Religion

Dying and Resurrecting

■ **Figure 7.1**

Vyshniyvolochek, Russia. A Russian Orthodox church lies in ruins in this small village in 1964. © H. J. de Blij.

When I made my first trip to the Soviet Union in 1964, the world was divided into West and East in the Cold War. I was cataloging the unique cultural landscape in my mind as my group drove along a road from Leningrad to Moscow: I was looking for evidence of communism on the landscape. The rural areas were filled with state and collective farms. To me, the most interesting aspect of the landscape was the multitude of churches in ruins.

In every town we passed, and in many villages along the way, churches lay in ruins, their roofs collapsed, their steeples toppled. The bells were gone; where stained-glass windows once adorned the churches there were now gaping holes (Fig. 7.1). My host did not want me to photograph the churches.

"Why let them collapse?" I asked, "Why not remove them altogether?" He pointed his finger to emphasize his point, "Religion causes conflict. We had many religions in the Soviet Union, and they set Soviet against Soviet. And the Orthodox

Church opposed our communist victory. That's what these useless relics are for. They remind the people of our victory and their freedom."

When the Soviet Union came into being in the 1920s, the government sought to knit together diverse lands stretching from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean. People already lived in all of these lands and had their own cultures and their own religions. At its height of territorial expansion, the Soviet Union included 15 Republics (each of which was an independent country before being annexed) and more than 100 ethnically distinct territories (the Republic of Russia itself included 70 distinct territories).

To diminish the religious diversity of the Soviet people, the government chose an official policy of atheism and discouraged religious practice among its citizens. In Russia, the state seized church bells and other religious paraphernalia and demolished many churches, converting others to secular uses. In the Muslim republics and territories, the Soviets tolerated Islamic practice among the old but not among the young. Time, they believed, would erase the imprints of both Christianity and Islam.

Soviet policies had an impact on religion but not always in expected ways. In some cases, religious practices went underground. Some religions thrived in this environment, whereas others disappeared all together. The example of Armenia and Azerbaijan shows how Soviet policies failed to diminish differences in the long run. Along the border between Christianity and Islam in the area between the Caspian and Black seas lie two republics infused with religion: Christian Armenia on the Black Sea and Shi'ite Muslim Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea.

The Soviets believed that the people in this region would show less allegiance to their republics and more allegiance to the Soviet Union if power rested at the local rather than republic scale. The Soviet Union drew boundaries for local control, creating a layout that separated ethnic groups within small areas (Fig. 7.2). In the middle of Muslim Azerbaijan, the Soviets drew a border around Christian Armenians and called it Nagorno-Karabakh. Similarly, to the southwest of Christian Armenia, along the border with Iran, the Soviets drew a border around Muslim Azerbaijanis and called it Nakhichevan.

The divide-and-diminish plan functioned only as long as the Soviet Union controlled both republics. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and the repub-

Figure 7.2
Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan. This map shows the Muslim Azerbaijani Nakhichevan, cut off by Christian Armenia, and the Christian Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh, surrounded by Muslim Azerbaijan. © H. J. de Blij, A. B. Murphy, E. H. Fouberg, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

lics became independent states, ethnic strife broke out almost immediately. Azerbaijani Muslims, long cut off from their Iranian Shi'ite counterparts, broke through the southern border, acquiring weapons in the process. Soon Muslims and Christians were locked in combat, and Armenian refugees were streaming from Nagorno-Karabakh westward and even fleeing by boat across the Caspian Sea. More than 70 years of Soviet domination had done little to soften Armenian-Christian memories of Islamic oppression or to lessen the intensity of Azerbaijani-Muslim disdain for Christian "unbelievers."

As Russia formed from the rubble of the Soviet Union, religion came above ground. In 1996, the Russian Orthodox Church rebuilt the Cathedral of Christ the Savior two blocks from the Kremlin. The Soviet government destroyed the cathedral in 1931 to build a palace commemorating Soviet leaders, but the palace was never built. According to Russian geographer Dmitri Sidorov, during Soviet times, what stood in the place of the cathedral was a large pit. In the first half of the 1990s, the pit served as "Russia's most famous geographical symbol for the failed communist endeavor."

In this chapter, we consider the sources, diffusion, and transformation of the world's great religions, their regional patterns, and their cultural landscapes. Like language, religion can be a strong unifying force, but it can also divide and foster conflict. In this chapter, we study religious strife in Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and beyond.

Key Questions For Chapter 7

1. What is religion, and what role does it play in culture?
2. Where did the world's major religions originate, and how do religions diffuse?
3. How is religion seen in the cultural landscape?
4. What role does religion play in ethnic conflict?

WHAT IS RELIGION, AND WHAT ROLE DOES IT PLAY IN CULTURE?

Religion and language lie at the foundation of culture: both confer and reflect identity. Like languages, religions are constantly changing. Although religious leaders and bureaucracies sometimes attempt to slow the pace of change, religions nevertheless change over time.

Interaction among people can cause one language to become extinct and another to thrive. The same is true for religion, where interaction can sometimes lead to conversion. Through conversion, migration, missionary efforts, and conquest, major religions of the world have diffused across cultural barriers and language boundaries.

The cultural landscape is marked by religion—most obviously by churches and mosques, cemeteries and shrines, statues and symbols (Fig. 7.3). Other more subtle markers of religion dot the landscape as well. The presence or absence of stores selling alcohol or of signs depicting the human form in particular ways reflect prevailing religious views. Religion is also proclaimed in modes of dress (veils, turbans) and personal habits (beards, ritual scars). The outward display of religious beliefs often reveals the inward structure of a religion. For example, in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in 1991, the government proclaimed that possessing a beard would be a condition for the appointment of judges. The beard requirement is an outward display of religion, and it also shows the inward structure of Islam in Pakistan, where women are not in a place of power.

Religion is an extraordinarily difficult concept to define. In the chapter "Geography of Religion and Belief Systems," written for *Geography in America*, geographers Robert Stoddard and Carolyn Prorak define religion as "a system of beliefs and practices that attempts to order

Field Note

"Each religion approaches the disposition of the deceased in different ways, and cultural landscapes reflect religious traditions. In largely Christian, western regions, the deceased are buried in large, sometimes elaborate cemeteries. The Hindu faith requires cremation of the deceased. Wherever large Hindu communities exist outside of India, you will see crematoriums, the equivalent of a Hindu funeral home."

Figure 7.3
Mombasa, Kenya. © H. J. de Blij.

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 how adherents "should" behave. "Shouldness" goes beyond religion to other belief systems, but in this chapter we focus on formal religions, their distribution, and their role in making and shaping places and cultures. The idea that a "good" life has rewards and that "bad" behavior risks punishment has an enormous influence on cultures, on how people behave, and on how people perceive and evaluate the behavior of others.

Religion manifests itself in many different ways. We can see religion in the worship of the souls of ancestors who are thought to inhabit natural objects such as mountains, animals, or trees; in the belief that a certain living person possesses special abilities granted by a supernatural power; and in the belief in a deity or deities, as in the great

world religions. In some places, societies are so infused with religion that religious tradition strongly influences behaviors during waking hours through ritual and practice and even during periods of sleep in prescribing the orientation of the body.

Across the multitude of religions, some religious practices such as ritual and prayer are common. Rituals may mark important events in people's lives: birth and death, attainment of adulthood, or marriage. Rituals are typically expressed at regular intervals in a routine manner, as is done on certain days in the Christian and

Figure 7.4
Antwerp, Belgium.   The cathedral in Antwerp was built beginning in 1352 and still dominates the central part of town.
© Alexander B. Murphy.

Jewish worlds, certain times of the day in the Muslim world, or according to certain astronomical events in the Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian worlds. A common ritual is prayer, whether at mealtime, at sunrise and sundown, at night upon retiring, or in the morning when arising.

Although religious beliefs and prescriptions influence many societies, **secularism** now prevails in some societies. In these places, religion, at least in its organized form, has become less significant in the lives of most people. But even in secular societies, religion permeates art, history, customs, and beliefs (Fig. 7.4). Indeed, no matter what society you come from, what you eat, when you work, when you shop, and what you are allowed to do are influenced by religion.

In short, organized religion has a powerful effect on human societies. It has been a major force in combating social ills, sustaining the poor, promoting the arts, educating the deprived, and advancing medical knowledge. However, religion has also blocked scientific study, encouraged the oppression of dissidents, supported colonialism and exploitation, and condemned women to an inferior status in many societies. Religion is, if nothing else, one of the most complex—and often controversial—aspects of the human condition.

thinking geographically

Describe how religion and language affect and change each other to shape cultures. (Consider what happens to a society's religion and language when a different religion or language diffuses to the place.)

WHERE DID THE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD ORIGINATE, AND HOW DO RELIGIONS DIFFUSE?

Despite the wide variety of religions found around the world, they are commonly classified into three categories based on their approaches to the concept of divinity. Adherents of **monotheistic religions** worship a single deity, a God or Allah. Believers in **polytheistic religions** worship more than one deity, even thousands. **Animistic religions** are centered on the belief that inanimate objects, such as mountains, boulders, rivers, and trees, possess spirits and should therefore be revered.

Throughout much of human history, virtually all religions were either animistic or polytheistic, or both. Somewhere around 3500 years ago, however, a monotheistic religion developed in Southwest Asia called Zoroastrianism. (The Parsi we talked about at the beginning of Chapter 4 are Zoroastrians who moved to India.) Some believe that the monotheism of late Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be traced to Zoroastrian influences. Others believe that Judaism itself was the first monotheistic religion. Whichever the case, the eventual diffusion of religions influenced by monotheism—Christianity and Islam—spread monotheistic ideas throughout much of the world and 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 were developed in the world (Fig. 7.5). The hearth of Greek philosophy is along the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. From a hearth in South Asia, along the Indus River Valley, came Hinduism; from a hearth on the eastern Mediterranean came Judaism; and from a hearth on the Huang He River Valley in China

Figure 7.5

Hearths of Major World Religions. *Adapted with permission from*: Albert M. Craig, William M. Graham, Donald Kagan, Stephen Ozment, and Frank M. Turner. *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, Seventh Edition. New York: Prentice Hall, 2006.
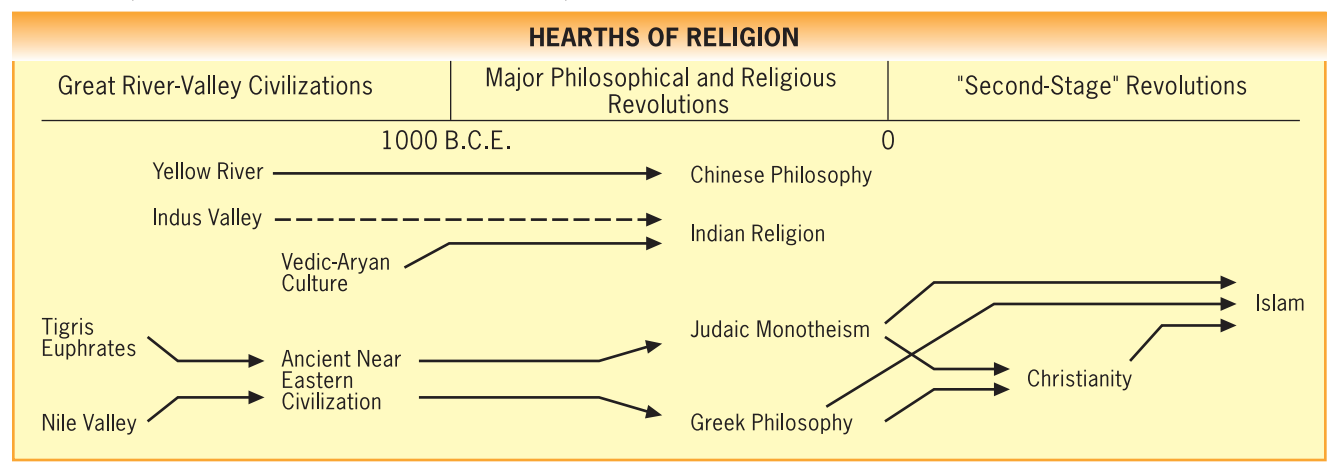
came Chinese philosophies. These early-established religions and philosophies profoundly impacted other religions, as the arrows in Figure 7.5 demonstrate. Philosophies and religions diffused from their hearths, affecting one another and influencing the ways founders established newer religions. The two religions with the greatest number of adherents in the world today, Christianity and Islam, were both influenced by Judaism and Greek philosophy.

The World Map of Religions Today

The map in Figure 7.6 provides a global overview of the distribution of the world's major religions. Any map of world religions is a generalization, and caution must be used when making observations from the map. First, the shadings on the map show the major religion in an area, thereby masking 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 other religions, such as Islam and Sikhism, attract millions of adherents in India (150 million Muslims live in India). Second, some of the regions shown as belonging to a particular religion are places where faiths have penetrated relatively recently and where traditional religious ideas influence the practice of the dominant faith. Many Christian Africans, for example, continue to believe in traditional powers even as they profess a belief in Christianity. Finally, in a number of areas many people have moved away from organized religion entirely. Thus, France appears on the map as a Roman Catholic country,

Figure 7.6

Religions of the World.   *Data from:* Several sources, including Hammond, Inc, 1977, H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and A. Winkler Prins, *The World Today*, 4e, 2008 State Department Religious Freedom Report, CIA World Factbook, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, and author observations.   © E. H. Fouberg, A. B. Murphy, H. J. de Blij, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
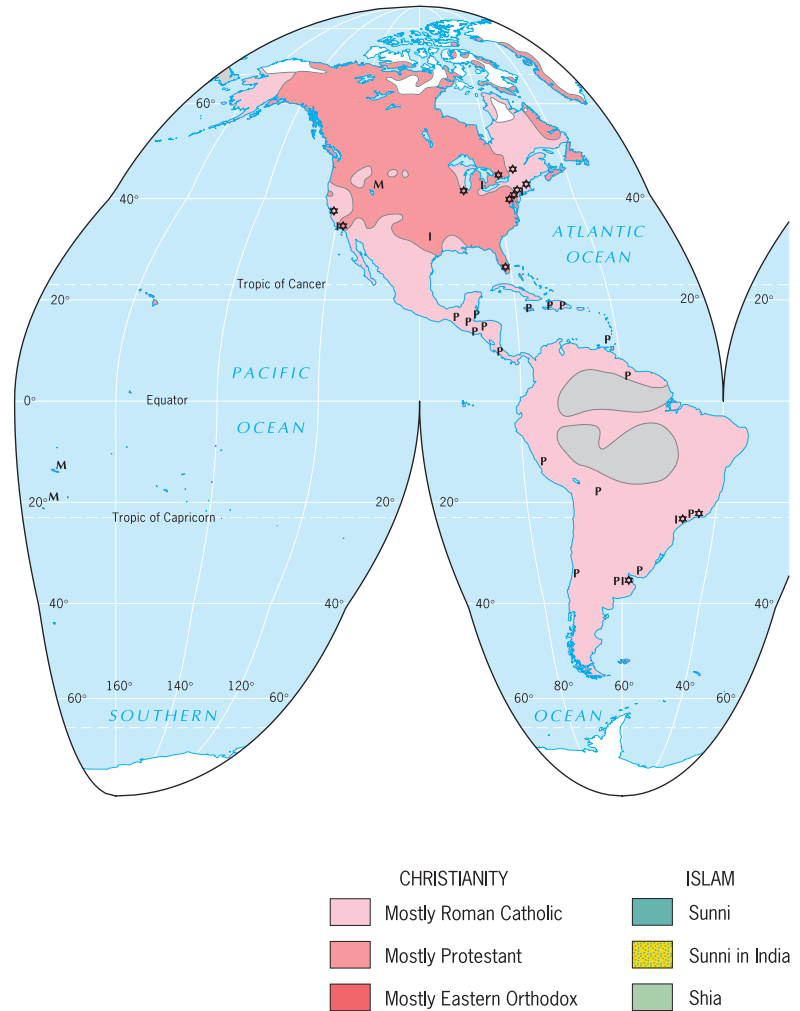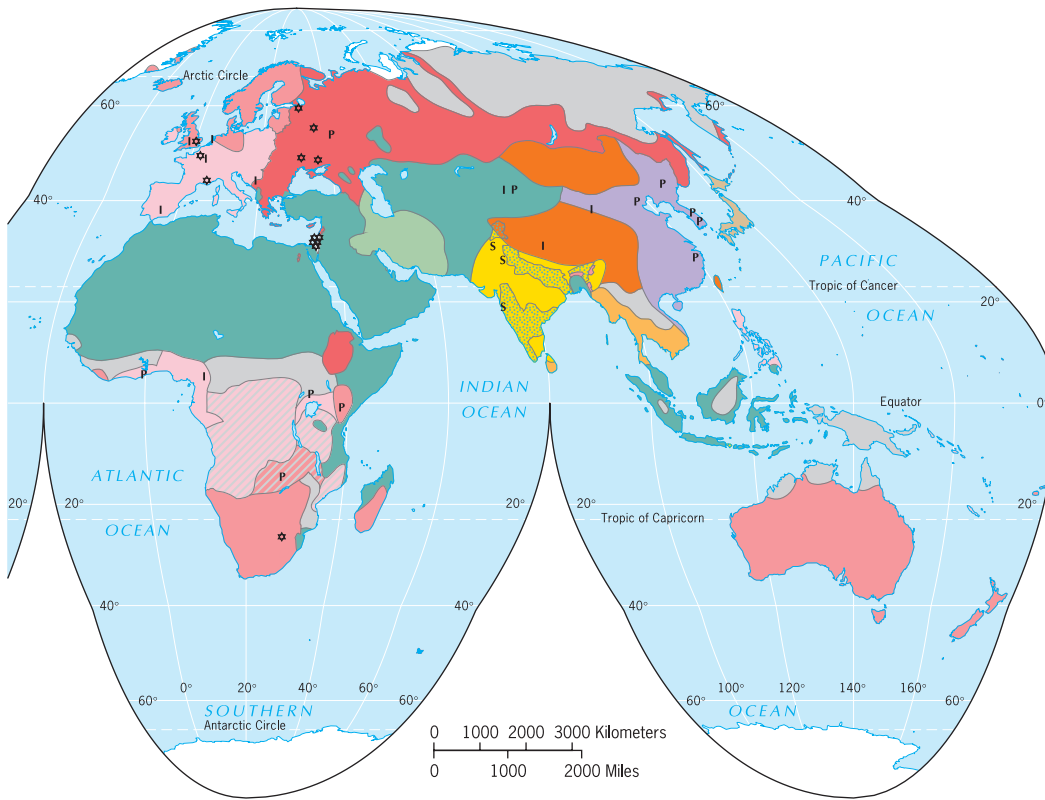
yet a significant number of French people profess adherence to no particular faith.

