

KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Religions Distributed?

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

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

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

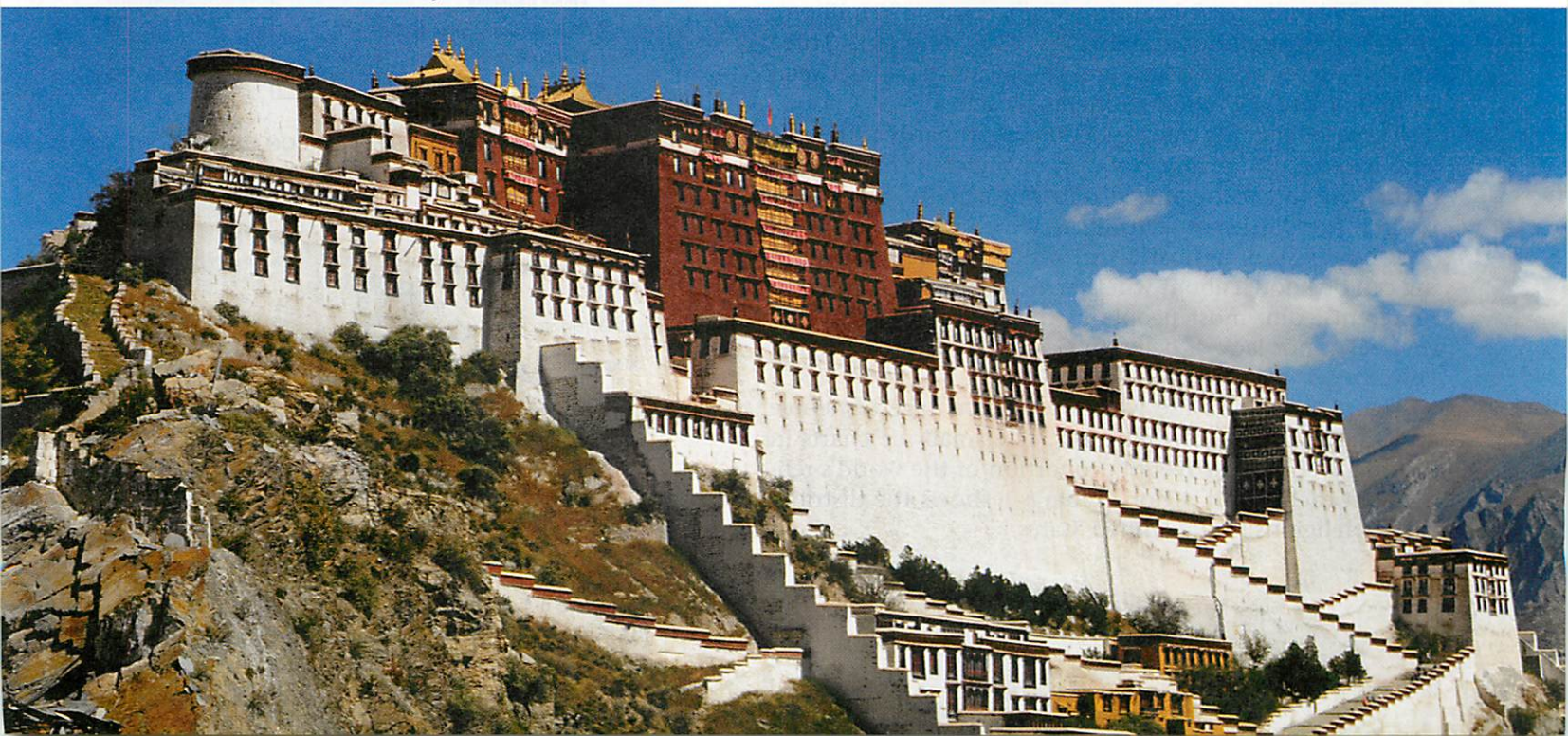
▼ **FIGURE 6-2 POTALA PALACE, LHASA, TIBET** Dalai Lamas lived in the palace from 1649 until 1959, when the fourteenth Dalai Lama was forced to migrate.

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

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

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

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



Distribution of Religions

Learning Outcome 6.1.1

Describe the distribution of the major religions.

