

KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Religions Distributed?

- Distribution of Religions
- Branches of Universalizing Religions
- Ethnic Religions

When the Dalai Lama dies, Tibetan Buddhists believe that his spirit enters the body of a child. In 1937, a group of priests located and recognized a 2-year-old child named Tenzin Gyatso as the fourteenth Dalai Lama, the incarnation of the deceased thirteenth Dalai Lama, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. The child was brought to Lhasa in 1939 when he was 4 and enthroned a year later. Priests trained the young Dalai Lama to assume leadership and sent him to college when he was 16. The Chapter Opener shows the fourteenth Dalai Lama at age 67.

The Dalai Lama—which translates as “oceanic teacher”—is not only the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism but was once also the head of the government of Tibet. Daily life in Tibet was traditionally dominated by Buddhist rites. As recently as the 1950s, one-fourth of all males were monks, and polygamy was encouraged among other males to produce enough children to prevent the population from declining. Figure 6-2 shows the Dalai Lama’s former palace in Tibet’s capital Lhasa, situated in the Himalaya Mountains.

▼ **FIGURE 6-2 POTALA PALACE, LHASA, TIBET** Dalai Lamas lived in the palace from 1649 until 1959, when the fourteenth Dalai Lama was forced to migrate.



China, which had ruled Tibet from 1720 until its independence in 1911, invaded the rugged, isolated country in 1950, turned it into a province named Xizang in 1951, and installed a Communist government in Tibet in 1953. The Chinese Communists sought to reduce the domination of Buddhist monks in the country’s daily life by destroying monasteries and temples. Farmers were required to join agricultural communes unsuitable for their nomadic style of raising livestock, especially yaks. After crushing a rebellion in 1959, China executed or imprisoned tens of thousands and forced another 100,000, including the Dalai Lama, to emigrate. Buddhist temples were closed and demolished, and religious artifacts and scriptures were destroyed.

In recent years, the Chinese have built new roads and power plants to help raise the low standard of living in Tibet. The Chinese argue that they have brought modern conveniences to Tibet, including paved roads, hospitals, schools, and agricultural practices. Some monasteries have been rebuilt, but no new monks are being trained. At the same time, the Chinese have secured their hold on Tibet by encouraging immigration from other parts of China. The Chinese government opposes efforts by other countries and international organizations to encourage greater autonomy for Tibet.

Why did the Chinese try to dismantle the religious institutions of a poor, remote country? At issue was the fact that the presence of strong religious feelings among the Tibetan people conflicted with the aims of the Chinese government.

The conflict between traditional Buddhism and the Chinese government is one of many examples of the impact of religion. In the modern world of global economics and culture, local religious belief continues to play a strong role in people’s lives.

Distribution of Religions

Learning Outcome 6.1.1

Describe the distribution of the major religions.

Only a few religions can claim the adherence of large numbers of people. Each of these faiths has a distinctive distribution across Earth's surface.

Geographers distinguish two types of religions:

- **Universalizing religions** attempt to be global, to appeal to all people, wherever they may live in the world, not just to those of one culture or location.
- **Ethnic religions** appeal primarily to one group of people living in one place.

Statistics on the number of followers of religions can be controversial. No official count of religious membership is taken in the United States or in many other countries. Most statistics in this chapter come from Adherents.com, an organization not affiliated with any religion. According to Adherents.com, approximately 58 percent of the world's population practice a universalizing religion, 26 percent an ethnic religion, and 16 percent no religion.

The three universalizing religions with the largest numbers of adherents are Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. According to Adherents.com, there are 2.1 billion Christians, 1.5 billion Muslims, and 376 million Buddhists in the world. Each of these religions has a distinctive distribution (Figure 6-3). The next three largest universalizing religions are Sikhism (23 million adherents), Bahá'í (7 million), and Zoroastrianism (3 million).

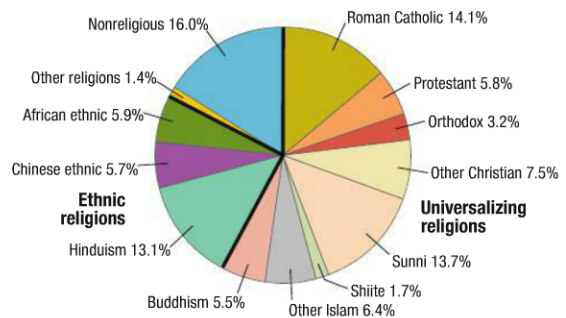
Hinduism is the ethnic religion with by far the largest number of adherents—900 million. Three other ethnic religions have at least 100 million adherents: Chinese traditional (394 million), Asian primal-indigenous (300 million), and African traditional religions (100 million). Three others—Juchte, Spiritism, and Judaism—have between 14 million and 19 million adherents each.

The nonreligious category consists primarily of people who express no religious interest or preference and don't participate in any organized religious activity. Some people in this group espouse **atheism**, which is belief that God does not exist, or **agnosticism**, which is belief that nothing can be known about whether God exists. According to Adherents.com, most people in this category affirm neither belief nor lack of belief in God or some other Higher Power.

Figure 6-4 shows the worldwide percentage of people adhering to the various religions. The small pie charts in Figure 6-3 show the overall proportion of the world's religions in each world region. Table 6-1 shows the distribution of religions in the United States.



▲ FIGURE 6-3 WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIONS The pie charts show the share of major religions in each world region.



▲ FIGURE 6-4 ADHERENTS OF WORLD RELIGIONS Nonreligious includes atheists and agnostics.

