

Living Religion

Fourth Edition

Janet Morrissey Adam Taylor Greg Bailey
Peter Mudge Paul Rule Nicola Edghill



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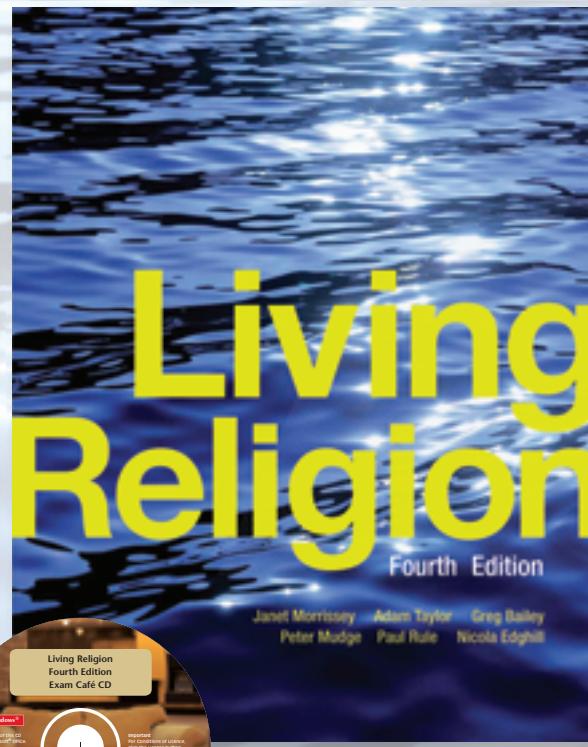
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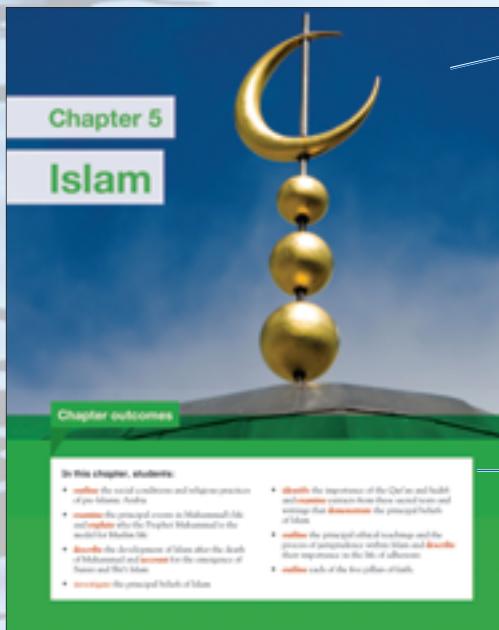
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Chapter opening page



Inviting photo to set the scene

Syllabus-based chapter outcomes specify content and skills covered

Introduction



Provides a concise summary of the chapter content

Glossaries

Glossary

conservative

The tendency to preserve existing conditions. The term can be used positively or negatively. To be positively conservative is to emphasise the preservation of the richness of past beliefs, institutions and practices. To be negatively conservative is to have difficulty in accepting anything that would modify what is held to be unchangeable.

culture

The way a group of organisms relate to each other to develop the sum total of ways of living built up by human beings and then transmitted from one generation to another.

Diaspora

The dispersion of Jews, caused by the Exile into Babylon and other scatterings of the Jewish people across all ages. Today it is the generic term used to refer to all Jews who live outside the modern State of Israel, founded in 1948.

radical

A person, institution or idea that favours changes or reform. From the Latin word for 'root', the term is used positively and negatively. For some, the sense is 'going back to the roots' and discerning what, for example, the founder of the religion would have done in these changed circumstances. For others, the term suggests an extreme transformation with little regard for anything in the past.

Integrated at regular, appropriate points in the text to provide clear definitions of all key terms and concepts

Review

Review

- 1 **Recall** the names of people and/or groups who were among the earlier followers of the Buddha.
- 2 **Describe** the early formation of the *sangha*.
- 3 What was Mahapajapati's request?
- 4 **Summarise** the evidence on which the knowledge of the early formation of the *sangha* is based.
- 5 Make a chart that gives a brief outline of each of the three councils.
- 6 **Identify** the importance of the first two councils in the development of Buddhism.
- 7 **Explain** why the disputes in the *sangha* occurred. In your explanation, refer to the conduct of monks rather than to matters of the Buddha's teachings.

Regular, carefully graded exercises for revision and consolidation

Extension

Extension

- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 180 and **examine** the information about the Denominational School Board, which existed from 1848 to 1866. Use this web page to list at least three items of information about the involvement of churches in education in New South Wales at this time.
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** further the contribution of one Christian denomination to education in Australia prior to 1945. In a report on your findings, include information on rural schools as well as on those in urban areas.
- 3 'Nineteenth century Acts of Parliament concerned with the provision of education not only moulded our modern system of church-related schools, but also helped create the secular society of today.' **Construct** a mind map or flow chart to **synthesise** the material presented in this section to **justify** your response to this statement.



Web destinations for activities found online at the Student Lounge

Engaging tasks to broaden, challenge and invite a range of responses

Respond



Figure 9.1.7 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam handed back the deeds to traditional Gurindji lands to Vincent Lingiari at Wattie Creek, Northern Territory, 16 August 1975. After handing back the deeds, the prime minister poured soil onto Lingiari's hand.

RESPOND What is the symbolism of this action?

Stimulates discussion of meanings in photos, artwork or text

Feature box

Jewish groups at the time of Jesus

Pharisees

The Pharisees were progressive and are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. They held closely to the **Torah** but also believed that it was open to interpretation within reason. They maintained that an afterlife existed and that God punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous in the world to come. They also believed in a Messiah who would herald an era of world peace.

Sadducees

The Sadducees were elitists and supported a Jewish monarchy, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Greek ideas into their lives—something the Pharisees opposed. They insisted on a literal interpretation of Jewish scripture. They disappeared as a group after 70 ce.

Essenes

The Essenes emerged out of disgust with the other two groups. This **sect** believed the others had corrupted the city and the Temple. They moved out of Jerusalem and lived a monastic life in the desert, adopting strict dietary laws and a commitment to celibacy. The Essenes are particularly interesting to scholars because they are believed to be an offshoot of the group that lived in Qumran, near the Dead Sea.

Highlights important or additional information

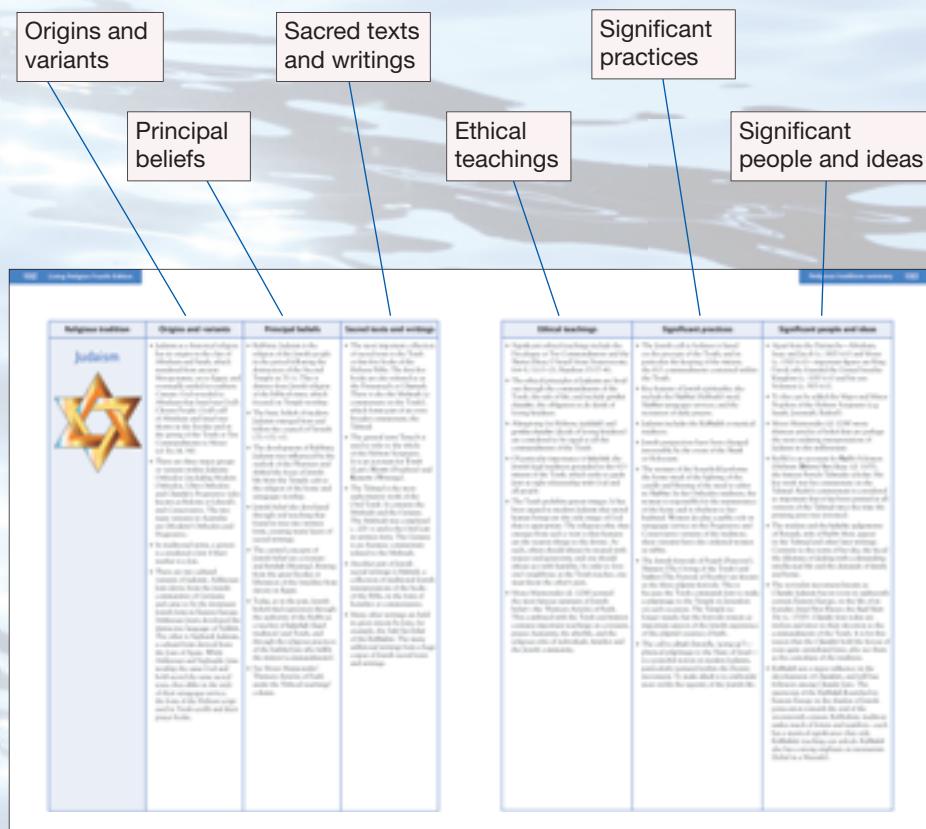
HSC-style exam questions

Clear indication of exam requirements

Set out just like
the real thing

HSC-style exam questions	
Section II	
▪ Studies of Religion I: answer ONE question from this section.	
▪ Studies of Religion II: answer TWO questions from TWO different religious traditions in this section.	
	Marks
Question 2—Christianity (15 marks)	
a. Outline the Christian ethical teachings on (any) of the following:	3
– bioethics	
– environmental ethics	
– sexual ethics	
b. Describe how ONE significant practice of Christianity supports adherence to strict everyday laws. Refer to ONE of the following:	5
– baptism	
– marriage ceremony	
– Sunday/Christian sabbath	
Question 3—Christianity (20 marks)	
Teach, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' (Matthew 22:36-40)	
With reference to this passage from the New Testament, explain the significant ethical teachings of Christianity in relation to ONE of the following:	

Religious tradition summaries



NSW Board of Studies directive terms

These are highlighted in red whenever they are used in the chapter outcomes as well as in the Review and Extension activities. The additional use of bold red indicates those directive terms that are specific to the outcomes for each area of study. This will assist your familiarisation with the terms you need to understand to respond to assessment tasks and exams.

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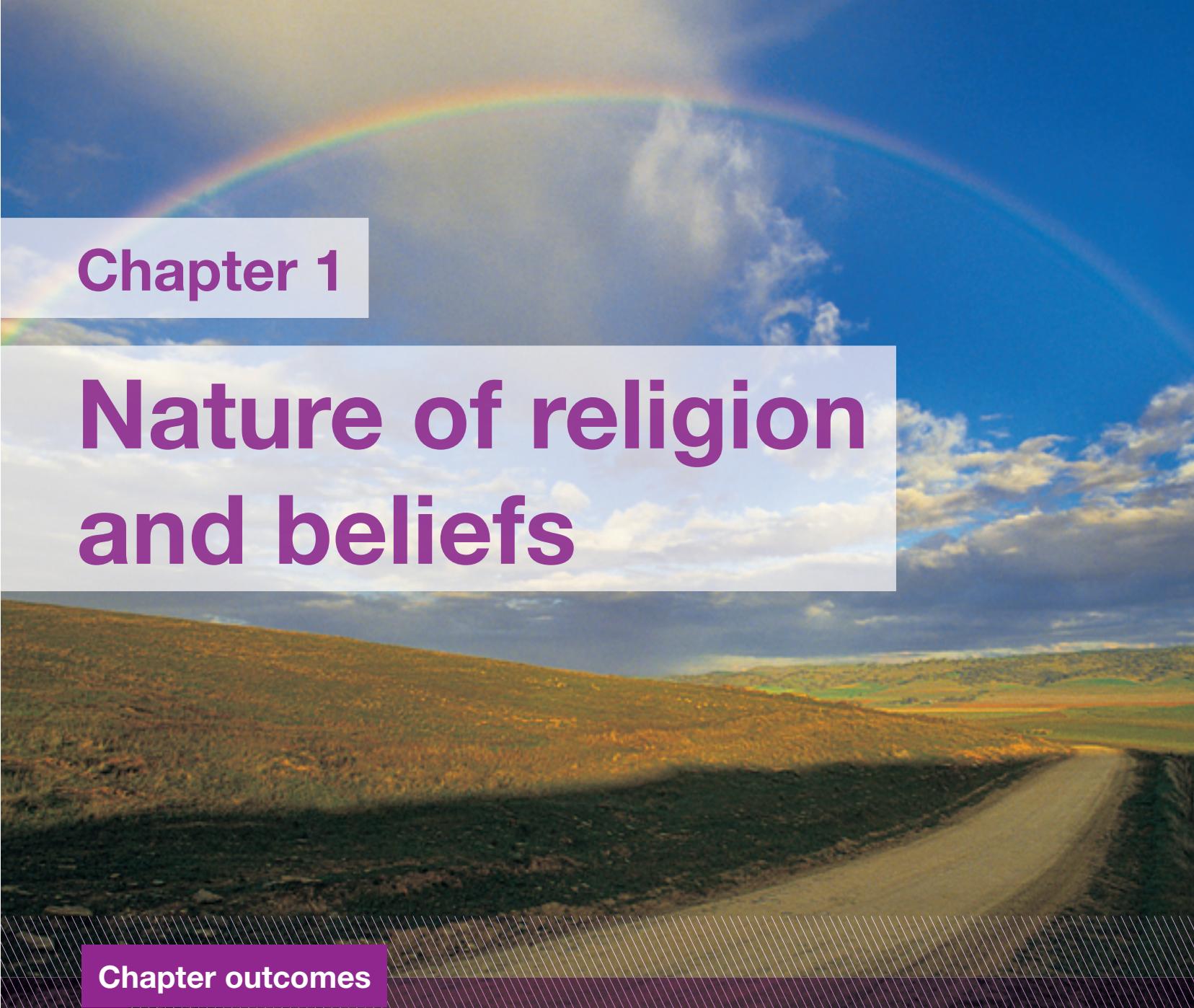
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Preliminary course



Chapter 1

Nature of religion and beliefs

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **define** the supernatural dimension and **discuss** a transcendent and immanent religious world view
- **define** the characteristics of religion and **explore** how these characteristics interact to create a dynamic, living religion
- **appreciate** the contribution of religion to individuals and society and culture
- **outline** the nature of Dreaming for Australia's Aboriginal peoples and **recognise** the importance of Dreaming for them
- **discuss** the diversity of Dreaming for Aboriginal peoples
- **investigate** the inextricable connection of Dreaming, the land and identity.



Galaxies are vast collections of stars that sometimes have many millions, and occasionally many billions, of members. Our own galaxy—the Milky Way with the constellation Southern Cross—is home to more than 100 billion stars. Such sights raise many questions, such as: ‘How did the universe begin?’ and ‘Where did human beings come from?’

Introduction

Glossary

myths

In a religious context, myths are stories that are passed on orally. Each myth has a beginning, a middle and an end, and narrates the deeds of superhuman beings or gods, who can do things that human beings cannot. Societies use myths to explain the ‘truth’ about how the world, social customs, rituals and other realities came to be.

Although space exploration and science have brought the world ‘out there’ closer and unravelled many questions about how the universe began, people still ponder the mysteries of human existence. They seek to find answers to what lies beyond the realm of the ordinary. In an attempt to answer the questions that people have asked—and continue to ask—about the search for meaning and the ultimate goal of human life, a number of quite distinctive responses have emerged. For some, the answers come through revealed texts and writings. For others, like Australia’s Indigenous peoples, answers come through ancestral **myths**, such as the stories of Dreaming that they express through symbolism and art, and re-enact in their ceremonies.

Living Religion Fourth Edition explores the expression and practice of the world’s various belief systems that have

arisen as people have sought answers to the ultimate questions of human existence. Five of these belief systems are called the major religious traditions—major because of the number of their adherents—and they each have their own distinctive response. But before looking at these belief systems, we need to understand the nature of religion and those characteristics we call ‘religious’.

The exploration of how people explain the ultimate questions of human existence is not an easy task—it requires the explorer to acknowledge that their understanding of religion is modified by their own experience of ‘religion’. How you were brought up, your family’s religious experience and the many other factors that have shaped you to this stage of your life affect your attitude towards religion and how you define it. Is it possible to ever arrive at a definition that can be explained in simple terms?

Religion, however one defines it, is complex. It can be a cohesive force in society and, at the same time, a source of division. But the investigation of these different aspects is exciting.

Note!

The five major religious traditions are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

Extension

- 1 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 **Compare** your first and subsequent definitions of ‘religion’ that you make as you work through this chapter with your definition of ‘religion’ at the end of the chapter.
- 3 Create and maintain a media clippings file under the following two headings:
 - a The nature of religion and beliefs
 - b Australian Aboriginal beliefs and spiritualities.

Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media’s presentation of these topics with what you have learnt.

Before one can talk about the ‘nature of religion’, it is necessary to come to some sort of definition of ‘religion’. This is not as simple as consulting the dictionary!

A belief in a supreme supernatural power or powers thought to control the universe and all living things.

Macquarie Dictionary

Religion is constituted by a set of beliefs, actions and emotions, both personal and corporate, deemed necessary on account of some concept of an Ultimate Reality.

Michael Peterson, *Reason and Religious Belief*

The Prophet Muhammad was asked, ‘What is religion?’ And he replied that religion is the way we conduct ourselves towards others.

In general, religion is a way of relating to mystery as a sacred or **divine** reality rather than as useless or meaningless.

Michael H. Barnes, *In the Presence of Mystery: An Introduction to the Story of Human Religiousness*

One may clarify the term religion by defining it as a system of beliefs and practices that are relative to superhuman beings.

The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion

... the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern.

Paul Tillich, *Writings on Religion*

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.

Dalai Lama, *Tibetan Buddhism and Modern Physics: Toward a Union of Love and Knowledge*

What is clear when we explore the different definitions of religion is that religion eludes exact definition. As Dr John Dickson, Director of the Centre for Public Christianity in Australia, said:

Like love, art or consciousness itself, religion is a feature of human existence that defies definition. Such realities stand over us and within us to such a degree that objective analysis is perhaps impossible. And, yet, when one is truly touched by love, art or religion, one knows it. It is a thing to be experienced as much as assessed.

The only common agreement seems to be about ‘something beyond the ordinary’—a **transcendent dimension**—and that religion helps in some way to map a course through life’s obstacles and the limitations of human existence.

1.1 The nature of religion

Glossary

culture	The accepted and traditionally patterned ways of behaving, and a set of common understandings shared by the members of a group or community. Includes land, language, ways of living and working, artistic expression, relationships and identity.
Diaspora	The Jewish community outside Israel.
divine	Of or pertaining to a god, especially the Supreme Being. From the Latin word <i>divinus</i> —of the gods or superhuman.
immanent dimension	A world view that recognises a divine being or powers as a constant reality—an active and continuing presence among believers and in this world.
transcendent dimension	The belief in a divine being or powers whose existence ‘goes beyond’ human limitations. It is often contrasted with the term ‘immanent’.

Throughout this chapter we will consider a number of different perspectives on ‘what is religion?’

So how can we bring all this together, including all the various contradictions about what ‘religion’ is? The Latin roots of ‘religion’ (see below) help us in a limited way to understand it as a complex set of experiences, images, beliefs, feelings, rituals, texts, symbols and institutions that enable individuals and members of a community to identify, express and live out their most fundamental relationships.

Did you know?

The Latin word *religio* translates as ‘religion’, but what was the root meaning of this Latin word? Scholars have proposed that its meaning comes from one or both of these sources: *relegare*, ‘to gather up’ or ‘turn to constantly’, and *religare*, ‘to bind together’. There is, however, no agreement about which is the critical term and this approach is problematic when studying **cultures** where the word is not connected to a Latin root or derivative.

A particular world view

A ‘world view’ means the way in which a society sees the world. The society into which you were born may determine how you see the world. Each religion promotes its own world view. Buddhism and Hinduism, for example, see time as a cycle, whereas for many Christians, Jews and Muslims time is linear—it has a beginning and an end. What religion does is provide its believers with a source of meaning that both transcends and contains their life and their world. Religion offers believers a specific set of beliefs and practices that give meaning to their lives.

The supernatural

When we talk about the supernatural we are talking about something being above or beyond what is natural—not able to be explained by known natural laws. The supernatural exceeds the ordinary limits of human existence and is sometimes described as abnormal, or even miraculous.

Religion has a transcendent dimension

Religion possesses a transcendent dimension. It points us towards the sacred or divine world and beyond this earthly and material world. The words ‘transcendent’ and ‘transcendence’ come from the Latin word *transcendere*, meaning ‘to climb over’ or ‘to surpass’. This transcendent dimension of religion enables humans to surpass the limits of their creaturely existence and earthly concerns to focus on heavenly or spiritual matters.

In contrast, the **immanent dimension** emphasises the presence of God or gods within human existence, in the day-to-day, concrete, ordinary concerns of life, rather than above and beyond it. A healthy approach to religion is often characterised by a balance between the transcendent—the ‘out there’ aspect of existence, and the immanent—the ‘inner’ aspect.



Figure 1.1.1 An artist's reconstruction showing a group of Neanderthals c. 60 000 BCE with the planet Mars in the background

RESPOND

Construct some possible questions and issues that this representation may raise in relation to belief in a supernatural power, a transcendent dimension, an immanent dimension, and responses to the basic questions of human existence.

Religious world views

- Christianity, Islam and Judaism—a divine power is said to transcend (be predominantly above or beyond) the world. The One God exists beyond the human and yet guides humanity throughout its everyday existence.
- Buddhism and Hinduism—a divine being or powers dwell within the individual (immanent). In the case of Buddhism, for example, it is important not to look for a Buddhist equivalent of ‘God’ but for an ultimate goal or principle, such as *nirvana* or *dharma*, that gives Buddhists a sense of ultimate meaning.
- Shinto—*kami* (gods and spirits) dwell in people, specific places or natural phenomena.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** the terms ‘religion’, ‘supernatural’, ‘transcendent dimension’ and ‘immanent dimension’.
- 2 **Clarify** what is meant by the term ‘world view’.

Extension

- 1 **Construct** a table to **compare** the meanings of ‘transcendent world view’ and ‘immanent world view’.
- 2 **Discuss** in detail examples of each of the following world views:
 - a one that holds a belief in a divine power and/or powers beyond the human (transcendent)
 - b one that maintains a belief in a divine being or powers dwelling within the individual (immanent).

Add these examples to the table you constructed in the previous question.
- 3 Organise a class debate on the topic: ‘There must be a balanced relationship in religions between the immanent and transcendent dimensions.’

Characteristics of religion

If religion is a human response to the sense that there is something beyond the ordinary and that this sense gives meaning and purpose to life, it follows that we have to have some organised way of responding to and explaining the sense of *mystery*, the *holy*, the *sacred*, the *transcendent*, or the *ultimate reality*. These responses are called the characteristics of religion. Four such characteristics are:

- beliefs and believers
- sacred texts and writings
- ethics
- rituals and ceremonies.

Some scholars would say that a list of characteristics of religion should also include many other characteristics, such as structures and institutions, sacred sites and times, and sacred symbols and figures.

Did you know?

The academic study of religion is a modern development. It began during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment with its advancement of the sciences and discovery of other cultures.

Beliefs and believers

Beliefs and believers sustain all religions. For example, the central beliefs of Christianity—Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, the resurrection, the forgiveness of sins, and the divine inspiration of the Bible—helped to keep the early Christian community unified. At times, however, as is shown in Chapter 3, differing interpretations of these beliefs have resulted in disunity. For Jewish people from the time of the *Diaspora*, it was their beliefs that kept alive their identity and community.

Sacred texts and writings

At their centre, all religions have oral and/or written sacred texts, writings, or other types of stories. In Buddhism, these are the *Tripitaka* or Pali Canon, as well as a huge collection of *sutras* ('threads' of teaching). In Islam, the *Qur'an* is the central sacred text. Of less importance are the *hadith*, which detail the life of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as the *sunna*, the reference point for regulations within Islamic belief and custom. This is a good example of how these characteristics are interconnected—the *Qur'an* is a sacred text that is not only read and meditated upon, but which gives essential direction for Islamic beliefs and customs.

Ethics

Ethics can be understood as the explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs within a tradition. They are central to any religion. Their purpose is to clarify what is right and wrong, and what the followers of a religion should freely do, or refrain from doing. In Hinduism, *sadharana dharma* is the general code of Hindu ethics. It is the universal natural law and also the moral and religious duties, laws and customs that are in harmony with the natural law. The ultimate goal of life is *moksha* or liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth of souls (*samsara*).

Did you know?

Australian law is administered by the government, which represents the world view of a Western secular (that is, non-religious) democratic state. While religious law can influence people's lives in ethical ways, all religious groups living in Australia must live under local secular laws.

Rituals and ceremonies

Rituals and ceremonies are enactments or systems of actions and beliefs that each have a beginning, a middle and an end. They are directly linked to superhuman beings or forces. Rituals and ceremonies in Judaism include male circumcision and the coming-of-age ceremony *Bar Mitzvah*, as well as significant rituals for marriage, divorce and death. Jewish ritual circumcision or *brit milah* is performed by a *mohel* on male infants on the eighth day after birth. Historically, it was required of Abraham and signified the covenant between God and the Jewish people (Gen 17:10–14). Its intention is to place a permanent reminder of the covenant in the flesh of the male Jew. The circumcision is followed by a festive meal for family and friends.



Figure 1.1.2 A Jewish circumcision

RESPOND

Explain ways in which this ritual is linked to key Jewish beliefs about God and human existence.

A dynamic, living religion

These key characteristics create a dynamic, living religion. A dynamic (Greek *dunamikos*, meaning 'powerful') religion is one characterised by energy, ambition, new ideas and practical achievements. It develops into a powerful force that refreshes itself constantly, and therefore avoids settling into a predictable or conservative rut. A living religion is one that is full of life; it is practical, real and immersed in—not removed from or afraid of—everyday human existence.

In general, any religion is likely to stagnate if it does not constantly revitalise its beliefs and believers, sacred texts and writings, ethics, rituals and ceremonies. When these characteristics of religion interact creatively, they help to nurture a religion that is alive, dynamic and active in the lives of its adherents, and in the society and culture in which it exists. It is a religion that is lived.

It is important to remember that when studying religion it is not enough to just read about its history or study its texts, but also to see it in action.

Review

- 1 **Define** the four main characteristics of religion.
- 2 **Demonstrate** ways in which these four characteristics affect the everyday lives of believers in two particular traditions.
- 3 **Explain** ways in which these characteristics combine to create 'dynamic, living religious traditions'. In other words, how does religious theory become a living, day-to-day practice?

Extension

- 1 **Investigate** important links between the four characteristics of religion. **Construct** a mind map or flow chart to present your findings.
- 2 In pairs, briefly **discuss** the question: 'What is essential for a religious tradition to remain a "dynamic, living force in contemporary society"?' List your key findings and **discuss** these with another pair.

The contribution of religion

The unexamined life is not worth living.

Socrates, *Apology*, 38a

Certain questions have puzzled people for thousands of years. These have sometimes been referred to as 'the great questions of human existence'. They include:

- Is there a supreme being?
- Who am I?
- Why is there evil, pain and suffering?
- Is there life after death?

Religious beliefs can help us answer such questions. They can provide a sense of self, and a sense of belonging and community. Religion can confront and challenge social and political injustices, and can be an agent for change in a society. Religion can also encourage violence when its adherents come to believe that their world view is being challenged.

It is important to acknowledge that many cultures outside those based in or dominated by Western 'First World' countries are not specifically interested in 'the great questions of human existence'. For example, many indigenous cultures understand their relationship with the cosmos in terms of the perceived unity of past, present and future. Such cultures have very little interest in questions to do with the origins of the universe, humanity or related areas.

Is there a supreme being?

A supreme being, god or deity (from the Latin word *deus*, 'god') is the name given to a god or goddess, depending on the religion being considered. In the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions, 'the Deity' refers to the monotheistic God (one God alone). In these religions, the supreme being, or God, is understood as the source and creator of the universe, the source of all that exists, and the ultimate ruler of all time and space.

Who am I?

The question 'who am I?' takes a person to the heart of human existence. For Christianity, the question 'who am I?' is understood in relation to 'what is human nature and what is its ultimate purpose?' For many religions and traditions, the person gains their identity (their answer to 'who am I?') by relating to their God or gods, guided by the beliefs and practices of their tradition.

Why is there evil, pain and suffering?

Human evil, pain and suffering have limitless aspects—physical illness, death, social injustice and poverty, loneliness and aloneness. This also raises limitless questions: Does life have meaning because of, or apart from, suffering? If God is all powerful and all loving, why does God allow evil, pain and suffering to exist?

In most traditions, evil is the opposite of what is good and beneficial. It can be understood as a cosmic power or as a human way of behaving or deciding. Evil, pain and suffering are interrelated. Suffering can be understood as the experience of pain that could be caused by evil, ignorance or neglect. As such, this three-part issue raises crucial questions for religions about the nature of God, of the universe, and of human existence itself.

Buddhists, for example, refer to suffering as *dukkha*—a 'desire to be in the world too much'. The cause of *dukkha* is selfish craving.

If a person sees that suffering afflicts them, let them examine their deeds.

Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot*, 5a



Figure 1.1.3 A young Somali boy suffering from malnutrition is watched over by his parents at a therapeutic feeding centre in a hospital in Dadaab, northern Kenya. Almost 40 000 new arrivals sought refugee status in Kenya in 2008, bringing the population of the seventeen-year-old refugee camp, situated 80 km from the Somali border in northern Kenya, to over 210 000 people.

RESPOND

Investigate and explain a variety of religious responses to the problem of evil, pain and suffering in today's world.

Is there life after death?

'Death' is generally understood as the ending of ordinary human existence. Issues and questions about the origin of death and the destiny of the dead, as well as rituals for the dead, are part of all religious traditions.

Each of the attitudes to death in the major religious traditions is not a scientific explanation of death, but an attempt to make sense of life—to understand death as a part of the pattern of life. Reincarnation, resurrection and other concepts of life after death provide powerful images for their believers. They help sustain people in the knowledge that there is a deeper meaning to life than that which is played out externally. The responses to death and afterlife in each tradition have helped humans to live with the mystery of existence and to give concrete meaning to their lives.

For example, Muslims believe that death is the common destiny willed by God for all living things—'Every soul will taste of death' (Qur'an). After death, Muslims believe that the soul waits in *barzakh* (the place of waiting for Judgement Day). When judgement comes, God will deal with everyone according to their actions. After judgement, the dead will be restored to their bodies, so Muslims do not cremate their dead.

The contribution of religion

This section on the nature of religion has provided various examples of how religion contributes to individuals and to society and culture. With its claim to a supernatural dimension (and by association to the transcendent and immanent world views), religion succeeds in fixing the minds and hearts of its adherents in the here and now, while at the same time pointing them beyond the material to the spiritual or divine realm.

Religion also contributes to individuals, society and culture by adhering to the key characteristics that have been discussed—beliefs and believers, sacred texts and writings, ethics, and rituals and ceremonies. These characteristics enable religion to become practical and concrete. They change over time and affect the society and culture in which that change takes place. This in turn not only creates a dynamic and living religious tradition, but a dynamic and living society in which that particular religion exists.

Religion has contributed significantly to great architecture, music, literature and art—as it was once famously observed:

Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge, never a check.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, preface to *The Cenci*, 1819

Review

- 1 **Recall** and **describe** a significant Jewish ritual.
- 2 **Identify** and provide possible responses to one 'great question of existence' to which you think most human beings would like an answer.
- 3 **Describe** the religious responses of at least two traditions to the basic questions of human existence listed in this section. Present your findings in the form of a chart or mind map.

Extension

- 1 In small groups, conduct a brief discussion to show that you **appreciate** the contribution of religion to (a) individuals and (b) society and culture. In your discussion, refer to at least two religious traditions and provide examples of the everyday beliefs and practices of their adherents. Share your list of key points with the rest of the class.
- 2 **Synthesise** your key learnings about the nature of religion in the form of a mind map or flow chart. In your chart, make explicit reference to a range of traditions and some of their beliefs and practices.
- 3 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this section and ensure that it is clear and complete. **Identify** and **discuss** any definitions of key terms that you have changed throughout the chapter so far, especially 'religion'.

1.2 Australian Aboriginal beliefs and spiritualities—Dreaming

Glossary

- aboriginal** From the Latin *ab origine*, meaning ‘from the beginning’. It is always capitalised when used in reference to Australian Aboriginal peoples.
- indigenous** Those people who are the original inhabitants of any country. It is always capitalised when referring to the Indigenous peoples of Australia.



Figure 1.2.1 *Wagilag Sisters, with child*, 2007, by Philip Gudthaykudthay (b. 1923/1927), Central Arnhem Land, natural earth pigments on canvas, 172 x 120 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

This painting represents a component of the Wagilag Sisters epic creation story. The upper-left corner of the work shows Wititj the sacred python emerging from its home, Mirarmina waterhole.

Aboriginal peoples have been in Australia for more than 40 000 years. Where they came from is uncertain, but in the relatively isolated situation in which they remained for so long, they developed their culture and way of living on the land. In 1770, when James Cook entered Australia’s history, the Aboriginal way of life was nomadic or semi-nomadic—they were living by hunting and gathering. This apparently simple lifestyle resulted in two misconceptions—that Aboriginal peoples all shared the same culture, and that they had little attachment to, and made little use of, the land. Because of this, Cook described the continent as *terra nullius* (empty land).

Diversity has always been a feature of Aboriginal society—there are several hundred distinct languages (two-thirds of which are now extinct), and songs, stories, dances, ceremonies, Dreamings and paintings that are all owned in different ways depending on complex laws. In spite of this diversity, it is possible to speak of common features of Australian Aboriginal cultures—highly developed, deeply religious, and closely associated with nature and the land.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is the most precise and inclusive reference for **Indigenous** Australians.

Today many Aboriginal groups prefer to identify themselves in local terms drawn from the language or territory group to which they belong. Some of the most widely used local terms are:

- Anagu—Central Australia
- Koori(e)—south-eastern Australia
- Murri—Queensland
- Nunga—South Australia
- Nyoogah or Nyungar—south-west Western Australia
- Yolngu—Arnhem Land region, Northern Territory.

Within these areas they may identify with a more specific language or territory group, for example, Wiradhuri, Gamillaroi, Arrernte (Aranda), Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara.

Torres Strait Islanders are the Indigenous peoples of the Torres Strait Islands. Torres Strait Islanders use the names of their island community—Badu, Murray, Yam, Boigu and the Meriam-speaking people of the eastern Torres Strait Islands.

Note: It is important to remember that these terms apply to specific groups and should not be misapplied. For example, ‘Koori’ is not a synonym for ‘Aboriginal’ and should not be applied to groups from various parts of Australia.

Extension



Identify the language group of the Indigenous Australians in your area using the internet or another resource such as David Horton (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, 1994, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Nature of Dreaming

Glossary

Ancestral Beings	Those spirits who moved about forming the landscape and creating the plants, animals and peoples of the known world. They also founded the ceremonies, marriage laws and other laws of human society. They continue to inhere (to exist permanently and inseparably) in the living generations.
Dreaming	A complex concept of fundamental importance to Aboriginal culture that embraces the long-ago creative era of the Ancestral Beings as well as the present and the future. Shark Dreaming, Honey Ant Dreaming, Yam Dreaming, and the hundreds of other Dreamings known across Australia are part of the spiritual identities of those Aboriginal peoples who claim them as their Ancestral Beings or totems . To falsely claim the Dreaming of another group is a serious infringement of Aboriginal law.
totem	An object such as an animal, a plant or a particular landmark through which a person is linked to the Ancestral Being responsible for his or her existence.

Dreaming is the centre of Aboriginal religion and life; it is the closest translation of the Aboriginal concept of how the world works. Dreaming is the past, the present and the future.

The term itself translates as different words in different languages of the Aboriginal peoples—the Arrernte call it *alcheringa ngambukala*, literally meaning ‘that springing from its own eternity’; the Pitjantjatjara people call it *tjurkupa*; in north-east Arnhem Land it is called *wongar*.

This section will concentrate on Dreaming in relation to how the sacred sites, stories, art and symbolism of Aboriginal society are the living expression of Dreaming.

Chapter 9 discusses those aspects of Dreaming—kinship, ceremonial life and obligations to the land and people—that most affect contemporary Aboriginal spiritualities.

What is Dreaming?

Dreaming is the beginning of all things. It is when all the things we know in the world today were formed.

- *Dreaming* refers to events and places, rather than what Westerners would call time. The Aboriginal sacred stories are stories about events of Dreaming and how Ancestral (Spirit) Beings formed the land, and founded life on the land.
- *Dreaming* is the unseen spirit world. This spirit world is not obscure and in the past. It is what gives life and reality to the visible world.
- *Dreaming* affects all of life. The performance of ceremonies that were first performed by Ancestors in Dreaming brings to life the power of Dreaming. Dreaming is experienced in the songs, stories, rituals and symbols.
- *Dreaming* is both personal and communal. A particular Aboriginal group may speak of ‘the’ Dreaming, with which it has been linked from the beginning, but each person may also speak of ‘my’ Dreaming. ‘My’ Dreaming may include a story about a form of life with which I am connected, for example, the black swan, the dolphin, the eagle. As an Aboriginal person, ‘my’ Dreaming connects me all the way back to ‘the’ Dreaming. Symbols of ‘my’ Dreaming would be depicted in the sacred art and objects used in the rituals about it.
- *Dreaming* is reflected in a special way in the land. To Aboriginal peoples the land is not just soil or rock or minerals, but the whole environment ... all related and linked by Dreaming. Humans are not separate from their environment, but indivisibly united with it. Aboriginal peoples reflect a constant awareness that they are in the presence of Dreaming wherever they travel, hunt, gather food or reside. Aboriginal peoples are part of the land and it is part of them.

Adapted from W. E. H. Stanner,
Oceania Monograph, n. 11, 1966

In traditional Aboriginal Australia, world order comes from all those events in which the **Ancestral Beings** travel and transform themselves into sites. There is no sense of creation or of a first creator. Aboriginal myths begin from the assumption that the life-giving power of the Ancestors simply exists and the issue of who made the Ancestors or the world does not arise.

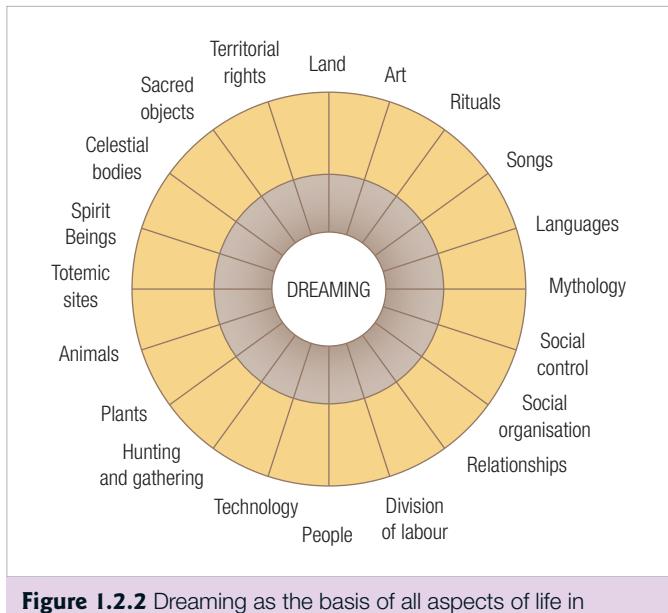


Figure 1.2.2 Dreaming as the basis of all aspects of life in traditional Aboriginal society. (Based on W. H. Edwards, *An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies*, 1988, p. 13.)

The stories, songs, art and ceremonies recall the journeys of the Ancestral Beings and their interaction with people and their bestowal (gifting) of land upon particular language groups. Aboriginal art and ritual objects play an important role in the telling of stories and in preserving the sacred laws handed down from the past. All this underlines the fact that Aboriginal spiritualties are not so much a series of complex ‘religious’ practices as they are a way of life. The whole way of life of traditional Aboriginal society is grounded in direct links to the land. Their stories, art and ceremonies recall the way the Ancestral Beings shaped the environment as it is now known, laid down the law and established the relationships and responsibilities by which Aboriginal peoples live out their lives.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **explain** the meaning and significance of Dreaming.
- 2 What is a ‘sacred site’?
- 3 In small groups, **discuss** what is meant by the statement: ‘Dreaming is the past, the present and the future.’ Write a brief report of your discussion.
- 4 **Construct** a two-column chart to **distinguish** the differences between the Western concept of how the world works and the Aboriginal concept of how the world works.

Extension



Investigate three Dreaming stories, each from a different location in Australia. Use the web destinations for page 11 as a starting point. Write a report on your research under the following headings:

- a name of language or territory group to which it belongs
- b Ancestral Being(s) in the story
- c **outline** of the main features of the story.

Layers of meaning

Glossary

Elders	Key persons and keepers of various knowledge within Aboriginal communities. They are chosen and accepted by their own communities as Elders in respect of:
a	kinship and as overseers of many Dreaming tracks; that is, they are ‘Boss over country’
b	being leaders of large extended family networks
c	knowledge acquired and services given within the community.
initiation	Formal admission into a society; the ceremony of admission.
mythological symbolism	The representation of the stories about supernatural beings and events.
rituals	Established or prescribed procedures and actions for a rite—a formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or is customary in a religious or other solemn use.

There are many layers of meaning in all Aboriginal **rituals** and ceremonies—their art, stories and ceremonies are full of **mythological symbolism**. The first layer is the most obvious and open and accessible to all. The second and further layers are not so obvious and require some degree of experience of, or relationship with, Aboriginal peoples or culture in order to understand them. The deepest layers are secret/sacred and as such are only available to **Elders** and initiated Aboriginal peoples—these layers give the full story, with all details, meanings and significance.



Figure 1.2.3 *Sugarleaf Dreaming at Ngarlu*, 1986, by Lucy, Hilda and Ruth Napaljarri, Walpiri, Yuendumu, Central Australia, acrylic on canvas.

In this painting, Ancestral Beings and real people are presented as one. It shows mythical women gathering sugarleaf and dancing a *yawulyu*, a women's ceremony involving the story of a man who took as his wife a woman whom he was not supposed to marry. At the same time, it depicts the birth (to the man's sisters) of two babies who are actual men living today.

Source: Peter Sutton (ed.), *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, 1988, p. 121

Many of the ceremonies are a combination of public and secret/sacred ceremonies. It is inappropriate for non-initiated Aboriginal peoples and, particularly, non-Aboriginal people to try to access the secret/sacred rituals. The secret/sacred nature of ceremonies has parallels through all Aboriginal life—certain sites may only be visited by certain groups, for example, women or Elders, for the purpose of initiation.

Much traditional art was 'temporary' and lasted only for the duration of particular ceremonies such as initiations and funerals. Today most Aboriginal art called 'traditional', as well as the so-called transitional works, such as Western Desert acrylic paintings on canvas and board, represent the places, events and Dreaming Ancestors depicted earlier in the 'temporary' art, but also incorporate actual events (see *Sugarleaf Dreaming at Ngarlu* in Figure 1.2.3). The boundaries between the mythical past and the actual present as non-Aboriginal people understand them are blurred—but then Dreaming is 'the past, the present and the future'.

All Aboriginal art has a religious theme, but some has particular secret/sacred significance, such as the carved boards, incised stones, carved trees and totem images of the inner circle of initiation grounds.

Aboriginal art and its symbolism communicates the intimate relationship between the Ancestral Beings and the Law, values, customs, ceremonies and obligations of Aboriginal peoples. It enables the passage of knowledge within Aboriginal society and, in limited ways, to the outside world.

Dr David Malangi's *Sacred Places at Milmindjarr* (Figure 1.2.5) is a powerful illustration of how Dreaming determines the cultural responsibilities and the rituals and ceremonies. It also demonstrates the difficulties experienced in trying to understand the spiritualities and beliefs of Aboriginal peoples under separate headings. *Sacred Places at Milmindjarr* is a partial representation of the mythical geography of his 'country'.

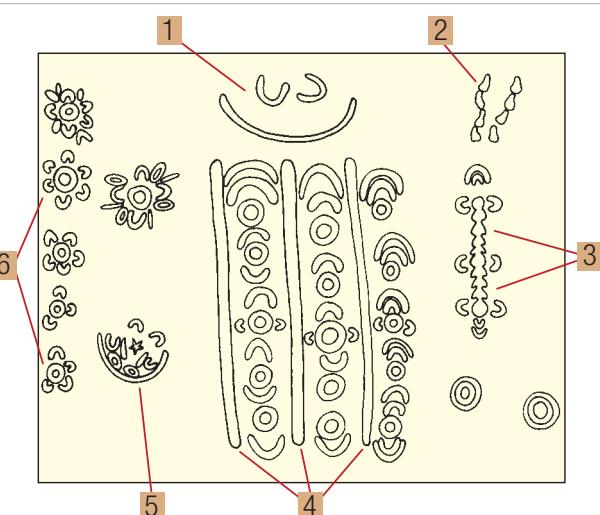


Figure 1.2.4 The 'map' of *Sugarleaf Dreaming at Ngarlu*

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 Napangardi's camp | 4 Ceremonial poles |
| 2 Jungarrayi's footprints | 5 Windbreak (birthplace of two Jampijinpa boys) |
| 3 Women dancing | 6 Women gathering Yanyirlingi |



Figure 1.2.5 *Sacred Places at Milmindjarr*, 1982, by Dr David Malangi (1927–1999), Central Arnhem Land, ochre on bark, 107 x 79 cm

The story concerns the travels of the founding ancestral figures known over much of Arnhem Land as the Djan'kawu Sisters. As they travelled from place to place, paddling their canoe and walking overland, they created the clans (landowning groups) and their languages, naming natural phenomena and creating spring waters by plunging their digging sticks into the ground. In Manharrngu clan country they created the well Milmindjarr' and had a ceremony there. They were looking for fish, and caught a small Catfish, which is represented in the painting. They gave birth to the peoples of the area. When asked about the significance of a certain motif, Malangi replied, 'I know. You don't know.'

In Peter Sutton (ed.), *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, 1988, p. 53

Review

- 1 From the text and artwork in this chapter, identify four specific examples to demonstrate the diversity of Dreaming for Aboriginal peoples.
- 2 Clarify what is meant by 'layers of meaning'.
- 3 Discuss how the bark painting *Sacred Places at Milmindjarr* could help clarify your understanding of Dreaming and its importance for the lives of Aboriginal peoples.
- 4 In three concise paragraphs, show that you recognise the importance of Dreaming to Aboriginal peoples.

Dreaming, land and identity

I feel with my body, with my blood. Feeling all these trees, all this country. When this wind blow you can feel it. Same for country ... you feel it, you can look, but feeling ... that make you.

Big Bill Neidjie, Gagudju Elder, Kakadu

For Indigenous Australians, the land is the core of all spirituality—the land is not dead, it is alive with power and the Ancestral Beings who live in it. The land is the Ancestors and as long as the land lives, so do the Ancestors. The land is not just soil or rocks or minerals, but a whole environment, and is sustained by people and culture.

Places on earth share in the sacredness of Dreaming as they were formed in their present shape by the journeys of the Ancestral Beings.

For the Pitjantjatjara people of the Western Desert of Central Australia, a high mountain peak may represent a place where one of the Ancestors reared up and looked over the surrounding country, and the ridge along a range may be an Ancestral track. The usually dry claypans that dot the plains are often viewed as camping places of the Beings. Some Ancestral Beings are said to have ascended to the sky after their wanderings and various star groups are their final resting places. The Seven Sisters, or Kungkarangkalpa, were chased over a vast area by a man named Nyiyunya and left the earth to become the Pleiades constellation (Taurus).



Figure 1.2.6 *Kuru Ala*, 2007, by Maringka Baker (b. 1951/1953), synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 153.5 x 200 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

This is *Kuru Ala*. These are creeks and rock holes everywhere, and many trees. There is *puli* (rocks) and *apu* (rocky hills). This is *Minyma Tjuta Tjukurrrpa* (Seven Sisters Creation Story). This area is close to Tjuntjuntjarra [in Western Australia, near the South Australian border].

Maringka Baker, 2007

For the Wiradhuri people of New South Wales, the black streak in the Milky Way, towards the Southern Cross, is one of the Ancestors of the Wawi, a serpent-like creature that lives in deep waterholes on the Darling River and burrows into the bank.

It is impossible to discuss the beliefs and spiritualities of Indigenous Australians without talking about the land. It is the land that gives them their identity—‘the Land is my mother’. The journeys of the Ancestral Beings shaped the landscape and gave birth to its people—journeys that are re-enacted in the rituals and ceremonies of the people and expressed in their art.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **clarify** what is meant by ‘the Land is my mother’. Why do you think ‘Land’ has a capital letter?
- 2 Give three reasons why the land provides identity for Aboriginal peoples.
- 3 In a graphic form of your choice, prepare a presentation to **examine** the connection between Dreaming, the land and identity for Aboriginal peoples. In your presentation, refer to Dreaming stories, sacred sites, and symbolism and art.
- 4 In groups, **discuss** the statement: ‘There is not one Dreaming, there are many.’ Share the points your group raises with another group.

Extension

Construct your own Dreaming mind map.

Conclusion

So what is the ‘nature of religion and beliefs’? The characteristics of religion have been defined (pages 5–6) but what do they really tell you? Is it possible to understand a religion by putting it into categories? Do Australian Aboriginal Dreamings fit there? This chapter has probably raised more questions than it has given answers—and, no doubt, the rest of your investigations into religious traditions and how they are lived out by their adherents will continue to raise questions. Throughout your studies you will continue to refine your definition of religion. The search for meaning and what human life is all about, and how we come up with answers to the seemingly answerable questions, will always exercise our imaginations—the answers will be different for everyone.

Review

- 1 Survey how members of your class define ‘religion’. Is it possible to arrive at a definition that satisfies everyone in the class? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 2 What is your definition of ‘religion’? Has it changed from what it was before you started this course? Do you think it might further change during the course?

Extension

- 1 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 2 What about your media file? Have you been able to easily classify it into categories under the following two headings:
 - a The nature of religion and beliefs
 - b Australian Aboriginal beliefs and spiritualities.

Where and why is there any overlap? Analyse the contents and prepare a report on your findings. Do your findings add to what you have studied in this chapter or complicate it?

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



Chapter 2

Buddhism

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **outline** the cultural and historical context in which Buddhism began
- **examine** the principal events in the Buddha's life and **explain** why the Buddha is the model of Buddhist life
- **describe** the early formation of the *sangha* within the first five years and **identify** the importance of the first two councils in the development of Buddhism
- **outline** the unique features of the major schools of Buddhism
- **investigate** the principal teachings of Buddhism
- **identify** the importance of the *Tripitaka*, the *Lotus of the Good Law* and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and **examine** extracts from these sacred texts and writings that **demonstrate** the principal beliefs of Buddhism
- **outline** the principal ethical teachings in Buddhism and **describe** their importance in the life of adherents
- **outline** *puja* as celebrated in the home.



Buddhist teacher Vidy Jayasinha at a Buddhist meditation centre in Point Clare, New South Wales

Introduction

Buddhism is a living world religion that has appeared in many different forms since it began some time during the sixth to fifth centuries BCE in north-eastern India. Originally a response to the demands of different cultural groups in India, it spread rapidly throughout Asia and absorbed cultural and religious elements from a variety of cultures. In this way, Buddhism became the very vibrant and rich religious movement it remains today.

Buddhism has always been successful in adapting to new cultures because people can practise it in many different ways, and on many different levels. Each level or way of practice gives meaning to the person and leads to a particular lifestyle—monks or nuns, laypeople, even those who simply practise a form of Buddhist meditation and are vegetarians (many Australians would fall into the last category).

While the Western understanding of Buddhism is characterised by a preference for some of its philosophical traditions, this is only one aspect of a complex religion. Buddhism is extremely rich—we need to be aware of the tension between its various forms throughout history and the tendency to simplify it doctrinally. Buddhism can

be approached from many different perspectives. To fully understand Buddhism we need to recognise its different levels—both intellectual and popular—which contain a series of highly intellectualised beliefs and ritual practices, an assembly of monks/nuns and a formally recognised body of laypeople.

Originating in India, Buddhism had spread to Sri Lanka within two centuries. By the beginning of the Common Era it had moved into China and Burma (Myanmar), and expanded from these countries into the rest of Asia. Buddhism's successful expansion is due to its ability to adapt itself to cultural and political conditions quite different from those of its country of origin. This means that any attempt to define 'Buddhism'—either as a philosophy or as a set of practices and lifestyle options—is bound to fail if it does not consider the richness of these many Buddhisms.

Despite its wide variety of forms and practices, and its separation into the two large schools (or branches)—Theravada and Mahayana—Buddhism has a number of basic features that are recognisable throughout its history and across its geographical spread. Though seemingly abstract, the Four Noble Truths provide the foundation of these basic teachings. These truths can be found, no matter how indirectly, in all Buddhist teachings that have evolved since the Buddha's lifetime.

Extension

- 1 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with Buddhism and/or Buddhists over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media's presentation with what you have learnt in your study of Buddhism.

2.1 Origins

Historical and cultural origin

Glossary

austerities	Severe acts or practices that usually require someone to abstain from or deprive themselves of something.
Buddha	A formal title that literally means 'awakened'. The Buddha's family name was Siddhartha Gautama. He was also called Shakyamuni, 'the sage of the Shakas' (the Shakas were the clan into which he was born).
doctrine	Collective teachings (adjective: doctrinal).
enlightenment	The state in which the true nature of existence is known both intuitively and intellectually.
Hinduism	The other prominent religion of India during the Buddha's time.
sangha	Name for the assembly of monks and nuns living in a given geographical area.
shramanas	Wandering holy men searching for enlightenment and performing austerities such as fasting.
yogins	Holy men who focus on the performance of intensive meditational and ritual practice for long periods.

It is hard to pinpoint the beginning of a religion because this incorrectly assumes we can define religion in contrast to other cultural institutions. Nor can we assume that the beginning of a religion begins with the life of its founder, as the founder might not have been aware of creating a new religion. But as a set of teachings and practices different from the existing varieties of **Hinduism**, Buddhism began as a religion some time during the life of the **Buddha**, who lived in either the sixth or fifth century BCE. Its beginning is dated about six weeks after the day the Buddha achieved **enlightenment** (530/527 BCE). At this time, at Sarnath, a Deer Park near Benares in India, five men with whom he had practised religious **austerities**, and who were also on the religious quest for enlightenment, agreed to accept the path the Buddha had pursued to success. Through what became a formal process of ordination, they were converted as the first monks.

The Buddha then began a wandering life that lasted for forty-five years until he died at the age of eighty-one. During this time he converted many people as both monks or nuns and lay Buddhists, adopted a conspicuously different clothing style from other holy men, and oversaw much property and wealth being granted to the **sangha** of monks and nuns he had set up. This means that in terms of **doctrine**, physical appearance of its followers and institutional support, Buddhism began to develop a somewhat different identity from the other religious movements of the time. Although it would be a few hundred years before this identity became easily recognised, it is these distinctive features that allow us to describe it as a separate religion.

Buddhism originated during an era that was characterised by economic plenty. Whereas the prior sociopolitical situation had been one of tribal societies and small kingdoms, this period saw the emergence, consolidation and growth of large, centralised states, each ruled by a king with the help of a developing bureaucracy and well-organised army. Urbanisation had been occurring steadily for at least a century. Literary sources confirm that what subsequently became the four classes of Hindu society were beginning to take shape as reference points for measuring social status.

Religious life during the Buddha's time was dominated by practices that were centred on gift exchange rituals—animal sacrifices and plant offerings—designed to manipulate multiple gods. These rituals were either large scale, requiring heavy financial outlay and time or, more commonly, small rituals performed by the eldest male of the household over an open fire. The philosophies underlying this form of religious life were to acquire material wealth on earth and to be reborn in heaven after death.

Yet alongside this was a new wave of thinking that focused on searching within the person, rather than in the outside world, to find what was considered to be the absolute truth. Many different groups of people and charismatic individuals taught various forms of these ideas and engaged in meditational practices. Some performed dramatic bodily austerities—including severe fasting, or remaining in one place for days without moving—to demonstrate their abhorrence toward the material world. We might call them holy men (they usually were men), ascetics or spiritual guides, but in the language of the time they were called **shramanas**. Some of these people were magicians, some were rogues, but others were serious and learned philosophers and well-practised **yogins**.

Shramanas made a point of wandering from place to place, often wearing very striking garments or no clothes

at all, and taking every opportunity to communicate their teachings to anyone who would listen. They offered a whole series of teachings about the nature of the soul, the certainty of rebirth across many lives, the uselessness of ritual, the benefits of bodily austerities and the ineffectiveness of the gods to influence human destiny. They argued that the material and the internal or psychological world produced only frustration, rebirth and world-weariness, but if the soul was discovered and known intuitively, it was possible to escape from this potentially endless round of unsatisfactory rebirths.

The Buddha was one such charismatic individual and Buddhism arose as one of these movements. But while most of the others fell away, the Buddha was able to attract a following and, importantly, to institutionalise it in such a way that it was able to flourish following his own death.

It is often said that the rise of the *shramana* movement, and therefore of Buddhism, was caused by the significant socioeconomic changes that occurred in the century before (and continued during) the Buddha's life. But why would religious movements so passionate about denying the value of the material world arise in times of economic plenty?

This mystery becomes even more significant when you realise that the doctrine of *dukkha*, inadequately translated as 'unsatisfactoriness' (see pages 28–9), is one of the central doctrines of early Buddhist teaching. It is as if the kind of anxiety about existence indicated by this term reflected a deep dissatisfaction among the *shramana* groups towards the world around them. All held the view that existence was unsatisfactory, but this could not have been because of the economic conditions they lived under. One possible explanation is that there might have been a high rate of disease in the area of north-eastern India where the Buddha lived, making death unpredictable, frequent and highly visible. In this situation, it would be rational to develop world-denying beliefs where the religious quest centred on transcending the possibilities of (repeated) death.

Review

- 1 In point form, **clarify** the characteristics of religious life in the Buddha's time.
- 2 **Describe** the significance of holy men in ancient India in the Buddha's time.
- 3 What was the *shramana* movement and what view did *shramanas* hold about existence?
- 4 Prepare a chart to **outline** the historical and cultural context in which Buddhism began.

The Buddha—life and enlightenment

Glossary

buddhahood	The view that all beings have within them the potentiality to become a Buddha and possess enlightening knowledge.
dhamma (<i>dharma</i>)	The complete body of the teachings of the Buddha or any other teacher. <i>Dhamma</i> is a Pali word based on the Sanskrit word <i>dharma</i> . It is used in this chapter unless it occurs as <i>dharma</i> in a name. Buddhist texts were composed in both Sanskrit and Pali and so both spellings will be found in Buddhist literature. The meaning is identical in both cases.
nirvana	The state of no suffering, desire or sense of self that results from enlightenment; the extinction of desire.
schismatic	A word describing the process where a group that has come together on the basis of common belief begins to split into different groups.



Figure 2.1.1 The Buddha seated in meditation in the position of a yogin with two attendants, 82 CE. This sculpture, carved from red sandstone, comes from the city of Mathura, India. It is an early example of the Buddha rendered in human form.

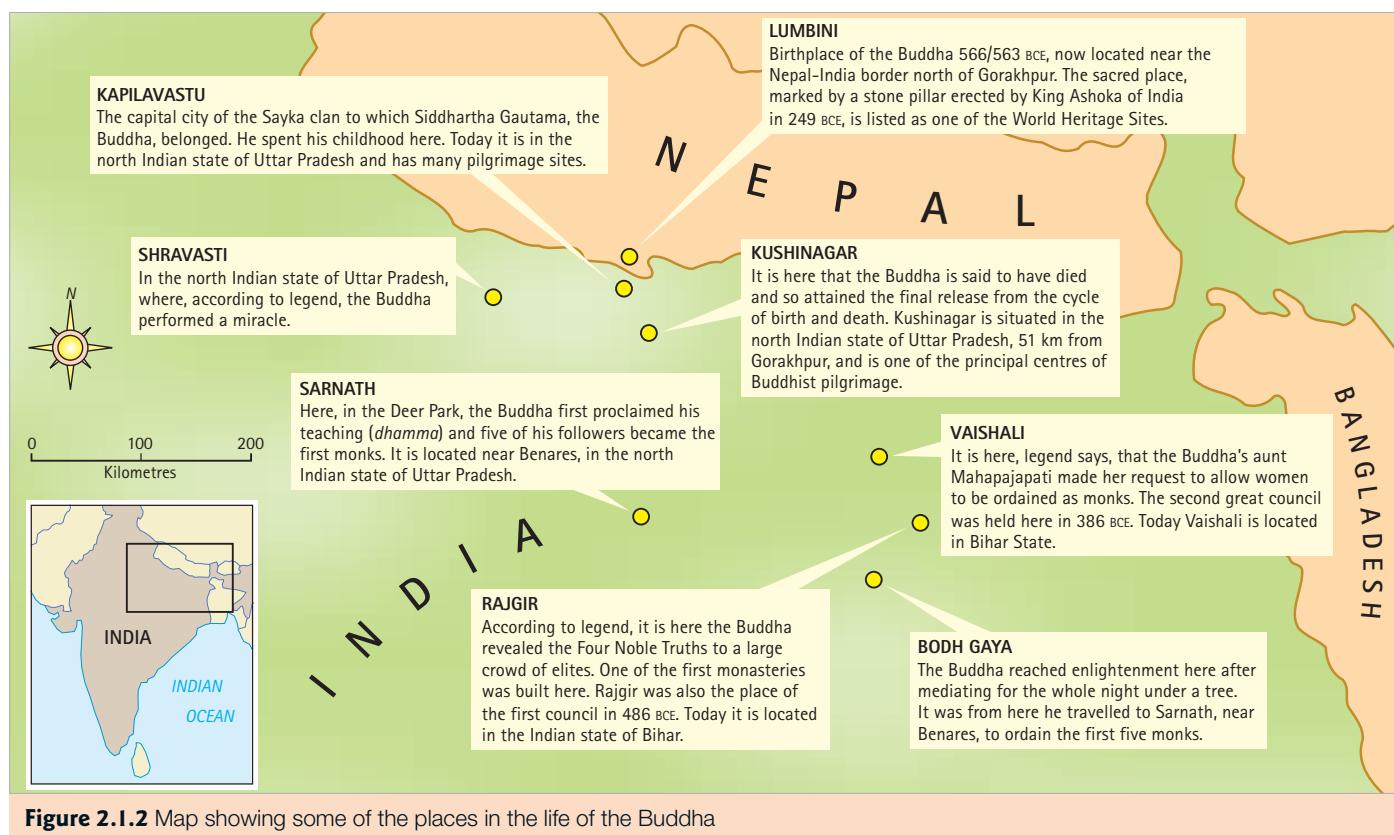


Figure 2.1.2 Map showing some of the places in the life of the Buddha

What we know about the Buddha's life comes from a series of biographies that were written several hundred years after his death—biographies that intermingle legend and myth with more verifiable material. The legendary material is very important in telling us how the Buddha was understood by later Buddhists. It makes it difficult, however, to draw out a detailed and accurate picture of his life. Nor do we know much about him at all until after the age of twenty-nine when he left his palatial home to seek enlightenment.

The bare facts are that Siddhartha Gautama was born in Lumbini, located in the small state of Shaka in south-eastern Nepal, in 566/563 BCE or perhaps a century later. He was raised in well-to-do circumstances, was married and had a son at the age of sixteen. At the age of twenty-nine, disillusioned with his life, he abandoned his wife and son and became a student of various philosophers and yogins. He became expert in certain meditational practices, and studied most of the philosophies that were prevalent at that time. The textual sources, however, indicate that he remained extremely frustrated at his lack of success in overcoming self-doubt and experiencing what would be called *nirvana*.

After six years of wandering over the present-day Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and experimenting with the teachings of the so-called six heretical teachers, he arrived at Bodh Gaya, located in Central Bihar. He placed himself under a tree, resolved he would not get up until he attained enlightenment and meditated for the entire night. He thus experienced a state of psychological relief that

LUMBINI

Birthplace of the Buddha 566/563 BCE, now located near the Nepal-India border north of Gorakhpur. The sacred place, marked by a stone pillar erected by King Ashoka of India in 249 BCE, is listed as one of the World Heritage Sites.

KUSHINAGAR

It is here that the Buddha is said to have died and so attained the final release from the cycle of birth and death. Kushinagar is situated in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, 51 km from Gorakhpur, and is one of the principal centres of Buddhist pilgrimage.

VAISHALI

It is here, legend says, that the Buddha's aunt Mahapajapati made her request to allow women to be ordained as monks. The second great council was held here in 386 BCE. Today Vaishali is located in Bihar State.

BODH GAYA

The Buddha reached enlightenment here after meditating for the whole night under a tree. It was from here he travelled to Sarnath, near Benares, to ordain the first five monks.

enabled him to be detached from all desire and affirmed the truth of the new system of thought he had developed.

He no longer directed his thought on to the supra-divine and unconscious spheres his masters had taught him, but on to the mystery of death and rebirth and the suppression of rebirth in the world of appearances.

E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien: des Origines à l'ère Saka*, Louvain, 1958, p. 17

Claiming that he was awakened (*buddho*), he travelled to Benares, ordained the five monks and then preached his famous sermon called *The Turning of the Wheel of the Law*, in which he introduced the Four Noble Truths and the important teaching of no-self. These provided a clear doctrinal foundation that distinguished the Buddhist ***dhamma*** from all other sets of teachings, and made available a declaration of beliefs that was suitable for use in teaching the basics of what came to be known as Buddhism. After this, the Buddha spent another forty-five years moving around north-eastern India (often staying in the large capital cities) converting people and teaching his own path to enlightenment.

Beyond this basic data, it is difficult to fill in the details. However, we do know that the Buddha spent much time dealing with elites—those who possessed material resources, political power and social status. He knew both Bimbisara and Ajatashatru, kings of the newly formed great kingdom or state of Magadha. He also put

considerable effort into visiting small villages—where he was presented as a virtual celebrity—in Magadha and the neighbouring state of Koshala. In the villages he preached the *dhamma* and gained financial and material support from people of all classes of society. It is likely that he also oversaw the establishment of the first monasteries in the two large cities of Savatthi and Rajgir. We have no idea how big these were, but we know they were initially used for shelter during the rainy season.

Near the end of the Buddha's life, his cousin Devadatta attempted to assassinate him. This attempt was partly due to **schismatic** movements that were already developing in the growing Buddhist community. While it was unsuccessful and the Buddha reconciled with Devadatta, it foreshadowed the many schisms to come.

Did you know?

One of the stories about the Buddha says that his father was a king, and that when the prince (the Buddha) left the palace he saw a poor man, a sick man, a dead man and a holy man. To the prince, only the holy man seemed truly happy. It was this encounter that formed the basis of his philosophy: all life contains suffering. Poverty, illness and death challenge all of us.



Figure 2.1.3 An example of a gilded Thai Buddha

In the end, the most important information to take from the body of biographical sources is the image of the Buddha that was being taught, the highly social nature of the religion, and the emergence of the *sangha*. The image of the Buddha that was being taught is significant because it provides a model of **buddhahood**—one that is traditionally regarded among the Theravadin school as the mandatory path of attainment of buddhahood for all Buddhas.

- ▶ Refer to pages 24–7 for a more detailed explanation of buddhahood.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** the term 'Buddha'.
- 2 **Describe** the enlightenment of the Buddha.
- 3 **Examine** the principal events of the Buddha's life and prepare a chart to show these events.
- 4 **Clarify** what is important about the biographical sources of the life of the Buddha. Does it matter whether they are legendary or not?
- 5 **Explain** why the Buddha is the model of Buddhist life.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 21 to find out more about the life of the Buddha. **Compare** the information with what you have learnt about the Buddha's life.