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

Geographers distinguish two types of religions:

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

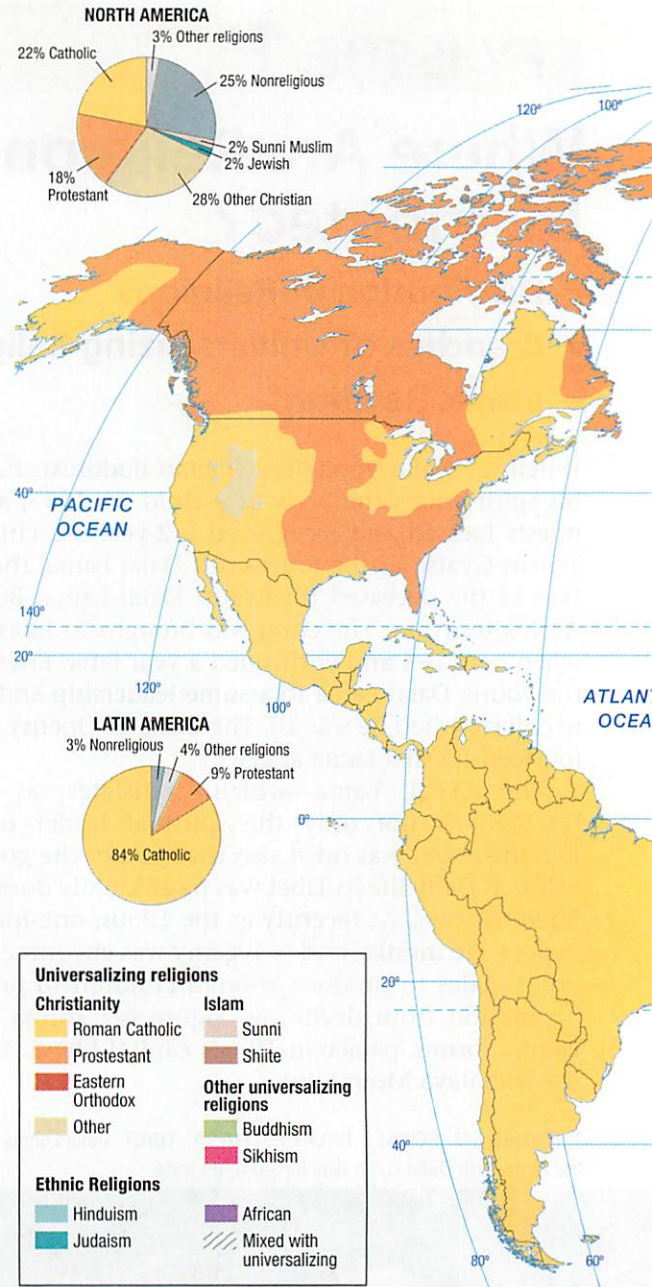
Statistics on the number of followers of religions can be controversial. No official count of religious membership is taken in the United States or in many other countries. Most statistics in this chapter come from Adherents.com, an organization not affiliated with any religion. According to Adherents.com,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

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

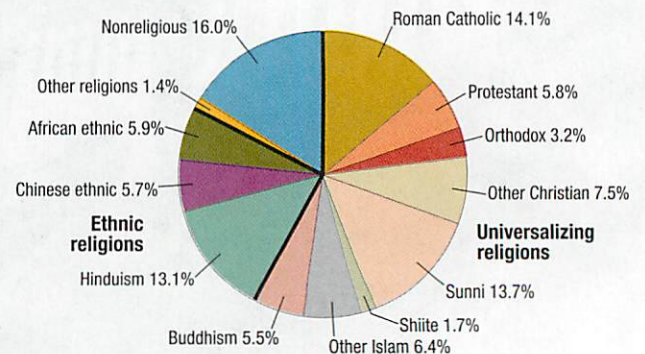
Hinduism is the ethnic religion with by far the largest number of adherents—900 million. Three other ethnic religions have at least 100 million adherents: Chinese traditional (394 million), Asian primal-indigenous (300 million), and African traditional religions (100 million). Three others—Juchte, Spiritism,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

