

Places of Worship

Church, basilica, mosque, temple, pagoda, and synagogue are familiar names that identify places of worship in various religions. Some religions require a relatively large number of elaborate structures, whereas others have more modest needs.

Christian Churches

The Christian landscape is dominated by a high density of churches. The word *church* derives from a Greek term meaning *lord, master, and power*. *Church* also refers to a gathering of believers, as well as the building where the gathering occurs. The church building plays a more critical role in Christianity than in other religions, in part because the structure is an expression of religious principles, an environment in the image of God, and because attendance at a collective service of worship is considered extremely important. The prominence of churches on the landscape also stems from their style of construction and location. Since Christianity split into many denominations, no single style of church construction has dominated.

Places of Worship in Other Religions. Unlike Christianity, other major religions do not consider their important buildings a sanctified place of worship.

Muslim Mosques. Unlike a church, a *mosque* is not viewed as a sanctified place but rather as a location for the community to gather together for worship. The mosque is organized around a central courtyard, and a distinctive feature of the mosque is the minaret, a tower where a man known as a muzzan summons people to worship.

Hindu Temples. In Asian ethnic and universalizing religions, important religious functions are likely to take place at home within the family. The Hindu temple serves as a home to one or more gods, although a particular god may have more than one temple. Because congregational worship is not part of Hinduism, the temple does not need a large closed interior space filled with seats. The site of the temple may also contain a pool for ritual baths.

(192)

Buddhist and Shintoist Pagodas. The pagoda is a prominent and visually attractive element of the Buddhist and Shintoist landscapes. Pagodas contain relics that Buddhists believe to be a portion of Buddha's body or clothing. Pagodas are not designed for congregational worship.

Bahá'í Houses of Worship. Bahá'ís built seven Houses of Worship dispersed to different continents to dramatize Bahá'í as a universalizing religion, open to adherents of all religions. Services include reciting the scriptures of various religions.

Sacred Space

The impact of religion is clearly seen at several scales. How each religion distributes its elements on the landscape depends on its beliefs.

Disposing of the Dead. A prominent example of religiously inspired arrangement of land at a smaller scale is burial practices.

Burial. Christians, Muslims, and Jews usually bury their dead in a specially designated area called a *cemetery*. After Christianity became legal, Christians buried their dead in the yard around the church. As these burial places became overcrowded, separate burial grounds had to be established. The remains of the dead are customarily aligned in some traditional direction. In congested urban areas, Christians and Muslims have traditionally used cemeteries as public open space. Traditional burial practices in China have removed as much as 10 percent of the land from productive agriculture. Cremation is encouraged instead.

(193)

Other Methods of Disposing of Bodies. Not all faiths bury their dead. Hindus generally practice cremation rather than burial. Cremation was the principal form of disposing of bodies in Europe before Christianity. Motivation for cremation may have originated from unwillingness on the part of nomads to leave their dead behind. Cremation could also free the soul from the body. To strip away unclean portions of the body, Parsis (Zoroastrians) expose the dead to scavenging birds and animals. Tibetan Buddhists also practice exposure for some dead, with cremation reserved for the most exalted priests. Disposal of bodies at sea is used in some parts of Micronesia, but the practice is much less common than in the past.

Religious Settlements. Buildings for worship and burial places are smaller-scale manifestations of religion on the landscape, but there are larger-scale examples: entire settlements. A utopian settlement is an ideal community built around a religious way of life. By 1858 some 130 different utopian settlements had begun in the United States.

Most utopian communities declined in importance or disappeared altogether. Although most colonial settlements were not planned primarily for religious purposes, religious principles affected many of the designs. New England settlers placed the church at the most prominent location in the center of the settlement.

(194)

Religious Place Names. Roman Catholic immigrants frequently have given religious place names, or toponyms, to their settlements in the New World, particularly in Québec and the U.S. Southwest.

Administration of Space

Followers of a universalizing religion must be connected so as to assure communication and consistency of doctrine. Ethnic religions tend not to have organized, central authorities.

Hierarchical Religions. A hierarchical religion has a well-defined geographic structure and organizes territory into local administrative units.

Latter-Day Saints. Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) exercise strong organization of the landscape. The highest authority in the Church frequently redraws ward and stake boundaries in rapidly growing areas to reflect the ideal population standards.

