel has responded with deadly force. In 2018, 52 Palestinians were killed and thousands were injured during demonstrations along the border against the plan to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The situation in the West Bank is different. Palestinian lands in the West Bank are not contiguous, and for years Israel has been constructing a barrier that does not follow the 1947 border between the West Bank and Israel (**Fig. 7.37**). Instead, areas with significant Israeli settler populations in the West Bank are on Israel's side of the fence. The patchwork geography of Palestinian control in the West Bank means that movement of Palestinian people there can, and often is, restricted. In a particularly controversial move, a road constructed and controlled by Israelis, Route 4370, gives Jewish settlers in the West Bank easier access to Jerusalem than their Palestinian counterparts. Israeli officials argue that security concerns justify this approach, but it also helps to fuel Palestinian resentment.

The situation in Israel and Palestine today is not the product of a conflict along a simple interfaith boundary. The tiny region has a multitude of interfaith boundaries, especially in the West Bank (see **Fig. 7.44**), where the settlements have produced many miles of interfaith boundaries within a small political territory. The prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine are greatly complicated by the fact that each side feels it has a historic right to the land and by the violence inflicted on each side by the other.

Nigeria

Like other countries in West Africa, Nigeria is predominantly Muslim in the north and Christian and animist in the south. These groups converge in the middle part of the country in

a region called the Middle Belt or North Central Zone, where Muslim, Christian, and animist communities now live side by side. With over 168 million people, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. Since 1999, when the country emerged from years of military rule, Nigeria has witnessed persistent violence along the interfaith boundary between these communities, which has cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

As with many such conflicts, the causes of north-south violence in Nigeria cannot be attributed solely to different religious beliefs. Because of differences in climates, many people engage in cattle herding in northern Nigeria, whereas in the south, most rural peoples are farmers. As land has become scarcer, the fertile grasslands of central Nigeria have become coveted by both cattle herders and farmers. Land that was once reserved for grazing has been gradually replaced by agriculture, and violence against herders is often justified as retaliation for acts of trespassing on planted fields and crop destruction by cattle.

The north and south of Nigeria differ in other respects as well (**Fig. 7.45**). The rich oil economy and jobs tied to it are concentrated in the south. As a result, southern Nigeria has a higher per capita GDP and greater concentration of wealth than northern Nigeria. In addition, while northern Nigeria is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, the south is more diverse. Western-style education is more accepted in the south than in the north, and the south has higher female literacy rates. Finally, access to health care, as reflected in the percentage of 1-year-olds who have received all the basic vaccinations, is higher in the south than the north.

Since 2009, the worst violence in Nigeria has taken place in the northern half of the country, along the interfaith boundary and in the northeast, where the extremist Muslim group, Boko Haram, operates. Mohammed Yusuf began the organization in 2002 in Maiduguri, Nigeria, with the goal of pushing Western-style education out of northern Nigeria. The words *Boko Haram* roughly translate to "Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language. Yusuf built an Islamic school, which drew mainly students from the Kanuri ethnic group, and then used the school to recruit members to Boko Haram. The group, like many other religious organizations in the north, received funding from local politicians seeking to disrupt elections in 2003 and 2007. As its support ran out, Boko Haram turned to other forms of criminality for funding, including bank robberies, extortion, and kidnapping for ransom.

As the influence of Boko Haram grew, state authorities sought to undermine it. In 2009, Nigerian police publicly executed the founder of Boko Haram on a street in Maiduguri. In response, members armed themselves, found a new leader, and turned increasingly to violence. At first, the group focused attacks on police and military as vengeance for the killing of its leader, but in 2012, Boko Haram began attacking schools. In 2014, northern Nigeria made global news when members of the terrorist organization kidnapped 250 teenage girls from their school in Chibok (**Fig. 7.46**).

In recent years, Boko Haram has aligned itself with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and has committed itself



FIGURE 7.44 The West Bank. Palestinian territories in the West Bank are punctuated by Israeli settlements. The security fence surrounds the West Bank, and in several places it juts into the West Bank to separate Israeli settlements from Palestinian areas.

fully to overthrowing the Western-aligned Nigerian government in favor of a system based on fundamentalist Islam (Shari'a law). It has not succeeded; in 2019, Nigeria reelected Muhammadu Buhari, a moderate Fulani Muslim from the far north. Still, in the leadup to the presidential election, hundreds died as Boko Haram insisted that participating in the election amounted to apostasy.