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

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



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



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

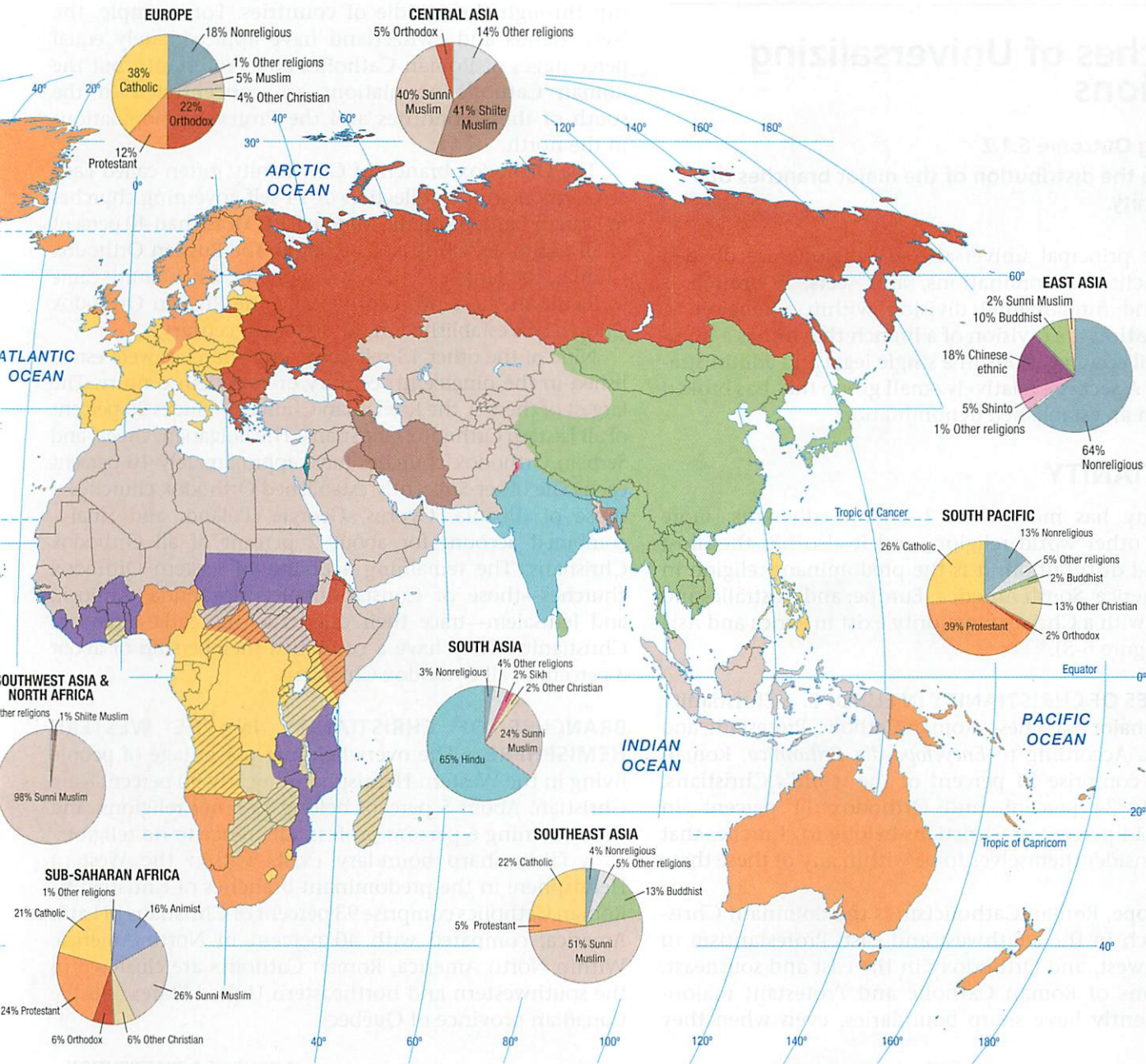


TABLE 6.1 RELIGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

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

Learning Outcome 6.1.2

Describe the distribution of the major branches of Christianity.