The formation of the *sangha*

Glossary

Ashoka	King and ruler of the Mauryan empire 269–232 BCE, and prominent supporter of the <i>sangha</i> .
Pali	The language of Theravada Buddhist texts.
stupa	A monument containing relics or other sacred objects.
Vinaya	The name given to the collections of books detailing the conduct of monks, and a word denoting correct conduct.

The first book of the *Vinaya*, the five-volume Book of Conduct, begins with the enlightenment of the Buddha and describes in general terms the growth of the *sangha* over the next twelve years. It tells of the conversion, at the Deer Park in Sarnath, of the five monks who had previously rejected the Buddha before he had achieved his enlightenment. It then presents many anecdotes about the conversion of prominent lay figures into the Buddhist *sangha* and the development of an informal lay following. This informal lay following would be used as a permanent base for sustaining the *sangha*, which eventually included both monks and nuns, none of whom engaged in paid work.

Initially, all of the monks were wanderers who taught the Buddhist *dhamma* and converted people. Many of the individual texts found in the *Vinaya* and some other Pali narrative texts were developed around a framework of conversion, indicating how important early Buddhists thought it was to demonstrate their success at this. The conversion of Yasa is an excellent example because it also illustrates the social tensions that arose when a person became a monk.

The conversion of Yasa

Yasa was the son of a wealthy merchant who lived in Benares. On witnessing some dancing girls sleeping in ungainly poses he became upset and said to himself, 'What distress! What affliction!' Immediately he left home, aided by some divine beings, and went straight to the Deer Park where he met the Buddha. The Buddha intuited by his special psychic powers that Yasa's mind was sufficiently prepared and malleable enough to be able to receive the teachings of the *dhamma*. On receiving these teachings, Yasa took the very brief ordination ritual that would allow him to become a monk.

In the meantime, his father came looking for him. He too found the Buddha, received the teachings, became a lay Buddhist and when asked, agreed with the Buddha that Yasa would not be able to re-enter lay life, even though Yasa's mother was very upset that he had become a monk.

Next Yasa's wife and brother met the Buddha and became lay disciples. Then four men, friends of Yasa's, became monks, fifty of their friends became monks and then monks brought in other people from outlying areas to receive ordination.

From I. B. Horner, *Book of the Discipline*, Part IV, Luzac, London, 1971, pp. 11–29

This is a summary of a longer narrative that explains Yasa's disgust with the material world (the original impulse for him seeking ordination), but also focuses on his mother and father trying to prevent him from becoming a monk. This and other accounts in a number of Buddhist texts tell us that there was a high level of concern among the families of those (often very young) men who took the Buddha's path at the level of the monk. Taking such a path meant a complete break with their own families, although the monks were not prevented from visiting them. The account also tells us that initially the *sangha* grew virtually by word of mouth.

Mahapajapati's request

At first the Buddha allowed only men to be ordained, even though he was approached three times by Mahapajapati, his aunt, to let women be ordained as nuns. It was only after the Buddha's cousin Ananda intervened that he relented at Mahapajapati's third request and a female *sangha* was established. Even then he predicted that allowing women to enter the *sangha* would weaken the entire *sangha*, eventually leading to its decline after 500 years. The view was that women could never be as spiritually developed as men. But the *sangha* of nuns has survived to the present day in various forms, and eventually entire handbooks of rules designed specifically for nuns were produced.



Figure 2.1.4 Monks' quarters at the Sunnataram Forest Monastery at Bundanoon, New South Wales. It is a Theravada Buddhist monastery in the Thai forest tradition and was established in July 1990.

It is likely there were Buddhist monks in the large cities of north-eastern India by the time of the Buddha's death. Certainly at the council at Rajgir held straight after his death (see page 23), the proceedings had to wait

until a number of monks arrived from distant places. Still we cannot accurately know how geographically widespread the *sangha* was at this time, nor the number of its members. The early Pali texts consistently mention that the Buddha was accompanied by either 500 or 1250 monks during his travels through north-eastern India. These figures must have been exaggerations—the resources needed to feed this number of wanderers would simply not have been available. What is more significant than the numbers is the attempt to show that the *sangha* was growing constantly, and that the monks and nuns were being provided with resources by an increasingly large lay following.

Very little is known about the development of the *sangha* in the period between the death of the Buddha (486/483 BCE) and the ascension of **Ashoka** to the throne of Magadha (269 BCE). It did develop during this time, however, because two councils were held to discuss doctrinal differences, and Ashoka himself, in one of his official edicts (proclamations), warned the *sangha* against schismatic activity. This implies it had increased in size and that schisms—which had been apparent almost since the beginning of the Buddha's preaching activity—were continuing to occur. Beyond this we know almost nothing about the growth of Buddhism up until Ashoka's reign—archaeological evidence is unclear, and the texts are difficult to date. It is likely that the number of Buddhists remained small, and they were restricted to the geographical area where the Buddha himself had travelled.

- Ashoka is a significant person considered in Chapter 10, pages 230–1.

After Ashoka's reign, Buddhism expanded dramatically. This can easily be measured by the huge number of Buddhist archaeological remains (including *stupas*, 'funerary monuments' and monasteries) that can be dated from between 200 BCE and 400 CE, and the large body of regulations governing the behaviour of monks that was recorded in several sets of *Vinaya* literature.

- *Vinaya*, the monastic code of conduct, is dealt with in detail on page 37.

The early councils

There were at least four councils held within the first 600 years of Indian Buddhism. The first three were by far the most important, with two in particular being instrumental in furthering the schisms in the Buddhist *sangha* that eventually led to the development of the

Theravada and Mahayana schools (see pages 24–7). Our knowledge of the councils is based on texts that were all written centuries after they were held. This means that the doctrinal conflicts that characterised the second and third councils are extremely difficult to unravel.

The council at Rajgir—486/483 BCE

The first council was held at Rajgir (then known as Rajagriha) immediately after the Buddha's death. It involved a full recitation of the Discourses of the Buddha (the *Suttapitaka* and the *Vinaya*, as both then existed), in what was probably an attempt to distinguish what was the authentic word of the Buddha from what was not. Whatever actually happened, the brief reports of this council show that there was already concern about purifying aberrant teachings from those that were regarded as genuine. Each subsequent Buddhist school always claimed it possessed the true essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Important as this council was for establishing the Buddha's teachings, the second one was more important still.

The council at Vaishali—386 BCE

Schisms were strongly evident in the second council, held at Vaishali, where disputes over both doctrine and the rules of monkish conduct were aired.

Ten areas of dispute

The ten areas of dispute at the second council at Vaishali were:

- 1 Carrying salt in an animal horn
- 2 Taking food past noon
- 3 Travelling to one village to eat after already having eaten in one village
- 4 Holding several assemblies of the *sangha*
- 5 Confirming *sangha* business in an incomplete assembly
- 6 Citing habit as the authority for violations of monastic procedures
- 7 Drinking milk whey after meals
- 8 Drinking unfermented wine
- 9 Using a mat with fringes
- 10 Accepting gold and silver

These areas of dispute relate to the interpretation of how monks should conduct themselves and are specifically directed at gluttony, ostentatious behaviour and the

possession of money. For example, if a monk was allowed to carry salt in a horn, he could store food and so could potentially eat at any time during the day, whereas traditionally monks were only supposed to eat in the morning and cease at noon—a reference to the second rule. To us, at a distance of more than 2000 years, these points seem very obscure. However, these disputes crystallise arguments about laxity or looseness of monkish conduct, and strongly suggest a growing split out of which the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Buddhism may have developed. It was easier to measure this split in terms of the much more straightforward monkish conduct than in terms of doctrine, which could be notoriously difficult to interpret.

- Find out more about the schools of Buddhism on pages 24–7.

The council at Pataliputra—c. 251 BCE

The third council was held at Pataliputra during Ashoka's reign and under his patronage. In several of his edicts, Ashoka had warned against schismatic activity, which indicates that it had been highly visible during his reign. Like the other councils, this one attempted to iron out further disagreements over both conduct and doctrine. But it also decided to start sending Buddhist monks outside of India, beginning the internationalisation of the religion.

The overall effect of the councils was probably not to purify the essence of the Buddha's teachings, but to intensify divisions that had most likely existed since the Buddha's own lifetime.

Review

- 1 **Recall** the names of people and/or groups who were among the earlier followers of the Buddha.
- 2 **Describe** the early formation of the *sangha*.
- 3 What was Mahapajapati's request?
- 4 **Summarise** the evidence on which the knowledge of the early formation of the *sangha* is based.
- 5 Make a chart that gives a brief outline of each of the three councils.
- 6 **Identify** the importance of the first two councils in the development of Buddhism.
- 7 **Explain** why the disputes in the *sangha* occurred. In your explanation, refer to the conduct of monks rather than to matters of the Buddha's teachings.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 24 to find out more about the early disciples of the Buddha. Choose two early disciples and prepare a brief summary of who they were and why each is important.

The schools of Buddhism

Glossary

arahant	A monk who seeks to attain enlightenment only for himself.
bodhi	Enlightening knowledge attained when a person achieves buddhahood.
bodhisattva	One who is close to enlightenment but forgoes <i>nirvana</i> to help others escape <i>samsara</i> .
emptiness	The view that everything is interdependent and is caused by something else, and so has no intrinsic reality of its own.
karma	The Sanskrit word <i>karma</i> literally means 'action that is pregnant with its fruits'—action that will inevitably lead to certain results.
samsara	The opposite of <i>nirvana</i> . A name for existence seen as bondage to a set of ongoing rebirths caused by <i>karma</i> .

- The teachings of Buddhism mentioned in this section are dealt with in detail on pages 28–32.

By approximately 100 years after the third council, the Buddhist *sangha* existed within two fundamental tendencies, later often classified as schools—Theravada and Mahayana. Both schools, and their extensive subdivisions, operate based on the common set of teachings that are claimed to derive from the Buddha himself, yet there are substantial areas of divergence. It is important, however, not to overstress the differences between the two schools. Traditionally, Buddhists of the different schools would stay in the monasteries of the other school when on pilgrimage, and much of the initial differentiation occurred at the rather abstract level of doctrine.

Theravada

The first school was Theravada Buddhism. Its expressions are found today in Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia and Thailand. The earliest available teachings of the Buddha, which are in the Pali Canon, belong to the Theravada. It is the most orthodox school of Buddhism.

► For more information on the Pali Canon see pages 33–4.

The teaching of the Buddha is very plain—‘abstain from all kinds of evil, to accumulate all that is good to purify the mind’. This can be accomplished by the Three Trainings: the development of ethical conduct, meditation and insight. The Theravada philosophy is that all worldly phenomena are subject to three characteristics:

- they are impermanent and transient
- they are unsatisfactory and there is nothing in them that can be called one’s own, nothing substantial, nothing permanent
- all compounded things (those things in a person’s mind, rather than those external to the mind) are made up of two elements—the material and the non-material.

The focus of Theravada has always been on the Buddha as an individual who attained enlightenment, and on the individual attainment of enlightenment by the monk (*arahant*). It maintains a sharp division between monk/nun and layperson. The Buddha is a model for what can be achieved by other individuals. But while the Buddha achieved enlightenment on his own, Theravadins require assistance from the wise members of the *sangha*. And although the Buddha might have been treated like a god by his lay followers, Theravada literature downplays this view of the Buddha.

Mahayana

Mahayana Buddhism is now found over most of Asia, but it is most prominent in Tibet, China and Japan. For Mahayanists, the Buddha is always treated as a transcendent, god-like figure—one who can leave his blissful state of *nirvana* to re-enter the external world to help other beings in whatever way seems appropriate. A related belief concerns the figure of the *bodhisattva* and the distinctive pathway to enlightening knowledge (*bodhi*) associated with this.



Figure 2.1.5 Bodhisattva Manjusri, India, 800–850 CE. Scholars have identified Manjusri as ‘the oldest and most significant mythic bodhisattva in the Mahayana tradition’.

Early Mahayanists took pains to criticise what they considered to be Theravada. In the early Mahayana literature, the Theravada tendency is named Hinayana or ‘lesser vehicle’, where *hina* is a derogatory term—the opposite of the *maha* or ‘great’, which was used to describe what became Mahayana. The same literature accuses the Theravada *arahant* of fearing the world of *samsara*, and of being preoccupied with their own enlightenment to the detriment of helping those who cannot become monks or nuns, and so cannot enter the Noble Eightfold Path (see page 32). In short, it implies they are selfish. In contrast, Mahayana, while including the *arahant* as a possible pathway to *nirvana*, shifts its emphasis to the *bodhisattva*, a figure whose path to *nirvana* requires them to help others escape from *samsara*, and to help them within *samsara*.

The three fundamental themes developed in the Mahayana literature are:

- the *bodhisattva*
- the **emptiness** of all phenomena
- that all humans possess within them the potentiality for buddhahood.



Figure 2.1.6 Tibetan painting depicting an unidentified *bodhisattva* with various *bodhisattvas*, deities and holy men, from Lhasa, 1780–1880, paper mounted on silk

The *bodhisattva* role is conceived as a pathway to enlightenment, but it differs from *nirvana* in that the attainment of enlightening knowledge is all important and the *bodhisattva*'s complete withdrawal from *samsara* is played down. The *bodhisattva* path assumes that every individual has the potential to attain buddhahood. It prescribes ten stages involving the attainment of six 'perfections', each centred on the giving of something. The figure of the *bodhisattva*, and the path itself, require the aspiring *bodhisattva* to take vows that they will take all sentient beings to enlightenment. In practice, this puts great emphasis on self-sacrifice and unselfishness, both spiritual and material. When a *bodhisattva* is enlightened, they can continue to live in the world or after death in any number of heavens, with the qualification that they can always reappear when called upon by their devotees. This is why *bodhisattvas* became such important cultic figures in all countries where Mahayana Buddhism has flourished.

The teaching of the emptiness of all phenomena probably existed in embryonic form in the Buddha's teachings.

It was systematised by the great second century CE philosopher Nagarjuna. He declared that when the elements that make up perceived objects are examined, they are really no more than mental phenomena and have no true existence. He argued that even the most basic Buddhist concepts such as *karma* and *dhamma* were concepts whose interdependence rested on their presence within a web of language.

While Nagarjuna's teachings remain difficult to understand, his ideas became enormously influential in most later schools of Mahayana Buddhism.

From the practical point of view of gaining liberation, Nagarjuna's ideas had one fundamental implication—that buddhahood was potentially available to everyone if only they knew how to find it. One way was meditation on the teachings of Nagarjuna, another was by simply seeing and



Figure 2.1.7 The ninth century Zen master Hotei pointing to the full moon (original Japanese woodblock print, 1888). The full moon is a symbol of ultimate truth. The 'finger pointing at the moon' is a favourite Zen image that indicates the need to distinguish reality from its symbols—for example, ultimate truth from its descriptions in words.

realising this truth through a flash of insight. Sometimes this flash of insight could be provoked by the hearing of a particular verse (*koan*), a practice that became famously associated with the Chinese Ch'an school of Buddhism and its Japanese equivalent, Zen.

Koans

A *koan* is a problem or riddle, often involving a paradox, which has no solution. A number of *koans* have become fairly well known, such as: 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' Others include:

- How do you get a goose out of a bottle without breaking the bottle or injuring the goose?
- Two monks were observing a flag flapping in the wind. They began to argue about whether the wind or the flag was moving. Hui-Nêng said, 'It is your mind that is moving.'
- A monk asked Joshu, 'Why did Bodhidharma come to China?' Joshu said, 'The oak tree in the garden.'

A pupil would be given a verse containing an apparent riddle. But no matter how much the pupil might try to solve it, resolution only occurred when the pupil realised that there was no solution. This led them to step completely outside of their normal thought patterns and then discover the emptiness of all phenomena—breaking them away from habitual behaviour that was keeping them in *samsara*.

For a committed Mahayanist, the point of most activity is to access this already existent state of enlightenment, which is somewhat concealed by the mass of information in the mind, especially emotional material.

Vajrayana

Out of Mahayana came the more mystically inclined Vajrayana. It probably started in north India, but was widely developed in Tibet after the eleventh century. Vajrayana gave rise to a whole set of literary developments. It built on the teachings of emptiness and the idea of potential buddhahood, asserting that enlightening knowledge could be spontaneously attained by visualising Buddhas and other divine figures under the guidance of a teacher. Students would be initiated into higher levels of knowledge and given verses to recite that should not be divulged to non-initiates. It is the recitation of such verses and the visualisation of the images of those already enlightened that brings forth the enlightening knowledge.

Then he should make the wrathful hand-gesture and divulge the symbolic gesture of Being-Vajra. He causes (the pupil) to recite a *vajra*-verse of his choice pertaining to intuitive knowledge of the Mahayana. Thus it pervades him, and as soon as it does so, divine wisdom becomes manifest. By means of that wisdom he knows the thoughts of others; he knows all events in past, present and future; his heart is confirmed in the teaching of all Buddhas; all sufferings are ended; all fear is dispersed; he is invulnerable to all beings ...

Extract from pp. 63–72 of the *Sarvatathagatataattvasamgraha*, translated in D. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan Successors*, 1987, Serindia Publications, London, p. 218

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'buddhahood'.
- 2 **Explain** the meaning of *bodhisattva*.
- 3 Which school of Buddhism is seen as the most orthodox?
- 4 To which school of Buddhism does Zen belong?
- 5 How would you **explain** what a *koan* is?
- 6 In point form, **outline** the unique features of each of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.
- 7 **Construct** a chart to show where the main schools of Buddhism are found.

Extension



- 1 Go the web destinations for page 27 to find out more about the different schools of Buddhism. **Outline** the common ground between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.
- 2 Choose four topics and use these to **distinguish** differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.
- 3 Make a table to **compare** and **contrast** what the three different schools of Buddhism have in common and where they differ.

2.2 Principal teachings

Did you know?

Teachings or beliefs? From a Buddhist point of view, the word ‘belief’ has a rather negative ring to it—it means ‘trust in ideas whose truth one has not personally experienced’. Beliefs are known in Buddhism as ‘views’. The Buddhist approach is that one should know for oneself through deep exploration of one’s human potential, which was the Buddha’s experience. The Buddha taught his own followers not to believe even his own teachings, but to test them and discover for themselves whether they were true, just as a jeweller tests gold to make sure it is genuine.

The Three Jewels—the Buddha, *dhamma* and *sangha*

The ideals at the heart of Buddhism are collectively known as the Three Jewels:

- the Buddha refers to the historical Buddha and to the ideal of buddhahood that is open to all
- *dhamma* signifies the totality of the Buddha’s teachings
- the *sangha*, in its broadest sense, means all the Buddhists in the world and those of the past and the future.

At the centre of the Buddha’s *dhamma* lies his diagnosis of the human condition. This is given as a rather brief set of propositions that accurately describe the condition of all so-called ‘sentient beings’, which includes animals and gods as well as humans. These propositions are called the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths depend on a more fundamental and seemingly simple view of the constancy of change. This is expressed by the idea that ‘whatever is of a nature to rise up, all that is of a nature to stop’, and that a relation of interdependence between things always exists. Simple as this seems, the task for someone who aspires to enlightenment is to understand existence itself, and not just as one particular interpretation of perceived reality among many others.

From this insight comes the understanding that all existence is movement, an idea often expressed by the technical term *samsara*. This term is impossible to

translate literally into English in any meaningful sense, but roughly means ‘the run-around’ or ‘the whirl of existence’. When fleshed out with details from the texts, *samsara* brings with it the idea of culturally (and self-) determined wants, the gaining of which lead to a desire for other goals and the quest for continued existence in *samsara* to achieve these further desires. Both resistance to the ongoing circle of change and the decision to flow with it (in the belief one can influence its direction) lead to dissatisfaction—a dissatisfaction the Buddha regarded as being inevitable. The Buddha adopted the Sanskrit word *dukkha* (Pali *dukkha*) for this dissatisfaction, which is often misleadingly translated as ‘suffering’.

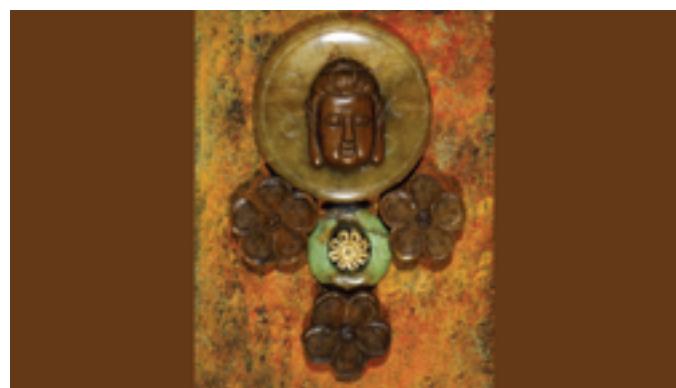


Figure 2.2.1 A contemporary image of the Three Jewels by Suzanne Martino

RESPOND

How is the artist explaining the Three Jewels?

The Four Noble Truths

The truths can be defined in these words:

- there exists *dukkha*
- there is the arising of *dukkha*
- there is the cessation of *dukkha*
- there is the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.

Often presented as simple formulas, the truths are best understood by Buddhist intellectuals and highly educated monks. For the majority of lay Buddhists these truths are known but are too remote from their daily lives. But they do lie at the heart of the Buddha’s vision of the nature of existence, and to that extent inform all later developments in Buddhist philosophy and scholarship. They can be depicted in a more accessible manner in Buddhist art, especially in Tibetan and Chinese art where the so-called Wheel of Life, a metaphor for *samsara*, was often the subject of paintings.

The directness of the truths allows them to be analysed in different ways. For instance, the first and third truths can be regarded as contradicting each other because if the first asserts the presence of *dukkha*, the third asserts its absence. Similarly, the second truth explains the process of the arising of *dukkha*, the fourth the process for its reversal. This conforms with the basic assumption that things rise and things fall in a consistent and interdependent manner. That an individual's immersion in *dukkha* can occur over a very large number of lives gives much more weight to the possibilities of coping with it. If one experienced *dukkha* over only one birth, one could conceivably cope with it, but its ongoing presence induces a kind of world-weariness in those who are subject to it.



Figure 2.2.2 The footprints of the Buddha. This limestone panel is from the Great Stupa at Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, India, 1 BCE. In the early period of Buddhist sculpture, the Buddha was not represented as a human figure, but through symbols. In the centre of each foot is a *dharma-chakra* (Wheel of the Law/Life). On the heels are *tritratnas* representing the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

The First Noble Truth

In defining the continual presence of *dukkha*, the first truth explains the Buddha's view of existence as having three basic characteristics, called the three marks of existence. Each of these marks can be understood in an existential sense, in a more pointed lifestyle sense and in artistic form.

The three marks of existence

- 1 **Dukkha** asserts that existence is always and ultimately unsatisfying at its deepest level of comprehension.
- 2 **Anicca** is the idea that everything is in a state of constant flux. Such impermanence can be seen around us constantly by mere observation, whether this is in the seasons or the changes in our own bodies. The mind, itself in a continuous process of change, is an observer of all the other changes going on around it. The Second Noble Truth (see below) actually proposes a sophisticated twelve-linked chain of elements that underlies and drives all change occurring in an individual's life, but at the same time explains the mechanism whereby this occurs. Where this becomes fundamental for individuals is in the attitude they take towards it.
- 3 **Anatta** asserts the absence of an individual self—what the Buddha called 'non-self'. Buddhists and scholars alike have still not been able to determine precisely what the Buddha meant when he referred to the 'non-self'. Did it refer to the absence of a self that existed beyond the fluctuations of the mind and the ongoing rebirths caused by *karma*? Was it something existing beyond the personality? These questions have never been answered with universal agreement. To accept *anatta* one has to accept that there is nothing that separates the self from every other part of existence. Attachment to the idea of a permanent self, however, is much easier to accept than attachment to something impermanent.

The Second Noble Truth

The Second Noble Truth explains the arising of *dukkha* by describing the workings of the forces causing a person to be reborn across two or possibly three lives, depending on how the meaning of the chain is understood. If the First Noble Truth explains the exact circumstance of existence as it occurs at any given time, the Second Noble Truth explains what it is that drives any given individual being through this existence. This explanation is absolutely essential given the Buddhist emphasis on process, which is demonstrated in the related doctrines of *karma* and rebirth. But the same truth is also fundamental in explaining how rebirth can occur in the absence of a permanent self, the existence of which is rejected firmly in the First Noble Truth.

So the Second Noble Truth defines the nature of the person and the psychological forces that give rise to the individual's wish for continued existence, along with the actions that produce karmic results and are necessary for this continued existence.

This process of change and development is summarised in a rather technical conceptualisation called the twelve-linked chain of dependent origination. This chain shows that its twelve component parts are dependent upon each other for their sequential appearance. It assumes the presence of ignorance about the true nature of existence, which most people think of in entirely opposite terms to those laid down in the First Noble Truth. That is, they believe in a permanent self, that life can be fundamentally satisfying and that there is the possibility of permanence within the world.

The complete chain is the sum of its individual parts and the relation of interdependence existing between them. Because each component arises in dependence upon the previous one, the whole set of twelve links is not thought of as having a finite beginning and end, but instead as a circle flowing ever onwards, almost an exact synonym of *samsara* itself. In this way, ignorance gives rise to karmic impulses, and these give rise to the five component parts of the body. Four of these component parts are mental and bring about the interaction between the mind and the external world. Dependent upon the mind is craving; and dependent upon this is grasping after the object of desire. This in fact defines the actual mechanics of *karma*—the desires that lead to actions that will result in further rebirths, the ‘final’ part of the twelve-linked chain.



Figure 2.2.3 A Tibetan *thangka* depicting the *bhavacakra*. A *thangka* is a complicated, composite, three-dimensional picture panel that is painted or embroidered.

The *bhavacakra*

The individual components of the chain (*bhavacakra*) as represented in art:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 ignorance | a blind old woman |
| 2 volitional impulses | pots being made by a potter |
| 3 consciousness | a monkey plucking fruit |
| 4 personality | a boat on the journey |
| 5 the six sense-organs | a house with many windows |
| 6 contact | the act of kissing |
| 7 feeling | a man with an arrow in his eye |
| 8 desire | a drinking scene |
| 9 appropriation | plucking fruit from a tree |
| 10 the process of becoming | a pregnant woman |
| 11 birth | a birth scene |
| 12 old age and death | a corpse being carried to its place of disposal |

Following D. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan Successors*, 1987, Serindia Publications, London, p. 15

Karma

One of the aims of the chain of dependent origination is to define and explain *karma*. The essential idea of *karma* derives from the very basic Buddhist view that things rise and fall in dependence on each other. From this comes the belief that all intentions ripen into corresponding future responses to these intentions. Although *karma* means ‘action’ (among other things), it is the mind’s intention to act, or the willed action (action carried out by choice), that is of central concern for the Buddha.

The theory of *karma* is the theory of cause and effect, of action and reaction; it is a natural law that has nothing to do with the idea of justice or reward or punishment. Every volitional action produces its effects or results. If a good action produces good effects and a bad action bad effects, it is not justice, or reward, or punishment meted out by anybody or any power sitting in judgement on your action, but this is in virtue of its own nature, its own law.

Walpola Rahula, *What The Buddha Taught*, 1959 (revised 1974), p. 32

Because *karma* establishes reactions that are seen only within the world around us and because of the continuity it establishes from life to life, it appears very much like *samsara*, where one life flows into another, as if echoing the flow suggested in the word *samsara*.

This continuity is best understood in the sense that intentions to act in a given life will ripen in a later life, at the same time as new actions are being proposed, the effects of which will themselves ripen in a subsequent life. Thus, an action—classified as good, bad or neutral—performed in one life will produce its effect in another life, but need not have a direct continuity with other actions performed in that life, which will ripen in a still later life.

Review

- 1 Recall the Three Jewels.
- 2 Identify the three marks of existence.
- 3 Write one sentence for each of the following words to clarify your understanding of the concepts: *dukkha*, *anicca*, *anatta*, *samsara*, *karma*.
- 4 In graphic form, demonstrate that you recognise the connection between *samsara* and *karma*.

Extension

- 1 In groups, discuss what it means to describe a person as having ‘no self’. Do people actually think in terms of having a self or not, or is this simply taken for granted by everyone? Share your ideas with other groups.
- 2 If you had to describe yourself in terms of the Buddhist non-self doctrine, how would you do so?
- 3 Review the components of the *bhavacakra* (page 30). The words in the first column are abstract; those in the second column describe highly graphic images. Assess whether the images accurately bring out what is expressed in the abstract words.
- 4 Do an internet search to find and download a large image of a *bhavacakra*. Can you identify each of the twelve components in it?

The Third Noble Truth

The Third Noble Truth simply asserts the cessation of *dukkha*, a condition the Buddha called *nirvana*. This word has been imported into English to indicate the highest state a person can achieve. Like so many Buddhist terms, it is impossible to translate exactly. Literally, it means ‘blowing out’ and Buddhist texts describe it using only similes and metaphors such as ‘coolness’ and ‘the other shore’. However, it can be paraphrased as indicating the complete absence of desire within the mind. That is, the deepest psychological components found in the chain of dependent origination—craving and grasping—are absent, allowing a person to remain in complete control of themselves and to extinguish entirely the forces producing *karma* and rebirth.

To understand *nirvana* fully we need to be aware of its three-fold interrelated dimensions:

- a person who has utterly eradicated desire, the fundamental cause of rebirth, and therefore, *karma*
- a perfect knowledge of *dukkha* and an absence of it for the person who has attained *nirvana*, even if it continues to exist as the dominant quality for other humans
- the eradication of that special form of ignorance preventing individuals from realising the true nature of existence as demonstrated in the Four Noble Truths.

Among other things, the enlightened being will know intuitively their own *karma*, and the *karma* of others.

Each of these could be said to be accompaniments of *nirvana*, but *nirvana* should never be regarded as a kind of objective state that is attained by following a particular program of spiritual exercises. *Nirvana* can be attained either through a flash of insight, sometimes induced by a special oral teaching given by a Buddha or, more commonly, by following a distinctive path called the Noble Eightfold Path, which is laid down in the Fourth Noble Truth.

The Fourth Noble Truth

The Fourth Noble Truth is the practice of Buddhism—the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path

1 Right Understanding	Wisdom
2 Right Thought	
3 Right Speech	Conduct
4 Right Action	
5 Right Livelihood	Meditation
6 Right Effort	
7 Right Mindfulness	
8 Right Concentration	



Figure 2.2.4 The Noble Eightfold Path—the ‘Wheel of Enlightenment’

Each of the components in this path must be practised simultaneously. It is likely, however, that the ethical components ('Conduct')—those designed to regulate the monk's, nun's or layperson's interaction with other sentient beings, including (but not restricted to) humans—are mastered first.

'Wisdom' includes a knowledge of the Buddha's teachings. Initially, this knowledge will be intellectual—as taught by the Buddha—rather than existential in the sense that the teachings and the behaviour are seen as the core of one's life.

The three limbs classified under 'Conduct' involve the intentional practice of correct behaviour towards all beings. This behaviour is based on developing and showing the compassionate attitude that is supposed to

reside in and be cultivated by all Buddhists. It requires them not only to exercise 'wholesome' and positive responses towards all other people, but also to extend beneficial ethical and psychological attitudes throughout the world. It is right attitude that is stressed here, reflected in the precise rules of conduct for monks and nuns detailed in the *Vinaya* texts.

The 'Meditation' component of the path requires the cultivation of strenuous discipline of the mind. This is encompassed by two meditational procedures, one that empties out all emotions and thought patterns from the mind, the other that applies the empty mind to understanding fully the nature of the external world through four fundamental categories taught by the Buddha.

These meditational practices are not designed just to still the mind; they also prepare it so it can focus powerfully on those aspects of existence the aspirant is required to penetrate as deeply as possible, both intellectually and intuitively. This then flows through to the third component, 'Wisdom'.

Though placed first in the list of the individual parts of the Noble Eightfold Path, the 'Wisdom' component develops to its highest point by cultivating the other two parts. The two limbs of 'Wisdom' are composed mainly of the teachings of the Buddha, yet initially these teachings are only accepted on faith in the Buddha's competence as a great religious teacher. To finally reach *nirvana*, these teachings must be understood intuitively, so that they completely replace the ignorant beliefs and goal-oriented attitudes (desires) of most sentient beings.

In short, strenuous cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path contains the possibility of gaining the correct knowledge to eradicate desire, the capacity to discipline the mind and the constancy of living a wholly ethical life. These are the minimum preconditions for the attainment of *nirvana*.

This path is so stringent that it is restricted to those who live in a monastic environment or who don't need to engage in a secular (non-religious) occupation. For laypeople, a more simple path was developed—one that does not lead to *nirvana* in the short term, but leads to the development of an ethical stance and an understanding of how the world of *samsara* really operates.

These teachings form the bare minimum of the Buddha's own foundational sermon, which was part of the famous *The Turning of the Wheel of the Law*—the first sermon the Buddha preached after he had gained enlightenment. They are common to all Buddhists even if they were interpreted differently in the many different forms of Buddhism that sprung up within 500 years of the Buddha's death.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** *nirvana* and, in one paragraph, **outline** its importance in Buddhism.
- 2 **Identify** the Four Noble Truths and **describe** their significance.
- 3 **Explain** how the Noble Eightfold Path summarises the practice of Buddhism.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 33 for an explanation of the teachings of Buddhism. What further understandings of these teachings does the website provide?
- 2 Prepare an outline for a ten-minute talk on *samsara*, *karma* and *nirvana*.

texts comprising the sayings of the Buddha were being recorded and transmitted during his own lifetime, but anything we say about them is simply speculation.

Tripitaka

The *Tripitaka* or ‘The Three Baskets’ refers to the oldest complete Buddhist **canon**, the Pali Canon. It was composed in Pali, a language that was used primarily by monks and possibly for trade purposes as well.



Figure 2.3.1 Carved on 81 340 wood blocks in 1251, the Korean *Tripitaka* is housed in the library (Changgyong-gak) at Haein-sa.

2.3 Sacred texts and writings

Glossary

canon	The collection of texts recognised as having authority.
Pali	The language of Theravada Buddhism. Pali is closely related to Sanskrit and many words are similar in the two languages.
Sanskrit	The classical language of India.
sutra	A Buddhist scripture, said to be Buddha’s words.

We cannot definitely trace any one text directly back to the Buddha himself. But the Buddha is depicted as the speaker in most of the enormous amount of literature that has come down to us in at least twenty different languages and in genres ranging from philosophy to grammar, medicine to ritual, biography to poetry. It is reasonably certain that this literature dates from the middle of the third century BCE, because certain **Pali** texts are mentioned in the inscriptions of King Ashoka. No doubt a body of

Did you know?

There are complete canons in **Sanskrit**, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian, Manchu and Korean. Some of these have hundreds of volumes and not even one is known in its entirety by any single person. In addition, there are large bodies of post-canonical literature that are still important but do not have the same status within the tradition as the canonical literature.

The Pali Canon, the authoritative body of texts for Theravada Buddhists, is the best known by Westerners—it was brought to the West earlier than the others and is one of the shortest (approximately thirty-five volumes). Evidence from Sri Lanka suggests it existed by the mid-first century BCE. It is divided into three sections:

- *Sutta Pitaka*—comprises of sermons of the Buddha and some other material, and is sub-divided into five further sections
- *Vinaya Pitaka*—includes the complete rules regulating the behaviour of monks, many anecdotes surrounding these rules, and biographical data about the Buddha
- *Abhidhammapitaka*—discusses the basic elements of existence and other metaphysical material from the Buddha’s sermons.



Figure 2.3.2 Section of illustrated scroll of the *Lotus Sutra*, thirteenth century Japan

Of these, the third section is really only of interest to monks devoted to philosophical study, the second is in part memorised by monks who must know by heart the rules of conduct, and parts of the first are known by both monks and laypeople. The first is the most popular because it contains the actual teachings of the Buddha largely in what is said to be the Buddha's own words. Among the texts it contains is the *Dhammapada*, a collection of sayings offering a summary of the Buddha's teachings for the layperson.

Nobody should ever associate with anything that is pleasant or unpleasant. Not seeing pleasant things is pain. So too is seeing unpleasant things.

Therefore, do not deal with what is pleasant as loss of what is pleasant is bad. The person who has neither what is pleasant or unpleasant is not bound.

In a person whose thoughts are churned, whose passions are strong, who looks for what is pleasant, craving increases massively. He certainly makes his bondage very strong.

He who dwells in quieting his thoughts, always reflecting, dwells on what is not pleasant, he will certainly remove, he will certainly cut the bonds of death.

But he who delights in stilling his thoughts and always meditates on what is not auspicious ... he cuts the bonds of death.

A person without wisdom has no meditation, nor does a person who is not meditating have wisdom. The person in whom meditation and wisdom are present is close to *nirvana*.

These are pithy and easily remembered. However, their composition in Pali means only educated monks would have been capable of understanding them. Today the few Pali verses recited by laypeople are not really understood, and vernacular texts (those written in the local language) are most widely used.

Other canons are not organised as systematically as the Theravadin Pali Canon, though most contain similar kinds of material with notable additions. This means there is not a distinctive Mahayana canon. There are thousands of Mahayana texts, some extremely obscure and scarcely known, others quite famous. Apart from the so-called Perfection of Wisdom literature (1 BCE–4 CE), which gave rise to a large body of texts, the Mahayana texts were produced on an individual basis. One of the earliest of such texts is the *Saddharma-pundarika* or the *Lotus of the Good Law*.

Lotus of the Good Law

Possibly dating from the first century BCE, *Lotus of the Good Law* is one of the earliest texts that reveals clear Mahayanist tendencies of a kind that allow this stream of Buddhism to be distinguished from Hinayana. Composed in Sanskrit (it was quickly reworked into vernacular languages)—as opposed to the Pali of the Theravadins—it contains twenty-eight chapters. Many of the chapters give an anecdote illustrating how the Buddha, often in disguise, has rescued an individual or a family group from a disastrous situation, usually by using unorthodox means. Each plot is really a metaphor for the Buddha's enlightening role, where he explicitly helps people escape from a difficult situation.

The stories, when told in the vernacular, are accessible to a large audience because of the lively plots and the particular aspects of the Buddha being depicted. Above all, the Buddha is portrayed as saving other individuals who are either incapable of saving themselves or need an initial helping hand. This emphasis fits perfectly with the image of the Buddha as *bodhisattva*, where emphasis is always placed on helping other sentient beings attain liberation (or helping them escape from any other distressful situation) rather than just attaining liberation for oneself. This is an area where one of the main differences between Theravada and Mahayana is obvious.

For the Theravadins, the Buddha is regarded as a historical being who, by his own efforts, attained *nirvana*. He is significant, principally, as an example to others to follow the same path. In contrast, for Mahayanists, the Buddha of the *Lotus of the Good Law Sutra*—though enlightened—is not satisfied just to achieve this state, but also makes great efforts to bring other beings to liberation. As such he is virtually given the status of a god—in fact, some of the names used for him appear to have been taken over from Hindu gods. He is no longer the rather austere or stern figure of the Theravadin texts.

The *Tathagata* who is endowed with knowledge, strength, self-confidence—the distinctive characteristics and the teachings of a Buddha—is very strong by virtue of his magical powers, is the father of the world and has gained the highest perfection in the knowledge of skilful means. He has great compassion, his mind is entirely wearied, and he is benevolent and compassionate. He springs up in this triple world—which is like a dwelling whose roof has decayed and is burning due to a huge mass of depression and pain—in order to instigate the unsurpassed perfect knowledge ... and liberate beings from passion, hatred and delusion.

Saddharmapundarikasutra, p. 53

Note!

Tathagata is a term the Buddha used about himself as an individual who has brought an end to suffering and has reached *nirvana*.

The imagery in the many stories in the *Lotus Sutra* is dramatic and colourful, with the Buddha appearing in a range of different guises to trick, cajole and push the unenlightened people out of a state of ignorance onto the path towards enlightenment. However, this is not regarded as deception. Instead it is described by the technical term *upayakausalya* or ‘skilful means’.

The Lord of the world performs a difficult task when he displays his skilful means, taming his sons of low interest. When he has tamed them, he gives them knowledge.

Saddharmapundarikasutra, p. 82, vs. 49

This justifies the Buddha’s capacity to use virtually any means to extract individuals out of *samsara* in the same manner as a father uses all sorts of devices to entice his children out of a burning house at a time when they do not realise the seriousness of the fire (the tale told in the third book of the *Lotus Sutra*). The analogy is explained

by seeing the Buddha as the father and his sons as unenlightened people.

Because it is so obviously about the Buddha as saviour, the *Lotus Sutra* very quickly became a central text of Mahayana Buddhism and remains arguably the most important Buddhist text in Japan today, as it was in medieval Japan. It is because it is both positive and negative in its outlook towards received Buddhist ideas that it is considered such an important text in the development of the Mahayanist movement.

Tibetan Book of the Dead

Many texts have been of great importance for Buddhists in a variety of Asian countries. There are at least two separate (although related) canons in Tibetan covering the entire genre of Buddhist texts. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (a title given by W. Evans Wentz for the first English translation of the text) or *Great Liberation upon Hearing in the Bardo* (*Bar-do thos-grol chen-mo*) has been well known in the West following its first translation into English in 1927.



Figure 2.3.3 Illustration from a copy of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*

It is primarily a collection of funeral liturgies and descriptions of funerary rituals pertaining in part to any intermediate state between death and rebirth, named *bardo* in Tibetan—a stage where the consciousness of the deceased can be reborn either into *samsara* or into some enlightened state. Though deriving from Sanskrit texts composed in the mid-fifth century, the idea of an intermediate state between birth and death and death and birth gave rise to considerable speculation in Tibet. It led to a variety of different views covering at least four kinds of intermediate states, which were expressed in a large body of literature.

Great Liberation upon Hearing in the Bardo was ‘rediscovered’ (composed from an earlier source) in the late fourteenth century in south-eastern Tibet. Within a few centuries it had become the standard text used in performing funerary rituals that involved disposal of the body and the transferral of the consciousness of the deceased from one state into another. The intermediate state was always regarded as a potentially dangerous condition because the soul was wandering—it could easily go the wrong way and could be subject to attack from evil forces.

The aim of all the manuals dealing with the soul during the intermediate stage was to provide expiation (atonement) rituals for purifying it from evil acts (which produced bad *karma*) performed in the past and to guide it to an appropriate new body or back to *samsara* in a favourable body.

In basic terms, the *bardo* ritual is a plea for the purification of the sins of the departed, for release from the perilous pathways of the *bardo*, and for auspicious rebirth among one of the three higher destinies (human, demigod, or god). The prescribed texts that accompany these rites, such as those included in the *Peaceful and Wrathful Deities* and the *Liberation upon Hearing*, ritually recreate the circumstances of the deceased’s journey through the *bardo* after death and invoke the image of buddhas and *bodhisattvas* coming down to lead the departed along the path:

When the time has come to go alone and without friends, may the compassionate ones [buddhas and *bodhisattvas*] provide refuge to so-and-so [name of the deceased] who has no refuge. Protect her, defend her, be a refuge from the great darkness of the *bardo*, turn her away from the great storms of *karma*, provide comfort from the great fear and terror of the Lord of Death, deliver her from the long and perilous pathway of the *bardo*.

Bryan J. Cuevas, *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2003, OUP, New York, p. 74

Review

- 1 In point form, **clarify** what the Pali Canon is.
- 2 **Construct** a chart that shows the three major sacred texts of Buddhism. Include the language in which they were written, their approximate date of origin and a brief outline of the content of each.
- 3 In one paragraph for each, **explain**:
 - a how the Buddha of the *Lotus Sutra* differs from the Buddha of the Pali texts
 - b how the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* differs from *Tripitaka* and the *Lotus of the Good Law*.
- 4 **Identify** the importance of Buddhism in the three texts mentioned.
- 5 **Examine** the extracts provided from each of these three collections of writing and **summarise** how they **demonstrate** the principal teachings of Buddhism.

Extension



- 1 **Investigate** and write a one-paragraph summary about the symbolism of the lotus flower.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 36 to learn more about the Buddhist Scriptures and read them online.
- 3 Use the internet to find a multimedia presentation on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Write a twenty-line review of the presentation.

2.4 Core ethical teachings

Glossary

ethics

The system of explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices to clarify what is right and wrong, and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.

- The application of Buddhist ethics to specific issues is addressed in Chapter 10, pages 234–8.

Buddhist **ethics** do not consist of a set of rules or commandments imposed from ‘above’. Buddhist scriptures and commentaries certainly provide general guidelines for ethical behaviour, but few moral issues are discussed in those texts. Many works, such as the *Vinaya* or monastic code, are aimed at a monastic audience and so are not always of great relevance to the Buddhist layperson. But for both groups—monks/nuns and laypeople—the ethics are based on the twin principles of causing no harm of any sort to living beings, and striving for the welfare of all beings.

Vinaya

The Noble Eightfold Path (see page 32) shows that ethics are central to the lifestyle of the Buddhist monk or nun. At the heart of this is the need to show compassion in everything that they do. Yet the lifestyle of the monk (*bhikkhu*) or nun (*bhikkhuni*), whether lived inside or outside a monastic environment, was a lifestyle where one had to avoid at all costs conditions under which desire might arise. The *Vinaya* rules are designed to remove members of the monastic *sangha* from such situations, and the meditational practices complement this physical and social removal by taking away the roots of desire altogether.

The *Vinaya* rules may seem restrictive—they impose strict limitations on the social activity of the monk/nun, especially in the areas of sexuality and taking what is not appropriate for them. On the other hand, the injunction to practise compassion towards all sentient beings can be regarded as being expansive because it requires the monk/nun to take an active interest in the affairs of those people who have not rid themselves of the ignorance that, unwittingly or not, will keep them on the wheel of *samsara*.

Monks must observe 227 rules. Their observance of the rules is tested every month at the *patimokkha* ritual, where an offending monk must make public any breaking of individual rules.

There are nine levels of different rules that are distinguished by the punishment allocated to those who break them. Punishments range from expulsion from the *sangha* to the performance of minor penance. Many of the rules are highly specific, though they do fall into the two categories of causing no harm of any sort to living beings, and striving for the welfare of all beings.

The Five Precepts

The *Vinaya* stands on the basis of abstention by monks/nuns from many areas of life. The five abstentions laid down for laypeople are much more universal in their aim and could be found in virtually any major world religion. It is recommended that people do not engage in:

- 1 killing living beings
- 2 taking what is not given
- 3 sexual misconduct
- 4 speaking falsely
- 5 taking drink and drugs that confuse the mind.

In many instances, the Buddha goes beyond these five recommendations and lays down modes of behaviour that are not only ethical in tone, but are also guaranteed to give success in interactions with other people with whom a person does business.

There are these five disadvantages, householders, for a person of poor morality who fails in morality. What five? Now, householders, a person of poor morality who fails in morality suffers great diminution of wealth owing to laziness; this is the first disadvantage for a person of poor morality who fails in morality.

Vinaya I, 226 ff.

Then the Buddha lists four other disadvantages: loss of reputation; loss of self-confidence; confusion at death; and entry into hell. Here the Buddha was ensuring that individuals act honestly, especially in business dealings, but also in all other areas of life.

Such proclamations recur frequently throughout the Buddha’s teachings. It is important to be aware that he proposes these general statements of attitude in addition to the more specific Five Precepts.

Review

- 1 In one paragraph, **demonstrate** that you understand the purpose of the *Vinaya*.
- 2 **Recall** what the Buddha says will result from ‘poor morality’.
- 3 **Explain** the relationship between the Five Precepts and the *Vinaya*.
- 4 **Outline** the principal ethical teachings in Buddhism.
- 5 Write a half-page summary to **describe** the importance of the ethical teachings in the life of Buddhists.

Extension

- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 38 to find out more about the *Vinaya*. Prepare a summary of three of the rules.
- 2 From your research, **demonstrate** how the purpose of *Vinaya* is put into practice.
- 3 Interview a practising Buddhist about how they put into practice Buddhist ethics in everyday life in Australia.
- 4 Many Buddhist centres and organisations also perform a social welfare role for their community. Go to the web destinations for page 38 to **investigate** such a centre. **Evaluate** whether their social welfare role is an extension of Buddhist ethical teachings found in the classical texts.



Puja

Glossary

puja

Worship; the Buddhist ritual that honours the Buddha, a god or goddess as a divine guest, usually in a temple, but it can also be a domestic ritual.

Buddhist worship that takes place in the home is not foreshadowed in the early Buddhist texts and is likely to have been a later development. Many Buddhist homes will contain small shrines holding pictures or images of the Buddha or of a prominent living monk, a Buddhist holy man or a *bodhisattva*. These can be quite simple or very elaborate. For example, in some Tibetan houses there are entire rooms set aside as the focus of worship and, in addition to candles, flowers and incense, they contain images of the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* and brightly coloured paintings on silk.

The taking of refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *sangha* is a brief ritual that can be performed in private or in public by laypeople. It is extremely popular because of its simplicity. It reaffirms a person’s commitment to the Buddhist path and is usually done before an image of the Buddha, either in a house or in a temple. Even if a Buddhist layperson knows no other formula or prayer, they will know how to take refuge. This is normally done with a few offerings and possibly bodily prostration and is completed within a few minutes.

Flowers and lights are especially important in the household *puja*. Flowers are placed in front of the Buddha. They are bathed with special water and when they are blooming they are symbolic of the Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment. This verse is sometimes recited:

This mass of flowers endowed with colour, fragrance, and quality I offer at the lotus-like feet of the King of Sages. I worship the Buddha with these flowers: by the merit of this may I attain freedom. Even as these flowers do fade, so does my body come to destruction.

Oil lamps are also important because they symbolise the removal of ignorance. These are set on the altar and the flame represents the Buddha’s capacity as the disperser of light. However, for most lay Buddhists, the main aims of this and the other forms of *puja* are to acquire good *karma* (merit) and prevent evil influences from entering their house.

2.5 Personal devotion in the home

Lay Buddhists may participate in rituals at a monastery, shrine or temple where monks/nuns lead them in veneration of the Buddha. In essence, however, Buddhism is a private religious tradition and most Buddhist devotion takes place in the home.



Figure 2.5.1 Vietnamese Buddhist Shrine in Braybrook, Victoria



Figure 2.5.2 A household puja

RESPOND

What are the obvious common elements in this figure and in Figure 2.5.1?

Review

- 1 Recall the definition of *puja*.
- 2 Identify the symbols found in a household *puja*.
- 3 Outline *puja* as celebrated in the home.
- 4 Describe the importance of household *puja* for the Buddhist family.

Extension



- 1 Visit a Chinese, Japanese or Vietnamese restaurant and make a note of the symbols in its shrine. Are there elements in common with the symbols in this section?
- 2 Using the web destinations for page 39 as a starting point, investigate the ritual of the taking of refuge in the Three Jewels and write a short report about its elements.

Conclusion

Buddhism continues to thrive throughout the world except, paradoxically, in India, the land where it began. Since its discovery by the West in the eighteenth century, it has sometimes not been considered a religion because of the apparent absence of a creator god. Even if this is so, the actual practice of Buddhists over the past 2000 years and the method of approaching the Buddha, the *bodhisattvas* and various Buddhist deities function like similar practices in other religions.

Today Buddhism remains a vibrant, growing religion, expanding in virtually every country where it is found. Throughout its history, Buddhism has demonstrated that it is capable of adapting to social and cultural change. These abilities to adapt and expand have been characteristic of Buddhism in all societies to which it was introduced. It has been so adaptable that in most countries where it has a history, we speak of a particular form of Buddhism as being (for example) Chinese, Japanese, Indian or even American.

Extension



- 1 **Propose** three reasons to explain the decline of Buddhism in India.
- 2 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 40 and visit the websites of three Buddhist organisations in Australia. See how often the terms included in your list of key terms, concepts and ideas appear. **Assess** whether these organisations are primarily for Buddhists or non-Buddhists.
- 4 You have to give a ten-minute talk on Buddhism. Prepare an outline for your talk. What would your priority be—the teachings of Buddhism or the living-out of Buddhism? **Propose** reasons for your decision.
- 5 Check that your media file is up to date. Do Buddhists and Buddhism have a ‘media profile’? How much of your material relates to the teachings of Buddhism, the religious practices of Buddhism, and how much relates to a Buddhism practised by Westerners? **Summarise** your findings.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



Chapter 3

Christianity

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **outline** the cultural and historical context in which Christianity began
- **examine** the principal events of Jesus' life and **explain** why Jesus is the model for Christian life
- **describe** the early development of Christianity after the death of Jesus
- **outline** the unique features of the major variants of Christianity
- **investigate** the principal beliefs of Christianity
- **identify** the importance of the Bible in Christianity and **examine** extracts from the Bible that **demonstrate** the principal beliefs of Christianity
- **outline** the principal ethical teachings of Christianity and **describe** their importance in the life of adherents
- **describe** the different types of personal prayer for Christians.





Thousands of Christians walked the streets of Melbourne (21 March 2008) visiting churches of various denominations in commemoration of Jesus Christ's sufferings and death.

Introduction

Glossary

Bible	The Bible comprises the Jewish Scriptures or Torah (the Old Testament) and the Christian Scriptures (the New Testament).	missionaries	Those sent out to spread the gospel .
gospel(s)	The stories of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, usually referring to the first four books of the Christian Scriptures—the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.	salvation	In general, the belief that human beings require deliverance. In Christianity, the process or state where one is redeemed by Jesus Christ from the power of sin, evil and death.
Messiah	Translation of a Hebrew word meaning 'Anointed One'. Its Greek equivalent in the New Testament is 'Christ'.	Torah	The Pentateuch or first five books of the Jewish Bible . Elsewhere it can refer to the whole body of traditional Jewish teaching, including the Oral Law.

Christianity is the name given to a religion based on the first century CE life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The followers of Jesus claimed that he was the Jewish **Messiah**, the long awaited deliverer sent to the people of Israel by God to bring hope and **salvation**. During that first century, the followers of Jesus broke away from Judaism, and what we now know as Christianity spread throughout the regions controlled by the Roman Empire and established itself as a tradition separate from Judaism. Early Christianity was centred on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as told through the writers of the **gospels** and the work of the early **missionaries**. Christianity's Jewish heritage was fundamental to the major text for Christianity—the **Bible**. Right from its very beginnings in Jerusalem, Christianity has been profoundly influenced by various events.

Christianity suffered many early persecutions, but by 381 CE it had been confirmed as the central religion of the Roman Empire. The collapse of the Roman Empire and its eventual division into the Eastern and Western Empires brought more conflict, and by the eleventh century the Christian Church had become the Church of the West—the Roman Church—and the Church of the East—the Orthodox Church. The sixteenth century brought more division with the Reformation in Europe and in England. All these events produced the variants of Christianity that we know today.

Throughout its entire history, Christianity has demonstrated a great capacity to adapt to the signs of the times and to renew itself accordingly. Today Christianity in all its variants is the largest of the world's organised religions. There are about 2 billion Christians in the world.

today, which is about 33 per cent of the global population. Christianity is the major religion in Europe, North and South America and Australasia. In Australia's 2006 Census, about 63 per cent of the population—13.5 million people—stated an affiliation with Christianity.

Extension

- 1 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with Christianity and/or Christians over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media's presentation with what you have learnt in your study of Christianity.

3.1 Origins

Glossary

Exodus	Greek word for 'exit', and used to describe the escape of the children of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.
Jewish	The name given to the people of Israel after their exile in Babylon; the survivors were mainly from the tribe of Judah.
Judea	Part of a mountainous area (now divided between Israel and Palestine) that the Jewish people believe has been promised to them by God.
prophets	Inspired teachers, revealers or interpreters.
Roman Empire	Two thousand years ago, Rome controlled all the land surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, including Judea . The Romans spoke Latin but Greek was also important.
sects	Groups of people with a common interest; factions.

The Jewish context

Christianity began in **Judea** where Jerusalem was the main religious and economic centre. Jerusalem contained the Temple, the principal place of **Jewish** worship, where priests offered sacrifices to their God as well as performing other rituals.

For the Jewish people, it was the story of their **Exodus** that held them together and gave meaning and direction to their life. Their beliefs had survived all the sufferings of the domination and oppression of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians, but they could not survive Greek persecution without being modified. The Greeks, after the time of Alexander the Great, were determined to destroy Judaism as a religious tradition. The oppression of Greek rule gave rise to expectations of the future intervention of God—evil was so present that a new Moses, a deliverer, had to be imminent.

Jewish groups at the time of Jesus

Pharisees

The Pharisees were progressive and are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. They held closely to the **Torah** but also believed that it was open to interpretation within reason. They maintained that an afterlife existed and that God punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous in the world to come. They also believed in a Messiah who would herald an era of world peace.

Sadducees

The Sadducees were elitists and supported a Jewish monarchy, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Greek ideas into their lives—something the Pharisees opposed. They insisted on a literal interpretation of Jewish scripture. They disappeared as a group after 70 CE.

Essenes

The Essenes emerged out of disgust with the other two groups. This **sect** believed the others had corrupted the city and the Temple. They moved out of Jerusalem and lived a monastic life in the desert, adopting strict dietary laws and a commitment to celibacy. The Essenes are particularly interesting to scholars because they are believed to be an offshoot of the group that lived in Qumran, near the Dead Sea.

When the Roman Empire gained almost complete control over Judea in 64 BCE, religious and political tensions arose. The Jews worried that their God, Yahweh, had abandoned them and various political and religious groups looked for a way to free Judea from Roman control. Some of them hoped that a Messiah would come, a man like King David, who would lead an independent Judea. This idea of a deliverer of political and religious freedom is often found in the later Torah when **prophets** such as Elijah and Isaiah spoke of the arrival of a saviour.



Figure 3.1.1 The first page of three on the first of seventeen strips of leather that make up the Qumran 'Qb' Isaiah scroll. These manuscripts help us to understand the ideas that were current at the time of Jesus. Qumran is the only archaeological site that matches the Roman historian Pliny's description of the Essenes' settlement.

As well as these tensions, Jewish religious character and spiritual unity was splintered by a variety of sects. There was no central Jewish authority; rather, religiously active Jews organised themselves into different groups.

It was into this world that Jesus, a Jew, came—his followers recognised him as the Messiah. At first, this community of followers was a sect within Judaism, but by the end of the first century CE it had become the separate religion of Christianity.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'Messiah'.
- 2 **Recall** the main Jewish groups of Jesus' time.
- 3 Prepare a chart to **outline** the historical context in which Christianity began. Note the ways Greeks, Romans and Jews might have influenced the origins of Christianity.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 44 to find out more about Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Present a three-paragraph report on your findings.
- 2 The Sadducees and the Pharisees represented the 'religious' people of Jesus' day. In the gospels there are many references to Jesus' conflict with them. Why was Jesus so critical of them? (see Mt 23; Mk 8:11–21, 12:1–40; Lk 7:36–50)

Note!

You will need a copy of the New Testament for the next two sections.

Jesus Christ

Glossary

baptism	A religious act of purification by water, from the Greek word <i>baptizo</i> , 'immerse'. For Christians, it marks their reception into the Christian community.
Bar Mitzvah	Coming-of-age ceremony for Jewish boys.
gentiles	General term for non-Jewish people.
myths	Spiritual or religious ideas expressed in human terms.
Passover	The Jewish festival that celebrates the Exodus from Egypt.
Sabbath (Shabbat)	The Jewish day of rest and religious observance. It begins at sunset on Friday and ends on Saturday at nightfall.



Figure 3.1.2 Palestine in the first century CE

What we know about Jesus comes almost exclusively from the Christian gospels. While all four gospels tell of Jesus' ministry and the last three years of his life, only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us of Jesus' birth and early years. These 'infancy narratives' are really **myths** and were written to place Jesus' ministry in a strongly Jewish context. Matthew and Luke wanted to explain that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as some of the Jews expected that the Messiah would be born in that city, the birthplace of David (c. 900 BCE), the first king of Israel and a Messiah figure.

The story of Jesus' birth about 6 BCE near the end of the reign of Herod the Great (37–4 BCE) tells of an angel who visited his mother, Mary, and predicted her son would be the son of God (Lk 1:26–38; Mt 1:18–25). The wise men or Magi were also said to be present soon after his birth. These were star worshippers from the Persian religion Zoroastrianism who had long predicted the birth of a

'chosen' man from the womb of a virgin. While there is no evidence that Jesus' family fled to Egypt because King Herod ordered the male babies of Bethlehem killed, it links Jesus' story with that of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Luke stresses that the practices of Judaism were part of the daily life of Jesus' family. Jesus was circumcised and named eight days after his birth (Lk 1:21). At the required time, Jesus was taken up to Jerusalem and brought to the Temple 'to do for him what was customary under the law' (Lk 2:22). We read in Luke that every year the family went to Jerusalem for the festival of **Passover** and that they were there when Jesus was twelve years old, the age for **Bar Mitzvah** (Lk 2:41–43).

Apart from the annual journeys to Jerusalem, Jesus spent the first thirty years of his life in the obscure town of Nazareth in southern Galilee. Jesus is described as a carpenter (Mk 6:3), although this term refers generally to any artisan working with hard materials. There is no more about Jesus' life until the event that heralded the beginning of his ministry—his **baptism** by John the Baptist when 'Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan' (Mt 3:13; Mk 1:9; Lk 3:21; Jn 1:29–34). Jesus was thirty years of age.

Principal events of Jesus' life

According to the gospels, after Jesus' baptism he began his three years of ministry not in the great Galilean cities such as Tiberias and Sepphoris, but as a wandering preacher and healer in the villages among the ordinary people (Lk 8:19–21, 9:57–61, 11:27–28; especially Mt 19:10–12). He returned to his home town after a preaching tour but was rejected:

[Jesus] left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the **Sabbath** he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given him?' ... Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Mk 6:1–6a

Jesus' ministry eventually took him to Jerusalem where he was arrested and brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman emperor's representative, who sentenced him to death by crucifixion.

The public ministry of Jesus

After his baptism by John, the gospels tell us Jesus began his ministry in Galilee (Mt 4:12–19; Mk 1:14–15; Lk 4:14–15). John the Baptist had been arrested and Jesus left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum. At first his message was the same as John's—'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come—but as he gathered followers, Jesus shifted his message more to the joy of salvation for those who heard God's message.

The followers of Jesus remained at first a small group within early Judaism. Jesus called his disciples to share in his teaching and healing ministry (Mt 10) and chose twelve in particular, perhaps to mirror the 'twelve tribes of Israel' (Lk 22:30). Although the Twelve Apostles, as they are called, were all male, it is important to remember that Jesus, unlike other rabbis (teachers) of his time, called women disciples. Indeed, women continued to exercise leadership roles in the earliest church communities (see page 50).

Jesus addressed his message to the Jews—his language, imagery and ideas are decidedly Jewish, particularly his favourite expression 'kingdom (or reign) of God' (Mk 2:15; Mt 4:17)—and the Jewish people, to whom his ministry was directed, understood what he was saying. Jesus encouraged his listeners to move beyond the strict

legalism of his day and look for motives for actions. Those who saw the Messiah as a new king—a David who would unite them and battle against the oppressors—were disappointed: Jesus didn't seem interested in gathering battalions. Those who saw Judaism as offering salvation only to those who strictly kept the Law of Moses were disappointed: Jesus was saying that all were welcome into the kingdom. He stated that he had come to 'fulfil the law' of Judaism and mixed freely with those considered 'sinners and outcasts' (Mt 5:17; Mk 2:15–16).

His favourite form of teaching was the parable, a mysterious saying designed to tease the minds of his audience, to knock his hearers off balance, unmask any false security and open people's eyes, ears and hearts to the Kingdom of God (Mk 2:15–17; Mt 11:29). Jesus' parables turned everything upside down. The rich ate with the poor; the lepers, the blind, the possessed, the lame all seemed to be welcome in the kingdom. Those who had difficulty were the ones who insisted on 'the letter of the law' as the most important qualification for entry to the kingdom. Jesus also worked miracles: healing the sick, casting out demons, showing power over nature and even raising the dead (Mk 4:35–41, 5:22–30; Jn 11:1–44). Jesus soon came into conflict with Jewish and Roman authorities.

Did you know?

In the Christian Scriptures, the term 'parable' can include proverbs (Lk 4:23), wisdom sayings (Lk 5:36–39), allegories (Mk 12:1–11) and the more familiar narrative parables (Lk 18:9–14). Parables usually contain an introductory formula such as 'it is like', 'the kingdom of heaven is like', or 'to what shall I compare'.

On the Sunday of the last week of his life, what Christians now celebrate as Holy Week, Jesus made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mk 11:1–11)—Palm Sunday. He visited the Temple and overturned the stalls of the moneychangers and those who sold offerings for sacrifice (Mk 11:15–16). He then entered into a series of arguments with the Pharisees and Sadducees about paying taxes and life after death (Mk 12:13–40). After celebrating Passover with his disciples—the Last Supper—Jesus was arrested and brought to trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator.

Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified on Friday (Mk 15:21–41; Mt 45–50)—Good Friday. He was buried hastily on Friday evening so as not to contravene the Sabbath. When some women came on Sunday



Figure 3.1.3 Christ Dining in Young and Jackson's, 1947, by John Perceval. Young and Jackson's is a famous hotel in Melbourne. At the time it had a dubious reputation!

RESPOND

Describe what this painting says about the ministry of Jesus. What features of this portrayal of Christ's ministry are distinctly Australian?

morning—Easter Sunday—to prepare Jesus' body for permanent burial, they found the tomb empty and angels said he had risen from the dead (Mk 16:1–8). Some people declared they had experienced visions of him (Mt 28:1–10; Lk 24:1–12; Jn 20:1–10). Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was said to have ascended into heaven (Acts 1:6–11).

What happened to those followers who were left behind after the death of Jesus and how the words, deeds and claims of Jesus' ministry became the tradition called 'Christianity' is dealt with in the next section.

Jesus—the model of Christianity

The focus of Christianity is Jesus' message that all were welcome into the Kingdom of God and that he was sent by God to teach God's ways to others. Jesus left in his teachings the Christian commands that apply to ethical behaviour such as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7). He also lived a life that Christians should follow—he showed compassion to the poor, healed the sick and taught the love of God.

Nevertheless, Jesus is more than a model, an idea, a philosopher or a teacher of values. He is a teacher of wisdom who calls Christians to a radically personal relationship with God. He also calls his followers to conversion and discipleship that involve sacrifice and suffering. Finally, he calls them to forgiveness, transformation and a counter-cultural lifestyle (Gal 2:20).

The ‘portraits’ of Jesus in the gospels and the writings of Paul provide the framework for the beliefs, rituals and behaviour for the whole life journey of the Christian. This is a journey during which the Christian is ‘being transformed into the same image [of Christ] from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit’ (2 Cor 3:18).

Portraits of Jesus

A range of portraits or interpretations of Jesus have been handed down to today’s Christians. Each views Jesus from different historical, cultural and faith perspectives.

- Mark wrote to **gentiles** from the perspective of Christians under persecution, and emphasised the Crucified Christ as the Son of God (c. 54–68 CE).
- Matthew wrote for Jewish Christians in Antioch, Syria, and focused on Jesus the Teacher (c. 85 CE).
- Luke wrote around the same time as Matthew, probably for wealthy gentile Christians in the Roman Empire. He emphasises the compassion and forgiveness of Jesus.
- Paul’s writings, particularly his letters to the Romans, Galatians and Corinthians, emphasise that Jesus is God in action and that he is the wisdom of God. In Paul’s writings, the whole world is the sphere of God’s redeeming action in Christ, since Jesus Christ is God’s new covenant with humanity.

Review

- 1 From where do we learn about Jesus’ life?
- 2 How would you **describe** the ‘Kingdom of God’?
- 3 **Identify** three reasons why Jesus experienced conflict with various groups during his ministry. In your answer, cite specific events and scripture passages.
- 4 **Explain** why Jesus is the model for Christian life. In your answer, refer to ‘portraits of Jesus’.