The violence may have its roots in the struggle for access to land, political power, and resources, but religion has served

as a key marker of difference. Violence along the interfaith Christian-Muslim boundary reinforces the perceptual importance of the boundary and promotes a sense—whether right or wrong—that religious differences represent the most important obstacle to social cohesion in Nigeria. And Nigeria is not the only northern African country experiencing violence along this interfaith boundary. Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Sudan, and other countries face this problem as well.

Sources: Data from: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008; platts.com; wikipedia.org; africacenter.org; and bbc.com.

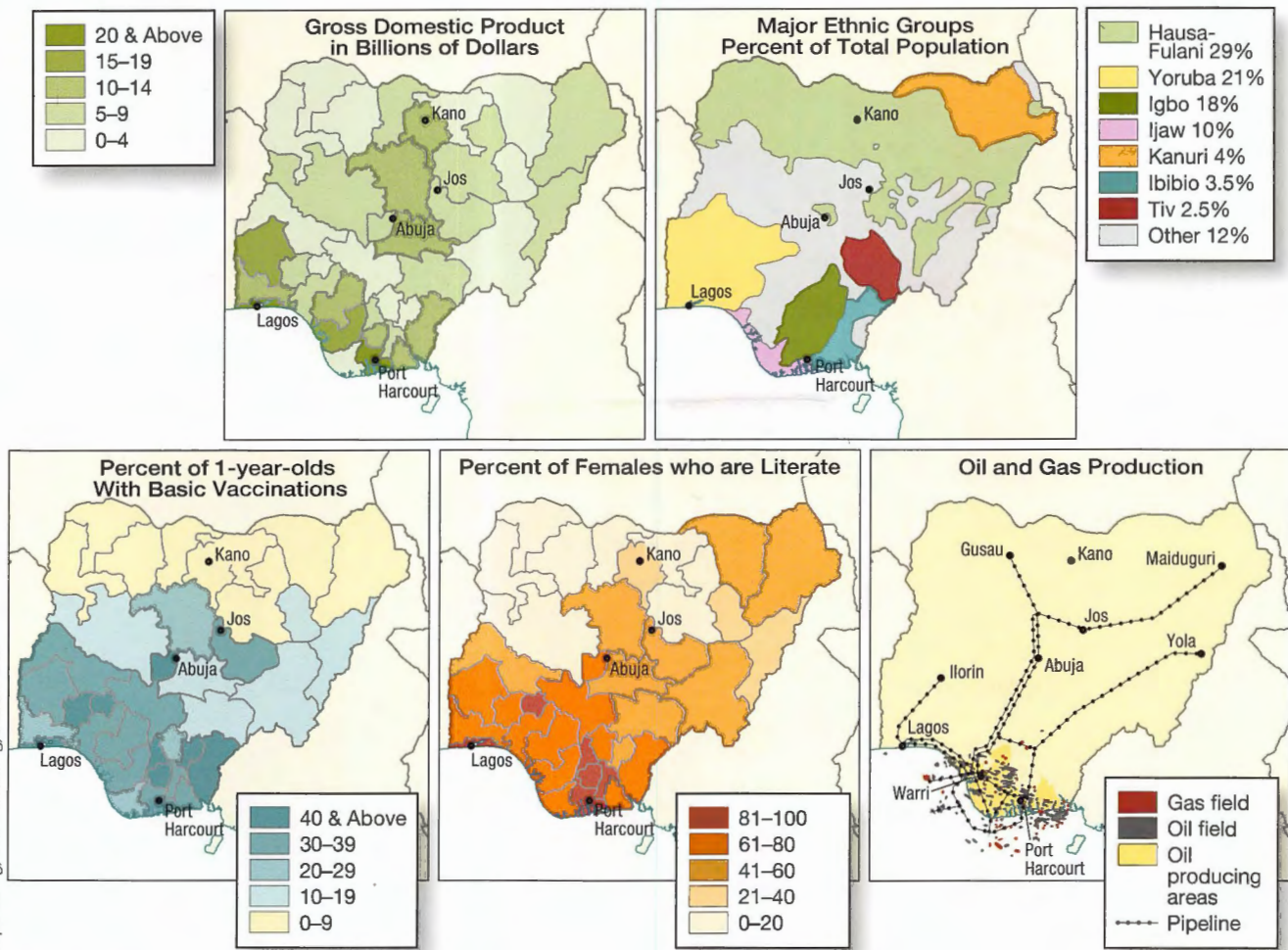


FIGURE 7.45 The North and South of Nigeria. Nigeria’s oil resources are concentrated in the south. Northern Nigeria has lower GDP per capita rates, lower levels of female literacy, and less access to health care than southern Nigeria. The extremist group Boko Haram has grown in the context of lower levels of wealth and female literacy in the north.