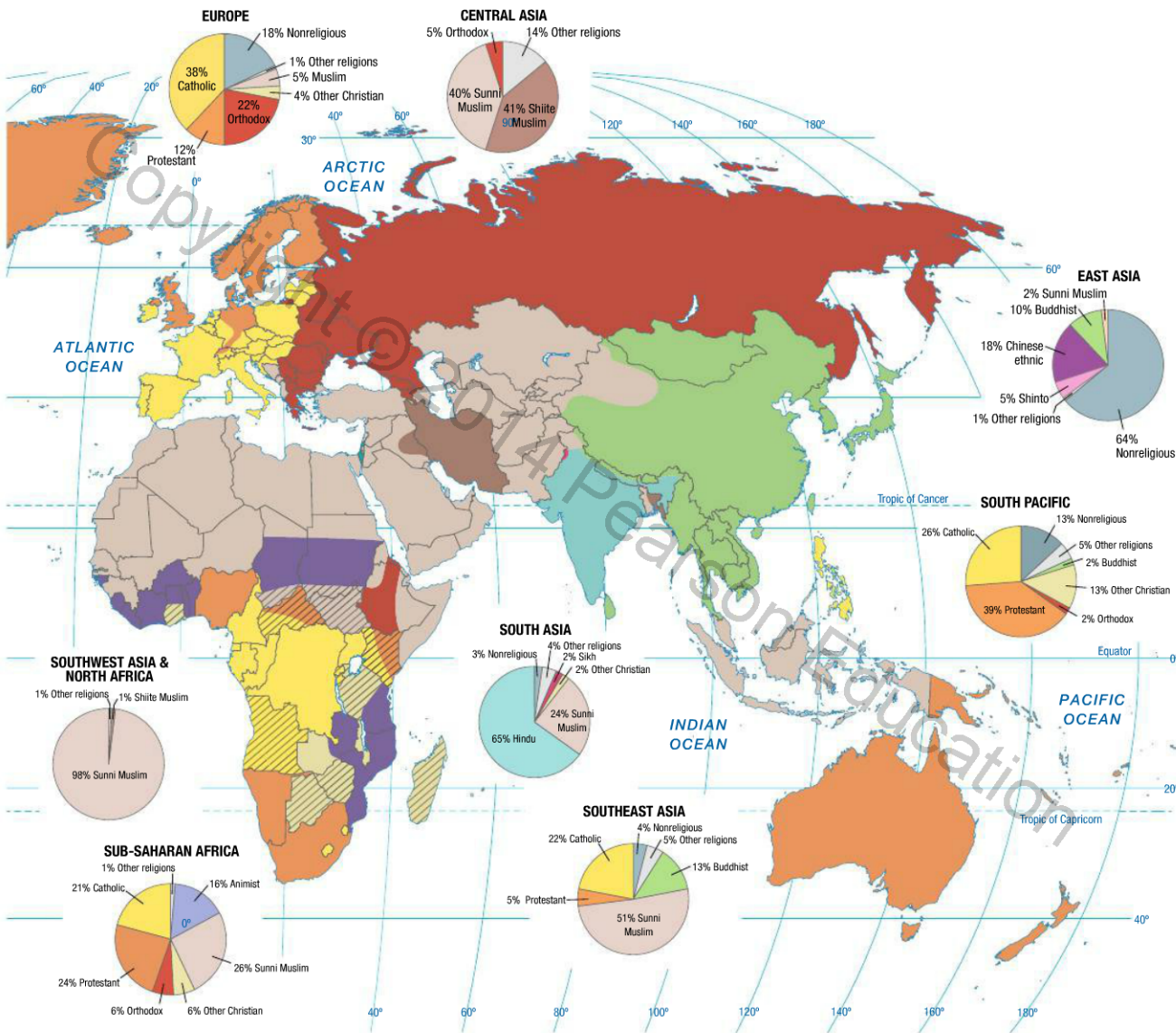


TABLE 6.1 RELIGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

<p>Nonreligious or atheist: 30 million</p> <p>Christians: 161 million</p> <p>Roman Catholics: 66 million</p> <p>Protestants: 82 million</p> <p>A Baptist church: 37 million</p> <p>A Southern Baptist Convention church: 17 million</p> <p>A National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., church: 8 million</p> <p>A National Baptist Convention of America church: 4 million</p> <p>A National Missionary Baptist Convention of America church: 3 million</p> <p>A Progressive National Baptist Convention church: 3 million</p> <p>An American Baptist Church, USA: 2 million</p> <p>Another Baptist church: 3 million</p>	<p>A Methodist church: 13 million</p> <p>A United Methodist church: 8 million</p> <p>An African Methodist Episcopal or Episcopal Zion church: 4 million</p> <p>A Pentecostal church: 11 million</p> <p>A Church of God in Christ: 6 million</p> <p>One of the Assemblies of God churches: 3 million</p> <p>One of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the world churches: 2 million</p> <p>A Lutheran church: 8 million</p> <p>An Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: 5 million</p> <p>One of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod churches: 3 million</p> <p>A Presbyterian Church U.S.A.: 4 million</p> <p>A Reformed church: 2 million</p> <p>A United Church of Christ: 1 million</p> <p>Another Reformed Church: 1 million</p> <p>An Episcopal church: 2 million</p>	<p>One of the Churches of Christ: 3 million</p> <p>A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): 1 million</p> <p>A Seventh Day Adventist church: 1 million</p> <p>Orthodox: 3 million</p> <p>A church of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: 2 million</p> <p>Another Orthodox church: 1 million</p> <p>Other Christians: 10 million</p> <p>A Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: 6 million</p> <p>A Jehovah's Witness church: 1 million</p> <p>Other Christians: 3 million</p> <p>Buddhists: 1 million</p> <p>Hindus: 1 million</p> <p>Jews: 3 million</p> <p>Muslims: 1 million</p> <p>Other faiths: 6 million</p>
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Branches of Universalizing Religions

Learning Outcome 6.1.2

Describe the distribution of the major branches of Christianity.

The three principal universalizing religions are divided into branches, denominations, and sects. A **branch** is a large and fundamental division within a religion. A **denomination** is a division of a branch that unites a number of local congregations in a single legal and administrative body. A **sect** is a relatively small group that has broken away from an established denomination.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity has more than 2 billion adherents, more than any other world religion, and it also has the most widespread distribution. It is the predominant religion in North America, South America, Europe, and Australia, and countries with a Christian majority exist in Africa and Asia as well (Figure 6-5).

BRANCHES OF CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE. Christianity has three major branches—Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Roman Catholics comprise 51 percent of the world's Christians, Protestants 24 percent, and Orthodox 11 percent. In addition, 14 percent of Christians belong to churches that do not consider themselves to be within any of these three branches.

In Europe, Roman Catholicism is the dominant Christian branch in the southwest and east, Protestantism in the northwest, and Orthodoxy in the east and southeast. The regions of Roman Catholic and Protestant majorities frequently have sharp boundaries, even when they

run through the middle of countries. For example, the Netherlands and Switzerland have approximately equal percentages of Roman Catholics and Protestants, but the Roman Catholic populations are concentrated in the south of these countries and the Protestant populations in the north.

The Orthodox branch of Christianity (often called Eastern Orthodox) is a collection of 14 self-governing churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. More than 40 percent of all Orthodox Christians belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest of these 14 churches. Christianity came to Russia in the tenth century, and the Russian Orthodox Church was established in the sixteenth century.

Nine of the other 13 self-governing churches were established in the nineteenth century or twentieth century. The largest of these 9, the Romanian Church, includes 20 percent of all Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian Orthodox churches have approximately 10 percent each. The other 5 recently established Orthodox churches—those of Albania, Cyprus, Georgia, Poland, and Sinai—combined account for about 2 percent of all Orthodox Christians. The remaining 4 of the 14 Eastern Orthodox churches—those of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem—trace their origins to the earliest days of Christianity. They have a combined membership of about 3 percent of all Orthodox Christians.

BRANCHES OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. The overwhelming percentage of people living in the Western Hemisphere—nearly 90 percent—are Christian. About 5 percent belong to other religions, and the remaining 6 percent profess adherence to no religion.

A fairly sharp boundary exists within the Western Hemisphere in the predominant branches of Christianity. Roman Catholics comprise 93 percent of Christians in Latin America, compared with 40 percent in North America. Within North America, Roman Catholics are clustered in the southwestern and northeastern United States and the Canadian province of Québec.

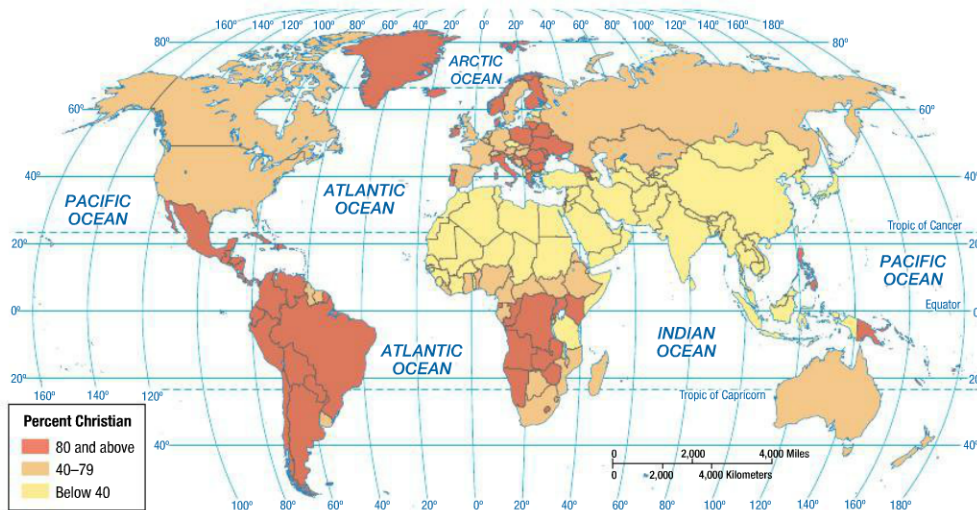
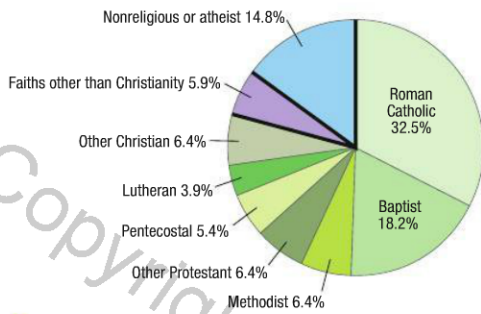


FIGURE 6-5 DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANS At least 80 percent of the population adheres to Christianity in Europe, the Western Hemisphere, the South Pacific, and selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa.



▲ FIGURE 6-6 PERCENTAGE OF FAITHS IN THE UNITED STATES Approximately 6 percent of the U.S. population adhere to a religion other than Christianity, and 15 percent adhere to no religion.

Protestant churches have approximately 82 million members, or about 28 percent of the U.S. population over age five (Figure 6-6). Baptist churches have the largest number of adherents in the United States, about 37 million combined over age five (refer to Table 6-1). Membership in some Protestant churches varies by region of the United States. Baptists, for example, are highly clustered in the southeast, and Lutherans in the upper Midwest. Other Christian denominations are more evenly distributed around the country (Figure 6-7).

OTHER CHRISTIANS. Several other Christian churches developed independently of the three main branches. Many of these Christian communities were isolated from others at an early point in the development of Christianity, partly because of differences in doctrine and partly as a result of Islamic control of intervening territory in Southwest Asia and North Africa.

Two small Christian churches survive in northeast Africa—the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Ethiopian Church. The Ethiopian Church, with perhaps 10 million

adherents, split from the Egyptian Coptic Church in 1948, although it traces its roots to the fourth century, when two shipwrecked Christians, who were taken as slaves, ultimately converted the Ethiopian king to Christianity.

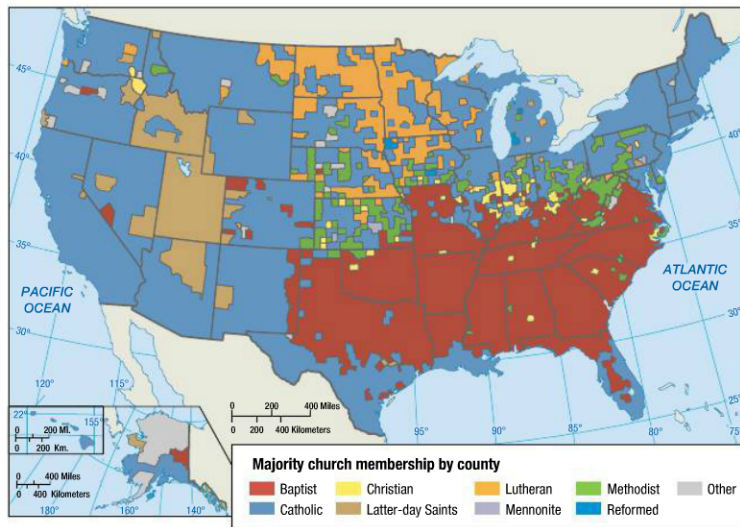
The Armenian Church originated in Antioch, Syria, and was important in diffusing Christianity to South Asia and East Asia between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. The church’s few present-day adherents are concentrated in Lebanon and Armenia, as well as in northeastern Turkey and western Azerbaijan. Despite the small number of adherents, the Armenian Church, like other small sects, plays a significant role in regional conflicts. For example, Armenian Christians have fought for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, a portion of Azerbaijan, because Nagorno-Karabakh is predominantly Armenian, whereas the remainder of Azerbaijan is overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim (see Chapter 7).