Extension



- 1 **Construct** a chart to **outline** the principal events in Jesus’ life.
- 2 Using the map on page 45 as the basis, draw a map that traces the towns connected with the events in question 1.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 48 to find out more about different interpretations of Jesus. Choose one topic and prepare a short report to **summarise** the information provided.
- 4 Ask four people, other than people at school or family members, to give you a short sentence that is their ‘portrait’ of Jesus. As a class, collate the responses and **discuss** the similarities and differences.

Did you know?

There are three James who were close to Jesus. One was a Galilean fisherman, the son of Zebedee. The second James, son of Alpheus, was also one of the Twelve Apostles. The third James appears in the New Testament as ‘the brother of Jesus’ and in other early Christian writings as ‘James the Just’. This James became leader of the Christians in Jerusalem.

The development of early Christian communities

The beginnings of Christianity were more complicated than they might seem at first. The gospels and the Acts of the Apostles recount that during his lifetime, Jesus chose twelve from among all his disciples. All acknowledge that Simon from Galilee was the leader of the group. Jesus gave him the nickname of 'Rock', which translated into Greek as *Petros*, hence, 'Peter'. At some point, Peter was forced to leave Jerusalem and moved his centre to Antioch, and is said to have gone to Rome and became the first bishop of the Roman Church. When Peter was forced to leave, James became the undisputed Christian leader in Jerusalem. James was put to death in 62 CE by a Jewish group attached to the Temple.

We know, therefore, that there were two early Christian leaders—Peter who was the leader of the twelve and James whose group had its base in Jerusalem. Another significant figure in this formative period was Saul. A Roman citizen from the city of Tarsus in modern-day Turkey, he was well trained in Jewish learning and awaited the coming of the Messiah. He is said to have come to Jerusalem and been commissioned by the high priest to seek out and persecute Christians in Damascus. He was converted to Christianity and took on a new name—Paul.

► Paul is a significant person considered in Chapter 11, pages 250–2.

The early development of Christianity can be identified through four major stages:

- **Stage One:** Jesus' death and resurrection is announced to the Jews and others at Pentecost (see Acts 2–4).
- **Stage Two:** The Church learns its first lesson about expansion. The first break—the gospel message is not tied to Jerusalem (see Acts 6–9).
- **Stage Three:** The Church learns a second valuable lesson. Expansion and disagreement—you need not be a Jew to be Jesus' disciple (see Acts 10:11, 13:4, 15).
- **Stage Four:** The Church expands through Paul's missionary journeys.

Earliest church communities and followers

Did Jesus found a 'church'? The Greek word *ekklesia* means 'assembly, congregation, council' and has become the term used to express the concept of a united Christian Church.

The gospels were written in Greek so it is problematic whether we should translate the word *ekklesia* in Matthew 16:18, 18:17 as 'church' in the way it is understood today. In the letter to the Ephesians, half a century after the last gospel was written, there is the claim that 'Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' (Eph 5:25). Later writers, such as Ignatius of Antioch and Origen, also begin to refer to these early groups of Christians as 'the church'.

It appears that Jesus' intention was to preach the gospel to all, at the same time knowing that only some of those 'assembled' would accept it. It is extremely doubtful that Jesus planned or had our understanding of 'church'.

It became common to confess 'the name of Jesus' (Acts 4:18) or to accept baptism as a sign of belonging to the Way (Eph 4:5). Christian communities formed very quickly in major cities such as Ephesus and Antioch.

The Christians

The Acts of the Apostles records that Christians were first known by that name in the town of Antioch (Acts 11:26). After Jesus' death and resurrection, his followers also called themselves the 'brethren' (Acts 1:16), 'disciples' (Acts 11:26), 'believers' (Acts 24:4) and 'those of the Way' (Acts 9:2, 24:14).

The famines during the reign of Claudius (Acts 11:28), also mentioned in other sources, allow the naming of Christians to be dated to around 40 CE.

... and when [Barnabas] had found [Paul], he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'.

Acts 11:26

As the name 'Christian' became more widespread, non-Christians became confused about its origin and meaning. They mistook its root for the Greek word *chrestos* meaning 'good'. Thus, they referred to Jesus' followers as Chrestiani, 'those belonging to the good one'.

The word 'church' seems to have been used to refer both to the local community and the whole communion.

Women were frequently referred to as disciples or followers of Jesus, including Mary Magdalene and Tabitha (Acts 9:36). Paul commends Phoebe as a sister, patron and deacon of the church of Cenchreae (Rom 16:1–2) and also mentions many other women by name who served the church as ‘fellow workers’ (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 16:19; Phil 4:2–3).

If early Christianity is understood to extend until 400 or 500 CE, then other important figures during this period were Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107 CE), Irenaeus (d. c. 200 CE), Origen (d. c. 254 CE), Anthony of Egypt (d. 356 CE), desert fathers and mothers, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386 CE), Augustine of Hippo (d. 430 CE) and Leo I (440–461 CE). Under Emperor Constantine (d. 337 CE), Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Review

- 1 When was the term ‘Christian’ first used for the followers of Jesus? Name two other terms used.
- 2 In one page, **describe** the development of the early Christian communities after the death of Jesus.
- 3 **Outline** the four major stages in the expansion of early Christianity.
- 4 **Recall** the names of three women prominent in the earliest church communities.
- 5 **Outline** the role of Christian women in the development of the early Christian Church.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 50 and **investigate** the lives, contributions and ongoing impact of two early Christian women. Write a short report on each.
- 2 **Investigate** the life and contributions of one other important figure of early Christianity. Present a report in point form.
- 3 Organise a class debate on the topic: ‘The important role women had in the early Church is not reflected in the later history of the Christian Churches.’

Major variants of Christianity

The history of Christianity is a history of division, often for political and social reasons as much as theological. Two key historical developments in Christianity were the division between Eastern and Western, and the **Reformation** in Europe and Britain that saw the development of Anglicanism and the major **Protestant** denominations.

The division between the East and the West had its roots in the fourth century split in the Roman Empire and the establishment of two capitals—Rome and Constantinople. Tensions always existed between the Greek-speaking Christians of the East who became the Orthodox Church and the Latin-speaking Christians of the West who became the Roman Catholic Church. These tensions came to a head when the Church was trying to formulate a **creed**. The Western church looked to the **Bishop of Rome** for guidance, the Eastern church to the **Patriarch of Constantinople**. In what is referred to as the Great Schism of 1054, the separation became official.

A further split occurred within the Western (Roman Catholic) church in the sixteenth century with the movement known as the Reformation. This movement began as an effort to purify the life and teachings of the Catholic Church, and eventually led to the establishment of separate Christian Churches. All these variants adhere to specific beliefs related to Jesus Christ, creation, salvation and the afterlife, and believe that the scriptures are the inspired word of God. The question of leadership, the expression of the beliefs, and the role of scripture and tradition is what separates them.

More recent times have seen the birth of various religious movements, mostly from within the Protestant churches, such as Pentecostalism.

Did you know?

The word ‘catholic’ comes from the Greek word for ‘universal’. In this chapter it refers to a variant of Christianity—the Catholic Church. It is also used to describe someone who has wide tastes in, for example, music. Orthodox is from the Greek word for ‘correct belief’; Protestant is from one who ‘protests’; and Anglicanism derives from the word for the people from Anglia—England. As used within Christianity, each one tells us something about the history of the variants of Christianity that have arisen since the time of the first Christian communities.

Glossary

Articles of Religion	The Thirty-nine Articles ‘agreed upon by the Archbishops, Bishops, and the whole clergy of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, London, 1562’. They form the basis of Anglican doctrine (teaching).	liturgy	The official or set forms of worship, as opposed to private devotions.
bishop	The title given to the leader in some Christian Churches. In Orthodox Churches, the title is patriarch .	monastic	Describing an institutionalised form of religious life, either alone or in a community, in which individuals take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.
creed	A formal, but concise, statement of beliefs.	Pope	The Bishop of Rome, considered to be the successor of the apostle Peter—the head of the Catholic Church.
Eucharist	The sacred meal of bread and wine commonly celebrated in some form by Christians as their central act of worship. It commemorates the last meal of Jesus with his disciples prior to his death. Catholics believe that Jesus is physically present in the bread and wine.	Protestant	A general term for those breaking away at the Reformation . In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ‘protesting’ churches in England were often called the nonconformist churches or dissenters—those churches that did not acknowledge the authority of the Church of England.
evangelical	Pertaining to the gospel and its teachings. It is used to describe those Christian bodies that emphasise the teachings and authority of the Bible.	purgatory	The intermediate stage between death and heaven according to Catholic theology .
filioque clause	Literally, ‘from the Son’. This clause was added to the Nicene Creed and caused great debate about the divinity of ‘the Father’ compared with that of ‘the Son’.	Reformation	The early sixteenth century movement that began as an effort to purify the life and teachings of the Catholic Church, and eventually led to the establishment of separate Christian Churches.
ikon (icon)	A representation of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint, especially one painted in oil on a wooden panel in a traditional Byzantine style, and venerated in the Eastern Churches; from the Greek word <i>eikon</i> meaning ‘image’.	rite	A formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or customary in a religious context.
iconostasis	Greek word for ‘icon stand’. A sanctuary screen, covered with icons (images of Christ, Mary and the saints), which separates the sanctuary from the rest of the church.	sacraments	Sacred or holy actions that can bring about changes; a visible sign of an invisible action of God.
		theology	The study of God and religious doctrine.

Anglicanism

The Anglican Church or Church of England emerged from the context of the Catholic Church (sometimes called Roman Catholic Church) in England in the sixteenth century, during the reign of Henry VIII. Between 1534 and 1535, the English Parliament passed Acts that made the head of the Catholic Church in England not the **Pope** in Rome, but the English king. A national church was created with a doctrinal basis formulated in 1562 as the Thirty-nine **Articles of Religion**. It claims to be both Catholic and Reformed—Catholic in its order of ministry (clergy), but with a conservatively reformed **liturgy** outlined in the Book of Common Prayer (1662).

The Church of England now operates flexibly and autonomously in many nations, but all accept the creed statement:

... a fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury.

Lambeth Conference of 1930

Anglicanism was heavily influenced by the **theology** of Martin Luther and other reformers such as John Calvin. The distinguishing features of Anglican theology that emerged from these influences included:

- authority—its definition and the relationship between biblical and papal authority
- justification—is salvation grounded in faith or good works
- the role of the **sacraments** in salvation
- priesthood—how the **Eucharist** as sacrament should be understood, and the power Christ handed on to the ordained ministry.



Figure 3.1.4 Jonathan Lilley being ordained by Archbishop Peter Jensen in St Andrew's Anglican Cathedral, Sydney, 12 February 2008

Traditionally, there have been two strands in Anglicanism—the ‘Low’ or **evangelical** and the ‘High’ or Anglo-Catholic. Evangelical Anglicans stress the Word and its preaching dimension rather than ritual and many would describe themselves as Protestants. ‘High’ Anglicans stress the ritual and sacramental dimension and their rituals are very similar to those of Catholicism, as are those of many Lutheran churches.

In some traditions of Anglicanism, ordination is a sacrament in which the priest is affirmed as a representative of God to humankind; in other traditions the priest functions more as a trained leader of the congregations. Most Anglican clergy are married and some Anglicans accept the ordination of women, although this is an ongoing controversy within the Anglican Church.

Did you know?

In 1962 the Church of England in Australia began to function under its own constitution, ending all legal ties with the Church of England in England. In 1978 an Australia Prayer Book was produced, and in 1981 the Anglican Church of Australia was formed as an independent body within the worldwide Anglican communion.

Catholicism

The Catholic Church consists of the Eastern and Western or Roman/Latin traditions. There are four original Eastern traditions: Antiochian, Alexandrian, Byzantine and Armenian. These four Eastern traditions are divided into a number of different Churches, for example, Maronite (Antiochian), Coptic (Alexandrian), Melkite and Ukrainian (Byzantine). While it has been traditional to speak of the Eastern **rite** or Latin rite, they are better defined as a communion of Churches that recognise the Pope as their head on earth.

While their rituals are different, all have the Eucharist as the central act of worship and recognise seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, reconciliation (penance or confession), ordination, marriage and anointing of the sick (extreme unction). Catholicism has a strong emphasis on Mary as the Mother of God and Mother of the Church, and on the communion of saints that intercede for those on earth and, finally, a strong belief in the existence of heaven, hell and **purgatory**. It also stresses the dual role of Scripture and Tradition in Revelation.

Catholics differ from other Christians on several points, including the necessity of penance, the meaning of

communion, the composition of the canon of scripture, purgatory, and the means of salvation. Protestants and Anglicans believe that salvation is by faith alone (*sola fide*), while Catholics believe that faith is exhibited in good works.

While the Eastern traditions use local languages for the liturgy, Latin remained the liturgical language in the Western Catholic Church until the 1960s. There has always been a strong **monastic** tradition in the Catholic Church, which saw the later development of religious orders devoted to special services such as education or missionary work.

None of the rites within the Catholic Church ordains women to the priesthood. To be a priest in the Roman Catholic rite, one must be male and unmarried (but widowers are not excluded). In the non-Roman rites, you must be male, but you can be married. Married men, however, cannot become bishops.

Orthodoxy

Currently there are fifteen self-governing churches within the Orthodox communion. These include the four ancient patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, which see themselves as lying in unbroken continuity from the time of the apostles. Over time, differences emerged in ideas and practices; the authority of the Pope was not accepted and there were some differences in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit—the **filioque clause**.

The heart of Orthodox worship is the Divine Liturgy—the celebration of the Eucharist. A distinctive feature of its worship is the use of **icons**. Orthodox liturgies are notable because of their length (often two hours or more), their frequent use of incense, their fully sung liturgies, and because parts of their services are hidden from view within a sanctuary enclosed by a curtain, barrier or **iconostasis**. Liturgies are also characterised by the beauty of their chant, and by very rich symbolism, vestments and ceremonies.

While Greek was the first language of Orthodoxy, there was no concern about translating the scriptures and the liturgy into local languages. The Orthodox Church has a profoundly sacramental view of existence and church membership. Monasticism has been an important element in Orthodoxy since the fourth century CE, although, unlike the Catholic orders, it did not develop religious orders for specific works. Only males can become priests—they may be married, but married priests cannot become bishops or patriarchs. Orthodox Christians are represented in Australia by many groups including the Greek, Russian, Macedonian and Serbian Churches.

Pentecostalism

Although the Pentecostal movement has roots in the Holiness movement that started among Methodists during the nineteenth century, its beginning is usually identified with events that occurred at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. There, on 1 January 1901, a student named Agnes Ozman was reported to have ‘spoken in tongues’. Thus, Pentecostalism—sometimes called Christian charismatic churches—took shape at the beginning of the twentieth century in the USA.

Pentecostalism sought to restore the ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’, those gifts bestowed on the Church at Pentecost (see Acts 2:4–11), to Christian thought, worship and practice (see Acts 10:46; 1 Cor 14). Other gifts of the Holy Spirit that they value are healing, prophesying and the interpretation of prophecy (cf. 1 Cor 12:8–10).

Another distinguishing feature of Pentecostalism is its emphasis on the corporate element in worship, meaning the group response of the congregation is with great spontaneity, which stresses those gifts of the Spirit. Pentecostals make a distinction between ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ and the experience of conversion or the reception of any sacraments (usually baptism). They hold that ‘Spirit baptism’ usually becomes apparent when the baptised person breaks into tongues (speaking in tongues).

Pentecostal Churches in Australia include Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Christian City Church, Christian Revival Crusade and Vineyard Fellowship.



Figure 3.1.5 Worshippers attend the first day of the annual Hillsong Conference, July 2007.

Protestantism

Protestantism is the system of Christian faith and practice based on acceptance of the principles of the Reformation. It derives from the ‘protestation’ of the reforming members of the Diet of Speyer (1529) who voted against the decisions of the Catholic majority.

The three founding branches of Protestantism are Lutheranism, Calvinism and Zwinglianism. It is from these that Methodism, Presbyterianism and the other Protestant denominations grew. None of these groups acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope and most minimise the liturgical and sacramental aspects of Catholic Christianity.

While the Protestant movement is diverse, its distinguishing features for most Protestants are:

- the Bible as the only source of revealed truth—doctrine should not be based upon church tradition
- the importance of faith alone—salvation is achieved individually through the merit of faith, and not faith plus the efforts of oneself and others
- baptism and the Eucharist (Holy Communion) are the central sacraments
- recognition of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ (1 Pet 2:9) in gaining access to God—no other earthly mediator is necessary
- the emphasis on the transcendence (total otherness) of God, and therefore the effects of the Fall and Original Sin
- the emphasis on preaching and hearing of the Word.

Clergy can generally marry and some but not all Protestant churches allow women to be leaders.

Review

- 1 **Recall** the two key developments that resulted in division within Christianity.
- 2 **Construct** a timeline to show the significant events and people that relate to variants within Christianity.
- 3 **Outline** the major features of Anglicanism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Pentecostalism and Protestantism. Specify some major differences between these variants.

Extension

- 1 Organise a class debate on the topic: ‘It was inevitable that divisions would arise within Christianity.’
- 2 Choose one variant of Christianity. **Investigate** its history and address these issues:
 - a the major figures in its history
 - b the major issues that caused the break from the Church of Rome
 - c the issues the variant is dealing with today.

3.2 Principal beliefs

Glossary

deacon

From the Greek word *diakonos*, which is often translated as ‘servant’. The office of deacon originated in the selection of seven men to assist with the pastoral and administrative needs of the early Church (Acts 6:2–6).

revelation

From the Latin word *revelare* meaning ‘to take away the veil’. In this context, it means the disclosure of something that could not have been revealed without the will of God. It is also the name given to the last book of the New Testament, ‘The Revelation to John’ (Book of Apocalypse).

Over the centuries, Christianity has organised its beliefs into a systematic theology that draws from its sacred writings and traditions. While the major beliefs of Christianity are shared by all Christian variants, there are degrees of difference in the interpretation of these beliefs and how they are lived out in everyday life. The following sections take a general approach to the beliefs, devotions, and ethical and moral teachings of Christianity. Any major differences and emphases are noted.

Christianity is not just, or even primarily, a list of beliefs and practices. Being a Christian begins with a person’s lived experiences. In this context, the principal beliefs of Christianity are examined here. How these beliefs are put

into practice through the ethical and moral teachings of Christianity and the personal devotion of its adherents are examined in later sections.

The divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ

In the centuries after Jesus' death it became necessary to provide explanations for what was being said about Jesus and his relationship to God. Early Christian thinkers believed that Jesus Christ was divine, yet this in turn raised difficult questions about the nature of Jesus and the nature of God. In what sense was Jesus both truly divine and truly human? Most people understood that a man could become a god—Roman emperors sometimes did after death. But it was much more difficult to explain how and why a god 'was made man'. Disputes arose over the many competing explanations, such as:

- *Jesus was co-equal but different*—Paul of Samosata became the bishop of Antioch in 260 CE, and his belief was that God remained the Logos or Word and Jesus had put that into flesh.
- *Jesus was created by God*—Arius, a Christian priest from Alexandria, began teaching in 319 CE that Jesus was created by God to put God's plans into action on earth. He believed Jesus was not eternal and, therefore, less god-like than God.
- *Jesus was both human and divine*—Athanasius (296–323 CE) was a **deacon** in Alexandria when Arius began his teaching about the nature of Jesus. Athanasius responded that Jesus was both the same nature as God and fully human.

These and other questions came to a head at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. The teaching of Athanasius was adopted and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was formulated: God is understood as one God, yet within the Godhead there are three distinct persons—God the Father/Creator, God the Son/Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit.

 See 'The nature of God and the Trinity' on page 56.

From that time onwards, Christians have understood more clearly that Jesus was human—he was born like other human beings; he ate, drank, slept and went to the toilet; and he knew sadness, suffering, uncertainty and joy.

Yet at the same time he was also mysteriously the divine Son of God, 'one with the Father', the second person of the Trinity. In other words, he was a human being who lived at a particular time and place with normal human limitations; yet he is also the divine Son of God whose life, death and resurrection has cosmic significance for the whole of humanity.

As the Gospel of John expresses it:

And the Word [the divine Son of God] became flesh and dwelt among us [became human], full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father.

Jn 1:14

Death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ

From the gospels we know that Jesus was arrested, briefly examined, taken to Golgotha outside Jerusalem, and put to death by crucifixion alongside other criminals. Thus ended the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth. But this was not the end—the gospels affirm that Jesus not only rose from the dead but also was seen by many of his followers (Mt 28:1–15; Mk 16:1–8; Lk 24:1–12; Jn 20:1–18). As well as the resurrection narratives, there is the ascension of Jesus to heaven (Mk 1:6–19; Lk 24:50–53). The ascension of Jesus refers to the event where Jesus returns to heaven after his resurrection (Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9). The Christian feast of the ascension is celebrated forty days after Easter.



Figure 3.2.1 The celebration of Easter at St Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Kingsford, New South Wales, 2004. Christ is taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb. During the Easter liturgy, candles are lit and the congregation greets one another with *Christos anesti*—'Christ is risen!'

From the very beginning, Christians believed in the resurrection of the body—that each believer will one day be completely human but transformed—body and soul—for all eternity, and share in the glorious life of Jesus Christ (refer to 2 Cor 4:14 and 1 Cor 15:35–37, 42–44). This belief is based on the event that is the heart and foundation of all Christian beliefs. At his resurrection, Jesus Christ, after truly suffering and dying, was raised to new life and entered a transformed, victorious and glorified state.

Did you know?

In the Jewish Scriptures, both Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1–14) ascend to heaven prior to death.

The nature of God and the Trinity

Christians believe that God is One and the Creator of all things. This same God is also known as three persons: Father or Creator of all; Jesus the Son of God; and the Holy Spirit or Sanctifier. This is known as ‘the mystery of the Holy or Blessed Trinity’. The Holy or Blessed Trinity is the central dogma and mystery of the Christian faith. ‘Mystery’ is used here to mean ‘deepest reality’ or ‘that which is always beyond anything we can fully know or experience’. In the Trinity, God exists as three persons—traditionally referred to as Father, Son and Holy Spirit—all existing in a relationship of ‘intimate self-surrender’ to each other. When one person in the Trinity acts, so too do the other two persons. Each person is distinct but does not act in isolation from the others.

Although the word ‘Trinity’ does not occur in the Bible, the origins of the trinitarian formula seem to be present in texts such as the following:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Cor 13:14

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mt 28:19

Christian theologians have also seen early indications of the existence of the Trinity in such Hebrew Scripture passages as the apparition of the three ‘angels’ to Abraham (Gen 18:1–15).



Figure 3.2.2 *The Three Persons of the Trinity*, fifteenth century icon by Andrei Rublev. This icon, inspired by the Genesis 18 story, situates the Father or Creator on the left, the Son at the centre and the Holy Spirit on the right.

The Trinity traditionally has been described in relation to three key functions:

- creating (bringing God’s new life to all creation)
- sanctifying (blessing and making holy all creation)
- redeeming (turning all creation from sin and darkness and more fully towards God).

Revelation

Revelation, put simply, is the transmission of knowledge from the divine to the human. It includes not only biblical revelation but revelation evident throughout the whole of human history. In other words, revelation is knowledge given by God to human beings about persons, events and things previously hidden or only partly known.

Christians believe that revelation is not only God’s self-communication to human beings, but it is also a loving and utterly free invitation to join in friendship with God. Through this revelation, God calls human beings to respond in faith and action today, not just intellectually or by accepting certain doctrines or beliefs.

God's fullest revelation takes place through the words, deeds and events associated with the person of Jesus Christ. Revelation, too, is not simply a past event or proclamation from God. Revelation continues to 'happen' as God continues to speak throughout human history—through its historical events, through Christianity, through world religions, through all the joys, hopes and frustrations of the entire world.

Salvation

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.

Jn 3:16

Salvation is the belief that human beings require deliverance by God from the power of sin and darkness. Yet it is also the process or way in which human beings are saved or brought to fullness of life in God. The New Testament speaks of salvation as the forgiveness of sin (Titus 3:5), living as a 'saved' person (Rom 1:17) and looking forward to a life in heaven (Mt 19:27–29).

For Christians, salvation has three main features:

- The initial fruits of salvation (of God's triumph through Christ over sin and death and the renewal of all creation) may be experienced now in this present life, but its full realisation is delayed until the next life or afterlife. Only in heaven, in the actual presence of God, will a person's deepest desires for love, peace and justice be completely fulfilled. Salvation is therefore 'here now' but 'not yet fully complete'.
- Because there are many obstacles in the present life that make salvation difficult, people cannot achieve salvation by themselves. It is only through the grace of God that humans can attain salvation.
- Jesus Christ is central to salvation, for it is through his life, death and resurrection that God has offered salvation to all humanity.

In this broad consensus among Christians, there are many different approaches and unresolved questions. For example:

- What precisely are the obstacles that prevent salvation or make it difficult, and what is the 'grace' that God offers us to overcome these obstacles? Is salvation only a personal concern or is it linked to the beliefs and practices of the faith community and the wider community?

- Is salvation possible apart from belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?
- Is membership of a Christian Church necessary for salvation?

Some Christian Churches (for example, Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches) hold that those who strive to do God's will as it is made known to them in conscience can be saved, even if they are not members of that particular church. Other churches hold this belief partially or would be opposed to it. Whatever their viewpoint, the central question here is: Is there salvation apart from belief in Jesus Christ?

In the final analysis, however, salvation is more concerned with the all-powerful and all-knowing love of God who is Mystery and beyond all human understanding. Christians believe that to experience God's love is to experience the essence of salvation's meaning and mystery.



Figure 3.2.3 Christ and Mary Magdalene, 2000 by Michael Galovic. Mary Magdalene (Mary of Magdala) is the classic model of a disciple seeking salvation from Jesus.

RESPOND

Who was Mary Magdalene? Explain what the icon's symbolism tells us about the type of salvation that Jesus offers.

Christian beliefs in the everyday life of the believer

For Christians, these principal beliefs are not just a doctrine but also a living relationship with Jesus Christ, and can be summarised as follows:

- The divine Christ became human so that humans might become more divine.
- God created the world, so everything within it is good.
- God saves us but we cannot be saved without our own cooperation.
- God is ever present as Creator (or Father), Son and Spirit, and God's Spirit and power make us new people.
- Mary followed God's will.
- The Church is necessary for salvation and is the body of Christ.
- Christian lives are to be based on God's love and forgiveness.
- Christians are called to live in accordance with the gospel in their own lives, acting justly and compassionately in the world.
- The whole of humanity is destined for eternal happiness, yet some may totally and deliberately reject God's gift of love and salvation.

Mary the mother of Jesus

The New Testament begins its account of Mary's life with the Annunciation, the appearance to her of the Archangel Gabriel heralding her divine selection to be the mother of Jesus. It records Mary's role in key events of the life of Jesus, from his virgin birth to his crucifixion. Other apocryphal writings (see page 59) tell of her subsequent death and bodily assumption into heaven.

Christians hold a number of important doctrines concerning Mary. Primary among these are that Mary lived a sinless life, and that as mother of Jesus she became *Theotokos*, literally the 'God-bearer' or 'Mother of God'.

Catholics, Orthodox, as well as some Anglicans and Lutherans venerate (honour) Mary as the mother of Jesus but they make a clear distinction between this and the worship due to God. Generally referred to as the Blessed Virgin Mary by Catholics, Mary is much depicted in Western art and the icons of Orthodoxy.

Review

- 1 **Outline** the principal Christian beliefs regarding the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.
- 2 **Outline** the key Christian beliefs about the nature of God and of the Trinity.
- 3 **Explain** the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection for Christians.
- 4 **Examine** the Christian understanding of revelation. Provide at least two examples of ways in which God reveals God's self to humanity.
- 5 **Describe** the Christian understanding of salvation. **Critically evaluate** some of the difficult questions that it raises.

Extension

- 1 **Construct** a mind map or flow chart to **summarise** the principal beliefs of Christianity. Make reference to differences and similarities between the variants of Christianity.
- 2 **Clarify** what Christians mean when they say their beliefs are not 'just a doctrine but a living relationship with Jesus Christ'.
- 3 Do an internet search and download three different paintings of Mary the mother of Jesus. What aspects of Mary's life does each depict?

Did you know?

Evangelicals and those of the Modern Protestant traditions do not accept the deuterocanonical books as canonical, although Protestant Bibles included them in *Apocrypha* sections until around the 1820s.

3.3 Sacred texts and writings

Glossary

apocrypha	From the Greek word meaning ‘hidden away’. These are texts of uncertain authenticity, or writings where the authorship is questioned. When used in this context, the term <i>apocrypha</i> refers to any collection of scriptural texts that falls outside the canon .
canon	Those books considered to be authoritative as scripture by a particular religious tradition.
deuterocanonical	From the Greek word meaning ‘belonging to the second canon’. The term has been used since the sixteenth century in the Catholic Churches and Eastern Christianity to describe certain books and passages of the Christian Old Testament that are not part of the Hebrew Bible.
synoptic	Literally means ‘seen together’.

The Bible

The Christian Bible is a collection of writings that Christians believe is of divine and human origin. The Bible is accepted by Christians as authoritative for belief and practice. The Bible is also sometimes referred to as ‘Scripture’ and ‘Holy Scripture’.

The Christian Bible is divided into the Hebrew or Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) and the Christian Scriptures (New Testament). The Hebrew Scriptures contain thirty-nine books from the Jewish tradition, while the Christian Scriptures contain twenty-seven early Christian works—the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the letters (epistles) of the early followers of Jesus and the final book, the Revelation of John (or the Apocalypse). The first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are the **synoptic** gospels—they share many common features and concentrate on Jesus’ public ministry. John’s Gospel, written much later than the first three, is a series of long reflections on Jesus as the divine Son of God.

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches accept a number of books not found in the Hebrew Bible—the **apocrypha** or **deuterocanonical** books. The Bible is sometimes called ‘a closed **canon**’—no new writings can be added to it.

The importance of the Bible

All variants of Christianity view the Bible as the basic source of belief and practice. Some Christian Churches, however, hold differing views on the relationship between the Bible and tradition, and the function of modern interpretation of the Bible.

The Bible is the central sacred text for Christians, especially because of its role in the everyday life of believers. The Bible is the basis for many major Christian beliefs; it is used in the liturgy of Christianity; it is the basis for prayer; and it provides the guidelines for the behaviour of Christians. It is particularly in the context of sacramental liturgy or worship that the Bible is viewed as important and sacred, for it is here that Christians at the same time read from the Bible and celebrate the Eucharist, Mass or Lord’s Supper. The Bible teaches them about the nature of God and the ministry and teachings of Jesus.

During the Middle Ages, the Bible was also revered as the ‘sacred page’ (Latin, *sacra pagina*) since it was the basis on which theology (words and teachings about God) was developed.

Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.

St Jerome (c. 340–420 ce), the most famous biblical scholar in the history of Christianity

The Bible and beliefs

While the beliefs underpinning sacred texts and writings are shared by all Christians, there are degrees of difference in the interpretation of these beliefs and how they are lived out in everyday life. Most Christian beliefs are introduced in the Bible:

- Jesus is Lord (Rom 10:9).
- Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24).
- Jesus is the Son of Man (Mk 2:28; cf. Dan 7).
- Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (Rev 19:13).
- Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:34–35).
- Christ will judge both the living and the dead (Rom 14:9).
- At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out and the Church was born (Acts 2:33–36).

The following sections will demonstrate how the Bible underpins the ethics and devotions of Christianity.



Figure 3.3.1 The Four Evangelists from the *Book of Kells*, dating from the ninth century

RESPOND

Investigate the origins and meanings of the symbols used to represent the evangelists.

The everyday life of believers

The Bible has a role in every aspect of the everyday life of believers. Various texts are used during the basic rituals and sacraments of the Christian life cycle from baptism through initiation, the Eucharist, marriage, ordination, sickness and death. The same range of texts is also used in the liturgical cycle of each Christian Church, especially during the Eucharist or Last Supper.

In addition, Christian sacred texts and writings are also central to the thought, morality and ethics of believers. For example, they help believers to better understand how to make decisions and how to act in certain situations. Finally, Christian sacred texts underpin their practices of prayer and meditation. Sacred and devotional texts are also used in domestic rituals such as grace before meals, prayers at bedtime and the blessing of homes.

Review

- 1 **Describe** the Christian Bible. Is it the same Bible for all Christians?
- 2 **Recall** what is meant by a ‘closed canon’.
- 3 **Examine** extracts from the Bible in this section. **Identify** links between these extracts and key Christian beliefs (for example, scripture texts about Jesus linked to titles given to him and key beliefs about him).
- 4 **Assess** the role of sacred writings in the everyday life of the Christian believer.

Extension

- 1 Do an internet search to discover what books make up the *apocrypha* for Catholic and Orthodox Churches.
- 2 **Construct** a table to detail *all* the books of the Christian Bible. Include dates and authors where possible.
- 3 What was the original language of the New Testament? What was the first other language it was translated into and by whom?
- 4 The first translation of the Bible into the vernacular (the language of the people) was by Martin Luther in 1522. **Investigate** other early translations and hold a class discussion on why the Catholic Church was reluctant to accept translations into the vernacular.

Did you know?

The Bible continues to be the most translated book throughout the world. As of 2005, at least one book of the Bible had been translated into 2400 of the existing 6900 language communities.

3.4 Core ethical teachings

Glossary

ethics

The system of explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices to clarify what is right and wrong, and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.

► The application of Christian ethics to specific issues is addressed in Chapter 11, pages 260–6.

Christian **ethics** refers to the moral norms that are seen to be distinctive of Christianity. Moral norms are those guidelines that help the Christian to reflect on their moral life and on what actions they should take in certain situations. Christian ethical teachings are based on the belief that the human person is an image of God with intellect, free will and power of self-determination. Most Christian Churches stress the importance of both faith and works (good moral actions), along with the central place of community, prayer and sacraments.

The ethical teachings of Christianity are based on a range of sources including the Christian Bible. Some churches such as the Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox also take heed of statements from Church Councils and Conferences, and the Pope and Bishops of the Church. Christian ethics pay particular attention to key passages from the Scriptures such as:

- the Decalogue or Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21)
- the ‘Golden Rule’ (Mt 22:37–39)
- the Beatitudes (Mt 5–7)
- actions based on love (1 Cor 13:1)
- nature of the Final Judgement (Mt 25)
- living a life of service (Lk 22:26–27)
- ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (Jn 13:34)
- following ‘the law of Christ’ (Gal 6:2) as the basis of morality
- uniting our will to God’s, our spirit united with the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:15–17)
- ‘Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God’ (Rom 15:7).

The Ten Commandments (Decalogue)

The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue ('ten words' from God), are the laws revealed by God to Moses (see Ex 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21). The first three commandments of the Decalogue refer to the worship of God, while the rest refer to obligations to one's neighbour and society.

The Decalogue is introduced by God's own words of freedom: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me' (Ex 20:2). The Decalogue summed up the type of relationship that Israel should have with God.

Jesus and those to whom he was preaching were, of course, well versed in the commandments of the Decalogue. For Christians, observance of the Decalogue is based on love not fear. The commandments should be viewed as life principles to be internalised by the human heart—not avoided because of perceived punishment and damnation by God. The practice of virtue is understood as more important than the listing of sins.

In the final analysis, the Decalogue is like a set of ten 'boundary markers' beyond which are sin, alienation, unhappiness and death. The Decalogue is an important basis for structuring and living the Christian life. It calls Christians back to loving God alone and loving their neighbour as themselves.

The Beatitudes

In his most well-known teaching, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1–12), Jesus says that certain people will be 'blessed with happiness'. Some of the Beatitudes (Latin for 'blessed') also appear in Luke's Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20–26). 'Beatitudes' have their origins in the Jewish Scriptures, where they were understood as declarations of praise or congratulations for an exercise of virtue.

In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' main purpose is to instruct his hearers. He delivers nine Beatitudes that praise people for various virtues that could be cultivated—for example, poverty of spirit, meekness and hunger for righteousness. The final two praise people for being persecuted and promise future rewards.

In Luke's version, Jesus blesses his listeners for conditions of real poverty, hunger and desolation by promising them future rewards from God. The four consoling Beatitudes are then balanced by four threatening woes.

Jesus' commandment of love

Three factors are important in order to understand Jesus' ethics:

- repentance as the basis of the ethical life
- the radical nature of God's ethical demand on humanity
- the centrality of the love commandment (Mt 7:12).

Further insight into Jesus' command to love is found in the first Letter of John:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God ... God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him ...

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us ...

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

I Jn 4:7–12, 17

Importance of the ethical teachings in the lives of Christians

Jesus preaches a God who is the source and model of love for Jesus and his disciples (Mt 5:48). Jesus proclaims a love that is to bind and distinguish the Christian community (1 Cor 12–13) and compared to which the individual will ultimately be judged (Mt 25:31–46).

In the final analysis, Jesus' command to love means that the Christian expresses their longing for God and constantly seeks the good of their neighbour. In the first three gospels in particular, 'love' is connected with the preaching of God's Kingdom that arrives in the person of Jesus, and also with the greatest commandment (Mt 22:34–40). This type of love unavoidably involves suffering (Lk 6:22 ff.), and the Christian is asked to follow in Jesus' footsteps to the cross (Mt 10:3–7 ff.) and beyond to the Risen Christ's victory over sin and death.

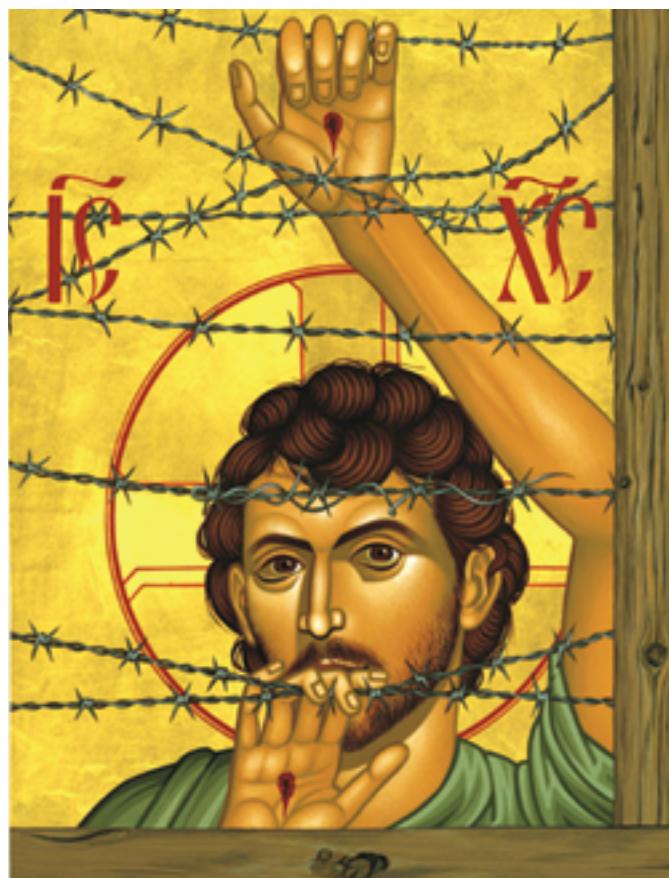


Figure 3.4.1 *Christ in the Margins*, 2003, by Robert Lentz. The artist has deliberately placed Jesus ambiguously to show him neither inside nor outside the barbed wire.

RESPOND

Describe important Christian ethical teachings that could be associated with this image.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** the term 'ethics'.
- 2 What is the Decalogue?
- 3 **Identify** two major guidelines for Christian ethics.
- 4 **Outline** the principal ethical teachings that underpin two of the following: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitude discourse and Jesus' command to love.
- 5 **Describe** the importance of Christian ethics in the everyday life of believers, especially in relation to the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes and Jesus' commandment to love.

Extension

- 1 In pairs, **discuss** the statement: 'The Decalogue is like a set of ten boundary markers.' Write a paragraph to **summarise** your discussion.
- 2 **Construct** a table to **compare** the similarities and differences in the two accounts of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1–12 and Lk 6:20–26). **Discuss** why there are differences.
- 3 **Compare** and **contrast** the meanings of 'ethics' and 'morality'. Present your conclusions in the form of a Venn diagram.
- 4 Imagine two worlds—one where there are no ethical guidelines and another where there are many moral laws.
 - a **Compare** and **contrast** these two worlds.
 - b Organise a class discussion on how someone would think and act if they were living in each of the worlds.



Figure 3.4.2 Many Christians read the Bible as a form of prayer.

3.5 Personal devotion

Glossary

devotion(s)	Used in the singular, 'devotion' is the ready will to serve God. The plural term 'devotions' refers to religious observances and forms of prayer or worship .
meditation	From the Greek word <i>melete</i> meaning 'care, study, exercise', implying preparation and practise in this form of prayer. Meditation in the Christian tradition is understood as a spiritual practice that serves as preparation for 'pure prayer' or 'prayer of the heart'.
prayer	The act, action or practice of praying to entities beyond the world, as in petition, thanksgiving, adoration or confession. In the Christian context this can include God, Jesus, his mother Mary and the saints . Prayer is also the form of words used for praying such as the Lord's Prayer or Our Father.
saints	Persons whose exceptional holiness of life is formally recognised by the Church and who are entitled to veneration.
worship	Often used interchangeably with 'liturgy', although 'worship' is the preferred term in the Reformed Churches. Both refer in general to celebrations or gatherings of the faithful for prayer and sacraments.

Did you know?

The English word 'prayer' literally means a 'petition' or 'request'. It derives from the Latin word *precari* meaning 'to entreat or beg'. For Christians, prayer is the most important and fundamental form of personal address to God.

Personal **devotions** refer to those various types of religious observances, whether public or private, that are usually separate from congregational **worship**. Many Christians see their 'personal devotions' as fostering true faith and spirituality.

Prayer as personal devotion

Prayer is an important way in which the Christian acknowledges the existence of a relationship between God and humanity and, more importantly, that God relates to each human being and all creation with ongoing compassion and goodness. In other words, a divine person interacts with human persons who in turn reach out to the One who sustains all creation. When Christians pray to the mother of Christ or to a saint, the one prayed to is viewed as linked with God and therefore having the power to answer prayers.

Prayer is encouraged in the Bible and there are many phrases from the scriptures used to describe prayer, including ‘to call upon’, ‘intercede with’, ‘meditate upon’, ‘consult’, ‘cry out to’, ‘draw near to’, ‘rejoice in’ and ‘seek the face of [God]’. Each of these expressions is obviously linked to various situations that prompt people to pray personally to God.

The personal prayer life of Jesus

Jesus is described as praying privately, silently or in solitude at various times during his ministry:

- after his baptism by John the Baptist (Lk 3:21–22)
- during the temptations and fasting in the desert (Lk 4:1–13)
- when seeking relief from his busy ministry (Lk 5:16)
- as a matter of course early in the morning before dawn (Mk 1:35).

He often spent the whole night in prayer, particularly before important decisions (Lk 6:12; Mk 14:26–42); after key sermons (Jn 6:15); and in times of distress (Jn 12:27–28), including during the crucifixion (Mt 27:46).

Different types of personal prayer

There are many different prayer practices and styles that Christians use in their everyday lives. Practices such as vocal, mental and contemplative prayer, and **meditation** and going on retreat, focus the Christian for their involvement with the world. Each of these prayer practices strengthen and direct the Christian so that they can interact in a more Christ-like way with others in the world. The practices give them direction when they feel alone, a sense of community when they feel lost, and a sense of joy when they are successful in spreading ‘the Good News’. Prayer infuses the life of the Christian because it is understood as an important way of experiencing ‘life with the living God’.

Vocal prayer uses words that are recited, spoken or sung. It may draw on traditional prayers with a long history such as the Lord’s Prayer (Mt 6:9–13), the Hail Mary, liturgical texts and litanies. Some prayers follow a prescribed formula such as the Catholic Rosary. Vocal prayer can also be original, spontaneous and based on one’s personal experience, the Psalms, the gospels and other sources.

O Lord, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established
... how majestic is your name in all the earth.

Ps 8:1–3



Figure 3.5.1 Christian meditation is a popular contemporary prayer style and has taken on many different forms.

Mental prayer refers to a process of reflection that involves the mind, the imagination and the will. During mental prayer, the Christian asks for God’s help to still the wandering mind and, eventually, to move the heart and convert it to the ways of God. Meditation is the most well-known form of mental prayer. Meditation is generally understood as the exercising of one’s spiritual memory based on repetition of words and phrases, usually pronounced aloud, and accompanied by vocal and bodily rhythm. A good example is the Orthodox Christian ‘Jesus Prayer’: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ Often icons are used as an aid to mental prayer.

Each of these different prayer practices and styles influence the everyday lives of believers by bringing them into contact with the mysteries of their faith, and by providing them with tangible ways in which these mysteries can be brought to life to provide individual and communal meaning. Prayer is a way of reaching out to others—praying for one’s family, the community or the world in general; seeking help for oneself—praying for guidance in coping with changes in one’s life; marking daily rituals—praying before a meal or setting out on a journey.

Review

- 1 What do Christians mean by ‘prayer’?
- 2 The Lord’s Prayer or Our Father is often called the model prayer. Read the Our Father and give three reasons for why it is called ‘the model prayer’.
- 3 **Describe** the main characteristics of vocal and mental prayer and **examine** their importance in the life of a Christian.
- 4 What are the key features of Jesus’ prayer life? **Discuss** possible ways his prayer life might influence the everyday practices of Christians.

Did you know?

The oldest Christian prayer is found in 1 Cor 16:22 (cf. Rev 22:20)—‘*Maranatha*’—Come, Lord [Jesus], Come.



RESPOND

What symbolism can you see in this image? How does this work relate to the material in this chapter?

Extension



- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the Rosary—the events in the lives of Jesus and Mary that it commemorates, its history and how it is prayed.
- 2 Interview five Christians and ask them what their favourite prayers are. In class, collate the responses and make a ‘Top of the Prayers’ list.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 65 and **investigate** why meditation is linked almost exclusively to Eastern practices.
- 4 **Outline** points for discussion in a class debate on the topic: ‘Meditation should be an important part of Christian prayer practices.’

Figure 3.5.2 *Shl'ma yhab ana l'khon*, 2007, by Western Australian artist Michael Kane Taylor. Triptych on canvas panels, printed with archival inks. The work combines scanned, photographic and autographic material. The title is an Aramaic translation of ‘I bring you peace’.

The image attempts to portray the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ as an event that is constantly re-enacted through human conflict and indifference. The three panels may be roughly divided into Suffering, Death and Renewal.

Conclusion

Perhaps due to its long and complex history, it is easy to forget that Christianity is based on a simple belief—that human beings exist in a state of alienation in this world, from God and each other, and that this state has been healed through the life, death and resurrection of one person, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, Christianity has at its heart not an idea but a person. Christians gain access to this person through a combination of historical understanding of Christianity, and by incorporating its key features into their daily lives—principal beliefs, sacred texts and writings, core ethical teachings and personal devotion.

Today Christianity is experiencing resurgence in Eastern Europe, while in Western Europe church attendance has been eroded by the influence of secularism and materialism. Christianity is also demonstrating great growth and renewal in some regions of Africa, parts of India, and in other countries such as Indonesia.

Christian migrants to Australia from Latin America, the Middle East and some parts of Asia bring their own rituals and ‘portraits’ of Christ. Many Australians who saw Christianity as a Western European religion have had to adjust to Christianity as a truly universal tradition. Wherever they come from, the very beginnings of Jesus’ ministry continue to take all Christians back to two perennial questions: ‘Who do you say that I am?’ (Mk 8:29) and ‘What is truth?’ (Jn 14:6, cf. Jn 18:38). These two questions lead to an obvious third question: ‘Who then is Jesus and how should his followers respond to him and his teachings today?’

These are perhaps the most urgent questions to be addressed by all contemporary Christians. There are, however, many competing answers to these questions—answers that either cause divisions within the Christian Churches or unite them in a common cause.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

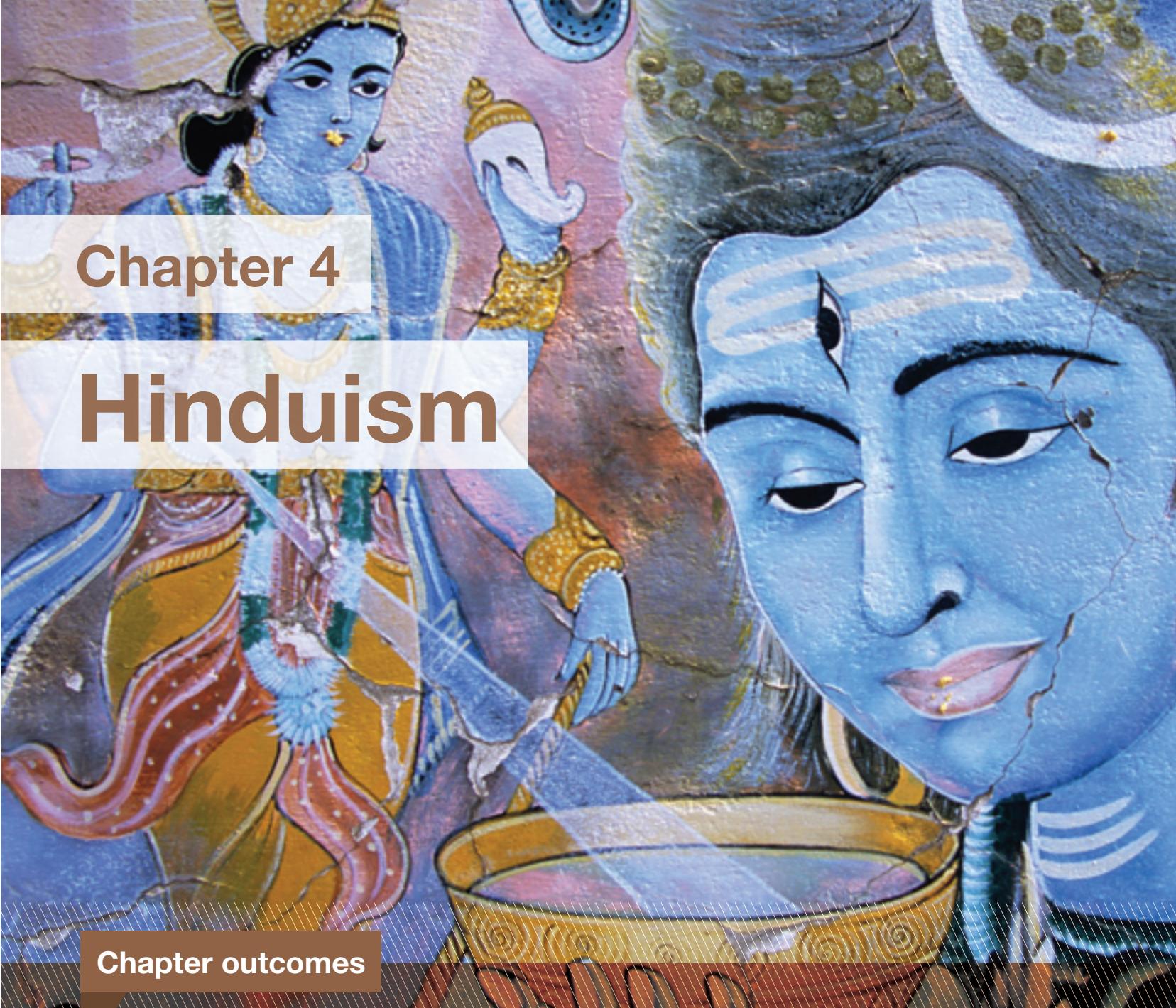
- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



Figure 3.5.3 Billboard messages are used by many Australian churches to spread the Christian message and attract people to their services.

Extension

- 1 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 2 Check that your media file is up to date. Use this file to **analyse** how the media report on Christianity compared to what you have learnt about Christianity in this chapter. Prepare a summary of your analysis.
- 3 Review this chapter in order to **construct** a pamphlet with text and graphics that advertises the best features of Christianity (maximum length is both sides of an A4 page).
- 4 **Synthesise** the main features of Christianity evident from all topics in this chapter in the form of a flow chart or mind map.



Chapter 4

Hinduism

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **discuss** the early Indus valley civilisation
- **describe** the Vedic period and **outline** the early development of Hinduism to the time of the *Upanishads*
- **outline** Hinduism as *sanatana dharma*
- **describe** the main features of devotion to Vishnu and Shiva
- **investigate** the principal teachings of Hinduism
- **identify** the importance of the *Vedas* and the epics for Hinduism, and **examine** extracts from them that **demonstrate** the principal teachings of Hinduism
- **outline** the principal ethical teachings in Hinduism and **describe** their importance in the life of adherents
- **outline** *puja* as celebrated in the home.



A recitation ritual for Shiva at Mount Waverley High School, Victoria (see detail on page 75). Here the thousand names of Shiva are being recited in unison. On the back wall is a *lingam*, a very common symbol of Shiva.

Introduction

Most world religions are considered by believers and scholars alike as having been founded by someone, and they often seek to find the ‘essence’ of a particular religion in the teachings of its founder. But what about religions that have no person or figure who could be regarded as having performed a founding role? The best known example of such a religion is Hinduism, which, having no founder and many distinct forms, has often been described not as a coherent religion in itself, but as a multiplicity of related religions.

Instead of trying to find an ‘essence’ of Hinduism, it is far more fruitful to regard the set of beliefs and practices covered by that name as forming a cultural ‘process’—the way in which human cultures change throughout time. This process provides a framework for the communication, and the incorporation into an identifiable whole, of:

- a range of religious world views
- religious practice—rituals and devotional actions
- social ethics—the interaction between members of different social groups.

Hinduism is the process that allows a remarkable variety of phenomena to be held together and to be recognised

by Hindus as making up a particular cultural system, whatever name it may be given.

In many respects, Hinduism is almost an ethnic category—most Hindus live in South Asia, with the exception of some immigrant groups in other countries, and Hinduism, as a religion, does not attract many converts. This does not mean that it has remained static throughout its history. South Asia has always been the home of many different ethnic and linguistic groups, all of which have contributed to the very rich umbrella of ideas conveyed by the word ‘Hinduism’. Because of the great variety of religious practices, held together by teachings and a ritual framework of devotion, this richness has been sustained. Devotional practices are the heart of practical Hinduism and can be modified easily to meet new technologies and new theological views.

Ultimately, this process is made up of many components. The best way to appreciate this is to study the developments in ancient Indian religious history that led to the beginnings of Hinduism. From these beginnings, Hinduism has grown to such an extent that it has approximately 900 million followers today, mainly located in India, but also in smaller numbers elsewhere in the world.

Extension

- Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with Hinduism/and or Hindus over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media's presentation with what you have learnt in your study of Hinduism.

4.1 Origins

The early inhabitants of the Indus valley

Glossary

deity	God or goddess. Hinduism is characterised by its multiplicity of deities believed to perform different roles for their worshippers.
Sanskrit	Language of the Vedas and a huge body of later literature; regarded by Hindus throughout history as a sacred language.
Vedas	'Sacred knowledge, sacred texts'—the most ancient and sacred Indian scriptures dated from approximately 1200–600 BCE. The Vedas are organised in four collections (<i>Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva</i>) and consist of hymns of praise, ritual/ceremonial manuals and mystical/philosophical treatises (<i>Upanishads</i>).

The various strands of Hinduism only came together after about 300 BCE, and are reflected most clearly in the great Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*. This development came after 2000 years of intellectual and material culture—even at its inception, Hinduism was already a complex set of cultural phenomena.



Figure 4.1.1 Ancient India

RESPOND

Compare this map with a map of modern India. What differences are there?

The Harappan culture

The earliest civilisation of ancient India flourished between about 3000 and 1500 BCE. It was centred on the Indus River in present-day Pakistan, but spread over most of west-central India, eastern Iran and Afghanistan. Called the Harappan culture, it was located around large cities—Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Kalibangan. The existence of these cities implies that there were sophisticated social, economic and political structures.

We know very little about the religion of the Harappan civilisation. It is thought that the religion might have been focused around astrology, the worship of fertility gods and goddesses, the performance of rituals by groups of

priests (suggesting the existence of a sacred cult) and the belief in purification by water. We do not know the names of any particular deities, nor details of any Harappan beliefs. Nevertheless, it is very likely that later Indian religion was in some way influenced by the intellectual culture of the Harappan civilisation. The Harappan culture offers the first component of what later became Indian civilisation.



Figure 4.1.2 Seal from the Harappan culture

The emergence of the Aryans

Another component of Indian civilisation began to develop with the arrival of the people who are often called Aryans. The Aryans were not a distinctive race—the Sanskrit word *arya* really means ‘noble’. The term *arya* occurs commonly in Sanskrit literature after the fourth century BCE, referring to those who followed the teachings of the *brahmins* (see next section) as being ‘religiously cultivated’, and as living in the heartland of brahmanical culture between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.

People speaking Indo-European languages entered India in successive waves of immigration between about 3000 and 1200 BCE. It is often incorrectly thought that they invaded India, but it is likely they mingled with the remnants of the Harappan culture. The enduring image that the texts give us of these people is one of small bands of nomads wandering the countryside in search of pasture for their cattle, horses and goats.

The Aryans left cultural features that had a major impact on the development of Hinduism. They brought with them the Sanskrit language, which rapidly became the language in which most religious texts were composed. Their great literary monuments were the *Vedas*, of which the most famous is the *Rig Veda*, a collection of texts dating back to about 1200 BCE.

The Vedic period

Glossary

asceticism	The act of performing bodily austerities designed to acquire magical power or purify the body.
atman	The essence or principle of life; Ultimate Reality as present within a human being—not a ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’.
austerities	Severe acts or practices that usually require someone to abstain from or deprive themselves of something.
Brahman	The name given to Ultimate Reality or Cosmic Self.
brahmin	The male priestly class (<i>varna</i>).
karma(n)	Originally ritual action; later meaning all human actions. The law of <i>karma</i> refers to the belief that all human actions have consequences that affect not only one’s present life but also future lives until moksha is achieved.
moksha	Liberation or release from <i>samsara</i> ; the end of rebirth for the human being. Different philosophical and religious strands in Hinduism describe <i>moksha</i> differently—for instance, the attainment of union with God or knowledge of one’s identity with Brahman .
pantheon	All the gods believed in by a particular group of people.
renouncers	Those who ritually leave society in order to lead a life in the forest based on the performance of <i>yoga</i> and bodily austerities. Renunciation includes giving up all material possessions and all social connections.
Vedic sacrifice	Described in the <i>Vedas</i> ; a fire sacrifice in which offerings (food and other gifts) were made by priests (brahmins) to honour the gods, and hymns were chanted. Less elaborate sacrifices were offered in the home. The priestly sacrificial ritual became very complex and was seen as a sacred creative power in its own right, which guaranteed the reality of the material universe—if the ritual was performed correctly by <i>brahmins</i> , who knew all the rules of the sacrifice, results would occur automatically. Over time, this power was interpreted as residing within the human being (an ‘internal’ sacrifice or meditation on sacred knowledge), and the emphasis shifted from material to spiritual wellbeing.

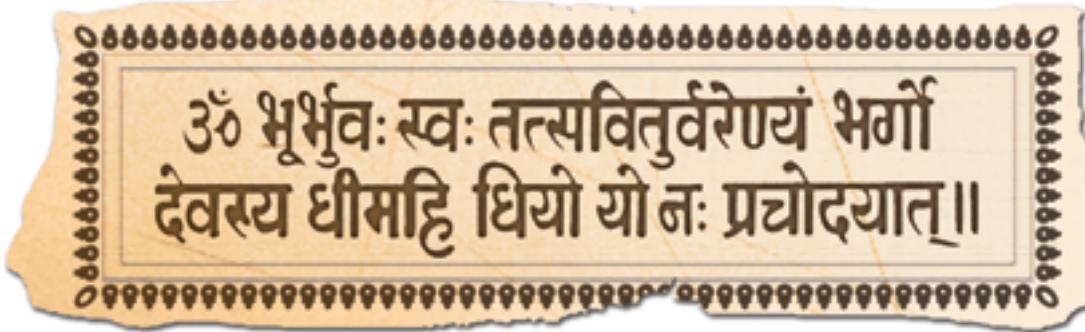


Figure 4.1.3 This Sanskrit verse is taken from *Rig Veda* 3. 62:10, and can be translated as follows: 'We meditate on the supreme splendour of the god, Savitr: May it stimulate our thoughts.'

Most scholars date Vedic literature from about 1200 to 100 BCE. The *Vedas* depict a **pantheon** of gods and associated myths and theologies that shaped all later Hindu mythology. They also extensively describe the **Vedic sacrifice**, which involved the ritual slaughter and cooking of cattle, sheep and goats for the purpose of maintaining the fertility of the earth and for the material wellbeing of the sacrificer. Finally, the image of the ancient Indian warrior-chieftain looking after his cattle, but also engaging in cattle rustling to increase his herd, became an important symbol of manhood in Vedic literature until at least the beginning of the Common Era.

The later parts of Vedic literature, named *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*, reflect clear developments in religion. In the *Brahmanas*, the performance of the sacrifice became the main element of religious life, and theorising about the sacrifice became the principal form of theological activity. The sacrifice itself took the form of a ritual, being regarded as a mechanically performed set of acts and utterances in which men and gods alike were equal participants. Its performance must have been a highly technical, complex and quite spectacular affair, requiring up to eighteen **brahmin** who were trained ritual specialists.



Figure 4.1.4 Groups of priests performing a fire sacrifice

Correct performance of the ritual was believed to be enough to generate power that could rejuvenate the fertility of the earth, confer material goods upon its performer in the future and give rebirth in heaven. In the final analysis, the ritual was more powerful than the gods.

However, such was the expense of its performance—in paying for the animals to be killed, the wages for the priests and the lost production while the ritual was being performed—that only the wealthy could afford to have these sacrifices staged. This meant that smaller household sacrifices, which could be performed by the male head of the household and his wife, became increasingly popular and formed a central part of the religious life of the people, as they still do today. The household ritual was the foundation of the ritual life of the Hindus, rather than the large public sacrifices, which virtually disappeared around the beginning of the Common Era.

► Concepts and terms introduced in this section are dealt with in more detail on pages 75–80.

The final section of Vedic literature is called the *Upanishads*, of which the eighteen earliest were composed between 600 and 100 BCE and are regarded as the most important, doctrinally speaking. The period reflected in this set of texts marked the second great flowering of Indian city culture. The nomadic lifestyle of the Vedic tribes was over. Under the influence of new technologies, which led to the clearing of the jungle, and new political and economic systems, large towns with up to 20 000 people had sprung up and a lively merchant trade had begun.

These changes were accompanied by the emergence of an introverted world view that was characterised by permanent abandonment of the socioeconomic world, and the performance of practices such as meditational exercises and bodily **austerities** in the solitude of the forest. Many saw this new and quite distinct lifestyle as being strongly opposed to the ritual world view, which emphasised

family ties, material possessions, rebirth in heaven and performance of the sacrifice for specific material ends.

A new stream of thinkers arose who rejected the idea that power resided in the sacrifice. Instead they looked inwards, within the person. They asserted the existence of an eternal Self (*atman*) transcending the impermanent and incessantly moving mind and body. This Self, they argued, was identical in every way to a greater Self (*Brahman*), which was the Ultimate Reality of the whole cosmos.

The person—regarded as consisting of *atman*, mind and body—was reborn constantly as a result of a residual power created by the performance of actions, from which the good or bad effects that arose had to be lived out in later lives. This power was called *karma*. It has become a permanent feature in all Indian religions. Through a combination of exhausting one's *karma* and meditation on the *atman*, it was held that rebirths would cease and one would enter some kind of undefined blissful state called *moksha*.



Figure 4.1.5 A Hindu ascetic in meditation. The monkey-headed god Hanuman is depicted in the picture behind him.

Those who taught meditation on *atman-Brahman* were not interested in either worldly possessions or in the sacrifice. Furthermore, they held a strongly pessimistic view about the social and material world, considering it to be a place quite unsuitable for achieving any kind of lasting happiness. Accordingly, they left the world and went into the forest to lead a contemplative life of **asceticism**. This is often called 'renouncing the social world' and those who did were called **renouncers**. They broke ties with every possible social and economic network. The isolation they craved was symbolic as well as actual, since it implied the isolation of the self from both body and mind and, by means of meditation, the isolation of the mind from the external world.

Since the sixth century BCE, the various ascetic movements, both within Hinduism and outside of it in Buddhism, have become a tremendously influential force in the religious and cultural life of India.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** what is known about Harappan culture.
- 2 **Recall** who the Aryans were and their impact on the development of Hinduism.
- 3 What is Vedic literature?
- 4 In one paragraph, **describe** the main differences between Vedic religion based on the sacrifice and the changed religious view found in the *Upanishads*.
- 5 In point form, **outline** the early development of ancient Indian religion up to the time of the *Upanishads*.

Extension

- 1 With a partner, **propose** two reasons why the changes in Indian society during the late Vedic period gave rise to a different direction in religious practices. Then **discuss** your ideas with the class.
- 2 Type 'Harappan culture' into an internet search engine. **Investigate** two sites from the results list and **summarise** the information you find helpful and interesting in a brief report.

Hinduism as *sanatana dharma*

Glossary

dharma

The law(s) of the cosmos (*sanatana dharma*—eternal *dharma* or universal natural law) and also the moral and religious duties, laws and customs that are in harmony with the natural law. *Sadharana dharma* is the general code of Hindu ethics.

varna

Class into which a person is born. There were four classes in ancient Indian society (not to be confused with 'caste').

The key concept for understanding the Hindu world view is ***dharma***. *Dharma* is a very complex idea, with many meanings. It reflects both how the world is and how it ought to be, as well as how religious practice fits in with the whole cosmos. At the highest level, it is *sanatana dharma*—the unchanging and everlasting law of order in the universe with which all things and all people should live in harmony.

Dharma is the foundation of the whole universe. In this world people go to a person who is best versed in *dharma* for guidance. By means of *dharma* one drives away evil. Upon *dharma* everything is founded. Therefore, *dharma* is called the highest good.

Taittiriya Aranyaka, 10:79

Harmony and balance are achieved by means of ordering human groups in different levels (or classes), each one having obligations and privileges. The four ***varnas*** are the most ancient social divisions. They are:

- *brahmin*—priest/teacher
- *kshatriya*—warrior/king
- *vaishya*—farmer/merchant
- *shudra*—servant to the other three classes.

One of the fundamental principles resulting from the application of *dharma* to society as a whole is that of hierarchy. This arrangement leads to the interdependence of all groups and to good order in society, because different groups are understood to have different responsibilities.

Dharma also refers to the laws and duties by which human beings ensure harmony with *sanatana dharma* (see pages 75–80).

Review

- 1 With a partner, **discuss** the statement: ‘*Dharma* is the way the world works.’ Is this too simple a definition of *dharma*?
- 2 **Outline** what the concept of *sanatana dharma* means.
- 3 **Explain** how a social hierarchy can achieve ‘harmony and balance’.

Extension

Propose some reasons for the hierarchical order of the four *varnas*. To what extent does the order reflect a society very different from the present-day India?

Devotion to Vishnu and Shiva

Glossary

avatara	The earthly manifestation of a god or goddess taken with the specific intention of restoring <i>dharma</i> when the world is in a state of decline.
bhakti	Loving devotion to a personal god or goddess and sharing in the loving grace of the divine person.
guru	A religious teacher, often regarded as an enlightened being; sometimes the central object of worship in a cult.
yogin	A person who engages in intensive meditational and ritual practice for long periods of time in caves or other isolated sites.

