

KEY ISSUE 2

Why Do Religions Have Different Distributions?

- Origin of Religions
- Diffusion of Religions

Learning Outcome 6.2.1

Describe the origin of universalizing religions.

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

Origin of Religions

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

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

ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM

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

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



CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC TOOLS

Counting Religious Adherents

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

In Canada, for example, the census asks:

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

- Specify one denomination or religion only _____
- No religion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

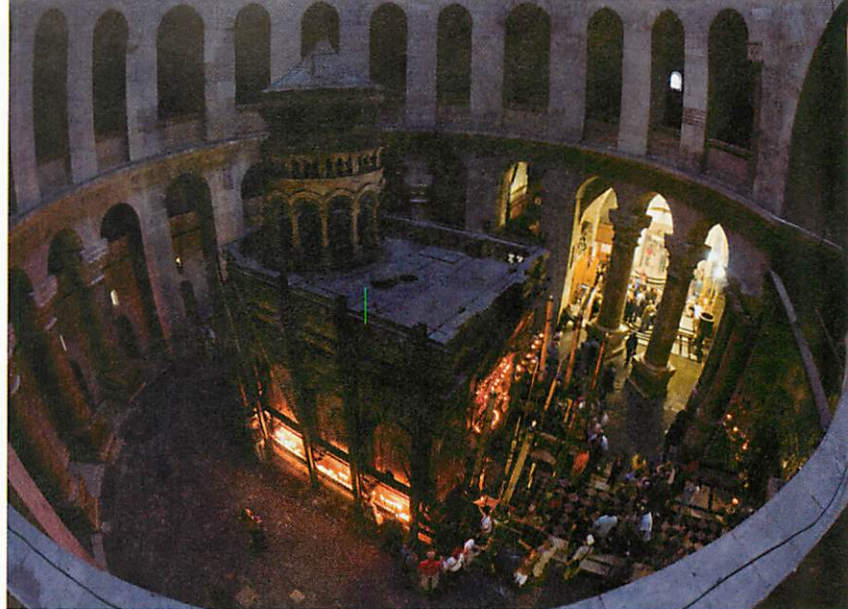
MAHAYANA BUDDHISM. Mahayana split from Theravada Buddhism about 2,000 years ago. *Mahayana* is translated as the great vehicle, and Mahayanists call Theravada Buddhism by the name *Hinayana*, or the inferior vehicle. Mahayanists claim that their approach to Buddhism can help more people because it is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

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

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

ORIGIN OF ISLAM

Learning Outcome 6.2.2

Understand differences in the origin of universalizing and ethnic religions.

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

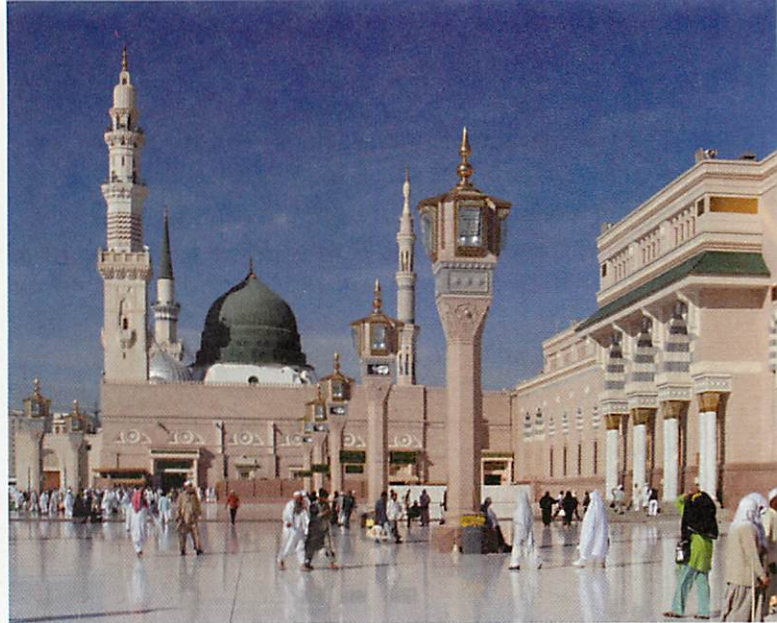
1. *Shahadah*, which means frequent recitation that there is no god worthy of worship except the one God, the source of all creation, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.
2. *Salat*, which means that five times daily, a Muslim prays, facing the city of Makkah (Mecca), as a direct link to God.
3. *Zakat*,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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORIGIN OF OTHER UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