The Maronites are another example of a small Christian sect that plays a disproportionately prominent role in political unrest. They are clustered in Lebanon, which has suffered through a long civil war fought among religious groups (see Chapter 7).

In the United States, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) regard their church as a branch of Christianity separate from other branches. About 3 percent of Americans are members of the Latter-day Saints, and a large percentage is clustered in Utah and surrounding states.

Pause and Reflect 6.1.2

Based on what you see in Figure 6-6 or Table 6-1, what are some of the largest Christian denominations in the United States that do not have highly clustered distributions in Figure 6-7?



◀ FIGURE 6-7 DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE UNITED STATES The shaded areas are U.S. counties in which more than 50 percent of church membership is concentrated in either Roman Catholicism or one Protestant denomination. The distinctive distribution of religious groups within the United States results from patterns of migration, especially from Europe in the nineteenth century and from Latin America in recent years.

ISLAM

Learning Outcome 6.1.3

Identify the major branches of Islam and Buddhism.

Islam, the religion of 1.5 billion people, is the predominant religion of the Middle East from North Africa to Central Asia (Figure 6-8). Half of the world's Muslims live in four countries outside the Middle East—Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India.

The word *Islam* in Arabic means “submission to the will of God,” and it has a similar root to the Arabic word for *peace*. An adherent of the religion of Islam is known as a *Muslim*, which in Arabic means “one who surrenders to God.”

BRANCHES OF ISLAM. Islam is divided into two important branches:

- **Sunni.** The word *Sunni* comes from the Arabic for “people following the example of Muhammad.” Sunnis comprise 83 percent of Muslims and are the largest branch in most Muslim countries in Southwest Asia and North Africa.
- **Shiite.** The word *Shiite* comes from the Arabic word for “sectarian.” Shiites (sometimes called Shias in English) comprise 16 percent of Muslims, clustered in a handful of countries. Nearly 30 percent of all Shiites live in Iran, 15 percent in Pakistan, and 10 percent in Iraq. Shiites comprise nearly 90 percent of the population in

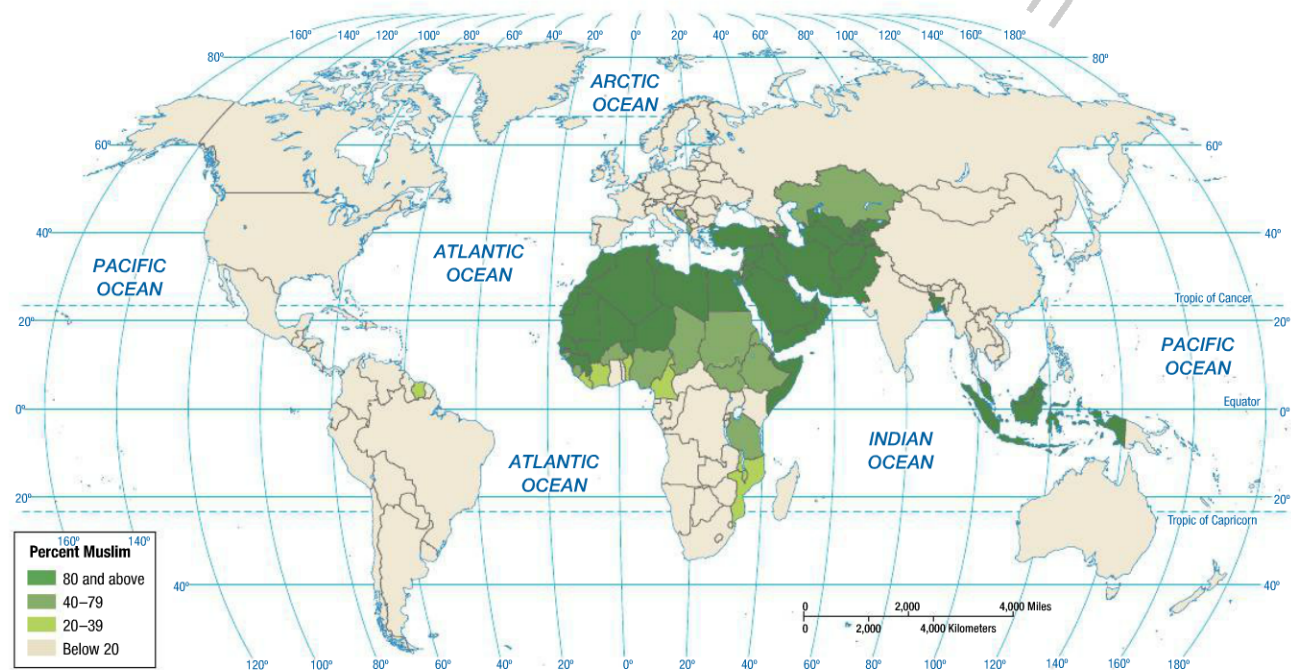
Iran and more than half of the population in Azerbaijan, Iraq, and the less populous countries of Oman and Bahrain.

ISLAM IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. The Muslim population of North America and Europe has increased rapidly in recent years.

In Europe, Muslims account for 5 percent of the population. France has the largest Muslim population, about 4 million, a legacy of immigration from predominantly Muslim former colonies in North Africa. Germany has about 3 million Muslims, also a legacy of immigration, in Germany's case primarily from Turkey. In Southeast Europe, Albania, Bosnia, and Serbia each have about 2 million Muslims.

Estimates of the number of Muslims in North America vary widely, from 1 million to 5 million, but in any event, the number has increased dramatically from only a few hundred thousand in 1990. Muslims in the United States come from a variety of backgrounds. According to the U.S. State Department, approximately one-third of U.S. Muslims trace their ancestry to Pakistan and other South Asian countries and one-fourth from Arab countries of Southwest Asia and North Africa. Many of these Muslims immigrated to the United States during the 1990s. Another one-fourth are African Americans, who have converted to Islam.

Islam also has a presence in the United States through the Nation of Islam, also known as Black Muslims, founded in Detroit in 1930 and led for more than 40 years by Elijah Muhammad, who called himself “the messenger of Allah.”



▲ FIGURE 6-8 DISTRIBUTION OF MUSLIMS At least 80 percent of the population adheres to Islam in Southwest Asia & North Africa and selected countries in Southeast Asia.

Black Muslims lived austere and advocated a separate autonomous nation within the United States for their adherents. Tension between Muhammad and a Black Muslim minister, Malcolm X, divided the sect during the 1960s. After a pilgrimage to Makkah in 1963, Malcolm X converted to orthodox Islam and founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity. He was assassinated in 1965. After Muhammad's death, in 1975, his son Wallace D. Muhammad led the Black Muslims closer to the principles of orthodox Islam, and the organization's name was changed to the American Muslim Mission. A splinter group adopted the original name, Nation of Islam, and continues to follow the separatist teachings of Elijah Muhammad.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism, the third of the world's major universalizing religions, is clustered primarily in East Asia and Southeast Asia. Like the other two universalizing religions, Buddhism split into more than one branch, as followers disagreed on interpreting statements by the founder, Siddhartha Gautama. The three main branches are (Figure 6-9):

- **Mahayana.** Mahayanists account for about 56 percent of Buddhists, primarily in China, Japan, and Korea.
- **Theravada.** Theravadists comprise about 38 percent of Buddhists, especially in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- **Vajrayana.** Vajrayanists, also known as Lamaists and Tantrayonists, comprise about 6 percent and are found primarily in Tibet and Mongolia.

An accurate count of Buddhists is especially difficult because only a few people participate in Buddhist institutions. Religious functions are performed primarily by monks rather than by the general public. The number of



▲ **FIGURE 6-9 DISTRIBUTION OF BUDDHISTS AND SIKHS**

At least 40 percent of the population adheres to Buddhism in East Asia and Southeast Asia. At least 40 percent of the population adheres to Sikhism in northwestern India.

Buddhists is also difficult to count because Buddhism, although a universalizing religion, differs in significant respects from the Western concept of a formal religious system. Someone can be both a Buddhist and a believer in other Eastern religions, whereas Christianity and Islam both require exclusive adherence. Most Buddhists in China and Japan, in particular, believe at the same time in an ethnic religion.

OTHER UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

Sikhism and Bahá'í are the two universalizing religions other than Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism that have the largest numbers of adherents. There are an estimated 23 million Sikhs and 7 million Bahá'ís. All but 3 million Sikhs are clustered in the Punjab region of India. Bahá'ís are dispersed among many countries, primarily in Africa and Asia.

Sikhism's first guru (religious teacher or enlightener) was Nanak (1469–1538), who lived in a village near the city of Lahore, in present-day Pakistan. God was revealed to Guru Nanak as The One Supreme Being, or Creator, who rules the universe by divine will. Only God is perfect, but people have the capacity for continual improvement and movement toward perfection by taking individual responsibility for their deeds and actions on Earth, such as heartfelt adoration, devotion, and surrender to the one God. Sikhism's most important ceremony, introduced by the tenth guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1708), is the Amrit (or Baptism), in which Sikhs declare they will uphold the principles of the faith. Gobind Singh also introduced the practice of men wearing turbans on their heads and never cutting their beards or hair. Wearing a uniform gave Sikhs a disciplined outlook and a sense of unity of purpose.