So far, the way of the ritual (associated with early Vedic literature) and the way of the renouncer (associated with the *Upanishads*) have been identified as two fundamental elements of the set of religious movements that came to be called Hinduism. However, Hinduism did not yet exist as a religious or a cultural body; one more element was needed before it could really come to fruition. This element is called ***bhakti***, which can best be translated as ‘devotion’—the word connoting the attitude of devotion to a deity or to a ***guru***, as well as the means by which the devotion is expressed.

Following its foundational period, the principal lines of development in Hinduism are mostly related to the emergence and expansion of various forms of devotionalism or ***bhakti***. Large-scale devotional movements arose that were centred on the worship of the two great gods Shiva (who destroys the universe) and Vishnu (who preserves the universe), the goddess (*devi*) under various names, and the gods Ganesha and Surya. Other minor deities, such as Krishna and Skanda, who fall within the family of Vishnu and Shiva, were also worshipped, as were prominent sages (Lakulisha, Caitanya and Shankara) who claimed they were ***avatars*** of gods.

Vishnu and Shiva became especially important. By the time of the appearance of the great Sanskrit epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, both gods had taken over some of the names and roles of other gods.



Figure 4.1.6 Statue of Vishnu in Jodhpur, India

In the *Svetashvatara Upanishad*, probably composed around the beginning of the Common Era, Shiva (under the name Rudra) is worshipped as a deity in a devotional manner. By this time, many myths had developed around him that identified him as both ascetic and householder, and as a kind of divine nonconformist and cosmic destroyer.

Vishnu became famous through his ten *avatars*. He is more prominent than Shiva in the two great epics, because his two most famous *avatars*, Krishna and Rama, are the heroes of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* respectively. They became worshipped as independent deities, but their association with Vishnu has never been lost.

From the fourth century CE onwards, as a result of the need to develop spatial areas where rituals of devotion could be undertaken cheaply and quickly, there was a tremendous upsurge in temple building and the construction of images of deities. Sacred places or *tirthas*—usually located near water—also became popular through being associated

with one or more of the great gods. Texts were composed to record the mythology surrounding the founding of these places and the results to be gained from performing rituals there.

Associated with the rapid expansion of devotionalism was the emergence of a whole new genre of literature called *Purana* (literally ‘ancient tale’). Composed in Sanskrit, these texts are filled with myths about the Hindu gods mentioned above, rituals to be performed to these gods and lists of rules giving guidance in everyday behaviour. Such texts continue to be composed and recited up to the present day. Vishnu and Shiva are especially important in these texts, and each god has at least one *Purana* named after them. In these texts, the mythology and theology of these two gods is extensively developed.



Figure 4.1.7 Dancing Shiva sculpture at Mahabalipuram Temple, near Chennai, India

Shiva has become very important as a local deity as well as a universal one. He is represented in many ways, including:

- as **yogin**, sitting and meditating, often with the River Ganges flowing through his hair

- as a family man, with his wife, Parvati, and two sons, Ganesha and Skanda
- as Nataraja, 'Lord of the Dance'
- as a teacher, seated upon a throne surrounded by sages who are receiving his instruction
- as Ardhanarishvara, with one half of the body as male and the other half as female. This symbolises the Hindu belief that the sacred ultimate power of the universe is both feminine and masculine.



Figure 4.1.8 Detail of a recitation ritual being performed for Shiva. The food offerings—here, symbolic offerings to Shiva—are standard to all *pujas* (see pages 87–8).

Review

- What is *bhakti*?
- In your own words, **define** 'avatars'.
- Recall** the names of the two main Hindu gods and **clarify** their roles.
- Explain** the importance of devotionalism in the development and spread of Hinduism.

Extension

- Investigate** and **describe** the main features of devotion to Vishnu and Shiva.
- Do an internet search to find and download two different representations of Shiva, then **identify** what attributes of Shiva each depicts.

4.2 Principal teachings

In the long history of Hinduism, there has never been universal doctrinal orthodoxy—that is, a ‘creed’ or set of beliefs established by an elite group to which all ‘believers’ must give assent. Instead, Hindus operate on a set of assumptions about reality and the world, which all believers tend to share but which can be (and are) questioned or denied without loss of religious identity. Only total rejection of the validity of the most ancient scriptures (the *Vedas*) would technically merit exclusion. A Hindu’s framework for religious belief and practice is set by the particular interpretation of shared insights within the group into which they are born.

Hinduism consists of a number of different traditions and groups; every village and town has unique aspects of religious practice as well as some that are more widely shared. There is endless variety, and some very large differences occur between groups. This contradicts a view developed by Western scholars over the last 200 years. They have imposed their particular interpretation of ‘Hinduism’ on this complex Indian religion and exaggerated the unity of Hinduism at the expense of its diversity.

Atman and Brahman, gods and goddesses

Glossary

samsara

A name for existence seen as bondage to a set of ongoing rebirths caused by karmic action.

Atman—‘Ultimate Reality’ or ‘Inner Self’

Underlying all Hindu belief is a philosophy that a person consists of a physical body, a mind and *atman*—an Inner Self that exists beyond these. While the first two disappear at death, the *atman* can potentially be reborn from life to life. The *atman* is the essence or principle of life—the Ultimate Reality as present within a human being.

Time and the nature of the material world

In general, while there are some groups who differ, Hindus will assume that there is no absolute beginning and end, either to their own lives or to the existence of the world



Figure 4.2.1 The great gods Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma give an interview in heaven, while a record of it is being prepared.
From an 1836 manuscript in Assamese script.

or, indeed, to the cosmos. They also assume that cycles of birth, death and rebirth affect all aspects of existence. This world view took many centuries to evolve and people speculated about questions such as:

- What is Ultimate Reality?
- What is the nature of the ‘divine’ and the nature of human beings and human consciousness?
- What causes and maintains the processes of the creation and destruction of the material world?

Creation—one question, many answers

Hindu scriptures tell many different stories in answer to the above questions. The most important scriptures (*shruti*—that which is heard) are traditionally thought to be inspired by the religious experience of ‘seers’—those who are able to see, hear or intuit understandings of the ‘real’ as a result of their spiritual power.

There are a number of different ideas about how creation occurred: as a result of a battle between the gods, or sexual union between the gods, or ascetic practices by the gods, or the mysterious action of a divine embryo. In the *Rig Veda* it was thought that a divine sacrifice of the first or primeval ‘man’ might have been the source of all life. But in the end, creation is understood as the greatest and most sacred mystery that neither human beings nor even the gods understand.

Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen?

Whence this creation has arisen—perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not—the one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows—or perhaps he does not know.

Creation Hymn from the *Rig Veda*, 10:129,
in W. O’Flaherty (trans. and annot.),
The Rig Veda: An Anthology, 1981

In later scriptures (*smṛti*), especially the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*, the idea of *Brahman* as a creator god arose, together with the idea that time goes in cycles, from age to age. In each cycle, the cosmos gradually becomes less perfect and is finally destroyed; then, after a long period of absolute quiet, it is recreated into a golden age, only to begin deteriorating again over very long periods (*yugas*), until yet another cycle of cosmic destruction, inactivity and recreation begins.

Hindus as individuals see themselves as having a very long history of birth, death and rebirth through the long cycles of creation and destruction. This whole process is called *samsara*, first mentioned in the final strata of Vedic literature. A human being is ‘chained’ or ‘bound’ in *samsara* unless they seriously seek total liberation from it (*moksha*) by religious practice. In the intervening time, what is sought and hoped for is a better rebirth in a higher caste or in the ‘world of the gods’ (heaven). One text describes it thus:

This entire world is bound to craving and rolls around like a wheel forever so long as there exists the notion ‘there is’ and ‘there is not’. Just as lotus fibre is found everywhere within a lotus stalk, so too fibre which is craving, and has neither beginning nor end, is always found in the body. And just as a weaver sews a thread into a garment, so one is bound to the thread of *samsara* by the needle of craving.

Mahabharata, 12. 210:32–34

Brahman

Brahman is the Ultimate Reality behind all appearances. It is neutral in gender and cannot be worshipped directly, nor described except in abstract terms such as ‘Bliss’, ‘Awareness’ or ‘Consciousness’, and ‘Being’.

Some Hindu theologians and philosophers prefer not to describe *Brahman* at all. One view is that everything other than *Brahman* has only a limited reality because it possesses no permanence. *Maya* is the veiling power that hides Ultimate Reality from us and leads us to believe that the world we see is permanent.

The Hindu view is that one is bound to the world because of self-interest, attachment and desire. Liberation from this bondage and from the round of birth, death and rebirth can only be achieved by linking oneself with *Brahman*—the Ultimate Reality or a form of ‘the Divine’.

Just as religious intuitions about creation changed over the centuries (as they have in all cultures), ideas about the gods/God-consciousness/Ultimate Reality changed over time. There were times when particular ideas became very powerful and others disappeared.

The *brahmin* priesthood recorded the texts and exercised a good deal of theological power among the literate minority from very early times. However, in the later texts, especially the *Puranas*, the understanding of the divine was influenced by the beliefs of non-*brahmins*.



Figure 4.2.2 Krishna and the *gopis* (milkmaids). The play of Krishna and the *gopis* is regarded as an image of the soul’s relationship with God. The love of Krishna and Radha (pictured on the right), his favourite *gopi*, is celebrated in Sanskrit and Bengali love poetry.

The gods (*devas*) and goddesses (*devis*)

All the gods and goddesses are manifestations of *Brahman*, but for a typical Hindu the god or goddess is much more important than the largely abstract *Brahman*. A god or goddess can be described in a personal way—for example, he or she will have a number of special names, may be closely connected with other gods or goddesses, may be a saviour and destroyer of evil and may intervene in human affairs.

There is debate about whether the major gods are on the same level of ‘reality’ as *Brahman* or on a lower level, but all points of view are allowed to flourish. A Hindu may reject the idea of a personal god to be worshipped in the home and temple, or may spend much of their life in praise and worship of many gods and goddesses.

Some of the goddesses are fiercely independent and powerful, such as Kali; others are controlled and peaceful, such as Parvati. They are thought to be the manifestation of the active power of the gods (*shakti*) and are also associated with the material world, the reality of matter and the senses (*prakriti*).

The cosmos as the body of god

One of the most influential interpretations of the relationship between the divine and the world of matter is that the world is the divine body. In this framework, many natural features of the landscape, such as rivers, mountains and rocks, together with animals and human beings, can be seen as concrete expressions of the divine. For instance, the Ganges River is a goddess, as well as being the Milky Way, which descended to earth as a great body of water to cool the heat of Shiva’s bodily austerities.

For Hindus, the whole world is sacred, but at a number of different levels. Saintly human beings are thought of as incarnations of god, but not as total a divine presence as the god or goddess in complete divinity.

In spite of the myriad of names, texts and local oral traditions that describe what one Vedic hymn calls the ‘330 million gods’, there is an important assumption that all the gods and goddesses are one. The multitudinous appearances are merely limited expressions of the infinite and unsayable nature of *Brahman*, yet the deities are approached by their worshippers with different expectations of what they will do.



Figure 4.2.3 The goddess Durga. Durga represents the power of the Supreme Being that preserves moral order and righteousness in the world. The Sanskrit word *durga* means a fort or a place that is protected and thus difficult to reach.



Figure 4.2.4 An image of the goddess Durga in the Sri Durga Temple at Rockbank, near Melbourne

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** ‘atman’ and ‘Brahman’.
- 2 **Identify** the most important gods and goddesses in Hinduism and write a sentence about each.
- 3 **Explain** how Hindus can worship many different gods while still believing they are just manifestations of the one god.

Extension



What can you discover about some of the many *devas* and *devis* of Hinduism? Go to the web destinations for page 78 as a good starting point. **Investigate** six of the *devas* and *devis* and **construct** your findings in graphic form.

Dharma, karma and moksha

Glossary

- | | |
|---|--|
| jati | The term used to denote communities (literally ‘births’) and sub-communities in India. |
| Sva dharma
(own <i>dharma</i>) | This is the framework of duties and obligations in which each person works out their religious practice. |

Dharma—human beings and their destiny

Dharma is not a precise doctrine to believe in, but a complex set of teachings to be understood and practised from the beginning to the end of one’s life. In this context, it means something similar to the Western concept of religious practice and its accompanying belief—that is, the right way of living in every sense.

It is neither morality, nor the good, the right, justice, nor law. It is the socio-cosmic order which can be said to be good simply because it is necessary for the maintenance of the successful existence of everything constituted by the ‘three worlds’—(earth, sky and intermediate space ...). It is the good simply in that it assures the continuity of the empirical world.

M. Biardeau, *L'Hindouisme. Anthropologie d'une Civilisation*, 1981, p. 49

'Autonomy' and 'equality', important values in Western societies, are thought to lead to chaos and anarchy, the very opposite of *dharma*. The central value is the good of the whole society and the harmony of the cosmos—not individual wishes and ambitions—and this profoundly influences ethical beliefs. The essence of *dharma* is the necessity of upholding and harmonising with the order of the world, which is seen to be continually threatened by the possibility of disorder and disturbance. It is a world-affirming ideal, and anyone who acts contrary to *dharma*, even in trivial ways, is seen as threatening the survival of all.

Purity and pollution

Closely connected with order and harmony is the concept of 'purity' and its opposite, 'pollution'. Purity is assumed to be perfect permanent order in its individual and social dimensions. To attain perfection in this way is, however, impossible. All temporary order is continually under threat, both by our ordinary bodily condition (which is messy, subject to ageing and decay, and virtually never perfect) and by our ignorance and selfishness. Pollution as disorder (and by implication, danger) is closely connected with all bodily fluids and products when they break the boundary of the body. Blood outside the body, as in menstruation and childbirth, is particularly polluting.

The meaning of pollution is not 'dirty' or 'unhygienic', but more accurately 'disturbingly powerful', with the potential to destabilise. The symbolism of breaking boundaries is important. Hindus have an understanding of the sacred not only as 'order', but also as 'disorder'—the kind of sacred that is awesome and dangerous and threatens to be out of control.

Class and caste

As we have seen, the application of *dharma* to Hindu society is the principle of hierarchy, where different groups within that hierarchy are understood to have different responsibilities. Each family has a place in the hierarchy of birth (*jati*) and in the simpler hierarchy of class (*varna*) (see pages 72–3). Each person also has a particular place in the hierarchy of the family. *Jati* is a separate hierarchy that came later, and refers to caste. The system of caste matches the system of class (*varna*) at the top and the bottom (*brahmins* and *shudras*), but it is very difficult to match caste with class in between the two extremes. Today there are more than 2000 castes.

A Hindu's position in the caste system is decided at birth, as the name *jati* implies, and is connected with occupation. The principle behind caste is that different occupations are either more or less polluting—those who work with blood and death (slaughter of animals,

the washing of soiled clothes) are lowest in the caste hierarchy; those who do not deal with such matters but deal mainly with the sacred as order (the priestly castes), whose messes are cleaned up for them by others, have the responsibility to maintain religious 'purity', and are highest on the caste scale.

What is unique about Hinduism is that a Hindu is born into and remains in a particular caste—and theoretically a class—for their whole life, and this is seen as an individual's destiny, directly connected with the *karma* of previous lives. *Sva dharma* is the particular *dharma* that is appropriate to one's position in the caste hierarchy. It is not something that an individual decides.



Figure 4.2.5 Hindu altar in Varanasi, India

Karma—actions have consequences

Another major teaching of Hinduism is that all human actions (*karma*) have consequences that not only affect oneself and others in the immediate sense, but shape the spiritual and even the material future of a person. Good actions lead to good results and more good actions—good *karma* or making merit (*punya*) is the way to fulfil the obligations of *dharma* and will lead to a better rebirth. This means a birth in which it is easier to follow spiritual goals in a higher caste position or to renounce material possessions and caste altogether, in the desire to devote one's life to seeking God-consciousness and attaining liberation from *samsara*. Action, or *karma*, that is against *dharma* is considered a demerit (*papa*), which can lead to rebirth in one of many hells.

To a certain extent, Hindus explain their current situation as the result of the quality of their actions (*karma*) and commitment to *dharma* in a previous life. Some actions are assumed to be so evil or so meritorious that not only is the doer's life affected, but possibly also that of whole families and districts even through generations.

Moksha or mutki—ways of liberation and the divine

Glossary

ashrama	A stage of life, of which there are four: the period of being a young student; the period of marriage and running a household; the period of partial withdrawal in middle age for more intense religious practice; the final period of complete withdrawal from social life. The final stage is a time when ascetic religious practice is recommended.
moksha (or <i>mutki</i>)	The ‘release’ from the cycle of <i>samsara</i> .
yoga	‘Joining’/‘yoking’ of mind and body to achieve perfect unity or wholeness; a spiritual and bodily discipline.

Most Hindus prefer to worship a personal god or goddess (or more than one) with an attitude of love and surrender (*bhakti*), and to lead an ordinary social life in which the goal is to avoid self-interest and do all ‘for the love of god’ (the way of *karma* or action). The *Bhagavad Gita* (see pages 83–4) recommends *bhakti* above all.

Most people hope only for a better rebirth—the attaining of **moksha**, although promised by Krishna in the *Gita* to all who love Him, is still considered very difficult without more committed renunciation than is possible in ordinary social life. There are three traditionally accepted ways of liberation.

Ways of liberation

Jnana yoga—the way of knowledge

‘Knowing *Brahman*’ means ‘knowing one’s Inner Self’, knowing that at the deepest level, the *atman* (the real self) is *Brahman*. This requires total abandonment of the sense of individual ‘self’ (understood as ego, mind and body) and the practice of **yoga**. In this framework, the great flaw of the human race is its ignorance of Self and *Brahman*, not its sinfulness nor exile from Heaven and god.



Bhakti yoga—the way of devotion

A renouncer may also opt for ecstatic *bhakti* devotion to a particular god or goddess. The goal is to become physically and spiritually close to the god or goddess through divine grace. Most Hindus follow a *bhakti* path without total renunciation, especially when linked with the ‘way of action’.

Karma yoga—the way of action

The person who follows this opts to stay active in the ordinary world but renounces all attachment to their own intentions and actions. The ideal of this path is not to wish for reward for one’s behaviour, nor let it be shaped by fear of social and personal consequences. All self-interest is put aside. Even building up a store of *punya* or merit is a form of self-interest. Within the framework of *bhakti* and *karma* *yoga*, the main flaw in human beings is our attachment to ourselves and our desires and actions.

► The *Bhakti* movement is a significant idea considered in Chapter 12, pages 279–82.

The perfect practice of each of the *yogas* requires a highly committed religious discipline, whether ‘within’ the world or renouncing it. A better rebirth is considered a more realistic goal than final liberation. A better rebirth can bring better opportunities for renunciation and liberation. One of the great themes of Hinduism is the tension between love of the world and all the good things in it and the accompanying wish to be reborn on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the knowledge that absolute freedom in the divine can only be achieved by renouncing that self-interested love.

One way of balancing these two goals is to set aside a part of life for renunciation. It is an ideal for the males in the highest *varnas* (classes) to see their lives in four stages or **ashramas**: the student years, the period of marrying and rearing children as a householder, a period during middle age when one withdraws from most social life, and finally, the period in old age when one leaves the household to lead a life of renunciation. In this way, a person can fulfil the *dharma* of their birth, contributing to the enrichment of the order of the world, and also renounce attachment to it in preparation for leaving it behind forever.

Review

- 1 **Investigate** the connection between *dharma* and *karma*. Then in your own words, write a paragraph to **explain** each concept.
- 2 **Clarify** how purity and pollution are connected with ‘order and harmony’.
- 3 What do Hindus understand by class (*varna*)?
- 4 What is the principle behind the caste system?
- 5 **Distinguish** the difference between ‘caste’ and ‘class’ in Hindu society.
- 6 **Explain** the concept of *moksha* and why it is considered to be very difficult to attain.
- 7 **Outline** the importance of *moksha* for a Hindu devotee.

Extension

- 1 With a partner, **discuss** whether *karma* makes sense in terms of Western ideas about birth and status. **Justify** your responses.
- 2 Imagine you are a Hindu devotee of Krishna. How difficult would it be to take up a lifestyle of total renunciation? Is *karma yoga* an easier option for most people?
- 3 ‘A better rebirth is considered a more realistic goal than final liberation.’ **Analyse** this statement from the point of view of a Hindu ‘living in the world’.

4.3 Sacred texts and writings

Glossary

epic	A text, usually very long, that depicts a total view of creation and society and explores the deepest concerns of humans.
orality	The remembered and spoken tradition, as opposed to literality—the written tradition.

Hinduism is taught through tens of thousands of texts composed in many languages and covering different genres. All Hindus have access to some texts, even if these are just a few hymns of praise to a god and a few short tales involving heroes and the exploits of gods, or folktales that tell how low-caste tricksters and merchants succeed in outsmarting high-caste figures.

Orality has always been the dominant way of transmitting knowledge in Indian culture. By far the majority of recitations have been of ‘fluid’ texts, where the basic storyline remains the same, but with some variation in detail being added by the reciter. Professional reciters still wander around India, telling stories from the two great Sanskrit epics as well as many others derived from collections of myths and legends originally found in vernacular (local) languages. In most cases, these texts will be accompanied by long oral commentaries in the vernacular language. These are among the principal means of religious instruction.

In addition, most Hindus will know by heart a few verses in Sanskrit that they may use in rituals, and also hymns that are sung in devotional performances of praise to their chosen deities. Most Hindus approach the great Hindu classics through versions of these texts translated into and summarised in vernacular languages. Sanskrit may still have a higher status than vernacular languages, but it remains a mystery for most Hindus.

The Vedas

The *Vedas* (see pages 69–72) constitute a large body of texts composed in an archaic dialect of Sanskrit. They consist of four parts differing by date of composition and content. The first three are significant because of the mythological narratives they passed on to later Hindu culture and the system of large-scale sacrifices they described. The main reason that the *Vedas* themselves are venerated now is because they are very old; their contents are scarcely known.

In terms of ongoing influence in Hindu culture, the *Upanishads*, the most recent part of the *Vedas*, are the most significant. They contain many speculations about the nature of the person, distinguishing between the body, the mental processes and the Inner Self (*atman*). They also speculate about the relationship between the *atman* and the *Brahman*, the cosmic equivalent of the *atman* (see pages 75–7). Rather than assert directly the nature of the *atman*, they skirt around it, describing it as what it is not, rather than what it is. Besides the famous statement in the *Bhrhadaranyaka Upanishad* that the *atman* is ‘not this, not that’, the *Chandogya Upanishad* presents a short narrative describing how Indra and Virocana approach Prajapati as students seeking knowledge of the *atman*.



Figure 4.3.1 Illustrated folio from the *Mahabharata*, sixteenth century CE

The Self which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real. It should be searched out, one should want to understand it. He obtains all worlds and all desires who has found out and who understands that Self.

Chandogya Upanishad, 8.7.1, after R. E. Hume,
The Thirteen Principal Upanishads

Indra goes on to identify the Self with the body, then with the person who appears in a dream, and next with the content of the mind in dreamless sleep, all of which are declared to be wrong. Finally, he realises the Self is a fourth state beyond these three.

The *Upanishads'* legacy does not rest directly on themselves. They are known by hardly anyone but the most intellectually inclined Hindus, yet their teachings are a powerful legacy that influenced later Hindu literature—the *Mahabharata*, the later philosophical writings of Shankara and the *Puranas*. In all of these texts, the idea of *atman/Brahman* becomes integrated with the dominant *bhakti* stream of thought where devotee and god come to be regarded as identical at the deepest level of being—the *atman* of the devotee being identical to the *atman* of the god, who is also regarded as *Brahman*.

► Shankara is a significant person considered in Chapter 12, pages 282–4.

The epics

The two great Sanskrit epics, composed after the *Vedas*, became the first popular texts—they were known in some form by most members of society, not just by the priestly groups. The earliest glimpses of *bhakti* occur in the later *Upanishads* and early Buddhist literature, yet *bhakti* really came to fruition as a religious force in the following centuries when it was depicted extensively in the massive epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* (both dating from the fourth century BCE), as doctrine and a method of religious practice.

The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*

The *Mahabharata* is an extended (100 000-line) narrative telling of the legendary history of disputed claims of royal inheritance and a subsequent battle between sets of cousins. In the midst of this steps Krishna, an incarnation (*avatar*) of Vishnu, who, together with Shiva, is one of the first of the great *bhakti* gods. He plays a pivotal role in the battle and is ultimately responsible for the re-establishment of *dharma* at a time when it had declined.

The *Mahabharata* speaks about three subjects of central importance for *bhakti*:

- the nature of god
- the nature of the devotee
- the way in which the devotee communicates in a devout way with god.

As a consequence, it provides a clear and practical account of the pathway of devotion to god, and it combines the way of the ritual and the way of worldly abandonment into a new synthesis that is set within the framework of devotion.

The *Ramayana* takes up similar themes to the *Mahabharata*, though in a less complex way. Its plot concerns the denial of the kingship of Ayodhya to the hero Rama; his banishment to the forest with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana; Sita's abduction by the demon Ravana; the discovery of Sita by the monkey Hanuman on the island of Lanka; the battle between Rama and Ravana; the re-uniting and eventual separation of Rama and Sita.

Like the *Mahabharata*, this epic has been transmitted in many different versions and languages and remains very popular among Hindus of all classes. Rama is an *avatar* of Vishnu, and Hanuman very quickly became a *bhakti* god in his own right, worshipped in temples and shrines all over India.



Figure 4.3.2 Composing the *Ramayana*. Valmiki is shown composing and completing the epic *Ramayana*. Image taken from *Ramayana*, Bala Kanda, originally published/produced in Udaipur, 1712.

The *Bhagavad Gita*

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a very short text of eighteen chapters inserted within the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*. It is certainly not as well known as the *Mahabharata*, primarily because, being very theoretical, it never captured the imagination of the general populace. However, it became very popular in the nineteenth century following its first English translation in 1784 and has since become entrenched as a text of contemporary, middle-class Hinduism.

It consists of a dialogue between Krishna and the Pandava hero Arjuna just before the great battle that is described in the middle books of the *Mahabharata* is about to begin. Arjuna does not want to fight because he has no wish to kill his cousins, who are part of the enemy army. He sits down in his chariot and expresses his despair to Krishna, his chariot driver. A dialogue begins, which Krishna very soon begins to dominate, offering Arjuna a summary of the main teachings of Hinduism as it was conceptualised at that time. It focuses on reinterpreting the *atman/Brahman* theory of the *Upanishads* in light of *bhakti* theology, where Krishna is *Brahman* and Arjuna is the *atman*. This sets the theory within a firm devotional foundation.

But the *Bhagavad Gita* is also a practical text. At the same time as it reworks the *Upanishadic* theory into a *bhakti* framework, it traces the path by which Arjuna becomes a devotee of Krishna. Between chapters two and eleven, Arjuna is shown to move from a condition of ignorance and despair to one of knowledge and awe in the face

of a direct revelation of the *bhakti* god's true nature. This revelation occurs in the famous eleventh book where Krishna gives Arjuna the divine eye, enabling him to see the god in his cosmic, hidden form—a form accessible only to his true devotees, thus signalling that Arjuna is now such a devotee.

The Blessed Lord said:

'But you cannot see me just with this your own eye. Here I give you the divine eye. Behold my supreme *yoga* ...'

Then he, Arjuna, filled with amazement, his hair standing on end, bowed down his head and, with folded hands, said to the God.

Arjuna said:

'I see all the gods in your body, O God, as also the various hosts of beings ... I see you possessing numberless arms, bellies, mouths, and eyes, infinite in form on all sides ... Wearing the crown and bearing the mace and the discus, a mass of splendour radiating on all sides, I see you—hard to gaze at—all around me, possessing the radiance of a blazing fire and sun, incomprehensible ...'

Your form is fierce. Tell me who you are. Salutation unto you, O Foremost among the gods, confer your grace on me, I desire to know you fully, the primal one, for I do not comprehend your activities.'

Bhagavad Gita 11, 8, 14, 17, 31.
Translation (modified) in W. De Bary (ed.),
Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. I, 1964, pp. 288–9



Figure 4.3.3 Statue of Arjuna in Ubud, Bali

Just as a *darshana* or direct vision of the deity is the high point of the devotional experience for any devotee, this episode in the *Bhagavad Gita* is the climax of the text and also of Arjuna's own devotional experience. At the end of the vision, Arjuna begs Krishna to assume his normal human form. The final six chapters of the text spell out some details of Hindu cosmology as it is relevant to *bhakti* theology.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the importance of the *atman/Brahman* theory in the *Upanishads*.
- 2 **Recall** what texts are called the 'epics' and why.
- 3 There are 'strands within strands' in the Hindu scriptures. Prepare a chart to **clarify** your understanding of what constitutes the major sacred texts and writings of Hinduism. In the chart, give a brief summary of the content of each of the strands.
- 4 **Identify** the importance of the *Vedas* and the epics for Hinduism.
- 5 Using the extracts in the previous sections, **examine** how the *Vedas* and the epics **demonstrate** the principal teachings of Hinduism.
- 6 **Propose** why orality has always been an important method of transmitting Indian culture.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 84 to read some of the chapters of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. **Propose** why you think these two texts, rather than the *Vedas*, have remained so popular in India.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 84 to find a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* and trace the changing relationship between Krishna and Arjuna from chapters two to eleven.
- 3 **Compare** and **contrast** the style of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the style of the two epics.
- 4 Ask a Hindu what they know about the contents of the *Vedas* and the *Bhagavad Gita* and which for them is the more important text.

4.4 Ethical systems

Glossary

ethics

The system of explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices to clarify what is right and wrong, and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.

- The application of Hindu ethics to specific issues is addressed in Chapter 12, pages 287–92.

It is often difficult for those raised in Western cultures to understand how **ethics** operate within Hindu society because the idea of the individual within Hindu culture is different from that in the West. In India, what a person does is primarily governed by the caste of which they are a member, by gender and by their particular stage of life. In the West, where group affiliations are much weaker and where there exists a multiplicity of prevailing ethical systems, the onus for ethical decisions rests on the individual. In the Hindu framework, attention is placed on relationships between individuals as members of groups possessing different qualities and social requirements.

Hindu ethics can only be understood with reference to *dharma*, because *dharma* encompasses a set of rules that define the appropriate group behaviour that will achieve the balance and stability necessary in a society seen to consist of groups rather than individuals. In this sense, we cannot speak of a separate ethical dimension in Hinduism, and any attempt to find one reduces the extent of what *dharma* embraces, because *dharma* is designed to encompass every aspect of a person's life.

Individual 'rules' of *dharma* are, in theory at least, not too difficult to follow because of the general clarity with which they are presented. The only difficulty may be their breadth. There are specific texts, *Dharmasutras*, which provide comprehensive lists of precepts or recommendations that govern many aspects of human behaviour. The *Dharmasutras* organise these precepts in a way that provides a systematic overview of human life from an ethical perspective. Typical texts belonging to this class date back to about the beginning of the Common Era, with the most famous, *The Laws of Manu*, dating to about the second century CE.

The body of precepts are not binding rules for which an external penalty is imposed if they are broken. They are largely shaped by the hierarchical division of Hindu society into four classes (*varna*).

Many of the precepts of *dharma* describe the kinds of behaviour that should regulate the relationships between members of the respective *varnas* on the one hand, and the expected duties associated with the four stages of life (*ashramas*) on the other.

The four *varnas* and *ashramas*—stages of life

► Refer to page 73 for an explanation of the four *varnas*.

Class ethics—sources of ethical authority

There are prescribed activities for the classes of *brahmins*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* and *shudras*. The *Bhagavad Gita*, following other texts, assigns specific areas of duty to each class:

Calm, self-restraint, ascetic practice, purity, forbearance and uprightness, wisdom in theory as in practice, belief in the self—these are the activities of *brahmins*, inhering in their nature.

High courage, energy, endurance, skill, lack of cowardliness in battle, generosity, a lordly nature—these are the activities of the *kshatriya[s]*, inhering in their nature.

To till the fields, protect cattle, and engage in trade—these are the works of *vaishyas*, inhering in their nature; but work whose essence is service inheres in the very nature of the *shudra*.

... By dedicating the work that is proper to his class to Him who is the source of the activity of all beings, by whom this whole universe was created, a man attains perfect success.

It is better to do one's own class duty, even if it is devoid of merit, than to do another's duty, however well performed. By doing the work prescribed by his own nature a man meets with no defilement.

Bhagavad Gita, 18:41–44; 46–47, author's translation

In this socio-religious scheme, the *brahmin*—the name of a member of the highest class—is more concerned with learning and matters of the mind (including religion) than warriors and merchants/farmers, whose broad occupational categories require them to be much more active and less concerned with learning and contemplation. In reality, most members of these classes would have traditionally made their living from farming.

The images given in the verses are projections of how the classes were desired to be seen from the perspective of the *brahmin* priesthood, which is exclusively male, although the class itself naturally contains females. This last point is an important one—what we find in the writings dealing with *dharma* only gives us the *brahmin* male's view of ethics, because it was the *brahmins* who held the monopoly in composition and transmission of these texts.

Did you know?

Many *brahmin* women carried out the ritual of *sati*. They threw themselves into the fire on their husband's funeral pyre, for it was seen as unseemly for a woman to live beyond the life of her husband. Although it was often claimed that the *Rig Veda* sanctions or prescribes *sati*, *bhakti* movements that tended to be anti-caste—favoured egalitarian societies—generally condemned the practice. Before it was outlawed in 1829, there were a few hundred officially recorded incidents each year.

It is true that acting ethically in many religions requires adherents to achieve particular individual states of holiness like those implied here. But any full system of ethics must go beyond this, in order to provide a framework within which appropriate interpersonal behaviour can be regulated.

What we find in *The Laws of Manu* is imprecise except where it concerns the *brahmin*'s avoidance of things and people who are carriers of impurity, his relations with his wife and his relations with people of different classes.

Here are three examples from *The Laws of Manu*:

He should never follow worldly conduct merely for the sake of subsistence. He should live the honest, sincere and pure livelihood of a *brahmin*.

Once he has become entirely content, the person who wants happiness should control himself. For happiness is the foundation of contentment and its opposite is the foundation of unhappiness.

4:11–12

No guest should stay in his house without being honoured with a seat, food, a bed, water, fruits and roots, in accord with his capacity.

But those who are heretics, those in prohibited occupations, cheats, hypocrites, sceptics and liars, he should not honour even just with a word.

4:29–30

Let him not dwell in a country where the rulers are *shudras*, nor in one which is surrounded by unrighteous men, nor in one which has become subject to heretics, nor in one swarming with men of the lowest castes.

4:61

Many of the rules are negative in outlook, defining those people or substances with whom the person should avoid contact. Applying to both men and women, they centre primarily on avoidance procedures that are determined by the *brahmin*'s need to maintain a degree of purity appropriate for the *brahmin* class. Mixing with people of a lower class or of an impure occupation leads to temporary entrance into an impure state, and a purifying ritual is required.

Gift exchange

Many verses, especially in the third book of *The Laws of Manu*, are concerned with gift exchange—a subject of considerably more importance in ancient India than in contemporary Australia (although it is certainly still significant here). For the *brahmin*, gift exchange is important for two reasons:

- the necessity to participate in the sacrifice, which is itself a form of gift exchange
- gift-giving imposes a duty on the person who receives the gift. This is because the gift brings with it the degree of purity of the donor. Regulations pertaining

to gift exchange have the effect of controlling personal interaction for the *brahmin*.

At the most general level, *The Laws of Manu* proclaim that:

- a *brahmin* must give hospitality to any other *brahmin*, except one who lives in his own village
- specific rules apply to the feeding of the guest, but they differ for guests of different classes
- *kshatriyas* can only be given food after any *brahmins* have been fed
- *vaishyas* and *shudras* must eat with the servants.

Here is a very clear instance of how hierarchy affects interpersonal relations. Gift-giving usually takes place in a ritual context and, since the gift is always loaded with the purity or the impurity of the donor, a *brahmin* will not, or is very reluctant to, receive one from a member of a lower class, because he will receive some temporary pollution that he will have to take steps to remove.

A *brahmin*'s *dharma* means that he must remain as pure as his daily business will allow and that he is not free to show attitudes such as altruism, generosity, compassion or kindness that are so important as the basis for ethics in the West and in Buddhism. These attitudes can be seen to be disruptive of *dharma*, so they are not absolute values in themselves.

The *brahmins* are the model for the rest of society, but the lower castes did develop their own ethical behaviour. *The Laws of Manu* and the other scriptures state that the local conduct and the opinion of the wise can be regarded as an authoritative source of ethical behaviour. Therefore, specific forms of behaviour developed in villages and particular regions. Each village had its own council, comprising of people of various classes, to oversee and adjudicate on any disruptions to this behaviour.

So what kind of external authority was there to prevent people from engaging in theft and murder, for example? Kings did have at their disposal warriors who sometimes acted as peacemakers, and individual villages had councils that could adjudicate on matters of *dharma*. However, the principal form of authority was, and still is, a religious one, because the most commonly cited reward for strict adherence to one's class rules is rebirth in heaven in a subsequent life—a principle repeatedly laid down in a whole variety of texts. This is where *karma* becomes an important component of Hindu ethical beliefs, for the Hindu texts on *dharma* classify actions as either possessing merit or demerit and lay down the rewards or punishments

(rebirth in hells) for particular forms of action. Thus, a strict adherence to one's class duties or one's stage-of-life (*ashrama*) duties will generate meritorious *karma* and therefore a good rebirth in the future.

Through virtuous conduct one obtains long life, through virtuous conduct desirable offspring, through virtuous conduct imperishable wealth; virtuous conduct destroys the effect of inauspicious marks.

The Laws of Manu 4:156

► Refer to page 80 for an explanation of *ashramas*.

Accordingly, ethics within a Hindu context regulate the behaviour of individuals as members of a group, not as free agents with the possibility of choosing between alternative courses of actions.

Review

- 1 Define the four *varnas*.
- 2 Clarify what is meant by 'gift exchange'.
- 3 Explain what *The Laws of Manu* are and what role they play in the ethical systems of Hinduism.
- 4 What do Hindus mean by *ashramas* or stages of life?
- 5 Outline the principal ethical teachings in Hinduism.
- 6 Describe the importance of ethical teachings in the life of Hindus.

Extension

- 1 With a partner, try to imagine the complexity of Indian society and ask yourselves if the ethical precepts laid down in the *Bhagavad Gita* would be sufficient as models for such a society. In point form, summarise your conclusions.
- 2 In groups, discuss how, if you were a Hindu, you would deal with daily interaction in situations where purity and pollution are so important. Prepare a report of your discussion.

4.5 Personal devotion in the home

Glossary

darshan

'Seeing' God; viewing the image of the divine indwelled (inhabited) by a god or goddess in a temple or other holy place.

puja

Worship; the ritual that honours a god or goddess as a divine guest, usually in a temple, but it can also be a domestic ritual.

There are special times and sacred places set aside for intimate contact with God-consciousness, which in Hinduism is centred on ***darshan*** or 'seeing' the divinity as an expression of Ultimate Reality, not just as a humanoid figure. The eyes are the part of the body most symbolic of spiritual perfection and enlightenment, and Hindu rituals are very visually oriented. Most Hindu rituals, whether small ***pujas*** in the home or large-scale rituals performed in temples, are implicated in the achievement of *darshan*. The rituals that lead to *darshan* involve extra effort and preparation, the most important regular ritual being ***puja***. Any ceremony that includes the offering of reverence and food gifts to the gods or goddesses is a form of *puja*, which is most often translated in English as 'worship'. Hindus, however, speak of 'taking *darshan*'—the encountering of the holy 'eye-to-eye'.

Household *pujas*

Household *pujas* are the simplest form of worship of the gods, except for those occasions when a special priest is invited to conduct the ceremony and many guests are present. For instance, a family might arrange the reading of certain sacred texts. The recitation of scriptures on a special occasion set aside for this is called a *katha*. A more frequent form of *puja* offered by a group of people is the *kirtana*, in which hymns or *bhajanas* are sung or chanted in honour of a particular god.

Each house will have a small shrine, perhaps just in a small, open cupboard, in which either a picture or an image of the household deity (*ishtadevata*) is contained. If this deity is Shiva, for example, the images will normally be of him and Parvati, and often a separate image or picture of Ganesha will be included as well.

The basis of any household *puja* is no different from that of any large Temple *puja*. It involves the welcoming of the god, as indwelling in the image, into the house, the cleaning and dressing of the god, adorning it with perfumes and flowers and the offering of prayers. These are designed primarily to protect the household.



Figure 4.5.1 A household shrine

In a simple everyday *puja*, the images of the household shrine are cleansed with water and special marks are made on them with coloured paste. Lamps are lit, incense burnt and offerings of fruit and sweets are placed before the images while short prayers are recited. The traditional duty of a wife is to wake early, purify herself with bathing, renew the offerings at the shrine and also offer prayers on behalf of the whole household, then prepare and purify the kitchen for cooking the first meal of the day. Various members of the family will also offer a simple *puja* when it suits them during the day.

In many families, children will offer a quick *puja* before leaving for school. In a very busy household, a *puja* will be offered only in the evening after everyone comes home from work. This form of *puja*, when everyone is present, is

more like the full *puja* rituals at the temple, which include the *arati* ritual (a circular, clockwise moving of a flame or lamp in front of an image) and the sharing out of the food received by the gods (*prasada*).

Most Hindu villages contain temples that exist outside of the household, usually one for each of the five main Hindu gods, and many small shrines for the individual mother goddesses. The large temples are normally open in the morning and evening for people to have *pujas* performed for them by priests; the smaller ones usually have no priest and so worshippers simply offer flowers, tinsel and fruit while uttering prayers.



Figure 4.5.2 Performing the *arati* ritual

Review

- 1 **Explain** the importance of *darshan* in Hindu worship.
- 2 **Clarify** why *puja* is the most common form of ritual performed by Hindus.
- 3 **Outline** a household *puja* as celebrated in a Hindu family.
- 4 **Account** for the importance of *puja* in the home.

Extension



- 1 Imagine being a younger member of a Hindu household. **Describe** how religious beliefs affect the way you behave towards other members of the family.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 89 and **investigate** how many steps a household *puja* may include.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, Hinduism is the synthesis of three ways: the way of the ritual, the way of renunciation and *bhakti*. It is neither ritualism, renunciation nor *bhakti* alone; rather, it is the interaction of all three. Thus, Hindus might fall predominantly into one of these categories, yet still regard themselves as devotees of one or more deities. The majority of Hindus in the past, and certainly today, fall into the third category of *bhakti*—that of individual devotees performing their own private rituals. They also occasionally participate in large collective rituals, and less often perform certain kinds of yogic exercises and practise meditation by constantly reciting the name of the deity.

The cultural complex developed around these three areas is one that was mostly consolidated by about 200 BCE. Since then, Hinduism has developed into a very rich tradition that derives its overarching cohesion from its *bhakti* framework.

The name ‘Hinduism’ really only began to be used in the nineteenth century—before then the most universal words to describe the religion, at least in Sanskrit literature, were ‘The Everlasting Law’ or *sanatana dharma*. Today the word Hinduism is used by Hindus and non-Hindus because of its usefulness in distinguishing Hinduism from other religions.

Extension

- 1 Go back through this chapter and look at the images. What conclusions can you draw from these about Hinduism?
- 2 Is the worship of gods the most important element in the Hindu religion? **Explain** your response.
- 3 In groups, **discuss** the statement: ‘Hinduism has often been described as a multiplicity of related religions.’
- 4 You have to give a ten-minute talk on Hinduism. Prepare an outline for your talk. What would your priority be—the teachings of Hinduism or the living-out of Hinduism? **Propose** reasons for your decision.
- 5 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 6 Check that your media file is up to date. Do Hindus and Hinduism have a ‘media profile’? How much of your material relates to the teachings of Hinduism, the religious practices of Hinduism, and how much relates to politics? **Summarise** your findings.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



Chapter 5

Islam



Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **outline** the social conditions and religious practices of pre-Islamic Arabia
- **examine** the principal events in Muhammad's life and **explain** why the Prophet Muhammad is the model for Muslim life
- **describe** the development of Islam after the death of Muhammad and **account** for the emergence of Sunni and Shi'i Islam
- **investigate** the principal beliefs of Islam
- **identify** the importance of the Qur'an and *hadith* and **examine** extracts from these sacred texts and writings that **demonstrate** the principal beliefs of Islam
- **outline** the principal ethical teachings and the process of jurisprudence within Islam and **describe** their importance in the life of adherents
- **outline** each of the five pillars of faith.



Pages from the Holy Qur'an, the sacred book of Islam

Introduction

Glossary

monotheistic	Characterised by the belief that there is only one God.
prophet (Arabic <i>nabi</i>)	One who is appointed by God to convey a divine message.
Qur'an (Koran)	The sacred book of Islam: the word of God revealed to the Prophet. The Arabic word for 'recitation' or 'reading' is <i>qur'an</i> , which became the name for the collected revelations as passed on by Muhammad.
revelation	God's disclosure of himself and his will to his people.

Note!

Islam is the Arabic word for 'submission', and *Muslim* means 'one who makes a devotional submission to God'.

Islam is just as much an Asian as a Mediterranean/Middle Eastern religion. Today over 1 billion people adhere to some form of Islam and the majority live outside the 'Arab World'. It is the second largest world religion.

Islam, the religion of love of and submission to the one God, emerged in the seventh century CE in a region where Asia and Africa meet—halfway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean—and spread

rapidly north, east and west. Islam established its main pattern very quickly, partly because it had a founder (Muhammad), partly because it had a foundation document (the *Qur'an*) and partly because, in having a communal and political aspect, it had to make rapid decisions on organisation in view of its great success.

Its name is inseparable from that of Muhammad, the **prophet** who preached it. For more than fourteen centuries, Islam has grown and spread from a religion of the seventh century Arabia of the Prophet Muhammad to a world religion whose followers are found across the globe. It created and inspired Islamic empires and states as well as a great world civilisation that stretched from North Africa to South-East Asia. In the process, a great **monotheistic** tradition, which shares common roots with Judaism and Christianity, has guided and transformed the lives of millions of believers down through the ages.

Characterised by an uncompromising belief in the one, true God (Allah), through his **revelation** and his Prophet, Islam developed into a spiritual path whose law, ethics and theology made it a rapidly growing world religion, both in the past and today in a number of countries.

The foundation of Islamic belief and practice is the *Qur'an*. For Muslims, the *Qur'an* is the revealed literal word of God. Second to it in authority are the narratives about sayings, doings and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Muslim faith and practice are based in revelation but expressed in a variety of beliefs, attitudes, rituals, laws and values.

Throughout its fourteen centuries of history, the Islamic community has had to respond to internal and external threats to its continued life and vitality. As a result, Islam has a long tradition of religious renewal and development, extending from its earliest history to the present. Muslims today, like believers the world over, continue to grapple with the continued relevance of their faith alongside the realities of contemporary society.

Extension

- Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with Islam and/or Muslims (followers of Islam) over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media's presentation with what you have learnt in your study of Islam.

5.1 Origins

Pre-Islamic Arabia

Glossary

Allah	The Arabic word for the one and only true God.
Bedouin	Arab desert nomad.
Ka'ba	Cube-shaped religious shrine believed to have been erected by Adam and then rebuilt by Abraham. Today it is the central shrine of Islam—the focal point for daily prayer and the pilgrimage—and is within the precincts of the Great Mosque of Mecca.
oligarchy	A form of government in which the power is invested in a few, or in a dominant class or clique.
polytheism	The belief in many gods or more than one god.



Figure 5.1.1 Arabia and its environs in the early seventh century CE, and pre-Islamic trade routes

Because Islam developed in central Arabia, the religious and social environment of that region provides the context for understanding Muhammad's message and mission. Seventh century CE pre-Islamic Arabian society and religion reflected the tribal realities of the Arabian Peninsula. Arabia's 1 700 000 square kilometres were dominated by desert and steppe areas. **Bedouin** tribes travelled from one area to another in search of water and pasture for their flocks of sheep and camels. The landscape was dotted with oasis towns and cities. Among the more prominent were Mecca, a centre of trade and commerce, and Yathrib (Medina), an important agricultural settlement.

Social organisation and identity for the peoples of Arabia were based on membership of an extended family—a tribe consisting of a cluster of several family groupings (a clan), led by a *shaykh* (chief) who was elected by a consensus of the heads of leading clans. Gods and goddesses served as protectors of individual tribes and their spirits were

associated with sacred objects—trees, stones, springs and wells. Local tribal gods were feared and respected and were the object of rituals—sacrifice, pilgrimage, prayer—celebrated at local shrines. In Mecca, there was a central shrine of the gods, the **Ka'ba**, which housed 360 idols of tribal patron gods, and was the site of a great annual pilgrimage and fair. While these gods were main objects of worship, beyond this tribal **Polytheism** was a shared belief in **Allah**. Allah was the supreme high god—the creator and sustainer of life—but remote from everyday concerns and so was not the object of cult or ritual.

The Arabian tribal society value system or ethical code was based firmly in the tribal experience—the preservation of tribal and family order was most important—and with this came fatalism that saw no meaning beyond this life.

At this time there were also three other flourishing religious traditions in the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding region—Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. All three of these traditions shared a belief that God is one and that there was a moral universe encompassing individual and communal accountability and responsibility. Each had, to differing degrees, become associated with political power. That is, they had become the official state religion—Judaism in Palestine, Christianity in the Roman (Byzantine) Empire, and Zoroastrianism in the Persian (Sasanid) Empire.

Arabian tribal society provided the context for the rise of Islam and so was marked by the tensions and questioning that accompany changes in a transitional society—Mecca and Medina were prospering and attracting many from a nomadic to a more settled life. And the emergence of Mecca as a major commercial centre ushered in the beginnings of a new political, social and economic order. New wealth, the rise of a new commercial **oligarchy** from within the Quraysh tribe, greater divisions between social classes, and a greater disparity between rich and poor brought stresses to the traditional system of Arabian tribal values and its way of life. This was the time and the social environment into which Muhammad was born.

Extension

Investigate the Arabian Peninsula during the time of Muhammad. From your research, **outline** briefly the beliefs of Zoroastrianism and **identify** why Mecca was at the centre of the pre-Islamic trade routes (see map on page 92).

The Prophet Muhammad

Glossary

infallible	Absolutely trustworthy; inerrant (free from error).
umma	Islamic community; refers to the worldwide Muslim community.
usury	Lending money for interest.

Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error.

Surat al-Imran 3:164 'The Family of Imran'

History, legend and Muslim belief portray Muhammad as a remarkable man and a prophet. While we know a good deal about Muhammad's life after his 'call' to be God's messenger at the age of forty, around 610 CE, historical records tell us little about Muhammad's early years. The Qur'an has some information regarding the life of the Prophet. The majority of information about him comes from prophetic narratives (reports about what Muhammad said, did and approved), and biographies based on such reports give us a picture of his role and significance in early Islam, as do Islamic calligraphy and art, where the names of Allah and Muhammad often occur side by side.

Understanding Muhammad and his role in the early Islamic community is central for an appreciation of the development of early Islam, as well as the dynamics of contemporary Muslim belief and practice.

Muhammad ibn Abdullah (the son of Abd Allah) was born around 570 CE into the Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe, the major tribe in Mecca. At the age of twenty-five, he married a forty-year-old wealthy widow, Khadija. During twenty-five years of marriage, they enjoyed a very close relationship and had two sons (who died in infancy) and four daughters, the most famous of whom was Fatima.

Muhammad, who had become a successful member of Meccan society, was deeply disturbed by the changes that came with Mecca's transition from a semi-Bedouin culture to a commercial, urban society. He was greatly respected for his judgement and trustworthiness. He retreated regularly to a cave on Mount Hira, a short distance north of Mecca, where he meditated and worshipped one God and contemplated his life and the troubles of his society, seeking greater meaning and insight.

It was on Mount Hira, in 610 CE, during what is now the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Muslim calendar), that Muhammad became Muhammad the Messenger of God. On the night the Qur'an refers to as 'The Night of Destiny', he received the first of many revelations from God. A heavenly intermediary, later identified by tradition as the Archangel Gabriel, commanded, 'Recite'. Muhammad responded that he had nothing to recite. Twice the angel repeated the command, and each time a frightened and bewildered Muhammad pleaded that he did not know what to say. Finally, the words came to him:

Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord, Who
created—
Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:
Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful—
He Who taught (the use of) the pen—
Taught man that which he knew not.

Surat al-'Alaq 96:1–5 'The Blood Clot'



Figure 5.1.2 This vivid miniature of the Archangel Gabriel was painted in Egypt or Syria in the early fourteenth century.

With this revelation, Muhammad saw himself as a divinely inspired messenger or prophet of God following in the line of the great prophets of Judaism—Moses and Abraham. Muhammad continued to receive divine revelations over a period of twenty-three years (610–632 CE). Muhammad memorised the revelations and scribes in Mecca wrote them down. These messages were collected and arranged between two covers about a year after his death as the Qur'an, Islam's sacred scripture.

After the revelation on Mount Hira, the Prophet Muhammad's life can be divided into three distinctive periods—the Meccan period, the Migration to Medina and the Treaty of Hudaybiyya and his death.

Note!

Sura is the Arabic word for chapter. When *sura* is used as a modifier, it is *surat*, for example, *surat al-'Alaq*, the ninety-sixth *sura* of the Qur'an. The title of each *sura* comes from a specific phrase or word in that chapter. Muslims always refer to the *sura* by its title.

The Meccan period

The first thirteen years of Muhammad's preaching were difficult, hampered by Meccan resistance, rejection and violence. His message was not altogether welcome for at least two reasons:

- his rejection of polytheism threatened the livelihood and prestige of the Meccans (in particular, the Umayyad clan) as keepers of the Ka'ba, the religious shrine that housed the tribal idols
- the values he expressed did not agree with the money-making policy of the rich merchants of the city.

Muhammad denounced false contracts, **usury** and the neglect and exploitation of orphans and widows. He defended the rights of the poor and the oppressed, asserting that the rich had an obligation to the poor and dispossessed and that this would be met as a 'welfare tax' levied on wealth and agricultural lands.

Later, too, Muhammad would be involved in conveying revelations that altered the legal shape of society, especially concerning marriage. A potential economic loss was combined with the undermining of Meccan tribal political authority by Muhammad's claim to prophetic

authority and leadership, and his insistence that all true believers belonged to the *umma* (a single universal community) that went beyond tribal bonds.

The Qur'an



The Qur'an occupies a central place in Islam. For any study of Islam, it is important to have access to a copy of the Qur'an. Muslims hold that the Arabic text can be explained but it is not possible to translate it fully, and renderings of it in English (or any other language), while a guide to understanding its content, do not have authority. In other words, any translation of the Qur'an immediately ceases to be the literal word of Allah, and hence cannot be equated with the Qur'an in its original Arabic form. A translation is actually an interpretation.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the eternal, uncreated, literal word of God sent down from heaven and revealed one final time through the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) to the Prophet Muhammad as a guide for humankind. Muslims believe therefore that the Qur'an is the **infallible** word of God. Qur'an means 'recitation'—a recitation by Muhammad of Allah's word.

Review

- 1 **Outline** the social conditions and religious practices of pre-Islamic Arabia.
- 2 **Recall** the definition of polytheism.
- 3 **Recount** what happened on 'The Night of Destiny'.
- 4 **Identify** the reasons Muhammad was opposed by the leaders of Meccan society.

Did you know?

When you are researching Islam, you will often see the Roman or Arabic letters 'saas' or 'saws' after a reference to Muhammad—for example 'Prophet Muhammad (saas)'. These letters stand for the words *Salla Alahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam*, which mean: 'May the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him.' Sometimes it is written PBUH ('Peace be upon him'). When the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned, a Muslim is to respect him and invoke this statement of peace.

Migration to Medina

Glossary

caliph (from <i>khalifa</i>)	Refers to the successor of Muhammad as leader of the Islamic community. The caliph performs three functions—political administration, tax collection and ensuring the security of the Muslim nation. A caliph does not hold religious authority.
Hajj	Annual pilgrimage to Mecca in the month of <i>Dhu'l-Hijja</i> and required of all Muslims at least once in their lifetime, if possible. <i>Hajj</i> is also the title of one who has made this pilgrimage.
al-Hijra	Migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE (Year 1 AH of the Muslim lunar calendar), where he established an independent Muslim community-state. Sometimes written in English as 'Hegira', AH stands for <i>anno Hegirae</i> and is Latin for 'in the year of Hijra'.
qibla (<i>kiblat</i>)	Direction of the Ka'ba at Mecca to which Muslims face when performing their daily ritual prayers.

While Muhammad struggled in Mecca preaching God's message, he gathered a small band of faithful followers. Among the early converts were 'Ali, his paternal cousin and son-in-law, and Abu Bakr, his future father-in-law and the first **caliph**. The deaths of Khadija and of his uncle and protector, Abu Talib, in 619 CE made life even more difficult. The core of the opposition came from the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh tribe. As we shall see, their descendants, even after their later conversion to Islam, would continue to challenge the family of the Prophet.

The situation changed significantly in 621 CE. Muhammad was invited by a delegation from Yathrib (later called Medina, 'city of the Prophet') to serve as a chief arbitrator (or judge) in a bitter feud between two Arab tribes. Muhammad accepted this invitation at about the same time as an event referred to in the first verse of *Surat al-Isra* 17:1 'The Night Journey':

Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless—in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).



Figure 5.1.3 The Ka'ba surrounded by pilgrims during the *Hajj*

This 'Night Journey' was the miraculous journey when the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) took the Prophet through the air from Mecca to Jerusalem and then, from the site that is now the Dome of the Rock mosque (*al-Aqsa*), he made the Ascension (*Mi'raj*) to heaven past the great prophets who had preceded him, to the presence of God. A widely recorded tradition (*hadith*) states that it was there that Muhammad was taught the ritual of the five daily prayers.

Muhammad and about 200 of his followers quietly emigrated to Medina between July and September 622 CE. **Al-Hijra** marked a turning point in Muhammad's fortunes and a new stage in the history of the Islamic movement. Islam also covered the social and political dimension of human life with the establishment of an Islamic community-state at Medina.

The importance of the *hijra* is reflected in its adoption as the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Muslims chose to date their history from neither Muhammad's birth nor his reception of the first revelation in 610 CE, but from the creation of the *umma*, the Islamic community. The community, as much as the individual, was to be the instrument for realising God's purpose for humanity on earth.

By leaving Mecca, Muhammad broke with the old tribal organisation to create a community of faith, and established a religion with its own institutions. The community in Medina who accepted this religion were called Muslims.

On arriving at Medina, Muhammad announced a charter, sometimes called the constitution of Medina, which set out the rights and duties of all citizens and the relationship of the Muslim community to other communities. Muslims formed a community whose primary identity was no longer tribal ties but a common religious faith and commitment. Jews were recognised as a separate community allied to the Muslim *umma*, but with religious and legal independence.

At the same time, Muhammad turned his attention to Mecca. Mecca had a special status as a religious and economic centre due to the shrine of the Ka'ba. Further revelations to Muhammad, which named Mecca as the *qibla* for ritual prayer and the focus for Muslim *Hajj*, increased its religious significance.

Muslims were viewed as defectors and traitors to Meccan tribal traditions. Muhammad attempted to intercept a large Meccan caravan carrying the possessions of Muslims left in Mecca during the migration. This threatened both the political authority and the economic power of the Quraysh. Several critical battles followed and in 624 CE at Badr, near Medina, Muslim forces defeated the much larger Meccan army. This was the first exercise of *jihad* or 'striving' to expand the boundaries of Islam. A year later, Muslims nearly lost at Uhud. In 626 CE Medina was unsuccessfully laid siege by a Meccan-led tribal coalition army.



For more information on *Hajj* and *jihad* see pages 109–13.

Treaty of Hudaybiyya and the death of Muhammad

The Treaty of Hudaybiyya with the Meccans in 628 CE was a turning point for Muslims. In the peaceful atmosphere, many willingly converted to Islam. When Mecca broke the treaty in 630 CE, the Muslim army conquered Mecca without any resistance. Muhammad entered Mecca and granted amnesty to the great majority of his former enemies. He destroyed the idols and images within the Ka'ba and dedicated it to one God as intended by Abraham. In Muslim tradition, the Ka'ba was rebuilt by Abraham and was the first shrine on earth for the worship of God after Adam's expulsion from Paradise, pre-dating Jerusalem. The Meccans converted to Islam, accepted Muhammad's leadership, and were within the *umma*.

During the next two years, Muhammad established his authority over much of Arabia and tribes one after the other converted to Islam. Representatives were sent from Medina to teach God's revelations and the duties and rituals of Islam, and to collect the welfare taxes due to Medina. In the spring of 11 AH (632 CE), Muhammad led the pilgrimage to Mecca. There, at sixty-three years of age, he preached what was to become known as his farewell sermon. He died later that year.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and to those others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people.

Concluding words from the Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon

Muhammad—model of Muslim life and devotion

Glossary

hadith

The traditional reports of what the Prophet Muhammad did and/or said. They are second only to the Qur'an in religious importance, although there is not unanimity in the Muslim community about the authenticity of every *hadith*.

sunna

All the traditions and practices of Muhammad that have become models to be followed by Muslims; the religious practices, morals and normal lifestyle of the Prophet that became a unifying bond for all parts of the Islamic *umma*.

Muhammad's remarkable character and personality inspired extraordinary confidence and commitment. Both during his lifetime and throughout the following centuries, Muhammad has provided the ideal model for Muslim character and life, providing the pattern that all believers are to emulate. He is, as some Muslims say, the 'living Qur'an'—the witness whose behaviour and words reveal God's will. The practices of the Prophet became the guiding source of Islamic law alongside the Qur'an.

Muslims look to Muhammad's example for guidance in all aspects of life—how to treat friends as well as enemies; what to eat and drink; how to love and conduct war. His influence on Muslim life cannot be underestimated, since he served as both religious and political leader of

Medina—prophet of God, ruler, military commander, chief judge, lawgiver. As a result, the practice of the Prophet, his *sunna*, became the standard for community life.

Muslims commemorated and remembered stories about what the Prophet said and did. The *hadith* were preserved and passed on in oral and written form. The body of *hadith* literature reveals the extensive scope of Muhammad's example. He is revered as the ideal religious and political leader, loyal friend and model husband and father.

Traditions of the Prophet give guidance for personal worship, morals, dress, eating, marriage, treatment of wives, diplomacy and ethics of warfare. He is certainly not a figure to be worshipped but is an example of the extreme good in humanity.

► For more information on *hadith* see pages 104–7.

Review

- 1 Recount what happened on 'The Night Journey'.
- 2 What is the Ka'ba and why is it significant for Muslims?
- 3 Why was Mecca so important to Muhammad?
- 4 Examine the principal events in Muhammad's life. Construct a chart setting out these events in the order in which they happened.
- 5 Why is Muhammad called the 'Messenger of God'?
- 6 Define what is meant by the *sunna* of the Prophet and explain why Muhammad is 'the model for Muslim life'.

Extension

- 1 In two pages, describe the origins of Islam. In your response, explain the role of Muhammad and analyse how he was able to transform much of the existing culture of the Arabian Peninsula into his response to his 'call to be the Messenger of God'.
- 2 Talk to a Muslim and ask them to explain why Muhammad is seen as the model for Muslim life.

Islam after the Prophet

Glossary

caliphate	The succession to the sovereignty of the Islamic community.	Shi'i	Those Muslims who believe that Muhammad designated 'Ali and his rightful descendants the true leaders (<i>imams</i>) of the Muslim community (<i>shiat-u-'Ali</i> , 'party or faction of 'Ali'). They can be called Shi'is or Shi'ites and you can talk about Shi'i Islam, Shi'ism or the Shi'a.
dynasty	The sequence of rulers from the same family or stock.	Sunni	Those Muslims who follow the tradition (<i>sunna</i>) of the Prophet and his companions without acknowledging any innate political privilege to the descendants of 'Ali or any other companion.
imam	Its primary meaning is prayer leader. In early Islamic history, the title <i>imam</i> was associated with the <i>khalifa</i> (from which 'caliph' is derived). The Shi'i acknowledge twelve principal <i>imams</i> after the death of the Prophet, one of whom disappeared and whose return is awaited. Shi'i believe this 'hidden' <i>imam</i> communicates with individuals of great holiness who give the community guidance through him.		



Figure 5.1.4 The Prophet enthroned with the four 'rightly guided' caliphs from Firdowsi's *The Book of Kings*, early fourteenth century

Muhammad's death in the eleventh year of the Islamic calendar (632 CE) was unexpected and no explicit provision had been made for a successor. Over the next thirty years the Islamic community intermittently plunged into political crises revolving around leadership and authority. The question of who had the right to be caliph was to cause more division and bloodshed in Islam than any other issue. The first successors are called the four 'rightly guided' caliphs—*al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun*—who were all early converts and companions of the Prophet. Their rule is especially significant, not only for what they did, but also because the period of Muhammad and the 'rightly guided' caliphs became regarded in Sunni Islam as the normative period.

After the first four caliphs, a semi-monarchy was established by the fifth caliph, Mu'awiyah. Over the centuries, differences over these early political events caused significant polarisation in the Islamic world.

Did you know?

The Arabic word *khalifa* (plural *khulafa*) literally means 'successor' or 'deputy'. In the Qur'an both Adam and Dawud (King David) are given the title *khalifa*.

The four ‘rightly guided’ caliphs

- Abu Bakr (632–634 CE)—A very early follower of the Prophet, he was the father of Muhammad’s alleged favourite wife (after the death of Khadija), ‘A’isha. He was acknowledged as Muhammad’s successor by the Prophet’s companions. He pacified and united the Muslim tribes, and ordered the first collection of the written text of the Qur’an.
- ‘Umar (634–644 CE)—An early follower of the Prophet, he was the designated nominee for succession to Abu Bakr, a member of the Quraysh clan and father of Muhammad’s wife Hafsa. ‘Umar extended Muslim rule to Syria, Egypt, Persia and, in the north, to Armenia. ‘Umar appointed a council of six men to select his successor.
- ‘Uthman (644–656 CE)—An early follower of the Prophet, ‘Uthman was from the Umayya, a leading Meccan family and part of the Quraysh clan. Reports hold that ‘Uthman commissioned the officially endorsed copy of the Qur’an that was written in Meccan dialect, its current form. His murder in 656 CE was the first in a series of Muslim rebellions that would plague the Islamic community’s political development.
- ‘Ali (656–661 CE)—Muhammad’s closest male relative, his paternal cousin. ‘Ali was married to the Prophet’s daughter Fatima and father to his grandsons Hasan (d. 669 CE) and Husayn (d. 680 CE). ‘Ali moved his capital to Kufah in Iraq, a more central location within the expanding Muslim world.

Based on the practice of the first three caliphs, a pattern was established for the selection of the caliph from the Quraysh tribe through a process of consultation. The appointment of ‘Ali, however, had another dimension—he was a blood relative of the Prophet and his children, Hasan and Husayn by the Prophet’s daughter Fatima, maintained the bloodline of the Prophet, the founder of Islam. It is here the origins of Shi‘i Islam are found. For Shi‘i, ‘Ali is not the fourth *khalifa* but the first *imam* of the community.

During ‘Ali’s reign, his authority was challenged by two opposition movements—one a coalition led by Muhammad’s widow, ‘A’isha (the daughter of Abu Bakr), and the other by the forces of Mu‘awiyah, the governor of Syria and a nephew of ‘Uthman. The opposition was largely inspired by accusations that ‘Ali was complicit in the killing of ‘Uthman. After a series of battles, ‘Ali lost effective power and he was assassinated by a fringe group while entering a mosque in Kufah.