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

CHRISTIANITY

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

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

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

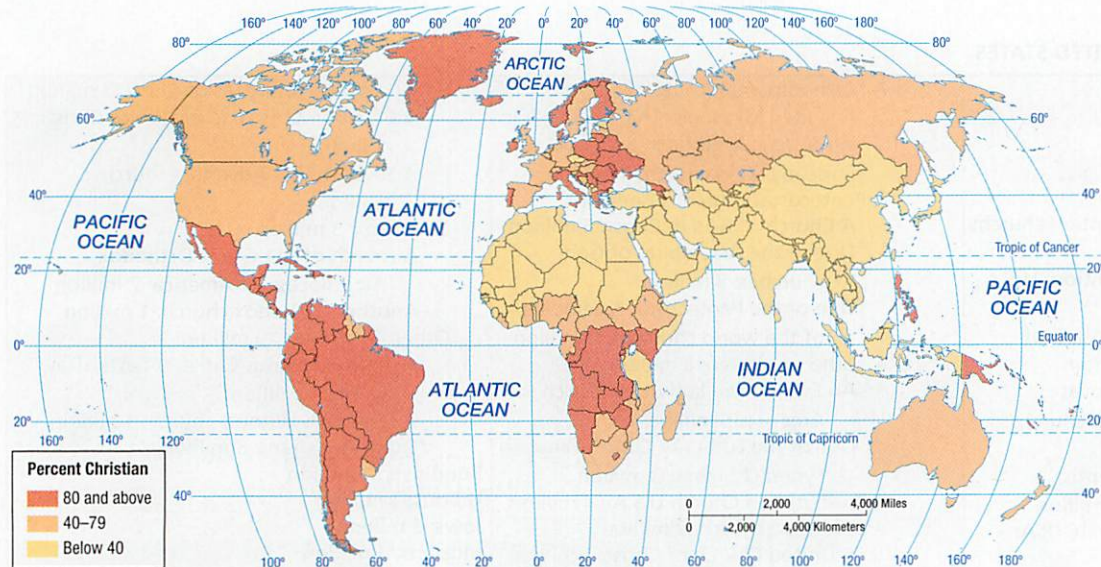
run through the middle of countries. For example, the Netherlands and Switzerland have approximately equal percentages of Roman Catholics and Protestants, but the Roman Catholic populations are concentrated in the south of these countries and the Protestant populations in the north.

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

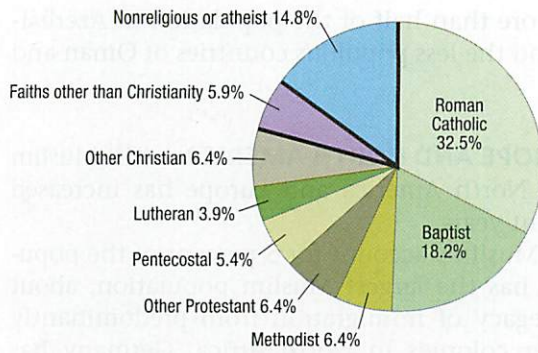
Nine of the other 13 self-governing churches were established in the nineteenth century or twentieth century. The largest of these 9, the Romanian Church, includes 20 percent of all Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian Orthodox churches have approximately 10 percent each. The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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

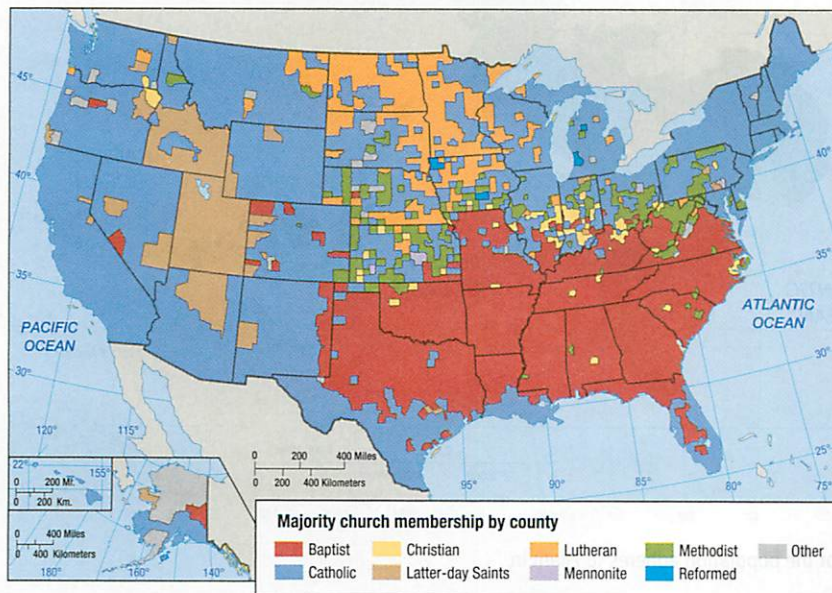
The Armenian Church originated in Antioch, Syria, and was important in diffusing Christianity to South Asia and East Asia between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. The church's few present-day adherents are concentrated in Lebanon and Armenia, as well as in northeastern Turkey and western Azerbaijan.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

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

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

Pause and Reflect 6.1.2

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



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

ISLAM

Learning Outcome 6.1.3

Identify the major branches of Islam and Buddhism.