Northern Ireland

A number of western European countries, as well as Canada and the United States, have large Catholic and Protestant communities. Over the past century, the split between these two sects of Christianity has not been a source of violent confrontation. The most notable exception is Northern Ireland.

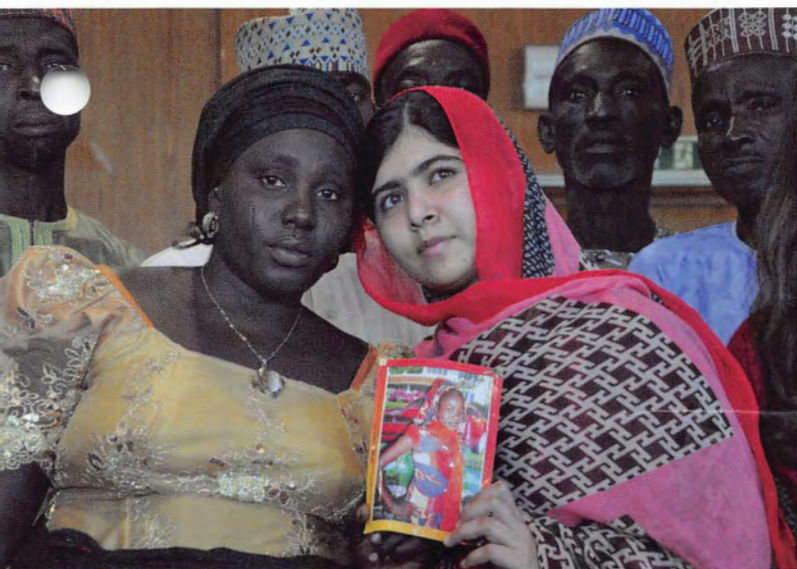
Northern Ireland and Great Britain (which includes England, Scotland, and Wales) form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK). For centuries, the island of Ireland was free from outside control. It was divided into kingdoms and its people followed a mix of Celtic and Western Christian religious practices. As early as the 1200s, however, the English began to infiltrate Ireland. Colonization began in the sixteenth century, and by 1700 Britain controlled the entire island.

During the 1700s, Protestants from Great Britain (primarily Scotland) migrated to Ireland to take advantage of the political and economic power granted to them in the colony. During

the 1800s, migrants were drawn principally to northeastern Ireland, where industrial jobs and opportunities were greatest and where the Irish colony produced industrial wealth for Britain in its shipyards. During the colonial period, the British treated the Irish Catholics harshly, taking away their lands and depriving them of their legal right to own property or participate in government.

In the late 1800s, the Irish began reviving older Celtic and Irish traditions, thus strengthening their identity. This led to ever greater resentment against the British, and in the early 1900s, a major rebellion began. The rebellion was successful throughout most of the island, which was predominantly Catholic, leading to the creation of the Republic of Ireland.

The conflict was settled in 1922. Britain retained control of six counties in the northeast, where significant concentrations of Protestant migrants from Britain lived. These counties constituted Northern Ireland, which became part of the United Kingdom. The substantial Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, however, did not want to be part of the



AP Images/Olamikan Gbemikan

FIGURE 7.46 Abuja, Nigeria. Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani who was attacked by the Taliban while on a school bus in her home country at the age of 15 in 2012, holds a picture of kidnapped schoolgirl Sarah Samuel with her mother Rebecca Samuel, during a visit to Abuja, Nigeria, Sunday July 13, 2014. Malala Yousafzai traveled to Abuja in Nigeria to meet the relatives of 250 schoolgirls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria.

United Kingdom (**Fig. 7.47**)—particularly since the Protestant majority, constituting about two-thirds of the total population (about 1.6 million) of Northern Ireland, possessed most of the economic and political power.

As time went on, economic stagnation for both populations worsened. The Catholics in particular felt they were being repressed. Terrorist acts by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), an organization dedicated to ending British control over all of Ireland by violent means if necessary, led to increased British military presence in the area in 1968. The Republic of Ireland was sensitive to the plight of Catholics in the north, but it was in no position to offer official help.