The Bahá'í religion is even more recent than Sikhism. It grew out of the Bábi faith, which was founded in Shíráz, Iran, in 1844 by Siyyid 'Ali Muhammad, known as the Báb (Persian for "gateway"). Bahá'ís believe that one of the Báb's disciples, Husayn 'Ali Nuri, known as Bahá'u'lláh (Arabic for "Glory of God"), was the prophet and messenger of God. Bahá'u'lláh's function was to overcome the disunity of religions and establish a universal faith through abolition of racial, class, and religious prejudices.

Pause and Reflect 6.1.3

Refer to the small pie charts in Figure 6-3. Which regions have enough adherents of each of the three universalizing religions so that all three appear on the pie charts?

Ethnic Religions

Learning Outcome 6.1.4

Describe the distribution of the largest ethnic religions.

In contrast to universalizing religions, which often spread from one culture to another, ethnic religions tend to remain within the culture where they originated. Ethnic religions typically have much more clustered distributions than do universalizing religions. The ethnic religion with by far the largest number of followers is Hinduism. Ethnic religions in Asia and Africa comprise most of the remainder.

HINDUISM

Hinduism is the world's third-largest religion, with 900 million adherents, but 90 percent of Hindus are concentrated in one country, India, and most of the remainder can be found in India's neighbors Bangladesh and Nepal. Hindus comprise more than 80 percent of the population of India and Nepal, about 9 percent in Bangladesh, and a small minority in every other country (Figure 6-10).

The average Hindu has allegiance to a particular god or concept within a broad range of possibilities. The manifestation of God with the largest number of adherents—an estimated 80 percent—is Vaishnavism, which worships the god Vishnu, a loving god incarnated as Krishna. The second-largest is Saivism, dedicated to Siva, a protective and destructive god.

OTHER ASIAN ETHNIC RELIGIONS

Three religions based in East Asia and Southeast Asia show the difficulty of classifying ethnic religions and counting adherents. Chinese traditional religions are **syncretic**, which means they combine several traditions. Primal-indigenous religions are especially difficult to document

because they are based on oral traditions rather than writing. Juchte is classified as a religion by Adherents.com but not by other sources.

CHINESE TRADITIONAL. Adherents.com considers Chinese traditional religion to be a combination of Buddhism (a universalizing religion) with Confucianism, Taoism, and other traditional Chinese practices. Most Chinese who consider themselves religious blend together the religious cultures of these multiple traditions:

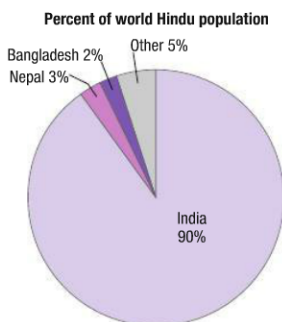
- **Confucianism.** Confucius (551–479 B.C.) was a philosopher and teacher in the Chinese province of Lu. His sayings, which were recorded by his students, emphasized the importance of the ancient Chinese tradition of *li*, which can be translated roughly as “propriety” or “correct behavior.” Confucianism prescribed a series of ethical principles for the orderly conduct of daily life in China, such as following traditions, fulfilling obligations, and treating others with sympathy and respect. These rules applied to China’s rulers as well as to their subjects.
- **Taoism.** Lao-Zi (604–531? B.C., also spelled Lao Tse) organized Taoism. Although a government administrator by profession, Lao-Zi’s writings emphasized the mystical and magical aspects of life rather than the importance of public service, which Confucius had emphasized. Tao, which means “the way” or “the path,” cannot be comprehended by reason and knowledge because not everything is knowable. (Figure 6-11).

Commingling of diverse philosophies is not totally foreign to Americans. The tenets of a religion such as Christianity, the wisdom of the ancient Greek philosophers, and the ideals of the Declaration of Independence can all be held dear without doing grave injustice to the others.

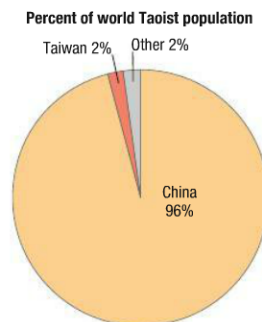
Pause and Reflect 6.1.4

Referring to Table 6-1, which ethnic religions have at least 1 million adherents in the United States?

▼ **FIGURE 6-10**
DISTRIBUTION OF HINDUS All but 10 percent of the world's Hindus live in India.



► **FIGURE 6-11**
DISTRIBUTION OF TAOISTS All but 4 percent of the world's Taoists live in China.



PRIMAL-INDIGENOUS. Several hundred million people practice what Adherents.com has grouped into the category primal-indigenous religions. Most of these people reside in Southeast Asia or South Pacific islands.

Relatively little is known about primal-indigenous religions because written documents have not come down from ancestors. Religious rituals are passed from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Followers of primal-indigenous religions believe that because God dwells within all things, everything in nature is spiritual. Narratives concerning nature are specific to the physical landscape where they are told.

Included in this group are Shamanism and Paganism. According to Shamans, invisible forces or spirits affect the lives of the living. **Pagan** used to refer to the practices of ancient peoples, such as the Greeks and Romans, who had multiple gods with human forms. The term is currently used to refer to beliefs that originated with religions that predated Christianity and Islam.

JUCHTE. Most North Koreans are classified by Adherents.com as following Juchte, which is a Korean word meaning “self-reliance.” Juchte was organized by Kim Il-sung, the leader of North Korea between 1948 and his death in 1994. Rather than a religion, Juchte is widely regarded as a government ideology or philosophy.

OTHER ETHNIC RELIGIONS

Outside Asia, the principal ethnic religions are African. Spiritism and Judaism are other ethnic religions that have at least 10 million adherents worldwide.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL. Approximately 100 million Africans, 12 percent of the continent’s people, follow traditional ethnic religions sometimes called **animism**. Animists believe that inanimate objects such as plants and stones, or natural events such as thunderstorms and earthquakes, are “animated,” or have discrete spirits and conscious life.

African animist religions are apparently based on monotheistic concepts, although below the supreme god there is a hierarchy of divinities. These divinities may be assistants to the supreme god or personifications of natural phenomena, such as trees or rivers.

Africa is 46 percent Christian—split about evenly among Roman Catholic, Protestant, and other—and another 40 percent are Muslims (Figure 6-12). The growth in the two universalizing refer to at the expense of ethnic religions reflects fundamental geographic differences between the two types of religions, discussed in the next key issue.

SPIRITISM. Spiritism is the belief that the human personality continues to exist after death and can communicate with the living through the agency of a medium or psychic. Most Spiritists reside in Brazil.

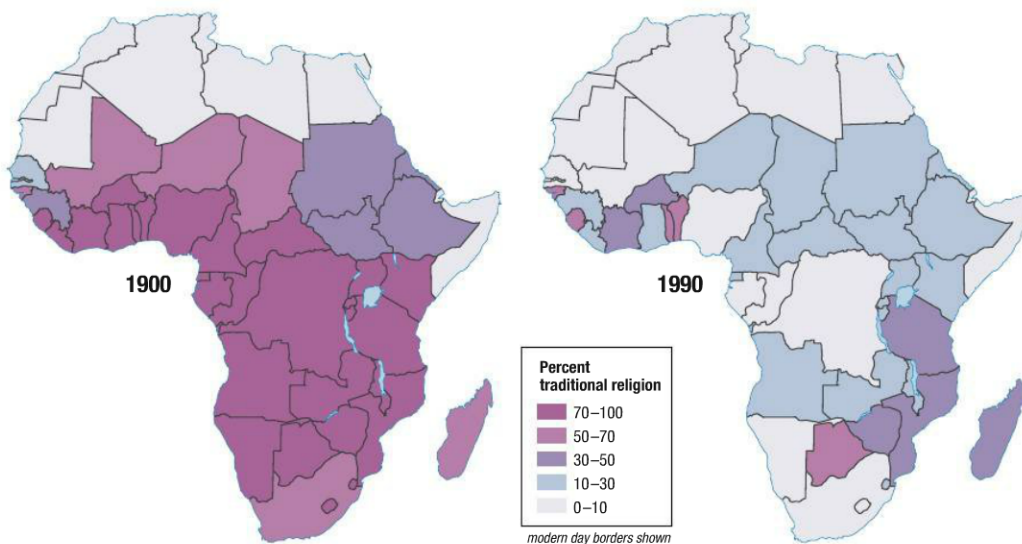
JUDAISM. Roughly two-fifths of the world’s 14 million Jews live in the United States and another two-fifths in Israel. The name *Judaism* derives from Judah, one of the patriarch Jacob’s 12 sons; Israel is another biblical name for Jacob. The Bible recounts the ancient history of the Jewish people. Judaism plays a more substantial role in Western civilization than its number of adherents would suggest:

- Judaism is the first recorded religion to espouse **monotheism**, belief that there is only one God. Fundamental to Judaism is belief in one all-powerful God. Judaism offered a sharp contrast to the **polytheism** practiced by neighboring people, who worshipped a collection of gods.
- Two of the three main universalizing religions—Christianity and Islam—find some of their roots in Judaism. About 4,000 years ago Abraham, considered the patriarch or father of Judaism, migrated from present-day Iraq to present-day Israel, along a route known as the Fertile Crescent (see discussion of the Fertile Crescent in Chapter 8 and Figure 8-10). About 2,000 years after Abraham, Jesus was Jewish, born about 500 years after Jesus Muhammad traced his ancestry to Abraham.

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Religions Distributed?

- ✓ Religions can be classified into universalizing and ethnic.
- ✓ The three largest universalizing religions are Christianity, which is found primarily in Europe, North America, and Latin America; Islam, which is found primarily in Southeast, Central, and Southwest Asia, as well as North Africa; and Buddhism, which is found primarily in East Asia.
- ✓ The largest ethnic religion is Hinduism, which is found primarily in South Asia.