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

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

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

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

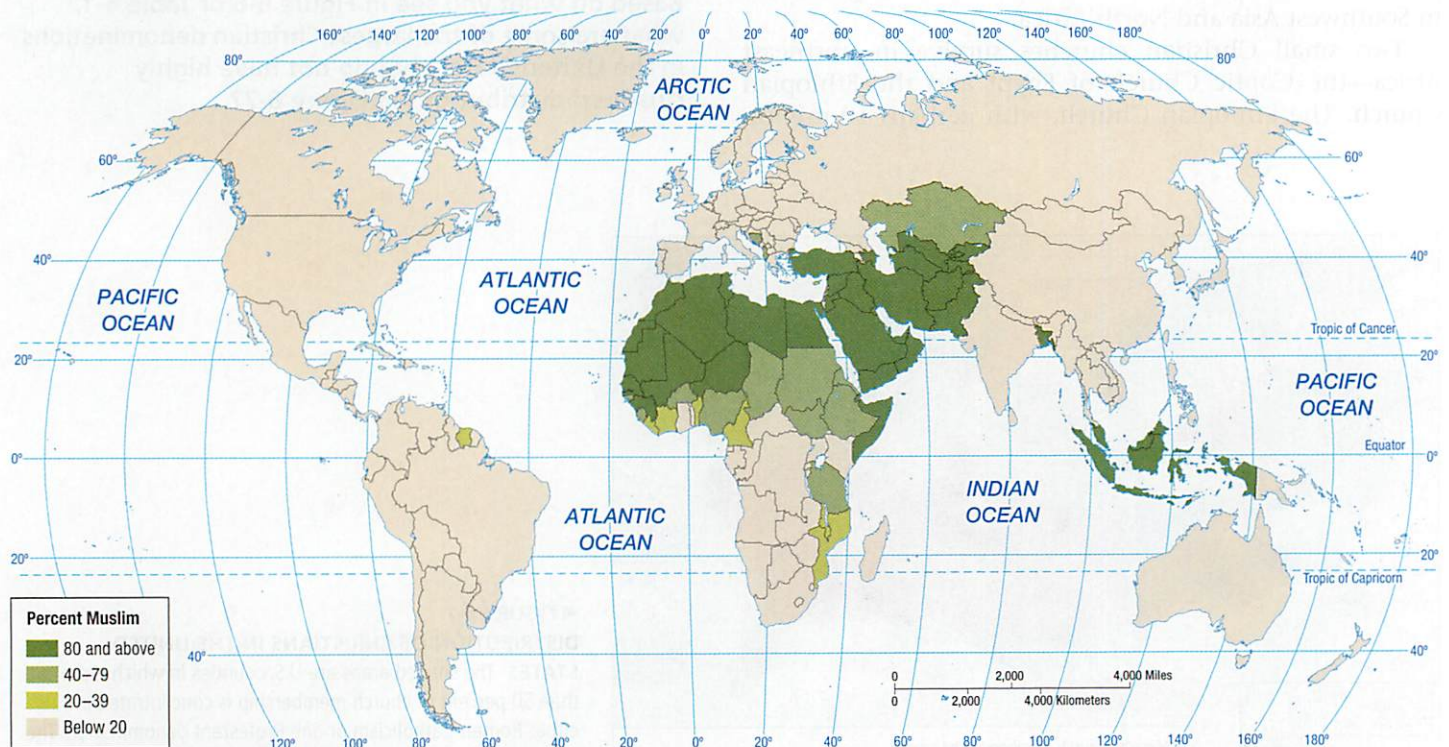
Iran and more than half of the population in Azerbaijan, Iraq, and the less populous countries of Oman and Bahrain.

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

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

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

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



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

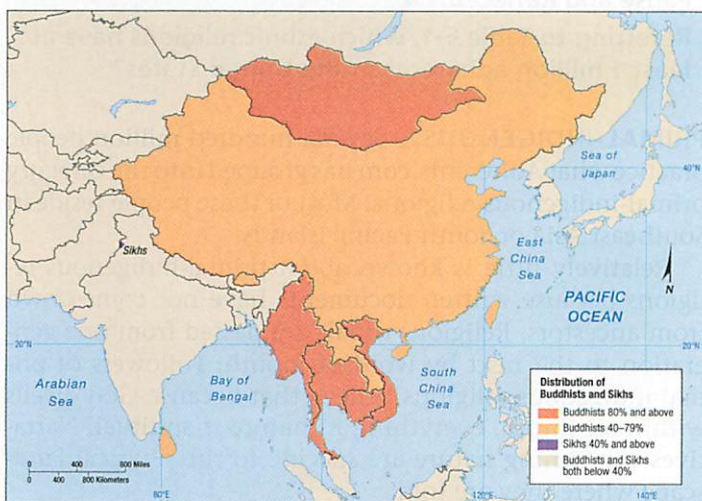
Black Muslims lived austere and advocated a separate autonomous nation within the United States for their adherents. Tension between Muhammad and a Black Muslim minister, Malcolm X, divided the sect during the 1960s. After a pilgrimage to Makkah in 1963, Malcolm X converted to orthodox Islam and founded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

BUDDHISM

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

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

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



▲ FIGURE 6-9 DISTRIBUTION OF BUDDHISTS AND SIKHS

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

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

OTHER UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

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

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

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

Pause and Reflect 6.1.3

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

Ethnic Religions

Learning Outcome 6.1.4

Describe the distribution of the largest ethnic religions.