The female companions of the Prophet—*Sahabiyat*

There were strong women in Muhammad’s life who helped establish the Muslim tradition. Historical evidence shows that women fled aristocratic tribal Mecca by the thousands to enter Medina, the Prophet’s city in the seventh century CE, because Islam promised equality and dignity for all—men and women, masters and servants. Women who lived in Muhammad’s time were neither secluded nor subservient.

Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet, was a businesswoman and is revered as the first Muslim after Muhammad. Nusibah bint Ka‘ba al-Mazinyyah, known as Umm ‘Umarah, an early convert to Islam, joined in the battle of Uhud (3 AH/625 CE) with her sword and bow and arrow. She formed part of the human barrier that was protecting the Prophet. Fatima, the daughter of Khadija and Muhammad, also played a pivotal role in the emergence of Islam and was the wife of the fourth and last ‘rightly guided’ caliph, ‘Ali Abi Talib, and the mother of Hasan and Husayn—the ‘martyrs of Islam’. Muhammad’s third wife, ‘A’isha, and alleged favourite wife after the death of Khadija, was the daughter of Abu Bakr, the Prophet’s successor.

In this foundational period of Islam, many women worked for a living and fought alongside Muhammad in battle. Throughout his lifetime, Muhammad acknowledged their role and encouraged them as teachers of the new religion. After his death, ‘A’isha and several of his other wives made major contributions to Islam by recounting and recording what Muhammad did and said during his lifetime (*sunna*). Women of the founding period were also regularly consulted by the Prophet’s companions about many aspects of Islam.

Every woman who came to Medina when the Prophet was the political leader of Muslims could gain access to full citizenship, the status of ‘Sahabi’, Companion of the Prophet. Muslims can take pride that in their language they have the feminine of that word, *sahabiyat*, women who enjoyed the right to enter into the councils of the Muslim *umma* [community], to speak freely to its Prophet-leader, to dispute with the men, to fight for their happiness, and to be involved in the management of military and political affairs.

Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam*, 1991, p. 8

► ‘A’isha is a significant person considered in Chapter 13, pages 303–5.

Extension

Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the life and contribution of one *sahabiyat* other than ‘A’isha and then **evaluate** the status of the female companions of the Prophet for contemporary Muslims.

The end of the elected caliphs

There is no fifth ‘rightly guided’ caliph. Hasan as the head of the Prophet’s household was the second Shi‘i *imam*, but in an agreement with Mu‘awiyah he abdicated the **caliphate** to him. Mu‘awiyah moved Islam’s capital to Damascus and, at the end of his life (in 680 CE), was able to secure the caliphate for his son. So a new period of Islamic and political history began, and political rule in the vast Muslim world became a **dynasty** or a hereditary monarchy.

After Mu‘awiyah’s death, Husayn, as the Prophet’s grandson, was urged to reclaim the role and authority that was considered his due. He took up arms against the Umayyads and was brutally massacred at the Battle of Karbala in 61 AH/680 CE. Husayn is revered by both the Sunni and Shi‘i branches of Islam but it is Shi‘i who have invested such significance in his death. Shi‘i regard ‘Ali and his son Husayn as martyrs of Islam, and it is the memory of their ‘martyrdom’ that has provided the model of suffering and protest that has guided and inspired Shi‘i Islam.

The expansion of the Muslim world

Glossary

dar al-Islam	‘Abode of peace’, Islamic territory; where Muslims are free to practise Islam.
hierarchy	A vertically structured system of organisation.
mosque	Muslim place of worship.
Shari‘a	Islamic law based on the Qur’an and the <i>sunna</i> of the Prophet.
‘ulama’	Religious scholars; specialists in Islamic sciences, particularly jurisprudence, or law.

By the time the rule of the Umayyads from Damascus ended with their massacre in 750 CE, Islam had spread to Spain and would be stopped only in southern France. To the north, Muslim armies were already at the gates of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, while to the east they roamed the Indus River in India.

The Muslims were remarkable in the administration of their expanding community. The caliph exercised direct political, military, judicial and monetary control of the Muslim community. Mostly they did not occupy conquered cities but established new garrison towns nearby, and so kept their army from damaging civilian property. These towns were centred on a **mosque**, which served as the religious and public focal point of the community.

There was no centralised religious **hierarchy** that was separate from the political administration. The caliph at the head of the community, and the judges and governors under him, had combined political and legal authority over Muslims. It was during the ‘Abbasid dynasty centred in Baghdad (132 AH/750 CE–750 AH/1258 CE) that *Shari‘a* (the Islamic law) developed, and it was the **‘ulama’** (religious scholars) who interpreted the Qur’an and the Prophet in such a way that the teachings could be applied to everyday life.

All Muslim citizens were members of a transnational *umma*, citizens of the **dar al-Islam** who, despite differences of interpretation, professed faith in God, his Prophet and his revelation. All were bound by the Islamic law and obliged to observe the five pillars of faith.

Sunni and Shi‘i Islam

As has been said previously, the major divisions within the Muslim community began less than thirty years after the Prophet’s death and the reasons for their appearance were largely political—who has the gifts and the spiritual insights to guide the Muslim community?

For the Sunni (today almost 85 per cent of Muslims), the head of the Muslim community must be the best-qualified Muslim. The Sunni claim to follow the ‘right path’ of Islam. For them, this ‘right path’ is the way based on the Qur’an and the *sunna* of the Prophet. For Sunnis, all direct revelation from Allah was complete with Muhammad’s death and is represented by the Qur’an and explained, elaborated and put into practice through the *sunna* of the Prophet.



Figure 5.1.5 The ship of Shi'ism—Persian (Iranian) identification with Shi'i Islam is portrayed as a story at the beginning of the most famous of all Persian books, the manuscript of Firdowsi's *The Book of Kings*. The ship bears Muhammad, 'Ali and 'Ali's two sons, Hasan and Husayn, who are shown with flame-like haloes but veiled because of the Muslim ban on figural art.

RESPOND

Investigate the reason for the Muslim ban on figural art.

The Shi'i (today around 15 per cent of Muslims) believe that only descendants of the Prophet can be invested as the leader (*imam*) of all Muslims, and they keep an official list of those who should have governed the Muslim world since the death of the Prophet. Shi'i hold that although the twelfth *imam* disappeared in 874 CE, divine guidance is still available through the descendants of Muhammad and qualified scholars. *Imam* could reveal the inner meaning of the Qur'an or could add to the understanding of the revelation of Allah.

Shi'i have always been a minority in Islam. The largest group (about 59 million people) is in Iran, where they form over 89 per cent of the population. Iran is the only country to make Shi'i Islam the official religion, but there are Shi'i majorities in Lebanon and southern Iraq.

As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, the difference between these two major variants is not one of belief, but rather of the expression of those beliefs and how Islamic history is perceived.

Review

- 1 What is the role of the caliph?
- 2 **Construct** a chart to organise your information about the four 'rightly guided' caliphs and the period following Muhammad's death in 632 CE. In your chart, **outline** the development of Islam after Muhammad's death and **identify** the contribution of the 'rightly guided' caliphs.
- 3 In small groups, **discuss** the statement: 'The expansion of the Muslim world was so successful because of the way it was administered.' Share your ideas with other groups.
- 4 **Explain** why the question of Muhammad's successor was so important after his death. Why is it still important to Shi'i Muslims?
- 5 How would you **account** for the emergence of the Sunni and Shi'i orientations in Islam?

Extension

- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, locate a map that shows the spread of Islam under the four 'rightly guided' caliphs (632–661 CE) and the Umayyad dynasty (661–750 CE). Draw your own map and on it **identify** the following locations: Karbala, Basra, Mosul, Kabul, Kufah, Baghdad, Nishapur, Córdoba, Toledo. Are these locations relevant today?
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the assassination of 'Ali and his son Husayn. **Identify** who was responsible for the assassinations and **describe** how Shi'i remember these events.
- 3 **Construct** a timeline that contains all the major periods, people and events in the history of Islam up until the beginning of the Sultanate period in 1281. **Explain** what this tells you about the expansion of Islam.



Figure 5.2.1 An example of Islamic calligraphy—*Shahada*, the declaration of faith: ‘I testify that there is no god but God. And I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God’—the first pillar of faith. (see page 109)

5.2 Principal beliefs

Note!

This section takes a general approach to the principal beliefs of Islam. Where there are major differences of interpretation and emphases in the two major orientations—Sunni and Shi'i—this is noted.

Glossary

'Aqida ul-Islam	The beliefs or creed of Islam.
shirk	The opposite of tawhid , shirk means to believe and worship another god or gods alongside the one true God, Allah. Shirk is the worst and only unpardonable sin in Islam.
tawhid	The declaration of the unity of God. Allah is the one true God, the sole Creator and Lord of the universe. All divine attributes belong to Allah and all human worship is to be directed to Allah.

The articles of faith

The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. ‘We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers.’ And they say: ‘We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.’

Surat al-Bakara 2:285 ‘The Cow’

This verse from the Qur'an sums up the main articles of faith (or doctrines) in Islam ('**Aqida ul-Islam**), which it says have been revealed or 'sent down' from Allah. It speaks of belief in the following:

- 1 Existence and unity of God—**tawhid**
- 2 Existence of Angels—*mala'ika*
- 3 God's revelation to humans in holy books—*kutubu'llah*
- 4 God appointing prophets to all people—*rusuluhu*
- 5 Resurrection and life after death—*al-Akhira*
- 6 God's Will and human freedom of choice—*al-Qadr*

Existence and unity of God

Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.

Surat al-Ikhlas 112:1–4 ‘Oneness’

The first article of faith is **tawhid**—the belief in the oneness and unity of Allah. If there is only one God, then he alone is the creator of all that exists, but was not himself created; he is ‘The Eternal’. **Tawhid** has some far-reaching implications in Islam. Muslims should worship Allah alone; no one else is worthy of worship. No other being should be associated with Allah. The sin of idolatry is called **shirk** (attributing Allah’s divinity and qualities to someone else), and is regarded by Muslims as the worst of all sins.

It is forbidden to represent Allah in visual or symbolic form. The ninety-nine names of Allah given in the Qur'an to describe the attributes of Allah, for example, the Compassionate, the Giver of all things, the All Knowing, are often written on the walls as part of the decoration of a mosque.

The existence of angels

All praise is due to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Maker of the angels, messengers flying on wings, two, and three, and four; He increases in creation what He pleases; surely Allah has power over all things.

Surat al-Fatir 35:1 'The Creator'

A belief in angels is central to the religion of Islam, beginning with the belief that the Qur'an was dictated to the Prophet Muhammad by the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel). The angels are created from light (*noor*), have no gender and do not eat or drink. Angels witness God's creative glory in the universe and therefore express absolute praise, service and obedience to God. They often serve as God's messengers as Jibril did. Jibril, also called the holy spirit, is the greatest of all God's angels as he was the vehicle for the revelation of the Qur'an.

Other great angels are Izra'il (Azreal), the angel of death, whose task is to separate a person's soul from their body at death; Mika'il (Michael), who with Jibril instructed Muhammad; and Israfil, whose task is to sound the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection.

Each person has two recording or guardian angels who record their good and bad deeds, and these angels are acknowledged during daily *salat* (prayer).

Belief in prophets and the Books of Allah

We have sent you inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: We sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms. Of some apostles We have already told you the story; of others We have not;—and to Moses Allah spoke direct;—Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the apostles, should have no argument against Allah. For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

Surat al-Nisa 4:163–165 'The Women'

A prophet is someone through whom Allah speaks. The Qur'an names twenty-five prophets, but tradition says there have been more than 124 000. God sent a prophet to every nation on earth. *Nabi* is the word used for most of these prophets, but *rasul* describes a prophet who has delivered a holy book. These are known as the Messengers of Allah. Belief in prophethood is closely linked with belief in holy books—*kutubu'llah*, the Books of Allah.

Five prophets are considered the most important as they received special revelations and performed their work at a pivotal time in history. They are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. For Muslims, Muhammad is Allah's last prophet, known as the 'Seal of the Prophets' (*Surat al-Ahzab 33:40 'The Clans'*), who brought the final message that has been preserved intact in the Qur'an. This is seen as the final and complete message from Allah to humanity. Along with the Qur'an, the holy books that contain Allah's revelation to these revered prophets are the Hebrew Bible and the Christian gospels.

Resurrection and life after death

So consider the signs of God's mercy; how He gives life to the earth after its death. Indeed, it is He Who gives life to the dead, for He is powerful over all things.

Surat al-Rum 30:50 'Romans'

O soul that art at rest, return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him). So enter among My servants, and enter into My garden.

Surat al-Fajr 89:27–30 'The Dawn'

Islam sees the real universe—more than what is visible—and that 'real' universe continues after death. Belief in *al-Akhira* is so crucial to Islam that any doubts about it amount to the denial of Allah. The Qur'an states that for each person after death, there is an intermediate period where souls wait for resurrection (*Surat al-Mu'minun 23:99–100 'The Believers'*). When, at some time in the future, this present world ends, Allah will call these souls and they will be brought to judgement before Allah.

Every human who has ever lived will be rewarded for their goodness or punished for their sins. God's forgiveness will manifest in abundance but the only sin that will not eventually be forgiven by Allah is the deliberate worship of other gods (*shirk*). While there is a place for the wicked called *jahannam* (hell), ruled over by *Iblis* (Satan), depictions of which in the Qur'an are particularly graphic, believers and good people will be rewarded forever in *jannah* (paradise). Because death marks the beginning of eternal life in Islam, the funeral is highly significant (see pages 322–4).

God's will and human freedom of choice

And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures—none knows them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book.

Surat al-An'am 6:59 'The Cattle'

Although Muslims are held responsible for their own sins, they also believe that nothing happens unless it is the will of Allah. *In sha' Allah* (meaning 'If God is willing') is a frequent statement that shows their recognition of his power and acceptance of his will for them—people cannot do anything unless approved by God; however, they still have a free will to choose. In other words, while Allah knows the past and future actions of every person, individuals have the free will to act for good or for evil; he does not force them to do anything—they do have control over their fate. Islamic scholars have had to attempt to reconcile the two notions: that humans are fully responsible for their final happiness or suffering, and that Allah knows, wills and creates everything. The nominal position is that humans choose their actions but God creates them.

Shi'i Muslims do not believe in absolute predestination since they consider it incompatible with God's justice. Neither do they believe in absolute free will since that contradicts God being all-knowing and all-powerful—Omnipotence. Rather they believe in 'a way between the two ways'—believing in free will, but within the boundaries set for it by God and exercised with his permission.

Review

- 1 Define **tawhid** and **outline** the implications of **tawhid** for Muslim belief.
- 2 **Examine** the role of the Books of Allah and prophecy in Islam. In your examination, **explain** why Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus are seen as 'special' and **outline** the implication of Muslim belief that Muhammad is Allah's last prophet.
- 3 What do Muslims believe about angels?
- 4 **Outline** the principal Muslim beliefs about life after death and predestination.
- 5 **Construct** a chart or mind map to explore the interrelationship of the principal beliefs of Islam.

Extension

Using the internet, **identify** ten of the 'Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of Allah' found in the Qur'an, which **describe** the attributes and qualities of Allah.

5.3 Sacred texts and writings

Glossary

linguistics	The study of the principles of language.
sahih	An Arabic word that means 'valid' and is applied to the <i>hadith</i> reports that have been critically analysed and authenticated. Collections of such <i>hadith</i> are also given the name <i>sahih</i> by the consensus of scholars.
sunna	All the sayings, actions and approvals attributed to Muhammad that have become models to be followed by Muslims; the normal lifestyle of the Prophet that became a unifying bond for all parts of the Islamic <i>umma</i> (community).
syntax	The structural components of sentences and phrases in a language.

The Qur'an is the central sacred reality of Islam. The words of the Qur'an are the first and last sounds that a Muslim hears in this life. As the direct Word of God, the interpreter of the universe and human being, and the embodiment of God's Will, the Qur'an is considered the essential guide for the life of Muslims. It is the universal source of all Islamic beliefs, practices and ethics. Both the intellectual and spiritual aspects of Islam as well as Islamic Law have their source in the Qur'an. The second source complementary to the Qur'an is the **sunna** of the Prophet recorded as *hadith*.

The Qur'an—its revelation and the writing of the text

The Qur'an was revealed orally to Muhammad over a twenty-three year period. The revelation was usually tied to certain events, the questions of believers or non-believers and on needs that arose as early Muslim society developed. Sometimes a few verses, at other times whole chapters, were revealed in a variety of ways (*Surat al-Shura* 42:51 'Counsel').



Figure 5.3.1 Qur'an, West Africa, c. mid-nineteenth century. This is a manuscript copy of the first chapter of the Qur'an, *Surat al-Fatiha* 'The Opening', the first *sura* that Muslim children learn by heart and use as a prayer. This example is in the *maghribi* script, which was the script most commonly used in West Africa. It was kept in a leather satchel, which protected it from unclean surfaces and enabled it to be kept close during the owner's travels.

RESPOND

Write out *Surat al-Fatiha* and explain why Muslims believe it contains the whole of the Qur'an in principle.

The Qur'an consists of 114 *sura* subdivided into 6238 *ayat* (verses). The *sura* are generally arranged according to length, not date of revelation. The longer *sura*, representing the later Medinan revelations, precede the shorter, earlier Meccan ones. The second *sura*, *al-Baqara*, is the longest—‘the Qur'an in miniature’—and outlines the ‘*Aqida* and *Arkan al-Islam* (see pages 102 and 109).

Muslims do not speak of Muhammad writing the Qur'an, but of his receiving it and reciting it. Muhammad employed scribes (secretaries) to record the words of revelation placed in his heart. At the death of Muhammad, a good deal of the Qur'an was already written down, though not as a volume, for while he was alive new *sura* were constantly being added. Numerous companions learnt a great deal of it by heart, for in that

era professional memorisers who could repeat the whole of a poet's compositions had long been recognised as indispensable members of Arabian society.

It was under 'Uthman, the third caliph, that an authorised version of the Qur'an in the dialect of Mecca was established. 'Uthman's edition to this day remains the authoritative word of God to Muslims.

There is only one text of the Qur'an accepted by all schools of Islamic thought and there are no variants. And since Muslims believe that the Qur'an's Arabic language is revealed, all Muslims, regardless of their national language, memorise and recite the Qur'an in Arabic whether they fully understand it or not. Arabic is the sacred language of Islam because, in a very real sense, it is the language God chose to reveal his word. In Islam, Arabic has remained the language of the Qur'an and of religious learning. Strictly speaking, the Qur'an should only be recited in Arabic, whether the reader is from Tunis, Riyadh, Dhaka or Sydney.

In every part of the world, Muslim children memorise the Arabic words of the Qur'an. If they do not understand Arabic, they are taught the meaning of the words they learn.

In plain Arabic speech.

Surat al-Shu'ara 26:195 'The Poets'



Figure 5.3.2 Muslim boys studying the Qur'an with their teacher at the Bilal Mosque, Cringila, New South Wales

Not only the language of the Qur'an, but a living language

In addition to its place as a religious text, the Qur'an was crucial to the development of Arabic **linguistics**, and provided the impetus for the development of Arabic grammar, vocabulary and **syntax**.

The need to preserve the accuracy and pronunciation of the verses (*ayat*) of the Qur'an led to the refining of the Arabic alphabet and the codification of Arabic grammar in the second and third Islamic centuries. Furthermore, the need for Muslims, whether native or non-native speakers of Arabic, to memorise and recite verses from the Qur'an in their daily worship has helped to keep the Arabic language alive.

The existence of scientific words of Arabic origin in European languages is attributed to the pioneering efforts of Muslim scholars in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry and medicine. Muslim scholars had to coin an entirely new terminology to introduce their innovations—for example, algebra, the algorithm, alkali, alchemy, alcohol.

In addition to scientific terms, European languages contain many everyday words of Arabic origin—for example, coffee, sugar, saffron, admiral, arsenal. And then there are Arabic numerals.

RESPOND

What other everyday words of Arabic origin can you locate?

Recitations of the Qur'an—*Tilawat al-Qur'an*

Muslims are highly recommended to recite or read the Qur'an at all times, and to read it through completely at least once a year. In a *hadith* by 'A'isha she said, 'The house in which *al-Qur'an* is recited is seen by the heavenly world as the stars are seen by the earthly world.'

Every chapter, except *Surat al-Tawba* 'The Repentance' (Chapter 9), commences with *Bi'smi'llahi-rrahmani-rrahim*—'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate'—and it is a habit to say *Bi'smi'llah* before reading and before every good act. For instance, if you want to read, it becomes 'I read in the Name of Allah ...' if you want to eat, it becomes 'I eat in the Name of Allah ...' The best time to read or recite the Qur'an is during *salat* (daily prayer).

The Qur'an is treated with the greatest respect. Muslims will not open it unless they have had ablution, a ritual washing of hands, arms, face and feet (*Surat al-Waqi'a* 56:76–79 'The Happening'). They hold it above the waist and no other book is ever placed above it on a bookshelf. It is recited and chanted during the daily ritual prayer. All observant Muslims know some chapters by heart and some memorise the whole book.

Muhammad said: 'He who recites the Qur'an well and clearly is equal in rank to the Angels who record creation's deeds. These Angels are gracious, honourable and of lofty rank. He who finds difficulty in reciting the Qur'an will obtain a double reward.'

Hadith of Bukhari and Muslim

Hadith—the sunna of the Prophet

The Arabic word *hadith* means a 'spoken word' or a 'saying'. In the Islamic context, it refers to the recorded sayings, actions and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad. The books in which these are compiled are called '*hadith* books'.

Most Muslims accept six collections of *hadith* as being the most trustworthy. These are known as 'The Accurate Six' and were collected within the first three centuries of Islam. The two most authoritative books are called *sahih*, meaning 'sound'; they are *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. The collectors of these books have critically analysed reported *hadith* and only included the ones they could confirm as authentic. For Shi'i Islam, the authenticity of *hadith* is guaranteed by its transmission through 'Ali and Shi'i *imams*; they have their own five collections and they also have sayings of their *imams*.

Extracts that demonstrate principal beliefs

Both the Qur'an and *hadith* lay down correct behaviour for the good ordering of Islamic society. In *Surat Ghafir* 40:1–12 'The Forgiving One' or 'The Believer', there is a series of teachings about acting with good intentions and encouraging behaviour that brings harmony to the community.

The following *hadith* also underline the importance of acting with justice.

One who shows no mercy to our young or who cannot acknowledge the rights of our old is not one of us.

Tirmizi

One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should do good unto guests. One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should do good unto neighbours. One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should say something good, if not keep silent.

Bukhari

A tough person is not one who can fight. A tough person is one who can control himself when he is angry.

Bukhari; Muslim

Review

- 1 Explain what is meant by the statement: 'Muslims do not speak of Muhammad writing the Qur'an, but of his receiving it and reciting it.'
- 2 What has helped keep the Arabic language alive?
- 3 Recall the two most authoritative collections of *hadith*.
- 4 Explain the relationship between the Qur'an and *hadith*.
- 5 Identify three examples that demonstrate the importance of the Qur'an to Muslims.
- 6 Throughout the previous sections of this chapter there are extracts from the Qur'an and *hadith*. Examine these extracts and explain how they demonstrate the principal beliefs of Islam.
- 7 Give three reasons to demonstrate how the Qur'an acts as a bond within the Muslim community throughout the world.

Extension



- 1 Identify those collections of *hadith* known as 'The Accurate Six'. Which of these is not accepted by Shi'i and why?
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 107 and investigate how Islamic scholars distinguished the true reports of how Muhammad lived his life from the false reports. Present the result of your investigation in chart form.

5.4 Core ethical teachings

Islamic jurisprudence

Glossary

ethics	The system of explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices to clarify what is right and wrong, and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.
halal	That which is permitted or lawful.
haram	That which is forbidden and unlawful, also sinful.
ijma'	The consensus of Muslim religious scholars (<i>ulama</i>) in a particular generation.
'ilm usul al-fiqh	Jurisprudence—the science of law or the science of interpretation. The Arabic word <i>fiqh</i> means knowledge, understanding and comprehension.
qiyas	Comparative analogy—a source of law or legal tool where existing rulings are extended to cover new situations when there is no specific mention in the Qur'an or <i>hadith</i> .
Shari'a	Islamic law based on the Qur'an and the <i>sunna</i> of the Prophet.

► The application of Islamic ethics to specific issues is addressed in Chapter 13, pages 315–21.

The ethical teachings of Islam reflect how the beliefs and teachings of Islam influence human behaviour. Islam places very strong emphasis on the importance of right action, and the laws that govern actions fall roughly into two categories. On the one hand, there is that body of law that governs the behaviour of Muslims towards God. These include laws about prayers, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimages and the like. The most important of these laws are described in the *Arkan al-Islam*, the five pillars. The second type of Islamic law directly regulates the ways in which human beings treat one another. For Muslims, there is no clear distinction between the sacred and the secular.

For each we have appointed a divine law and a traced out way.

Surat al-Maeda 5:48 'The Table'

A Muslim's whole life is guided by ***Shari'a***, which literally means the 'path to a waterhole', but is more often called 'the straight path'. It regulates all aspects of Muslim life: the performance of ritual, personal morality, hygiene, etiquette, family and inheritance laws; and rules for commerce and the social and political order. For Muslims, their whole life must be one of submission to Allah for happiness in this world and the next. Muslims must therefore know what is obligatory, *fard* (religious duties—the five pillars), what actions are ***halal***, and what actions are ***haram***. *Shari'a* encompasses both public and private life. It is a reflection of Allah's guidance for Muslims whatever situation they may find themselves in.

Guidelines for the Muslim life place great stress on the individual as well as the community (*umma*).

You should do what is natural.

You should promote unity and harmony.

You should support the community of Muslims.

You should obey the law (*Shari'a*) as found in the Qur'an and *hadith*, and as interpreted by recognised Muslim scholars.

Justice, compassion and generosity are frequently given as qualities of a truly human life.

No one (truly) believes until what is wished for his brother is what is wished for himself.

From al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*



Figure 5.4.1 The *halal* logo. This logo on Australian red meat products lets Muslims know that the meat has been slaughtered according to *Shari'a* and is therefore *halal* and permissible to eat.

The process of Islamic jurisprudence

Shari'a has four sources from which to draw its guiding principles:

- the Qur'an
- the *sunna*
- *ijma'*
- legal precedent or *qiyas*.

The Qur'an is the most important authority for Muslims followed by the *sunna* of the Prophet as found in the officially accepted written accounts of what he said, did and approved—*hadith*. The *sunna* confirmed the rulings of the Qur'an and detailed some of the concepts, laws and practical matters that are briefly stated in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an instructs 'Establish the service of worship', but doesn't specify how to worship. By describing how the Prophet Muhammad prayed, the *sunna* provides details of what the Qur'an instructed.

The *sunna* and *hadith* are complementary sources to the Qur'an but may not be interpreted or applied in any way that is inconsistent with the Qur'an. '*Ilm usul al-fiqh*' refers to the science of drawing legal rulings by Muslim scholars, based on their knowledge of *Shari'a*. The science of *fiqh* started with the expansion of Islam in the second century after *hijra* when the Islamic community faced several issues that were not explicitly covered in the Qur'an and *sunna*.

The consensus of Muslim scholars (*ijma'*) is used to make rulings about things not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an or *hadith*. If there is consensus over a ruling, chances are it is right as it is impossible for every scholar to agree over a wrong interpretation.

The primary benefit of *ijma'* is that it allows Muslim scholars to make legal rulings that provide guidelines on a variety of modern issues. This gives Islam the flexibility to be applicable in all times and places, and among all peoples. All rulings of these scholars must be derived from the teachings and principles of the Qur'an and/or the *sunna*.

Did you know?

A *fatwa* is an official ruling from clerics and lay leaders on the interpretation of what is forbidden, permitted or disapproved. In 1997 the National Fatwa Council in Malaysia ruled that smoking is forbidden (*haram*).

Legal precedent or *qiyas* is a legal ruling arrived at through a process of deductive reasoning or analogy. For example, the Qur'an prohibits the consumption of alcohol, but does not mention drugs. Based on reason (*qiyas*), drugs are also illegal in Islam by extension because the common denominator, or reason for prohibition for both alcohol and drugs, is intoxication and harmful effects on health.

While Islamic ethics are articulated in *Shari'a* and this provides the common principles of life for all Muslims, there are some areas where Muslims differ in its interpretation. Shi'i have traditionally opposed the principle of *ijma'* and the senior lawyers of the *imams* in Iran (*ayatollahs*) continue to make new binding interpretations directly from the Qur'an. For Sunni, rulings based on the consensus of the community of Muslim scholars are usually binding.

Decision-making based on collective consultation (*shura*) is very important in Islam to minimise individual error in judgement, and *shura* ranks as a principle in political, social and religious affairs. It is not permissible, however, to use *shura* with core beliefs and practices of Islam that are clearly and firmly established, such as belief in the unity of God or fasting in the month of Ramadan.

Review

- 1 What is *Shari'a*?
- 2 In point form, **outline** the principal ethical teachings within Islam.
- 3 **Recall** the four sources for Islamic ethics.
- 4 **Demonstrate** how each of the four sources is used in determining Islamic Law.
- 5 How does *Shari'a* relate to the beliefs and practices of Islam?
- 6 **Explain** why there can be different interpretations of *Shari'a*.
- 7 **Analyse** the implications of the ethical teachings of Islam for everyday living.

Extension

- 1 **Identify** what is *haram* for Muslims to eat.
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** three examples of actions that are forbidden (*haram*) to Muslims and three examples of actions that are permitted (*halal*).
- 3 Imagine you are a Muslim. In practical terms, **propose** how you would follow 'the guidelines for life' (see page 108) in your everyday life.

5.5 Expressions of faith

The five pillars of faith

The Muslim goal of devotional submission to God is put into practice through *Arkan al-Islam*—the five pillars of Islam. Throughout the Muslim world, these five duties are performed by practising Muslims and are a unifying force in Islam.

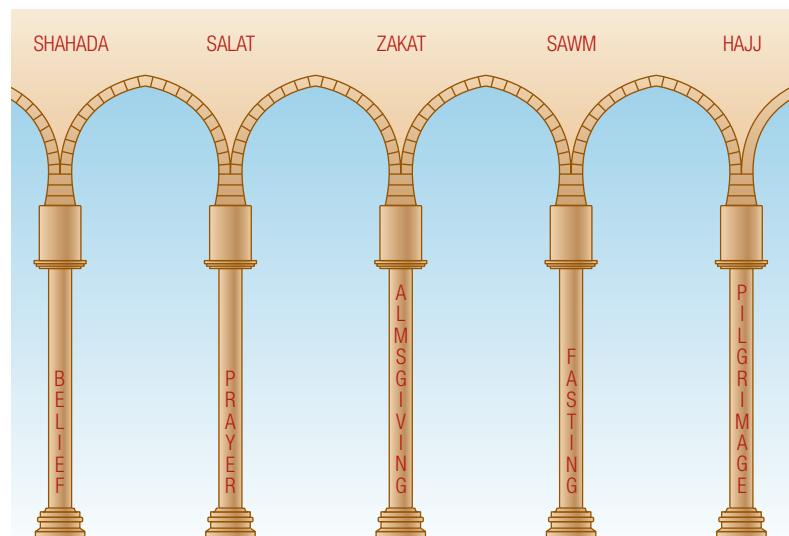


Figure 5.5.1 The five pillars of faith—*Arkan al-Islam*

Shahada—declaration of faith

The first duty of a Muslim is to publicly declare his or her faith: 'I testify that there is no god but The God. And I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.' This declaration is called *Kalima*, which is simply the Arabic word for sentence, any sentence. When a person utters this sentence in front of other Muslims, he or she is accepted as Muslim.

Salat—daily prayer

Salat is obligatory five times each day for every Muslim 'who is sane, mature and, in the case of women, free from menstruation and confinement due to childbirth'. It is the distinctive mark of believers and it provides them with opportunities for direct communion with God five times a day, helping them to avoid too much attachment to non-essential things. It is also the foremost of the basic conditions for the success of the believers.

Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers.

Surat al-Mu'minun 23:1–2 'The Believers'

- ▶ Because of its importance in the everyday lives of Muslims, *salat* is covered in more detail on pages 111–13.

Zakat—obligatory (religious) almsgiving

But the firm in knowledge among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and those who keep up prayers and those who give the poor-rate (*zakat*) and the believers in Allah and the last day, these it is whom We will give a mighty reward.

Surat al-Nisa 4:162 'The Women'

The payment of *zakat* is a compulsory welfare contribution by economically well-off Muslims for the needy, wherever they may live. It is paid once a year based on their cash savings, and gold, silver and jewellery if their savings are above a certain threshold. It is also paid on cattle and agricultural products. The minimum amount of alms (*zakat*) obligatory for a Muslim is 1/40 (2.5 per cent) of excess personal wealth. Once collected, *zakat* can only be distributed to poor, needy and other rightful beneficiaries.

Zakat is an act of devotional duty of worship and obedience, and is paid to gain Allah's favour. In Islam, wealth belongs to Allah—he is the real owner and Muslims are the trustees of his wealth. In addition to the annual *zakat*, the Qur'an encourages Muslims to make voluntary contributions to help the poor and needy. This payment is *sadaqa* (charity). At the end of Ramadan, Muslims are asked to make a small donation to allow the poor to celebrate the end of fasting.

Sawm—fasting in Ramadan

O you who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard (against evil).

Surat al-Baqara 2:183 'The Cow'

Muslim adults are required to fast from dawn to sunset each day during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This means a Muslim should not eat, drink, smoke or have sexual intercourse during the hours of fasting. They eat a light meal before dawn, then go without food or drink all day until sunset. As well as fasting, they should spend time, where possible, in prayer and meditation.

The month of Ramadan is of special significance to all Muslims. The Qur'an was first revealed during Ramadan.

It is a time of spiritual focus, moderation, forgiveness, patience, kindness and concern for the welfare of others. All Muslims desire to achieve a good disposition through self-control, and fasting in Ramadan is designed to achieve this. Although all adult Muslims are expected to fast, there are some exceptions. Those who are too old or sick or people on long journeys do not have to fast; nor do women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or menstruating. They can make up the missed days later.

Hajj—pilgrimage

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. It is the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Mecca, the symbolic house of Allah dedicated to belief and devotion to one God, that must be undertaken at least once in a lifetime by those Muslims who can afford it. *Hajj* is performed during the period 8–13 *Dhu'l-Hijja*, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. During this period all the barriers of language, territory, colour, race and culture disappear and the bond of faith is uppermost. Muslims reflect on their lives and collectively ask for forgiveness.

Perform the pilgrimage and the visit (to Mecca) for Allah.

Surat al-Baqara 2:196 'The Cow'

- ▶ For more information on *Hajj* see Chapter 13, pages 325–7.

Review

- 1 Define the following terms and write one sentence about each:
 - a Shahada
 - b Salat
 - c Zakat
 - d Sawm
 - e Hajj.
- 2 Why do you think they are called 'pillars of faith'?
- 3 In two paragraphs, outline the importance of *umma* in Islam.
- 4 Investigate the connection between the five pillars and the ultimate goal of Islam as submission to Allah. Summarise your conclusions in point form.
- 5 Explain how Muslim belief is put into practice through *Arkan al-Islam*.

Salat in the daily life of Muslims

Glossary

rak'a (plural, **rak'at**) Literally means 'bowing'. The *rak'a* is a 'unit of prayer' in which the worshipper recites a number of ritual prayers and invocations while standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting. The number of *rak'at* performed varies from prayer time to prayer time, as does the recitation being silent or said aloud.

Thee alone we worship; Thee alone we ask for help. Show us the straight path.

Surat al-Fatiha 1:5, 6 'The Opening'

Salat is highly formalised and regulated in its cycles of spoken formulas and body postures. The set words in Arabic are recited from memory and these words are accompanied by actions—standing, kneeling and bowing in a set pattern. Before performing each ritual prayer, Muslims must perform *wudu'* by washing hands, feet and face, and rinsing the nostrils and ears (body, clothes and the place of prayer must be clean). Traditionally, women cover their hair. Each *salat* must be offered at or during its proper time and face in the direction of the sacred mosque in Mecca (*qibla*).

Salat underlines the belief that faith and works are inseparable. It consists not only in the turning of the heart and mind and soul to Allah, but also in a series of movements involving the entire body. Body and mind are inseparable. All must be devoted to Allah.

There are five obligatory (*fard*) prayers in a day and each prayer contains a set number of *rak'at*:

- *Salat al-Fajr*, the morning prayer—two *rak'at* said aloud
- *Salat al-Zuhr*, the noon prayer—four silent *rak'at*
- *Salat al-'Asr*, the afternoon prayer—four silent *rak'at*
- *Salat al-Maghrib*, the evening or sunset prayer—three *rak'at*, two said aloud and one silently
- *Salat al-'Isha'*, the night prayer—four *rak'at*, two said aloud, two said silently.

Thus, the observant Muslim must perform a minimum of seventeen *rak'at* every day. Prayer five times a day may seem excessive to some people. In reality it only takes a maximum of twenty minutes in a day. If, however, a person does the optional cycles, the time taken can double.

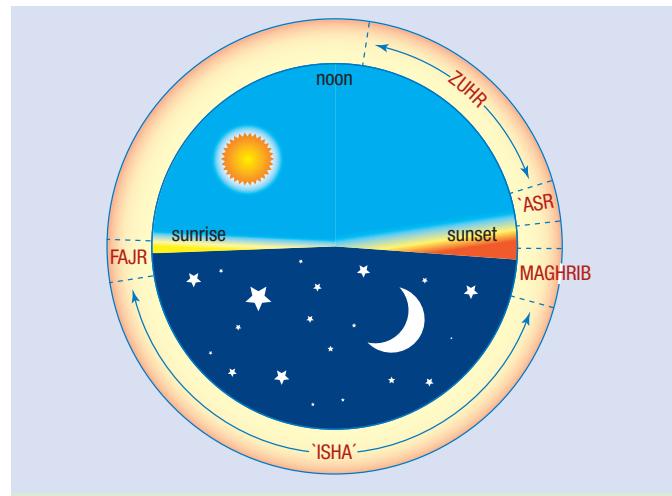


Figure 5.5.2 The timing of the daily prayers

Although it is preferable to perform the ritual prayer with other people and in a mosque led by an *imam*, a Muslim may pray almost anywhere—the workplace, at school, in the home, and at universities.

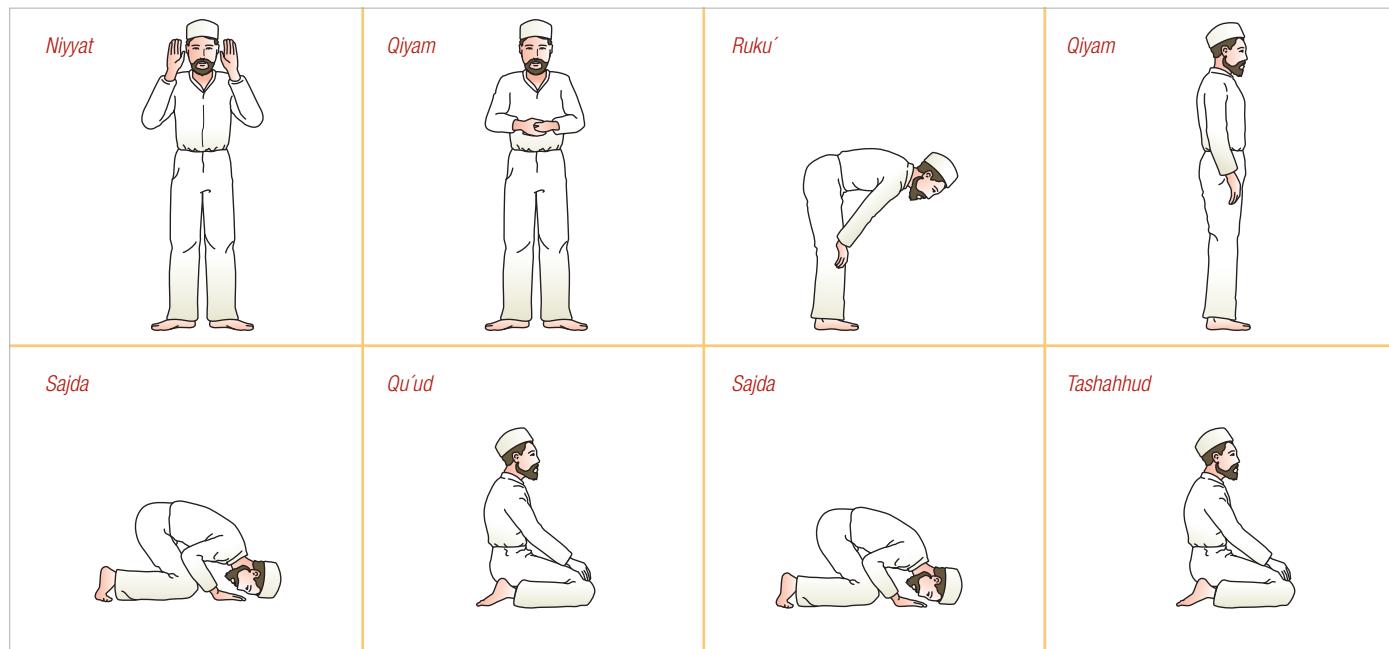
Before each *salat* the worshipper recites *iqama* (private call to prayer) and expresses the intention (*niyya*) to perform *salat*, for example:

I intend to offer the four *rak'at* of the '*Isha'* prayer and face *qibla* for the sake of Allah and Allah alone.

Surat al-Fatiha, the first *sura* of the Qur'an, is always recited twice during each *salat*. To complete every second *rak'a* and at the end of any time of prayer, when all *rak'at* have been completed, *Tashahhud* ('Praise be to God') is recited while seated and then the other Muslims in the congregation, as well as the worshipper's recording or guardian angels, are acknowledged by looking over the right shoulder (towards the angel recording good deeds), then the left (towards the angel recording wrongful deeds) and saying each time: 'Peace and blessings of God be upon you.'

After this, personal prayers, *du'a*, are said and, if praying in a group, each person stands and individually greets the others saying, 'May God receive our prayers.' Depending upon the number of *rak'at* for a particular prayer time, certain postures and prayers will be repeated.

There are differences between Sunni and Shi'i in some details of *salat*. Both acknowledge the five daily prayers but Shi'i are allowed to combine noon and afternoon prayers and evening and night prayers and perform them in three distinct times, not five. Another difference is that, traditionally, Shi'i will only pray on natural rock, the ground (if it is not planted with something edible and/or

**Figure 5.5.3** Body postures for ritual prayer

something from which clothing can be made), or rugs made of dry, grass-like material. Sunni allow prostration on anything that is clean. Shi'i also pray with their hands hanging down their sides in standing position, not folded across their navel (see prayer postures in Figure 5.5.3).

Only on Friday (at noon—*salat al-Zuhr*) do Muslims have to pray in congregation in a mosque. After the call to prayer, the *imam* gives a sermon and then they pray together. In some Muslim countries, Friday is a holiday—the first part of the weekend. Although women can attend the Friday prayers, this is optional for them. If they do, there is a separate section (often an upstairs gallery) for them.

Apart from the five daily prayers and the Friday prayers, there are two special festive prayers that are called '*Id* prayers. One is straight after the month of fasting (Ramadan) and the other during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) when Muslims gather together in large numbers. Whatever the prayer, and whenever the prayer, *salat* follows the same ritual.

► For more information on *jihad* see Chapter 15, pages 372–3.

Jihad

Jihad means 'to strive or struggle' in the way of Allah, and is often referred to as the sixth pillar of Islam by some Muslim scholars, although it was given no such official status by the Prophet Muhammad.

Jihad is a notion that Westerners often misunderstand. The term 'holy war', which is often used to mean *jihad*, was coined in Europe during the Crusades, meaning a war against Muslims. The term does not have a counterpart in Islamic terminology, and *jihad* is certainly not its translation.

All Muslims are obliged to wage a spiritual *jihad*—the struggle within the Muslim community and within each person against evil. It describes the effort that Muslims must make to do Allah's will every day of their lives. It means fighting all the evil thoughts and desires within ourselves, such as greed, envy, lust and laziness. This 'greater' *jihad* demands sacrifice—sacrifice of one's time, skills and money.

The 'lesser' *jihad* is the struggle against external evils. It is a war fought in the last resort after all peaceful attempts have failed. It is not an aggressive war. The Qur'an teaches that it should only be fought by Muslims in self-defence, or in defence of Islam. *Jihad* was initially necessary for the survival of the early Muslim community in Medina and was the means whereby, in the first expansion period, Islam annexed the neighbouring areas of the Middle East from two large hostile empires. Even in that setting, *jihad* was only feasible when there were valid and legally justifiable reasons and a reasonable chance of success. Although *jihad* is not supposed to include aggressive warfare, on special occasions it could be and has been used to rouse Muslims to military fervour. At the moment it is an ever-present reality in the Middle East, and there are *jihad* organisations in Lebanon, the Gulf States and Indonesia.



Figure 5.5.4 Congregational prayer (*salat al-jama'at*) at an Australian mosque

Review

- 1 **Recall** the five obligatory daily prayers of Islam and the time of day for each prayer.
- 2 **Define** the role of *salat* in the daily life of Muslims.
- 3 **Describe** the importance of prayer in Islam.
- 4 **Identify** two extracts from the Qur'an that demonstrate the importance of prayer for Muslims.
- 5 **Evaluate** the statement: 'It is impossible to call oneself a Muslim if you do not perform *salat* each day.'

Extension



- 1 Imagine you are a Muslim at university. What are some of the difficulties you may face in performing your ritual prayers each day?
- 2 In pairs, **propose** the arguments you would present to the university to enable Muslim students to fulfil their *salat* obligations. Share these with another pair.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 113 to find out more about the rituals of *salat*. In two paragraphs, **summarise** what one of these websites says about the performance of *salat*.
- 4 **Critically evaluate** the statement: 'Some contemporary Muslim organisations have taken the European term 'holy war' as a translation of *jihad* and use it for their own ends.'

Conclusion

In the centuries since the days of Muhammad, Islam has truly become a world religion. Although it has spread throughout the world, most Muslims are still living in those countries to which Islam originally spread from Arabia. The total world population of Muslims is estimated at 1300 million. While most Muslims live in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey and Egypt, many live as minorities in different countries around the world. The country with the greatest number of Muslims is Indonesia, followed by Pakistan, both with over 120 million.

According to the 2006 Census, 340 392 Muslims live in Australia—of these, 37.8 per cent were born in Australia with almost 48.7 per cent under twenty-five years of age. Muslims living in Australia come from ethnically diverse backgrounds. After the largest cohort of Australian-born Muslims, those from Turkey and Lebanon constitute the two largest ethnic groups. Other countries making up a large part of the Muslim population in Australia include Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, Iran and Fiji. There is also a significant Shi'i community in Australia, mainly from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Afghanistan. The differences are not as pronounced as in some countries and Muslims in Australia tend to organise along ethnic lines rather than as Shi'i or Sunni.

The conflicts that are apparent in some Islamic countries and have their roots in the early schisms of Islam are not really a factor in Australia. While some Muslims think it is their duty to establish an Islamic state and implement Islamic law wherever they are, even in a minority context, this is a contemporary idea rather than being a norm throughout Muslim history. For Muslims living in a country where Islam is well established, it is natural for Islamic norms and values to be reflected in

that society. For those who live as minorities, it is their duty to implement Islam in their individual lives as best they can and form cooperative communities. One of the major challenges for Muslims living in Western countries is adjusting traditional Islamic norms to Western contexts. For Australian Muslims, much of the theoretical discussions that occupy the legal scholars in Muslim countries are not relevant to their lives as Australians.

Muslims face the same challenge as followers of other world religious traditions—how to be relevant and, at the same time, be faithful to their origins.

Extension

- 1 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 2 You have to present a ten-minute overview of Islam to a class who has no previous knowledge of Islam. Prepare an outline of your presentation that would be suitable for use with a presentation graphics program such as Microsoft® PowerPoint®.
- 3 Is your media file up to date? **Classify** it into categories and then prepare a report that **analyses** how the media report on Islam.
- 4 **Compare** the analysis of your media file with what you have learnt about Islam. **Assess** how media reporting differs from your understanding of Islam.
- 5 **Construct** a 'Things you must know' package for journalists who are reporting on Islam and Muslims.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places



Chapter 6

Judaism

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **outline** the life of Abraham and **describe** the covenant with the Patriarchs
- **outline** the story of Moses and the Exodus and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai
- **outline** the unique features of the major variants of Judaism
- **investigate** the principal beliefs of Judaism
- **identify** the importance of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud and **examine** extracts from the Hebrew Scriptures that **demonstrate** the principal beliefs of Judaism
- **outline** the principal ethical teachings of Judaism and **describe** their importance in the life of adherents
- **describe** the importance of *Shabbat*.



The reception of a new Torah scroll at the Leo Baeck Centre in Kew, Victoria, 19 October 2008. Torah scrolls are very valuable and highly prized in Jewish communities.

Introduction

Glossary

creed	A formula of religious beliefs.
Diaspora	The dispersion of Jews, caused by the Exile into Babylon and other scatterings of the Jewish people throughout the ages. Today it is the generic term used to refer to all Jews who live outside the modern State of Israel, founded in 1948.
Haskalah	The Jewish Enlightenment—a period in the eighteenth century of expansion in Jewish cultural and philosophical thought and in dialogue with European society at large; strongest in Eastern Europe.
sages	The sages are the rabbis (teachers) of the Talmudic period (for Talmud, see page 131).
Shabbat	The Jewish day of rest (see Ex 20:8–10; Deut 5:12–14) and religious observance, known in English as the Sabbath. It begins at sunset on Friday and ends on Saturday at nightfall when three stars can be seen in the sky. <i>Shabbat</i> is a foretaste of the peace and tranquillity of the world to come. A part
Temple	of Jewish mystical belief is that if all Jews kept the Sabbath, the Messiah would come.
Tenach	The sacred building built in Jerusalem as a place to offer sacrifices and bring burnt offerings to God. Rebuilt several times, the Temple was finally destroyed in the Jewish war against Rome, 66–73 ce. Traditional Judaism still looks to the day when the Temple will be rebuilt.
Torah	The twenty-four books that make up the Hebrew Scriptures (see pages 128–9). Also known as <i>Chumash</i> among Jews. In its narrow sense, Torah refers to the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Torah literally means ‘teaching’. The 613 commandments are contained within these Five Books of Moses. The term ‘Torah’ is often used in a much broader sense as Jewish tradition as a whole (see ‘The Torah’ on page 129).

As Jews understand it, the history of Judaism is the story of the dialogue of the Jewish people with God and the developing religious tradition. That story begins with Abraham and the Patriarchs, and follows with Moses and the other great figures of the Hebrew Scriptures, known as the **Tenach**.

After the destruction of the Jerusalem **Temple** in 70 CE, the Rabbis emerged to establish the form of Judaism (normative), based on a strong commitment to synagogue worship and study of the **Torah**, that has persisted to this day. The Rabbis were the inheritors of the traditions of the Pharisees, a Jewish sect that had flourished in the several hundred years before. The Pharisees believed in the ‘dual Torah’: the Written Torah—that is, the Five Books of Moses; and the Oral Torah—that is, the debates and deliberations, the elaboration and interpretation of the Written Torah, developed by the **sages** of the Pharisees. Most famous among the Pharisaic sages were Hillel and Shammai. The Pharisees also focused their religion around their homes, a pattern that was to become a major feature of Jewish religious practice.

Through the ages, Judaism spread its influence beyond its birthplace, first to Babylon, then to Spain and the expanse of Europe. This dispersion of the Jewish people is known as the **Diaspora**. While there were flowerings, such as the Jewish Golden Age in Spain (c. 900–1200) and the eighteenth century **Haskalah**, much of this period was one of oppression under Islamic or Christian rulers. The emergence of the modern State of Israel in 1948 re-established a Jewish homeland. Today, while nearly 5 million Jews live in Israel, an even higher number live in the USA. While these two countries account for more than half of all Jews worldwide, it is estimated that significant Jewish communities of over 10 000 people exist in more than thirty countries. Australia is included in this group with around 100 000 Jews.

Though today we see Judaism to be a single, normative religion, movements have interpreted the Jewish tradition in varying ways throughout the ages. Even today, Judaism is a tradition of enormous diversity, with different expression in the forms of Orthodox, Progressive and Conservative Judaism.

Did you know?

Who is a Jew? Traditionally, any person whose mother is a Jew is considered Jewish. This definition means that there are both religious or observant Jews, and secular Jews.

Though not laid down in a binding **creed**, Jewish beliefs are those concepts and values that are found throughout the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish writings. The Jewish way of life is based on the commandments and the **Torah** (*Chumash*) as explained, expounded and applied from ancient times. In Judaism, the history of the Five Books of Moses, expressed through ritual and prayer, is a living story that transforms people’s lives every day. The 248 positive and the 365 negative commandments of the **Torah** provide all the guidance necessary to live and pray as a Jew. Routine Jewish life culminates each week in **Shabbat**, the sacred day of the week, marked out from the rest of the week as the day of rest, prayer and the study of the **Torah**.

Extension

- 1 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with Jews and/or Judaism over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media’s presentation with what you have learnt in your study of Judaism.

6.1 Origins

Abraham and the covenant

Glossary

circumcision	The removal of the foreskin of the penis.
covenant	In general, an agreement between two parties. Each of the parties has both rights and responsibilities. In the Bible, the covenant is an agreement between God and his people.
Patriarchs	The forefathers of the Jews—Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac’s son Jacob (later known as Israel).



Figure 6.1.1 The stage for the story of the Patriarchs is a broad one, ranging from ancient Ur in Mesopotamia in the east, to the Nile Delta in the south-west. In a later period, in the time of the Davidic monarchy, the story of Israel is enacted in a narrower territory, as illustrated on the inset map.

Abram (as Abraham is first known in the biblical account) and his half-sister and wife Sarai, later known as Sarah, emerged with their tribe out of ancient Mesopotamia.

Abraham led a nomadic life. Famine eventually led him and his tribe to the fertile lands of the Nile Delta in Egypt. They later journeyed back north, settling in the southern part of Canaan. In Genesis 22, we read of how Abraham took his young son Isaac and in response to God's call prepared to sacrifice him. However, a messenger of the Lord called to Abraham not to kill Isaac, and a ram was substituted in his place. In acknowledgment of his loyalty, Abraham's covenant with God was established.

I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

Gen 22:17

The importance of the Patriarchs

Isaac was the second son of Abraham and the first born to him by his wife Sarah. Isaac was the father of Esau and Jacob, twins born to his wife Rebekah. Jacob was to become known as Israel, after he wrestled all night with an angel (Gen 32:23–29). The name Israel means 'contender with God'. 'Israelites' is the term used to refer to the descendants of the Patriarchs in ancient times. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are known collectively as the Patriarchs.

Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.'

Gen 32:28

The covenant

The Patriarchs are seen as the forefathers of modern Judaism, as the covenant was established with them. The first covenant with the unseen God was made with Abraham. It is the covenant, the special relationship with God, which is at the very heart of Jewish belief and practice even to this day.

The covenant is first mentioned as a promise by God to Noah (Gen 6:18) and is confirmed through God's eternal promise to Abraham to make him the 'ancestor of a multitude of nations' (Gen 17:5). The key stipulation of God's covenant with Abraham was that every male be **circumcised** (Gen 17:10–14). This remains the ritual mark of every Jewish male to this day (Gen 15:18, 17:1–14).

God's promise to Abraham was renewed with his son Isaac, and again with Isaac's son Jacob. Jacob (Israel) lent his name to a nation. Abraham's steadfastness to his God, demonstrated in his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, is a model for the steadfast love that Jews are expected to hold for their God. It is from the promises made to the Patriarchs that a great nation and one of the world's great religions flowed. The theme of covenant begun with the Patriarchs and continued in Jewish history with the further development of the covenant through Moses.

 Read more about the importance of the covenant for Judaism on page 126.

Moses, the Exodus and the giving of the Torah

Glossary

Midrash	A form of ancient biblical commentary and interpretation, mostly written between the second and eighth centuries BCE. <i>Midrash</i> does not always take the biblical text literally, but rather seeks to uncover the hidden meaning of the Torah.
mitzvah	Hebrew word meaning 'commandment'. (plural, <i>mitzvot</i>) There are 613 <i>mitzvot</i> in the Torah.

The life of Moses

If Abraham is the father of Judaism, then Moses is its teacher. Moses was called by God to lead his people out of slavery:

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here am I.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the LORD said, 'I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.'

Ex 3:4–10

The Exodus

The Book of Exodus tells the story of a Hebrew baby being plucked from the river by the daughter of the Pharaoh (Ex 2). This child grew up in the Pharaoh's court and was known as Moses. Having killed an Egyptian who he witnessed being cruel to a Hebrew slave, Moses fled the court of the Pharaoh.

Eventually, Moses' Hebrew background was revealed to him. Reluctant at first, Moses (*Mosheh*) was to become a powerful spiritual and political force among his people. He led the Hebrews' dramatic escape from slavery in Egypt in the episode known as the Exodus (Ex 1:8–12:42). He received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:1–17; Deut 5:6–21) and established the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites. The laws of the Torah are formulated in his name. He is considered by Jews as the first and greatest prophet, God having spoken to him face to face (Num 12:8). Ultimately, Moses was to die in sight of the land that God had promised to his forebears (Deut 34:1–5).

Did you know?

The word 'exodus' is from the Greek word for 'departure'. The events of the Exodus—the plagues on Egypt; the 'passing over' of the houses of the Israelites; and the parting of the sea that saved the Israelites and then swamped the Egyptians—are commemorated at the great Jewish family feast *Pesach* (Passover).

Miriam

Miriam, sister to Aaron and Moses, was one of the three leaders of the Hebrews in the period of the Exodus (Mic 6:4). Gifted as a leader, skilled in poetry and song, she is the first woman in the Hebrew Scriptures to be referred to as a prophet (Ex 15:20). According to the *Midrash*, she prophesied Moses' role in the emergence of his people. The sages knew her as Puah, the midwife of Exodus 1, who in courage defies the Pharaoh's orders to kill the males born to Hebrew women. As a reward for her courage, the people grew stronger.

But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live ... So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong.

Ex: I:17, 20

It is Miriam who watched the infant Moses be placed in a basket among the reeds and persuaded the Pharaoh's daughter to have the child protected and nurtured to maturity (Ex 2:1–10). Much later in the desert, having crossed the Red Sea, Miriam led the women in 'Miriam's Song'. The style and language of this text mark it as among the oldest compositions in all of Hebrew scripture.

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.'

Ex 15:20–21

Another story from the *Midrash* tells of the miraculous 'Miriam's Well', created by God at sunset on the very first Sabbath. According to the tradition, the well was given to Miriam as reward for her faithfulness, and it followed and sustained the Israelites throughout their forty years of wandering in the desert. 'Miriam's Well' can indeed be seen as a metaphor for what Miriam was for her people—a power that nourished and healed.

Ultimately, Moses' establishment of the group of seventy elders excluding Miriam and Aaron (Num 11:16), and their dissatisfaction with Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman (Num 12:1) relegated Miriam to a less prominent place in Jewish history than that reserved for Moses. Despite this, today Miriam is increasingly seen as an iconic woman of the Hebrew Scriptures. Miriam reminds Jews of the nurturing and sustaining power of women within family structures and of their relationship with God.

The giving of the Torah

On the Exodus from Egypt, Moses receiving the Torah or Ten Commandments from God became the defining moment in the history of the Israelites, making Moses the greatest teacher and intermediary in the Jewish tradition. To this day, a reminder of this event is recorded above the 'ark', the housing for the Torah scrolls in modern synagogues.

The Israelites built a portable structure, known as the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:8–22), to house the stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments that had been given to Moses (Ex 20–23, 28, 31:12–17, 32:15–19, 34:1–4, 37:1–9, 40:20–21; Deut 5:6–21). Eventually, the Ark, the symbol of the unseen God, was to find its home in the Temple (1 Kings 8:1–9).

The biblical story of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai in the desert (Ex 24:12–18, 34:1–28) further develops the importance of the covenant in the Jewish story. To be circumcised, as was originally commanded of Abraham, is just one of the *mitzvot* of the Torah. The Ten Commandments come to be seen as emblematic of all the 613 *mitzvot* that a Jew must follow to be faithful to the covenant. Depending on the interpretation of 'being Jewish', this influences the way a Jew eats, dresses and prays. In the strictest sense, it dictates the entire pattern of everyday living.

God's promise of a homeland to Abraham, reaffirmed in the promise to Moses in the desert to deliver the Israelites into a land 'flowing with milk and honey' (Ex 3:8), is also the origin of the Jewish affinity with the Holy Land. Today the modern State of Israel, founded in 1948, holds a special place in the hearts and minds of all Jewish people, both those who live in Israel and those of the Diaspora.

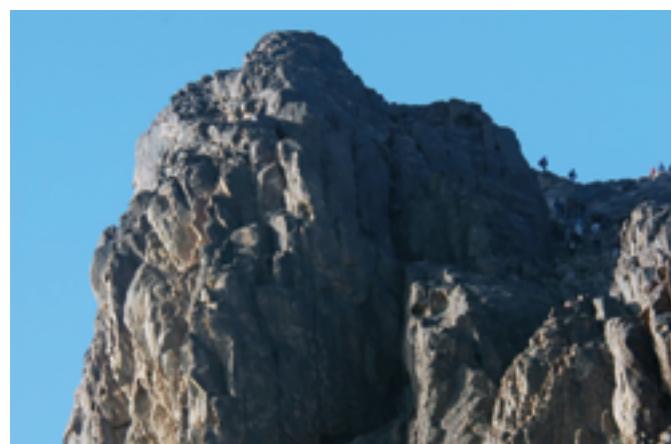


Figure 6.1.2 The summit of Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai is the site of Moses' ascent to receive the Torah and is situated in modern north-eastern Egypt.

Review

- 1 a Define the term 'Patriarch' as it applies to Judaism.
- b Who are the three Patriarchs?
- c What does the word 'Israel' mean?
- 2 Describe the importance of the Patriarchs in the development of early Judaism.
- 3 Construct a chronology of the events of the Exodus story.
- 4 Outline the covenant at Sinai and describe its importance in Judaism.

Extension

- 1 Compare the relative importance of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Miriam for Judaism.
- 2 Summarise the origins of Judaism. In your response, explain the role of the Patriarchs and Moses, and analyse the degree to which they have shaped modern Judaism.

Modern Judaism

The Middle Ages had seen the exile of Jews from the West to the East. The reopening of England and France to Jews in the middle of the seventeenth century began an exodus back to the West. By 1800 the vast majority of Jews remained in the **ghetto**, lacking the money or opportunity

to escape it. Some Jews, however, through secular education, talent and wit, became 'Salon Jews', dining with the elite of Christian society, or 'Court Jews', serving the leaders of society. Jews such as Moses Mendelssohn, an eighteenth century German Jewish thinker, pushed for the integration of Jews into Western society. A wave of liberalism spread across Europe and the USA in the wake of the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Revolution (1789–99). The pressing for Jewish **emancipation** that had begun with Mendelssohn and the *Haskalah* was intensified.

The establishment of the USA saw Jews there granted full citizenship. In the years to come, this was to attract many Jews to the USA. They joined other Jews, some of whom had arrived in New Amsterdam (New York) as early as 1654. This exodus of Jewish refugees from Europe would, in time, give the USA the world's largest Jewish population.

In the Netherlands, and more slowly in Great Britain, Germany and Austria, equal rights were attained for Jews, freeing Jews to join in the social and cultural revolution of Europe. This they did. Emancipation was welcomed by very many Jews, as it was the road to the rich rewards of a rapidly industrialising Western Europe. The price of emancipation was **assimilation**, and it was a price many Jews of the day were prepared to pay. Jewish languages such as Yiddish were discouraged, as English, French and German (and Russian in the East) were considered necessary for advancement. Rabbinic leadership and general religious observance declined. A significant number of Jews entered into mixed marriages or converted to Christianity. A process of Jewish assimilation had begun. Wrestling with assimilation has been a highly significant factor in the emergence of the modern variants of Judaism.

Glossary

- antisemitism** Hatred of Jews. The term was coined by Wilhelm Marr, a Hamburg journalist, in 1879. While the term was not known until the late nineteenth century, the phenomenon of antisemitism has ancient roots.
- assimilation** The process whereby a cultural, ethnic or religious group takes on the habits, customs and practices of the dominant culture.
- Chasidim** Jewish revivalist movement that is based on the teachings of the *Baal Shem Tov* (c. 1700–1760).
- emancipation** The granting of independence to an individual or a minority group of people.

- ghetto** Originally referring to the walled quarter of Venice where Jews were ordered to live in 1555, Jewish ghettos were instituted across Western Europe. 'Ghetto' has come to mean any quarter of a city where a minority lives.
- Holocaust (Shoah)** The Nazi destruction of European Jewry (1942–45) including the murder of 6 million Jews.
- yeshiva** (plural, *yeshivot*) Jewish religious academy. The *Talmud* is the major subject of study at *yeshivot*. (For *Talmud*, see page 131.)
- Zionism** Zionism is the name given to the movement that began life seeking the establishment of a modern Jewish State.

It has been suggested that what saved emancipated Judaism from being swallowed up by the dominant religion in nineteenth-century Western Europe and the USA was the constant flow of traditional Jewish scholarship and piety arriving with the immigrant Jews from Russia, Poland and Hungary.

It was against this background of Jewish emancipation that new movements within Rabbinic Judaism developed as a response to the modern world. The most significant of these movements are Orthodox, Progressive and Conservative Judaism.

Did you know?

Yiddish is a Germanic dialect with a number of Slavonic and Hebrew loan words, using the Hebrew script. There are well-known Yiddish loan words in English, such as 'schmuck', and *shul*, commonly used for 'synagogue' among the Australian Jewish community.



Figure 6.1.3 Eliezer ben Yehuda, the father of Modern Hebrew. A Lithuanian-born Zionist, he determined upon his emigration to Palestine in 1881 not to speak any other language than Hebrew, encouraging his wife to do the same. Through his publishing and teaching, he revived the language almost single-handedly. Today Hebrew is the native tongue of around 5 million Israelis.

Orthodox Judaism

The term 'Orthodox Judaism' was first used in 1795. In reality, Orthodox Judaism is the umbrella term that is used to describe Jewish traditionalists who accept the authority of the code of Jewish law and reject the modernist adjustments of the Progressive movement. Orthodox Judaism is also distinguished by its traditional forms of worship in Hebrew.

There are different styles of Orthodoxy. Each Orthodox synagogue in Australia is the responsibility of the local

Jewish community who affiliate with it and as such, there is some variety in the culture attached to each. Generally speaking though, Australian Orthodox Judaism is more open to modern idiom than is the more isolationist Orthodoxy practised in parts of Israel and the USA. The vast majority of Australian Jews are affiliated with Orthodox synagogues.

Orthodox Jews are sometimes distinguished as Modern Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox. Ultra Orthodoxy rejects much of the modern world. This is symbolised by denigrating secular studies and often dressing in stylised ghetto clothing. Modern Orthodoxy balances the requirements of living in modern circumstances, while being faithful to the world view of the dual Torah.

Perhaps best known among the Ultra Orthodox groups is the *Chasidim*. There are very active *Chasidic* groups in Australia, particularly the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, strongly represented in the Sydney *yeshiva* and through rabbis serving in Orthodox synagogues. Because of the keenness of *Chasidic* Jews for outreach to other Jews, and because of their strict adherence to Jewish study and practice, this tiny community of a few thousand has considerable influence on the larger Australian Jewish community.

► *Chasidim* is a significant idea considered in Chapter 14, pages 337–9.