Despite the limitations of the map of world religions, it illustrates how far Christian religions have diffused (2.1 billion adherents worldwide), the extent of the diffusion of Islam (1.34 billion), the connection between Hinduism (950 million adherents) and one of the world's major population concentrations, and the continued importance Buddhism (347 million followers) plays in parts of Asia. Many factors help explain the distributions shown on the map, but each of the widespread religions shares one characteristic in common: they are all universalizing religions. **Universalizing religions** actively seek converts because they view themselves as offering belief systems of universal appropriateness and appeal. Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism all fall within this category, and their universalizing character helps explain their widespread distribution (Table 7.1).

Universalizing religions are relatively few in number and of recent origin. Throughout much of human history, most religions have not actively sought converts. Rather, a given religion has been practiced by one particular culture or ethnic group. In an **ethnic religion**, adherents are born into the faith and converts are not actively sought. Ethnic religions tend to be spatially concentrated—as is the case with traditional religions in Africa and South America (250 million followers). The principal exception is Judaism (13 million adherents), an ethnic religion whose adherents are widely scattered as a result of forced and voluntary migrations.

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

- HINDUISM
- BUDDHISM – TANTRAYANA
- BUDDHISM – THERAVADA
- CHINESE RELIGIONS and BUDDHISM – MAHAYANA
- SHINTOISM and BUDDHISM – MAHAYANA
- TRADITIONAL and SHAMANIST RELIGIONS
- TRADITIONALIST MIXED
- ✡ JUDAISM
- S SIKH
- M MORMONISM
- P EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS
- I ISLAM

TABLE 7.1
Adherents to Major World Religions

Religion	Number of Adherents	Percent of Total Global Adherents
Christianity	2.1 billion	41.79%
Islam	1.34 billion	26.67%
Hinduism	950 million	18.91%
Buddhism	347 million	6.90%
Traditional beliefs	250 million	4.97%
Sikhism	24 million	.48%
Judaism	13 million	.26%

Data from *The Atlas of Religion*, Joanne O'Brien and Martin Palmer, University of California Press, 2007.

From the Hearth of South Asia

Hinduism

In terms of number of adherents, **Hinduism** ranks third after Christianity and Islam as a world religion. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the modern world, dating back over 4000 years, originating in the Indus River Valley of what is today part of Pakistan. Hinduism is unique among world religions in a number of ways. The religion does not have a single founder, a single theology, or any agreement on its origins. The common account of the history of Hinduism holds that the religion is based on ancient practices in the Indus River cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. The ancient practices included ritual bathing and belief in reincarnation, or at least a long journey after death. The common history says that Aryans invaded (some say migrated) into the Indus region and gave the name Hinduism to the diverse religious practices of the people who lived along the Indus River.

Despite the ambiguous beginnings of Hinduism, one thing is certain: Hinduism is no longer associated with its hearth in Pakistan. Pakistan is primarily a Muslim country, and as Figure 7.6 demonstrates, Hinduism is found mainly in India. In fact, one of the most sacred places for Hindus is the Ganges River, in India.

Just as there is no consensus on Hinduism's origins, there is a lack of agreement on defining Hinduism relative to other major world religions. Many define Hinduism as a polytheistic religion because of the presence of many gods. However, many Hindus define their religion as monotheistic. The one god is Brahman (the universal soul), and the other gods in the religion are various expressions of Brahman. Similarly, Western academics define Hinduism today as an ethnic religion because Hindus do not actively seek converts. At the same time, historical evidence shows Hindus migrating into Southeast Asia and diffusing their religion (as a universalizing religion would) before the diffusion of Buddhism and Islam into Southeast Asia (Fig. 7.7). Although Hinduism is now more of an ethnic religion, the religion has millions of adherents in the populous region of South Asia, extending beyond India to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

The Hindu religion is not centrally organized. The religion does not have an administrative or bureaucratic structure like Christianity and Islam. The Hindu religion does not have a prophet or a single book of scriptures, although most Hindus recognize the sacredness of the *Vedas* (the four texts that make up the sacred books of Hinduism). Hinduism is a conglomeration of beliefs characterized by a great diversity of institutional forms and practices. The fundamental doctrine is *karma*, which has to do with the transferability of the soul. According to Hindu doctrine, all beings have souls and are arranged in a hierarchy. The ideal is to move upward in the hierarchy and then escape

Figure 7.7

Angkor Wat, Cambodia. The extensive, walled structure at the temple complex in Angkor Wat marks the earliest period of Hinduism's diffusion into Southeast Asia. Eventually, Buddhism supplanted Hinduism in Cambodia, and many Hindu temples such as this now suffer from neglect and destruction.   © H. J. de Blij.

from the eternal cycle of *reincarnation* through union with Brahman (the universal soul). A soul moves upward or downward according to the individual's behavior in the present 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 a cornerstone of Hinduism.

Hinduism's doctrines are closely bound to Indian society's caste system, for castes themselves are steps on the universal ladder. However, the **caste system** locks people into particular social classes and imposes many restrictions, especially in the lowest of the castes, the Dalits. Until a generation ago, the 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 effects of modernization during the colonial period, and especially the work of Mahatma Gandhi helped loosen the social barriers of the caste system and somewhat improved the lot of the 80 million Dalits.

Diffusion of Hinduism

Hinduism was born in the western part of the Indian subcontinent and spread eastward through processes that are not well understood. Before the advent of Christianity, Hinduism had diffused into Southeast Asia. It first attached itself to traditional faiths and then slowly replaced them. Later, when Islam and Christianity appeared and were actively spread in Hindu areas, Hindu thinkers attempted to integrate certain new teachings into their own religion. 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 beliefs contributed to the weakening of caste barriers. In other instances, the confrontation between Hinduism and other faiths led to the emergence of a compromise religion. Islam stimulated the rise of Sikhism, whose followers disapproved of the worship of idols and disliked the caste system, but retained the concepts of reincarnation and karma.

As Figure 7.8 shows, Hinduism evolved in what is today Pakistan, reached its fullest development in India, and spread into Southeast Asia. Given its current character as an ethnic religion, it is not surprising that Hinduism's geographical extent is relatively small. 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. Bali became a refuge for Hindu holy men, nobles, and intellectuals during the sixteenth century, when Islam engulfed 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. The caste system prevails, but the lower castes outnumber the higher castes by nearly 10 to 1—producing less divisiveness than in India. Religion plays an extremely important role in Bali. Temples and shrines dominate the cultural landscape, and participation in worship, festivals, and other ceremonies of the island's unique religion is almost universal. Religion is so much at the heart of Balinese culture that it is sometimes described as a celebration of life.

Figure 7.8

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.
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DIFFUSION OF FOUR MAJOR RELIGIONS

C — Christianity   H — Hinduism
I — Islam   B — Buddhism
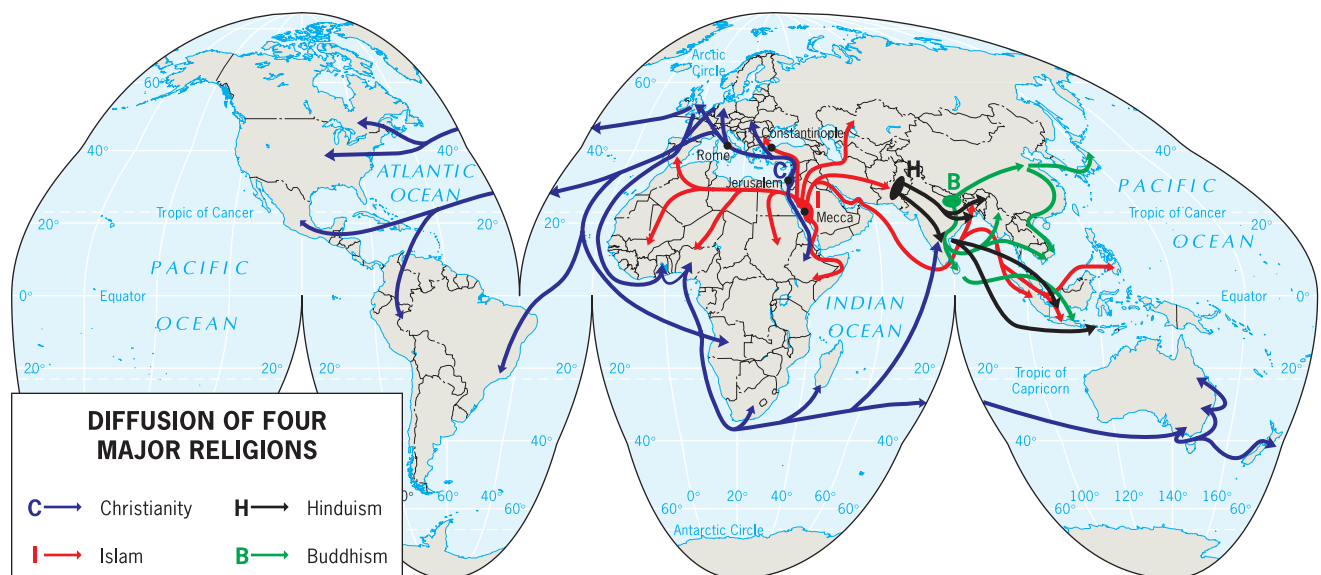
Outside South Asia and Bali, Hinduism's presence is relatively minor. Over the last two centuries, Hinduism has diffused to small parts of the world through migration. During British colonialism, the British transported hundreds of thousands of Hindu adherents from their colony of India to their other colonies in East and South Africa, the Caribbean, northern South America, and the Pacific Islands. Because Hinduism is not a universalizing religion today, the relocation diffusion has produced pockets rather than regions of Hinduism.

Buddhism

Buddhism splintered from Hinduism over 2500 years ago. Buddhism and several other religions appeared in India as a reaction to questions about Hinduism's teachings at the time. Reformers questioned Hinduism's strict social hierarchy that protected the privileged and kept millions in poverty. Prince Siddhartha, who was heir to a wealthy kingdom in what is now Nepal, founded Buddhism. Siddhartha 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). 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 knowledge, especially self-knowledge; elimination of greed, craving, and desire; complete honesty; and never hurting another person or animal.

After Buddha's death in 489 BCE at the age of 80, the faith grew rather slowly until the middle of the third century BCE, when the Emperor Asoka became a convert. Asoka was the leader of a large and powerful Indian state that extended from the Punjab to Bengal and from the Himalayan foothills to Mysore. He not only set out to rule his country in accordance with the teachings of Buddha; he also sent missionaries to carry Buddha's teachings to distant peoples (Fig. 7.9). Buddhism spread as far south as Sri Lanka and later advanced west toward the Mediterranean, north into Tibet, and east into China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia, over a span of about ten centuries (Fig. 7.8). Although Buddhism diffused to distant lands, it began to decline in its region of origin. During Asoka's rule there may have been more Buddhists than Hindu adherents in India, but after that period the strength of

■■■ Figure 7.9

Borobudur, Indonesia.   Built about 800 CE when Buddhism was spreading throughout Southeast Asia, Borobudur was abandoned and neglected after the arrivals of Islam and Christianity and lay overgrown until uncovered and restored under Dutch colonial rule in 1907–1911. The monument consists of a set of intricately carved, walled terraces; the upper terraces are open. In the upper terraces stand six dozen stupas, each containing a sculpture of the Buddha in meditation, visible when you peer through the openings.   © H. J. de Blij.

Hinduism began to reassert itself. Today Buddhism is practiced by relatively few in India, but still thrives in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, Nepal, Tibet, and Korea. Along with other faiths, it also survives in Japan.

Like Christianity and Islam, Buddhism changed as it grew and diffused, and now the religion is strongly regional-assuming different forms in different regions. Buddhism's various branches have an estimated 347 million adherents, with Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism claiming the most adherents. Theravada Buddhism is a monastic faith that survives in Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. It holds that salvation is a personal matter, achieved through good behavior and religious activities, including periods of service as a monk or nun. Mahayana Buddhism, which is practiced mainly in Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and China, holds that salvation can be aided by appeals to superhuman, holy sources of merit. The Buddha is regarded as a divine savior. Mahayana Buddhists do not serve as monks, but they spend much time in personal meditation and worship. Other branches of Buddhism include the Lamaism of Xizang (Tibet), which combines monastic Buddhism with the worship of local demons and deities, and Zen Buddhism, the contemplative form that is prevalent in Japan.

Buddhism has become a global religion over the last two centuries, diffusing to many areas of the world. However, the faith has suffered in Southeast Asia. Militant regimes have attacked the religion in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In Thailand, Buddhism has been under pressure owing to rising political tensions. Nevertheless, the appeal of Buddhism's principles has ensured its continued diffusion, most recently in the Western world.

Shintoism

Buddhism is mixed with a local religion in Japan, where **Shintoism** is found. This ethnic religion, which is related to Buddhism, focuses particularly on nature and ancestor worship (Fig. 7.10). The Japanese emperor made Shintoism the state religion of Japan in the nineteenth century, according 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 a ceremonial status. The number of adherents in Japan is somewhere between 105 and 118 million, depending on the source. The majority of Japanese observe both Buddhism and Shintoism.