Roman Catholic Hierarchy. The Roman Catholic Church has organized much of Earth's inhabited land into an administrative structure, ultimately accountable to the Pope in Rome. Reporting to the Pope are *archbishops*. Each archbishop heads a *province*, which is a group of several *dioceses*. The archbishop also is bishop of one diocese. Reporting to each archbishop are *bishops*. Each bishop administers a diocese, of which there are several thousand. A diocese in turn is spatially divided into parishes, each headed by a priest, who reports to the bishop.

(195)

Locally Autonomous Religions. Some universalizing religions are highly **autonomous religions**, or self-sufficient, and interaction among communities is confined to little more than loose cooperation and shared ideas. Islam and some Protestant denominations are good examples.

Local Autonomy in Islam. Islam has neither a religious hierarchy nor a formal territorial organization. Strong unity within the Islamic world is maintained by a relatively high degree of communication and migration, such as the pilgrimage to Makkah. In addition, uniformity is fostered by Islamic doctrine, which offers more explicit commands than other religions.

Protestant Denominations. Protestant Christian denominations vary in geographic structure from extremely autonomous to somewhat hierarchical. The Episcopalian, Lutheran, and most Methodist churches have hierarchical structures, somewhat comparable to the Roman Catholic Church. Extremely autonomous denominations such as Baptists and United Church of Christ are organized into self-governing congregations. Presbyterian churches represent an intermediate degree of autonomy.

Ethnic Religions. Judaism and Hinduism also have no centralized structure of religious control.

Key Issue 4. Why Do Territorial Conflicts Arise among Religious Groups?

- **Religion vs. government policies**
- **Religion vs. religion**

The twentieth century was a century of global conflict. The threat of global conflict has receded in the twenty-first century, but local conflicts have increased in areas of cultural diversity. The element of cultural diversity that has led to conflict in many localities is religion.

(213)

Religion vs. Government Policies. The role of religion in organizing Earth's surface has diminished in some societies, owing to political and economic change. Yet in recent years, religious principles have become increasingly important in the political organization of countries, especially where a branch of Christianity or Islam is the prevailing religion.

Religion vs. Social Change. Participation in the global economy and culture can expose local residents to values and beliefs originating in MDCs. North Americans and Western Europeans may not view economic development as incompatible with religious values, but many religious adherents in LDCs do, especially where Christianity is not the predominant religion.

Taliban vs. Western Values. Once in control of Afghanistan's government in the late 1990s, the Taliban imposed very strict laws inspired by Islamic values as the Taliban interpreted them. Islamic scholars criticized the Taliban as poorly educated in Islamic law and history and for misreading the Quran. A U.S.-led coalition overthrew the Taliban in 2001 and replaced it with a democratically elected government. However, the Taliban was able to regroup and resume its fight to regain control of Afghanistan.

Hinduism vs. Social Equality. Hinduism has been strongly challenged since the 1800s, when British colonial administrators introduced their social and moral concepts to India. The most vulnerable aspect of the Hindu religion was its rigid **caste** system. British administrators and Christian missionaries pointed out the shortcomings of the caste system, such as neglect of the untouchables' health and economic problems. The Indian government legally abolished the untouchable caste, and the people formerly in that caste now have equal rights with other Indians.

Religion vs. Communism. Organized religion was challenged in the twentieth century by the rise of communism in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Orthodox Christianity and Islam vs. the Soviet Union. In 1721, Czar Peter the Great made the Russian Orthodox Church part of the Russian government. Following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, which overthrew the czar, the Communist government of the Soviet Union pursued antireligious programs.

(197)

People's religious beliefs could not be destroyed overnight, but the role of organized religion in Soviet life was reduced. With religious organizations prevented from conducting social and cultural work, religion dwindled in daily life. The end of Communist rule in the late twentieth century brought a religious revival in Eastern Europe, especially where Roman Catholicism is the most prevalent branch. Property confiscated by the Communist governments reverted to Church ownership, and attendance at church services increased. Central Asian countries that were former parts of the Soviet Union are struggling to determine the extent to which laws should be rewritten to conform to Islamic custom rather than to the secular tradition inherited from the Soviet Union.