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

HINDUISM

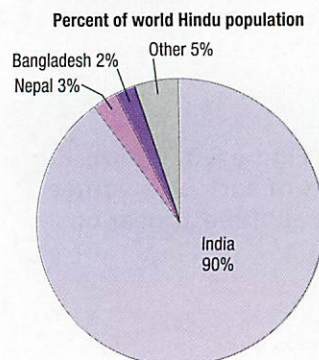
Hinduism is the world's third-largest religion, with 900 million adherents, but 90 percent of Hindus are concentrated in one country, India, and most of the remainder can be found in India's neighbors Bangladesh and Nepal. Hindus comprise more than 80 percent of the population of India and Nepal, about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

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

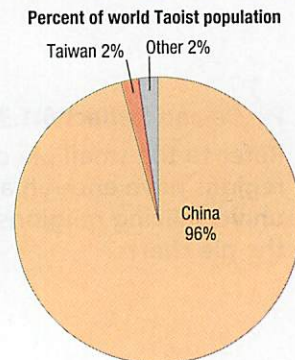
OTHER ASIAN ETHNIC RELIGIONS

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

Pause and Reflect 6.1.4

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

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

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

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

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

OTHER ETHNIC RELIGIONS

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

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

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

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

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

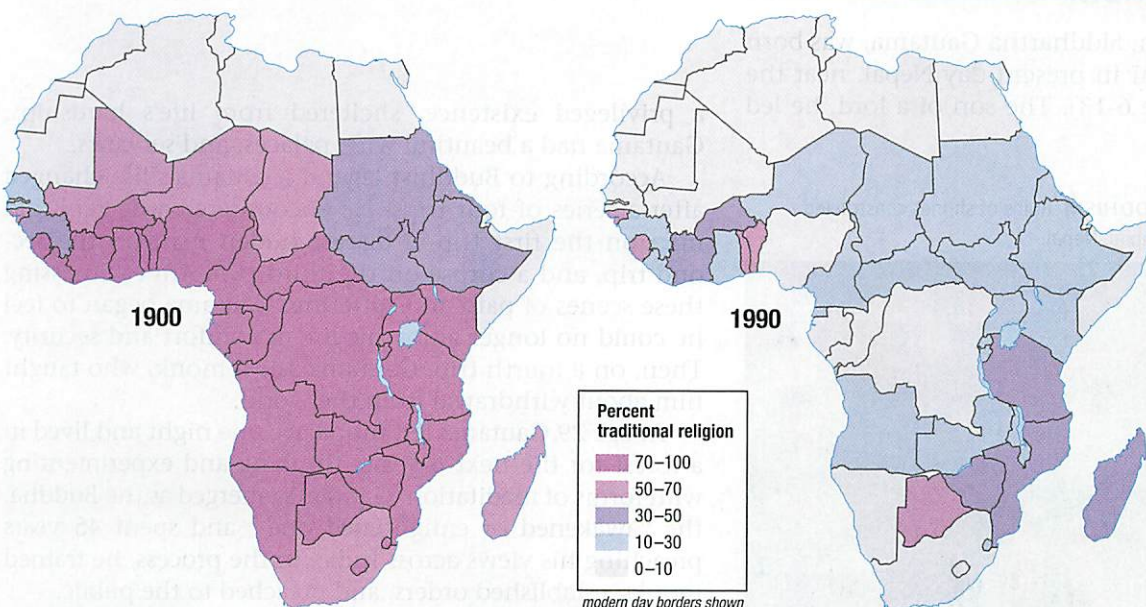
JUDAISM. Roughly two-fifths of the world’s 14 million Jews live in the United States and another two-fifths in Israel. The name *Judaism* derives from Judah, one of the patriarch Jacob’s 12 sons; Israel is another biblical name for Jacob. The Bible recounts the ancient history of the Jewish people. Judaism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

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

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Religions Distributed?

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



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