From the Hearth of the Huang He River Valley

Taoism

While the Buddha's teachings were gaining converts in India, a religious revolution of another kind was taking place in China. 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." In his teachings, 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 gave rise to the concept of **Feng Shui**—the art and science of organizing living spaces in order to channel the life forces that exist in nature in favorable ways. According to
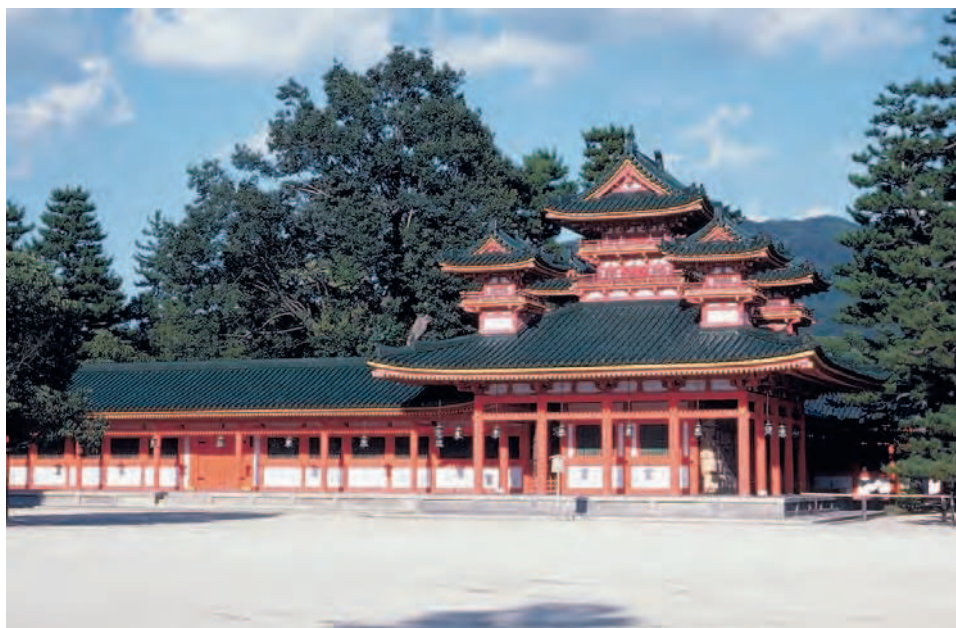

Figure 7.10

Kyoto, Japan. In Japan, both Buddhism and Shintoism make their marks on the cultural landscape. This Shinto shrine, with its orange trim and olive-green glazed tiles, is visible after passing under a torii—a gateway usually formed by two wooden posts topped by two horizontal beams turned up at their ends—which signals that you have left the secular and entered the sacred world. © H. J. de Blij.

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 occupying the natural world and can give advice on how to order things according to Feng Shui.

Among the Taoist virtues are simplicity and spontaneity, tenderness, and tranquility. Competition, possession, and even the pursuit of knowledge are to be avoided. 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. Lao-Tsu himself was worshiped as a god, something of which he would have disapproved. People, animals, even dragons became objects of worship.

Confucianism

Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BCE, and his followers constructed a blueprint for Chinese civilization in almost every field, including philosophy, government, and education. In religion, Confucius addressed the traditional Chinese tenets that included belief in heaven and the existence of the soul, ancestor worship, sacrificial rites, and shamanism. He held that the real meaning of life lay in the present, not in some future abstract existence, and that service to one's fellow humans should supersede service to spirits.

Confucianism is mainly a philosophy of life, and like Taoism, Confucianism 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.

Despite these views, 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, a set of 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 emperor 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 ways, 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 expanded the influence of the Chinese religions in parts of Southeast Asia and helped to introduce their principles into societies ranging from Europe to North America.

The diffusion of Chinese religions even within China has been tempered by the Chinese government's efforts to suppress religion in the country. Like the Soviet government, the communist government that took control of China in 1949 attempted to ban religion, in this case Confucianism, 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. Confucianism and Taoism are so entrenched in Chinese culture that the government's anti-religion initiatives have not had their desired effect. For example, a Chinese government policy in the 1950s that ran counter to the teachings of Feng Shui met much resistance by tradition-bound villagers. Feng Shui geomancers in China have the responsibility of identifying suitable gravesites for the deceased—gravesites that leave the dead in perfect harmony with their natural surroundings. The Chinese created burial mounds for their dead at these chosen gravesites. The pragmatic communist Chinese government saw the burial mounds as a barrier to efficient agriculture, so they leveled the burial mounds during the communalization program. Tradition-bound villagers strongly opposed the practice; they harbored a reserve of deep resentment that exploded much later in the revolutionary changes of the 1970s.

Geomancy is still a powerful force in China today, even in urban areas with large populations. Geographer Elizabeth Teather studied the rise of cremation and columbaria (resting places for ashes) in Hong Kong, investigating the impact Feng Shui has had on the structures and the continued influence of Chinese religious beliefs on burial practices in the extremely densely populated city of Hong Kong. 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 highly encouraged cremation over the past few decades. The availability of burial plots in cities like Hong Kong is quite low, and the costs of burial plots have risen in turn.

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, she states, have a "cultural need to keep ancestral remains appropriately stored and in a single place." In North America and Europe, a family often chooses to scatter the ashes of a cremated loved one, but a Chinese family is more likely to keep the ashes together in a single identifiable space so that they can return to visit the ancestor during Gravesweeping Festivals (an annual commemoration of ancestors during which people visit and tend the graves of their ancestors). 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

Field Note

"Many cities in Europe have distinct Jewish neighborhoods with active synagogues and communities. Others, such as Prague, also have historical Jewish neighborhoods, marked with cemeteries and synagogues that have become historical sites or museums. The Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague was built in the 1400s and the last person was buried there in 1787. The jumbled mass of tombstones in the cemetery is a result of layers of people (up to 12 layers) being buried within the confines of the cemetery over the centuries."

Figure 7.11
Prague, Czech Republic.   © Erin H. Fouberg.

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 Jews, one of several nomadic Semitic tribes living in Southwest Asia about 4000 years ago. The roots of 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 have a covenant in which the Jews agree to worship only one God, and God agrees to protect his chosen people, the Jews.

The history of the Jews is filled with upheaval. Moses led them from Egypt, where they had been enslaved, to Canaan, where an internal conflict developed and the nation split into two branches, Israel and Judah. Israel was subsequently wiped out by enemies, but Judah survived longer, only to be conquered by the Babylonians and the Assyrians. The Jews regrouped to rebuild their headquarters, Jerusalem, but then fell victim to a series of foreign powers. The Romans destroyed their holy city in 70 CE (Common Era) and drove the Jews away, scattering the adherents to the faith far and wide. Jews retained only a small presence on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean until the late nineteenth century.

Our map shows that unlike other ethnic religions, Judaism is not limited to a small territorial extent. Rather, Judaism is distributed throughout parts of the Middle East and North Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Europe, and parts of North and South America (Fig. 7.6). According to *The Atlas of Religion*, of all the world's 18 million Jews, 40.5 percent live in the United States, 40.2 percent live in Israel, and then in rank order, less than 5 percent live in France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Argentina. Judaism is one of the world's most influential religions, although it claims only 18 million adherents.

During the nineteenth century, a *Reform* movement developed with the objective of adjusting Judaism and its practices to current times. However, many feared that this reform would cause a loss of identity and cohesion, and the *Orthodox* movement sought to retain the old precepts. Between those two extremes 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 ethnic distinctiveness.

Diffusion of Judaism

The scattering of Jews after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem is known as the **diaspora**—a term that now signifies the spatial dispersion of members of any ethnic group. The Jews who went north into Central Europe came to be known as *Ashkenazim*, and the Jews who scattered across North Africa and into the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) are called *Sephardim*. For centuries, both the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim were persecuted, denied citizenship, driven into ghettos, and massacred (Fig. 7.11).

In the face of constant threats to their existence, the Jews were sustained by extraordinary efforts to maintain a sense of community and faith. The idea of a homeland for the Jewish people, which became popular during the nineteenth century, developed into the ideology of **Zionism**. Zionist ideals are rooted in the belief that Jews should not be absorbed into other societies. The horrors of the Nazi campaign against Jews from the 1930s through World War II, when the Nazis established concentration camps and killed some six 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 homeland on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. Aided by sympathetic members of the international community, the Zionist goal of a Jewish state became a reality in 1948, when two states, Israel and Palestine, were carved out of the territory of the eastern Mediterranean in a United Nations resolution.

While adherents to Judaism live across the world, many Jews have moved to Israel since its establishment. The Israeli government passed the Law of Return in 1950, which recognizes the rights of every Jew to immigrate to Israel. In 2004, over 10,000 Jews left the former Soviet Union for Israel, along with nearly 4000 Jews from Africa and over 2000 from each of western Europe and North America.

Christianity

Christianity can be traced back to the same hearth in the Mediterranean as Judaism, and like Islam, Christianity stems from a single founder, in this case, Jesus. Christian teachings hold that Jesus is the son of God, placed on Earth to teach people how to live according to God's plan. Christianity split from Judaism, and it, too, is a monotheistic religion. Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, and during his lifetime, he traveled through the eastern Mediterranean region preaching, performing miracles, and gaining followers. 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 changed the fate of Jesus' followers—giving them eternal life.

The first split in Christianity, between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox, developed over a number of centuries. At the end of the third century, the Roman Emperor Diocletian attempted to keep the empire together by dividing it for purposes of government. His divisions left a lasting impression. When the Roman Empire fell and broke up, the western region, centered on Rome, fell on hard times. The eastern region, with Constantinople (now Istanbul in Turkey) at its heart, became the new focus of the Byzantine Empire (Fig. 7.12). Christianity thrived there and radiated into other areas, including the Balkan Peninsula. This 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 (centered in Rome) and the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church (centered in Constantinople) separated.

The **Eastern Orthodox Church** suffered blows when the Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbs in Kosovo in 1389, when the Turks took Constantinople in 1453, and when the Soviet Union suppressed Eastern Orthodox churches in the twentieth century. Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church remains one of the three major branches of Christianity and is experiencing a revival in former Soviet areas.

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

During the Middle Ages, Roman Catholic authorities often wielded their power in an autocratic manner and distanced themselves from the masses. The widespread diffusion of the Black Death during the 1300s and the deaths that resulted caused many Europeans to question the role of religion in their lives. The Roman Catholic Church itself 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. Reformers to the Church soon followed. 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 and challenging the practices of the Church's leaders. The **Protestant** sects of Christianity 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 in the Counter-Reformation. Some countries in Europe such as Switzerland (Fig. 7.13) are still divided into Catholic and Protestant regions.

Christianity is the largest and globally the most widely dispersed religion. Christian churches claim more than 1.5 billion adherents, including some 430 million in Europe and the former Soviet Union; approximately 355 million in North and Middle America; approximately 310 million in South America; perhaps 240 million in Africa; and an estimated 165 million in Asia. Christians

Figure 7.12

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.   © H. J. de Blij, A. B. Murphy, and E. H. Fouberg, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

thus account for nearly 40 percent of the members of the world's major religions. Roman Catholicism, as noted earlier, is the largest segment of Christianity. Figure 7.6 reveals the strength of Roman Catholicism in party of Europe and North America, and throughout much of Middle and South America. Among religious adherents in significant parts of North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, Protestant churches prevail. Eastern Orthodox churches have as many as 180 million followers in Europe, Russia and its neighboring states, Africa (where a major cluster exists in Ethiopia), and North America.

Diffusion of Christianity

The dissemination of Christianity occurred as a result of expansion combined with relocation diffusion. In western Europe, Christianity declined during the centuries
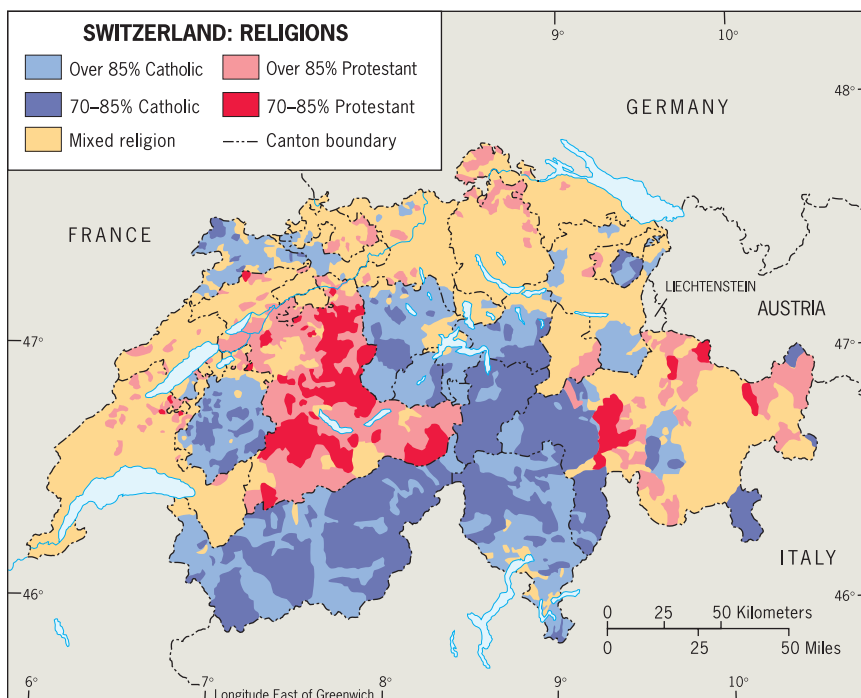

Figure 7.13

Religions in Switzerland. These data show the concentration of religions by canton and commune in Switzerland. Two cantons, Neuchatel and Geneva, separated religion from the commune government; thus, religion is no longer taught in the public schools in these two cantons. In Switzerland's other 24 cantons, religious matters (including taxes of individuals and businesses to support churches) are handled by the canton governments. *Adapted with permission from*: Bundesamt fur Statistik, Office federal de la statistique, Switzerland, 2005.

immediately after the fall of the Roman Empire. Then a form of contagious diffusion took place as the religious ideas that had been kept alive in remote places such as coastal Ireland and Scotland spread throughout western Europe. In the case of the Eastern Orthodox faith, contagious diffusion took place from the religion's hearth in Constantinople to the north and northeast. Protestantism 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, as political leaders would convert—sometimes to escape control from Rome—and then the population would gradually accept the new state religion.

The worldwide diffusion of Christianity occurred during the era of European colonialism beginning in the sixteenth century. Spain invaded and colonized Middle and South America, bringing the Catholic faith to those areas. Protestant refugees, tired of conflict and oppression in Europe, came to North America in large numbers. Through the efforts of missionaries, Catholicism found adherents in Congo, Angola, Mozambique, and the Philippines. The Christian faith today has over 33,000 denominations. Hundreds of these denominations engage in proselytizing (purposeful spreading of religious teachings) around the world, creating an incredibly complex geographical distribution of Christians within the spaces of the world map that are shaded in "Christian" (Fig. 7.6).

The Christian faith has always been characterized by aggressive and persistent proselytism, and Christian missionaries created an almost worldwide network of conversion during the colonial period that endures and continues to expand today (Fig. 7.14).

Islam

Like Christianity, **Islam**, the youngest of the major religions, can be traced back to 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 in a series of revelations that began when the Prophet was about 42 years old. During these revelations, Muhammad spoke the verses of the Qu'ran (Koran), the Muslims' holy book. Muhammad admired the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity; he believed 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 had doubts that he could have been chosen to be a prophet but was convinced by further revelations. He subsequently devoted his life to the fulfillment of 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. 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.

In many ways, the precepts of Islam revised Judaic and Christian beliefs and traditions. The central precept is that there is but one god, who occasionally reveals himself through the prophets, such as Abraham, Jesus, and Muhammad. Another key precept is that Earthly matters

Figure 7.14

La Chinantla, Mexico. Catholic missionaries (of the Marianist order) interact with people in the Uxpanapa Valley in Mexico. © Randall Hyman, Photographer.

are profane; 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 their use but only until the final judgment day.

Adherents to Islam are required to 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, the people build mosques to observe the Friday prayer and to serve as social gathering places (Fig. 7.15).