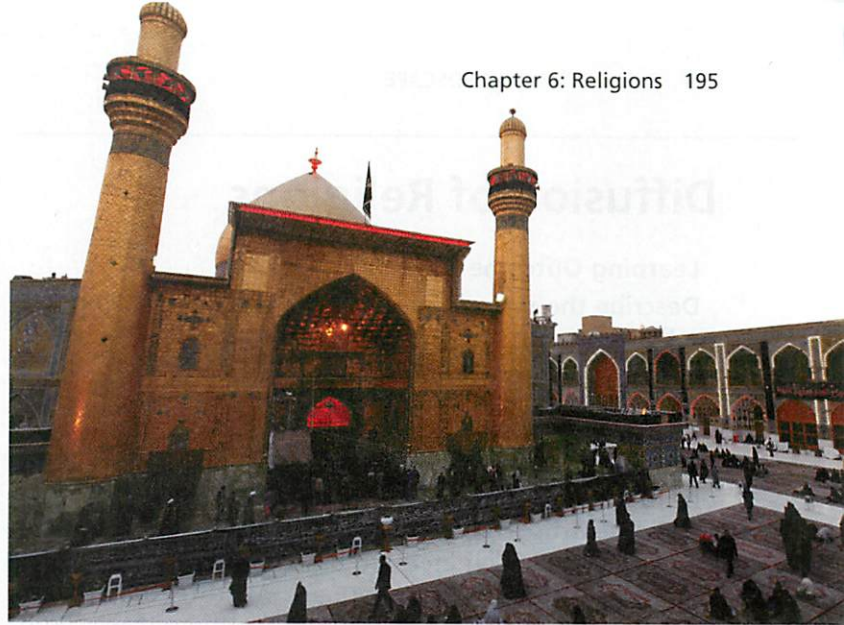
Sikhism and Bahá'í were founded more recently than the three large universalizing religions. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, traveled widely through South Asia around 500 years ago, preaching his new faith, and many people became his *Sikhs*, which is the Hindi word for “disciples.” Nine other gurus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

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

UNKNOWN ORIGIN OF HINDUISM

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

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



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

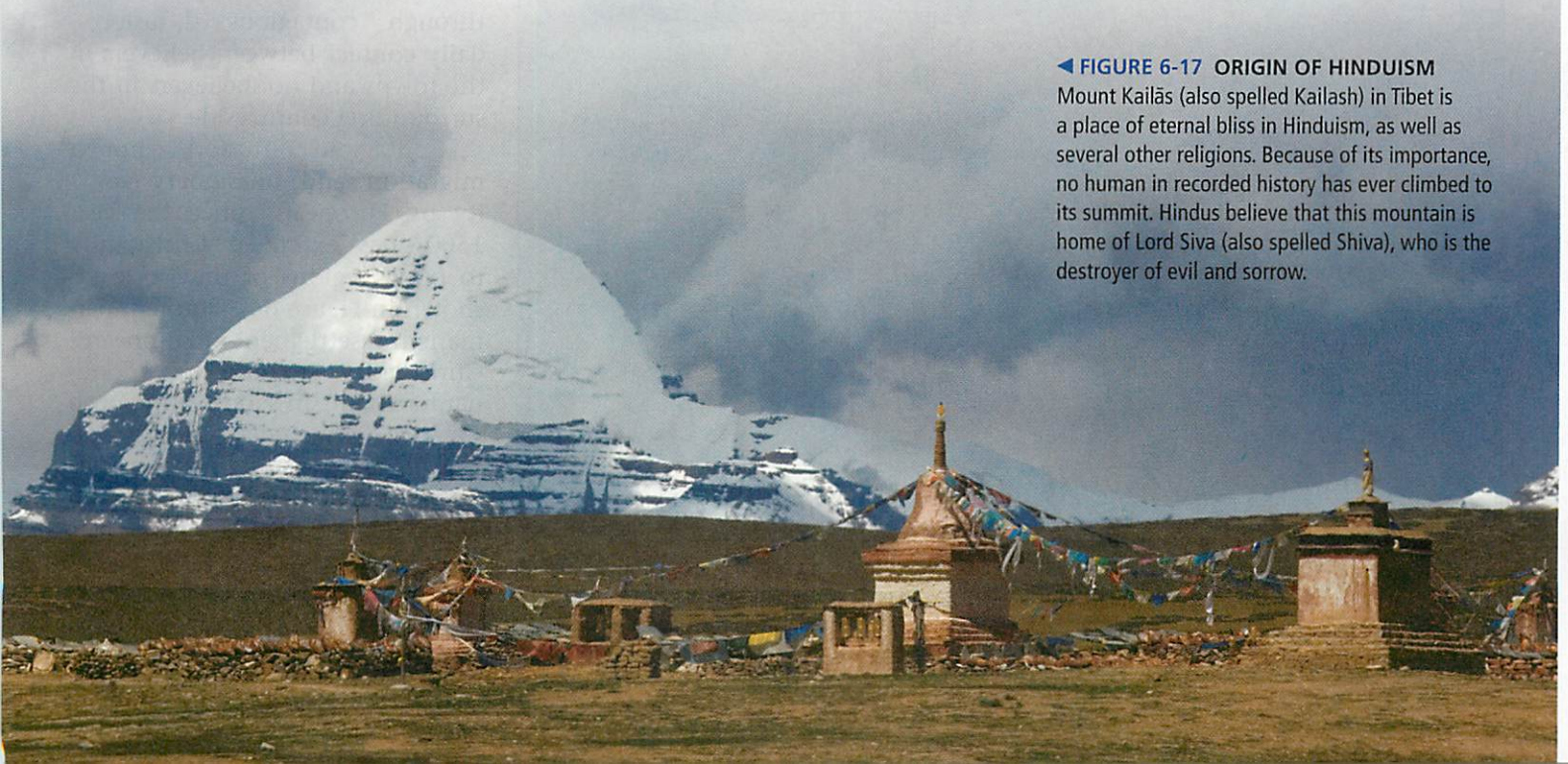
surviving Hindu documents were written around 1500 B.C., although archaeological explorations have unearthed objects relating to the religion from 2500 B.C. Aryan tribes from Central Asia invaded India about 1400 B.C. and brought with them Indo-European languages, as discussed in Chapter 5. In addition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