In the face of the worsening conflict—called the Troubles—Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland increasingly distanced their lives and homes from one another. The cultural landscape bears witness to the religious conflict, as each group clusters in its own neighborhoods and celebrates special Catholic or Protestant events. Irish geographer Frederick Boal wrote a groundbreaking work in 1969 on the Northern Irish in one area of Belfast. Boal used fieldwork to mark Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods on a map, and he interviewed over 400 Protestants and Catholics in their homes. Boal used the concept of **activity space** to demonstrate how Protestants and Catholics had each chosen to separate themselves as they went about their daily activities.

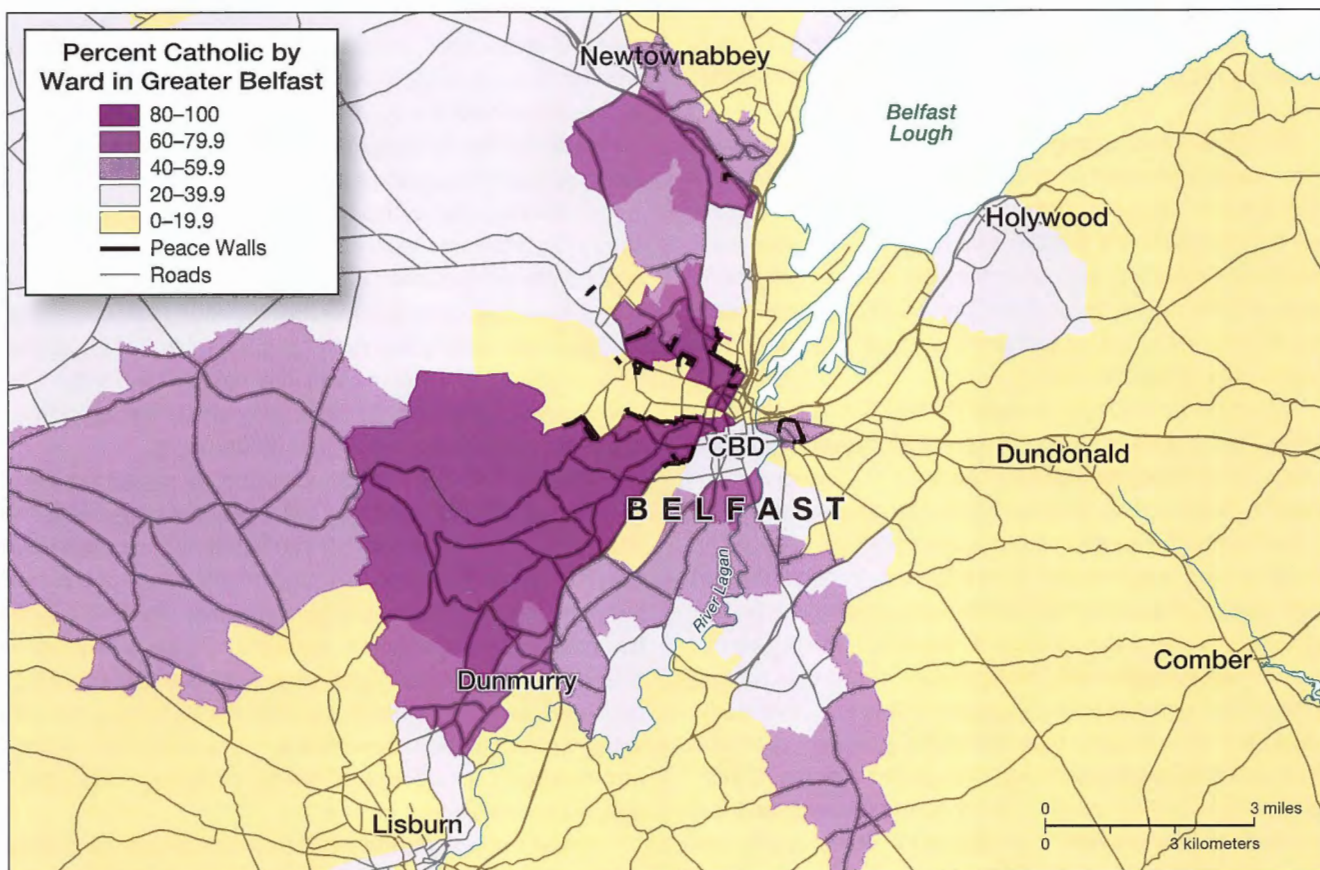


FIGURE 7.47 Religious Affiliation and Peace Lines in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Catholic neighborhoods are clustered west of the central business district (CBD) and west of the River Lagan. Protestant neighborhoods are separated from Catholic neighborhoods by Peace Walls in West Belfast.