Islam, like all other major religions, is divided—principally between **Sunni** Muslims (the great majority) and the **Shi'ite** or *Shiah* Muslims (concentrated in Iran). Smaller sects of Islam include Wahhabis, Sufis, Salafists, Alawites, Alevis, and Yazeedis. The religion's main division between Sunni and Shi'ite occurred almost immediately after Muhammad's death, and it was caused by a

Figure 7.15

Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. The soaring minaret of the Sabah State Mosque creates a strong Muslim imprint on the cultural landscape of the city.   © H. J. de Blij.

conflict over his succession. Muhammad died in 632 CE, and 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 murder, warfare, and lasting doctrinal disagreements. The Sunni Muslims eventually prevailed, but the Shi'ite Muslims, the followers of Ali, survived in some areas. Then, 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.

Sunni Muslims believe in the effectiveness of family and community in solving life's problems; Shi'ites believe that the imam is the sole source of true knowledge. *Imams* are Shi'ite Muslim leaders whose appointments they regard as sanctioned by Allah. Shi'ites believe imams are without sin and infallible, making imams a potent social as well as political force. Shi'ite Islam has influenced Sunni Islam in several ways. The veneration of Ali has diffused throughout Sunni Islam and is reflected in the respect all Muslims show to Ali's descendants, the *sayyids* of East Africa and the *sharifs* of North Africa.

Diffusion of Islam

At 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 armies to spread the faith across the Arabian Peninsula through invasion and conquest. Moving west, in waves of invasion and conquest, Islam diffused throughout North Africa. 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 Arab empire extended from Morocco to India and from Turkey to Ethiopia. Through trade, Muslims later spread their faith across the Indian Ocean into Southeast Asia (Fig. 7.16). As Muslim traders settled trading ports in Southeast Asia, they established new secondary hearths of Islam and worked to diffuse the religion contagiously from the secondary hearths. Recent diffusion of Islam into Europe (beyond Spain and Portugal), South Africa, and the Americas has largely been a result of migration—of relocation diffusion.

Today, Islam, with more than 1.3 billion followers, ranks second to Christianity in global number of adherents. Islam 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
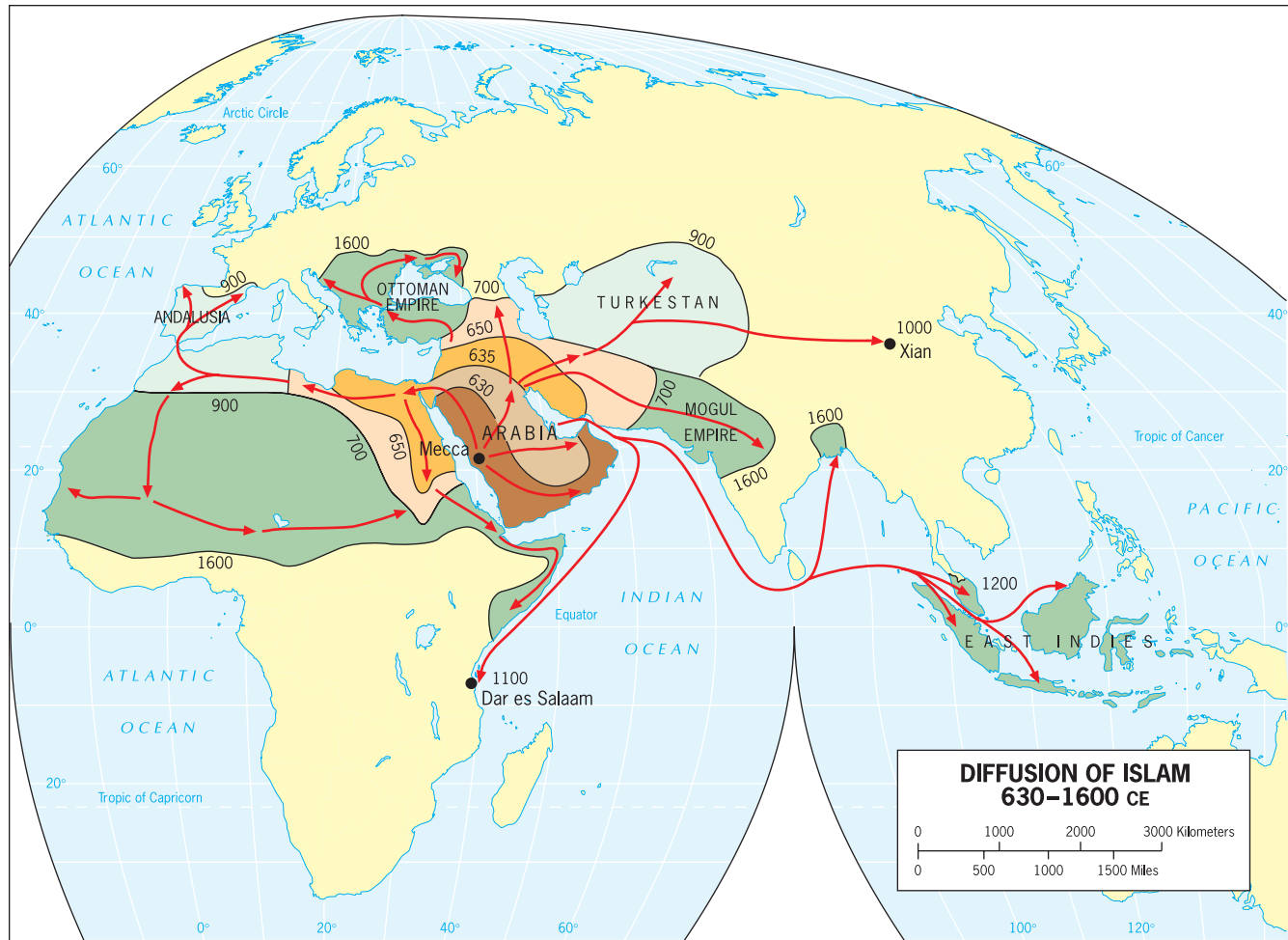
Figure 7.16

Diffusion of Islam.   This map shows the diffusion of Islam from 600 CE to 1600 CE   © H. J. de Blij,
P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

China, and including clusters in Indonesia, Bangladesh, and southern Mindanao in the Philippines. Islam is strongly represented in India, with over 150 million adherents, and in Subsaharan Africa, with approximately 190 million adherents. Islam has followers in Bosnia and Albania and has substantial numbers of adherents in the United States and western Europe (Fig. 7.17). The largest Muslim country is actually outside of the Middle East, in Southeast Asia. Indonesia has nearly 200 million adherents. In fact, of Islam's 1.3 billion followers, more than half live outside Southwest Asia and North Africa. And not everyone in Southwest Asia and North Africa is Muslim. The region is home to millions of Christians, Jews, and other smaller religious sects.

Indigenous and Shamanist

Finally, Figure 7.6 identifies large areas in Africa and several other parts of the world as "Indigenous and Shamanist." **Indigenous religions** are local in scope, usually have a rev-

erence for nature, and are passed down through family units and groups (tribes) of indigenous peoples. No central tenet or belief can be ascribed to all indigenous religions. We do not group indigenous religions because they share a common theology or belief system. Instead, we group indigenous religions because they share the same pressures from the diffusion of global religions- and they have survived (Fig. 7.18).

Shamanism is a community faith in which people follow their shaman—a religious leader, teacher, healer, and visionary. Shamans have appeared at various times to various peoples in Africa, Native America, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. These appearances had similar effects on the cultures of widely scattered peoples. Perhaps if these shamanist religions had developed elaborate bureaucracies and sent representatives to international congresses, they would have become more similar and might have evolved into another world religion. Unlike Christianity or Islam, the shamanist faiths are small and comparatively isolated.

Shamanism is a traditional religion, an intimate part of a local culture and society, but not all traditional
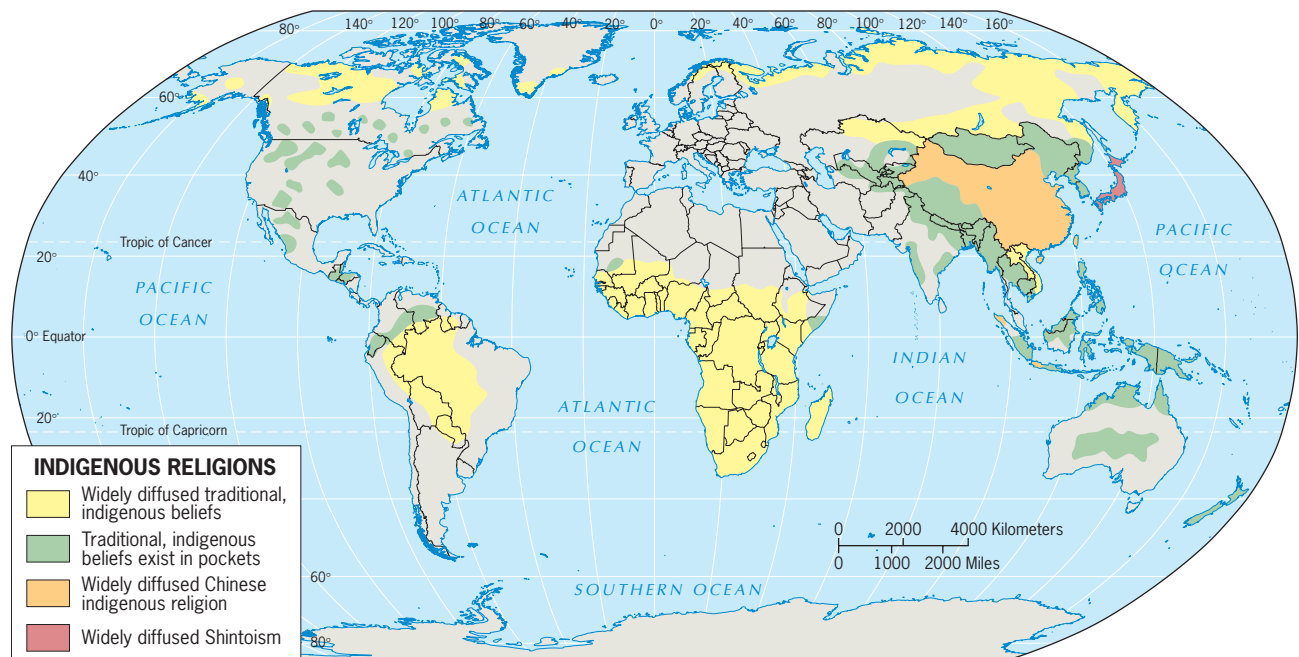
Figure 7.17
Paris, France. This large mosque in Paris attests to the significance of Islamic migration to France over the past several decades. Global religions are not found in neat geographical spaces; they are now found side-by-side all over the world.   © Alexander B. Murphy.

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, they have failed to convert most African peoples, except in limited areas. Figure 7.6 shows where the adherents to traditional religions remain in the majority.

The Rise of Secularism

The world map of religion might mislead us into assuming that all or even most of the people in areas portrayed as Christian or Buddhist do in fact adhere to these faiths. This is not the case. Even the most careful analysis of worldwide church and religious membership produces a total of about 4 billion adherents—in a population of over 6 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. Moreover, even church membership figures do not accurately reflect the number of *active members* of a church. When polled about their church-going activities, fewer than 3 percent of the people in Scandinavia reported frequent attendance, and in France and Great Britain, less than 10 percent reported attending church at least once a month. The lack of members-active or otherwise underscore the rise of **secularism**, indifference to or rejection of organized religious affiliations and ideas.

Figure 7.18
Indigenous Religions. Adapted from: *The Atlas of Religion*, Joanne O'Brien and Martin Palmer. University of California Press, 2007.

INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS
- Widely diffused traditional, indigenous beliefs
- Traditional, indigenous beliefs exist in pockets
- Widely diffused Chinese indigenous religion
- Widely diffused Shintoism

The level of secularism throughout much of the Christian and Buddhist worlds varies from country to country and regionally within countries. In North America, for instance, a poll in 2002 asked whether people felt religion was very important to them. Only 30 percent of Canadians agreed with this statement, whereas 59 percent of Americans felt religion was very important to them. In France, the government recently banned the wearing of overt religious symbols in public schools. The French government wanted to remove the "disruption" of Muslim girls wearing hijab (head scarves), Jewish boys wearing yarmulke (skullcaps), and Christian students wearing large crosses to school. The French government took the position that banning all religious symbols was the only egalitarian approach.

Looking at polls that ask about the importance of religion for people in a country does not give us the complete picture, however. Canada's 30 percent rate would be much, much lower if we removed recent or second-generation immigrants from the tally. Immigrants often hold onto their religion more fervently to help them ease into a new place and to link into a community in their new home. 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 of the country.

In some countries, antireligious ideologies are contributing to the decline of organized religion. Church membership in the former Soviet Union, which dropped drastically during the twentieth century under communist rule, rebounded, after the collapse of the Soviet system but to much lower numbers. Maoist China's drive against Confucianism was, in part, an antireligious effort, and China continues to suppress some organized religious practices, as reports of religious persecution continue to emanate from China.

In many areas labeled Christian on the world map of religions, from Canada to Australia and from the United States to western Europe, the decline of organized religion as a cultural force is evident. In the strongly Catholic regions of Southern Europe and Latin America, many people are dissatisfied with the papal teachings on birth control, as the desire for larger families wanes in these regions of the world. In Latin America, the Catholic Church is being challenged by rapid social change, the diffusion of other Evangelical Christian denominations into the region, and sexual abuse scandals similar to those that have occured in the United States and Canada.

Secularism has become more widespread during the past century. People have abandoned organized religion in growing numbers. Even if they continue to be members of a church, their participation in church activities has declined. Traditions have also weakened. 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, not to church. To witness the rise of secularism among Christians in America first-hand, 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?

At the same time that secularism is on the rise in the United States, many people who do follow their religion seem to be doing so more fervently. Religious traditions are stronger in some cultural regions of the United States than in others, and Sunday observance continues at a high level, for example, in the Mormon culture area of the United States. Even though Catholic dioceses are closing churches and declaring bankruptcy in some parts of the Northeast, other Catholic dioceses are building new churches and enormous activity halls in other parts of the country. Moreover, Evangelical and other alternative churches are growing rapidly in some parts of the United States and western Europe. Entire industries, such as Christian music and Christian publications, depend on the growing commitment of many Americans and Europeans to their religion.

The division between secularism and fervent adherence is not confined to the Christian world. Secularism is growing in South Korea, where half of the population does not profess adherence to any particular religion. Although major faiths are experiencing an overall decline in adherence, several smaller religions are growing in importance: Baha'i, Cao Dai, Jainism, and the Spiritual Church of Brazil.

Migration plays a large role in the diffusion of religions, both universalizing and ethnic. As Europe becomes more secular, migrants from outside of Europe continue to settle in the region. Imagine Europe 30 years from now. Predict where in Europe secularism will be the most prominent and where religious adherence will strengthen.

HOW IS RELIGION SEEN IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE?

Religion marks cultural landscapes with houses of worship such as churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples; with cemeteries dotted with religious symbols and icons; with stores designated to sales of religious goods;

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 culture 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 7.19

Credit: Mary Lee Nolan, Oregon State University

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and even with services provided to religious adherents who travel to sacred sites. When adherents voluntarily travel to a religious site to pay respects or participate in a ritual at the site, the act of travel is called a **pilgrimage**. Geographers who study religion are interested in the act of pilgrimage and its impacts on place, people, religion, culture, and environment.

Sacred sites are places or spaces 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 held with reverence, adherents may be encouraged to make a pilgrimage to the sacred site for rejuvenation, reflection, healing, or fulfillment of a religious commitment.

In ancient human history, sacred spaces were typically features in the physical geographic landscape, such as buttes, mountain peaks, or rivers. In more recent history, as universalizing religions diffused across the world, sacred sites were abandoned, usurped, 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. 7.19). When Roman Catholicism diffused to Ireland, 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 "sacred" (bones of saints or images) was typically brought to a place in order to infuse the place with meaning.