◀ **FIGURE 6-12**
DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS The percentage of animists in sub-Saharan Africa has declined from more than 70 percent in 1900 to around 12 percent in 2010. As recently as 1980, some 200 million Africans—half the population of the region at the time—were classified as animists. Followers of traditional African religions now constitute a clear majority of the population only in Botswana. The rapid decline in animists in Africa has been caused by increases in the numbers of Christians and Muslims.

KEY ISSUE 2

Why Do Religions Have Different Distributions?

- Origin of Religions
- Diffusion of Religions

Learning Outcome 6.2.1

Describe the origin of universalizing religions.

We can identify several major geographic differences between universalizing and ethnic religions. These differences include the locations where the religions originated, the processes by which they diffused from their place of origin to other regions, the types of places that are considered holy, the calendar dates identified as important holidays, and attitudes toward modifying the physical environment.

Origin of Religions

Universalizing religions have precise places of origin based on events in the life of a man. Ethnic religions have unknown or unclear origins, not tied to single historical individuals.

Each of the three universalizing religions can be traced to the actions and teachings of a man who lived since the start of recorded history. The beginnings of Buddhism go back about 2,500 years, Christianity 2,000 years, and Islam 1,500 years. Specific events also led to the division of the universalizing religions into branches.

ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM

The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, was born about 563 B.C. in Lumbinī in present-day Nepal, near the border with India (Figure 6-13). The son of a lord, he led

▼ **FIGURE 6-13 ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM** Ruins of shrines constructed around Buddha's birthplace in Lumbinī, Nepal.



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CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC TOOLS

Counting Religious Adherents

An accurate count of the number of adherents to various religions, branches, denominations, and sects is impossible in the United States because the census does not ask questions about religion. Other countries do ask about religion.

In Canada, for example, the census asks:

“What is this person’s religion? Indicate a specific denomination or religion even if this person is not currently a practising member of that group. For example, Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Islam, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, etc.”

- Specify one denomination or religion only _____
- No religion

Critics charged that including the phrase “even if this person is not currently a practising member” inflated the number of people who were thought to be religious in Canada.

Nonetheless, an analysis of recent census data by mathematicians showed that the fastest-growing response to census questions about religion in a number of countries is “unaffiliated.” When they extrapolated the growth of “unaffiliated” into the future, the mathematicians concluded that religion would become extinct during the twenty-first century in nine countries: Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Switzerland.

a privileged existence, sheltered from life’s hardships. Gautama had a beautiful wife, palaces, and servants.

According to Buddhist legend, Gautama’s life changed after a series of four trips. He encountered a decrepit old man on the first trip, a disease-ridden man on the second trip, and a corpse on the third trip. After witnessing these scenes of pain and suffering, Gautama began to feel he could no longer enjoy his life of comfort and security. Then, on a fourth trip, Gautama saw a monk, who taught him about withdrawal from the world.

At age 29 Gautama left his palace one night and lived in a forest for the next 6 years, thinking and experimenting with forms of meditation. Gautama emerged as the Buddha, the “awakened or enlightened one,” and spent 45 years preaching his views across India. In the process, he trained monks, established orders, and preached to the public.

The foundation of Buddhism is represented by these concepts, known as the Four Noble Truths:

1. All living beings must endure suffering.
2. Suffering, which is caused by a desire to live, leads to reincarnation (repeated rebirth in new bodies or forms of life).
3. The goal of all existence is to escape suffering and the endless cycle of reincarnation into Nirvana (a state of complete redemption), which is achieved through mental and moral self-purification.
4. Nirvana is attained through an Eightfold Path, which includes rightness of belief, resolve, speech, action, livelihood, effort, thought, and meditation.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM. Theravada is the older of the two largest branches of Buddhism. The word means “the way of the elders,” indicating the Theravada Buddhists’ belief that they are closer to Buddha’s original approach. Theravadists believe that Buddhism is a full-time occupation, so to become a good Buddhist, one must renounce worldly goods and become a monk.

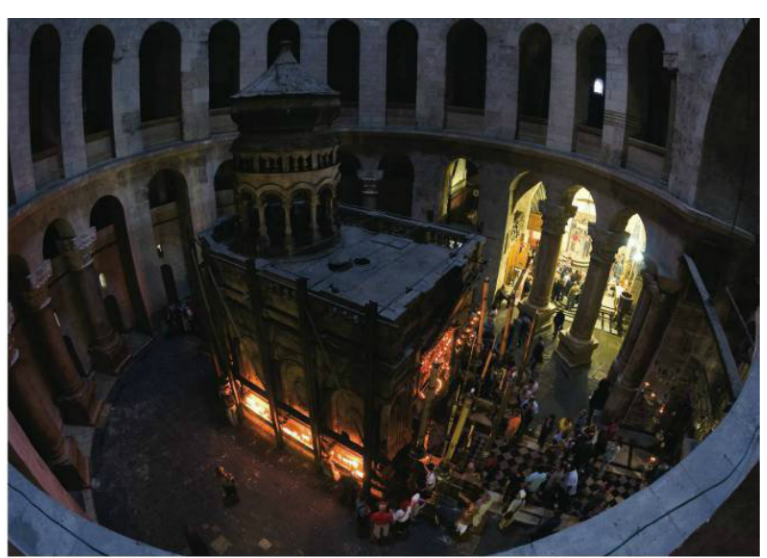
MAHAYANA BUDDHISM. Mahayana split from Theravada Buddhism about 2,000 years ago. *Mahayana* is translated as the great vehicle, and Mahayanists call Theravada Buddhism by the name *Hinayana*, or the inferior vehicle. Mahayanists claim that their approach to Buddhism can help more people because it is less demanding and all-encompassing. Theravadists emphasize Buddha’s life of self-help and years of solitary introspection, and Mahayanists emphasize Buddha’s later years of teaching and helping others. Theravadists cite Buddha’s wisdom and Mahayanists his compassion.

VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM. Vajrayanas emphasize the practice of rituals, known as Tantras, which have been recorded in texts. Vajrayanas believe that Buddha began to practice Tantras during his lifetime, although other Buddhists regard Vajrayana as an approach to Buddhism that evolved from Mahayana Buddhism several centuries later.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity was founded upon the teachings of Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem between 8 and 4 B.C. and died on a cross in Jerusalem about A.D. 30. Raised as a Jew, Jesus gathered a small band of disciples and preached the coming of the Kingdom of God. The four Gospels of the Christian Bible—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—document miracles and extraordinary deeds that Jesus performed. He was referred to as Christ, from the Greek word for the Hebrew word *messiah*, which means “anointed.”

In the third year of his mission, Jesus was betrayed to the authorities by one of his companions, Judas Iscariot. After sharing the Last Supper (the Jewish Passover Seder) with his disciples in Jerusalem, Jesus was arrested and put to death as an agitator. On the third day after his death, his tomb was found empty (Figure 6-14). Christians believe



▲ **FIGURE 6-14 ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY** This tomb in the center of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was erected on the site where Jesus is thought to have been buried and resurrected.

that Jesus died to atone for human sins, that he was raised from the dead by God, and that his Resurrection from the dead provides people with hope for salvation.

ROMAN CATHOLIC BRANCH. Roman Catholics accept the teachings of the Bible, as well as the interpretation of those teachings by the Church hierarchy, headed by the Pope. Roman Catholics recognize the Pope as possessing a universal primacy or authority, and they believe that the Church is infallible in resolving theological disputes. According to Roman Catholic belief, God conveys His grace directly to humanity through seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist (the partaking of bread and wine that repeats the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper), Penance, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing the Sick.

ORTHODOX BRANCH. Orthodoxy comprises the faith and practices of a collection of churches that arose in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. The split between the Roman and Eastern churches dates to the fifth century, as a result of rivalry between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarchy of Constantinople, which was especially intense after the collapse of the Roman Empire. The split between the two churches became final in 1054, when Pope Leo IX condemned the Patriarch of Constantinople. Orthodox Christians accept the seven sacraments but reject doctrines that the Roman Catholic Church added since the eighth century.

PROTESTANT BRANCH. Protestantism originated with the principles of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The Reformation movement is regarded as beginning when Martin Luther (1483–1546) posted 95 theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. According to Luther, individuals have primary responsibility for achieving personal salvation through direct communication with God. Grace is achieved through faith rather than through sacraments performed by the Church.

ORIGIN OF ISLAM

Learning Outcome 6.2.2

Understand differences in the origin of universalizing and ethnic religions.

Like other universalizing religions, Islam arose from the teachings of a historical founder. The core of Islamic belief involves performing five acts, known as five pillars of faith:

1. *Shahadah*, which means frequent recitation that there is no god worthy of worship except the one God, the source of all creation, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.
2. *Salat*, which means that five times daily, a Muslim prays, facing the city of Makkah (Mecca), as a direct link to God.
3. *Zakat*, which means that a Muslim gives generously to charity as an act of purification and growth.
4. *Sawm of Ramadan*, which means that a Muslim fasts during the month of Ramadan as an act of self-purification.
5. *Hajj*, which means that if physically and financially able, a Muslim makes a pilgrimage to Makkah.