Author Field Note Listening to Laughter in Belfast, Northern Ireland

"I felt uneasy as I stood in the Clonnard Martyrs Memorial Garden. Built to honor Catholics who had fallen during the Troubles between Catholics and Protestants, the gardens were more of a brick patio with brick walls than a garden. A 40-foot-tall peace wall towered behind the gardens, and next to the garden stretching along the wall was a row of houses settled by Catholics. On the other side of the peace wall was the Protestant Shankhill neighborhood, where I had been 10 minutes earlier. My sense of unease came from a sound that I typically find comforting, a child laughing. I looked over the brick wall of the memorial gardens to see the child. It was a scene I could see in my backyard on a summer evening, a child jumping on a trampoline, but I did not see trees, grass, swing sets, barbecues, or the other familiarities of backyards in my neighborhood. The peace wall loomed behind the trampoline. The back side of the child's house was shielded by a rather large cage. I looked up at the wall again and realized the cage was there to protect the back door and windows from anything flung over the wall from the Protestant Shankhill neighborhood into the Catholic Falls neighborhood."

– E. H. Fouberg



Photo by E.H. Fouberg. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 7.48 Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Although religion is the tag line we use to describe the Troubles, the conflict has much more to do with nationalism, economics, oppression, access to opportunities, terror, civil rights, and political influence. Nonetheless, religion and religious history have long demarcated opposing sides; as such, churches and cathedrals have become symbols of strife rather than peace.

Belfast now has 99 peace lines, or peace walls, separating Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods (**Figure 7.48**). In the 1990s, Boal updated his study of Northern Ireland and found hope for a resolution in the fact that religious identities were actually becoming less intense among the younger generation and among the more educated. He found Catholics and Protestants intermixing in spaces such as downtown clubs, shopping centers, and college campuses.

As interaction increased, so did the political commitment to bring the Troubles to an end. In April 1998, the parties signed an Anglo-Irish peace agreement. The Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement) raised hopes of a new period of peace in Northern Ireland. Those hopes have been realized in part. The two sides have made major strides toward reconciliation in recent years. Although the conflict remains unresolved, violent encounters are all but nonexistent. Moreover, mixing across Christian faiths is growing, though more commonly among the better educated and less segregated. Still, in a 2006 study, Madeleine Leonard found that teens who grew up in Catholic or Protestant neighborhoods rarely interacted with the "Other" and that "some children restricted their movements" to local neighborhoods. Moreover, Catholic and Protestant celebrations continue to generate tensions between the communities, and uncertainties about the status of the Ireland–Northern Ireland border in the wake of the United Kingdom's Brexit could open old wounds.

Conflicts in the Face of Migration

Religion can also provoke conflict when it is tied to a socially contentious migration stream. Europe is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon in today's world. So-called guest workers began arriving in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s—often at the invitation of European governments with high demands for workers. Most of the guest workers came from Southwest Asia and North Africa, and most were Muslims.

In its early stages, this migration was not controversial. In the 1970s, it became more contentious as migration continued apace while the European economy slipped into recession. Two things have happened to make the migration more contentious in recent decades: (1) Migration has grown significantly as instability, conflict, and economic hardship have gripped North Africa and Southwest Asia, and (2) Terrorist incidents with roots in that region have stoked fear among many Europeans.

Muslims who have migrated to Europe come from places with widely different customs, practices, and languages. Their faith hardly makes them all the same, but opponents of migration have tended to lump them together because of their affiliation with Islam. This tendency to group all migrants together has made religion a central symbolic feature of the conflict over migration. Anti-immigration extremists began speaking of an Islamic invasion. Even in more moderate circles, concerns were expressed about how recent migrants did not integrate into European societies, with Islamic practices trotted out as supporting evidence.

It was not just traditional Europeans who were lumping peoples of diverse backgrounds and beliefs under one religious label. Islamic extremists such as Osama bin Laden were doing the same thing—calling for all Muslims to put aside their differences and create a unified, powerful Islamic world.

Moreover, the rhetoric coming from some radical mosques in Europe encouraged an us-them way of thinking based on broad religious-cultural differences. Whatever its source, the growing presence of Islam in Europe has clearly been a source of conflict—with anti-Islamic pronouncements and harassment of Muslims found at one end of the spectrum, and calls for uprisings and even terrorist bombings at the other end.