Cultural branches of Judaism

The difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews lies in the cultures developed in the countries in which they have lived. The Ashkenazi culture originated in the Franco-German region in Western Europe and developed in Eastern Europe and Russia. In contrast, the formative experience of the Sephardim originated in Spain, North Africa and the Middle East.

Due to their different historical experiences, there is variation in the customs and traditions of the two groups. Each has a distinctive language: Yiddish in the case of the Ashkenazim and Ladino among the Sephardim. The Sephardim have a distinctive pronunciation of Hebrew, which was adopted in the modern spoken language of Israel. They also have their own traditional liturgical melodies and an order of the synagogue service that differs slightly from the Ashkenazi service. There are two Sephardi synagogues in Sydney, and the remainder are Ashkenazi.

Progressive Judaism

The Progressive movement has also been known as Reform or Liberal Judaism. While ‘Progressive’ did not become the preferred term until the late twentieth century, the term shall be used throughout this section to describe this originally German and North American movement of Jewish faith and life. In Australia, the movement prefers to go by the name of Progressive Judaism, with Reform synagogues affiliated under the union for Progressive Judaism. The movement’s presence in Australia is strong, claiming 8000 adult members.

Inspired by the freedom of the Enlightenment, the Progressive movement in Judaism began in 1810 with the building in Germany of the first ‘Temple’, the term used to describe Progressive synagogues. German Progressive Judaism gained considerable popularity among Jews. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Progressive Judaism



Figure 6.1.4 Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio standing at the Ark with the Torah. Rabbi Ninio is one of the leaders of the Congregation of the Temple Emanuel, Woollahra, a constituent of the Union for Progressive Judaism in Australia. Women rabbis are found in Progressive but not in Orthodox Judaism.

had taken firm root in the USA also. Some features of Progressive Judaism that distinguish it from traditional Judaism are as follows:

- Progressive synagogues are known as temples
- the Progressive movement rejected beliefs in
 - a personal Messiah
 - resurrection of the dead
 - return to the Holy Land
 - rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem
 - the eventual reintroduction of Temple sacrifice.

Significant innovations introduced by the Progressive movement were:

- religious services in the local language of the community (rather than in Hebrew)
- men and women sitting together during worship
- a lessening of the importance of traditional Jewish laws
- the belief that the Torah needs to be interpreted so as to capture the spirit of the age
- in recent years, the ordination of women rabbis and the equality of men and women as readers of the Torah during synagogue services
- use of the organ and other liturgical features deriving from church practice
- the *Bar Mitzvah* and Confirmation ceremony
- adaptation of the Jewish prayer book to include modern Jewish writings and reference to modern situations.

Since the **Holocaust**, Progressive Judaism has been more supportive of **Zionism** and has shown a greater interest in the revival of ritual.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 123 and examine ‘A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism’ from the 1999 Pittsburgh Convention. Summarise what it says about Progressive Judaism that makes it distinct from other forms of Judaism.

Conservative Judaism

The seeds of the Conservative movement were planted in Germany in the work of Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875). After the focus of the Progressive movement shifted to the USA, a less radical group broke away from Progressive Judaism after the Pittsburgh Conference of 1885. The movement, known as Conservative Judaism, is sympathetic to modern Western ways of thinking, but is more traditional than Progressive Judaism, especially in matters of worship. There is great diversity in Conservative Judaism. Some synagogues are close to Orthodox ones in custom and practice; others are nearly Progressive in character. Despite this diversity, there are some distinguishing features of Conservative Judaism:

- the service includes prayers in English, although most of the service is in Hebrew
- many Conservative synagogues use the organ
- unlike Progressive Judaism, Conservative Judaism accepts the authority of the Oral Law, but reserves the right to reinterpret it in keeping with changing needs
- Conservative Judaism places great importance on a universal people of Israel, the centrality of the land of Israel, the continuation of Jewish tradition, and the sponsoring of Jewish scholarship
- in recent times, women have been allowed into Conservative rabbinical schools.

Conservative Judaism today accounts for more than a third of all Jews in the USA, which is its centre.

There is very little Conservative Judaism formally practised in Australia, with just one synagogue in Melbourne and one in Sydney. But while Conservative Judaism is largely a US movement, its influence is broader than that. In the Conservative movement's acceptance of the authority of the code of Jewish law (with some concessions to modern Western ways of thinking), what is practised by Conservative Jews in the USA is quite close to the practice of many Australian Orthodox Jews.

More than 80 per cent of Australian Jews affiliate themselves with Orthodox synagogues, the remaining numbers belonging to Progressive congregations. Progressive synagogues in Australia (known generally as 'temples') have something of a conservative flavour, preferring, for example, the wearing of the *kippah* inside the temple and the use of a fair amount of Hebrew in the liturgy. Overall, while Australia is strongly Orthodox, the views of its Orthodox community would be closer to the middle-of-the-road Conservative Judaism of the USA, although there is a strong presence of *Chasidic* rabbis leading Sydney and Melbourne Orthodox congregations.

Zionism

Political Zionism was born in 1897 at the first Zionist conference in Basel, Switzerland. The Zionist movement was fired by the failure of emancipation to prevent **antisemitism** in the West, and also the failure to gain political rights in the East.

Zionism in its beginnings was a political movement, not a specifically religious one, although two of the earliest Zionist writers were rabbis. Unlike the other Jewish movements that emerged in the nineteenth century, Zionism did not spring from the well of the Torah. Zionism explained that Jews were one people by viewing Jewish history as a unified and continuous experience of exile and return, which would culminate in the establishment of the Jewish State.

Jewish settlement in Palestine continued to build into the twentieth century, supported by Eastern European Jews. Zionism, however, did not become an urgent passion for Jews in Western Europe until the Holocaust.

RESPOND

What is the origin of the word 'Zionism'?

The relative isolation of the Australian Jewish community from the rest of the Jewish world has meant that synagogues have played an extraordinarily important role in the development of the Australian Jewish community.

Jewish pluralism is a terrific strength because it is an exact mirror of Jewish history. It is where we are and how we will flourish in Australia.

Rabbi John Levi, quoted in Dan Goldberg,
'The All Australian Rabbi', *Australian Jewish News*, 24 September 2004

Review

- 1 **Recount** the history that led to the emergence of variants of Judaism.
- 2 **Construct** a table that highlights the unique features of Orthodox, Progressive and Conservative Judaism.
- 3 **Compare** the key similarities and key differences between Orthodox and Progressive Judaism.

Extension



- 1 **Contrast** Orthodox Judaism as it is practised in Australia and elsewhere.
- 2 **Critically analyse** the statement: 'Conservative Judaism is a religious halfway house.'
- 3 **Account** for the pluralism that exists in the Australian Jewish community today.
- 4 Go to the web destinations for page 125 to find a chronology of the development of Judaism. **Outline** the key elements of the chronology for your own understanding of the history of Judaism.

6.2 Principal beliefs

Glossary

anthropomorphic	Expressed in terms of human thought, action and being.
iconography	The symbolic representation of a tradition through art, especially paintings or drawings.
immanent	An indwelling, constant reality; an intrinsic part of the world. The opposite of transcendent .
incorporeal	Without bodily or material form.
transcendent	Ultimate reality that exists beyond our world and our experience.

In the twelfth century, the Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides offered the Thirteen Articles of Faith as a summary of the 613 commandments of the Torah. Neither Maimonides' nor any other formulation has binding authority as a compulsory creed of Judaism, but the Thirteen Articles of Faith are a good indication of the basics of Jewish belief.

► Moses Maimonides is a significant person considered in Chapter 14, pages 334–6



Figure 6.2.1 Moses Maimonides (1135–1204). He is known in rabbinical literature as RaMBaM, an acronym derived from his given name **Rabbi Mosheh ben Maimon**.

The Thirteen Articles of Faith

- 1 God is creator.
- 2 God is one.
- 3 God is **incorporeal**.
- 4 God is eternal.
- 5 God alone is to be worshipped.
- 6 God has spoken through the prophets.
- 7 Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
- 8 The whole of the Torah was revealed to Moses.
- 9 The Torah is the unalterable word of God.
- 10 God has knowledge of and concern for all the deeds of human beings.
- 11 God rewards those who keep the *mitzvot* and punishes those who transgress them.
- 12 The Messiah will come.
- 13 The dead will be resurrected.

Belief in one God

The first five of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith speak of the belief in one God. In Judaism, God has neither parents nor children. God always was and always will be. In Jewish belief, God is **transcendent, immanent** and creator. While the Bible and Jewish religious literature have used **anthropomorphic** language to refer to God, the incorporeal nature of God remains central in Jewish belief. God is without form, and this is why images of God are never found in synagogues or as a part of Jewish **iconography** generally.

Anthropomorphic language is used to illustrate how humans are but a shadow of God inasmuch as they weakly reflect the moral perfection of God. Human categories applying to God indicate not that God is human-like, but rather that humans must strive to emulate God's moral attributes.

Then God spoke all these words: I am the **LORD** your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the **LORD** your God am a jealous God ...

Ex 20:1–17

Jewish belief holds that while God is separate from the world, God continues to be involved in the world and with people. God's plan for creation is made clear to Jews through the words of the Hebrew Scriptures, with the Torah as its core. God's plan for creation can perhaps be summed up by the rabbi Hillel's famous retort to the heathen who said he would convert to Judaism if he could be taught the whole of the Torah while standing on one leg: 'What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: this is the whole of the Torah. The rest is commentary. Now go and study it.'

A moral law prescribed by God

Glossary

halachah

The Jewish legal tradition, grounded in the 613 commandments of the Torah.

It is Jewish belief that the Torah contains the divinely inspired moral law that binds Jews to their God. Woven within the Torah are 613 *mitzvot* (commandments): 248 positive *mitzvot* and 365 negative *mitzvot*. They cover all aspects of life and worship. The negative *mitzvot* detail those things from which the Jew must restrain, and are largely consistent with the secular law in modern Western societies. (Indeed, modern Western societies have drawn their laws and ethics from the principles outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures.)

Women are exempt from some of the positive *mitzvot*, while other *mitzvot* refer specifically to them. This highlights the distinct roles of men and women in the home, in the synagogue and in society that give character and uniqueness to the Jewish way of life. Overall, the positive *mitzvot* describe the rituals by which a Jew can express faithfulness to the covenant.

The covenant

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a covenant was established between God and Abraham. The importance of the covenant is that it affirms a unique relationship between God and the Jewish people that was cemented in the encounter between God and Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 24). This covenant was further developed in the Hebrew Scriptures as God worked through the lives of the kings and prophets.

The whole of the Torah, in fact, is an expression of the covenant. In terms of Jewish belief, the requirements of the covenant are known as **halachah**, which is dealt with in detail later in this chapter. The legal tradition of **halachah** is grounded in the 613 commandments or *mitzvot* contained within the Written Torah, the first five books of the Bible. The *mitzvot* are mentioned in Article 11 of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith.

In return for God's steadfast love, the Jew is bound by observance of **halachah**. For the Orthodox Jew, understanding the importance of the covenant reveals the Torah as the teacher and guide for everyday life. For Progressive Jews, the covenantal relationship is expressed as a deep desire to continue to develop an intellectual engagement with, and expounding on, the meaning of Jewish sacred texts and writings for living spiritually well in today's world. In all forms of Judaism, the covenantal relationship is expressed in the form of a deep affection for and concern with the State of Israel.

Other Jewish beliefs

Glossary

Talmud
(adjective,
Talmudic)

The most authoritative work of the Oral Torah (see *Yerushalmi* and *Bavli*, page 131). Written in the period c. 200–500 CE, the Talmud contains the Mishnah and the Gemara, an Aramaic commentary on, elaboration, and scriptural underpinning of the Mishnah.

Revelation

Articles 6–9 of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith concern Jewish beliefs about God's revelation to humankind. In Orthodox Judaism, their importance is preserved to this day. In more liberal forms of Jewish interpretation, there has been a lessening of importance of the literal word of the laws of Moses and a corresponding increase in the importance of the message of the prophets.

The afterlife, the messianic age and final judgement

Articles 10 and 11 of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith define the notion of the reward and punishment of this world. The tendency at times to blame the ill fate of the Jews at one time or another on the people's own failure to keep the *mitzvot* is based on this belief. On the positive side, it is Jewish belief that preserving God's commandments ensures a good and satisfying life.

In line with Article 12 of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith, traditional Judaism affirms the belief in the coming of a person who will be the Messiah (the Anointed One). The Progressive movement prefers to speak of a messianic age of truth, justice and peace among all humankind. Messianism has waxed and waned throughout Jewish history, according to the circumstances of the people. The foundation of the State of Israel has led to strengthening of the messianic hope. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate has approved the use of a liturgical formula that sees modern Israel as the 'beginning of the sprouting of our redemption'.

Contrary to Article 13 of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith, the importance of the belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead has declined since medieval times in all but Orthodox Judaism. Despite this, it continues to be the subject of prayers in traditional prayer books. More common among Jews today is the belief in the immortality of the soul, without reference to the rejoining of soul and body in the afterlife.

Practices surrounding burial reflect modern Jewish beliefs about the afterlife and judgement before God. For example, Jewish communities go to some lengths to ensure that, in the ritual preparation of dead bodies, in burial and in the design of gravestones, there is an equality that reflects the Jewish belief that in death, everyone is equal before God.

In addition, traditional Jewish belief is that the integrity of the body should not be disturbed after death. Therefore, organ transplantation and embalming are to be avoided. The same applies to autopsy, unless required by law. According to this traditional belief, cremation is forbidden, as it mutilates the body and is seen as a denial of the doctrine of bodily resurrection. However, cremation is allowed by Progressive Jews.

Humanity and the world

According to Jewish thinking, there is no more important creature than humankind. Some **Talmudic** passages state that Adam was more intelligent than the angels. This superior status, combined with free will, leads to the special duties and responsibilities of humankind to God and to the world. As humans often fail in their responsibilities, there is also the need to repent.

Review

- 1 Identify the most important belief in Judaism.
- 2 Explain why Jews reject an anthropomorphic image of God.
- 3 Outline the difference in the attitude of Orthodox Jews and Progressive Jews to the covenant.
- 4 Identify then classify the principal Jewish beliefs in the order of their importance to the believer.
- 5 What is the relationship between the Torah and *halachah*? Justify your response.

Extension



- 1 Propose how the principal Jewish beliefs would apply to the everyday life of the believer.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 127 to learn more about Jewish ideas and beliefs. Investigate three beliefs that you think are similar to your own personal beliefs or those of your tradition, and three that are different. Discuss the similarities and differences.

6.3 Sacred texts and writings

Glossary

aggadah	The non-legal tradition in Jewish religious writing. The <i>aggadah</i> of the Talmud and other later writings includes astrology, folklore, magic, medicine, parables, proverbs, speculation and stories about the rabbis.	responsa	The formulations of questions and the rabbinical responses concerning the dual Torah—Oral and Written—that flowed back and forth across the Jewish world from the early Middle Ages.
Amoraim	Interpreters; Aramaic for ‘speakers’. This is the title given to the sages of the Talmud.	Second Temple period	The age extending from the return from the Babylonian Exile, c. 536 BCE, a short time after which the Temple was rebuilt, to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in 70 CE (see Ezra 1–3).
Baraita	The teachings of the <i>Tannaim</i> that were not included in the <i>Mishnah</i> . Best known among them are the <i>Midrashim</i> on Leviticus (<i>Sifra</i>), Numbers and Deuteronomy (<i>Sifre</i>) and Exodus (<i>Mekilta</i>), and the <i>Tosefta</i> —discussions on the traditional Law that complement and deepen those in the <i>Mishnah</i> .	Tannaim	Aramaic for ‘teachers’. Literally the term means ‘repeaters’—the <i>Tannaim</i> were originally those who memorised the Oral Law. It came to be the term used to designate the sages of the period in which the <i>Mishnah</i> was written—first to third centuries CE.
canon	Writings accepted as sacred scripture within a religious tradition.	Yavneh	The town from which modern rabbinical Judaism was founded. (See Chapter 14, pages 348–9, for further details.)
Mishnah	Completed c. 200 CE, the <i>Mishnah</i> was the Oral Law established in written form. The Oral Law had developed among the teachers of the Second Temple period as the interpretation and development of the Torah. (See section on the <i>Mishnah</i> on pages 130–1.)	Zion	The hill on which the city of King David first stood and around which the city of Jerusalem grew. Today Zion is the iconic symbol of redemption for both religious and secular Jews. (See the feature on Zionism on page 124.)

The Hebrew Scriptures (Tenach)

He who brings into his house more than twenty-four books brings confusion.

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 2:12

Jewish belief and practice is based on teachings derived from many writings and teachers. The source of all of these teachings, however, is the Tenach, the twenty-four books that make up the Hebrew Scriptures.

The form of the Hebrew Scriptures as they are known today was completed around 100 CE, although the books within them are hundreds of years—some, thousands of years—older than that in their origins.

At the core of the Hebrew Scriptures is the principal sacred writing of Judaism, the first five books of the Bible known as the Torah. It is also known as the Pentateuch and the *Chumash*. Both these words, in Latin and Hebrew respectively, derive from the word for ‘five’. Originally

in Hebrew and still read in that language by Jews today, the Torah is the foundational writing of Jewish religious literature.

The rabbis of Yavneh completed the compilation of the **canon** of the Hebrew Scriptures around 100 CE. They did not actually add to or take away from the collection of books that had been known among Jews since the second century BCE—they simply clarified the status of certain books, such as Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. These books had long been used among Jews as religious works, but their authorship was a matter of controversy.

The themes of the Hebrew Scriptures

The compilation of the Hebrew Scriptures bore one overriding theme: the people of Israel had a special relationship with God and the land. If the people fulfilled God’s commandments, as contained in the Torah, God would bless the people. This was the theme of the crisis of exile and the promise of return, the theme of alienation

The Tenach

The term 'Tenach' comes from the Hebrew name of the three sections of the Hebrew Scriptures.

T E	N A	C H
Torah (The Teaching)	Neviim (The Prophets)	Ketuvim (The Writings)
Genesis	Joshua	Psalms
Exodus	Judges	Job
Leviticus	Samuel	Proverbs
Numbers	Kings	Ruth
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Song of Songs
	Jeremiah	Ecclesiastes
	Ezekiel	Lamentations
	The Twelve Minor Prophets (counted as one book)	Esther
		Daniel
		Ezra–Nehemiah
		Chronicles

Thus, the twenty-four books.

and reconciliation, and the idea that to be Israeli is to have gone into exile and then returned to **Zion**. This motif has been the motivating force for the range of Jewish movements that have sprung up through the ages.

From the time of the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BCE, and for much of the **Second Temple period**, the Jews were subjected to continual domination from foreign powers. This is a very important point to note. Control of Israel by a series of foreign powers meant the continuation of the theme of loss and recovery and thus ensured, right down to the formulation of the **Mishnah** in the second century CE, the central importance of the Torah to Judaism.

The Torah

The core of Jewish sacred writings—indeed, the core of Judaism—is the Torah. Otherwise simply known as the Law, the Torah is the source and inspiration for all Jewish teaching. Each new generation that built upon the Torah—the **Tannaim** who wrote the Mishnah, the **Amoraim** who wrote the Talmud—added another layer of scholarship that was to become the body of work that is Jewish tradition. That is why the term 'Torah' is also used in the broader sense to refer to the entire corpus of Jewish sacred writings and stories. If one is looking for the most pious Jews, one will find them studying the Torah.

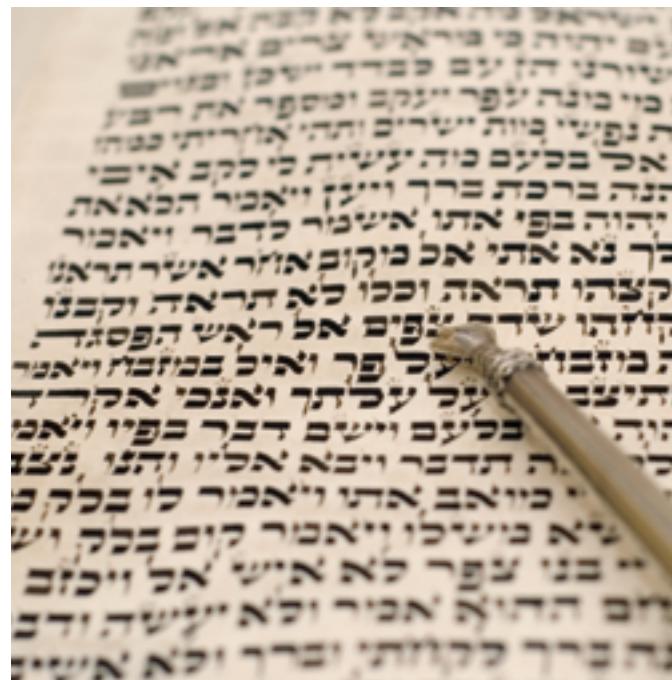


Figure 6.3.1 The *yad* (Hebrew for 'hand') is used to keep one's place while reading from the Torah scroll in the synagogue, so that the page is not soiled. Scrolls are handwritten on parchment and thus are very expensive and precious. This, together with the fact that they embody Jewish sacred text, means that they are deeply treasured by their communities.

The *Shema* prayer

The observant Jew will pray three times a day. Indeed, the various modes of Jewish prayer lead to the very heart of Jewish practice and belief.

The oldest passage commonly recited within the Jewish tradition is the *Shema*, named from its first word in Hebrew, the language of Jewish prayer. The first two parts of the *Shema* are also contained within the *mezuzah* and *tefillin* (see pages 132 and 134). The *Shema* affirms belief in the oneness of God, then instructs the faithful as to His commandments.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way.

And if you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be full. Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the LORD gives you.

You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul;

And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Deut 6:4–9, 11:13–31; Num 15:37–41



Figure 6.3.2 A historic Sephardi Torah scroll donated by an Indian Jewish community in 1951 and now housed in the Hobart Synagogue. It is usual for scrolls to be elaborately covered—in the Ashkenazi cultural tradition, generally with velvet and a metal breast plate; in the Sephardi cultural tradition, mostly in a hard silver casing.

Other Jewish sacred writings

The Mishnah

The Mishnah, completed around 200 CE, committed to writing the long tradition of the Oral Law that had developed in Second Temple Judaism. The Oral Law was an interpretation and development of the Torah. While based on the Written Torah, it extended its vision so that it would apply to the whole of life in the contemporary world.

The Mishnah has six divisions:

- 1 laws of prayer and agriculture
- 2 laws of Sabbath and holy days
- 3 laws of marriage and divorce, including the status of women
- 4 civil and criminal laws
- 5 laws about the Temple
- 6 laws about ritual cleanliness.

There are sixty-three tractates (books or sections) in all.

The Oral Law was not complete, even though it had been set down in writing. As the Roman Empire continued to decline in the West, many Jews left Palestine for the comparative peace of Babylon. There was a further strengthening of the Babylonian Diaspora and important Jewish academies developed there. They developed new forms of Jewish writings, such as the *responsa*—formulations of questions and their rabbinical responses concerning the dual Torah, Oral and Written. *Responsa* as a form of Jewish sacred writing had their origins in the Babylonian academies.

The *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli*

The writing of the *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli*, the two versions of the Talmud, continued with this concept, expanding the legal tradition of the Mishnah, as well as adding a considerable body of *aggadah* literature to the Jewish tradition.

The Mishnah generated questions within the Jewish community. In the several centuries after the completion of the Mishnah, the *Amoraim* set to work interpreting and clarifying the Mishnah and responding to the new situation in which historical events placed them. The result was the Talmud.

In fact, two Talmuds emerged—the *Yerushalmi* (the Palestinian Talmud) was finalised in the fourth century CE, and the *Bavli* (the Babylonian Talmud—four times the size of the *Yerushalmi*) around a century later.

The *Bavli* is a commentary on the Mishnah and it follows the Mishnah's order. The commentary is lengthier than the text on which it comments. This is because it goes into detailed explanations of how the Mishnah's authority is derived from the Torah. It applies the Mishnah's rulings and logic to practical situations—something like mini 'case studies'; it spends much time comparing the judgements of different rabbis and apparent contradictions in the Mishnah, explaining why the differences exist. In addition, it includes the many stories, parables and proverbs of the *aggadah*. It also expands on the writings of the *Tannaim* by including the *Baraita*. Thus, the Talmud provides a body of literature that quite literally places layer upon layer of tradition over the text that is its source and inspiration, the Torah. Later glosses and commentaries added to the Talmud, like that of Rashi, contribute to the richness of the layers of tradition in the Talmud. When one understands the complexity and length of the Talmud (twenty large volumes in the standard Vilna edition), it is easier to understand how and why Talmudic scholars spend a lifetime in its study in *yeshivot*—Jewish academies designed for the prime purpose of the study of the Talmud.

While the Mishnah and the Talmud are not canonical, they are nonetheless highly authoritative. The Talmud is the principal subject of study at *yeshivot*. From the start, the *Bavli* was considered more authoritative than the *Yerushalmi*, and still is. Indeed within the pages of the *Bavli*, one will find the roots of most forms of modern Judaism.

- Rashi, the famous eleventh-century French Talmudic scholar, is a significant person considered in Chapter 14, pages 332–4.

Later writings

There have been other, later Jewish writings that have also gained authoritative status. Moses Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* (The Second Law) organised the complex and haphazardly arranged Talmud and its myriad of accretions into a logical order that was accessible to the non-Talmudic scholar.

Drawing in part on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Joseph Karo's *Shulchan Aruch* (The Prepared Table) was completed in 1563. It was a codification of the *halachah* from a Sephardi perspective. Moses Isserles in Poland added glosses to illustrate the Ashkenazi view. With broad support, the *Shulchan Aruch* quickly gained favour as an authoritative codification of the Oral Law.

Other religious texts and stories have been composed over the centuries, even up to the present. While not authoritative, they are part of the heritage of Jewish religious literature that has sustained and invigorated Jewish scholarship over time. That scholarship, in turn, has left its mark on Jewish belief and practice.

Review

- 1 **Recount** the theme of exile and return that dominates the Tenach.
- 2 **Distinguish** between the layers of writing that make up the *Bavli*.
- 3 **Identify** the list of reasons offered in this section as to why the Torah is the core of Jewish sacred writing.
- 4 Re-read all the verses from the Hebrew Scriptures that are quoted in this chapter. Reading from the context in which they are placed, **examine** how each one **demonstrates** a belief of Judaism. Place your findings in a meaningful table.

Extension



- 1 **Explain** the difference between canonical and authoritative writings in Judaism.
- 2 **Evaluate** the relative importance of later Jewish writing such as Joseph Karo's *Shulchan Aruch*.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 132 to learn more about the structure and appearance of pages in the Talmud.
- 4 Do an internet search to find a tutorial on how to say the *Shema* prayer. Prepare a brief summary of your findings.
- 5 **Construct** a chart to **summarise** the sacred texts and writings of Judaism. In your chart, note those that are considered to be:
 - a canonical
 - b highly authoritative.

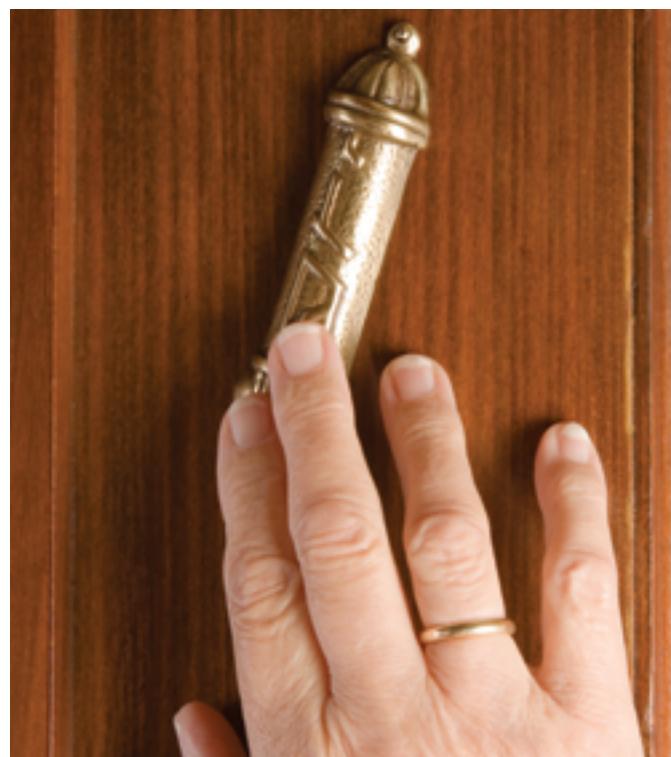


Figure 6.4.1 *Mezuzah*. The scroll containing the *Shema* is rolled up and placed in the case so that the first letter of the name of God (*Shin*) is visible or, more commonly, the letter *Shin* is written on the outside of the case.

The scroll and case are fixed on an angle to the right side doorpost as one enters the house. If the doorpost is wide enough, the *mezuzah* should be tilted with the upper part slanting towards the house or room.

6.4 Core ethical teachings

Glossary

ethics	The system of explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices to clarify what is right and wrong, and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.
kashrut	<i>Kashrut</i> refers to the laws of Torah regarding permitted foods. Permitted foods are known as <i>kasher</i> (or more commonly in English, <i>kosher</i>). The food laws of Judaism give the Jewish home a unique atmosphere. Even Jews who do not keep strictly to all the food laws tend to steer away from eating some of the forbidden foods or food combinations.
mezuzah	A miniature scroll placed in a cylindrical case that is affixed to the doorposts of Jewish homes.

► The application of Jewish ethics to specific issues is addressed in Chapter 14, pages 340–7.

The standards of ethical behaviour in Judaism are derived from the thoughts and writings of Jewish sages from antiquity. As the writings of the sages in turn all derive from the text that is at the core of the Talmud—namely the Torah—then it is true to say that all Jewish behaviour is ultimately derived from the Torah. This is why the term Torah in its narrowest sense refers to the first five books of the Bible, but in its broadest sense refers to the entire body of Jewish teaching that expounds the Law.

The importance of the Torah in the everyday life of believers is evidenced in the customary placement of the *mezuzah* on the doorpost of a Jewish home. The *mezuzah* is a small cylinder containing a piece of parchment on which are written several verses of the Torah. The *mezuzah* is a reminder to each member of the Jewish home that the Torah is the guiding principle in the way they conduct their lives.

Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to affix a *mezuzah*.

From the *Shema*

The study of Torah

Among the greatest of all the *mitzvot* is the commandment to study the Torah. Maimonides and other Talmudic scholars comment throughout the Talmud about the way in which the study of the Torah draws Jews together. People who study common thoughts with a common purpose will grow in unity and love. Just as study of the Torah develops friendship between Jews, it also develops friendship between the student of the Torah and God.

Of course, not all Jews can devote themselves to a lifetime of study of the Torah—that role is taken up by only a relative few—but the great respect that is given to those who do reflects the Jewish desire to know the Torah and live by its precepts. Typically, a Jew will live by the Torah by what they eat (living by the dietary laws of *kashrut*), by the rhythm of their home life (with Friday nights given over to the celebration of *Shabbat* and Saturdays to public worship in the synagogue) and by how they ‘love their neighbour’.

As a direction for the spiritual life, as the source and justification of Jewish ethics and as the ‘guidebook’ for Jewish ritual, the Torah in both its narrower and broader sense helps make sense of life for Jews.

The Torah prohibits graven images (images of God in works of art). It has been argued in modern Judaism that moral human beings are the only image of God that is appropriate. The religious ethic that emerges from such a view is that humans are the nearest thing to the divine. As such, others should always be treated with respect and generosity, and one should always act with humility. In order to love one’s neighbour, as the Torah teaches, one must know the other’s pain.

A system of positive and negative commandments

The ethical system that operates within Judaism is represented by the codes of positive and negative commandments that have been produced in Judaism and works that study and analyse ethical concepts. Under this system of ethics, one acts in a certain way because that is in the *halachah* and the *halachah* is God’s will. While many ethical codes and moral philosophies are available in Judaism, the tradition has more practical ways of relating its ethics to its people. The fundamental values that underpin the ethical and moral teachings of Judaism can be found in the lived experience of the *halachah*, and are core values associated with the rituals of the Jewish holy days. The Jewish ethical system makes demands on Jews to act in certain ways on a wide range of social, environmental, economic and personal issues.

The commandments of the Torah—*halachah*

The ethical and moral teachings of Judaism are grounded in the Torah, the rule of life. The tradition of *halachah* contained within the Torah is long and complex, and involves scholars and ordinary people alike in a lifetime of study. Ultimately, *halachah* is concerned with guiding believers in right relationship with God and right relationship with one’s family and neighbours. The many attempts at reducing *halachah* to its essence reveal the Jewish understanding of the fundamental ethical principles and moral values that lie at the heart of Judaism.

As has already been noted, Torah has a broader meaning than simply the first five books of the Bible. Torah is sometimes used to refer to the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures. Torah is even used sometimes to refer to the entire body of Jewish teaching. The Talmud suggests that the person who has mastered the Torah is, in their thoughts and actions, the very embodiment of Torah. Whichever way Torah is understood, Torah is axiomatic to Judaism—it is evident without proof or argument. In traditional Jewish thinking, to live by the Torah is to live as a religious Jew.

Halachah is to be distinguished from *aggadah*, the non-legal material of the rabbinic literature. The *aggadah* takes on a variety of forms: stories, legends, wise sayings, parables, prayers and many other forms of literary expression. While the *aggadah* is a part of the Oral Law, it is not authoritative in the same way as the *halachah*. Nonetheless, the *aggadah* is often used in Jewish teaching to explain and illustrate the prescriptions of the *halachah*.

The *halachah*, the tradition that expounds the religious obligations of Jews, might be viewed by the outsider as legalistic and restrictive. This is not the view of the lover of the Torah. One of the most famous teachers of Judaism, the Rambam, taught that one could observe all the *mitzvot* and yet be an evil and vile person. In order to be truly holy, one needs to comply with the spirit of the Law, as well as the letter of the Law.

Halachah is the fleshing out of the essence of ethical living, so that it can be understood and actually lived by the follower. At its core though, the *halachah* symbolises the very ethical principles upon which Judaism is based. Some of the attempts to synthesise *halachah*, gathered in the Talmud, are summarised on page 134. They illustrate the way in which the Jewish way of life is one that symbolises ethical principles.

The essence of *halachah*

King David's **Psalm 15** reduced the 613 commandments to eleven:

One who:

- 1** walks uprightly
- 2** works righteously
- 3** speaks truth in his heart
- 4** does not slander
- 5** does no evil
- 6** does not take up a reproach against a neighbour
- 7** despises vile people
- 8** honours those who fear the **LORD**
- 9** does not change his pledged word even though it hurts him
- 10** does not lend on interest
- 11** does not take a bribe against the innocent shall never be disturbed.

Isaiah reduced them to six (*Isa 33:15–16*):

He who:

- 1** walks righteously
- 2** speaks honestly
- 3** rejects gain from extortion
- 4** keeps his hand from accepting bribes
- 5** stops his ears against bloodshed
- 6** shuts his eyes from looking upon evil will dwell on high.

Micah reduced them to three (*Mic 6:8*):

He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the **LORD** demands of you:

- 1** to act justly
- 2** to love mercy
- 3** to walk humbly with your God.

Isaiah, again, reduced them to two (*Isa 56:1*):

Thus says the **LORD**:

- 1** keep justice
- 2** do righteousness.

Amos reduced them to one:

Seek Me and live.

Bavli Makkot 24a

The prophetic vision—*tikkun olam*

The Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the minor prophets lived in times of difficulty and oppression. Their words, seeking social justice for their people, transpose themselves through time as calls to *tikkun olam*, 'repair the world'.

Tikkun olam is a Jewish principle of a commitment to social justice and social order. *Tikkun olam* is a partnership with God in a divine purpose that was established with the bringing of social order on the Giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. In the Giving of the Law, the process of repairing the world began, and each day is an opportunity for the Jew to be a cooperator in furthering God's purpose. *Tikkun olam* today takes the form of volunteering time and energy for the good of the community, or through giving *tzedakah* or *gemilut chasadim* (see next page). Involvement in both Jewish *tzedakah* organisations and secular social justice and social responsibility groups are all viewed as *tikkun olam*.



Figure 6.4.2 A Jewish man wearing the *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tefillin*. The *tallit* is worn during the morning prayers on weekdays, *Shabbat* and holidays. The *tefillin* are black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah that are bound to the arm and the forehead. Usually *tefillin* are worn by Orthodox Jewish males only during weekday morning services.

Tzedakah and gemilut chasadim

Let no man think to himself, saying: 'Why should I diminish my wealth by giving it to the poor?' For he must be mindful that the wealth belongs not to him, but that it was simply given to him as a trust with which to execute the will of the One who has entrusted this fund to him ... Every man must contribute *tzedakah* according to his means.

From the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, in H. E. Goldin, *The Jew and His Duties*, 1953, p. 180

The doing of *gemilut chasadim*, deeds of loving kindness, was identified in the Midrashic literature as a distinguishing feature of Jewish people (Deuteronomy Rabbah 3:6). *Tzedakah* (almsgiving) and *gemilut chasadim* are considered to be equal to all the commandments of the Torah. *Tzedakah* requires the giving away of some material possession, perhaps just a coin, but *gemilut chasadim* requires the investment of one's personal time and energy. Simply the giving of money is not the heart of *tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* given, say, to help make a person self-reliant is far more meritorious than *tzedakah* given begrudgingly.

In considering *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*, the latter is considered more important. Examples of *gemilut chasadim* are assisting in setting up the household of a bride, giving hospitality, visiting the sick, feeding the poor, comforting a mourner and attending a funeral. Already a part of the teachings of the Talmud, *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* were strongly reinforced in Maimonides' twelfth-century *Mishneh Torah* and Joseph Karo's sixteenth-century *Shulchan Aruch*. While the study of the Torah is considered a high calling in Jewish life, it is interesting to note that it is common practice for the students of a *yeshiva* to be engaged one afternoon a week in community service activities—*gemilut chasadim*.

The sick, the old and the poor

It is a traditional responsibility of Judaism to visit the sick and assist the elderly, the disadvantaged and the poor. In Judaism, I am my brother's keeper. In Australia, Jewish welfare organisations play an important role—for example, there are large Jewish aged-care homes and day-care centres in the capital cities. Practical assistance for the poor is evidenced in some of the Jewish day schools, which admit students regardless of the parents' financial position.

A blind beggar accosted two men walking on the road. One of the travellers gave him a coin, but the other gave him nothing. The Angel of Death approached them and said: 'He who gave to the beggar need have no fear of me for fifty years, but the other shall speedily die.'

'May I not return and give charity to the beggar?' asked the condemned man. 'No,' replied the Angel of Death. 'A boat is examined for holes and cracks before departure, not when it is already at sea.'

Midrash in Me'il Tzedakah

If one noticed a poor man asking for something and ignored him, and failed to give *tzedakah* (charity), he has broken a prohibitive command, as it is written: Do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy brother.

Deut 17:7

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah* 'Gifts to the Poor' 7:2

Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is ascribed to King Solomon, and gives advice for upright living. Proverbs exults the quality of wisdom as a necessary value for a virtuous life.

Happy are those who find wisdom,
and those who get understanding,
for her income is better than silver,
and her revenue better than gold.
She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Prov 3:13–15

Wisdom stems from knowledge, and the beginning of knowledge is fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7). Thus, the wisdom of Proverbs connects with the heart of Torah. The wisdom of Proverbs is important, too, in the later rabbinic tradition. In elevating wisdom to a virtue for its own sake, the Book of Proverbs foreshadows the rabbis' ethic that strongly emphasises the importance of the study of Torah for its own sake.

The Book of Proverbs has always had wide appeal (even beyond the Jewish community). The theme that flows through Proverbs is a universal one: the wise shall be rewarded with happiness and contentment and the foolish will reap the bitter rewards of their short-sightedness. For the Jew, the wise phrases of Proverbs direct one to a life of righteousness, purity and generosity of spirit, as the following selection from Proverbs indicates.

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
when it is in your power to do it.

Do not say to your neighbour, 'Go, and come again,
tomorrow I will give it'—when you have it with you.

Prov 3:27–28

Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devious talk far from you.
Let your eyes look directly forward,
and your gaze be straight before you.
Keep straight the path of your feet,
and all your ways will be sure.
Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil.

Prov 4:24–27

Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
but righteousness delivers from death.

Prov 10:2

On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found,
but a rod is for the back of one who lacks sense.

Prov 10:13

When pride comes, then comes disgrace;
but wisdom is with the humble.

Prov 11:2

Fools think their own way is right,
but the wise listen to advice.

Prov 12:15

Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is
than a fatted ox and hatred with it.

Prov 15:17

Review

- 1 How does the *mezuzah* underline the importance of the Torah for Jews?
- 2 Define the meaning of *tikkun olam*.
- 3 Explain the relationship between the *mitzvot* and *halachah*.
- 4 If ‘the giving of money is not the heart of *tzedakah*’, then what is?
- 5 Describe the importance of the care of others as a social justice principle of Judaism.
- 6 Choose three of the proverbs quoted in this section and rewrite each in your own words to demonstrate that you understand their meaning.

Extension



- 1 Construct a mind map to synthesise the importance of *halachah* for the everyday life of the observant Jew.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 136 to find out more about Jewish ethics.
 - a Outline the principal ethical teachings of Judaism.
 - b Evaluate the degree to which Jewish ethics impact on the everyday life of the believer.
- 3 How do the proverbs provide a guide for ‘a life of righteousness, purity and generosity of spirit’?

6.5 Observance

Glossary

birkat ha-mazon	The grace after meals. It contains four blessings praising God for food, for the land, for Jerusalem and for God’s goodness.
challot (singular challah)	The two uncut plaited loaves of bread prepared for, then eaten on, the evening of <i>Shabbat</i> and holy days.
havdalah	The prayer of separation said at the end of <i>Shabbat</i> .
kiddush	The prayers and blessings said over a cup of wine, ushering in <i>Shabbat</i> and holy days.
Pesach	<i>Pesach</i> or Passover is a Jewish festival that commemorates the ‘passing over’ of the houses of the Israelites as God seized the firstborn of the Egyptians (Ex 12:21–30). <i>Pesach</i> is very widely practised in Australia and around the Jewish world, being celebrated by Jews of every degree of religious commitment. (Read more about <i>Pesach</i> in Chapter 14, page 351.)

In general terms, religious observance refers to conformity with the laws and practices of a tradition. This is certainly true of Judaism, where religious observances can have a transformative effect on its adherents.

For example, the effect of *kashrut* (kosher) is to transform the act of eating from a mundane activity to a discipline charged with religious significance. The *Pesach* meal, so widely commemorated in Jewish family groups with varying degrees of personal commitment, is at the very least an occasion that focuses the individual on their place in the life of the Jewish community and the foundational beliefs and values of Judaism. The synagogue services, rituals and celebration of *Shabbat* in the home are elements of Jewish religious observance that can have a similar impact. It is the observances of *Shabbat* in particular that are the focus of the following section.



Figure 6.5.1 A family prepares for the *Shabbat* meal.

Shabbat

The Torah commands that the seventh day, known as *Shabbat*, or Sabbath in English, belongs to God. As such, no work is to be done. Among Orthodox Jews, the *halachah* of *Shabbat* is applied very strictly. One may not cook, write, drive a car, turn lights on and off and other such weekday activities. Refraining from these actions heightens the special nature of the *Shabbat*. In Israel, strict observance of *Shabbat* is catered for—the country virtually closes down from sunset on Friday evening until the third star appears in the sky on Saturday at nightfall, which marks the end of *Shabbat*. Strict observance of *Shabbat* is more difficult in secular societies such as Australia, but universally in Judaism it is seen as the day of the week set aside for one's family, for the community, for God and the study of Torah.

The family is a significant focus of *Shabbat* ritual. As no work is permitted on the *Shabbat*, preparations for *Shabbat* will start well before *Shabbat* itself, with the shopping for the *Shabbat* meal and the preparation of the house, the children

and the *Shabbat* meal. Special bread, *challah*, is baked for the *Shabbat* meal and the loaves are placed under a cloth on the *Shabbat* table for later use in the *Shabbat* ritual. The table should be set with at least two candles (representing the dual commandments to remember and observe the Sabbath), a glass of wine, and at least two loaves of *challah*. The *challot* should be whole and should be covered with a bread cover, towel or napkin. Eighteen minutes before sunset, the traditional family will usher in the beginning of *Shabbat* with the lighting of two *Shabbat* candles, accompanied by blessings. The candles are lit by the woman of the household. After lighting, she waves her hands over the candles, welcoming *Shabbat*. She then covers her eyes, so as not to see the candles, and recites the blessing:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe,
who has sanctified us with His commandments and
commanded us to light the *Shabbat* candles.

She then uncovers her eyes and looks at the candles, completing the *mitzvah* of lighting the candles.

Following the *Kabbalat Shabbat* ('Welcoming the Sabbath') and evening service at the synagogue, a husband blesses his wife and children, and then recites *kiddush* over a cup of wine.

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

... You have lovingly and willingly given us Your holy *Shabbat* as an inheritance, in memory of creation.

This day is the first among our holy days, and a remembrance of our Exodus from Egypt ...

Blessed are You who sanctifies the *Shabbat*.

From *Kiddush*

After *kiddush*, the *challot* are uncovered. A blessing is said over the *challah*, and it is broken and distributed to those present. The *Shabbat* meal is then eaten, interspersed with traditional songs. To conclude the meal, another special prayer is said, the *birkat ha-mazon*.

The synagogue, a Jewish house of worship, also plays a significant role in *Shabbat* religious observances in each Jewish community. Saturday morning involves the main synagogue service of *Shabbat*, at which the Torah is read.

Lunch is accompanied by songs and blessings. After the meal, people may rest, study Torah, or visit friends or family. There is a final afternoon service, followed by the last of the *Shabbat* meals. After nightfall, the *havdalah*, the prayer that closes *Shabbat*, is recited.

Havdalah involves a blessing over wine. This is followed by a blessing over spices. The fragrance of the spices is to compensate for the heavy-heartedness that one feels with the passing of the *Shabbat*, and the leaving of the *neshamah yeterah*—the ‘additional soul’ that enters each person for the duration of *Shabbat*. Finally, there is a blessing over the light of a two-wicked twisted candle. Light cannot be kindled during *Shabbat*, and so the lighting of the *havdalah* candle sets apart *Shabbat* from the rest of the week.

... Blessed are you, O Lord, who separates the holy from the everyday.

From the *Havdalah*, said over wine, spices and a twisted candle.

► The synagogue is the central place for public observance on *Shabbat*. You can read about it in depth in Chapter 14, pages 348–52.

Review

- 1 **Identify** the key elements of the *Shabbat* meal.
- 2 **Calculate** in a list the things that would need to be prepared/done to faithfully celebrate the *Shabbat*.
- 3 **Classify** the adult responsibilities of *Shabbat* according to those of men and those of women.
- 4 **Describe** the importance of *Shabbat* for the Jewish family.

Extension



- 1 ‘*Shabbat* is a day of stifling restrictions.’ **Propose** a response to this that you might expect to come from a faithful and observant Jew.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 138 for more information on the symbols and foods of *Shabbat*. Prepare an illustrated report based on your findings.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.

Conclusion

The presence of Jews from the very beginnings of modern Australia in 1788 has meant that Jews have always found a ready place in the Australian community. Significant waves of European Jewish migration to Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century strengthened Jewish differentiation from the rest of the Australian community, while increasing the diversity of the Australian Jewish community. In most recent times, significant numbers of Jews have migrated to Australia from southern Africa.

Amid the diversity found in the modern Australian Jewish community are the constants of Jewish life: belief in one, incorporeal, transcendent God; a confidence in the covenant between God and the Jewish people that was forged in ancient times by Abraham and the Patriarchs; a cleaving to the Torah as the guide to right living; a knowledge of the important place of the Talmud and other Jewish writings in expounding the meaning of the Torah; and a faithfulness to the observation of *Shabbat* worship. These are the constants that sustain the Jewish life in all its forms to this day.

Extension

- 1 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 2 Is your media file up to date? **Classify** it into categories and then prepare a report that **analyses** how the media report on Judaism.
- 3 **Compare** the analysis of your media file with what you have learnt about Judaism—how does media reporting differ from your understanding of Judaism? **Summarise** your findings.
- 4 **Construct** a ‘Things you must know’ package for journalists who are reporting on Jews and Judaism.



Chapter 7

Religions of ancient origin



Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **investigate** the nature of two ancient Asian religions—Daoism and Shinto
- **identify** the principal beliefs of each religion
- **identify** and **describe** the role of supernatural powers and deities
- **discuss** the relationship between sacred spaces and the beliefs of each religion
- **identify** the principal rituals and **examine** their significance for the individual and the community
- **explain** the interrelationship between each religion and its society
- **explain** how the religion provides a distinctive response to the search for meaning in the society.



Map of East Asia by Willem Janszoon Blaeu, first printed in mid-seventeenth century. 'East Asia' is a geographical term to describe China, Japan and Korea. These areas had a multitude of local religions but as China began to create a large, united imperial system it became the 'big brother' from which others borrowed. East Asia is not, however, a common culture and, as you will see, borrowings change but do not destroy local cultures.

Introduction

Ancient religions are the religions of early civilisations. They are often presented as if they were dead and gone. This is perhaps the case with the ancient religions of Europe, Western Asia and Central America. It is, however, surprising how much has been incorporated into the rituals and **symbolism** of the world religions that succeeded them. We have only to think of the way Christian Churches are often modelled on Roman temple architecture, the use of the symbols of fire and water in **liturgies**, and pilgrimages and harvest rituals in other traditions. Historians have traced many of the popular Christian saints of Europe and the Americas back to pre-Christian gods and goddesses. But while these ancient religions are no longer practised as living religions, in Asia the direct descendants of ancient religions are

among the major living traditions. Buddhism has become a world religion and is found in all parts of Asia today; Hinduism, which grew out of the religion of ancient India, is the major religion of modern India; and Confucianism continues to deeply influence all of East Asia and Chinese people wherever they are found.

Ancient religions were themselves influenced by the earlier religious beliefs and practices of the places where they developed. We can easily find in them echoes of the **fertility cults** of early farmers and herders, and the practices that hunters and gatherers used to attempt to control the forces of nature. But as societies grew more complex, new religious forms evolved and these are what are commonly called 'ancient' or '**archaic**' religions.

Glossary

ancient	The distant past. Of religions, the religion of early civilisations.	hierarchy	A social structure in which individuals or classes of people are ranked so that some people occupy higher levels of importance than others. In religion, it refers to the relative importance of holders of religious offices.
archaic	Sometimes used as an alternative to 'ancient', or to describe the early stages of ancient civilisations .	liturgies	Formulas for the conduct of religious rituals. 'Liturgies' is often used as a synonym for 'rituals'.
civilisation	A complex of institutions involved in organising life in cities. It includes governing bureaucracies, merchant activity, the arts and religious organisations.	primal	Of religions, those that are earliest in time and that influence those that follow.
divination	Practices to discover future events by determining the will of the spirits or the natural processes involved.	primitive	Same as primal but now generally avoided in use because of implications of being inferior or undeveloped.
diviner	A person trained or endowed with special gifts to perform divination .	symbolism	The use of visual or verbal signs that point to something beyond themselves.
fertility cults	Religious rituals to promote the production of crops, domestic animals and humans.		

They are contrasted with the 'primitive' or 'primal' religions that preceded them by virtue of the new forms of religious organisation that suited the more complex large-scale societies of the city-states and empires where they developed. When we look at the continual warfare, prevalence of slavery, human sacrifice etc. in such societies, we may question whether they were 'civilised', but that description certainly fitted the root meaning of that term (from the Latin word *civitas*, 'city').

Ancient religions arose where city living had created the need for new forms of social organisation and specialisation (kings, bureaucracies, armies, law courts and merchants). Even more importantly for religion, writing was invented to serve the needs of the bureaucracies. Religion, too, fitted into this new pattern. Instead of religious and civil authority being exercised by the same people, as was usually the case in primal religions, a new class of religious leaders evolved with special functions: priests to offer sacrifice and control rituals, teachers, prophets, mystics and **diviners**. Thus, a **hierarchy** was created. They had a close but sometimes antagonistic relationship with the political and military leaders, who often tried to assume sacredness or even divinity for themselves. Whereas in primal religions religious status depended on personal powers and qualities, now it came from holding office and was often inherited.

When ancient religions emerged, there was not a complete break with the primal religions from which they grew. One

common feature is that all members of the society shared the same religious beliefs. No doubt there were some dissenters and sceptics, but they were not organised into different religions or 'heretical' groups. It is only with the creation of the great empires with many conquered peoples that other religions came to be tolerated and sects developed. Another thing that ancient religions have in common with primal religions is that religion was part of everyday life, not just for festivals or special days. And the peasants in the countryside probably continued worshipping nature gods and celebrating the changing seasons of the farming year much as they always had.

The ancient religions of East Asia differed from each other greatly as they developed out of the earlier religions of the areas we now call China, Japan and Korea. However, one thing they had in common was a lack of interest in questions that bothered ancient peoples elsewhere. In particular, unlike the ancient religions of West and South Asia, they were not concerned with the origins of the universe. They assumed the universe always existed and worried about the origins of their part only (in the case of the ancient Japanese) or about how it worked (the ancient Chinese). This has been described as a focus on cosmology (how the world works) as opposed to cosmogony (how it began). Hence, too, there was an emphasis on **divination**, which might predict what will happen. The Chinese theory of nature that lies behind Chinese divination is called Daoism and the Japanese religion of the spirits who control the world is called Shinto.

Review

- Can you find anything in Australia's customs, holidays, ceremonies and religious rituals that corresponds to the ancient celebrations of the seasons and the fertility of the land?
- In your own words, **define** 'primal' religion.
- Describe** the characteristics of 'ancient' or 'archaic' religions.
- Distinguish** the similarities and differences between primal and ancient religions.
- What is a major difference between the ancient religions of East Asia and those of West and South Asia? What terms are used to **describe** this difference?

Extension

- Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with Daoism and Shinto over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media's presentation with what you have learnt in this chapter.

7.1 Daoism

Glossary

Dao	'The Way', a key idea in Chinese religion. It is used both as a general term for the main religions or Ways of China—Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, and as the main concept in Daoism.
yang	The male principle in nature, associated by the Chinese with the sun—power, activity, heat and light.
yin	The female principle in nature, associated by the Chinese with the earth—passivity, negativity, cold and dark.



Figure 7.1.1 Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate, dated 1623 (Ming dynasty). You will recognise what is commonly known in the West as the **yin-yang** symbol. Other symbols of **yin** and **yang** in ancient China were the white tiger and the blue-green dragon.

Ancient China

The early royal religion in China, revealed in the earliest Chinese writing, was one of sacrifices to earlier rulers—the origin of the modern Chinese cult of ancestors. The peasants, however, were more concerned with the fertility of their land, and worship of 'gods of the soil' continued up until modern times. These two themes—ancestors and fertility of humans, animals and crops—have always been central in Chinese religion.

Confucianism and Daoism are the main religions that are native to China (as opposed to Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, which were introduced from outside). Both began around 500 BCE and derive their authority from the writings of their founders, Kongzi (K'ung-tzu), who is generally called Confucius by Westerners, and the mysterious Laozi (Lao-tzu).

Confucianism is mostly concerned with how people should behave (ethics) but has a God that Confucians call Heaven (*Tian*) or the Supreme Ruler (*Shangdi*), as well as religious rituals. It was adopted as the state ideology of

the Chinese empires, which lasted, with many changes of the ruling house, from 221 BCE to 1911. It continues to shape Chinese society even today and its ideas are used to perpetuate the cult of ancestors.

Daoism, named after the Chinese word *, ‘the Way’, taught a simple way of life that was close to nature and avoided striving for good fortune that was contrary to nature. It too has deeply influenced the Chinese way of life and popular religion as practised in local temples and shrines. Some scholars want to use the label ‘Daoism’ for all popular Chinese religious ideas other than those derived from Confucianism and Buddhism—but this is not justifiable. Many popular Chinese religious beliefs and practices go back long before the theory of the *was developed. It is probably better to think of a very ancient common Chinese religion that feeds into later Daoism and Confucianism, and in many respects into Chinese Buddhism too.**



Figure 7.1.2 Meeting between Confucius and Laozi from *Recherche sur les Superstitions en Chine* by Henri Dore, 1912

The spelling of Chinese words

Chinese is written in ‘characters’ (more or less complex graphs or combinations of strokes written with a brush or pen). They are sometimes called ‘pictographs’ (picture writing) but only very few characters are pictures, for example, *ri* 日, ‘sun’. Some are ‘ideographs’ (representing ideas), for example, *shang* 上, ‘above’. Most, however, are a combination of a meaning part and a sound part, for example, *fu* 福, ‘good fortune’, which consists of the sign for ‘religion’ on the left, and a sign indicating the pronunciation ‘*fu*’ on the right.

To represent these characters in an alphabetical language we have to try to find letters that convey the sound or something like it (in practice, Chinese words have intonations that further distinguish them). This is called ‘romanisation’—their representation in Roman or Western letters. There are many ways of doing this, usually based on the national standard of pronunciation, which nowadays is Northern Chinese (formerly called Mandarin because it was the language of government).

The Chinese government has adopted a system called *pinyin*. In general, this is closer to English pronunciation with some exceptions, for example, it uses ‘*q*’ for our ‘ch’ sound and ‘*x*’ for our ‘sh’. All Chinese terms will be given here in *pinyin*, occasionally with the older Wade-Giles system equivalent following in square brackets.

One key Chinese religious term is 道, ‘the way’. It is written in *pinyin* as *dao*, which is how it sounds, but in Wade-Giles as *tao*. So the Chinese religion that makes this its central idea used to be called Taoism but is increasingly referred to as Daoism. Both are correct, but the one that is closest to the sound of Chinese is preferable.

The earliest Chinese religion, as practised in the emerging village society from 6000 to 7000 years ago, seems to have been related to the cycles of nature. This was prior to the use of writing, so we have no textual evidence, but later Chinese writing relating to religion is based on the earliest Chinese characters that reflect their practices. One, for example, seems to depict an earth mound with a plant on top of it, probably an altar (*tu* 土, meaning today ‘earth’ or ‘place’, and in its earliest form much more clearly a mound with vegetation on top of it). Even today, in villages outside Hong Kong you can see small altars to local gods consisting of a stone, or a heap of earth at the base of a tree.

We can assume that the powers of nature were personified as gods or goddesses, given names and personal histories. There are many traces of these in later Chinese writings. Then, as now, religion reflected the deepest needs of the people: good harvests, safety from human and non-human enemies, and children to carry on the line and support the parents in old age. The main and enduring features of Chinese religion over 4000 years or more are:

- a concern with nature, fertility and reproduction
- a focus on the family linking ancestors, the present and future generations
- a view of the spirit world as a hierarchy that parallels the social structure on earth, which can be influenced, bribed or persuaded to help.

Zhou religion—the origins of Confucianism and Daoism

In the third Chinese dynasty, the Zhou [Chou] (c. 1050–c. 256 BCE), we find both the first Chinese books and the origins of Daoism and Confucianism. These books, the five ‘classics’, later became the main texts of Confucianism; but parts of them long preceded Confucius (551–479 BCE), and they contain much that is the common cultural property of all Chinese.

Recent research on the history of Confucianism strongly undermines the claim that it was not or is not a religion. Even in its later form known as Neo-Confucianism, it has a God figure, *Tian* (or Heaven) and rituals and practices of self-examination and meditation that are clearly religious. And Confucius himself often seems closer to the later Daoists than to the busy officials who claimed to be Confucians. For example, there is a passage from the *Sayings or Analects* (Bk 11, Ch. 25) collected by his followers that shows Confucius favouring the simple life and enjoying nature.

In this fascinating exchange, Confucius asks his closest disciples what they would do if they had their wishes. Zi Lu, the bold and pugnacious disciple, plunges in and expresses a wish to be made prime minister of a large state, besieged and invaded by its enemies, and suffering from famine. Confucius simply smiles. The next in seniority, Dian, misses



his turn because he is playing the lute at the time. Ran You replies next, and perhaps taking his cue from Confucius’ lack of enthusiasm for Zi Lu’s grand ambitions, asks for three years to set in order the affairs of a small state, but protests his lack of ability to teach the rules of behaviour or the arts. Gongxi Hua, knowing that Confucius strongly stressed the importance of rituals, has an even more modest ambition: to be an assistant in the ancestor rituals and court ceremonial of a king. Finally, without further comment, Confucius turns to Dian:

‘Dian, what about you?’ Dian, who was playing the lute, paused and put aside his instrument which was still sounding, and replied: ‘I differ from the choices of the three other gentlemen.’ The Master said: ‘No harm in that. Each of you should indicate your real desires.’ Dian then went on: ‘In late Spring, wearing our new Spring outfits, I would go with five or six young men and six or seven boys to bathe in the Yi River, enjoy the breeze at the Rain Altar, and return home singing.’ The Master sighed deeply and said: ‘I am with Dian.’

Review

- 1 **Recall** the two central themes of Chinese religion.
- 2 What have been the three enduring features of Chinese religion?
- 3 **Identify** the writings from which Confucianism and Daoism derive their authority.
- 4 **Deduce** what we can learn about Confucianism from the material in the previous feature box.

Extension

‘Taoism’ or ‘Daoism’? Do an internet search for each term. How many sites are there for each? **Investigate** if the terms are used synonymously. Which term is used more today?

The origins of Daoism

The origin of Daoism as a formal system of thought or religion is associated by the Chinese with a book and its alleged author. The book is generally called the *[Tao Te Ching], 'The Classic of the Way and Its Virtue'. The Chinese text, as we now have it, dates from the third century CE but a number of earlier complete and partial versions have recently been found in ancient tombs; these show very interesting variations and confirm that it goes back to at least the third century BCE. According to tradition, it was written by a contemporary and critic of Confucius called Laozi [Lao-tzu], 老子, 'The Old Master', while most Western and some Chinese critics*



Figure 7.1.3 Bronze statue of Laozi on his water buffalo, holding a scroll (Chinese School, nineteenth century). According to legend, when Laozi was leaving China and reached the pass to India, the frontier official Yin Xi asked Laozi to write down the essence of his teaching before leaving. This record became known as the *.*

think it is a compilation from many sources. Even if this is so, some person (or persons) edited the text as we now have it and we may as well call him Laozi.

Who was Laozi?

The name is suspicious. It is clearly not a surname but rather a pseudonym. Even more suspiciously, the earliest biographies are contradictory and confusing. Some say he was the keeper of the royal archives and that when Confucius came to do research on the ways of the old kings, Laozi told him he was wasting his time. Truth was found only by experience not from written records (a strange view to be held by an archivist). The story goes on:

Laozi cultivated the way and its virtue. His teaching used self-concealment and abandoning names in order to succeed. He lived in Zhou for a long time, but when he saw the decline of Zhou, he left. When he reached the Pass, Yin Xi, the Keeper of the Pass said: 'Since your honour is about to retreat from the world, would you for my sake leave a record of your teaching?' So, Laozi wrote down a book in two parts, dealing with the meaning of the way and its virtue, in some five thousand words or more, and then departed. No one knows where he eventually ended up.

But the same source (the first great history of China, the *or 'Historical Records' from the first century BCE) gives two other incompatible stories. In other words, nobody knew who Laozi was.*

The best explanation is that he never existed. The legend, however, is important because it depicts him riding off towards the West—the direction from which Buddhism was to later come. But if Laozi didn't exist, the book did and its teaching is remarkably like the early Chinese religion. It discusses the ways of nature, how to avoid trouble by reading the way the world is and acting naturally, and, according to some, by contacting the spirit world.

Did you know?

The term *is not used exclusively by Daoists. Confucians and Buddhists use it to describe their 'Way'. Even Chinese translations of the Bible have used it to translate 'the Word' at the beginning of the Gospel of John.*

Daoist texts

道德經—The Way and Its Virtue

Note!

'De' means 'virtue' in the sense of power or action, rather than moral virtue.

The eighty-one chapters of *Dao De Jing* are short and its wording is mysterious. How we translate it depends on what we think the book is about. Is it the result of meditation and mystical experience? Or advice about how to get on in the world? Or is it a work of philosophy, which has nothing to do with the later religious practices of organised Daoism? Opinion today favours the first interpretation and denies any radical break with later religious Daoism. But in the end, you have to make up your own mind by a close reading of the text. There are many good translations into English as well as many very bad ones.

To show how difficult it is, here is a literal translation of the opening six words:

道可道 非常道

Dao ke dao, fei chang dao.

The Way that can be wayed is not the unchanging Way.

Some other translations are:

A way can be a guide, but not a fixed path.

The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the eternal *Dao*.

The *Dao* that can be described in words is not the true *Dao*.

The ways that can be walked are not the eternal Way.

The *Dao* which can be expressed is not the unchanging *Dao*.

Spoken *Dao* is not eternal *Dao*.

The *Dao* that can be expressed is not the *Dao* of the Absolute.

Dao can mean a 'path' or, as a metaphor, a 'way' to follow. It can also be a verb 'to speak', which is how it is generally interpreted here. So it appears to be saying that the real way cannot be spoken. And the second line confirms this: 'The name that can be named is not the unchanging

name.' But, in that case, why write a book about it? And why can we not describe this mysterious Way in words? It would seem that the reason is that it is not a thing, and words describe things. Ultimately, it is 'no thing', 'nothing' (*wu* 無). If not a thing among other things, what is it? It is their source, what lies ultimately behind everything that exists. It cannot be labelled but it can be understood through comparisons—it is like water, a valley, a female, a baby, an empty vessel, an uncarved block of wood, a boat drifting on the water.

Is the *Dao* then God? Perhaps, but the text also refers many times to *Tian* (Heaven) and the Way seems to be produced by Heaven. Is it Nature? This seems closer but it is nature as an active force not the sum total of things in the world. The *Dao De Jing* invites us to observe or better meditate upon the world around us and see the Way at work.

If we do so we will understand that it simply goes its way and nothing we do will stop it. In fact we should 'not act' (*wu wei* 無為), that is, not act purposefully. If we try to change, to reform the world as Confucians advocated, we will be destroyed like the 'straw dogs' that were used in ritual then just thrown away. The real 'virtue', which is in conformity with the Way, is not to try to be something we are not.

***Zhuangzi* 莊子**

The other foundational work of Daoism is the *Zhuangzi* [*Chuang-tzu*], the core of which is the work of a teacher named Zhuang Zhou 莊周, (called by his disciples and posterity Zhuangzi—Master Zhuang) who lived in the late fourth century BCE. He seemed to draw on the same ideas about the Way as were attributed to Laozi, but adds much that was taken up in later Daoism: practices of meditation and bodily postures that led to understanding (yoga), retiring from the world as hermits, special diet and even sexual practices. Recently discovered manuscripts have shown a great interest in such matters in early China.

What makes the *Zhuangzi* so compelling is the personality and style of Zhuangzi himself. He thought that to help people understand the Way it was necessary to twist language, play games with it, force the reader or hearer to realise that truth must be experienced and not received from others. He used stories, paradoxes and striking images. As his disciples said of him in the last chapter of the book: 'He believed that everyone in the world had become stupid and could not grasp serious language so he used impromptu expressions in his effusions, allusions to convey the truth and metaphors to expand the mind.' All this makes the *Zhuangzi* one of the great works of world literature.

The book opens with an extraordinary leap of the imagination:

In the depths of the North there is a fish. Its name is Kun. It is gigantic, and no one knows how many thousands of miles it stretches. It is suddenly changed and becomes a bird named Peng with a back no one knows how many thousands of miles wide. It leaps into the air and takes off, and its wings are like clouds floating in the sky. This bird floats above the waves towards the southern deeps, the Pool of Heaven.