Islam traces its origin to the same narrative as Judaism and Christianity. All three religions consider Adam to have been the first man and Abraham to have been one of his descendants. According to the biblical narrative:

- Abraham married Sarah, who did not bear children; as polygamy was a custom of the culture, Abraham then married Hagar, who bore a son, Ishmael.
- Sarah's fortunes changed, and she bore a son, Isaac.
- Jews and Christians trace their story through Abraham's original wife Sarah and her son Isaac.
- Muslims trace their story through his second wife, Hagar, and her son Ishmael; the Islamic tradition tells that Abraham brought Hagar and Ishmael to Makkah (spelled Mecca on many English-language maps), in present-day Saudi Arabia.
- Centuries later, according to the Muslim narrative, one of Ishmael's descendants, Muhammad, became the Prophet of Islam.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD. Muhammad was born in Makkah about 570. At age 40, while engaged in a meditative retreat, Muhammad is believed by Muslims to have received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel. The Quran, the holiest book in Islam, is accepted by Muslims to be a record of God's words, as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through Gabriel. Arabic is the lingua franca, or language of communication, within the Muslim world, because it is the language in which the Quran is written.

Islam teaches that as he began to preach the truth that God had revealed to him, Muhammad suffered persecution, and in 622 he was commanded by God to emigrate. His migration from Makkah to the city of Yathrib—an event



▲ **FIGURE 6-15 ORIGIN OF ISLAM** Muhammad is buried under the green dome in the Mosque of the Prophet in Madinah, Saudi Arabia. The mosque, built on the site of Muhammad's house, is the second holiest in Islam and the second largest mosque in the world.

known as the *Hijra* (from the Arabic word for “migration,” sometimes spelled *hegira*)—marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar. Yathrib was subsequently renamed Madinah, Arabic for “the City of the Prophet” (Figure 6-15). After several years, Muhammad and his followers returned to Makkah and established Islam as the city's religion. By Muhammad's death, in 632 at about age 63, Islam had spread through most of present-day Saudi Arabia.

SHIITES VERSUS SUNNIS. Differences between the two main branches of Islam—Shiites and Sunnis—go back to the earliest days of the religion and basically reflect disagreement over the line of succession in Islamic leadership. Muhammad had no surviving son and no follower of comparable leadership ability. His successor was his father-in-law, Abu Bakr (573–634), an early supporter from Makkah, who became known as *caliph* (“successor of the prophet”). The next two caliphs, Umar (634–644) and Uthman (644–656), expanded the territory under Muslim influence to Egypt and Persia.

Uthman was a member of a powerful Makkah clan that had initially opposed Muhammad before the clan's conversion to Islam. The more ardent converts criticized Uthman for seeking compromises with other formerly pagan families in Makkah. Uthman's opponents found a leader in Ali (600?–661), a cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, and thus Muhammad's nearest male heir. When Uthman was murdered, in 656, Ali became caliph, although five years later he, too, was assassinated (Figure 6-16).

Ali's descendants claim leadership of Islam, and Shiites support this claim. But Shiites disagree among themselves about the precise line of succession from Ali to modern times. They acknowledge that the chain of leadership was broken, but they dispute the date and events surrounding the disruption.

During the 1970s both the shah (king) of Iran and an ayatollah (religious scholar) named Khomeini claimed to be the divinely appointed interpreter of Islam for the

Shiites. The allegiance of the Iranian Shiites switched from the shah to the ayatollah largely because the ayatollah made a more convincing case that he was more faithfully adhering to the rigid laws laid down by Muhammad in the Quran.

ORIGIN OF OTHER UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

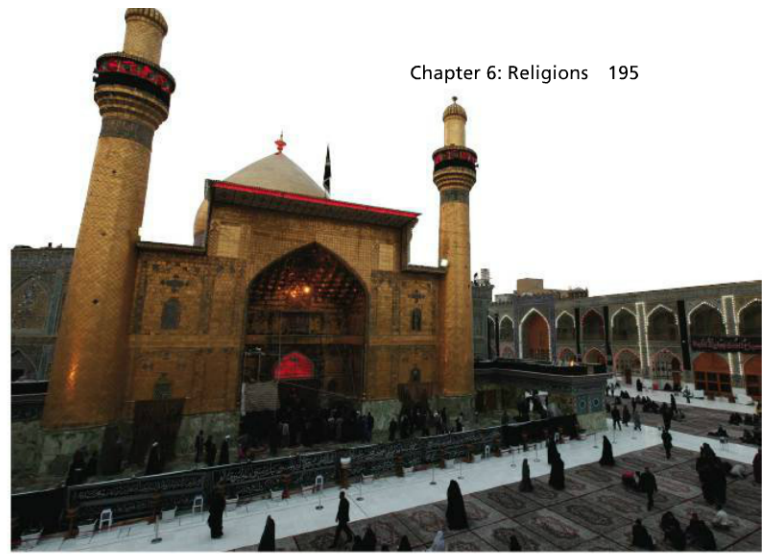
Sikhism and Bahá'í were founded more recently than the three large universalizing religions. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, traveled widely through South Asia around 500 years ago, preaching his new faith, and many people became his *Sikhs*, which is the Hindi word for “disciples.” Nine other gurus succeeded Guru Nanak. Arjan, the fifth guru, compiled and edited in 1604 the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Holy Granth of Enlightenment), which became the book of Sikh holy scriptures.

When it was established in Iran during the nineteenth century, Bahá'í provoked strong opposition from Shiite Muslims. The Báb was executed in 1850, as were 20,000 of his followers. Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet of Bahá'í, was also arrested but was released in 1853 and exiled to Baghdad. In 1863, his claim that he was the messenger of God anticipated by the Báb was accepted by other followers. Before he died in 1892, Bahá'u'lláh appointed his eldest son 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921) to be the leader of the Bahá'í community and the authorized interpreter of his teachings.

UNKNOWN ORIGIN OF HINDUISM

Unlike the universalizing religions, Hinduism did not originate with a specific founder. The origins of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are recorded in the relatively recent past, but Hinduism existed prior to recorded history.

The word *Hinduism* originated in the sixth century B.C. to refer to people living in what is now India. The earliest



▲ **FIGURE 6-16 ORIGIN OF SHIITE ISLAM** The shrine of Imam Ali, in Najaf, Iran, contains the tomb of Ali, from whom traces the Shiite branch of Islam.

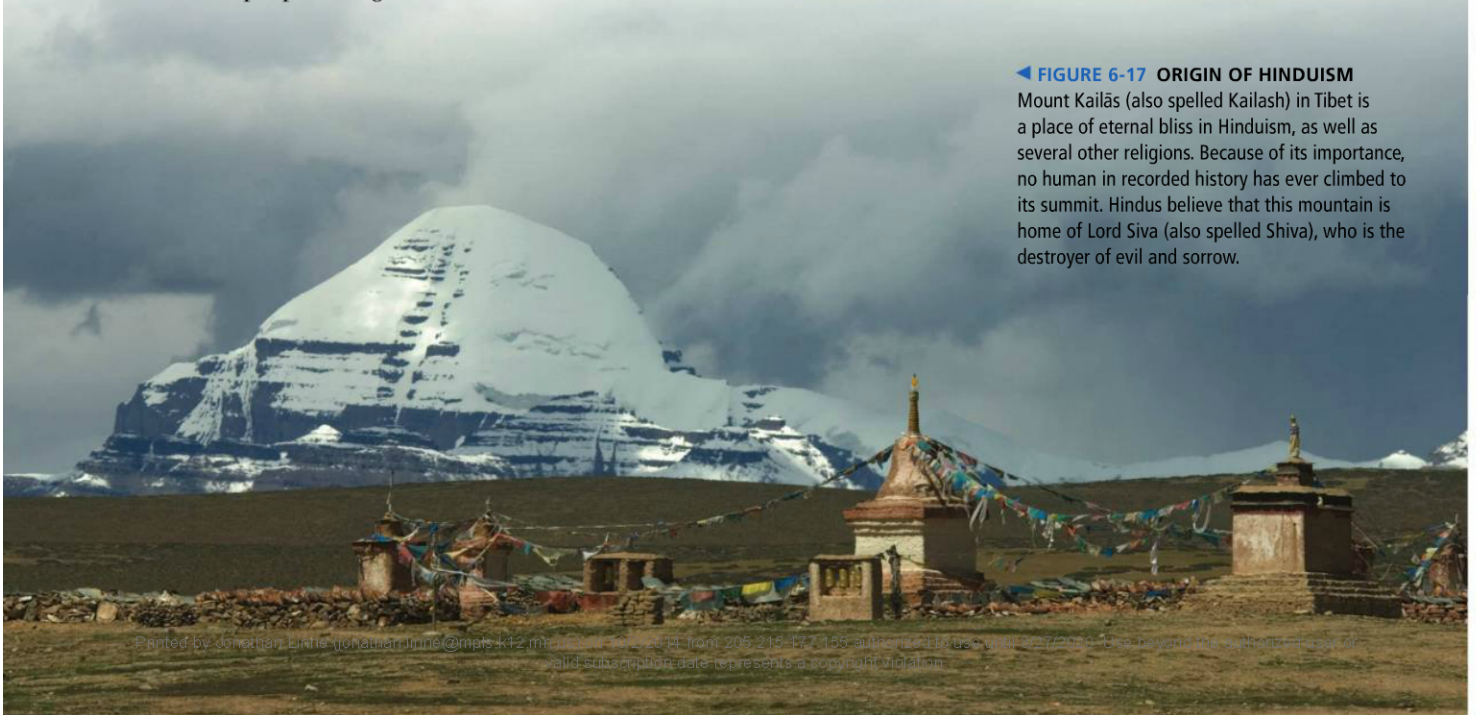
surviving Hindu documents were written around 1500 B.C., although archaeological explorations have unearthed objects relating to the religion from 2500 B.C. Aryan tribes from Central Asia invaded India about 1400 B.C. and brought with them Indo-European languages, as discussed in Chapter 5. In addition to their language, the Aryans brought their religion. The Aryans first settled in the area now called the Punjab in northwestern India and later migrated east to the Ganges River valley, as far as Bengal. Centuries of intermingling with the Dravidians already living in the area modified their religious beliefs (Figure 6-17).