Buddhism vs. Southeast Asian Countries. In Southeast Asia, Buddhists were hurt by the long Vietnam War. Neither antagonist was particularly sympathetic to Buddhists. The current Communist governments in Southeast Asia have discouraged religious activities and permitted monuments to decay. These countries do not have the funds necessary to restore the structures.

Religion vs. Religion

Conflicts are most likely to occur at a boundary between two religious groups. Contributing to more intense religious conflict has been a resurgence of religious **fundamentalism**, which is a literal interpretation and a strict and intense adherence to basic principles of a religion. In a world increasingly dominated by a global culture and economy, it is one of the most important ways that a group maintains a distinctive cultural identity. Two long-standing conflicts involving religious groups are in Northern Ireland and the Middle East.

Religious Wars in Ireland. The most troublesome religious boundary in Western Europe lies on the island of Eire (Ireland). The Republic of Ireland, which occupies five-sixths of the island, is 87 percent Roman Catholic, but the island's northern one-sixth, which is part of the United Kingdom rather than Ireland, is about 46 percent Protestant and 40 percent Roman Catholic. Ireland became a self-governing dominion within the British Empire in 1921. Complete independence was declared in 1937, and a republic was created in 1949. When most of Ireland became independent, a majority in six northern counties voted to remain in the United Kingdom.

(199)

Demonstrations by Roman Catholics protesting discrimination began in 1968. Since then, more than 3,000 have been killed in Northern Ireland — both Protestants and Roman Catholics. A small number of Roman Catholics in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a militant organization dedicated to achieving Irish national unity by whatever means available, including violence. Similarly, a scattering of Protestants created extremist organizations to fight the IRA, including the Ulster Defense Force (UDF). As long as most Protestants are firmly committed to remaining in the United Kingdom and most Roman Catholics are equally committed to union with the Republic of Ireland, peaceful settlement appears difficult.

Religious Wars in the Middle East. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have fought for 2,000 years to control the same small strip of land in the Eastern Mediterranean.

- Judaism, as an ethnic religion, makes a special claim to the territory it calls the Promised Land. The religion's customs and rituals acquired meaning from the agricultural life of the ancient Hebrew tribe. After the Romans gained control of the area they dispersed the Jews from Palestine.
- Islam became the most widely practiced religion in Palestine after the Muslim army conquered it. Muslims regard Jerusalem as their third holiest city, after Makkah and Madinah, because it is thought to be the place from which Muhammad ascended to heaven.

- Christianity considers Palestine the Holy Land and Jerusalem the Holy City because the major events in Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection were concentrated there.

Crusades between Christians and Muslims. In the seventh century, Muslims captured most of the Middle East. The Arab army moved west across North Africa and invaded Europe at Gibraltar in AD 711 and crossed the Pyrenees Mountains a few years later. Its initial advance in Europe was halted by the Franks. The Arab army continued to control portions of present-day Spain until 1492. To the east, the Arab army captured Eastern Orthodox Christianity's most important city, Constantinople (present-day Istanbul in Turkey), in 1453 and advanced a few years later into Southeast Europe, as far north as present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. The recent civil war in that country is a legacy of the fifteenth-century Muslim invasion. To recapture the Holy Land from its Muslim conquerors, European Christians launched a series of military campaigns, known as Crusades.

Jews vs. Muslims in Palestine. The Muslim Ottoman Empire controlled Palestine between 1516 and 1917. After World War I, Great Britain took over Palestine under a mandate from the League of Nations. The British allowed some Jews to return to Palestine, but immigration was restricted again during the 1930s in response to intense pressure by Arabs in the region. As violence initiated by both Jewish and Muslim settlers escalated after World War II, the British announced their intention to withdraw from Palestine. The United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two independent states. Jerusalem was to be an international city, open to all religions, and run by the United Nations. When the British withdrew in 1948, Jews declared an independent state of Israel within the boundaries prescribed by the U.N. resolution. The next day its neighboring Arab Muslim states declared war. The combatants signed an armistice in 1949 that divided control of Jerusalem. Israel won three more wars with its neighbors, in 1956, 1967, and 1973. During the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel captured the entire city of Jerusalem and other territories from its neighbors.