In many societies, features in the physical geographic landscape remain sacred to religious groups. Access to and use of physical geographic features are constrained by private ownership, environmental concerns, and the act of designating certain sacred spaces as public recreational or tourist areas. Geographer Kari Forbes-Boyte studied Bear

Butte, a site sacred to members of the Lakota and Cheyenne people in the northern Great Plains of the United States and a site that became a state park in the 1960s. Bear Butte is used today by both Lakota and Cheyenne people in religious ceremonies and by tourists who seek access to the recreational site. Nearby Devils Tower, which is a National Monument, experiences the same pull between religious use by American Indians and recreational use by tourists.

Places such as Bear Butte and Devils Tower experience contention when one group sees the sites as sacred and another group does not. In many parts of the world, sacred sites are claimed as holy or significant to adherents of more than one religious faith. In India several sites are considered sacred by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. Specifically, Volture Peak in Rajgir in northeastern India 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 consider Buddha to be a god or prophet. Fortunately, this site has created little discord among religious groups. Pilgrims of all faiths peacefully congregate in the place year after year. Other sacred sites are not so fortunate. Some of the most contentious sites are in Jerusalem, a city seen as holy by three major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Sacred Sites of Jerusalem

The ancient city of Jerusalem is sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jews saw Jerusalem as sacred before the birth of Jesus, but most Jews fled from the city and surrounding area during the diaspora. For Jews, Jerusalem remained sacred even though they did not control it, and when the Zionist movement gained strength, Jews set their sights on controlling the sacred city once again. The most important sacred site for Jews is the Western Wall (also called the Wailing Wall), at the edge of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (Fig. 7.20). The Temple Mount was the site of the two great temples of the Jewish people. Occupying 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, each of which was destroyed by invaders. The Western Wall is all that remains of the second temple, and Jews gather in the place to remember the story of Abraham and the destruction of the temples and to offer prayers. The name "Wailing Wall" evokes the sounds of mourning over the temple's demise (and the suffering of Jews over time) made by Jewish pilgrims.

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' crucifixion took place outside of the city's walls. Jesus was then buried near the Cross (Jews only allowed kings to be buried inside the city walls) in a tomb Roman Emperor Constantine marked with a basilica that is now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Fig. 7.21). Christians believe that from that tomb Jesus rose from the dead on Easter. For centuries the Roman, and then the

Figure 7.20

Jerusalem, Israel. The Western Wall, which is sacred to Jews, stands right next to the Dome of the Rock, which is sacred to Muslims.
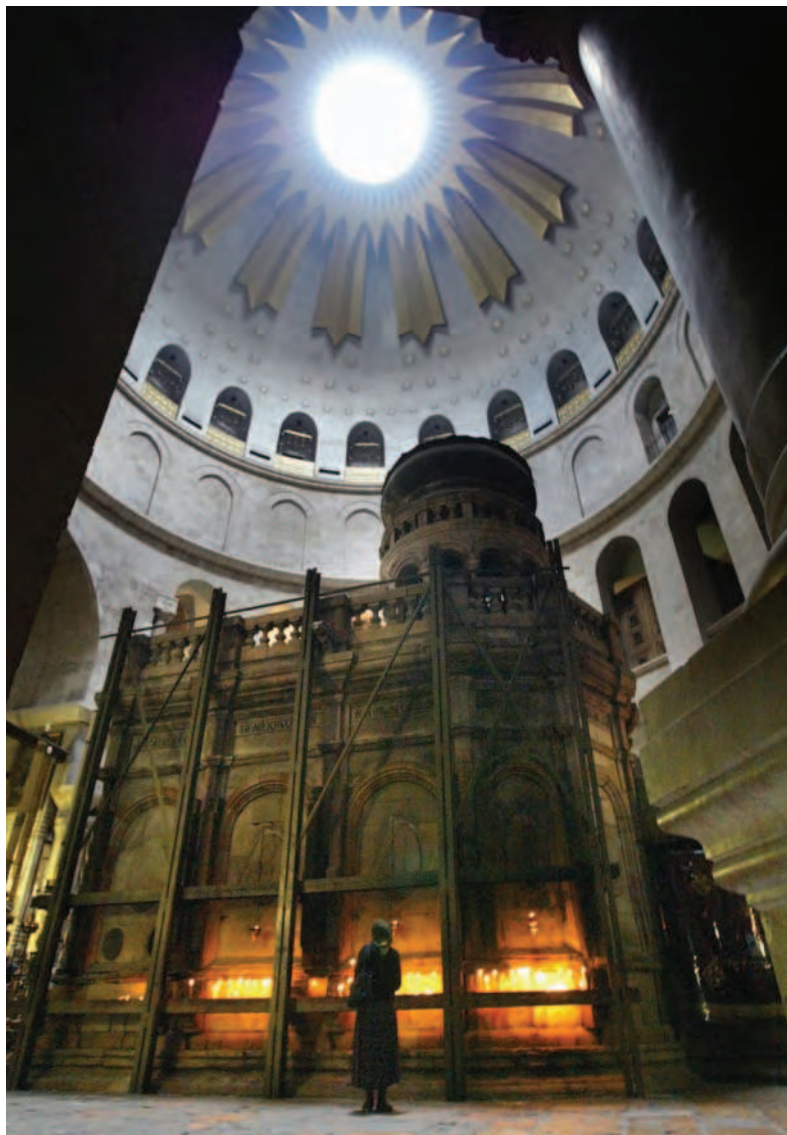© Alexander B. Murphy.

Figure 7.21
Jerusalem, Israel. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is sacred to Christians who believe it is the site where Jesus Christ was crucified. Inside the church, a Christian worshipper lights a candle at Jesus Christ's tomb.   © Reuters/Corbis Images.

Byzantine, Empire controlled the city and protected their sacred site.

In the seventh century, Muslim armies took control over the city from the Byzantine Empire. Muslims constructed a mosque called the Dome of the Rock adjacent to the Western Wall to mark the site where Muslims believe Muhammad arrived from Mecca and then ascended into heaven (Fig. 7.20). The site Jews call Temple Mount is called al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) by Muslims.

Christians and Muslims fought the Crusades of the Middle Ages 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 so-called Holy Land. The first Christian crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099, ruling the city for almost 100 years. As the first crusaders made their way across what is modern-day Turkey on their way to Jerusalem, they also left a series of conquests in their wake—laying claim to the city of Antioch and a number of 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 cement a commitment by Christians to protect the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Similarly, the Crusades and then Zionism cemented a commitment by Muslims to protect the Dome of the Rock and 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 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 rituals are attended by millions of people. 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. The location of shrines is important because Hindus prescribe that such holy places should minimally disrupt the natural landscape. Whenever possible, a Hindu temple is located in a "comfortable" position, for example, under a large, shady tree. Hindus also want their temples to be near water because many gods will not venture far from water and because water has a holy function, *ritual bathing*, in Hinduism (Fig. 7.22). 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 the cultural landscape of India, its main culture region. 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 unique atmosphere (Fig. 7.23).

Figure 7.22
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.   © Alexander B. Murphy.

Field Note

"In the summer of 2007, the newer, Hi-Tec city area of Hyderabad, India was under construction. Migrant workers built new roads, new apartment houses, and new office buildings throughout the city. Beautiful new homes reflected the new wealth accrued among many in the city's newly wealthy. In front of the new homes, I could see Hinduism in the cultural landscape, as many owners built temples for their favorite Hindu god. In the oldest parts of the city, I visited Golconda Fort, built more than 1500 years ago. On the day I was there, the Hindu women of the city were participating 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 part in a festival that began in the mid-1800s, when the Hindu women began the festival to ward off the anger of the gods, as the city stood under the siege of the bubonic plague."

Figure 7.23
Hyderabad, India.   © Erin H. Fouberg.

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. The Bodhi tree 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. 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. 7.24).

Along with the religious structures such as temples, we can see evidence of religion in the cultural landscapes of the dead. Traditionally, Hindus, and more recently Buddhists, and Shintoists cremate their dead. Thus, wherever a large pocket of Hindus, Buddhists, or Shintoists live, a crematorium will be nearby. The Hindu crematorium in Kenya stands in stark contrast to much of the rest of the cultural landscape and signals the presence of a large Hindu population (Fig. 7.3).

The cultural landscapes of South Asian religions extend into Southeast Asia, where several religions that began in the South Asian hearth (including Hinduism and Buddhism) diffused 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 in these areas. Today, we can stand in Singapore, study the cultural landscape, and see the influences of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

Field Note

"To reach the capital of Myanmar (Burma) we had to transfer to a ferry and sail up the Rangoon River for several hours. One of Southeast Asia's most spectacular Buddhist shrines is the golden Shwedogon Pagoda in the heart of Yangon. The golden dome (or *chedi*) is one of the finest in Southeast Asia, and its religious importance is striking: eight hairs of the Buddha are preserved here. Vast amounts of gold have gone into the creation and preservation of the Shwedogon Pagoda; local rulers often gave the monks their weight in gold—or more. Today, the pagoda is a cornerstone of Buddhism, drawing millions of faithful to the site. Myanmar's ruling generals have ruined the country's economy and continue to oppress Buddhist leaders who try to convey public grievances to the regime, even blocking international aid following the devastating impact of cyclone Nargis in May 2008. The generals have a powerful ally in the Chinese, who are building bridges and laying pipelines but who exercise little influence over the military junta."
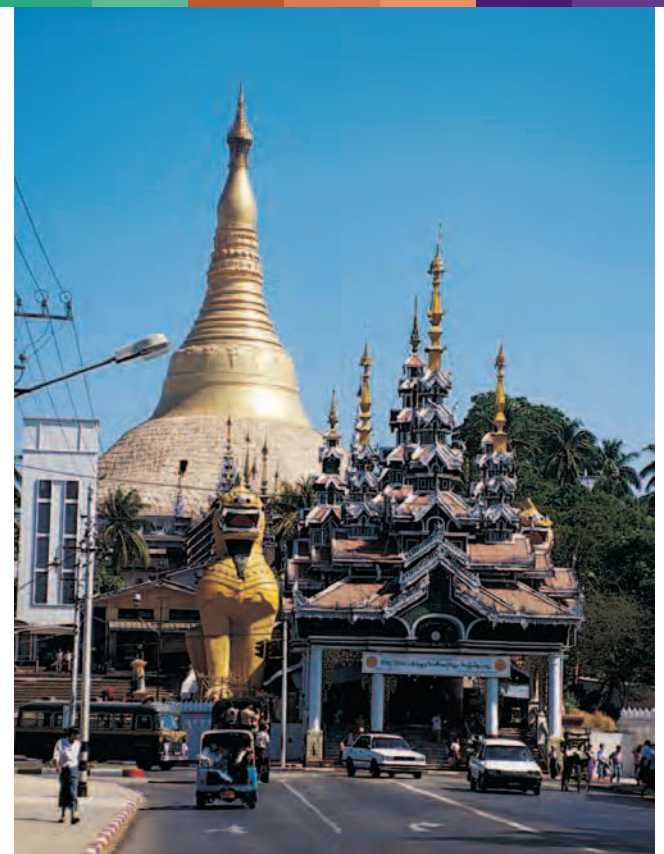

Figure 7.24
Yangon, Myanmar. © H. J. de Blij

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 that could be seen (and whose bells could be heard) for miles in the surrounding countryside (Fig. 7.25). 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 in the shadow of the symbol of religious authority. As a result of mercantilism and colonialism, Europeans exported the ornate architecture of European Christian churches wherever they settled (Fig. 7.26).

▬ Figure 7.25

Bordeaux, France. Built beginning in 1472, St. Michael's Tower rises over Bordeaux, France, marking the importance of the Catholic Church in Bordeaux's history and culture. © H. J. de Blij.

▬ Figure 7.26

Singapore. Built beginning in 1834, St. Andrew's Cathedral stands on spacious grounds between Singapore's commercial center and hotel district. The church was built by the Church of England and stands in the midst of a city that is predominantly Chinese with Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim minorities. © H. J. de Blij.

The Reformation, the rise of secularism, and the decline of organized religion are reflected in the cultural landscape as well. Many 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 their doors or significantly reducing the number of religious services offered. Yet, not all of Europe's sacred sites have become secularized. Famous cathedrals continue to hold services while tourists peruse the interior of the vast churches. And other sacred sites of Christianity, such as churches for specific saints,

Figure 7.27
Vatican City. Pope John Paul II greeted pilgrims at a general audience in St. Peter's Square. Thousands gathered each week to see the pope and hear him greet visitors in multiple languages.   © Erin H. Fouberg.

places where significant events occurred, and Vatican City in Rome, are still major pilgrimage sites in Europe. When in Rome, the leader of the Catholic Church, the pope, holds an outdoor service for pilgrims to Vatican City, attracting thousands of followers to St. Peter's Square each week (Fig. 7.27).

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

Religious 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 7.28 presents a modified version of Zelinsky's map. The religious regions on the map are familiar to anyone who has even the most general impression of cultural differences in the United States.

The New England region is strongly Catholic; the South's leading denomination is Baptist; the Upper Midwest has large numbers of Lutherans; and the Southwest is predominantly Spanish Catholic. The broad midland region extending from the Middle Atlantic to the Mormon region (in the Western United States) and has a mixture of denominations in which no single church dominates; this is also true of the West. As Figure 7.28 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.

More interesting than the simple regionalization of religions in the United States is the variation in cultural landscapes within regions. In a 2008 study, geographers Barney Warf and Mort Winsberg used data on religious adherents by county in the United States to discern what counties and regions of the country have the most and the least religious diversity. Warf and Winsberg defined religious diversity as having a variety of religions within a small spatial unit, in this case a county. One way the authors mapped religious diversity is presented in Figure 7.29, a map showing counties with the least religious diversity in the darkest colors. In counties with the darkest shading, one religion accounts for 64 percent or more of all religious adherents in the county. In comparing Figure 7.29 to 7.28, 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 in the country. In these regions, you can expect to see the imprint of one major religion throughout the cultural landscape. By contrast, religious regions characterized by many lightly colored counties have a rich religious mix.
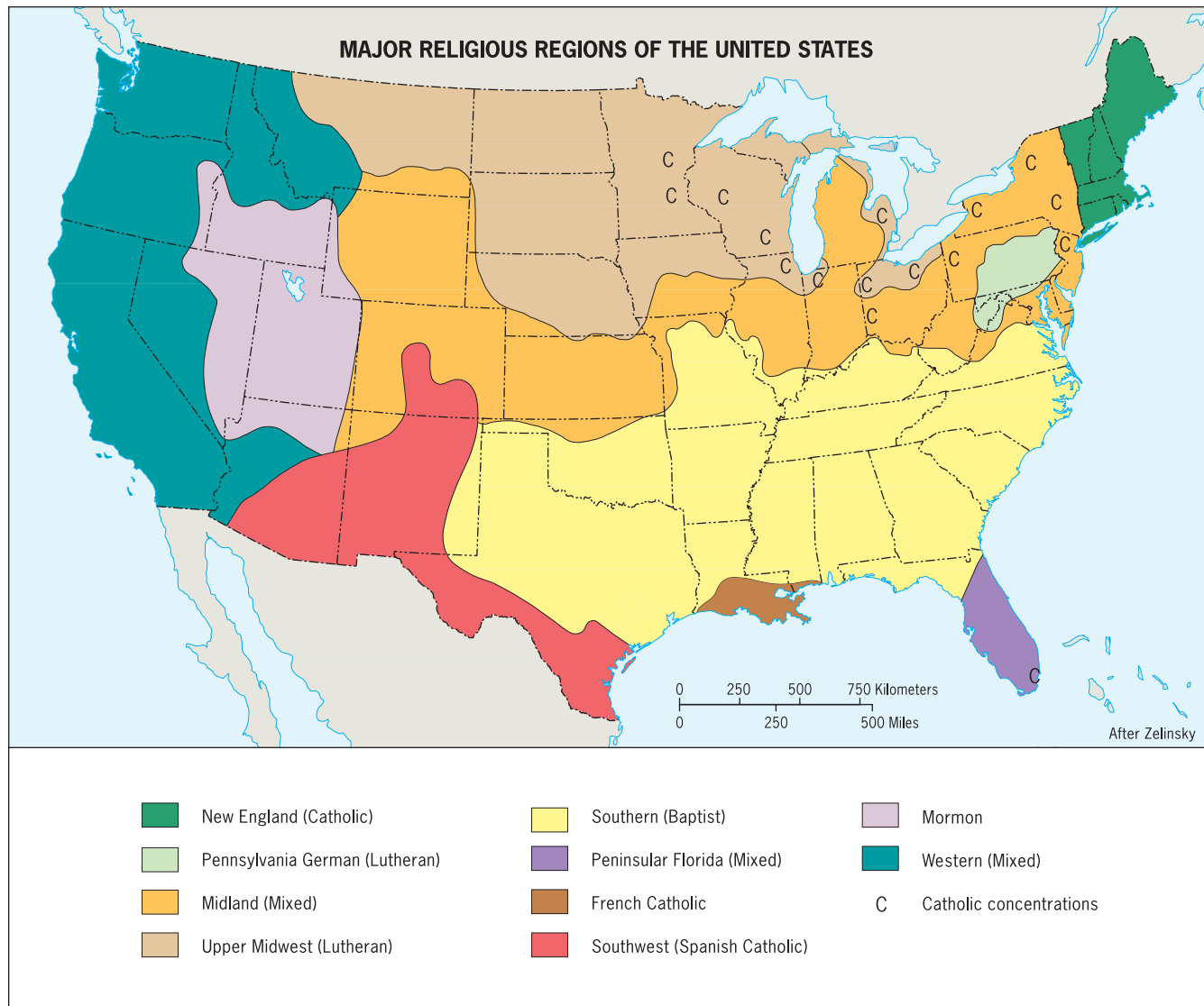
MAJOR RELIGIOUS REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Color	Region
■	New England (Catholic)
■	Pennsylvania German (Lutheran)
■	Midland (Mixed)
■	Upper Midwest (Lutheran)
■	Southern (Baptist)
■	Peninsular Florida (Mixed)
■	French Catholic
■	Southwest (Spanish Catholic)
■	Mormon
■	Western (Mixed)
C	Catholic concentrations

After Zelinsky

Figure 7.28

Major Religious Regions of the United States.   A generalized map of the religious regions of the United States shows concentrations of the major religions. *Adapted with permission from*: W. Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, revised edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 96.