Pause and Reflect 6.2.2

What is the significance of Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

◀ **FIGURE 6-17 ORIGIN OF HINDUISM**

Mount Kailās (also spelled Kailash) in Tibet is a place of eternal bliss in Hinduism, as well as several other religions. Because of its importance, no human in recorded history has ever climbed to its summit. Hindus believe that this mountain is home of Lord Siva (also spelled Shiva), who is the destroyer of evil and sorrow.



Diffusion of Religions

Learning Outcome 6.2.3

Describe the process of diffusion of universalizing religions.

The universalizing religions diffused from specific hearths, or places of origin, to other regions of the world. In contrast, most ethnic religions typically remain clustered in one location.

The hearths where each of the three largest universalizing religions originated are based on the events in the lives of the three key individuals. All three hearths are in Asia (Christianity and Islam in Southwest Asia, Buddhism in South Asia). Followers transmitted the messages preached in the hearths to people elsewhere, diffusing them across Earth's surface along distinctive paths, as shown in Figure 6-18.

DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity's diffusion has been rather clearly recorded since Jesus first set forth its tenets in the Roman province known at the time as Judea. Consequently, geographers can examine its diffusion by reconstructing patterns of communications, interaction, and migration.

In Chapter 1 two processes of diffusion were identified—relocation (diffusion through migration) and

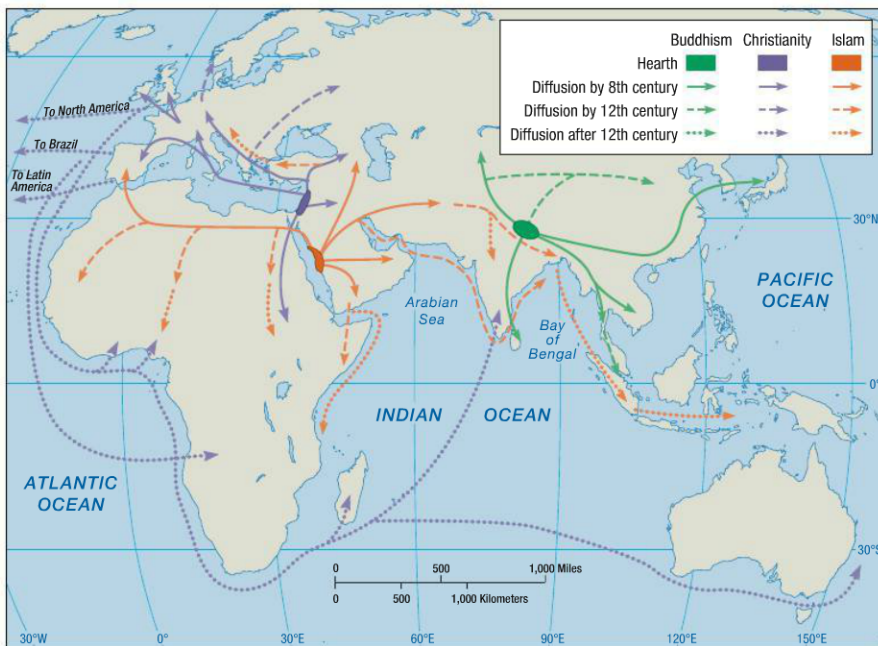
expansion (diffusion through a snowballing effect). Within expansion diffusion, we distinguished between hierarchical diffusion (diffusion through key leaders) and contagious diffusion (widespread diffusion). Christianity diffused through a combination of these forms of diffusion.

HIERARCHICAL DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY. The dominance of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire was assured during the fourth century through hierarchical diffusion—acceptance of the religion by the empire's key elite figure, the emperor. Emperor Constantine (274?–337) encouraged the spread of Christianity by embracing it in 313, and Emperor Theodosius proclaimed it the empire's official religion in 380. In subsequent centuries, Christianity further diffused into Eastern Europe through conversion of kings or other elite figures (Figure 6-19). Latin Americans are predominantly Roman Catholic because their territory was colonized by the Spanish and Portuguese, who brought with them to the Western Hemisphere their religion as well as their languages.

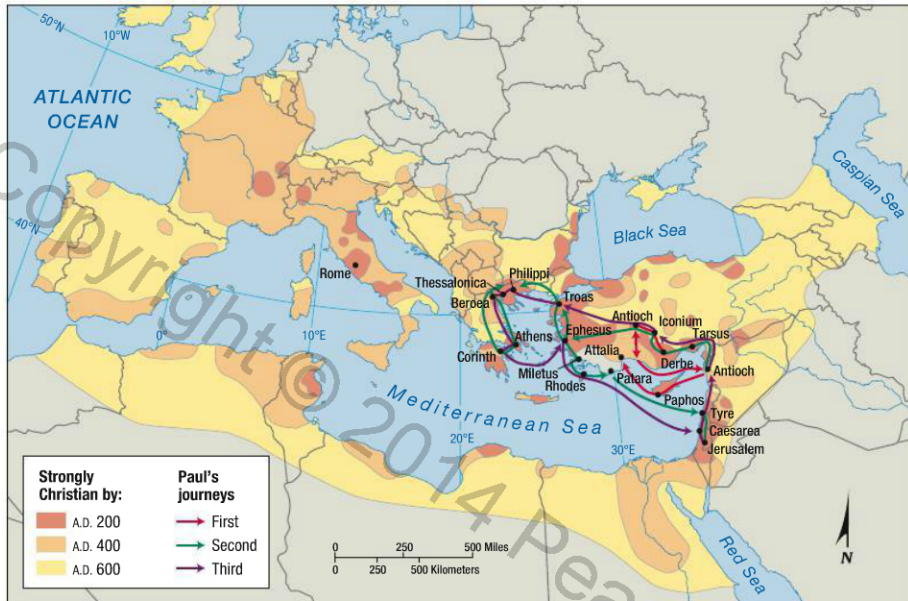
RELOCATION DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY. Christianity first diffused from its hearth in Judea through relocation diffusion. **Missionaries**—individuals who help to transmit a universalizing religion through relocation diffusion—carried the teachings of Jesus along the Roman Empire's protected sea routes and excellent road network to people in other locations (Figure 6-19).

People in commercial towns and military settlements that were directly linked by the communications network received the message first from Paul and other missionaries. But Christianity spread widely within the Roman Empire through contagious diffusion—daily contact between believers in the towns and nonbelievers in the surrounding countryside.

Contagious diffusion, through migration and missionary activity by Europeans since the year 1500, has extended Christianity to other regions of the world, as shown in Figure 6-3. Through permanent resettlement of Europeans, Christianity became the dominant religion in North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand. Christianity's dominance was further achieved by conversion of indigenous populations and by intermarriage. In recent decades, Christianity has further diffused to Africa, where it is now the most widely practiced religion.



▲ FIGURE 6-18 DIFFUSION OF UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS Buddhism's hearth is in present-day Nepal and northern India, Christianity's in present-day Israel, and Islam's in present-day Saudi Arabia. Buddhism diffused primarily east toward East Asia and Southeast Asia, Christianity west toward Europe, and Islam west toward northern Africa and east toward southwestern Asia.



▲ FIGURE 6-19 DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY Christianity began to diffuse from Judea through Europe during the time of the Roman Empire and continued after the empire's collapse. Paul of Tarsus, a disciple of Jesus, traveled especially extensively through the Roman Empire as a missionary.

Canada (except Québec) and the United States have Protestant majorities because their early colonists came primarily from Protestant England. Some regions and localities within the United States and Canada are predominantly Roman Catholic because of immigration from Roman Catholic countries (refer to Figure 6-7). Immigration from Mexico and other Latin American countries has concentrated Roman Catholics in the Southwest, whereas French settlement from the seventeenth century, as well as recent immigration, has produced a predominantly Roman Catholic Québec.

▼ FIGURE 6-20 DIFFUSION OF ISLAM Islam diffused rapidly from its point of origin in present-day Saudi Arabia. Within 200 years, Muslims controlled much of Southwest Asia & North Africa and southwestern Europe. Subsequently, Islam became the predominant religion as far east as Indonesia.



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Similarly, geographers trace the distribution of other Christian denominations within the United States to the fact that migrants came from different parts of Europe, especially during the nineteenth century. Followers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, popularly known as Mormons, settled at Fayette, New York, near the hometown of their founder Joseph Smith. During Smith's life, the group moved several times in search of religious freedom. Eventually, under the leadership of Brigham Young, they migrated to the sparsely inhabited Salt Lake Valley in the present-day state of Utah.

DIFFUSION OF ISLAM

Muhammad's successors organized followers who extended the region of Muslim control over an extensive area of Africa, Asia, and Europe (Figure 6-20). Within a century of Muhammad's death, Muslims controlled Palestine, the Persian Empire, and much of India, resulting in the conversion of many non-Arabs to Islam, often through intermarriage.

To the west, Muslims diffused across North Africa, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, and retained part of Western Europe, particularly much of present-day Spain, until 1492. During the same century in which the Christians regained all of Western Europe, Muslims took control of much of southeastern Europe and Turkey.

As was the case with Christianity, Islam, as a universalizing religion, diffused well beyond its hearth in Southwest Asia through relocation diffusion of missionaries to portions of sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Although

it is spatially isolated in Southeast Asia from the Islamic core region, Indonesia, the world's fourth-most-populous country, is predominantly Muslim because Arab traders brought the religion there in the thirteenth century.