The world is one of constant transformation, full of marvels. We ordinary people, the story goes on to say, are like the short-lived cicada or the common dove who see the shadow pass above but cannot do anything but wonder at it. But we should aim, as the title of the chapter suggests, to ‘wander freely forever’, unrestrained by society or rules.

Like Laozi, Zhuangzi is constantly telling us what the *is like. The *is like a great clod of clay, with potential to be shaped into anything whatever (Ch. 24). We know it when we encounter it. Recognising the *is a knack, like that of the good butcher who slaughters a beast without stopping to think about how to do it (Ch. 3) or the wheelwright who cannot teach his son how to make wheels but simply knows (Ch. 13). We must avoid ‘the machine mind’ and try to be ‘useless’ and then we will survive like the gnarled old oak tree that lived to extreme old age because it could not be made into furniture or a bridge or a house (Ch. 4). The more we try, the worse we make things, like the two friends who tried to give senses to Chaos by boring holes for eyes, ears and mouth. Chaos died (Ch. 7).***

Above all, Master Zhuang tells stories—memorable stories that are still told in China and elsewhere. One is about a



Figure 7.1.4 Zhuangzi Dreaming of a Butterfly, Ming dynasty, mid-sixteenth century, ink on silk

foolish man who tried to get Zhuangzi to point out to him where the Way was:

Master Dongguo asked Zhuangzi: ‘This thing you call the Way, where can I find it?’ Zhuangzi said: ‘There is nowhere where it is not.’ Master Dongguo said: ‘That won’t do, be specific.’ Zhuangzi said: ‘It is in crickets and ants.’ Dong replied: ‘How could it be in such an insignificant place?’ Zhuangzi said: ‘It is in the weeds in the fields.’ ‘But that’s lower still.’ ‘It’s in tiles and debris.’ ‘That’s even worse.’ Zhuangzi said: ‘It is in human excrement.’ Master Dongguo did not reply.

Ch. 22

The point, of course, as Zhuangzi goes on to explain, is that *is everywhere and nowhere—it is behind all reality but not to be identified with any particular reality.*

Other famous stories illustrate that in the end all is the Way. The differences we perceive are unimportant. The royal monkeys in a time of famine rioted when their keeper told them they would only get three nuts in the morning and four in the afternoon. When the keeper agreed to give them four in the morning and three in the afternoon they were happy (Ch. 2).

Perhaps the best known of all is the butterfly story at the end of chapter 2.

Once upon a time, I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamed I was a butterfly, a butterfly fluttering about, happily going its way, enjoying life without knowing who I was. Suddenly I woke up and was indeed Zhou. But I didn’t know whether I was Zhou who had been dreaming he was a butterfly or a butterfly who was dreaming he was Zhou. There must be some distinction between Zhou and the butterfly. This is what is called the transformation of things.

There are whole books of commentary on this story but, as Zhuangzi does, we leave it to you to work out what it means.

Zhuangzi advocates the simple life. Again a story to illustrate it:

Zhuangzi was fishing in the Pu River when the King of Chu sent two of his high officials to him with a message: ‘I want to entrust to you the government of the state.’ Zhuangzi kept on fishing and did not even turn around. He said: ‘I have heard that in Chu there is a sacred tortoise which has been dead for three thousand years. Your king keeps it wrapped up in a box in a place of honour in his ancestral hall. This tortoise,

do you think it would rather be dead and its bones preserved and honoured, or would it rather be alive and wagging its tail in the mud?'

The two officials said: 'It would prefer to be alive and wagging its tail in the mud.'

Zhuangzi said: 'Go away! I intend to wag my tail in the mud.'

Ch. 17

We must bear in mind when reading passages like this that the historical background to the writings of Zhuangzi and Laozi is the period known as the 'Warring States'. The power of the Zhou dynasty had collapsed and China was being torn apart by war between competing states, each hoping to conquer all the rest (475–221 BCE). A philosophy of state power called legalism predominated. The slaughter only ended when one state, Qin [Ch'in] destroyed all the rest in 222 BCE, only to be in turn destroyed in 206 BCE by the Han. During the Warring States period, dropping out was not a viable option—rather a utopian vision. But some individuals might retire to the mountains and cultivate the simple life to the point where, they hoped, they would become 'immortals'.

Daoists never believed anyone could live forever, but they did believe one could prolong life enormously by the right diet—no meat, no grain, just vegetables—the right unhurried lifestyle, contemplation of nature and pleasant occupations such as writing poetry or making music. Strangely, these Daoist hermits seemed to enjoy congenial company and they had no objection to drinking alcohol.

Zhuangzi himself had reservations about special exercises like those which later Daoists advocated. Rather it was an attitude of mind: 'All you need do is practise quiet, placidity, retirement, imperturbability, emptiness, non-being and non-action' (Ch.15). In the *Zhuangzi* we can see the nucleus of the organised religion that persists until the present day. Daoism took many forms as teachers and prophets emerged and sacred writings were added until the *Dao Zang* 道藏 ('Collected Daoist Scriptures') comprised some 1476 works in 1120 volumes. This was a development that came to include rituals and practices (see pages 150–2) that the early Daoist thinkers never dreamed of and perhaps would not have approved of. Daoism, however, always remained opposed to the government—in fact, it was often associated with rebellion. It appealed to ordinary people, especially women, who often played a leading role, and reflected the daily experience of peasants and workers.

Recent research has found that the earliest signs of Daoism seem to have arisen in South China. A famous work called in translation *The Songs of the South* depicts a religion in which spirit mediums called down gods and goddesses from above and penetrated the mysteries of the natural world. Perhaps Daoism comes from South China just as Confucianism comes from North China.

Review

- 1 **Recall** the names of the two major texts of Daoism.
- 2 **Outline** the major ideas of each of these texts.
- 3 The Chinese term *has many meanings—**identify** some of these meanings and prepare a short summary to **clarify** your understanding of the term.*
- 4 **Construct** a chart to **summarise** some of the characteristics of early Daoism.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 148 to read more of the Daoist scriptures in English and view different Chinese script versions.

Organised or 'religious' Daoism

Glossary

alchemy	In Daoist practice, a set of procedures and principles meant to prolong human life. In Daoism, there were two types of alchemy: Outer Alchemy, which consisted of the chemical production of elixirs that were meant to be swallowed; and Inner Alchemy, which relied on symbolic meditation to achieve the same end.
pantheon	All the gods of a particular religion, people, or nation.



Figure 7.1.5 Qingxu Daoist Temple in Pingyao, Shanxi province

In the turmoil of the collapse of the Han dynasty at the end of the second century CE, many new religious movements arose all over the country. Between the second and sixth centuries CE, organised or ‘religious’ Daoism developed out of these movements, coming to maturity in the Tang dynasty. The most important of these movements was the ‘Way of the Celestial Masters’. It grew from the Five Bushels of Rice healing cult, so called after the offering made to join, established by the Zhang family in Sichuan province. Its founder, Zhang Daoling, supposedly received divine revelations from Laozi himself. Following this experience, Zhang developed a distinct system of religious teachings based on ‘The Classic of the Way and Its Virtue’.

Daoism became a popular religion that offered consolation to the ordinary people and to those of the educated elite who had seen their Confucian world collapse around them. To use an image of the time, the scholar-officials were like lice in a pair of trousers on someone caught in a fire—they were destined to perish with their host. The unworldly doctrines of Daoism appealed to such people. Partly this was due to new teachings known in China as *xuan xue*, ‘dark’ or ‘mysterious’ learning that combined the

ideas of Laozi and Zhuangzi with cosmology, numerology, sexology and alchemy.

Note!

The descendants of Zhang Daoling in Taiwan preside over this Daoist movement to the present day.

Another group of the time, the probably legendary Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, has become famous for its eccentric behaviour. One of the sages, Liu Ling, is said to have gone everywhere accompanied by a small boy carrying a flask of wine and a spade (the latter to be used to bury Liu Ling on the spot if he should drop dead). On one occasion his friends were scandalised to find him stark naked on a very hot day. ‘The whole world is my trousers,’ he said. ‘What are you doing inside my trousers?’

The Daoist pantheon

Daoism also acquired a **pantheon**, the history of which is confused. The highest gods have titles such as ‘Celestial Worthy’ or ‘Emperor’ and hold court in celestial paradises and govern a complex hierarchy of gods, similar to the hierarchy of emperor and officials on earth. Many of the gods that emerged were consolidated into a well-defined pantheon by the Tang dynasty (618–906 CE). Among them were the Three Purities or Three Clarities (which included Laozi) and the Three Officials.

The Three Purities are:

- the ‘Celestial Venerable of the Original Beginning’
- the Celestial Venerable of Numinous Treasure (the Jade Emperor)
- the Celestial Venerable of the Way and Its Power (‘Lord Lao up in Heaven’).

The Three Officials are in charge of heaven, earth and the waters under the earth, and record people’s good and bad deeds and determine their life span and destiny.

A second category of deities are human beings who, through learning, self-discipline, alchemy, or other means have purified themselves of mortal imperfections and become gods; a transformation often described as ‘ascending to the heavens in broad daylight’. Among them are the Eight Immortals with their racy histories:

1 Zhan Zhongli Emblem: fan of feathers or peach of immortality Represents: the military	5 Li Tieguai Emblem: iron crutch and gourd of life-preserving medicine Represents: the sick
2 Zhang Guolao Emblem: paper horse Represents: the old	6 Han Xiangu Emblem: lute Represents: the cultured class
3 Lu Dongbin Emblem: sword Represents: the scholars	7 Lan Zaihe Emblem: flower basket Represents: the poor
4 Cao Guojiu Emblem: court writing tablet Represents: the nobility	8 He Xiangu Emblem: lotus Represents: unmarried girls

Review

How would you **describe** the role of deities in Daoism?

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 150 to find out more about the Eight Immortals. Choose four of them and **extrapolate** how their symbols relate to their role.
- 2 The Eight Immortals are described as having ‘racy histories’. Do an internet search to **investigate** three of them—is this description accurate?



Figure 7.1.6 *The Eight Immortals*, 1978, by Ding Yanyong, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 141.5 x 69.6 cm image, purchased 2000, collection, Art Gallery of New South Wales, photograph: Brenton McGeachie.

This lively scroll depicts the eight legendary beings of Daoism who have attained immortality—the Eight Immortals. It is inscribed ‘painted by Ding Yanyong in the wuwu year [1978]’ and the poem describes the characteristics of each of the Eight Immortals.

Daoist practices

Did you know?

Central to the Daoist philosophy is duality, a ‘oneness’ made of complementary opposites. *Yin* and *yang*, ‘male’ and ‘female’, were found in all things, not just human beings; and a balance between them was regarded as necessary. This principle applies to all elements of existence—from nature to a particular individual. Social disturbance, natural disasters, personal illness, unsettled family relationships and so on are all the result of an imbalance between the forces of *yin* and *yang*. Restoring harmony cures the ills and gives a sense of direction.

Practices arose to ‘nourish the vital principle’ by special diet (abstaining not only from meat but also from grain) and sexual practices designed to conserve and increase the male *yang* at the expense of the female *yin*. There were also meditation and *yoga* practices and, increasingly, rituals designed to bring about these ends.

In time, a number of Daoist sects arose with a priesthood and monasteries, probably mainly in response to Buddhism, which had introduced these Indian religious customs.

Many schools of Daoism, however, remained largely ‘lay’, and even today, many Daoist priests are part-time. Daoist priests (*dao shi*) are ordained in a ceremony that closely imitates Buddhist ordination in which they promise to observe the five prohibitions of the Very High Lord Lao (no killing, no meat, no wine, no lying, no sex) and to take refuge in the *Dao*, the scriptures and the priesthood.

Although sectarian Daoism has almost disappeared in the People’s Republic of China, its influence remains strong in popular ideas about long life and healing. In Taiwan, however, Daoist sects, priests, temples and rituals are still very popular and have been adapted to modern urban living. Gods may be offered cigarettes in place of incense,



Figure 7.1.7 Daoist ritual, Qing dynasty, 1700, ink and colours on silk

and evil spirits are driven out of the sick and carried away in paper bags on the back of motorcycles. Divination may be used to arrange the furniture in a high-rise apartment or promote the career of a film star. It is a long way from Laozi and Zhuangzi but the connections are there. The world follows a natural course and hence is predictable. Human beings should follow that course as closely as possible. As Laozi said, the ideal society is one where ‘the people all say: “we act naturally”’ (Ch. 17).

Sacred spaces—the *Jiao* ritual

There is a sense in which no spaces are especially sacred in Daoism, or rather all are equally manifestations of the great Way. However, the major ritual of religious Daoism, the *Jiao* ritual, the Rite of Cosmic Renewal that is also called the Great Ritual Offerings to the All-Embracing Heaven, involves ritually creating a sacred space. Over several days, Daoist priests create in a temple a kind of model of the universe or microcosm and make offerings to purify and renew each part of it.

- On the first day, the spirits are invited to attend, scriptures are read, a fire is lit and a flame divided to symbolise the *Dao* giving birth to the universe. The gods of the five directions (the Chinese consider the centre should be counted as well as the four points of the compass) are called on to purify the whole world.
- On the second day, audience is held with the spirits in ascending order ending with Laozi, and petitions are presented.
- On the third day, the Jade Emperor himself arrives, a memorial is presented to the Three Pure Ones (the main gods of Daoism), and they are thanked and sent off.
- Other rituals are often performed over several more days, in honour of the dead and sometimes healing the living of sickness of body and soul.

It is clear that this ritual is based on the notion of a heavenly hierarchy that parallels the earthly one (imagined as the old pre-1911 imperial hierarchy). They are invited, honoured, and petitioned to intervene and purify a world that is run-down and has been corrupted. Many popular Chinese beliefs also figure in this ritual:

- the power of reciting scriptures and the use of talismans (pieces of paper with mysterious writing on them)
- symbolic actions involving fire and water
- possession by spirits who give messages through a medium who goes into a trance.



Figure 7.1.8 The Wong Tai Sin Temple in Kowloon, Hong Kong

The Wong Tai Sin Temple

The Wong Tai Sin Temple is the most popular shrine in Hong Kong. The first temple building you come to after entering from the Wong Tai Sin MTR station is inscribed ‘The Confucius and Dao Gate’. Wong Tai Sin (‘the Great Immortal Huang’) was originally Huang Chuping, one of the eighty-four Daoist immortals described in Ge Hong’s *Biographies of Immortals* (third century CE), but he intervened through a spirit medium during a plague in Guangdong in the nineteenth century and became a popular local god.

Wong Tai Sin became a ‘refugee’ when his image was taken to Hong Kong and his cult became very popular among the Hong Kong population, most of whom were themselves refugees.

A very active temple administration, which engages in charitable works and accommodates a large number of booths for diviners and fortune-tellers, has helped it flourish. Many elements of Chinese popular religion, Confucianism and Buddhism as well as Daoism, are found in this large temple complex. If you go to Hong Kong it is well worth a visit. In the meantime, you can find out more about it on the internet.

Review

- 1 What is divination and what role does it play in Daoism?
- 2 In your own words, **define** ‘alchemy’.
- 3 Daoism has no creeds or statements of main beliefs but certain basic beliefs can be deduced from its main texts and practices. If you were asked to write a Daoist creed what would you **identify** as the principal beliefs of Daoism?
- 4 How would you **define** ‘a sacred space’ in Daoism?
- 5 **Identify** the principal rituals or practices of Daoism. What is the relationship between sacred spaces and the beliefs of Daoism?
- 6 **Examine** the significance of Daoist rituals for the individual and the community.

Extension



- 1 Use the internet to **investigate** three Daoist rituals and **summarise** your findings. Go to the web destinations for page 152 for a useful starting point.
- 2 In groups, prepare a discussion outline to **analyse** the statement: ‘Classifying Daoism as an “ancient” religion precludes any examination of it as a living tradition.’
- 3 How would you **explain** the relationship between Daoism and the culture of China? What influence has it had on the culture?
- 4 Are any aspects of Daoism visible in Australian society?
- 5 **Construct** arguments for and against the statement: ‘It is impossible to understand Daoism if one tries to fit it into a Western definition of religion.’



Figure 7.2.1 Heian Shrine near Kyoto. The shrine was built in 1895 to mark the 1100th anniversary of the foundation of the Heian Capital. It is dedicated to the first and last emperors who reigned from Heian-kyo (modern Kyoto), Emperor Kammu and Emperor Komei.

7.2 Shinto

Glossary

bodhisattva	A person who is motivated by compassion and seeks enlightenment not only for themselves but for everyone.
kami	The gods or spirits of Japan.
shamanism	A belief in controlling spirits who can be influenced by a priest or someone who works with the supernatural.

Ancient Japan

The origins of the Japanese people is a very controversial subject, not least for the Japanese themselves. It is probable that the modern Japanese are a mixture of peoples from the Pacific and from North Asia, especially via Korea. From about 8000 BCE there was a Neolithic culture in Japan that is marked in the archaeological record by fine pottery known as Jomon pottery. The religion, in so far as religion can be deduced from material

objects, seems to have centred on fertility cults, shown by clay cult figurines, female 'mother goddesses', phalluses and half-human, half-animal figures known as *dogu*.

A great cultural leap seems to have occurred in the Yayoi period, c. 300 BCE to 300 CE (contemporary with the Han dynasty in China). This was probably due to Chinese and Korean influences, perhaps an actual invasion that brought rice cultivation and metalworking.

In the following Kofun ('Great Tomb') period, 300–538 CE, there arose a warrior society with a hierarchy of rulers who symbolised their authority in regalia that consisted of mirrors, swords and jewels. These are still symbolic of the Japanese imperial dynasty today.

In the Yamato period of the sixth and seventh centuries CE, the Japanese monarchy finally emerged in the Yamato plains. With the monarchy came the theory of the *kami*, who were the ancestors of the royal house and the source of their authority. The emperor, the *temo*, was the descendant of the gods and hence destined to rule the islands of Japan forever. The religion of the ordinary people, however, in this period and probably long before, was a kind of **shamanism** (like that of most of North Asia), which was based on spirit mediums who contacted the spirits and were taken over by them to communicate messages from their world to ours.

The Japanese state that developed from a centre in the Yamato plains in South Central Honshu seems to have been originally indigenous in its structures—an extension of a warrior clan society. But around 600 CE, a great change was begun by Prince Shotoku that involved the introduction of Chinese political institutions and ideologies. Eventually, in the *Taika*, 'Great Reform', of the mid-seventh century CE, both Confucian and Buddhist ideas were adopted.

Did you know?

Buddhism is said to have been imported to Japan from China via Korea, by Buddhist monks sent by the friendly Korean kingdom of Kudara (Paikche) in 552 CE. While this may be legendary, it was the Chinese form of Mahayana Buddhism that was adopted in Japan.

One paradoxical result of these reforms was the consolidation of Japanese mythology through its collection in two compilations: the *Kojiki*, 'Record of Ancient Matters' (712 CE), and the *Nihongi*, 'Written Chronicles of Japan' (720 CE). These are not regarded as revealed scriptures but rather as authoritative ancient records, like the classics of China. But they begin with the *kami*, the spirits or gods and goddesses. The religion based on them is called 'the way of the *kami*', *kami-no-michi*, or Shinto (from Chinese *Shen Dao*—the way of the gods).

Shinto has been the 'national' religion of Japan in the fullest sense, and is still today despite the post-war constitutional changes that denied it special status as the state religion. It is respected and to some extent practised by most Japanese. It incorporates many of the features of the oldest religion of the Japanese, is based on the myths of national origin, and pervades Japanese culture from high art to the materials of daily life. It is not the exclusive religion of Japan but has tended to adapt itself to other religious currents: popular folk religion and the religions imported from China—Buddhism and Confucianism.

Review

- 1 Recall the names of two compilations of Japanese mythology.
- 2 What is shamanism?
- 3 In what century was Buddhism introduced to Japan?

Extension



In the Nara and Heian periods (710–1185) of Japanese history, Chinese influence declined and many of the imported ideas were gradually 'Japanised'. Go to the web destinations for page 154 and **investigate** some examples of this 'Japanisation'. Prepare a chart to **summarise** the impact this had on Japanese religion.

The *kami*

If Shinto is 'the way of the *kami*', what are *kami*? The *kami* are the very centre of the state and popular religion of Japan. But it is hard to pin down who or what are *kami*. Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), an important figure in the modern revival of Shinto, wrote:

In general, one can say that *kami* signifies, firstly, the deities of heaven and earth described in the ancient records and who are found in the shrines where they are worshipped today. But it also includes some humans, and birds, animals, trees, vegetation, seas and mountains. In fact, in the old days, anything at all which was extraordinary, which was powerful or awe-inspiring was called *kami*. This power did not have to be something high or good or admirable. *Kami* is used also of bad or spooky things if they are abnormal and terrifying. Of course, the most eminent of the human *kami* are the line of emperors down to our day.

So they are gods, spirits of any kind, including human spirits, powerful natural objects, and in a special way, the Japanese emperors.

Kami is essentially an expression used by the early Japanese people to classify experiences that evoked sentiments of caution and mystery in the presence of the manifestation of the strange and the marvellous.

D. C. Holton, *The National Faith of Japan*, 1996, p. 24

Kami relate to specific places, persons or natural phenomena and hence are guardians or protectors of these. Especially important are the *ujikami*, the guardians of the *uji* or clan. And each household has or had its '*kami* shelf' (*kamidana*) or shrine for its household *kami*. In theory, the number of *kami* is unlimited, but a 1930s study listed 214 *kami* worshipped in recognised State Shinto shrines. The Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, is considered Shinto's most important *kami*.



Figure 7.2.2 Natural features can be worshipped as *kami*.

The *kami* were also assimilated into the Buddhist deities and *bodhisattvas* in the form of Shin-butsu-konko (mixed Shinto-Buddhism). Buddhist shrines were included in the precincts of Shinto temples and statues of the *kami* were introduced into Buddhist temples. This was clearly in response to popular demand but was hard to reconcile with either Shinto or Buddhist theology. Sometimes the *kami* were equated with *bodhisattvas*, or interpreted by Buddhists as manifestations of the Buddha in Japanese guise, or presented as lower-ranking spirits in need of the salvation offered by the Buddha. Humans become *kami* after they die and are revered by their families as ancestral *kami*.

With the Meiji restoration of 1868, when the emperor's political power (which had been long eclipsed by the shogun, or military leader of Japan) was restored, Shinto too received a new emphasis. Shinto was made Japan's state religion, Shinto priests became state officials, important shrines started to receive government funding, Japan's creation myths were used to foster an emperor cult, and efforts were made to separate and liberate Shinto from Buddhism.

Popular Shinto, as we shall see, was something different again, incorporating many elements of folk religion. But all these variants rest ultimately on belief in the *kami*.

Note!

No-mikoto has a honorific meaning of something like 'his or her highness'.

Creation mythology

The *kami* were responsible for the creation of the world as we know it. In the Kojiki we are told that in the beginning there were the 'kami of the centre of heaven', and then there appeared the 'kami of birth and growth'. But it was the brother and sister *kami*—Izanagi-no-mikoto, 'the male who invites', and Izanami-no-mikoto, 'the female who invites'—who gave birth to the other great *kami*:

- Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, was their first and favourite child and so was sent up to rule over Heaven.
- The Moon God, Tsuki-yomi, came next and was placed in the sky as her consort.
- The next born was the Leech-child who could not stand so was set afloat in a camphorwood boat.
- Then came Susano-o who, because he was an unruly god given to destruction and loud noises, was assigned to earth as the Storm God.
- They also gave birth to the Eight Great Islands of Japan.



Figure 7.2.3 A household shrine. Note the *shimenawa* and *gohei* (see Figure 7.2.9)



Figure 7.2.4 *Amaterasu Emerges from the Light*, Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865), coloured woodcut

The birth of the islands

Izanagi and Izanami stood on the floating bridge of heaven and plunged a spear into the ocean and stirred until the brine congealed to form the first Japanese island. They then descended to the island and set up a pillar. They circled the pillar until they met and Izanami said: 'I see a handsome young man.' Izanagi was angry because the man should speak first. They went around again and this time Izanagi said: 'I see a beautiful young girl.' They then examined their bodies and found their organs fitted together. They mated and produced the rest of the Japanese islands. This makes Japan, even in its physical make-up, sacred, and the direct production of the gods.

Izanami finally died of burns after giving birth to the Fire God, but before dying managed to bring forth the Water Goddess, the Earth Goddess and Gourd of Heaven who together could control Fire and prevent the world being destroyed. When Izanami died and her body decayed, Izanagi came to the land of Yomi (god of the dead) to see what had happened. Izanami told Izanagi not to look at her but he broke off a tooth of his wooden comb and lit it to see. Izanami then created eight avenging females who pursued Izanagi to the end of the world. He purified himself from the contamination of contact with death, and from his bathwater were produced a myriad of other *kami*.

Amaterasu and her brother Susano-o had a literally stormy relationship. Susano-o delighted in destroying what his sister had done for human beings. In the spring he broke down the earth walls of her rice fields and at harvest time made 'the heavenly piebald colts' trample the crops. This, of course, refers to the typhoons and storms to which the islands of Japan are subject.

Amaterasu was so annoyed that she retired into a cave and refused to come out—thus explaining the alternation of the seasons. Japanese mythology is typically jokey and down-to-earth. Amaterasu is enticed out of hiding by hanging jewels and a mirror in the tree outside her cave, and a wild and obscene dance by the other *kami* that attracts her curiosity, and then she is persuaded to stay. So the sun returns each year, and wild rituals were held to celebrate it.

The last but, in Japanese eyes, not least of the creations of the *kami* is the Japanese imperial line. From her heavenly home Amaterasu sent down Ninigi, her own grandson. Ninigi's great-grandson, Jimmu, eventually conquered the central plains of Japan and became the first emperor of Japan. So all Japanese emperors since are physically divine. The sacred insignia of Amaterasu—the jewel, mirror and sword, which are also the insignia of the emperor—are enshrined in one of the great imperial shrines at Isé, which became the centre of Amaterasu's cult and the most sacred place in Japan. It is rebuilt in exactly the same way every twenty years.

The behaviour of the *kami* as depicted in the *Nihongi* and *Kojiki* is very human. They act foolishly, break the moral codes they themselves enforce, they die and are killed, then take on purely spiritual forms.

The most characteristic feature of Shinto is a basic conviction that Gods (*kami*), men and the whole of Nature were actually born of the same parents, and are therefore of the same kin.

Jean Herbert, *Shinto: At the Fountain-head of Japan*, 1967, p. 21

We may question whether the Japanese really believe that all men and women and all the world, or only the Japanese people and the Japanese islands are included in this kinship. Of course, at the time Shinto originated, there was probably no thought that any other land or any other people existed.

Later, during the national revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a notion of the special, unique status of Japan was drawn from these myths by proponents of Kokugaku ('national revival'), such as Motoori Norinaga (see page 154), with tragic consequences.

Review

- 1 Recall the meaning of the word 'Shinto'.
- 2 Outline the main features of the creation story of Shinto.
- 3 According to Shinto, what happens to humans after they die?
- 4 Explain the relationship between the Shinto creation story and the Japanese emperor.
- 5 Identify the principal Shinto beliefs.
- 6 Who is considered Shinto's most important *kami*?
- 7 The only common belief in Shinto is in the existence and importance of *kami*. How would you describe the role of the *kami* in Shinto?



Figure 7.2.5 The Outer Shrine of the Isé Jingu on the Shima Peninsula. Isé Jingu consists of two shrines: the Outer Shrine (Geku) dedicated to Toyouke, the *kami* of clothing, food and housing, and the Inner Shrine (Naiku), which enshrines Amaterasu. The Isé shrines are so sacred that no pictures may be taken near their main halls and, unlike most other Shinto shrines, they are built in a purely Japanese architecture.

Extension

- 1 In groups, discuss the role of the *kami* and the creation stories of Shinto. Agree on three points to demonstrate how they have shaped the Shinto world view.
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, investigate how the creation myths of Shinto have been used with 'tragic consequences' in times of national revival. Prepare a brief report on your findings.

Shrines

As we have seen, the *kami* can be found anywhere, not least in places of natural beauty or power—mountains, forests, caves, rocks etc. But they are also found in special places of pilgrimage and worship where shrines are erected, *jinja* or '*kami* places'. These shrines are often extremely beautiful, and are built of wood. Outside the shrines stand gates called *torii*—there are twenty different types of *torii*, and they indicate the status and cult of the shrine. The heart of the shrine is the *honden*, an inner chamber containing sacred objects that constitute the 'divine body' (*shintai*) or 'august-spirit-substitute' (*mitamashiro*). On visiting a shrine, after ritual purification by washing the hands and mouth, you make an offering, clap your hands to alert the *kami*, then pray to the enshrined *kami*. There are tens of thousands of shrines across Japan, some of which can be categorised into a few major groups.



Figure 7.2.6 One or more *torii* gates mark the approach and entrance to a shrine.



Figure 7.2.8 Komainu are the guardians at a shrine's entrance. At Inari shrines they are foxes; at others they are lions or dogs.



Figure 7.2.7 Purification fountain and trough. Found near the entrance, these fountains are used for cleaning the hands and mouth before approaching the main hall of the shrine.



Figure 7.2.9 The straw rope (*shimenawa*) with white zigzag paper strips (*gohei*) marks the boundary to something sacred and can be found on *torii* gates, around sacred trees and stones. Shrine visitors write their wishes on wooden plates (*ema*) and then leave them at the shrine in the hope their wishes come true.

Shinto shrines

- **Imperial shrines**—these are the shrines that were directly funded and administered by the state in the Meiji period. They include some of Shinto's most important shrines such as the Isé shrines (see page 157) and a number of shrines built during the Meiji period such as Tokyo's Meiji shrine and Kyoto's Heian shrine (see page 153). Imperial shrines can be recognised by the imperial family's chrysanthemum crest and they are often called *jingu* rather than *jinja*.
- **Inari shrines**—these are dedicated to Inari, the *kami* of rice. They can be recognised by fox statues, as the fox is considered the messenger of Inari. The most famous of the Inari shrines is Kyoto's Fushimi Inari shrine.



- **Hachiman shrines**—these are dedicated to Hachiman, the *kami* of war, who used to be popular among the leading military clans of the past. The most famous is probably Kamakura's Tsurugaoka Hachimangu.
- **Tenjin shrines**—these are dedicated to the *kami* of Sugawara Michizane, a Heian period scholar and politician. They are particularly popular among students preparing for exams. Tenjin shrines can be recognised by ox statues and plum trees, Michizane's favourite trees.
- **Sengen shrines**—dedicated to Princess Konohanasakuya, the Shinto deity of Mount Fuji.
- **Toshogu shrines**—some powerful clans in Japanese history established and dedicated shrines to their clans' founders. As the name suggests, these celebrate the era of the shoguns.

The architecture and features of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples have melded over the centuries. There are several construction styles, most of which show Buddhist influences from the Asian mainland. Only a few shrines are considered to be built in a purely Japanese style. Among these are Shinto's most important Isé shrines.

Priests, usually called *shinshoku*, are trained at special Shinto training institutions, and then appointed to a shrine. Many, especially those at local shrines, are part-time. They wear distinctive white robes. Men and women can become priests and they are allowed to marry and have children.

Charms called *omamori* are sold at shrines for protection. These may be amulets, charms worn round the neck, or placards for doorways designed to keep out evil spirits.

Festivals

Festivals (*matsuri*) are held annually or even more frequently at the great shrines—at Isé, for example, for each season of the year. They typically involve food offerings (*shinsen*), a procession of the *kami* in palanquins (*mikoshi*) and ritual prayers (*norito*). The celebration of the new year includes visits to the local Shinto shrine. At the beginning of spring is the Setsubun ('change of seasons') festival, which like many other festivals aims at purifying the household and neighbourhood. The autumn or harvest festival is particularly important in the countryside. The Bon or Obon festival for the dead, a Shinto adaptation of the Buddhist 'All Souls', is held on 15 July. The dead are invited to visit the family altar by a fire lit at the door of the house two days before and then are 'sent off' by another fire.

Shinto rituals

► Refer to pages 155–6 for the story of Izanagi and Izanami.

Purification is a major theme of Shinto rituals. Physical cleanliness is associated with moral and spiritual purity. The model is the purification ritual performed by Izanagi after he had been polluted by contact with the corpse of Izanami in the land of Yomi. Until recently, women were forbidden to enter certain sacred places, to climb Mount Fuji and so on, because they might be polluted by childbirth or menstruation. Purification rituals often involve symbolic bathing, for example, in a stream, a

waterfall or the sea. Salt is also used in purification. When a house is built there are rituals for clearing the ground (*jichinsai*), erecting the frame and celebrating the completion of the building—*kami* are invited to enter the house and protect it.

Other Shinto rituals relate to the life cycle. Weddings are often performed in Shinto shrines (if not in Surfers Paradise!), although Buddhist temples are preferred for funerals. The 'First Shrine Visit' (*hatsu-miyamairi*) is performed after a child is born: on the thirty-second day after birth for a boy and on the thirty-third day after birth for a girl. The father goes to the district Shinto shrine to present the child to the local *kami* and introduce him or her to the community.

Even today the emperor performs a large number of private rituals relating to his ancestors. But imperial rituals are largely secret affairs and not for the general public.

Did you know?

Cemeteries are almost never found at shrines, because death is considered a cause of impurity in Shinto and is dealt with mostly using Buddhist rituals.

Review

- 1 Explain why there are so many shrines in Japan.
- 2 What role do shrines play in Shinto rituals?
- 3 Recall the names of two Shinto festivals.
- 4 Outline the typical elements of a festival.
- 5 Recall the major theme of Shinto rituals and clarify how it relates to the creation story of Shinto.

Extension



- 1 Construct a chart to identify the features of a typical Shinto shrine.
- 2 If you visit a Tenjin shrine, what would you expect to see and do?
- 3 Construct a mind map to explain the relationship between Shinto shrines, rituals, festivals and the beliefs of Shinto.

Shinto in daily life

Glossary

aesthetic Relating to the principles of beauty.

A Japanese saying has it that ‘Shinto is not a religion, it is a folk way’. This is somewhat misleading since Shinto certainly involves the worship of spirits and the other main features of religion. But it does point to an important truth: that Shinto is a way of life, of daily living.

Shinto is expressed through simplicity of life. Again, as with bathing, the Japanese associate the spiritual with something most people normally separate from it, namely, the **aesthetic**. Religious feelings are aroused by the beauties of everyday life, by poetry and music, as much as or more than by scriptures or rituals. For example, the *Manyoshu*, a collection of poetry from the eighth century CE, is regarded by the Japanese as a religious text. And going into the countryside to observe the cherry blossoms has taken on religious overtones. Similarly, visits to Mount Fuji are regarded as religious pilgrimages rather than tourism. And the famous tea ceremony and flower arranging (*ikebana*) are regarded as essentially religious rituals.



Figure 7.2.10 Japanese tea ceremony—*sado*. This ceremony is a good example of the fusion of religion and the aesthetic.

Shamanism

It is arguable whether or not Japanese shamanism should be regarded as part of Shinto. Most probably its origins lie far back in Japanese prehistory, before the formulation of Shinto. But just as Shinto rests on the notion of the *kami*, shamanism rests on communication with the *kami*—spirits who enter the bodies of mediums and send messages, advice and oracles. The common metaphor is that of

crossing a bridge to the other world (remember the bridge that Izanami and Izanagi stood on when they made the islands of Japan). Shamanism is not practised much in modern urban Japan, but it still remains a part of Japanese culture, as anyone who likes Japanese films would know.

Emperor cult

In the nineteenth century, Shinto was used by the proponents of ‘national revival’ to promote the restoration of the emperor to power and authority, which finally culminated during the Meiji period (1868–1912). The theory was that Jimmu Tenno, the Emperor Jimmu—the first emperor of Japan—was a direct descendant of Amaterasu the Sun Goddess, and hence his descendants, the emperors of Japan, had a special place in the world (see page 156). In practice, the power of the Japanese emperor was usurped by military leaders, the shoguns. The School of National Learning, which began in the early eighteenth century, argued for a return to the old idea of the divine emperor and articulated an ideology that was to have tragic consequences for modern Japan.

In 1868, when the Emperor Meiji was restored to real power, Shinto was named as the basis of the Japanese state. A new Department of Shinto was given sweeping powers, and Shinto priests were henceforth to be appointed by the government rather than being hereditary. At birth, each Japanese person was required to be registered at a Shinto shrine as a member of a Shinto parish (under the Tokugawa shoguns, Buddhist parishes had served the same purpose). In 1882 most Shinto shrines were named as state shrines administered by a Bureau of Shrines. The government declared that State Shinto was not a religion, but this was really an attempt to proclaim it a super-religion that was different from and superior to all the others—State or Shrine Shinto (to distinguish it from various Shinto sects) was the sign of Japanese unity and superiority.

After the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, the occupation government issued the Shinto Directive in December 1945, which disestablished the Shinto shrines and forbade state support and state control. In February 1946, the various Shinto organisations formed themselves into the Association of Shinto Shrines, which still oversees most Shinto activities. In 1946 Emperor Hirohito formally renounced any claim to divinity and became simply ‘a symbol of the state’—Shinto was formally separated from the state. Shinto then became, in theory, simply one of the religions of Japan that citizens were free to follow or to reject. In practice, however, and in the minds and hearts of Japanese, it remains much more, as is clear on occasions of national crisis.

Where does this leave postwar Japan? Some Japanese nationalists have never accepted the secularisation of the Japanese state and the de-divinisation of the emperor, but most have. The result is a spiritual vacuum that has largely been filled by so-called 'New Religions', some drawing on Shinto, some on Buddhism, others much vaguer and 'New Age' in doctrine and practice.

Popular Shinto, however, is still deeply rooted in the Japanese mind. It sits somewhat uneasily with the technological and economic organisation of contemporary Japan. In fact, it is perhaps the only major example of a simple group or folk religion still flourishing in a modern industrial society. Japan is a 'living museum of religion'. In this, as in other respects, the Japanese are, as they claim, unique.

Did you know?

The Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo has become a source of controversy in Japan and abroad. Originally designated by the Emperor Meiji as the 'Shrine of the Peaceful Country', it has come to be the place of enshrinement of the nation's war dead, and so associated with militant nationalism. Although Article 20 of the 1946 Constitution says 'No religious organisations shall receive any privileges from the State nor exercise any political authority', Yasukuni Jinja has become a political symbol. The emperor no longer honours the war dead there, but politicians, including recent prime ministers, have attended the annual ceremonies and stirred up controversy in Japan and abroad.

Review

- 1 What role do you think shamanism has in contemporary Shinto?
- 2 Explain the interrelationship between Shinto and Japanese society.
- 3 Discuss the role of Shinto in the 'emperor' cult.
- 4 In groups, prepare a discussion outline to analyse the statement: 'Classifying Shinto as an "ancient" religion precludes any examination of it as a living tradition.'

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



Figure 7.2.11 Shinto priest at Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kyoto

Extension

- 1 'One of the reasons many Japanese bathhouses exclude foreigners is because bathing is a religious activity.' What can you discover to justify this statement?
- 2 Construct a chart to demonstrate the elements and characteristics of Shinto. In your chart, provide examples to explain how such an ancient tradition can still be such an important part of the everyday lives of the majority of Japanese people today.
- 3 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 4 Is your media file up to date? Classify it into categories and then prepare a report that analyses how Daoism and Shinto are portrayed in the media.

Chapter 8

Religion in Australia pre-1945



Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **outline** the arrival and establishment of Christianity and *two* other religious traditions in Australia prior to 1945
- **examine** the impact of sectarianism on the relationship among Christian denominations in Australia pre-1945
- **examine** the contribution of Christianity to social welfare in Australia pre-1945
- **discuss** the role of *one* religious tradition in rural and outback communities in Australia pre-1945
- **outline** the contribution of *one* religious tradition to the provision of education in Australia pre-1945
- **examine** initiatives taken by *one* religious tradition in the area of public morality in Australia pre-1945.



God, King, Country, the Bushman Soldier, Anzac—some of the enduring themes of Australia before 1945

8.1 Religious traditions in Australia pre-1945

Introduction

Religion, as defined by Europeans, came to Australia with the establishment in 1788 of the British settlement in the colony of New South Wales. It was the religion of the British—Christianity. This British Christianity, however, was not a unified Christianity and the lack of harmony among Christians remained part of Australia's religious history well into the twentieth century. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that there was any official recognition of any religious tradition other than Christianity, and that was of Judaism. Relative isolation from the rest of the world and a fairly narrow immigration stream from the British Isles ensured that the religious make-up of Australia did not change much for a hundred years. The exceptions to this were waves of non-British immigration during the nineteenth-century, gold rushes, and some refugees around the time of the First World War.

The real marker point for a change in the Australian religious landscape came with the worldwide upheaval of the Second World War. The end of that war is where this chapter ends.

In 1845 those who identified as Christians made up 98.6 per cent of the population—72.4 per cent were Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and other Protestants from Britain, and 26.2 per cent were Catholics from Ireland and Britain. In 1945 Australia was still overwhelmingly Christian although the mix was a little more exotic and slightly less British and Irish. As far as most Australians were concerned, there were Anglicans and Protestants and Catholics who were white and spoke English. There were some notable minorities—Lutherans who spoke German, and Jews from England, Russia, Poland and Germany. Largely, however, these communities assumed a trend of assimilating, considered to be the norm at that time.

Extension

- Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- Create and maintain a media clippings file on the history of religious traditions in Australia. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on this topic.

Arrival and establishment of Christianity

What shall I render under God for his goodness to me ...
Ps 116:12, from the first prayer service in the colony, 1788

'Formal' Christianity came to Australia with the First Fleet and its Church of England chaplain Rev. Richard Johnson. Its arrival was rather an afterthought—it was only after lobbying by evangelical Christians in Britain that a chaplain was appointed.

Glossary

atheist	A person who denies or does not believe in the existence of God.		
Calvinism	John Calvin (1509–1564) was one of the major religious reformers of what became known as Protestantism . Calvinism became the name of one of the founding branches of Protestantism. The Presbyterianism of early Australian settlers had its origins in Scottish Calvinism.		
diocese	The territory overseen by a bishop. Both the Church of England and the Catholic Church had established dioceses in the various colonies of Australia by the end of the first hundred years of European settlement.		
established church	A church recognised by the government as the official church, and supported by it.		
evangelical	Applies to a type of Christianity that emphasises the preaching of the gospel and personal experience of the saving power of Jesus Christ. Evangelicalism also places a strong emphasis on personal and		
		public morality. The word ‘evangelical’ can be applied to any denomination but it mostly applies to the Protestant churches and to evangelical Anglicanism.	
		Protestantism A general term for those breaking away at the Reformation, the early sixteenth century movements for reform in the Christian Church. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ‘protesting’ churches in England were often called the nonconformist churches or dissenters—those churches that did not acknowledge the authority of the established church of England.	
		religious orders Organisations of men or women who take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Bands of men or women in these religious orders most frequently live in community and devote themselves to a specific vocation such as work in schools or hospitals.	
		synod An assembly or council of church officials.	

Australia was a series of British colonies until 1901. The establishment of the different denominations of Christianity and their subsequent development is reflected in the history of those colonies. On the First Fleet, two-thirds of the convicts classified themselves as Church of England, one-third as Roman Catholic. Convicts in fact, made up around 80 per cent of the first wave of European arrivals to Australian shores. It was considered that the new colony of New South Wales would be useful as a dumping ground for moral undesirables of the British Isles.

Governor Phillip's official instructions regarding religious observances were comprehensive.

He was to enforce due observance of religion and good order among the inhabitants, and take such steps for the due celebration of public worship as circumstances would permit ... He was to grant full liberty of conscience, and the full exercise of all modes of religious worship not prohibited by law, provided his charges were content with a quiet and peaceable enjoyment of the same, not giving offence or scandal to government; he was to cause the laws against blasphemy, profaneness, adultery, fornication, polygamy, incest, profanation of the Lord's Day, swearing, and drunkenness to be rigorously executed ... [The governor] was to take care that the Book of Common Prayer as by law be read each Sunday and Holy Day, and that the Blessed Sacrament be administered according to the rites of the Church of England.

Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol. 1, 1962, p. 80

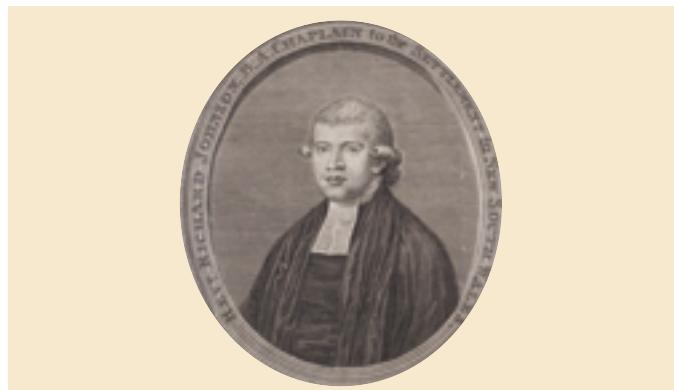


Figure 8.1.1 The Rev. Richard Johnson, who conducted Australia's first church service on 3 February 1788 under a great tree near the corner of modern-day Bligh and Hunter streets, Sydney

Naturally, it was Johnson who was expected to carry out these duties.

For the first thirty years of the new settlement, Church of England ministers were the only clergy with any power or influence in the community. They had a role in legislative activity and were supported financially by the authorities. The Church of England was the state religion of England, and it was expected that things would be no different in Australia. The English convicts, many from the ‘unchurched’ slums of London, were **atheists** for all intents and purposes. The Church of England was seen as being associated with the authorities and with the maintenance of stability in the colonies. The Irish Catholic convicts despised the religion of the English, a people they saw as their oppressors.

All convicts were obliged to attend Church of England services, but these had little effect in establishing a climate of religious feeling. For the English convicts, compulsory worship and religious instruction were viewed as part of the punishment. For the Irish convicts, it was an imposition and offensive.

A community of exiles

Rev. James Fleet Cover, a Congregational Minister who arrived from Tahiti with missionaries of the first London Missionary Society on 14 May 1798, wrote:

Here we have to contend with the depravity and corruption of the human heart, heightened and confirmed in all its viciousness by long and repeated indulgences of inbred corruption.

Captain William Bligh, Governor of New South Wales 1806–08, described the colony as:

... a community of exiles, each dragging the others further into the filth of moral corruption and the slime of physical surdity.

The Quakers James Backhouse and George Walker wrote to the governor on 18 January 1837:

We cannot but regard with mournful interest, the low state of morality and the necessarily consequent defect of religious principle in the generality of the inhabitants of this colony.

Early Presbyterian minister Rev. William Hamilton wrote in his diary (1837–53) of the rural districts between Berrima and Goulburn:

I am continually shocked by the religious indifference of those among whom I live.

In James Udy, *Church Union in Australia*, 1983, pp. 1–5

The Catholic free settler John O'Sullivan wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin in 1830:

Some of our unfortunate and wretched countrymen are foremost in perpetrating the shocking crimes that mark this colony ... I did not think the Irish character capable of performing the villainous deeds that are daily blazoned forth.

In Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 1992, p. 9



Figure 8.1.2 Samuel Marsden (1765–1838), the second Church of England chaplain of New South Wales

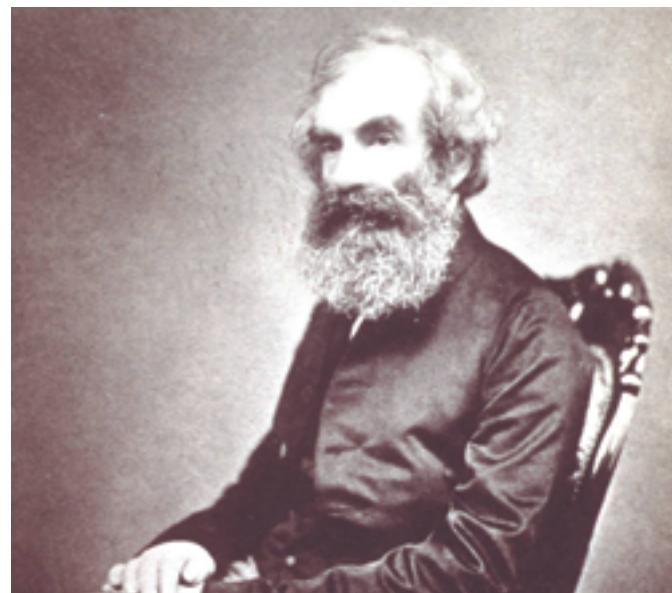


Figure 8.1.3 James Backhouse established Quakerism in Australia in 1832. Writing in 1837, he mourned the low state of morality in the colony.

Did you know?

Transportation to New South Wales ended in 1840 (Port Phillip, Victoria, and Moreton Bay, Queensland, were part of New South Wales). It ended in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1853. In 1840 convicts were 30 per cent of the European population of New South Wales. In 1851 Port Phillip became a separate colony.

The Church of England (Anglican)

The earliest Church of England ministers were of the 'Low' church or evangelical persuasion. The evangelicals stressed religion as an individual matter of personal conviction and salvation, as mediated through the direct authority of the Bible. Evangelicalism placed a strong emphasis on personal and public morality.

Support from the colonial government brought many privileges for the Church of England in Australia. But it also meant interference in the affairs of the Church of England, particularly in the appointment of senior church officials, such as bishops. The first bishop of Sydney and the first and only bishop of Australia (before the single diocese was divided into four in 1847) was Bishop William Grant Broughton. Broughton sought permission for self-government for the Church of England in Australia in 1850. The British Government initially refused. Only in 1962 did all the parliaments of Australia pass legislation to completely separate the Church of England from its formal link to the Crown under Australian secular law. From around 1860, local **synods** of the Church of England in

Australia developed in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. A nationwide General Synod was formed in 1872, but historically the power and influence within Anglicanism in Australia has remained in the dioceses.

The Church of England drew heavily on assistance from the mother country, in terms of both finances and personnel. In fact, the first Australian-born Anglican bishop, Sir Marcus Loane, was not appointed to the diocese of Sydney until 1966. The term Anglican, while first used in Australia in 1851, was not adopted as the official title of the Anglican Church in Australia until 1981. The reliance on English men and women was particularly seen in the bush brotherhoods and the Bush Church Aid Society (see pages 176–7).

The Church of Scotland (Presbyterian)

The Presbyterian of 8 April 1899 commented on the forthcoming formation of the General Assembly: 'God made a free offer of salvation to men without distinction.' This was a softening of the strongly Calvinistic stance of the Presbyterians that had been evident before the 1870s. Presbyterian ministers were reminded not to shirk their duty of informing their parishioners of the eternal damnation that awaited the wicked, although the issue of Sabbath observance was stronger. In the secular press, the *Bulletin* magazine made frequent satiric comment about this kind of strict **Calvinism**.

Presbyterians were not necessarily the wealthy classes in the nineteenth-century Australian community. The Rev. John Dunmore Lang sponsored a significant number of Presbyterians to emigrate to Australia to escape the poverty of Scotland and also to help ensure a **Protestant** 'character' to New South Wales.

Movement towards the union of the various divisions within Presbyterianism in Australia started in the second half of the nineteenth century. A national Federal Presbyterian Union was formed in 1901 as the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Did you know?

John Hunter, captain of the First Fleet flagship HMS *Sirius* and Governor of the colony 1794–1800, was a former candidate for the Church of Scotland ministry. The first Church of Scotland congregation was formed at Ebenezer on the banks of the Hawkesbury River near Sydney in 1803.



Figure 8.1.4 St Philip's Church, Sydney, c. 1840. Sydney's first church building, made of wattle and daub, was not completed until 1793. It cost 67 pounds 12 shillings and 11 pence ha'penny and was paid for by Rev. Johnson himself. It burnt down in 1798. A new stone church named St Philip's was opened in 1810, and this was replaced by the current building in 1856.



Figure 8.1.5 A sketch of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, 1908–09, by Lionel Lindsay, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. The original cathedral, blessed by Father Therry in 1821, was destroyed by fire in 1865. The present cathedral, blessed by Bishop Polding in 1868, was not fully completed until 2000 when the spires were added.

The Church of Rome (Roman Catholic)

In its Australian beginnings, the Catholic Church was Irish, and the Irish were convicts. Certainly there were hardened criminals among the Irish convicts, but a large share of the Irish on the transport ships were on minimum seven-year sentences, and they were there because their poverty and English oppression had driven them to rebellion. After the uprising of 1798, Irish rebels were transported to Australia in large numbers, among them principled men whose crime was standing up to their English oppressors. That having been said, it was also the case that those most indifferent or hostile to religion back in Ireland were the ones most likely to have been involved in rebellion. Nonetheless, resentment against the English and their religion could not have been sharper.

The Irish Catholics were more given to piety than some others in the colony, encouraged as they were from 1820 by the powerful influence of the colony's early Catholic priests, such as Father John Therry. Therry became adviser, banker and confidant of the Irish Catholic community. The foundation stone of Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral was laid within a year of Therry's arrival. Therry's many battles with the authorities eventually led to the loss of his official commission in 1825.

The Catholic Church did, however, continue to grow in strength. In the 1860s, twelve **religious orders** entered Australian dioceses to set up schools, hospitals and hostels—but mostly schools. By the late 1860s, two Australian religious orders had been founded: the Good Samaritan Sisters in 1857, and the Sisters of St Joseph in 1866. By 1880 there was a total of 815 sisters from all orders teaching in schools.

The nonconformist Churches (Methodist and Congregationalist)

The **nonconformist** churches had an important place in the establishment of Christianity in Australia. A number of missionaries from the Congregationalist Church-sponsored London Missionary Society arrived in New South Wales in 1798, having fled unrest in the Pacific Islands. They were able to assist the uncompromising Samuel Marsden, the colony's second Church of England chaplain, to plant the seeds of Christian institutions in Australia.

The first Congregationalist minister arrived in September 1830. The independent stand of Congregationalists mediated against their establishing strong communities in Australia—they were never more than 5 per cent of the population. Yet their desire to get involved in political life has seen them exert far greater influence than their numbers would suggest.

Methodist ministers were active in Australia from the early part of the nineteenth century. A lack of clergy, however, did not hold back Methodism in the early years. The small class meetings of Methodism could continue successfully for years without a clergyman. All the streams of Methodism had a strong commitment to evangelicalism, as well as to missionary work in Australia and the Pacific. Methodists were active in their establishment of schools, colleges, hospitals and churches.

Movement towards Methodist union waxed and waned throughout the nineteenth century. A united Methodist church, the Methodist Church of Australia, came into being on 1 January 1902.



Figure 8.1.6 Samuel Leigh (1785–1852) became the first Methodist minister of New South Wales in 1815.

Did you know?

Ties to Germany, the maintenance of German language and membership of the Lutheran Church (Lutheranism) were hallmarks of the German-speaking immigrants to South Australia in 1837–38. While some of them were missionaries to Aboriginal peoples, most were refugees from religious persecution in Prussia. The people of this German community brought with them the skills of vine planting and winemaking learnt from the famous Rhine valley winemaking districts of Germany, skills for which South Australia has become world famous.

Review

- Outline** the arrival and establishment of Christianity in Australia after 1788.
- Write a short narrative account of the religious outlook of the convicts who arrived in Australia.
- In pairs, have one partner consider the similarities of the arrival and establishment of the Church of England and the Catholic Church in Australia; the other partner should consider the differences. **Compare** the lists. On balance, were the experiences of the Church of England and the Catholic Church more similar or different? **Justify** your response.
- What difficulties did the nonconformist Christian Churches face in establishing themselves in Australia?

Extension



- Go to the web destinations for page 168 to read more on the history of the Anglican Church in Australia. List three points that extend your knowledge of the arrival and establishment of Anglicanism in Australia.
- Go to the web destinations for page 168 to **investigate** the history of the Lutheran Church in Australia. What does this tell you about the establishment of Lutheranism in Australia up to 1945? **Outline** how this relates to the history of the establishment of Christianity in Australia.

Religious traditions other than Christianity

Apart from Judaism, it would be difficult to say that any tradition other than Christianity was established in Australia before 1945. Other traditions, however, were present in Australia, particularly in the years prior to Federation and the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, which ensured that ‘white Australia’ would become a reality.

A ‘white Australia’

The origins of the ‘white Australia’ policy go back to the goldfields of the 1850s. Large numbers of Chinese miners, with ‘foreign’ ways and unfamiliar religions, who undercut ‘white’ labour prices, were resented by the Anglo-Australian population. By 1861 Victoria and New South Wales had passed anti-Chinese restriction legislation. Australia’s first prime minister, Edmund Barton, was later to say, ‘The doctrine of the equality of man was never intended to apply to the equality of the Englishman and the Chinaman.’

The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* was one of the first pieces of legislation passed by the first Federal Parliament. This Act was the basis of the ‘white Australia’ policy for over fifty years. Rather than focus on particular nationalities as the anti-Chinese legislation had done in the nineteenth century, it prohibited all those who failed to pass a dictation test of fifty words in a European language. After 1905 any prescribed language could be used although this change was never implemented. The use of the test by immigration officers was discretionary and aimed to exclude all those who looked ‘coloured’.



Figure 8.1.7 A 1906 ‘white Australia’ badge

Although not explicitly stated, it was a given that immigrants would be Christian—for example, government resistance to immigration by ‘white’ European Jews was certainly encountered before the Second World War. It is therefore of little surprise that religious traditions other than Christianity did not increase their profiles significantly until after the Second World War, when immigration drives by the government began changing the make-up of the Australian population.

Buddhism

It is most likely that the first lay Buddhists to come to Australia were some of the Chinese working on the goldfields of the 1850s, but these people probably also stood within the traditions of Confucianism and popular Daoism as well. Victoria had the highest Buddhist population at 27 000 in 1857. In 1891 Buddhists represented 1.2 per cent of the Australian population, but by 1911 the total number had fallen to just 3268 or 0.07 per cent.

The first permanent Buddhist community was established in the 1870s by Sinhalese migrants from Sri Lanka who came to work on Queensland sugar plantations and in the Thursday Island pearl industry. By the 1890s, there were about 500 people in the Thursday Island community, a temple had been built, Buddhist festivals were celebrated and a monk was said to have visited to officiate. There were also mainly Japanese Shinto/Buddhist communities in Broome and Darwin.

Hinduism

Hindu Indians first came to Australia with British families who had employed them in India. There were even a few Indian convicts sent here by the British government in India, and it is recorded that two Bengali Indians fought at the Eureka Stockade.

Many Hindus who came to Australia in the nineteenth century worked as hawkers, travelling around the remote communities. Some came as labourers to work on sugar cane or cotton plantations. In 1880 there were about 3000 Indians in Australia. Most Indian migrants returned to India after a period of work here. In any census year, the number of Indians in Australia who identified as Hindus in the Census was substantially lower than the Indian population in Australia.

By 1896 a firm of merchants from Hyderabad in India had branches in Melbourne. In 1898 about thirty merchants from Sindh (now in modern-day Pakistan) also settled in Melbourne. There is no evidence that Hindus were able to practise their religion and it is probable that the only ceremonies were private domestic rituals at home shrines.

Hinduism was, however, present in other ways in Australian life. The Theosophical Society centred in Sydney and Melbourne, from 1879 until the present, had many prominent members, including prime ministers such as Alfred Deakin, some of whom were well-read in Hindu texts. However, these people were more interested in the intellectual and philosophical aspects of Hinduism and did not engage in devotional or ritual activities.

Did you know?

Founded in New York in 1875, Theosophy—meaning ‘Divine Wisdom’—embraced aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism and mysticism. Theosophists claimed to have rediscovered an ancient wisdom that, unlike denominational Christianity, did not clash with the new scientific theories of the late nineteenth century and so attracted many well-educated people. In time, the Theosophical Society drifted away from its strong focus on Eastern philosophies and gave greater emphasis to spiritualism and occultism.

Islam



Figure 8.1.8 The Adelaide mosque was built in 1888, and is the oldest mosque in Australia. Its original four minarets were added in 1903.

Muslims from as far away as Broken Hill, New South Wales and Kalgoorlie, Western Australia gathered at least once a year at the Adelaide mosque, usually for the Fast of Ramadan. In 1890 it was reported that eighty Afghans were present to observe this important festival (*Adelaide Observer*, 2 August 1890).

There was a Muslim presence in Australia before European settlement, as Muslim fishermen from Makassar (in modern-day Indonesia) visited north-western Australian long before 1788. This is known from the graves they dug there, which face Mecca, and local Aboriginal cave paintings and ceremonies that incorporate Makassan Muslim motifs.

Afghan camel drivers (not all were from Afghanistan, but most were Muslims) began to work the inland areas of Australia from 1860, after three Afghan camel drivers accompanied the Burke and Wills expedition. The ‘Ghans’, as they were known, built the first mosques in Australia around the turn of the century. Many returned to their homeland after their period of work and, during the first half of the twentieth century, the number of Muslims in Australia declined. The 1911 Census recorded just under 4000 Muslims in Australia and this fell to 1877 in 1933.

Judaism

There were at least eight Jewish convicts on the First Fleet. By the time transportation ended in 1853, at least 1000 Jews, mostly males and mostly from London’s East End, entered New South Wales and the other colonies as convicts. Convict numbers were supplemented by emigrant Jews from Britain’s urban poor and then increasing numbers of middle-class English Jews, who brought with them their particular Anglo-Jewish style of practice. There is a record of a Chevra Kadisha (the Jewish burial society that takes charge of the ritual matters associated with death and burial) from as early as 1817.

Did you know?

Perhaps best known among the Jews of the First Fleet was Esther Abraham. She bore her first child, a daughter, in London’s Newgate Prison while awaiting transportation to Sydney and later went on to become the wife of George Johnston, Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales. Esther’s grandson by that daughter, George Nicholls, went on to become Auditor General of New South Wales in 1856. Nicholls was instrumental in gaining parity with Christian congregations for the progress of Jewish clergy. Also among Esther Abraham’s descendants was the late Rear Admiral Sir David Martin, Governor of New South Wales 1989–90.

By the 1840s, Jewish numbers made up 0.5 per cent of the population and have remained around that percentage nationally ever since. The Jewish community in Sydney demonstrated sufficient self-reliance by 1845 to be granted

aid in the repayment of a debt for the erection of a purpose-built synagogue. That synagogue, in York Street, Sydney, was the forerunner to the Great Synagogue, which has stood on its present site between Castlereagh and Elizabeth streets since 1878.

A Jewish community flourished in Melbourne after 1845. There were also Jewish communities in Goulburn, Maitland and Grafton in the nineteenth century, and while those communities are gone today, their gravestones mark their former presence.

The 1880s saw Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution in their homelands, and some came to Australia. Jewish refugees continued to come to Australia in the first half of the twentieth century—initially after the First World War, and then after 1933 as Hitler came to power in Germany. Seven thousand Jews took Australian visas between 1938 and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

The Anglo-Jewish and Western European, more liberal influences remained strong in Sydney, while the Eastern European, stricter Orthodoxy became a feature of Melbourne Jewry, where many of the Eastern European refugees settled. Even though the Western European immigrants were liberal compared to their Eastern European counterparts, they were far more observant than the descendants of the nineteenth-century Jewish population in Australia, who had strongly assimilated into the dominant culture.



Figure 8.1.9 The York Street Synagogue. It served the Sydney Jewish community between 1844 and 1877, when it made way for the Great Synagogue.

Jews in public life



Figure 8.1.10
Sir Isaac Isaacs



Figure 8.1.11
General Sir John Monash

Pictured above is Sir Isaac Isaacs, the first Australian-born Governor-General of Australia (1931–36) and General Sir John Monash, whom Field Marshal Montgomery called ‘the best General on the Western Front in Europe’ in the First World War. Both men were Jewish, Australian and, like other Anglo-Jews of the time, were loyal to the British Empire (Isaacs fiercely so). ‘We Australian Jews in this remote outpost of the British Empire are Britishers to the backbone and spinal marrow,’ the *Jewish Herald* reported shortly after the end of the First World War.

Review

- 1 Recall the cultural and legislative factors that worked against the expansion of traditions other than Christianity in Australia prior to 1945.
- 2 In point form, outline the arrival and establishment of Buddhism and Judaism in Australia.
- 3 Recall some of the kinds of work in which nineteenth-century Hindu immigrants might have been found.
- 4 Identify the different places from which Muslims came to Australia before 1945.
- 5 Offer a set of reasons that account for the greater degree of the establishment of Judaism in Australia compared to other traditions (except Christianity).
- 6 You are asked to summarise the establishment of religion in Australia from 1788 to 1945. What would you say? Identify in your response at least five key points.

Issues related to the development of Christianity in Australia

Glossary

- conscription** Compulsory military service.
sectarianism The narrow and excessive allegiance to a particular religious group.

Christianity in Australia developed along denominational lines, and this brought with it the sectarian rivalries that had fragmented the churches in Britain. Many Protestant groups objected to the domination of the Church of England (Anglicans). At the heart of anti-Catholic sentiment was the issue of loyalty to the British Empire. Catholics could be suspected of disloyalty to the Empire because of their loyalty to the Pope or to other Catholic nations. These rivalries had an impact on how education developed in Australia and in the way social welfare was organised.

Sectarianism

Until quite recently there has been a climate of mistrust and bad feeling between the various Christian denominations. This enmity, known as **sectarianism**, is a significant part of Australia's religious history.

Sectarianism was usually most obvious between Protestants (and Anglicans) and Catholics, but it also existed among the Protestants. Sectarianism going back some centuries existed between Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists and Quakers. While there were instances of cooperation among the Protestant clergy in the early days of the colonies, there are more than a few recorded instances of Methodist and Presbyterian clergy complaining about their ill-treatment at the hands of the established church (the Church of England).

All the Protestant denominations kept apart from the Irish Catholics, whose loyalty to Ireland, strange language (many spoke only Gaelic), disreputable convict connections and mysterious religious practices made them objects of suspicion. The Reformation and the English presence in Ireland had created fear and mistrust. Between the Protestants and Catholics was an ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious divide wider than the seas they had all crossed to arrive in Australia.

Did you know?

In 1902 Prime Minister Edmund Barton returned to Australia following a visit to Britain and Europe that included an audience with the Pope. It raised such sectarian ire that 30 000 Protestants signed a petition that was presented to the House of Representatives, opposing conferring 'any position of honour or dignity in the Commonwealth' on the Pope.

Each [Protestant group] ... brought its own certainty about the correctness in every detail of its own position, and the consequent failure to observe the fullness of the truth by all groups other than its own. The Christian witness was a kaleidoscope indeed, and it would be only with fingers crossed behind the back that one could remark on how these Christians loved each other.

Ian Gillman (ed.), *Many Faiths One Nation*, 1988, p. 13

The Eligible has been turned down by his Sweetheart in favour of The Boy who has "done his bit," and who now leads her to the altar. The Recruiting Officer seizes the occasion to say— "Well, what about it, lad?"



—Only the Brave Deserve the Fair."

Figure 8.1.12 This conscription propaganda postcard dates from c. 1915. The overtones of loyalty to God, King and Country are evident in its message that it is the righteous soldier who will be graced by God.

RESPOND

Why might some Catholics object to the 'overtones' in this postcard?

Sectarianism, in its broader sense, was on show at the celebrations for Federation. Federation in 1901 was supposed to herald the unity of the Australian people but what happened during the Sydney Federation ceremony marred the celebration. The Catholic Cardinal Moran and the heads of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches did not follow the Church of England Archbishop Smith and civic leaders to the inauguration ceremony at Centennial Park.

The two Protestant churchmen had refused to march because they had been placed far behind the Anglican and Catholic leaders in the order of the procession. After all, they protested, the new constitution guaranteed equality to all religions! Cardinal Moran withdrew because he had not been given first place over the Archbishop as he was a cardinal.