Pause and Reflect 6.2.2

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

◀ **FIGURE 6-17 ORIGIN OF HINDUISM**

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



Diffusion of Religions

Learning Outcome 6.2.3

Describe the process of diffusion of universalizing religions.

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

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

DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY

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

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

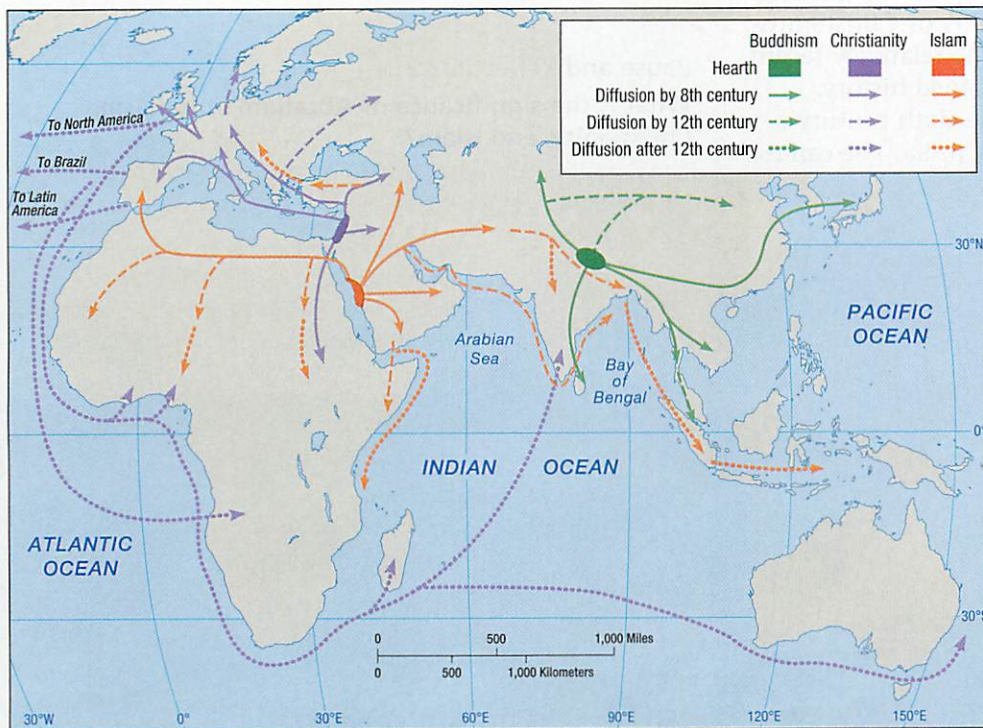
expansion (diffusion through a snowballing effect). Within expansion diffusion, we distinguished between hierarchical diffusion (diffusion through key leaders) and contagious diffusion (widespread diffusion). Christianity diffused through a combination of these forms of diffusion.