Pause and Reflect 6.2.3
Does the diffusion of Islam provide a good example of hierarchical diffusion, relocation diffusion, or both?

DIFFUSION OF BUDDHISM

Learning Outcome 6.2.4

Compare the diffusion of universalizing and ethnic religions.

Buddhism did not diffuse rapidly from its point of origin in northeastern India (Figure 6-21). Most responsible for the spread of Buddhism was Asoka, emperor of the Magadhan Empire from about 273 to 232 B.C.

The Magadhan Empire formed the nucleus of several powerful kingdoms in South Asia between the sixth century B.C. and the eighth century A.D. About 257 B.C., at the height of the Magadhan Empire's power, Asoka became a Buddhist and thereafter attempted to put into practice Buddha's social principles. A council organized by Asoka at Pataliputra decided to send missionaries to territories neighboring the Magadhan Empire. Emperor Asoka's son, Mahinda, led a mission to the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where the king and his subjects were converted to Buddhism. As a result, Sri Lanka is the country that claims the longest continuous tradition of practicing Buddhism. Missionaries were also sent in the third century B.C. to Kashmir, the Himalayas, Burma (Myanmar), and elsewhere in India.

In the first century A.D., merchants along the trading routes from northeastern India introduced Buddhism to China. Many Chinese were receptive to the ideas brought by Buddhist missionaries, and Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese languages. Chinese rulers allowed their people to become Buddhist monks during the fourth century A.D., and in the following centuries Buddhism turned into a genuinely Chinese religion. Buddhism further diffused from China to Korea in the fourth century

and from Korea to Japan two centuries later. During the same era, Buddhism lost its original base of support in India.

DIFFUSION OF OTHER UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

The Bahá'í religion diffused to other regions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, son of the prophet Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'í also spread rapidly during the late twentieth century, when a temple was constructed on every continent.

Sikhism remained relatively clustered in the Punjab, where the religion originated. Sikhs fought with Muslims to gain control of the Punjab region, and they achieved their ambition in 1802, when they created an independent state in the Punjab. The British took over the Punjab in 1849 as part of its India colony but granted the Sikhs a privileged position and let them fight in the British army.

When the British government created the independent states of India and Pakistan in 1947, it divided the Punjab between the two instead of giving the Sikhs a separate country. Preferring to live in Hindu-dominated India rather than Muslim-dominated Pakistan, 2.5 million Sikhs moved from Pakistan's West Punjab region to East Punjab in India.

LACK OF DIFFUSION OF ETHNIC RELIGIONS

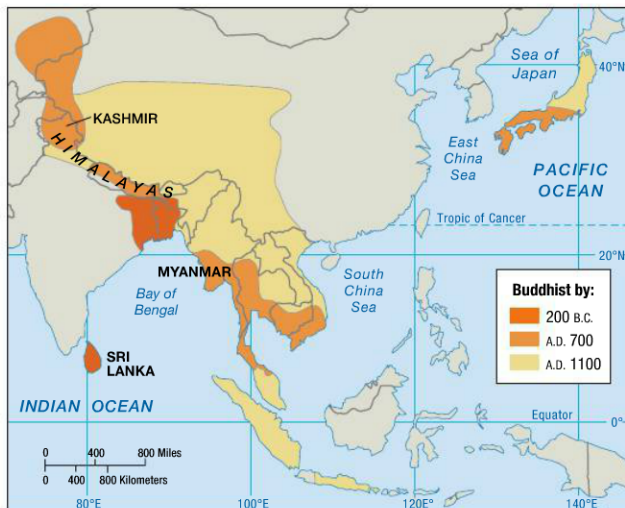
Most ethnic religions have limited, if any, diffusion. These religions lack missionaries who are devoted to converting people from other religions. Thus, the diffusion of universalizing religions, especially Christianity and Islam, typically comes at the expense of ethnic religions.

MINGLING OF ETHNIC AND UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS.

Universalizing religions may supplant ethnic religions or mingle with them. In some African countries, Christian practices are similar to those of their former European colonial masters. Equatorial Guinea, a former Spanish colony, is mostly Roman Catholic; Namibia, a former German colony, is heavily Lutheran. Elsewhere, traditional African religious ideas and practices have been merged with Christianity. For example, African rituals may give relative prominence to the worship of ancestors. Desire for a merger of traditional practices with Christianity has led to the formation of several thousand churches in Africa not affiliated with established churches elsewhere in the world.

In East Asia, Buddhism is the universalizing religion that has most mingled with ethnic religions, such as Shintoism in Japan. Shintoists initially resisted Buddhism when it first diffused to Japan from Korea in the ninth century. Later, Shintoists embraced Buddhism and amalgamated elements of the two religions. Buddhist priests took over most of the Shinto shrines, but Buddhist deities came to be regarded by the Japanese as Shintoist deities instead.

The current situation in Japan offers a strong caution to anyone attempting to document the number of adherents of any religion. Although Japan is a wealthy country



▲ **FIGURE 6-21 DIFFUSION OF BUDDHISM** Buddhism diffused slowly from its core in northeastern India. Buddhism was not well established in China until 800 years after Buddha's death.

with excellent record keeping, the number of Shintoists in the country is currently estimated at either 4 million or 100 million. When responding to questionnaires, around 4 million, or 3 percent, of the Japanese state that they are Shintoist, and that's the number that Adherents.com uses. But Shinto organizations in Japan place the number at 100 million, or 80 percent, based on record keeping and participating in major Shinto holidays. Meanwhile, around 100 million Japanese say they are Buddhists. So if the higher number for Shintoists is correct, then most of the 123 million inhabitants of Japan profess to follow both religions.

ETHNIC RELIGIONS AND MIGRATION. Ethnic religions can diffuse if adherents migrate to new locations for economic reasons and are not forced to adopt a strongly entrenched universalizing religion. For example, the 1.3 million inhabitants of Mauritius include 52 percent Hindu, 28 percent Christian (26 percent Roman Catholic and 2 percent Anglican), and 17 percent Muslim. The religious diversity is a function of the country's history of immigration.

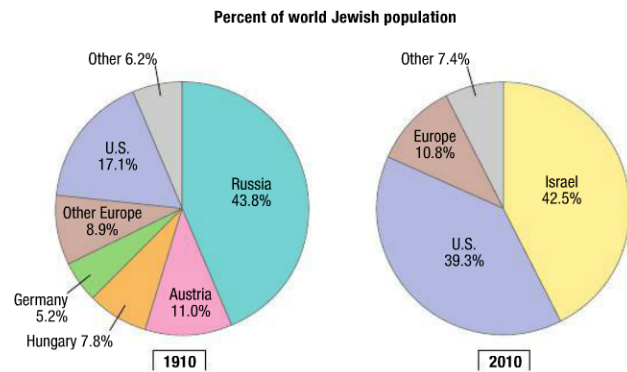
A 2,040-square-kilometer (788-square-mile) island located in the Indian Ocean 800 kilometers (500 miles) east of Madagascar, Mauritius was uninhabited until 1638, so it had no traditional ethnic religion. That year, Dutch settlers arrived to plant sugarcane and naturally brought their religion—Christianity—with them. France gained control of Mauritius in 1721 and imported African slaves to work on the sugarcane plantations. Then the British took over in 1810 and brought workers from India. Mauritius became independent in 1992. Hinduism on Mauritius traces back to the Indian immigrants, Islam to the African immigrants, and Christianity to the European immigrants.

DIFFUSION OF JUDAISM. The spatial distribution of Jews differs from that of other ethnic religions because Judaism is practiced in many countries, not just its place of origin. Only since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 has a significant percentage of the world's Jews lived in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Most Jews have not lived in the Eastern Mediterranean since A.D. 70, when the Romans forced them to disperse throughout the world, an action known as the *diaspora*, from the Greek word for “dispersion.” The Romans forced the diaspora after crushing an attempt by the Jews to rebel against Roman rule.

Most Jews migrated from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe, although some went to North Africa and Asia. Having been exiled from the home of their ethnic religion, Jews lived among other nationalities, retaining separate religious practices but adopting other cultural characteristics of the host country, such as language.

Other nationalities often persecuted the Jews living in their midst. Historically, the Jews of many European countries were forced to live in **ghettos**, defined as city neighborhoods set up by law to be inhabited only by Jews. The



▲ **FIGURE 6-22 DISTRIBUTION OF JEWS, 1910 AND 2010** Most Jews lived in Europe (including Russia) a century ago; now most live in Israel or the United States.

term *ghetto* originated during the sixteenth century in Venice, Italy, as a reference to the city's foundry or metal-casting district, where Jews were forced to live. Ghettos were frequently surrounded by walls, and the gates were locked at night to prevent escape.

Beginning in the 1930s, but especially during World War II (1939–1945), the Nazis systematically rounded up a large percentage of European Jews, transported them to concentration camps, and exterminated them in the Holocaust. About 4 million Jews died in the camps and 2 million in other ways. Many of the survivors migrated to Israel. Today, less than 15 percent of the world's 15 million Jews live in Europe, compared to 90 percent a century ago (Figure 6-22).

Pause and Reflect 6.2.4

What country had the largest Jewish population in 1910?

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 2

Why Do Religions Have Different Distributions?

- ✓ Ethnic religions typically have unknown or unclear origins, whereas universalizing religions have well documented places of origin based on events in the life of a man.
- ✓ Universalizing religions typically diffuse widely from their place of origin, whereas ethnic religions typically do not.