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 as the Catholic Church historically did (Fig. 7.30). Conversely, many Catholic churches in the United States, both in the Northeast and in Chicago, as well as in other immigrant-magnet cities, were built by immigrants who lived in ethnic neighborhoods. Immigrants spent their own money and used their own building skills to construct more ornate churches and dozens of cathedrals that tied them back to their country of origin and demonstrated their commitment to their faith (Fig. 7.31).

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
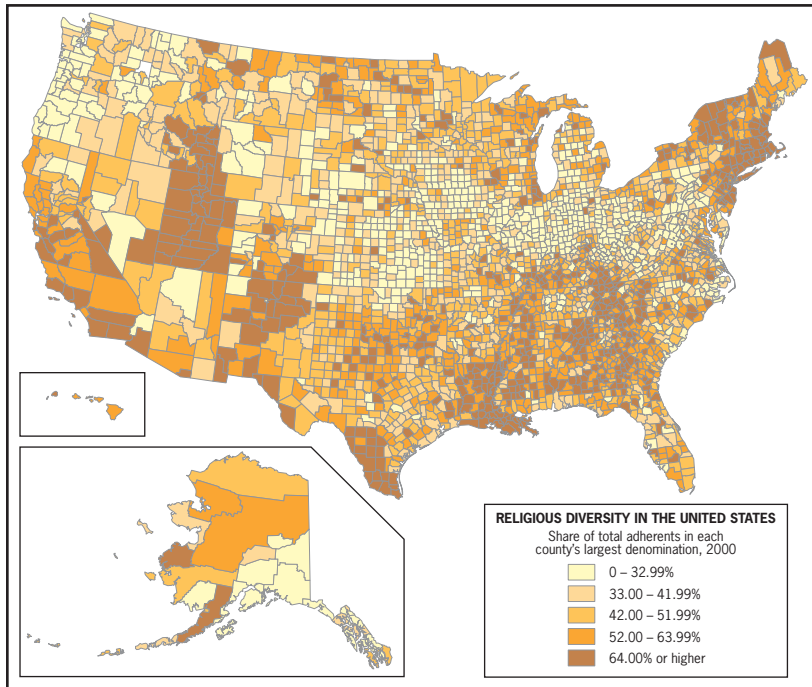
Figure 7.29
Religious Diversity in the United States.
Adapted with permission from: B. Warf and M. Winsberg, "The Geography of Religious Diversity in the United States," *Professional Geographer*, 2008.

Figure 7.30
Brown County, South Dakota. 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.   © Erin H. Fouberg.
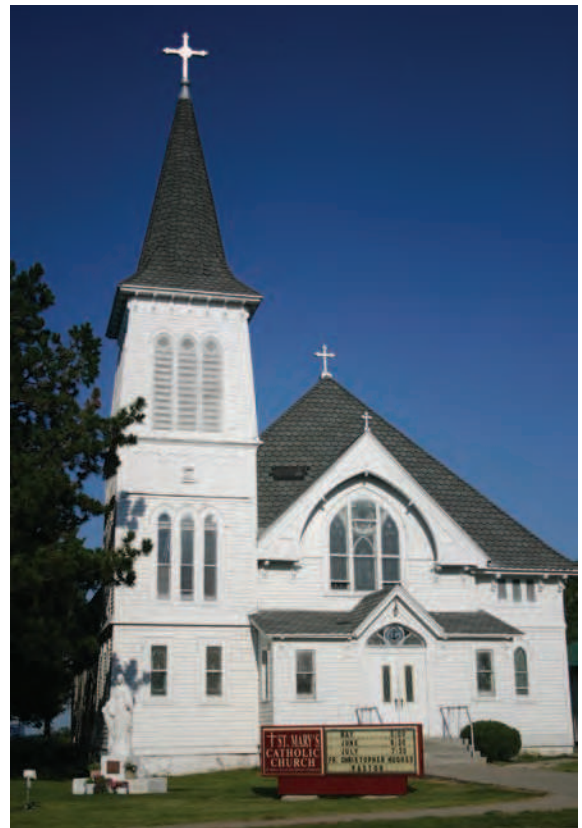

Figure 7.31
Zell, South Dakota.   St. Mary's Catholic Church was built by nuns in 1875 to serve Catholic immigrants and American Indians. The more ornate architecture and stained glass of St. Mary's Church is commonly found in Catholic churches in the Great Plains.   © Erin H. Fouberg.

Figure 7.32
Isfahan, Iran. The dome of this mosque demonstrates the geometric art evident in Muslim architecture.
© Alexander B. Murphy.

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. 7.32). 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.

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 primacy in the cultural landscape confirms the degree to which, in much of the Muslim world, religion and culture are one.

One of the most well-known pilgrimages in the modern world is the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, the **hajj**. One of the five pillars of Islam, the hajj requires all Muslims (if financially and physically able) to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during their lifetime. Each year, over 1.3 million Muslims from outside of Saudia Arabia and over 1 million from inside the country make the hajj (Fig. 7.33). The pilgrimage 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 2004, over 250 pilgrims were trampled to death as hordes of people followed the steps of the pilgrimage, and in 1990 over 1400 pilgrims suffered the same fate. The Saudi government now restricts the number of visas granted each year to Muslims from outside of the country. Yet, the number of pilgrims continues to climb, and the services needed for Muslim pilgrims during the hajj and during the rest of the year 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.

Geographer Surinder Bhardwaj has studied non-hajj pilgrimages in Islam, which include "visits to sacred shrines of holy men, the graves of saints and Imams, and the tombs of martyrs of the faith." Although some sects of Islam see non-hajj pilgrimage as non-Islamic, the *ziarats* (non-hajj pilgrimages) are important to a growing number of Muslims. Bhardwaj points out that the hajj is obligatory but the ziarat is voluntary. He explains that study of the ziarat helps geographers understand the many variations and regional forms of Islam in the world today. For example, Bhardwaj describes how the ziarat in Indonesia (the country with the largest number of

Figure 7.33
Mecca, Saudi Arabia.   Pilgrims circle the holy Kaaba in the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the hajj.   © AP/Wide World Press.

Muslims) reflects the continued influence of pre-Islamic ways. Especially in the interior of Indonesia, Islam has mixed with Buddhism and Hinduism, both of which stress the importance of pilgrimage. Similar to Ireland, where the Catholic Church usurped Celtic sacred sites, Bhardwaj found that many sites in Indonesia that were sacred under Hinduism and Buddhism *were* usurped by Islam, which changed the object of pilgrimage from non-Muslim to Muslim.

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) alters this place's cultural landscape and environment.

WHAT ROLE DOES RELIGION PLAY 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 arise not only between people adhering to different major religions (as with Muslims and Christians in the former Yugoslavia) but also among adherents of the same religion. 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 often functions 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 Sikhs in India has a strong political as well as religious dimension. Nevertheless,

in these and other cases religion serves as the principal symbol around which conflict is organized.

Conflicts along Religious Borders

A comparison between Figure 7.6 and a political map of the world (see Fig. 8.3) reveals that some countries lie entirely within the realms of individual world religions, whereas other countries straddle **interfaith boundaries**, the boundaries between the world's major faiths. Many countries that lie astride interfaith boundaries are subject to potentially divisive cultural forces—particularly when the people see their religious differences as a source of social division within their country. This is the case in several countries in Africa that straddle the Christian-Muslim interfaith boundary (Fig. 7.34). 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, divisions between Muslim Sunni and Shi'ite, and the like. This is the case in Northern Ireland, where Protestants and Catholics, who both worship in the Christian tradition, have a long history of conflict.

Interfaith and intrafaith boundaries can be peaceful, or they can spur enormously violent political conflict. Israel/Palestine, the Horn of Africa, and the former Yugoslavia provide examples of interfaith conflicts, and Northern Ireland is an example of an intrafaith conflict. In each case, religious difference is not the only factor, but it certainly plays an important symbolic and perceptual role.

Israel and Palestine

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the history of the conflict over the sacred space of Jerusalem. The region of Israel and Palestine is home to one of the most contentious

Figure 7.34

African Transition Zone. Percent Muslim by State. © H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
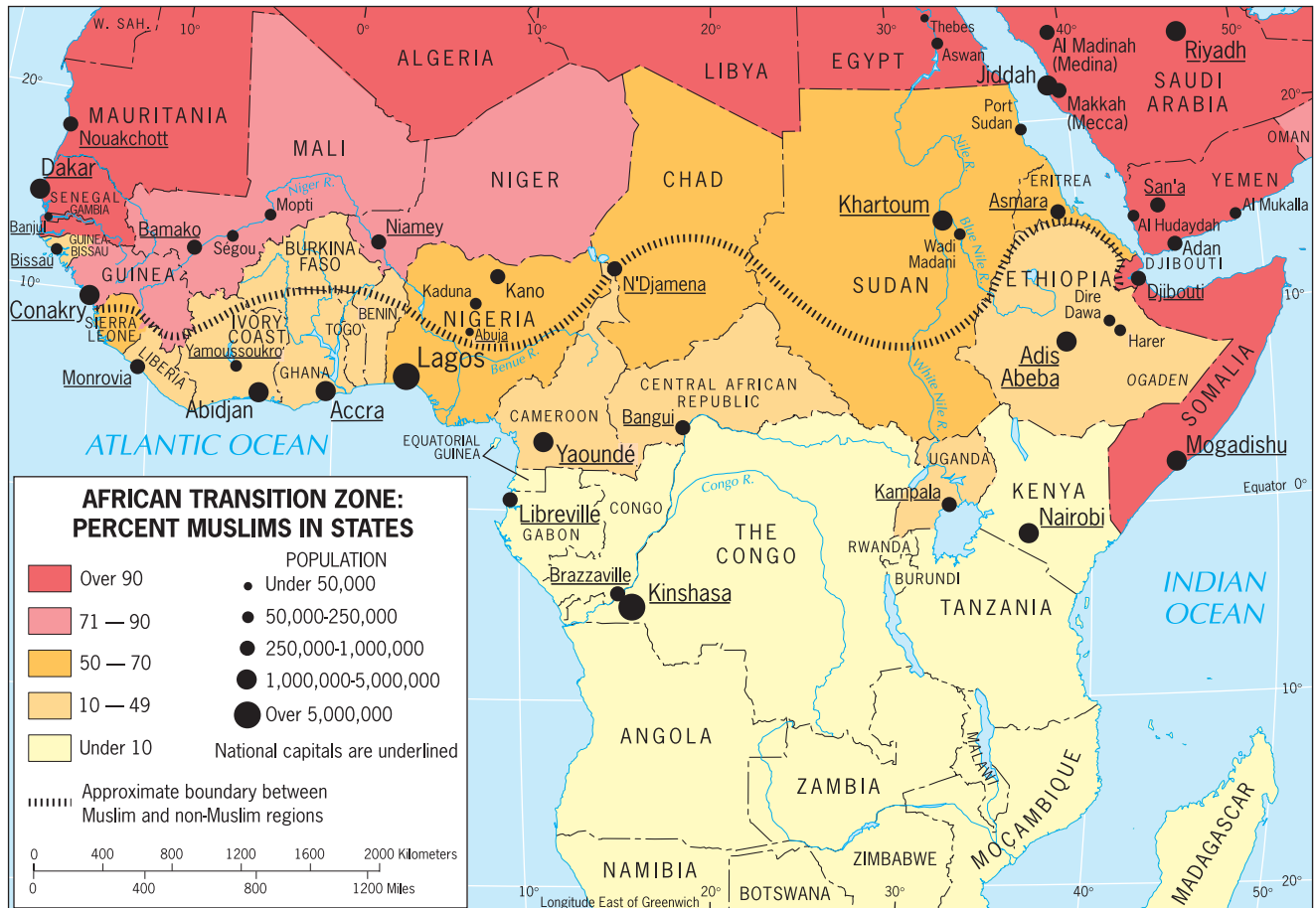
religious conflicts in the world today. In the aftermath of World War I, European colonialism came to a region that had previously been controlled and fought over by the Jews, Romans, Christians, Muslims, and Ottomans. A newly formed League of Nations (a precursor to the United Nations) recognized British 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, by 1947–1948, Jews and Palestinians engaged in open warfare.

In the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, many more Jews moved to the region. Shortly after the war, the British mandate ended, and the newly formed United Nations voted to partition Palestine—creating independent Israeli and Palestinian states. From the drawing of the first map, the partitioning plan was set for failure (see Fig. 3.11). Palestinians and Israelis were to live in noncontiguous states. Surrounding Arab states reacted violently against the new Jewish state. Israel survived through numerous wars in which Palestinians lost their lands, farms, and villages. As a consequence of war and the consolidation of the Israeli state, Palestinians migrated or fled to refugee camps in neighboring Arab states.

In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israel gained control of the Palestinian lands in Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The international community calls these lands the Occupied Territories. The Jewish presence in Gaza has always been small. But over the last three decades, the Israelis built Jewish housing settlements throughout the West Bank and have expanded the city of Jerusalem eastward into the West Bank (razing Palestinian houses along the way) to gain more control of territory. The Israeli government severely restricts new building by Palestinians, even on lands in the Palestinian zones of the West Bank. Events in the early and mid-1990s began to change this religious-political mosaic as self-government was awarded to Gaza and to small areas inside the West Bank. Palestinian Arabs were empowered to run their own affairs within these zones. Stability and satisfactory coexistence could lead to further adjustments, some thought—and eventually a full-fledged Palestinian state. In 1995, the parties hammered out a peace accord that would have created a substantial Palestinian state. In 2000, Palestine rejected the peace terms and the Oslo framework, which many saw as the best chance for peace in the region.

In September 2005, the Israeli government shifted its policy toward the Gaza Strip. Israel evacuated the settlements that had been built there, burned down the buildings that remained (Fig. 7.35), and then 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. Within days, the border with Israel was closed—making it impossible for many Palestinians to travel to their places of work in Israel. The border with Egypt was closed as well. Although Palestinians now have greater freedom within the Gaza Strip, they are economically isolated and the standard of living has dropped.