As we saw in Chapter 3, migration can lead to social conflict without religion being a significant issue, as is the case with the migration stream from Mexico and Central America into the United States or of central Europeans into western Europe. The arrival of migrants in Europe from North Africa and Southwest Asia reminds us, however, that tensions can intensify when migrants of one religion move to a place where different religious traditions dominate. That tendency serves as clear evidence of the strong link between religion and cultural identity.

Religious Fundamentalism and Extremism

The drive toward **religious fundamentalism** often comes from a sense of powerlessness. Often people are frustrated over the perceived breakdown of society's morals and values and obstacles to economic advancement. There is a perceived loss of local control and a focus on the failure of governmental institutions. Regardless of the religion, members of fundamentalist groups then see their religious beliefs as nonnegotiable and beyond question.

People in one society often fear fundamentalism in other societies without recognizing it in their own. What many call fundamentalism is sometimes better defined as extremism. **Religious extremism** is fundamentalism carried to an (often violent) extreme. The attacks on the United States in September 2001 reinforced the tendency of some Americans to associate extremism with Islam. Yet Christian extremism is also a potent force. In the United States, religious zealots have killed physicians who perform legal abortions, and have detonate bombs, as Timothy McVeigh did in Oklahoma City in 1995. Although fundamentalists can be extremists, by no means are all fundamentalists extremists.

Today the forces of globalization affect religions. Education, radio, television, and travel spread ideas about individual liberties, sexual equality, and freedom of choice—but also consumerism and secularism. Some Christian churches have allowed women and members of the LGBTQ community to serve as religious leaders and same-sex partners to marry. Others have reaffirmed fundamental or literalist interpretations of religious texts and tried to block what they see as morally corrupting influences and external cultural interference.

Christian Fundamentalism The Roman Catholic Church has long resisted innovations deemed incompatible with the fundamentals of the faith. Among the disputed issues are birth control and the role of women in the religious hierarchy. The major religions tend to be male-dominated, and

few women have gained high positions. In the Roman Catholic Church, women are not allowed to serve as priests. The Roman Catholic Church has over 1 billion adherents and has a global diplomatic and political presence, influencing policies in numerous places and on many topics.

In the United States, a few branches of the Catholic Church continue to hold Mass in Latin and are much more fundamentalist than the rest of the church. Some of these branches are recognized parts of the Catholic Church, but others stand apart; they do not recognize the authority of the pope, nor does the Vatican sanction them. For example, actor and director Mel Gibson belongs to the Holy Family Church, which fits this description. Gibson's church is most closely associated with the Traditionalist Catholic Movement, a fundamentalist movement that believes that the Mass should still be conducted in Latin and that most modern religious leaders are not following the traditional theology and practices of the church.

In the United States, some branches of Protestantism are fundamentalist. Preaching a doctrine of strict adherence to the literal precepts of the Bible, many Protestant Christian fundamentalists believe that the entire character of contemporary society needs to be brought into alignment with biblical principles. Fundamentalist Protestant churches range from tiny churches to enormous warehouse-style churches with thousands of members (see Fig. 7.32).

Regardless of the size of the congregation, fundamentalist Protestant churches have become increasingly active in political and social affairs—promoting prayer in public schools, the teaching of creationism in science courses, and a strict ban on abortion. In the process, they have gained considerable influence, both in local politics (school boards and city councils) and at the national level (in think tanks and issue-focused research institutes).

Judaic Fundamentalism Like all other major religions, Judaism has fundamentalist sects. The most conservative of the three major branches of Judaism is Orthodox, though Orthodoxy takes many forms. Indeed, Orthodox Jews embrace different schools of thought, and they have diverging views on Israel, education, and interaction with non-Orthodox Jews. More fundamentalist Orthodox Jews who have migrated to Israel tend to vote for more conservative candidates in Israeli elections, affecting election outcomes. Similarly, many of the more fundamentalist Jews in Europe or North America send money to politicians who support conservative Israeli policy positions.

Judaism also has its extremist elements—people whom the majority of Jews denounce and whom the government of Israel has even banned from the country. Among these are the two groups Kach and Kahane Chai—followers of the late American-born Israeli rabbi, Meir Kahane. Rabbi Kahane espoused anti-Arabism in his teachings, and his followers (Kahane Chai) continue to do so. Members of Kach and Kahane Chai are suspected in several terrorist acts in Israel.