(200)

Conflict over the Holy Land: Palestinian Perspective. After the 1973 war, Egypt and Jordan renounced their territorial claims and recognized the Palestinians as the legitimate rulers of these territories. Five groups of people consider themselves Palestinians:

- People living in the territories captured by Israel in 1967
- Citizens of Israel who are Muslims
- People who fled from the West Bank or Gaza after the 1967 War
- Citizens of other countries, especially those in the Middle East, who identify themselves as Palestinians.

After capturing the West Bank from Jordan in 1967, Israel permitted Jewish settlers to construct more than 100 settlements in the territory. Jewish settlers comprise about 10 percent of the West Bank population and Palestinians see their immigration as a hostile act. Some Palestinians, especially those aligned with the Fatah Party, are willing to recognize the State of Israel with its Jewish majority in exchange for return of all territory taken by Israel in the 1967 war. Other Palestinians, especially those aligned with the Hamas Party, do not recognize the right of Israel to exist and want to continue fighting for control of the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The United States, European countries, and Israel consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization.

(201)

Conflict over the Holy Land: Israeli Perspective. Israel sees itself as a very small country with a Jewish majority, surrounded by a region of hostile Muslim Arabs. Israel considers two elements of the local landscape especially meaningful. First, the country's major population centers are quite

close to international borders, making them vulnerable to surprise attack. The second geographical problem from Israel's perspective derives from local landforms.

(203)

The partition of Palestine in 1947 allocated most of the coastal plain to Israel, while Jordan took most of the hills between the coastal plain and the Jordan River, called the West Bank (of the Jordan River). Farther north, Syria controlled the highlands east of the valley, known as the Golan Heights. Between 1948 and 1967 Jordan and Syria used the hills as staging areas to attack Israeli settlements on the adjacent coastal plain and in the Jordan River valley. During the 1967 War, Israel captured these highlands to stop attacks on the lowland population concentrations.

Israeli Jews are divided between those who wish to retain some of the occupied territories and those who wish to make compromises with the Palestinians. Peace will be difficult to achieve because Israelis have no intention of giving up control of the Old City of Jerusalem, and Palestinians have no intention of giving up their claim to it.

Key Terms

Animism (p.178)	Hierarchical religion (p.194)
Autonomous religion (p.195)	Missionary (p.182)
Branch (p.171)	Monotheism (p.178)
Caste (p.196)	Pagan (p.182)
Cosmogony (p.188)	Pilgrimage (p.185)
Denomination (p.171)	Polytheism (p.178)
Ethnic religion (p.170)	Sect (p.171)
Fundamentalism (p.197)	Solstice (p.189)
Ghetto (p.185)	Universalizing religion (p.170)

Test Prep Questions

- Which of the following is NOT a universalizing religion?
 - Islam
 - Christianity
 - Hinduism
 - Buddhism
- Which of the following is NOT a branch of Christianity?
 - Lutheranism
 - Orthodoxy
 - Roman Catholicism
 - Protestantism
- What was the first major religion known to espouse monotheism?
 - Islam
 - Christianity
 - Hinduism
 - Judaism

- 4) Which of the following religions does NOT trace its origins to the patriarch Abraham?
A) Judaism
B) Islam
C) Hinduism
D) Christianity
- 5) Where are the hearths of the three largest universalizing religions all located?
A) Asia
B) Europe
C) Africa
D) North America
- 6) What do Hindus consider to be the holiest river?
A) the Indus
B) the Ganges
C) the Tigres
D) the Nile
- 7) In which religion is burial of the dead NOT widely practiced?
A) Islam
B) Christianity
C) Judaism
D) Hinduism
- 8) Which of the following Protestant denominations is the MOST autonomous?
A) Baptist
B) Lutheran
C) Presbyterian
D) Episcopalian
- 9) Which of the following is NOT a conflict based upon religion?
A) Christianity/Islam vs. the former Soviet Union
B) The Taliban in Afghanistan vs. western values
C) Protestants vs. Catholics in North America
D) Hinduism vs. social equality
- 10) Which of the following territories was NOT captured by Israel during the 1967 War?
A) The Golan Heights
B) The Mediterranean lowlands
C) The Gaza Strip
D) The West Bank

Short Essay

- 1) Identify the three major universalizing religions on Earth and accurately describe their origins.

2) Describe the differences between universalizing religions and ethnic religions with respect to how they identify holy places, citing examples.

3) Compare the Palestinian perspective with the Israeli perspective regarding the conflict over the Holy Land.