The Israeli government tightly controls the flow of Palestinians and goods into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Gaza is surrounded by fences, and in some places a wall—with land mines in certain areas and dust road to show footprints. Most controversially, however, the Israelis have set about constructing a security fence in the West Bank, which does not follow the 1947 West Bank border but dips into the West Bank to include some of the larger Israeli Settlements on Israel's side of the fence. This may greatly complicate any future territorial settlement, and some Israelis are opposed to it. But many others argue that Palestinians continue to fight a war against the Israelis—with terrorism. Palestinian attacks against Israelis threaten the everyday lives of the Israeli people; no bus, coffee shop, restaurant, or sidewalk is safe from the threat of terrorist attack. Similarly, in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, the Israeli military hunts the suspects, shedding blood in Palestinian neighborhoods.

The situation in Israel and Palestine today does not reflect a simple interfaith boundary. The tiny region has a multitude of interfaith boundaries, especially in the West Bank (Fig. 7.36). The settlements in the West Bank have produced many miles of interfaith boundaries within a small political territory.

The Economist recently summed up the prospects for peace in the region, saying that despite some signs that violence by both sides is abating, "there is not a flicker of hope, in the short run, that even a truce is in the offing." At the same time that Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, the government was erecting a new security fence in the West Bank and was building new Israeli housing in the West Bank. In 2005, *The Economist* explained that an Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, believes the new security fence will "still separate many Palestinians (particularly around Jerusalem) from their farmland and cut deep into the West Bank around the main Israeli settlements—in effect joining them to Israel proper while nearly dividing any future Palestinian state into enclaves."

The conflict over the small territory of the Holy Land is amplified by the sentiment of both Israelis and

Figure 7.35
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 liason offices on September 9, 2005, in preparation for completing the Israeli retreat from the Gaza Strip on September 11, 2005.   © AP/Wide World Photos.

Palestinians that they have a historic (in the minds of some, even a divine) right to the land; by the violence inflicted on each other by both sides; and by, as Stoddard and Prorok put it, the belief and emotional conviction by both parties that the "territory belongs to them."

The Horn of Africa

The religions in the Horn of Africa include Islam, ancient Christian sects, and Christian sects of European colonizers (Fig. 7.37). Over the last 2000 years, the small country of Eritrea, on the Red Sea coast, has changed hands a multitude of times. Along with diversity in religion, this region, like the rest of Africa, incorporates a very high level of linguistic diversity.

At the heart of the Horn of Africa lies mountainous Ethiopia, the cultural core area of Amharic (Coptic) Christians. For centuries, the Amharics in the mountains of Ethiopia used their nearly impregnable natural fortress to control the lowlands beyond the borders of what is today Ethiopia. As Islam diffused into North Africa, Muslims converted some people at the base of the mountains, but the Amharic rulers maintained control of most

Figure 7.36

The West Bank. *Adapted with permission from*: C. B. Williams and C. T. Elsworth, *The New York Times*, November 17, 1995, p. A6. © The New York Times.
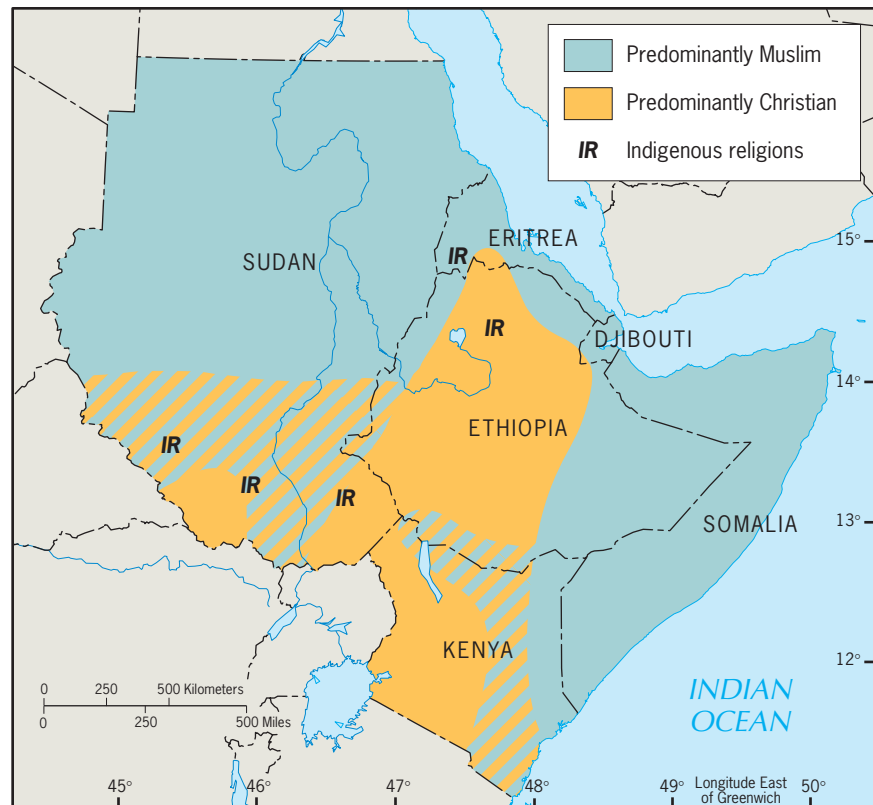
■ **Figure 7.37**
Religious Regions in the Horn of Africa.
Data from: United States Department of State, International Report on Religious Freedom, 2004.

of the region. Islam surrounded the Amharics to the north, northeast, and southeast.

During the 1600s, the Ottoman (Muslim) Empire extended into the Horn of Africa, but the Amharics remained. With the coming of European colonialism to Africa, in the late 1800s to early 1900s, Italy took Eritrea as a colony. After World War II, Great Britain controlled the region, and in 1950, the United Nations decided it was best for Eritrea to become part of Ethiopia. The marriage was not one of consent, and the Muslim Eritreans did not easily accept control by the Amharic Ethiopians. The Amharic rulers controlled not only the Muslim Eritreans in the north, but also the Muslim Somalis in the east, together with a huge arc-shaped region of traditional and other sects of Christianity to the west and south. The Amharics continued to control these areas, even after the kingdom of Ethiopia was overthrown by a military dictatorship. The Eritreans' war for independence lasted for 30 years, and finally ended in 1991 with the Eritreans reaching their goal of independence. But the situation has remained tense with border conflicts erupting in the early 2000s.

Eritrea's secession did not end Ethiopia's religious multiculturalism. Ethiopia still contains a large Muslim population of Somalis in its eastern zone; the south and west are non-Muslim; and Amharic Christians still cluster in their highland domain. The separation of Eritrea is likely to be only one step in a series of changes that underscore the difficulties of straddling an interfaith border.

The Former Yugoslavia

No discussion of the impact of interfaith boundaries is complete without the former Yugoslavia. A number of religious and linguistic fault lines run through the Balkan Peninsula. We discussed one of the fault lines earlier in the chapter when we looked at the fall of the Roman Empire and the subsequent division between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orothodox Church. The dividing line between the two branches of Christianity runs right through the Balkan Peninsula. The Slovenians and Croats in the west of the peninsula are Catholic, and the Serbians and Montenegrans in the east and south of the peninsula are Eastern Orthodox.

The Balkan Peninsula is also a dividing line for language in Europe, with people west of the line using the Roman alphabet and people east of the line using the Cyrillic alphabet. The Serbo-Croatian language is now recognized as two languages, Serbian and Croatian. Even when these languages were recognized as a single language, the Croats used the Roman alphabet in the written form of their language, and the Serbs used the Cyrillic script.

These divisions in religion and language were complicated by the entry of another universalizing religion during the 1300s. The Ottoman Turks, a Muslim empire, brought soldiers to their northwestern military frontier and converted some Serbian communities to Islam. The Ottomans took control of the region by force, beginning with the bloody battle of Kosovo in 1389, which was the Serbian homeland during the European Middle Ages. From that point on, the region has had pockets of Muslims in the middle and south of the peninsula, creating numerous interfaith boundaries. Even by the early 1990s, the clusters of Muslims on the peninsula were quite large, in terms of both territorial extent and population. Muslims had a strong presence in Bosnia and in its capital, Sarajevo, as well as in Kosovo and Macedonia.

Yugoslavia is another example of a country thrown together and left wrestling with significant diversity. The name "Yugoslavia" means land of the South Slavs. The country was formed in the chaotic aftermath of World War I before 1920. When World War II began, many Serbs already resented the Muslim presence in the region, harking back to the time when the Ottomans defeated the Serbs. During World War II, the Croats, who supported the German Nazis, fought the anti-Nazi Serbs. Croats, with the might of the Nazis behind them, sought to rid their territories of Serbs, who lived in Croatia and Bosnia during the war. After 1945, Yugoslavia came under the control of a communist dictator, Josip Broz Tito. For decades, Tito ran Yugoslavia as a centralized country with six republics. During his reign, he stopped nationalist movements in Croatia and among Muslim Albanians in Kosovo. Tito never healed the ethnic divides in Yugoslavia; he simply suppressed them and pushed them out of view during his control. After his death in 1980, Serbian nationalist leader Slobodan Milosevic ruled for the benefit of Serbs until Yugoslavia was swept up in the winds of change produced by the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Slovenia was the first republic to declare its independence from the rest of the country, followed closely by Croatia and Bosnia.

Serbia, led by Milosevic, tried to force the republics to stay in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. The multiethnic republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was caught in the middle when war broke out between the Croats and Serbs (Fig. 7.38). The Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina were soon attacked by both camps. The term **ethnic cleansing** came into use to describe the ouster of Bosnian Muslims and others from their homes and lands—and sometimes their slaughter. Serbs and Croats also sought to "cleanse" each other's territories. In the midst of war, the Croats and Muslims formed a coalition to fight against the Serbs. More than 2.5 million Bosnians were driven from their homes, and hundreds of thousands were injured or killed. Atrocities became so rampant that other countries

agreed to form a war crimes tribunal while the war was ongoing.

The international community belatedly became involved, and a partition plan was put in place. New countries joined the United Nations: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The plan divided Bosnia and Herzegovina into two republics: one for Croats and Muslims and one for Serbs. The future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is quite uncertain. The central government has little power, and the wounds of war are still raw. The long line dividing the two republics was secured by 60,000 NATO peacekeepers from Europe and the United States, but oversight has now been transferred to a European Union force (Fig. 7.39).

In 2003, the name Yugoslavia disappeared from the maps and was replaced by the name Serbia and Montenegro for the former Yugoslavia. The splintering of the Balkan Peninsula continued in 2006 when Montenegro voted for independence in a referendum. The United States and the European Union recognized Montenegro's statehood, and in the same year, Montenegro joined the United Nations.

A final development of significance began to unfold in the second half of the 1990s, when a group of ethnically Albanian Muslims in Kosovo (an autonomous region in southwestern Serbia) demanded autonomy. The Serbian leadership responded with a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Kosovo Albanians in 1999. They razed whole villages, drove out people in great numbers, and killed many. The international community was once again slow to intervene. This time the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led by the United States, initiated a bombing campaign against Serbia that brought hostilities to a halt and paved the way for the introduction of a peacekeeping force. After failed attempts to reach a negotiated agreement on independence, in 2008 the Kosovars unilaterally declared the founding of the new independent state of Kosovo. Many countries, including the United States, recognized the new state, but others—notably Russia, and of course, Serbia—did not.

Northern Ireland

A number of western European countries, as well as Canada and the United States, have large Catholic communities and large Protestant communities, and often these are reflected in the regional distribution of the population. In most places, the split between these two sects of Christianity creates little if any rift today. The most notable exception is Northern Ireland.

Today Northern Ireland and Great Britain (which includes England, Scotland, and Wales) form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK). This was not always the case. For centuries, the island of

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

POPULATION
Under 50,000
50,000–250,000
250,000–1,000,000
1,000,000–5,000,000

Railroad   Road
National capitals are underlined.

Albanians   Muslims
Bulgarians   Serbs
Croats   Slovaks
Hungarians   Slovenes
Macedonians   No majority
Montenegrins

0   50   100 Kilometers
0   25   50 Miles

Figure 7.38

The Former Yugoslavia. This map shows the generalized distribution of ethnic groups in Yugoslavia before the war. *Adapted with permission from*: Office of the Geographer of the United States Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1991.

Ireland was its own entity, marked by a mixture of Celtic religious practices and Roman Catholicism. As early as the 1200s, the English began to infiltrate the island of Ireland, taking control of its agricultural economy. Colonization began in the sixteenth century, and by 1700, Britain controlled the entire island. During the 1800s, the Irish colony produced industrial wealth for Britain in the shipyards of the north. Protestants from the island of Great Britain (primarily Scotland) migrated to Ireland during the 1600s and 1700s to control the farms. During the 1700s, Protestants migrated particularly to Northern Ireland to take advantage of the political and economic power granted to them in the colony. During the 1800s, migrants were drawn to northeastern Ireland where industrial jobs and opportunities were greatest. During the colonial period, the British treated the Irish Catholics harshly, taking away their lands, depriving them of their legal right to own property or participate in government, and regarding them as second-class citizens.

Figure 7.39

Bosnia and Herzegovina. The map shows the Muslim-Croat Federation, the Serb Republic, and the Dayton Accord partition line.   © H. J. de Blij, Power of Place.

In the late 1800s, Irish Catholics began reinvigorating their Celtic and Irish traditions; this strengthening of their identity fortified their resolve against the British. In the early 1900s, the Catholic Irish rebelled against British colonialism. In 1922, Britain partitioned Ireland to protect the Protestants in the northeast. Twenty-six counties formed the Republic of Ireland, with a vast Irish Catholic majority. And the six counties of the north voted to form Northern Ireland, which became part of the United Kingdom. The six counties that compose Northern Ireland are home to both Catholics and Protestants (Fig. 7.40). The substantial Catholic minority in Northern Ireland felt unprotected as part of the United Kingdom.

The Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, constituting about two-thirds of the total population (about 1.6 million), possessed most of the economic and political advantages. As time went on, economic stagnation for both populations worsened the situation, and the Catholics in particular felt they were being repressed. Charges of discrimination and repression of Catholics were underscored by Irish Republican Army (IRA) terrorist acts, bringing British troops into the area in 1968. Although the Republic of Ireland was sensitive to the plight of Catholics in the North, no official help was extended to those who were engaging in violence.

Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland segregated their lives and homes from one another. The cultural landscape marks the religious conflict, as each group clusters in its own neighborhoods and celebrates either impor-

tant Catholic or Protestant dates (see Fig. 6.11). Irish geographer Frederick Boal wrote a seminal 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 in their rounds of daily activity. Boal found that each group traveled longer distances to shop in grocery stores tagged as their respective religion, walked further to catch a bus in a neighborhood belonging to their own religion, gave their neighborhood different toponyms, read different newspapers, and cheered for different football (soccer) teams.

The ongoing conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland made little sense to either Protestants or Catholics who live outside of this region in peace. Although religion is the tag-line by which we refer to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the conflict is much more about economics, oppression, access to opportunities, terror, civil rights, and political influence. But religion and religious history are the banners beneath which the opposing sides march, and church and cathedral have become symbols of strife rather than peace.