Islamic Fundamentalism The growth of a fundamentalist movement in Afghanistan (the Taliban) provided a particularly striking example of how quickly a fundamentalist

movement can use extremism to change a place once it comes to power. The Taliban regime seized control of much of the country during the 1990s and asserted the strictest fundamentalist regime in the contemporary world. The leadership imposed a wide range of religious restrictions, sought to destroy all statues depicting human forms, required followers of Hinduism to wear identifying markers, and forbade women to appear in public with their head exposed.

The Taliban in Afghanistan also provided a haven for the activities of Islamic extremists who sought to promote an Islamic holy war, or **jihad**, against the West in general and the United States in particular. One of the key figures in the Islamic extremist movement of the past decade, Osama bin Laden, helped finance and mastermind a variety of terrorist activities conducted against the United States. These activities including the destruction of the World Trade Towers, the attack on the Pentagon, and the downing of Flight 93 on September 11, 2001.

Bin Laden is now dead, but those following in his footsteps are a product of a fundamentalist revolutionary Islamic movement that views the West as a great enemy and that opposes many of the changes associated with modernization and globalization. These beliefs are certainly not representative of Islam as a whole, but they are religious beliefs. Indeed, they can be traced to a form of Islam, known as Wahhabi Islam, that developed in the eighteenth century in opposition to what was seen as the sacrilegious practices of Ottoman rulers. Its champions called for a return to a pure variant of Islam from centuries earlier. The Saudi Arabian state is the hearth of Wahhabi Islam today. The Saudi royal family has championed Wahhabi Islam since the 1800s, and Saudis fund Wahhabi Islamic schools, called madrassas, around the world.

A variety of forces have fueled the violent path of the Wahhabi extremist movement, but some of these forces are decidedly geographic. Perhaps the most important is the widely

held view among movement followers that “infidels” have invaded the Islamic holy land over the past 80 years. Islamic extremists are particularly concerned about the presence of American military and business interests in the Arabian Peninsula, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the support that European and American governments have given Israel. A principal goal is to bring an end to what are seen as improper external influences on the Islamic world. A second, geographically related, concern is the diffusion of modern culture and technology into the Islamic world and its impact on traditional lifestyles and spiritual practices. Ridding the Islamic world of such influences is thus a major goal.

Extremist Islamic fundamentalists have resorted to violence in pursuit of their cause. They are relatively small in number, however. Indeed, most Muslims in the Middle East oppose Islamic extremism. A 2014 Pew Research study found that a considerable majority of those surveyed in 14 Islamic countries have a negative opinion of al-Qaeda; most people surveyed in Pakistan oppose the Taliban; most Palestinians hold unfavorable views of Hezbollah and Hamas; and most Nigerians are concerned about Boko Haram.

TC Thinking Geographically

Jerusalem is a sacred **site** for 3 major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Both Hinduism and Buddhism have sacred **sites** near the Ganges River in India. Hypothesize why some sacred sites are surrounded by political conflict and others are not. Study Figures 7.13 and 7.9 to look at **hearths**, paths of **diffusion**, and current locations of major religions to help you formulate your answer. Thinking about sacred sites, and pilgrimages, hypothesize why followers of some religions are in political conflict and others are not.

Summary

7.1 Describe the Nature of Religion and Its Cultural Significance.

1. Organized religion has a powerful effect on most human societies. It has been a major force in combating social ills, sustaining the poor, promoting the arts, educating the disadvantaged, and advancing medical knowledge. However, religion has also blocked scientific study, encouraged the oppression of parts of society, supported colonialism, and condemned women to inferior roles.
2. The cultural landscape is marked by religion—most obviously by churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques, and by cemeteries, shrines, statues, and religious symbols. More subtle landscape markers of religion exist as well, for example, the lack of stores selling alcoholic beverages in traditional Islamic areas.

7.2 Describe the Distribution of Major Religions and the Factors That Shaped Their Diffusion.

1. Universalizing religions actively seek converts because their belief systems are deemed to be appropriate for everyone (i.e., universal). Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are all universalizing religions. Their universalizing character helps explain why they are the most widespread religions on Earth.
2. Ethnic religions tend to be more spatially concentrated because followers are born into the faith of a given group, and no efforts are made to convert others. Judaism is an exception because, even though it is an ethnic religion, its followers have scattered widely over the past two millennia as a result of forced and voluntary migrations.
3. Religions reflect and influence social arrangements. Hinduism is closely associated with India’s caste system. Buddhism adopted

elements of traditional Asian philosophical perspectives. Christianity spread around the world as a result of European colonialism and imperialism.