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

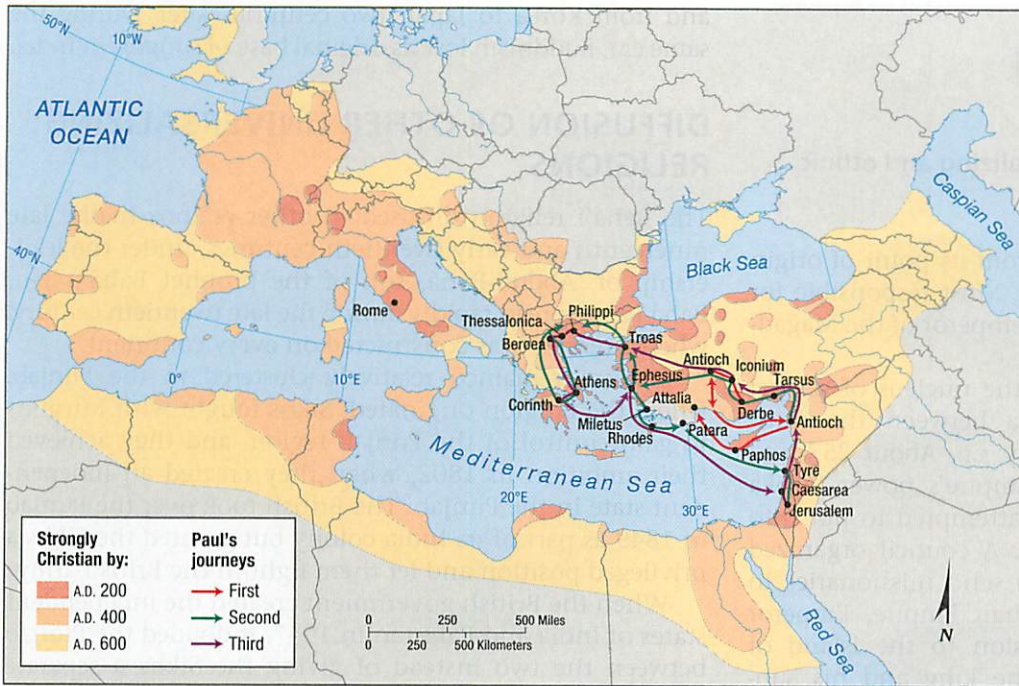
RELOCATION DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY. Christianity first diffused from its hearth in Judea through relocation diffusion. **Missionaries**—individuals who help to transmit a universalizing religion through relocation diffusion—carried the teachings of Jesus along the Roman Empire's protected sea routes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

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

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



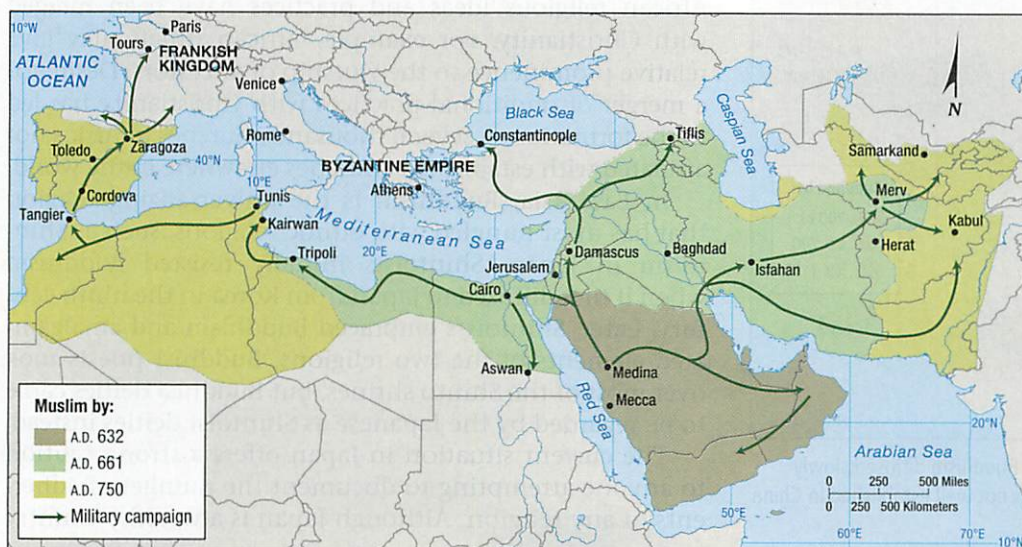
▲ **FIGURE 6-18 DIFFUSION OF UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS** Buddhism's hearth is in present-day Nepal and northern India, Christianity's in present-day Israel, and Islam's in present-day Saudi Arabia. Buddhism diffused primarily east toward East Asia and Southeast Asia, Christianity west toward Europe, and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