In the 1990s, Boal updated his study of Northern Ireland and found hope for a resolution. Boal found that religious identities were actually lessening in intensity among the younger generation and among the more educated. In Belfast, the major city in Northern Ireland, Catholics and
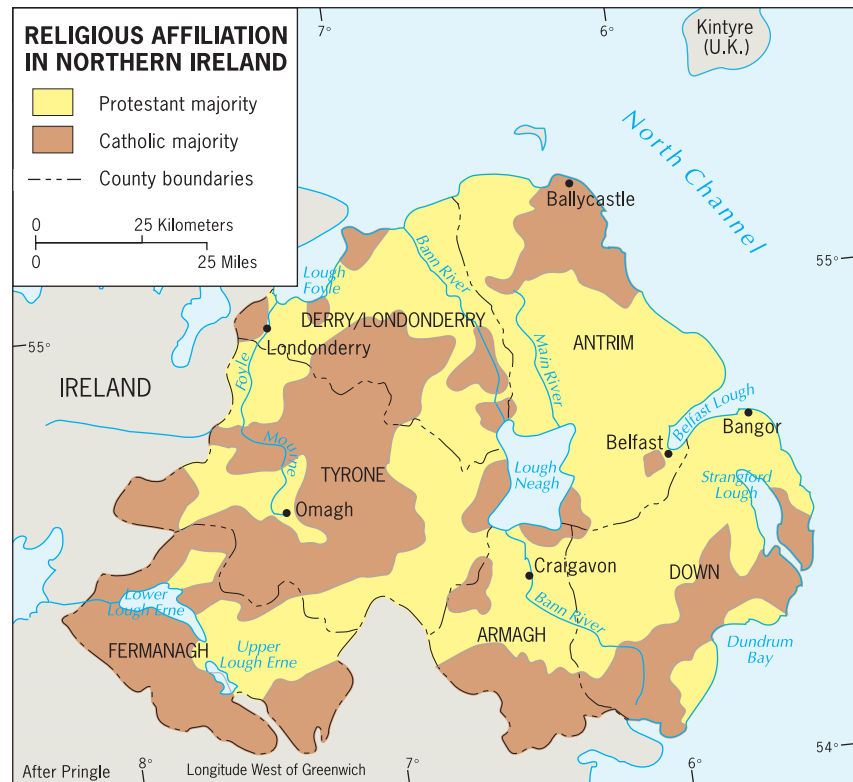
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND
- Protestant majority
- Catholic majority
- County boundaries

■ **Figure 7.40**
Religious Affiliation in Northern Ireland. Areas of Catholic and Protestant majorities are scattered throughout Northern Ireland. *Adapted with permission from*: D. G. Pringle, *One Island, Two Nations?* Letchworth: Research Studies Press/Wiley, 1985, p. 21.

Protestants are now intermixing in spaces such as downtown clubs, shopping centers, and college campuses.

Boal's observations were right, and a movement toward resolution among the population along with the British government's support for devolution (see Chapter 8) helped fuel the April 1998 adoption of an Anglo-Irish peace agreement known as the Belfast Agreement & Good Friday Agreement, which raised hopes of a new period of peace in Northern Ireland. Following a decade of one step back and two steps back toward peace, Northern Ireland finally realized a tenuous peace in 2007 when the Northern Ireland Assembly (Parliament) was reinstated. Yet the conflict has not gone away. While some of the younger generation may be mixing socially, more "peace walls" (giant barriers between Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods) have been constructed since the signing of the Belfast agreement—raising concerns that segregation may be increasing.

Religious Fundamentalism and Extremism

Today, throughout the world, religious leaders and millions of their followers are seeking to return to the basics of their faith. The drive toward **religious fundamentalism** is often born out of frustration over the perceived breakdown of society's mores and values, lack of religious authority, failure to achieve economic goals, loss of a sense of local control, or a sense of violation of a religion's core territory. Regardless of the religion, a fundamentalist group holds its religious beliefs as nonnegotiable and uncompromising.

People in one society often fear fundamentalism in other societies without recognizing it in their own. In fact, what many call fundamentalism is sometimes better defined as extremism. **Religious extremism** is fundamentalism carried to the point of violence. The attacks on the United States in September 2001 reinforced the tendency of many Americans to equate extremism with Islam. Yet Christian extremism is also a potent force, as witnessed in the United States when religious zealots kill physicians who perform legal abortions. Fundamentalists can be extremists, but by no means are all fundamentalists, whether Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or any other religion, extremists.

Today the forces of globalization affect religions. Education, radio, television, and travel have diffused notions of individual liberties, sexual equality, and freedom of choice—but also consumerism and secularism. In the process, the extent of cultural diffusion and innovation has accelerated. Some churches have managed to change with the times, allowing women to serve as priests and homosexuals to marry, and generally liberalizing their doctrines. Others have gone in the opposite direction, reaffirming fundamental or literalist interpretations of religious texts and trying to block modern influences and external cultural interference.

Christianity

The Roman Catholic Church has long resisted innovations deemed incompatible with the fundamentals of the faith. Among the issues giving rise to disputes are birth control,

family planning, and the role of women in the religious bureaucracy. The major religions tend to be male-dominated, and few women have managed to enter the hierarchy. This is true in the Roman Catholic Church, where 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, affecting policies in numerous places and on many topics. For example, the Roman Catholic Church preaches against the use of artificial means of birth control as well as abortion. During the September 1994 United Nations Conference on Population and Development, the Roman Catholic Church sought to ally itself with Islamic countries against advocates of population control.

In the United States, certain sects of the Catholic Church continue to hold Mass in Latin and are much more fundamentalist than the rest of the Church. Some of these sects are part of the Catholic Church and continue to operate within the purview of the Church. Others stand apart from the Catholic Church and do not recognize the pope, nor does the Vatican sanction them. For example, actor/director Mel Gibson belongs to the Holy Family Church, which does not recognize the pope, and the Vatican does not recognize that church as part of the Catholic Church. Gibson's church is most associated with the *Traditionalist Catholic Movement*, a fundamentalist

movement that believes the Mass should still be conducted in Latin and that modern popes and clergy are not following the traditional theology and practices of the Church.

In the United States, Christian fundamentalism is also associated with Protestant faiths. 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. Regardless of the size of the congregation, fundamentalist Protestant churches have become increasingly active in political and social arenas—arguing for prayer in public schools, the teaching of creationism in science courses, a strict ban on abortion, and the adoption of laws outlawing gay marriage (Fig. 7.41). In the process, they have gained considerable influence, especially in local politics (school boards and city councils).

Judaism

Like all other major religions, Judaism has fundamentalist sects. The most fundamentalist of the three major sects of Judaism is Orthodox. Yet, the Orthodox sect is divided into several different schools of thought, teachings, and

Figure 7.41

Gay Marriage in the United States.   Data from: BBC, map: Gay marriage across the US. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/35 16 551.stmlastaccessed: September 2008.
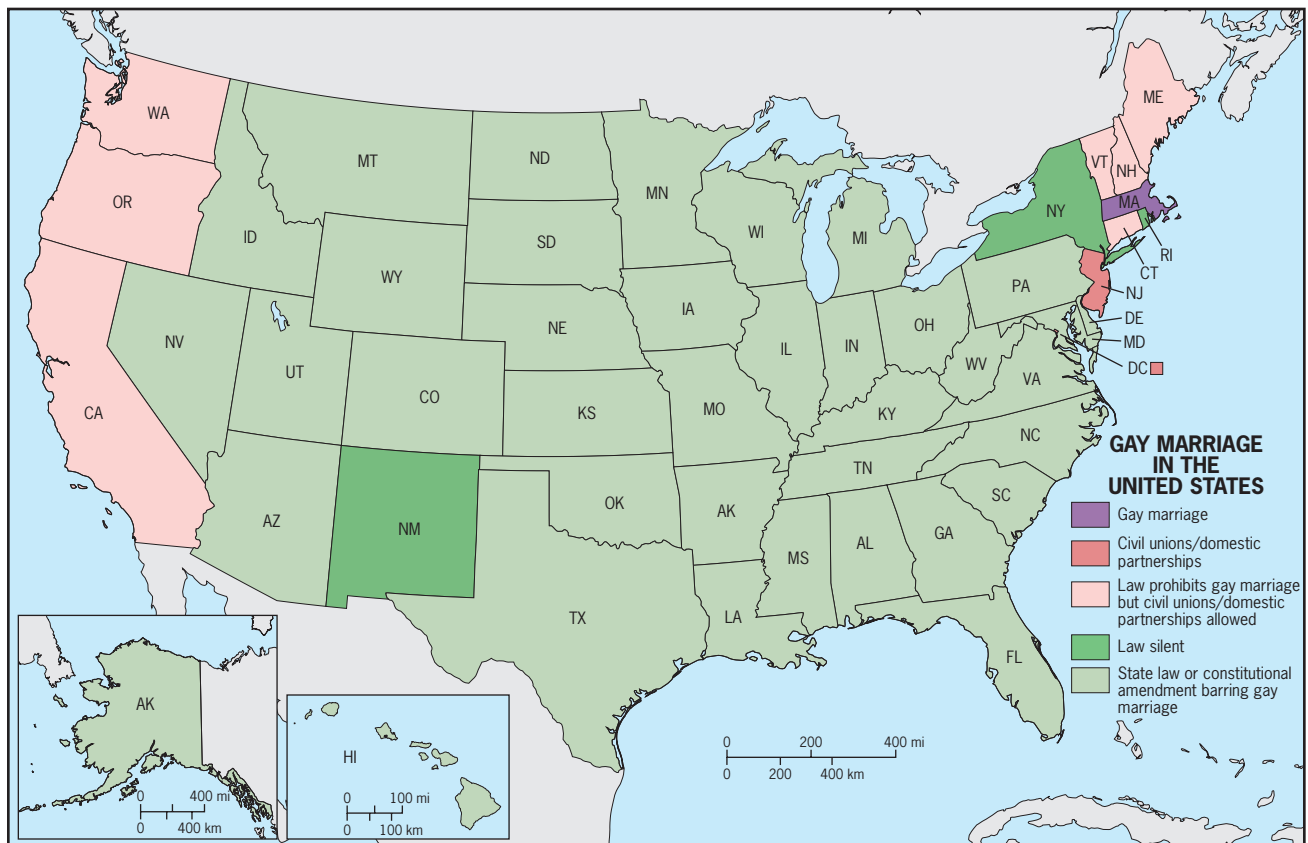
synagogues. Much diversity exists among Orthodox Jews, with varying views on Israel, education, and interaction with non-Orthodox Jews. Fundamentalist Jews who have migrated to Israel tend to vote for more conservative candidates in Israeli elections, affecting election outcomes. Similarly, some fundamentalist Jews who remain in Europe or North America send money to certain politicians in Israel in support of policies such as Israeli settlements on the West Bank.

Judaism also has its extremist element—people whom the majority of Jews denounce and whom the government of Israel has even banned from the country. Among the Jewish extremist groups is the 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 or Kahane Chai are suspected in several terrorist acts in Isreal.

Islam

Other major faiths must also confront the pressures of change. Not all Muslim communities, for example, adhere precisely to the rules of the Qu'ran prohibiting the use of alcohol. The laws of Islam, which (like some other religions) are very strict when interpreted literally, are not applied with equal force throughout the Muslim world. Such inconsistency, along with concerns over external influence, produces a reaction, not only in the religious bureaucracies but also among many believers.

One sign of the growth of Islamic fundamentalism is the expansion of Islam's **Shari'a laws**. Shari'a laws, especially the criminal code, are harsh, prescribing, for instance, the amputation of hands or limbs for theft. Northern Nigeria and northern Sudan both impose Shari'a laws in their criminal courts. In Malaysia, Chinese and other non-Muslim minorities reacted fearfully when the government considered demands for the general application of Shari'a law. In Indonesia, a fundamentalist drive by Islamic preachers has found fertile soil, especially among rural people who remain remote from the changes affecting Indonesian society elsewhere.

As with Christian fundamentalism, countering Muslim fundamentalism entails political risks. When the former Shah of Iran tried to limit the power of the imams as he sought to integrate the state into the wider global economy, he provoked a religious movement that contributed to his overthrow. (His overthrow in 1979 was also tied to the autocratic regime he headed, which fostered much opposition.) During the revolution in Iran, the imams imposed the most basic of Shi'ite religious rules and practices upon their followers. After the Shah was replaced by an ayatollah, a supreme religious leader, those rules and practices became law. Women, who had acquired greater freedoms under the Shah's regime, faced new restrictions. The government arrested women who had adopted Western modes of dress and required them to wear hijab, veils, and long robes. Many lost positions in commerce and administration, and their political influence declined.

What happened in Iran during the 1970s and 1980s was one of the significant early manifestations of the trend toward fundamentalism. Since then, the government of Iran has used fundamentalism to keep its grip on power. In 2008, the Islamic government of Iran banned all Iranian celebrities (actors and athletes) from appearing in commercials or other advertisements. Prior to September 11, the growth of a different fundamentalist movement, the Taliban in Afghanistan, provided a particularly striking example of how quickly a fundamentalist government can use extremism to change a place. 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, including the destruction of the World Trade Towers, the attack on the Pentagon, and the downing of Flight 93 on September 11, 2001 (Fig. 7.42). Bin Laden and his followers are a product of a revolutionary Islamic movement that now sees the West as a great enemy and one that Muslims must oppose. The beliefs of bin Laden and his associates 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*, which developed in the eighteenth century in opposition to what was seen as sacrilegious practices on the part of Ottoman rulers. The champions of the opposition movement called for a return to a purportedly pure variant of Islam from centuries earlier. The Saudi Arabian state is the hearth of Wahhabi Islam today, as the Saudi Royal family has championed Wahhabi Islam since the 1800s. Saudis fund Wahhabi Islamic schools, called madrasses, around the world.

A variety of forces have fueled the violent path on which the Wahhabi extremist movement has embarked, but some of these forces are unambiguously 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. Of particular concern to Islamic extremists are the presence of American military and business interests in the Arabian Peninsula, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the support European and American governments have given Israel. A principal goal of the movement is to bring an end to what are seen as improper territorial incursions. A second geographically related concern of Wahhabi extremists is the

Figure 7.42
New York, New York. On September 11, 2001, with the north tower of the World Trade Center already burning, hijacked United Airlines flight 175 flew toward the south tower of the World Trade Center. © CNN via Getty Images News and Sport Services.

diffusion of modern culture and technology and its impact on traditional lifestyles and spiritual practices. Ridding the Islamic world of such influences is also a major goal.

Islamic fundamentalists who have resorted to violence in pursuit of their cause (thereby becoming extremists) are relatively small in number. Yet one of the critical contemporary issues is the extent to which they can or will attract widespread support throughout the Islamic world. The potential for such support is greatest among those who feel that they are the losers in the contemporary global economic order and who feel their cultures are fundamentally threatened. By extension, a key to avoiding the division of the world into mutually antagonistic religious realms is to promote an atmosphere in which such feelings do not become widespread. This, in turn, suggests the importance of non-Islamic cultures conveying an under- standing of the gap between mainstream and fundamentalist Islam, and supporting the economic and political efforts of genuinely democratic forces in Islamic countries.

Boal's studies in Northern Ireland demonstrate that solving a religious conflict is typically not about theology; it is about identity. You are assigned the potentially Nobel Prize–winning task of "solving" the conflict either in Northern Ireland or in Israel and Palestine. Using Boal's example, determine how you can alter activity spaces and change identities to create the conditions for long-lasting peace in this conflict zone.

Summary

Religion is a major force in shaping and changing culture. The major world religions today all stem from an area of Eurasia stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to China. Major world religions are distributed regionally, with Hinduism in India; Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, and Chinese philosophies in East and Southeast Asia; Islam reaching across North Africa, through the Middle East and into Southeast Asia; Shamanist religions mainly in Subsaharan Africa; and Christianity in Europe, Western

Asia, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand. Judaism, another major world religion, is not as concentrated. Today, Judaism has a base in Israel and has adherents scattered throughout Europe and the Americas.

As the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., made clear, religious beliefs can drive people to extremist behaviors. On a day-to-day basis, however, religion more typically drives cultures—shaping how people behave, how people perceive the behaviors of others, and how people across place, scale, and time interact with each other.

Geographic Concepts

religion	Confucianism	secularism
secularism	Judaism	pilgrimage
monotheistic religion	diaspora	sacred sites
polytheistic religion	Zionism	minarets
animistic religion	Christianity	hajj
universalizing religion	Eastern Orthodox Church	interfaith boundaries
ethnic religion	Roman Catholic Church	intrafaith boundaries
Hinduism	Protestant	ethnic cleansing
caste system	Islam	activity space
Buddhism	Sunni	relgious fundamentalism
Shintoism	Shi'ite	religious extremism
Taoism	indigenous religions	shari'a laws
Feng Shui	Shamanism	jihad

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