4. In some places, secularism (indifference to or rejection of formal religion) has grown rapidly in recent decades. The most secular countries in the world today are found in Europe, but secularism is growing elsewhere, particularly in urbanized areas in countries with a high level of economic development.

7.3 Explain How Cultural Landscapes Reflects Religious Ideas and Practices.

1. Religion has a clear presence in the cultural landscape. Sacred sites are places or spaces to which people attach religious meaning. Jerusalem has sites that are sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.
2. Each of the world's major religions has developed a distinctive architectural style and set of landscape practices associated with its belief system. Hindus and Buddhists build shrines and temples. Christians build churches. Muslims build mosques.
3. Christianity is the dominant religion in the United States, but there is significant diversity from region to region in the variant of Christianity that dominates. In recent decades, the United States has seen the growth of evangelicalism in some places and secularism in others.

7.4 Identify and Describe the Role Religion Plays in Political Conflicts.

1. Religious beliefs and histories can bitterly divide people. Significant conflicts exist at the borders between major religions (inter-faith boundaries) and at the borders between variants of faiths (intrafaith boundaries).
2. Religion has played an important symbolic role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. In both cases, however, the conflicts are less about religious beliefs than they are about the competing territorial agendas of ethno-nationalist groups.
3. Recent migration streams into Europe from Southwest Asia and North Africa have brought a substantial number of Muslims into Europe. Resulting tensions have often had a religious dimension.
4. In some places religious fundamentalism has led to a form of religious extremism that encourages followers to resort to violence. Terrorist attacks undertaken in the name of religious extremism have become increasingly common—in the process fueling tensions between societies in the name of religion.

Self-Test

7.1 Describe the nature of religion and its cultural significance.

1. Religions spread through:
 - a. expansion diffusion.
 - b. relocation diffusion.
 - c. contagious diffusion.
 - d. conquest.
 - e. all of the above.
2. True or False: Religion played a major role in the historical development of culture, but aside from churches, temples, and synagogues, it has little impact on culture today.
3. Secularism has gained the most ground in:
 - a. Europe.
 - b. South America.
 - c. sub-Saharan Africa.
 - d. South Asia.

7.2 Describe the distribution of major religions and the factors that shaped their diffusion.

4. True or False: The hearth of each of the four major world religions is in the Eastern Hemisphere.

5. Which type of religion is most likely to diffuse over a wide area?
 - a. an ethnic religion
 - b. a universalizing religion
 - c. an animistic religion
 - d. a syncretic religion
6. Theravada Buddhism is found principally in:
 - a. South Asia.
 - b. Southeast Asia.
 - c. Mongolia and Tibet.
 - d. eastern China and Japan.
7. The term *diaspora* refers to:
 - a. the spatial dispersion of members of an ethnic or religious group.
 - b. the conversion of people to a particular religion.
 - c. the ways in which religions change when they move into new areas.
 - d. the religious hierarchy that tends to develop in ethnic religions.
8. The country with the largest Muslim population in the world is:
 - a. Saudi Arabia.
 - b. Egypt.
 - c. Indonesia.
 - d. Pakistan.

7.3 Explain how cultural landscapes reflects religious ideas and practices.

9. Jerusalem has sites that are sacred to:
- Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
 - Jews, Christians, and Hindus.
 - Jews and Christians only.
 - Jews and Muslims only.
10. The practice of making pilgrimages to visit sacred sites is associated with:
- Christianity and Hinduism, but not Islam.
 - Christianity and Islam, but not Hinduism.
 - Hinduism and Islam, but not Christianity.
 - Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.
11. A minaret is an architectural feature of:
- Hindu temples.
 - Muslim mosques.
 - Buddhist temples.
 - Shinto shrines.

7.4 Identify and describe the role religion plays in political conflicts.

12. In _____, the most significant religious conflict is intrafaith (as opposed to interfaith).
- Israel/Palestine
 - Nigeria
 - Northern Ireland
 - None of the above
13. True or False: In most cases of religious conflict, the central point of contention is not differences in religious practices. Instead, it is rooted in ethno-national differences and/or competition over access to political power and economic opportunity.
14. Migration is sometimes strongly associated with religious conflict. In which of the following examples is that not the case?
- migration from North Africa and Southwest Asia into Europe over the last 60 years
 - migration from Europe into Israel after 1947
 - migration from Mexico and Central America into the United States over the last 30 years
 - migration from Great Britain into Northern Ireland during the eighteenth century