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

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

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



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

DIFFUSION OF ISLAM

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

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

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

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

Pause and Reflect 6.2.3

Does the diffusion of Islam provide a good example of hierarchical diffusion, relocation diffusion, or both?

DIFFUSION OF BUDDHISM

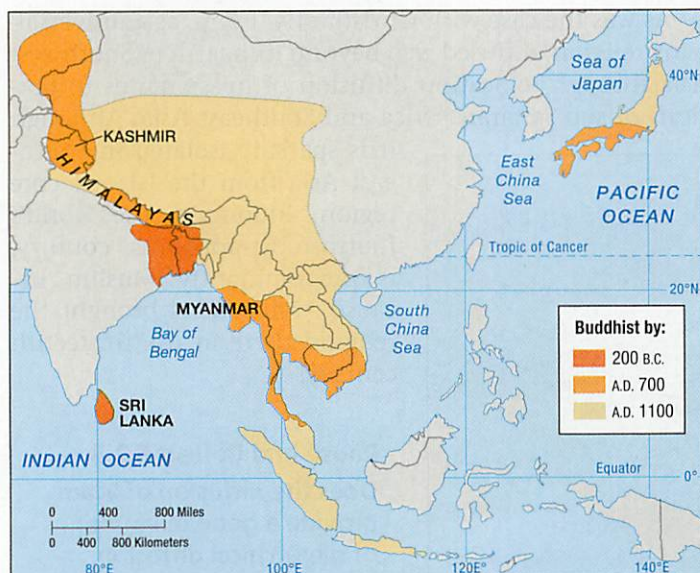
Learning Outcome 6.2.4

Compare the diffusion of universalizing and ethnic religions.

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

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

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



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

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

DIFFUSION OF OTHER UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

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

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

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

LACK OF DIFFUSION OF ETHNIC RELIGIONS

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

MINGLING OF ETHNIC AND UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS.

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

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

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

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

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

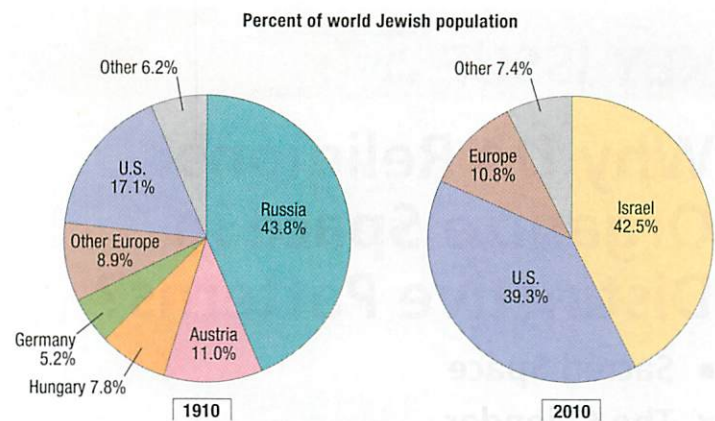
A 2,040-square-kilometer (788-square-mile) island located in the Indian Ocean 800 kilometers (500 miles) east of Madagascar, Mauritius was uninhabited until 1638, so it had no traditional ethnic religion. That year, Dutch settlers arrived to plant sugarcane and naturally brought their religion—Christianity—with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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Pause and Reflect 6.2.4

What country had the largest Jewish population in 1910?

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 2

Why Do Religions Have Different Distributions?

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