Richard Broome, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in NSW Society 1900–1914*, 1980, p. 95

Conscription and sectarianism

The First World War was a crucial period in the entrenchment of the sectarian divide between Catholics on one side, and Protestant and Anglican Australia on the other. It was crucial because it raised the question of loyalty and national interest that had not been raised before.

In 1916 when the Labor prime minister, William Morris (Billy) Hughes, announced his intention to hold a referendum of the people on the question of **conscription**

for military service outside the Commonwealth, the issue began to split the country. Hughes was the leader of a party that had pledged to oppose conscription for overseas service and was highly suspicious of all imperialist wars. The Labor Party believed that conscription threatened the 'white Australia' policy and class solidarity because it would create a need for imported labour. When Hughes announced the referendum for 28 October, he was expelled from the Labor Party.

The non-Labor parties were deeply Protestant and so were not natural places for Catholic loyalties. On the other hand, the Labor Party was not all Catholic and the opposition to conscription was not only from Catholics.

Both Catholic men and Protestant men enlisted (and died) in great numbers in the war, but it is true to say that at the extremes of politics, those who fiercely supported conscription tended to be Protestant and those who opposed it, Catholic. This reflected the closeness of religion and socioeconomic status in early twentieth-century Australia. The language of war propaganda saw highly emotive religious language and imagery used, particularly in support of conscription—as is evident in the illustration on page 163. Many saw the British cause as akin to a holy war in which the mother country was the moral defender of freedom and democracy.

Those who opposed conscription, such as the prominent Catholic archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix, saw the war and conscription more in terms of economics and politics. Mannix won few friends outside the Catholic Church when he called the First World War a 'sordid trade war'. With respect to the war, he declared: 'First settle Ireland's wrongs, and then we will talk about going to the rescue of Belgium.' Other Catholic bishops did not share his view. They stressed that Catholics should vote according to the dictates of their consciences.

In the first referendum, held on 28 October 1916, the 'no conscription' vote was only 72 480 more than the 'yes' vote. Despite the sectarian fury during the campaign, the electorate results show that voting was in the main on party lines. A second referendum was held in December 1917—Mannix called Hughes a 'little Czar' and Hughes threatened to deport Mannix. Again the referendum was defeated by the slimmest of margins.

In the aftermath of the First World War there was a real sectarian bitterness in Australian society. The hope that the war would unify the young nation was not fulfilled. Catholics who had signed up, who had served and who lost sons were very bitter that their loyalty to Australia as a nation was still suspect. One of the reasons for this

suspicion was because the issue of funding for Catholic schools continued to be pushed during the war—others thought they ought to have given up on their sectional demands and thrown themselves into the national effort. Mostly the aggressive face of sectarianism was restricted to a few groups such as the Loyal Orange Lodge and the Protestant Defence Society (PDS), which was formed in 1902 to counter the 'secret tactics and open aggressiveness' of Roman Catholicism.

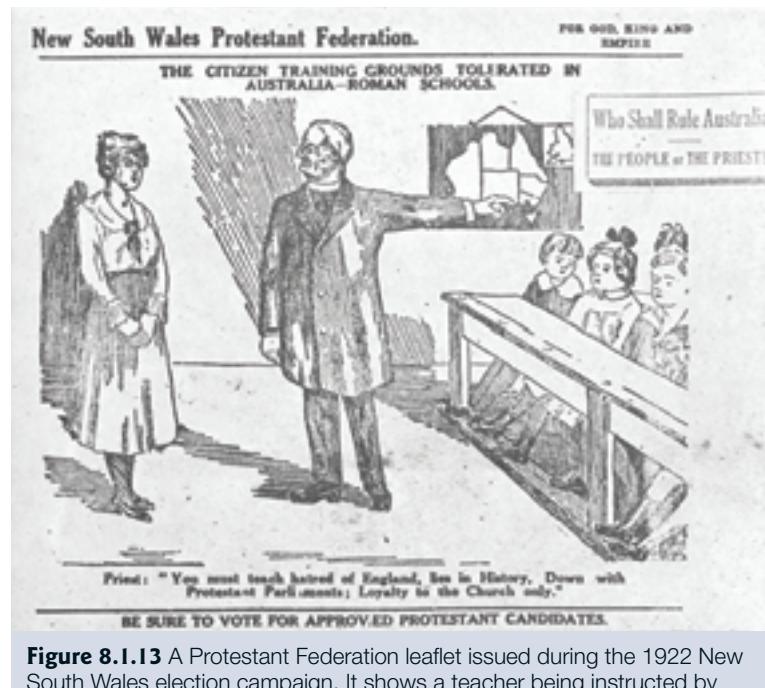


Figure 8.1.13 A Protestant Federation leaflet issued during the 1922 New South Wales election campaign. It shows a teacher being instructed by a Catholic priest, who says: 'You must teach hatred of England, lies in History, Down with Protestant Parliaments; Loyalty to the Church only.'

Catholics formed their own organisations, such as the Knights of the Southern Cross (1919) and the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (1871), to attract Catholics away from organisations attached to Freemasonry. Mostly the face of sectarianism was subtle. There were many important firms in which it was said Catholics were not employed. On the other hand, it was assumed by many people that the public service was a Catholic preserve.

Some sectarianism, however, was not so subtle. Until the later 1940s there were still job advertisements in newspapers explicitly stating 'no Catholics need apply' or that the person should be a Catholic. And well into the 1950s Catholic and Protestant children would meet on the street and taunt each other with sectarian rhymes; mixed marriages often resulted in exclusion from church and families; and Catholics had to seek permission to go to non-Catholic funerals.

It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that overt sectarianism disappeared from Australian society. There were many factors both inside and outside Australia that created a more 'open' society and led almost incidentally to the decline of sectarianism. Some of these are examined in Chapter 9.

Review

- Recall** the names of the two major opponents in the First World War conscription debate.
- Identify** the various factors that link conscription in the First World War and sectarianism.
- Summarise** some of the impacts of sectarianism in Australian society before 1945 from this list of headings: funding for schools; job restrictions; mixed marriages.
- Distinguish** between subtle and not subtle forms of sectarianism outlined in this section.

Extension



- Use the internet to **investigate** the history of the Loyal Orange Lodge, the Protestant Defence Society or the Hibernian Society. Do any of these organisations exist today?
- Discuss** the proposition: 'Sectarianism was the inevitable result of importing European religions and tensions into Australia.'
- Using the web destinations for page 174 as a starting point, **investigate** the language of war propaganda. Can you find one or more examples of highly emotive religious language and imagery that was used to build support for the war effort?

Social welfare

In the area of social welfare, agencies such as St Vincent de Paul, the Wesley Mission and the Brotherhood of St Laurence have a major impact today on the lives of Australians. They had their origins in Australia in nineteenth-century church men and women who took seriously the Christian call to service. Each of the major religious bodies in nineteenth-century Australia, in the absence of extensive government support, sought to assist



Figure 8.1.14 Christmas poor relief appeal, 1938. Canon Hammond (far left) was a well-known minister of the Church of England St Barnabas on Broadway in Sydney. It was the teetotal Hammond who began the tradition of the sign outside St Barnabas' Church that proclaimed each week a new message of salvation for all who passed by down Parramatta Road. Hammond was heavily involved in social welfare work, including the establishment of a low-cost, self-help housing project for disadvantaged families in Sydney's south-west. The suburb Hammondville was named in his honour.

their communities in the area of medical care. Frequently this assistance was incorporated with other community services through their various welfare agencies. Religious organisations have had a significant role in the welfare of the Australian people.

Did you know?

The Irish Sisters of Charity arrived in Australia in 1838 and went on to establish St Vincent's Hospital at Potts Point, Sydney, in 1857. The founding Sisters of this hospital were professional nurses trained in France, and the Sisters of Charity were the first professional nurses in the penal colony.

In 1817 the Benevolent Society of NSW—an outgrowth of the 1813 organisation The NSW Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence—was formed. It was the first charitable organisation to receive government

subsidies and became the model for the involvement of the community in providing services directly or administering government funds. Through their volunteer services, organisations such as this have, since their beginnings, provided a level of social welfare services that the government alone simply does not have the resources to provide. Most often this has been without consideration of the religious affiliation of the people being cared for. Some of the most important of these organisations are listed here.

Anglican Home Mission Society

Small organisations caring for homeless children, women in need, the unemployed and the poor, in one form or another, have operated in partnership with local Anglican parishes since 1856. Over time, these disparate groups came under the 'Anglicare' banner.

Did you know?

'Three pints of ale, please.' The Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) first met as the 'Eclectic Society' in the Castle and Falcon pub in London. Their society, renamed the Church Missionary Society, was eventually among the first to send chaplains to Australia, among them the famous Samuel Marsden. There were forty-three separate Australian missions operating in towns and rural areas around Australia between 1814 and 1900. Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Methodists, Moravians and Presbyterians were all represented.

St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a Catholic lay organisation originally established in France in 1833. By 1895 there were already twenty-six branches of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Sydney alone. Members of the association visited people in hospitals and prisons, and offered assistance to the aged, homeless and poor.

The Sydney Rescue Work Society

The Sydney Rescue Work Society was founded in 1882. It was established specifically to tend to the needs of poor families, particularly their women and children. Today it continues as Communicare, an agency of the Anglican Church, and is involved primarily with providing childcare assistance for families.

Central Methodist Mission

The Central Methodist Mission was established in Sydney in 1884 in Castlereagh Street. The slogan chosen was

'A living Christ for a dying world', and the mission looked to combine social action with word in the preaching of the gospel. Wesley Mission is the name used today for social welfare services that come under the banner of UnitingCare Australia, a work of the Uniting Church in Australia. The Uniting Church makes provision for a central mission in each of the capital cities.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army, a Christian denomination that began as the 'Christian Mission' in London's East End in 1865, found its way to South Australia in 1880. The Salvation Army has a strong belief in the importance of bringing the Christian message to people through practical means, thus its emphasis on providing welfare services. From humble beginnings, the 'Salvos' have become a part of the fabric of Australian society.

Social welfare during the Great Depression

During the 1930s Great Depression (at that time the period of perhaps the greatest social need in the history of the young nation) the Australian churches were mostly silent. On the political causes of poverty and social dislocation, they held a moderate and politically conservative position. They provided some material comfort (for their own), but rarely questioned government policy. It appears that Christians found little support from their churches for long-term solutions to society's ills.

Review

- 1 Define 'social welfare'.
- 2 Recall and list the kind of groups that church social welfare agencies sought to support.
- 3 Outline the contribution of three Christian agencies to social welfare in Australia before 1945.
- 4 Clarify the factors that motivated the churches to become involved in social welfare.

Extension

Investigate an Australian religious social welfare agency and write a report to summarise its history and work in the period prior to 1945.

The contribution of religious traditions in Australia

Glossary

Anglo-Catholic	A strand within the Church of England (Anglican) whose rituals retained many aspects of Roman Catholicism. The Anglo-Catholic or 'High' church also had religious orders for women and men.
proselytising	Winning converts to one's religion.
secularism	A social or political philosophy that rejects all forms of religion.

Given Australia's religious history, it is not surprising that it is Christianity that contributed most to Australian society in the first 150 years after the arrival of the First Fleet. This section deals with that contribution in rural and outback communities, education and public morality.

Rural and outback communities

The make-up of Australia's religious communities state by state reflects the differences in their colonial past. The Catholic Church went where the Irish went and many of them went into rural Australia. In rural areas the Catholics had the advantage—Catholic nuns and brothers and priests, mostly from Ireland, were prepared to go where married Anglican clergy refused to go. The Lutherans established a strong presence in Central Australia—the Hermannsburg mission for the western Aranda Aboriginal peoples was established in 1877.

Bush brotherhoods

Australia's vast open spaces and absence of church authorities were two of the factors that played a part in the emergence of the Church of England 'bush brotherhoods'. At the turn of the twentieth century there were those among the English ministers who dreamed of a 'band of men' who could 'preach like Apostles, ride like cowboys' and, with just their food and clothing as material comforts, be content to minister to the European population in the bush. The brotherhoods relied on clergy who were recruited from England, lured by the promised romance of a life as a minister in the bush—culturally the early brothers were upper class, well-educated, celibate Englishmen.



Figure 8.1.15 The first 'bush brothers'—Brotherhood of St Andrew, Longreach, Queensland, 1898. Back: A. Perry and W. Scott; front: T. C. Chapman and G. Halford.

The Bush Brotherhood Movement began with the establishment of St Andrew's Mission House at Longreach, Queensland in 1897, with Rev. George Douglas Halford (1865–1948) as its head.

At Dubbo in May 1904, Rev. Frederick Henry Campion (1872–1957) formally established and became principal of the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd. He founded the society's journal, the *Bush Brother*, later that year. It was Campion who established by example the pattern of a bush brother's life—trips into his district, interspersed with frequent short visits to the central house and quarterly reunions there with all members of the brotherhood.

In 1928 there were six of these brotherhoods working in Australia, covering over 180 million hectares of territory between them.

Well into the twentieth century, the concept of loyalty to the Empire was disappearing in Britain. English clergy no longer felt the same sense of duty to travel across the world to serve the church as bush brothers. Of course there were Australian brothers, but local Anglicans were never as inclined towards the lonely, celibate life that seemed to have romanced the English brothers from afar.

The Brothers must also be unmarried and free from matrimonial understandings.

In the archives of Anglican Diocese of Brisbane

The achievements of the brotherhoods are perhaps to be measured by the degree to which they have become a part of Australian Anglican culture. An extraordinary number of English brothers were made bishops—twenty in all, eighteen of them in Australia. The brotherhoods carried a pastoral ministry to the farthest reaches of the continent. The ministry of the bush brotherhoods is responsible for the presence of High Church Anglicanism in many rural regions.

Mr Edmund Jowett said that it was to prevent a depopulation of the vital portions of Australia, sparsely populated and forming an open gateway to the East that the great work of the brotherhood must be carried on. The provision of the amenities of civilisation for the dwellers in the ‘outback’ was not only a humanitarian question or a religious question but a national question.

Reported in the Melbourne Argus, 29 February 1928

The Bush Church Aid Society

The Bush Church Aid Society was an attempt by the evangelical Sydney Anglicans to capture the bush dioceses from the influence of the bush brotherhoods and their strongly **Anglo-Catholic** stance. In addition, Anglicans feared Catholic ‘aggression’ in the bush. Social services, such as child welfare and education, were almost entirely under the control of Catholic nuns and brothers, who had established convent schools in places the married Anglican clergy had refused to go.

A mission to the bush was also an escape route for conservative Sydney evangelicals, who felt besieged by the increasingly liberalising forces around them. The Bush Church Aid Society for Australia and Tasmania, known as the BCA, was launched on 26 May 1919. The BCA, with its married clergy and army of female volunteers, took over in places where the brotherhoods had failed, particularly the settled rural areas and townships.

In an age when women were mostly restricted to fetes and flowers in the service of the church, the BCA was noteworthy for its pioneering use of women missionaries, and they were the backbone of the Society. Australian women took up the challenge, too, as hostel sisters and nurses.

The BCA developed a reputation for its healthcare services, hostels for young people, and innovative use of aeroplanes. The hostels—models of Christian service rather than **proselytising** preaching—ensured the welcome of the BCA and its long life in the bush. The BCA is still working in some of the areas it pioneered in the 1920s.

Australian Inland Mission

Victorian-born Presbyterian minister John Flynn (1880–1951) went on a mission to shearers in 1909 and in 1912 founded the Australian Inland Mission, which brought a range of religious, health, pastoral and other services for Europeans in outback Australia. Flynn used the modern inventions of the wireless and the aeroplane to establish the Flying Doctor Service in the late 1920s to provide reliable medical assistance for people in remote areas. The School of the Air was an offshoot of the introduction of the wireless in the bush. Flynn’s motto was ‘For Christ and the Continent’—it is still the motto of the Uniting Church in Australia’s outback mission service, Frontier Services.

Review

- 1 What ‘advantage’ did Catholics have in their ministry in sparsely populated rural regions?
- 2 Explain the background of most of the bush brothers and the appeal to them of the Australian outback.
- 3 Identify the religious groups that had an impact on rural and outback life in Australia before 1945.
- 4 Deduce the difficulties of ministering in the rural and outback areas for the mainstream Christian Churches.

Extension

- 1 Form groups and then further divide into ‘bush brothers’ and ‘rural settlers from the United Kingdom’. Imagine what might have been the key concerns about your sub-group’s life in Australia and decide on six concerns. In your larger group, construct a conversation between a bush brother and a rural settler.
- 2 ‘... amenities of civilisation for the dwellers in the “outback” was not only a humanitarian question or a religious question but a national question.’ Discuss issues that arise from this comment by Mr Jowett from the Argus excerpt on this page.

Education

The story of religion and education in nineteenth-century Australia is essentially a story of the interplay of Christianity and politics. The churches battled with the government for financial support and autonomy in an area where they saw the future of their religious communities—education.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, legislation was enacted in each of the colonies to provide free, compulsory and secular elementary education for all children in schools operated by the State. These enactments influenced the contribution of the churches to Australian society and also the process of **secularism** in Australian society.

Did you know?

Established in 1856, St Catherine's Anglican Day and Boarding School for Girls in Waverley, Sydney, is Australia's oldest Anglican school for girls. It was not uncommon for Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran boarding schools to be established in rural centres, where they could cater for the educational needs of widely dispersed pastoral populations.

Church and School Corporation (1826)

This attempt to endow the Anglican Church as the Established Church in the Australian colonies and to place all public education under its control failed. Catholics and Presbyterians campaigned against the Corporation on the grounds of religious equality and its charter was suspended in 1829. It was dissolved in 1833.

The Church Act 1836

This provided a more general support for religion, as money was allocated to the major denominations according to their numbers in the population—one pound was promised for each pound raised by a congregation for the building of churches. This Act reflected the practical beliefs of the early legislators that all the religious bodies present in the colony could contribute to the moral welfare of a growing community that was badly in need of refinement. It also, however, had the effect of ensuring that the bigger Christian Churches in Australia were both mainstream and urban. Small religious denominations or people living in far-flung rural areas lacked the facility to organise themselves into congregations, and received virtually no aid. The major denominations firmly established their power base in the cities, particularly Melbourne and Sydney.

Different models for schools were proposed, both non-denominational with non-sectarian religious instruction and denominational, but all models were rejected.

The abolition of state aid to the four major churches in 1862 showed that secular feeling was strengthening and there were calls for unified control of elementary education. A NSW Royal Commission in 1866 found that many children were not attending school. The majority of the colony's schools remained with the Church of England and the majority of Catholic parents refused to send their children to school, preferring no education rather than have them come under the influence of the Church of England. As late as 1911, census statistics still showed a significantly higher rate of illiteracy among Catholics compared to the rest of the population.

NSW Public Instruction Act 1880

This Act sought to bring to an end some of the inequities that had resulted from *The Church Act 1836*.

Among its provisions were:

- separate religious instruction by visiting clergy in public schools (government school teachers could also provide non-sectarian scripture lessons);
- compulsory attendance
- the reduction (though not abolition) of fees
- the removal of state aid to denominational schools from 31 December 1882.

This eventually led to the establishment of a Catholic education system entirely separate from the State. State-controlled schools had been condemned in Pope Pius IX's 'Syllabus of Errors' in 1864, so Catholics did not welcome the secular education system that was proposed by the Act. This, together with the urban power base of the Church, brought about the establishment of a system of Catholic schools with religious orders of teachers as their essential foundation.

Let parents send their children, when of fit age, exclusively to Catholic schools. Let them regard all other schools as no places for their children, who have to learn before everything else to save their souls ...

Australian Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter, 1879

Did you know?

Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans and Lutherans all had schools established prior to 1945. These schools most often were 'elite' schools. Catholics established some elite schools as well, but also had a 'second tier' or parish schools linked to local churches. The private school systems that this history gave rise to have created a higher rate of private school enrolment in Australia than in any other English-speaking country.



Figure 8.1.16 An early Methodist school at Hill End, New South Wales. This photograph was taken c. 1870. Note the makeshift nature of the schoolhouse roof. With the withdrawal of government aid, denominational schools faced a time of crisis.

Jewish schools in New South Wales

- 1844–47** The first schoolmaster, Rev. Moses Rintel, conducted the Sydney Jewish Academy.
- 1848** Zion House School was established.
- 1863** The Sydney Jewish Sabbath School was established by Rev. Alexander B. Davis with fourteen pupils. Enrolments increased in the first year to eighty-one.
- 1868** The Sydney Hebrew School in Pitt Street opened.
- 1882** When all aid to denominational schools ceased, the day school closed and the Sydney Jewish Education Board was established to conduct classes in state schools. The first classes were held at Fort Street, Crown Street and William Street public schools.
- 1909** The Sydney Jewish Sabbath School was amalgamated with the Sydney Jewish Education Board to form a New South Wales Board of Jewish Education.

The education debate leads to the emergence of secularism

The three pieces of legislation outlined on page 178 were a response to the religio-political secular education debate of the nineteenth century. The Anglican and Protestant Churches did not wish to see any extension of Catholic

influence. Given that the dominant culture in Australia was Protestant in nature, their sense was that if education was compulsory, free and secular, it would serve their needs. Ironically, the secularisation of values that would be very prominent in twentieth-century Australia was heavily influenced by the energetic reformist agenda of nineteenth-century Australian Protestantism.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Australian Catholics had established for themselves a strong network of schools to serve their faith community. Other Christian denominations had also established schools, but these were mainly secondary schools and they had a much higher fee structure than the Catholic parish schools. The Catholic school became the linchpin of Australian Catholicism.

Review

- 1 **Outline** the contribution of one religious tradition to education in Australia prior to 1945.
- 2 **Explain** how *The Church Act 1836* assisted churches in making their contribution to the provision of education prior to 1945.
- 3 **Clarify** how *The Church Act 1836* disadvantaged some denominations and people.
- 4 **Evaluate** the extent to which the NSW *Public Instruction Act 1880* contributed to the establishment of a Catholic education system entirely separate from the state.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 180 and **examine** the information about the Denominational School Board, which existed from 1848 to 1866. Use this web page to list at least three items of information about the involvement of churches in education in New South Wales at this time.
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** further the contribution of *one* Christian denomination to education in Australia prior to 1945. In a report on your findings, include information on rural schools as well as on those in urban areas.
- 3 'Nineteenth century Acts of Parliament concerned with the provision of education not only moulded our modern system of church-related schools, but also helped create the secular society of today.' **Construct** a mind map or flow chart to **synthesise** the material presented in this section to **justify** your response to this statement.

Public morality

Religion, something of an afterthought in the founding and early development of Australia, came to be seen as the only hope for an improvement in public morality. The clergy could do the job of being 'God's police'. Christians had a powerful influence on public policy in this area and established a reputation as 'wowsers'.

The influence of Christian values in legislation can be seen clearly in the twentieth century, particularly in the first half. 'Criminal' adultery, liquor licensing and anti-gambling laws, as well as laws to protect women and children are all evidence of the influence of Christian morality over twentieth-century lawmakers.

One early example is the Women's Christian Temperance Union, a national organisation that began in the late nineteenth century. Although its primary aim was the prohibition of alcohol, it was also active in other areas of social and political reform, including the gaining of women's suffrage.

Various Sunday Observance laws were passed by Australian governments reflecting the influence of Christian values surrounding Sunday as a day of rest. Extensive Sunday retail trading did not become a feature of Australian urban life until the 1980s/90s. Similar restrictions on Sunday professional sport and entertainment also stood in the early part of the century, but fell to a changing culture more quickly.

Did you know?

In 1914 the Sydney newspaper *Truth* defined a **wowser** as 'a pernickety kind of person, always objecting to everybody else who does not agree with him; he will interfere with the pleasures and enjoyments of others; thinks that he alone has the right conception of right conduct, and a monopoly of the narrow way to paradise ...' Its editor, John Norton, had used it in a headline in 1899 and claimed he had invented it. Another theory is that it came from the slogan '**We Only Want Social Evils Righted!**'

Diocesan Church House
George Street Sydney

13th April 1942

My dear Prime Minister

I write to express the earnest hope that you will not allow the secularisation of Sunday in response to the suggestion being made by certain newspapers the Cinemas should be opened on that day as a means of providing hospitality for our American friends and I approach you with the greater confidence because of your well-known appreciation of spiritual values ...

Letter from Howard Sydney, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, to Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, upon the call for cinemas to be opened on Sundays for the entertainment of US troops in Australia during the Second World War

Dear Sir

I am requested by the members of this Fraternal, representing the various Protestant Churches from Bankstown to Campsie, to approach you on their behalf on the question of Temperance Reform ... we would emphasise the need for drastic reduction in the amount of alcoholic liquors perwith to be produced—we strongly suggest a cut of 50% in last year's alarming figures.

Letter from the Rev. John Morris, Hon Secretary of the Campsie–Bankstown Fraternal Association and Minister of the Lakemba Congregational Church, to the Australian Attorney-General, Dr H. V. Evatt, 5 November 1942

**Sunday opening**

Working man: 'If you don't open the door we'll have to break it open.'
 Gillies: 'Don't ask me to open the door for a Continental Sunday. Why not stop at the Athenaeum Club and read the story of Jonah and the Whale?'

Figure 8.1.17 Bulletin cartoon of 1890, deriding 'John Knoxism' and 'Sabbatarian can't'—that is, religious attitudes that were against, among other things, Sunday trading of any sort.

RESPOND

Who was John Knox? **Extrapolate** how his views are represented in this cartoon.

The emphasis on morality was very much focused on the individual. The belief was that if people are saved, then the nation will be saved. This can be contrasted with the notion of a communal responsibility to 'social justice'—a feature of the mainstream churches today. The 'social gospel' was not a prominent part of Protestant religious thinking until fairly recently. Catholics gave it some attention from 1891 because of Pope Leo XIII's letter 'On the Condition of the Working Classes', which stressed, among other things, the rights of workers to organise into unions and to withdraw their labour in the face of injustices.

When it came to questions of sexual immorality and 'immoral' art and literature, Protestants and Catholics were more likely to be of one mind. But despite the apparent shared conservatism, Australian Catholics have a contradictory history. It could be said they have been both

the most pious and the most irreligious of the religious communities: they have displayed a high level of moral conservatism and at the same time a tolerance of drinking and gambling. The general perception of religion in Australia as having to do exclusively with moral concerns about sex, pornography and abortion persists, no matter how inaccurate that perception happens to be.

Review

- 1 **Define** the term 'wowser'.
- 2 **Describe** at least three areas of life where Christian morality had an influence on laws and practices in Australian secular society prior to 1945.
- 3 **Evaluate** the contribution of one religious tradition in Australia to rural and outback communities, education and public morality.

Extension

- 1 **Investigate** the role of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Australia's political history and its initiatives in the area of public morality. The web destinations for page 181 are a good starting point.
- 2 **Compare and contrast** the attitudes of two Christian denominations to public morality in Australia before 1945.
- 3 **Investigate** some of the prohibitions in the various State Sunday Observance laws. The web destinations for page 181 are a good starting point. Prepare a report to **outline** some of the prohibitions.
- 4 Go to the web destinations for page 181 and **examine** letters written during the Second World War to the Australian prime minister. Prepare a report that outlines the moral concerns expressed in the letters.
- 5 In small groups, **propose** some reasons and examples of how Catholics 'have been the most pious and the most irreligious of the religious communities' with reference to their attitudes to public morality. Share your reasons and examples with another group.

Conclusion

It is difficult to deny that Christianity has been a formative influence in Australian life. There are many examples: Australia has an enormous number of church-related schools, built upon the energies of the churches in the nineteenth century, with a degree of hard-fought autonomy from government educational authorities that is unique in the Western world. The Australian legal system is supposed to be secular—based on the values of the ‘reasonable person’. Yet, in reality, Christian morality and ethics have had a major influence in shaping Australian laws. Many of our leading hospitals are institutions owned and operated by church authorities. There are higher penalty rates of pay for many Australian workers who work on a Sunday, ‘the Lord’s Day’, and Christian notions of moral right and wrong still have a marked impact on the outcome of certain political debates in Australia. Even the secular celebration of Anzac Day, with its ode and dawn service, contains shades of quasi-Christian ritual forms.

Like any society, modern Australian society is the product of a mix of forces that have shaped it and tested it. Sometimes those forces positively influence a society. At other times, it is reaction against those forces that shape a society. Those forces and their interaction with society become a nation’s heritage. Religious thought and action, particularly the work of the Christian Churches, has played a significant role in forming Australia’s national heritage.

Extension

- 1 **Extrapolate** on the contribution of one religious tradition to life in Australia before 1945: how is that contribution still visible in Australian society today?
- 2 **Synthesise** your reading in this chapter and your research outside it to make an extended response to the following statement: ‘More good than harm emerged from the thoughts, ideas and practices of religious communities in Australia in the period 1788–1945.’
- 3 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 4 **Classify** your media file into appropriate categories (it is possible that some items are also appropriate to religion in Australia post-1945). From your file, **evaluate** whether the pre-1945 religious debates still play a role in the Australia of today.

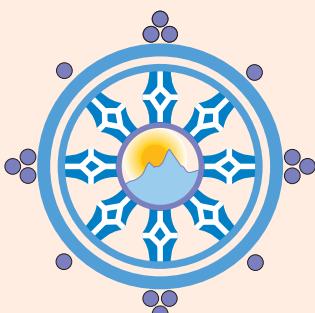
Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

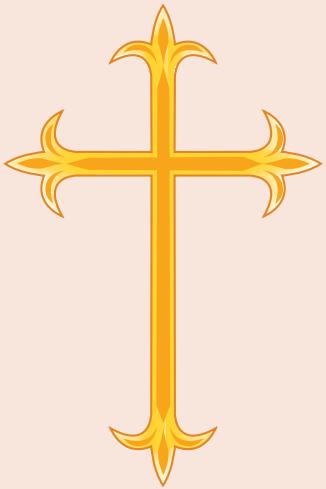
- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



Religious tradition summaries

Religious tradition	Origins and variants	Principal beliefs	Sacred texts and writings
<h2>Buddhism</h2> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Buddhism emerged as a distinctive set of teachings and practices during the lifetime of the Buddha (566/563–486/483 BCE or a century later). The Buddha attained enlightenment at the age of thirty-five. This gave his teachings both an intellectual and experiential base. He established the Order (<i>sangha</i>) a few years later, which gave the emerging religion an institutional base. The Buddha became the first living embodiment of the religion. ◆ Buddhism grew slowly until the reign of Ashoka, king of Magadha 269–232 BCE. He supported Buddhism financially and assisted with the sending of Buddhist monks to Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar) and north-west India. ◆ In 200 BCE–200 CE Buddhism received more royal support in North and Central India and expanded rapidly with considerable building of monasteries and funerary monuments, and the composition of a large body of literature in several languages. ◆ About the beginning of the Common Era, Buddhism entered into China, where it flourished from about the beginning of the third century CE. ◆ Between 100 BCE and 100 CE new texts appear that mention the word Mahayana, distinguishing them from Hinayana. This marks the beginnings of Mahayana and Theravada as the two large schools of Buddhism. Mahayana, which today represents around 70 per cent of Buddhists, is located mainly in East Asia, whereas Theravada, with the remaining 30 per cent, is located in South-East Asia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Buddhism speaks about teachings rather than beliefs and these teachings differ according to particular social levels and forms of practice. They can be highly intellectualised, where the ultimate goal is enlightenment, or pragmatic, where the goals are more attuned to material concerns. ◆ At the intellectual level, the fundamental teachings are summed up in the Four Noble Truths, which centre on the problem of the unsatisfactoriness that is asserted to lie at the heart of existence. The truths define this condition as being insubstantial, impermanent and painful. Its cause is described by a twelve-linked path where the individual's mind is pushed along by desire and grasping, but it can be reversed and lead to its opposite, <i>nirvana</i>, a condition achieved by following a particular ethical and religious path. ◆ The world is defined as <i>samsara</i>, a word indicating that the totality of thinking beings in it is driven along by endless desires to act and gain objects to consume. Rebirth and <i>karma</i> are both associated with <i>samsara</i> as dynamic forces of continuity. ◆ The Buddha is the model of a person who has achieved enlightenment and his life is taken as an example by all others. He has exhausted all of his <i>karma</i> and has acquired a perfect knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. He is completely without desire. ◆ At a more pragmatic level, it is believed that monks/nuns and holy men and women are centres of power, and this can be transferred to other people as good <i>karma</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Buddhism has produced a huge amount of literature in many languages and continues to do so. ◆ This literature is divided into canons, which sometimes include up to a thousand separate texts. ◆ There is much overlapping content in these texts, but they all claim to represent the word of the Buddha. ◆ Each canon can be subdivided into three main areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Discourses of the Buddha, which convey Buddhism's basic doctrinal teachings. ▶ Rules of conduct for monks and nuns. These texts explain the origins of particular rules and give illustrative examples of how they are used. ▶ Philosophical texts of restricted accessibility that are designed to give psychological commentaries on the basic teachings expounded in the Discourses. ◆ There is a large body of additional literature lying outside of the canons. This ranges over several genres—drama, poetry, epics, short stories and mixed narratives—and a considerable variety of content, encompassing many of the intellectual traditions that have existed in the West. Especially important are some early philosophical treatises composed in Sanskrit by the celebrated Nagarjuna (c. 150–c. 250 CE). These have had a profound impact on all later Mahayana literature and the pithy Zen poems produced in China and Japan are philosophically dependent on them.

Ethical teachings	Significant practices	Significant people and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Buddhist ethics were highly developed right from the beginning and are designed to provide appropriate behavioural guidance for both the monk/nun and the layperson. Their intention is both practical in governing personal interaction, and religious in helping to create the conditions that will eventually allow the person to be removed from the painful round of existences everyone must undergo. ◆ Underlying all Buddhist ethical attitudes is the need to exercise compassion towards all sentient beings, reflecting the fundamental belief that existence is basically unsatisfactory and that all conscious beings should be helped to become aware of this. ◆ For laypeople, five basic ethical precepts are laid down. People should restrain from: killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicating substances. ◆ The rules for monks and nuns are much larger in number and are more specific than those for laypeople. They are especially designed to prevent sexual misconduct by monks and nuns, but also pertain to dietary restrictions as well as to other aspects of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ritual practices in Buddhism differ considerably depending on whether they apply to monks and nuns or laity. ◆ Both of these groups take part in the <i>parivara</i> and <i>kathina</i> rituals, which occur at the end of the rainy season. These rituals involve a statement to the laity of the purity of the order of monks, nuns and the donation of newly made robes to the laity. ◆ Monks perform funeral services for the laity, but marriage and birth ceremonies are uncommon in Buddhist countries. ◆ Popular festivals are celebrated by the laity. One example is Vesak, which commemorates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. It is usually held in April or May to mark the beginning of the rainy season. ◆ Both monks/nuns and laypeople undertake pilgrimages to Buddhist sacred sites, which are usually associated with aspects of the Buddha's life or with the presence of renowned monks. ◆ Meditational practices are performed by both monks/nuns and the laity. ◆ Buddhist deities are worshipped at festivals and shrines. ◆ The <i>pratimoksha</i> ritual is held fortnightly for monks. Monks in a particular area assemble and any infringements of the <i>Vinaya</i>, or monkish conduct, are to be confessed and appropriate penalties are laid down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Buddhism has been pushed along by the order of monks, nuns and the laity, yet certain prominent individuals have had a decisive influence on the development of the religion. ◆ The Buddha (566/563–486/483 BCE) remains the spiritual model to be followed. Even in his time certain monks disagreed with his ideas, but the differences were usually smoothed over. ◆ Ashoka (c. 304–c. 232 BCE), king of Magadha, extensively supported the Buddhist Order, tried to stop dissident disputes, built monasteries and <i>stupas</i>, and encouraged the spread of Buddhism throughout India and elsewhere. Buddhism as an institutional religion expanded dramatically after his reign. ◆ Nagarjuna (c. 150–c. 250 CE) was a philosopher of very great importance who criticised earlier interpretations of the Buddha's thought, arguing that other Buddhist schools were developing the idea that in some way permanency existed in the world, whereas the Buddha had argued no such thing was possible. With his emphasis on the 'emptiness' of all phenomenal things, Nagarjuna influenced many Buddhist thinkers in India, China and Japan, and is perhaps the ultimate inspiration for the development of Zen. ◆ Kumarajiva (343–413 CE) was a very important figure in translating Buddhist literature into Chinese. His efforts were of great significance in spreading Buddhist ideas throughout China. ◆ Bodhidharma (prominent 480–520 CE) was a legendary Indian monk who introduced Ch'an Buddhism into China and became a very important figure in Chinese folk religion. ◆ The Dalai Lama (b. 1935) is the spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhists. He has lived in North India since 1960, but has travelled extensively in the West, introducing the main schools of Tibetan Buddhism to the West and acting as a political leader for Tibetans in exile.

Religious tradition	Origins and variants	Principal beliefs	Sacred texts and writings
<h2>Christianity</h2> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christianity emerged around 6 BCE from within a Jewish context, through the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (c. 6 BCE–30 CE). Jesus was a religious Jew who attended the synagogue, and celebrated Jewish festivals. ◆ After his death, Jesus' message was spread and adapted by Paul and the other men and women who were his disciples. Christianity became a separate identity when it was accepted that to follow Jesus one did not have to be a Jew. By 150 CE there were Christian communities in most major provinces of the Roman Empire. ◆ The 'Great Schism' of 1054 divided the West (Catholic) and the East (Orthodox), and the Reformation in the sixteenth century led to the emergence of Protestantism and Anglicanism. ◆ The Catholic communion includes eight distinct rites including the Roman and Maronite rites and acknowledges the Pope as head. ◆ The Orthodox 'family' includes the Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Macedonian, Armenian and Greek Orthodox Churches. ◆ The main strands within the Protestant churches are the 'Reformed' Churches and, more recently, the Pentecostal Churches. Anglican Churches usually describe themselves as somewhere on the spectrum between Anglo-Catholic and evangelical or Protestant. ◆ Christianity is the largest of the world's major religions with about 2.3 billion followers, roughly one-third of the world's population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christians believe in one God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that God sent his Son to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins. ◆ Christians believe that Jesus was fully human and that through their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and in his death and resurrection, they can have a right relationship with God, whose forgiveness was made once and for all through the death of Jesus Christ. ◆ Christians believe in the Trinity—that is God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, is present today and evident in the works of believers. ◆ Christians believe that the Church or communion of believers is necessary for salvation and is the body of Christ, and believe in life after death. ◆ Christians believe that by repeating the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper—by eating bread and drinking wine—Jesus becomes especially present in some way. ◆ Christians believe that sacraments were established by Jesus himself. Generally, they retain at least the two sacraments clearly mentioned in the Christian Scriptures—baptism and Eucharist. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches recognise seven sacraments. ◆ Some Christian Churches also hold strong beliefs in saints, and in Mary as the Mother of God. ◆ Protestantism emphasises the authority of the Bible and the traditions of the early Church, and salvation by faith alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Christian Bible consists of the Jewish Scriptures including the Torah or Pentateuch and the Christian Scriptures (New Testament). Often the Jewish Scriptures are referred to as the 'Old Testament'. ◆ By about 400 CE, the Christian Church had decided on an official list or canon of Scripture containing the following books: the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Acts of the Apostles; Paul's Letters; other Letters; and Apocalypse or Revelation. ◆ The word 'gospel' means 'good news'. It was a term used by the early Christians to describe what Jesus had achieved. ◆ The Jewish Scriptures were written in Hebrew with a few sections in Aramaic. The Christian Scriptures were written in Greek and then translated into Latin for the Western Church. This translation was called the Vulgate and it became the official Bible in the West. The Reformation saw the Bible translated into English and Martin Luther completed a German translation in 1534. ◆ There are differences in the canons of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches. ◆ The Bible offers Christians support and guidance, including guidelines for moral behaviour. It is used for reading, reflection, prayer, liturgy, and family or domestic rituals.

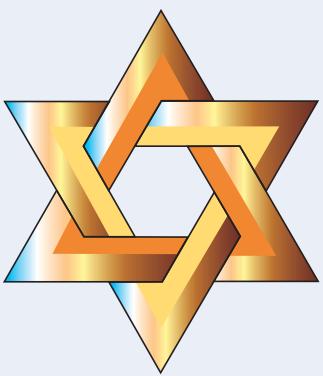
Ethical teachings	Significant practices	Significant people and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Jesus' ethical teaching fits into the tradition of prophetic and early rabbinical teaching, especially his emphasis on justice and mercy over ritualistic ethics of purity and cult offerings. His teaching is especially linked to love of God and love of neighbour (cf. Mk 12:30–31). ◆ The core Christian ethical teachings are the Ten Commandments or Decalogue, the Beatitudes, and Jesus' 'commandment of love'. ◆ Christian ethical teachings raise questions for believers: What is a good life? How do I distinguish between good and evil, and right and wrong? How does Jesus challenge me to think and act today? ◆ Historically, there have been quite different approaches to ethics by Catholics and Protestants. For Catholics, there was the eternal law which could be known by human reason—natural law, and by God's revelation through the Scriptures and tradition—Church teaching. Because the Protestant reformers generally based their ethics on the Bible, there was never the same certainty in Protestant ethics as there had been in Catholic ethics. ◆ Christians today tend to exercise their conscience when making their decisions in ethical issues. Such conscience should be informed, but it cannot be coerced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christian worship involves praising God in music and speech, readings from Scripture, prayers of various sorts, and various holy ceremonies. Christian liturgy or worship is a key reference point for prayer, reflecting the life, death and resurrection of Christ for believers. ◆ Christian worship grew out of Jewish worship and the first obvious divergence was making Sunday the holy day instead of Saturday, with both based on the spirituality of the Jewish Sabbath. By doing this, the day of Christian worship is the same as the day Jesus rose from the dead. ◆ Church services on a Sunday (or Saturday for some) divide into two general types: Eucharistic services, focused on the act of Holy Communion; and services of the Word. Both types of service include hymns, readings and prayers. ◆ Reformed Churches stress the preaching of the Word in their practices, while Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches stress symbolic actions and rites. Icons are particularly important in Orthodox and Eastern liturgical practices. ◆ Prayer was central to the life of Jesus and many Christian prayer forms have their earliest roots in Judaism. ◆ Forms of Christian personal devotion include vocal, mental and contemplative prayer, as well as practices such as praying grace at mealtimes. Meditation is used as an exercise where sacred words and phrases are repeated, accompanied by vocal and bodily rhythm. ◆ The rites of baptism, marriage and the other sacraments are also significant practices in the tradition and find their inspiration in Jesus' preaching and in the sacred rituals of the early Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ After Jesus and Paul of Tarsus (d. c. 65 CE) significant early Christian figures were Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215 CE), Origen (d. c. 254 CE) and Ambrose (d. 397 CE). ◆ Augustine (d. 430 CE) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) were also major interpreters of the Christian tradition. ◆ The Reformation of the sixteenth century saw a significant reinterpretation of Christianity under Luther, Knox, Zwingli, Calvin and others. ◆ Some figures have been called 'revitalisers', such as Thomas Merton (d. 1968) and Bede Griffiths (d. 1993) who have connected Eastern and Western Christianity, and Dennis Bennett (d. 1991) who was an early leader of what became known as the Charismatic Movement. ◆ Many of the great challengers in Christianity have been women, such as Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), Teresa of Avila (d. 1582), Catherine Booth (d. 1890) and Sarah Maitland (b. 1950). ◆ Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila come from the monastic tradition and are known as mystics. Catherine Booth, who with her husband founded the Salvation Army, was well known as a preacher at a time when a woman's role was seen as a 'silent' one, and Sarah Maitland is an Anglo-Catholic feminist from Britain. ◆ Schools of thought or movements within Christianity such as feminist and liberation theologies, mysticism and Pentecostalism continue to challenge Christianity in areas such as liturgy, ethics, images of God, scripture, justice, and Western and Eastern and Indigenous spiritualities.

Religious tradition	Origins and variants	Principal beliefs	Sacred texts and writings
<p>Hinduism</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hinduism has no identifiable beginning. If, however, Hinduism is regarded as the collection of cults associated with the worship of the great gods such as Shiva and Vishnu, it probably began about the second century BCE. ◆ Evidence shows religious life in India began in the Harappan civilisation dating from 3000 BCE. It involved rituals and beliefs associated with fertility. ◆ There is textual evidence from north-western India, dating from about 1200 BCE, of a full body of mythology involving a family of gods and demonic figures. Animal sacrifices comprised the principal religious practice. ◆ By about 600 BCE a new stream of religious beliefs—associated primarily with the cultural elite—focused on discovering the true nature of reality within the person, who is regarded as potentially undergoing a large number of rebirths in an unsatisfactory state of existence. ◆ From the same time, worship of personal gods and demi-gods developed and gave rise to large-scale cults centred around gods and holy men. ◆ By about the second century BCE, a Hinduism emerged that combined ritual activity, devotion to gods and worship of the god as identical with the innermost self. ◆ Most subsequent variants involved different manifestations of these three basic forms or mixtures thereof. Large-scale theologies of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess developed and individuals/groups worshipped them in a host of different ways. Ganesha became a popular god from about the tenth century CE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Bhakti</i> or loving devotion to the godhead defines the basic framework of belief for a Hindu. ◆ The object of devotion is regarded as the supreme being in the universe. They are responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the world. The god/goddess is born on earth when evil forces need to be removed. Equally the god/goddess can be approached at a personal level and will extend their favour (<i>prasada</i>) to the devotee if ritually approached with the correct amount of devotion. ◆ A philosophy of the person underlies all Hindu belief. A person consists of a physical body, a mind and a Self—<i>atman</i>—that exists beyond these. While the first two disappear at death, the <i>atman</i> can potentially be reborn from life to life. ◆ Rebirth is caused by <i>karma</i>—actions caused in a given life that will have repercussions in a later life. Many Hindus believe that rebirth in the world or one of the hells is ultimately unsatisfactory and measures must be taken to escape from it. ◆ People will be reborn according to the ethical status of their actions. Rebirth can occur in a heaven, a hell or, if final liberation is achieved, in a place beyond space and time. ◆ The correct order of the world is governed by <i>dharma</i>, the belief that there is a right order that can be upset if correct social and ritual actions are not followed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hinduism divides its huge volume of sacred texts into two fundamental categories: <i>shruti</i> or ‘texts heard by the sages’ and <i>smṛti</i> or ‘texts remembered by the sages’. The first encompasses the <i>Vedas</i>, the second everything else. ◆ The <i>Vedas</i> are the oldest texts, dating from 1200 BCE until about 600 BCE. They deal mainly with the sacrifice, mythology and the beginnings of philosophy. ◆ <i>Smṛti</i> involves a much larger body of texts and includes the two great Sanskrit epics, the <i>Mahabharata</i> and the <i>Ramayana</i>, which have become very popular because they were quickly translated into vernacular languages spoken by the bulk of the population. <i>Smṛti</i> also includes the <i>Puranas</i>, comprising a huge body of mythology, and a set of legalistic texts called <i>Dharmasutras</i>. ◆ There is also a huge body of other religious literature in vernacular languages. Sanskrit ceased to be a spoken language before the beginning of the Common Era and so Sanskrit literature continued to be transmitted only by a body of learned <i>brahmin</i> scholars. Vernacular literature includes religious epics, collections of hymns and translations of Sanskrit texts. ◆ In addition to all of these (now) written texts, there has always been a strongly thriving oral tradition of recitation in India, comprising folk tales and oral versions of some of the texts mentioned.

Ethical teachings	Significant practices	Significant people and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The ethical teachings of Hinduism are based on the assumption that the group determines normative behaviour and that the individual has little choice in applying any interpretation over this. ◆ <i>Dharma</i> or ‘the right order of the universe’, as reflected in correct roles associated with the four social classes, determines normative behaviour. If people act in accord with dharmic precepts then stability will be preserved in society and in the larger context governing the interrelation of gods and humans. ◆ Love and altruism do not play an important role in Hindu ethics. Individual adherence to class roles will produce a good rebirth in a later life and will contribute to the maintenance of the status quo. ◆ Ritual purity and impurity are very important in Hindu ethics as the caste system reflects a mode of differentiation based on high castes remaining relatively more pure than low castes. The need to retain purity is based substantially on rules pertaining to the need to avoid particular polluting substances. ◆ Ethical rules are contained in Sanskrit texts called <i>Dharmasutras</i>. These are open to some degree of interpretation, which is reflected in commentaries composed on them. Interpersonal behaviour for lower castes is based partially on these rules and particularly on traditional local customs. ◆ Hindu religious practice is essentially associated with expressions of devotion towards a deity or another sacred figure, such as a holy man or woman. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A common form of ritual (<i>puja</i>) involves the placing of vegetable offerings into a fire or simply having a priest offer them to the god. This involves not just the physical offering but the formalised utterance of prayers and acts of obeisance, such as kneeling before the god. ◆ Acts of devotion performed in temples are very common. These can involve ritually walking round the temple in a clockwise manner, gazing at the central image of the god in a fixated manner, uttering prayers before the god, and listening to religious stories and disquisitions. ◆ Public festivals associated with the worship of a particular god or goddess are also very common and combine the performance of large <i>pujas</i> with hymn singing and performances of mythological dramas. ◆ Pilgrimage to sacred sites is also very important for Hindus of all classes and involves travelling along a set trail of sacred sites and performing <i>pujas</i> at these sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Particular individuals have had a strong influence on the development of Hinduism, but because of the importance of group identity in Hindu society, it is the interests of social groups that have had more impact on its development. ◆ Knowledge of the lives of prominent individuals has always been very sketchy—although there is a body of literature produced by such people, the details of their lives were always considered unimportant. ◆ Shankara (c. 700–c. 750 CE) was a South Indian who developed a distinctive school of Vedanta philosophy and set up four important monastic orders and ten orders of monks, all of which survive today. He was very influential in teaching a strictly monistic religious philosophy. ◆ Ramanuja (1017–1137) expounded a theistic form of Vedanta that united North and South Indian forms of devotion. He placed great emphasis in his teachings on the importance of divine grace. ◆ Mira Bai (c. 1500–c. 1550) was a female mystic and poet, notable for her devotion to Krishna and her contribution to the <i>bhakti</i> movement. ◆ Tulsidas (1532–1623) composed a Hindi version of the <i>Ramayana</i> entitled <i>The Holy Lake of the Deeds of Rama</i>. This cut across various intellectual levels and made the <i>Ramayana</i> very popular in North India. ◆ Ramakrishna (1834/1836–1886) was an important Bengali Tantric mystic. He was a devotee of the goddess Durga, and manifested many ecstatic states in public. He wrote no books, but his teachings were popularised by his disciple Vivekananda (1863–1902). He contributed to the development of a resurgent Hinduism in the second half of the nineteenth century. ◆ Vedanta is a school of philosophy that seeks to understand the real nature of reality. It emphasises the <i>Upanishads</i>. ◆ The <i>bhakti</i> movement emphasises devotion to a particular deity.

Religious tradition	Origins and variants	Principal beliefs	Sacred texts and writings
<p style="text-align: center;">Islam</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Islam emerged in the seventh century CE within the tribal society of the Arabian Peninsula. Its name is inseparable from that of Muhammad (570–632 CE), the Messenger of God. ◆ In the month of Ramadan (now the ninth month of the Islamic calendar) in 610 CE, Muhammad received the first of many revelations from God. These revelations continued for twenty-three years and when collected and arranged became the Qur'an, Islam's sacred scripture. ◆ Muhammad's preaching of God's message was not well received in his home city of Mecca and he and a small number of followers quietly emigrated to Medina in 622 CE. This <i>hijra</i> (migration) marked a turning point, and it was in Medina that an Islamic community (<i>umma</i>) was formed and its members were called Muslims. After defeating the Meccan armies, Muhammad returned to Mecca in 630 CE, and died there in 632 CE. ◆ Muhammad was succeeded by the four 'rightly guided' caliphs (632–661 CE) but the community suffered a series of crises about authority and leadership that led to a number of schisms. ◆ Sunni and Shi'i, the two major branches of Islam, arose at this time. Today Sunni comprise 85 per cent of Muslims and Shi'i around 15 per cent. Some of the other groups that comprise the Muslim world are the Ibadis and the Wahhabis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In Islam, it is impossible to separate beliefs from practice—faith and the right action or practice are intertwined. ◆ The foundation of Islamic belief is the revelation from Allah in the Qur'an. The beliefs of Islam are found in the seven articles of its creed—‘<i>Aqida ul-Islam</i>’ as revealed by Allah. The first of these is <i>tawhid</i>, the belief in and declaration of the oneness and unity of God. The others are: belief in angels; belief in the holy books; belief in the Prophets; belief in the Day of Judgement and the world to come; and belief in the will of God. These articles are often condensed into three aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Tawhid</i>—the oneness of Allah. Only Allah must be worshipped and no other being should be associated with Allah. The sin of idolatry (<i>shirk</i>) is the worst of all sins. ▶ <i>Rusuluhu</i>—the belief in prophethood. The Qur'an names twenty-five prophets, among them Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Dawud (David) and Isa (Jesus). Muhammad is the final prophet. ▶ <i>al-Akhira</i>—the world to come. Muslims believe in an afterlife and that when they die their lives on earth will be assessed. While they believe that nothing can happen without the will and the knowledge and the power of God, that does not stop human beings making free choices. ◆ Muslim belief is put into practice through <i>Arkan al-Islam</i>—the five pillars of faith. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Islam has two universal texts that are considered sacred—the Qur'an and <i>hadith</i>. ◆ The Qur'an is the direct word of God and contains all the essential teachings of the unity and power of God, the stories of the prophets, and the consequences of good and evil for the life hereafter. ◆ Muslims do not speak of Muhammad writing the Qur'an, but of his receiving it and reciting it. This recitation was copied down by scribes. It was during the time of the third 'rightly guided' caliph that the authorised version was established. ◆ The Qur'an consists of 114 <i>sura</i> (chapters) subdivided into 6000 verses. ◆ For Muslims, Arabic—the language of the Qur'an—is the language of God and so all Muslims memorise and recite the Qur'an in Arabic. ◆ Any translation of the Qur'an is regarded as giving only an approximate interpretation of the original. ◆ Second to the Qur'an in authority are the <i>hadith</i>, which record the <i>sunna</i> of the Prophet. These are the traditions and practices of Muhammad that have become models to be followed by Muslims. ◆ Most Muslims accept six collections of <i>hadith</i> as being the most trustworthy. These were collected within the first three centuries of Islam.

Ethical teachings	Significant practices	Significant people and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The ethical teachings of Islam reflect the beliefs and teachings of Islam. ◆ Islam places a very strong emphasis on the importance of right action. ◆ Laws that govern actions fall into two categories—the behaviour of Muslims towards God and the ways in which human beings treat one another. For Muslims, there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. ◆ Islamic jurisprudence has four sources: the Qur'an, the <i>sunna</i> of the Prophet, <i>ijma'</i> (the consensus of the scholars of a particular generation), and legal precedent or <i>qiyas</i>. ◆ The most important of the laws that govern Muslims' behaviour towards God are described in the five pillars of faith. ◆ Moral guidelines for Muslims place great emphasis on the <i>umma</i> or community. In this context, Muslims are called upon to do what is natural, promote unity and harmony, support the community of Muslims and obey <i>Shari'a</i> (Law). Justice, compassion, generosity and love of neighbour are also stressed. ◆ The interpretation of <i>Shari'a</i> is not uniform among Muslims. Shi'i have traditionally opposed the principle of <i>ijma'</i> and the senior scholars of the <i>imams</i> make binding interpretations directly from the Qur'an. For Sunni, rulings based on the consensus of Muslim scholars and <i>qiyas</i> are binding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Muslim ritual, ceremony, prayer and belief are centred on the five pillars of faith—declaration of faith (<i>Shahada</i>); ritual prayer (<i>Salat</i>); obligatory religious almsgiving (<i>Zakat</i>); fasting (<i>Sawm</i>); and pilgrimage (<i>Hajj</i>). ◆ These rituals are the practical expressions of the Muslim's devotion to God and are extended to all sectors of human activity. ◆ The daily ritual prayer is the distinctive mark of believers and provides them with opportunities for direct communion with God five times a day, and so helps them to avoid too much attachment to non-essential things. ◆ <i>Salat</i> is highly formalised and regulated in its cycles of spoken formulas and body postures and is recited from memory in Arabic. Each <i>salat</i> must be offered at its proper time and facing in the direction of Mecca. ◆ The place of worship for Muslims is the mosque (<i>al-Masjid</i>) but the obligatory daily prayers can be said anywhere. Congregational prayer (<i>Salat al-jama'at</i>) at the mosque on Friday at noon is highly recommended. ◆ <i>Salat al-janaza</i>, the funeral ceremony, and <i>Hajj</i> are considered highly significant and collective duties. ◆ Major Islamic festivals include '<i>Id al-Fitr</i>' at the end of Ramadan, '<i>Id al-Adha</i>' in the month of pilgrimage, and those that celebrate significant events in Muhammad's life. The most significant day on the Shi'i calendar is 'Ashura', the commemoration of the martyrdom of al-Husayn, the son of the fourth caliph, 'Ali. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ From the earliest years of Islam, there have been individuals and groups who have had great influence on the practice of Islam. Sometimes they have been a focus for consolidation, sometimes they have challenged, and sometimes they have caused disputes. ◆ Two women were among the earliest people of significance: Khadija bint Khuwaylid (554–619 CE), the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad and revered as the first Muslim after him; and 'A'isha bint Abi Bakr (c. 614–c. 678 CE) the third and favourite wife of the Prophet. 'A'isha fought unsuccessfully against 'Ali, the fourth 'rightly guided' caliph. ◆ Imam al-Shafi is widely recognised as 'the Father of Islamic Jurisprudence'. He and the Imams Malik, Abu Hanifa and Ahmad b. Hanbal are the main figures whose interpretation of <i>hadith</i> and the Qur'an are followed by the majority of Sunni Muslims. ◆ Sufism or <i>tasawwuf</i>, the inner, mystical dimension of Islam described as 'The Science of the Heart', and Sufis such as Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 801 CE) and Abn Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111) have been influential. Al-Ghazali, one of Islam's greatest scholars, was a reconciler and was recognised as one of the <i>mujaddid</i>—'Renewers of Islam'. ◆ Two influential figures in the 'reawakening' of Islam in the twentieth century are Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) and Sayyid Maududi (1903–1979). Qutb was a major thinker of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Maududi was the founder of Jama'at-I Islam, the revivalist movement that had a particular impact in Pakistan.

Religious tradition	Origins and variants	Principal beliefs	Sacred texts and writings
<h2>Judaism</h2> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Judaism as a historical religion has its origins in the clan of Abraham and Sarah, which wandered from ancient Mesopotamia, on to Egypt, and eventually settled in southern Canaan. God revealed to Abraham that Israel was God's Chosen People. God's call of Abraham and Israel was shown in the Exodus and in the giving of the Torah or Ten Commandments to Moses (cf. Ex 24, 34). ◆ There are three major groups or variants within Judaism: Orthodox (including Modern Orthodox, Ultra Orthodox and <i>Chasidic</i>); Progressive (also known as Reform or Liberal); and Conservative. The two main variants in Australia are (Modern) Orthodox and Progressive. ◆ In traditional terms, a person is considered a Jew if their mother is a Jew. ◆ There are two cultural variants of Judaism. Ashkenazi Jews derive from the Jewish communities of Germany and came to be the dominant Jewish form in Eastern Europe. Ashkenazi Jewry developed the distinctive language of Yiddish. The other is Sephardi Judaism, a cultural form derived from the Jews of Spain. While Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews worship the same God and hold sacred the same sacred texts, they differ in the style of their synagogue service, the form of the Hebrew script used in Torah scrolls and their prayer books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Rabbinic Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people in the period following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. This is distinct from Jewish religion of the biblical times, which focused on Temple worship. ◆ The basic beliefs of modern Judaism emerged from and follow the council of Yavneh (70–132 CE). ◆ The development of Rabbinic Judaism was influenced by the outlook of the Pharisees and shifted the focus of Jewish life from the Temple cult to the religion of the home and synagogue worship. ◆ Jewish belief also developed through oral teaching that found its way into written form, creating many layers of sacred writings. ◆ The central concepts of Jewish belief are covenant and <i>berekah</i> (blessing), flowing from the great Exodus or liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. ◆ Today, as in the past, Jewish beliefs find expression through the authority of the Rabbi as a teacher of <i>halachah</i> (legal tradition) and <i>Torah</i>, and through the religious practices of the faithful Jew who fulfils the <i>mitzvot</i> (commandments). ◆ See Moses Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith under the 'Ethical teachings' column. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The most important collection of sacred texts is the <i>Torah</i> or first five books of the Hebrew Bible. The first five books are also referred to as the Pentateuch or <i>Chumash</i>. There is also the <i>Mishnah</i> (a commentary on the <i>Torah</i>), which forms part of an even broader commentary, the <i>Talmud</i>. ◆ The general term <i>Tenach</i> is used to refer to the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is an acronym for <i>Torah</i> (Law), <i>Neviim</i> (Prophets) and <i>Ketuvim</i> (Writings). ◆ The <i>Talmud</i> is the most authoritative work of the Oral Torah. It contains the <i>Mishnah</i> and the <i>Gemara</i>. The <i>Mishnah</i> was completed c. 200 CE and is the Oral Law in written form. The <i>Gemara</i> is an Aramaic commentary related to the <i>Mishnah</i>. ◆ Another part of Jewish sacred writings is <i>Midrash</i>, a collection of traditional Jewish interpretations of the books of the Bible, in the form of homilies or commentaries. ◆ Many other writings are held in great esteem by Jews, for example, the <i>Sefer ha-Zohar</i> of the <i>Kabbalists</i>. The many additional writings form a huge corpus of Jewish sacred texts and writings.

Ethical teachings	Significant practices	Significant people and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Significant ethical teachings include the Decalogue or Ten Commandments and the <i>Shema</i> (Hear, O Israel) from Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21; Numbers 15:37–41. ◆ The ethical principles of Judaism are lived out through the commandments of the Torah, the rule of life, and include <i>gemilut chasidim</i>, the obligation to do deeds of loving kindness. ◆ Almsgiving (in Hebrew, <i>tzedakah</i>) and <i>gemilut chasidim</i> (deeds of loving kindness) are considered to be equal to all the commandments of the Torah. ◆ Of particular importance is <i>halachah</i>, the Jewish legal tradition grounded in the 613 <i>mitzvot</i> of the Torah, which seeks to guide Jews in right relationship with God and all people. ◆ The Torah prohibits graven images. It has been argued in modern Judaism that moral human beings are the only image of God that is appropriate. The religious ethic that emerges from such a view is that humans are the nearest things to the divine. As such, others should always be treated with respect and generosity, and one should always act with humility. In order to love one's neighbour, as the Torah teaches, one must know the other's pain. ◆ Moses Maimonides (d. 1204) penned the most famous summary of Jewish belief—the Thirteen Articles of Faith. This combined with the Torah and <i>mitzvot</i> contains important teachings on covenant, prayer, humanity, the afterlife, and the religious roles of individuals, families and the Jewish community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Jewish call to holiness is based on the precepts of the Torah; and in particular the keeping of the <i>mitzvot</i>, the 613 commandments contained within the Torah. ◆ Key features of Jewish spirituality also include the <i>Shabbat</i> (Sabbath) meal, <i>Shabbat</i> synagogue services, and the recitation of daily prayers. ◆ Judaism includes the <i>Kabbalah</i> or mystical tradition. ◆ Jewish perspectives have been changed irreversibly by the event of the <i>Shoah</i> or Holocaust. ◆ The woman of the household performs the home ritual of the lighting of the candle and blessing of the meal to usher in <i>Shabbat</i>. In the Orthodox tradition, the woman is responsible for the maintenance of the home and is obedient to her husband. Women do play a public role in synagogue service in the Progressive and Conservative variants of the tradition; these variants have also ordained women as rabbis. ◆ The Jewish festivals of <i>Pesach</i> (Passover), <i>Shavuot</i> (The Giving of the Torah) and <i>Sukkot</i> (The Festival of Booths) are known as the three pilgrim festivals. This is because the Torah commands Jews to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem on each occasion. The Temple no longer stands, but the festivals remain as important aspects of the Jewish experience of the pilgrim's journey of faith. ◆ The call to <i>aliyah</i> (literally, 'going up')—physical pilgrimage to the State of Israel—is a powerful notion in modern Judaism, particularly nurtured within the Zionist movement. To make <i>aliyah</i> is to embroider more richly the tapestry of the Jewish life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Apart from the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (c. 1800 BCE) and Moses (c. 1300 BCE)—important figures are King David, who founded the United Israelite Kingdom (c. 1000 BCE) and his son Solomon (c. 900 BCE). ◆ To this can be added the Major and Minor Prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). ◆ Moses Maimonides (d. 1204) wrote thirteen articles of belief that are perhaps the most enduring interpretations of Judaism in this millennium. ◆ RaShI is an acronym for Rabbi Solomon (Hebrew: <i>Shlomo</i>) ben Isaac (d. 1105), the famous French Talmudic scholar. His key work was his commentary on the Talmud. Rashi's commentary is considered so important that it has been printed in all versions of the Talmud since the time the printing press was invented. ◆ The wisdom and the <i>halachic</i> judgements of Beruiah, wife of Rabbi Meir, appear in the Talmud and other later writings. Contrary to the norm of her day, she faced the dilemma of dealing with a demanding intellectual life and the demands of family and home. ◆ The revivalist movement known as <i>Chasidic</i> Judaism has its roots in eighteenth century Eastern Europe, in the life of its founder, Israel Ben Eliezer, the <i>Baal Shem Tov</i> (c. 1700). <i>Chasidic</i> Jews today are tireless and strict in their devotion to the commandments of the Torah. It is for this reason that the <i>Chasidim</i> hold the favour of even quite assimilated Jews, who see them as the custodians of the tradition. ◆ <i>Kabbalah</i> was a major influence in the development of <i>Chasidism</i>, and still has followers among <i>Chasidic</i> Jews. The mysticism of the <i>Kabbalah</i> flourished in Eastern Europe in the shadow of Jewish persecution towards the end of the seventeenth century. Kabbalistic tradition makes much of letters and numbers—each has a mystical significance that only <i>Kabbalistic</i> teaching can unlock. <i>Kabbalah</i> also has a strong emphasis on messianism (belief in a Messiah).

HSC course

Chapter 9

Religion and belief systems in Australia post-1945



Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **discuss** how Aboriginal spirituality is determined by Dreaming
- **discuss** the continuing effect of dispossession on Aboriginal spiritualities
- **outline** the importance of the Land Rights movement and **analyse** the relationship between Dreaming and Land Rights
- **outline** changing patterns of religious adherence in Australia from 1945 to the present
- **account** for the present ‘religious landscape’ in Australia
- **describe** the impact of ecumenism on Australian Christianity
- **evaluate** the importance of interfaith dialogue in multifaith Australia
- **examine** the relationship between the spiritualities of Aboriginal peoples and religious traditions in the process of Reconciliation.



The Gamillaroi Aboriginal dancing group from Sydney led a cleansing ceremony and call to worship at the inauguration of the National Council of Churches in Australia at St Christopher's Catholic Cathedral in Canberra, 3 July 1994.

Introduction

Given Australia's religious history, who could ever have imagined that there could be, in 1994, an Aboriginal cleansing ceremony at the beginning of a worship service to inaugurate a meeting of almost all the denominations of the Christian Churches in Australia?

The religious make-up of Australia's population in 1945 had hardly changed from that of 1901. With the exception of a small but significant Lutheran element, Australian society was predominantly Anglo-Celtic Christian, with about 0.5 per cent professing non-Christian religions. This was all to change with the impact of migration to Australia after the Second World War.

The end of the Second World War in 1945 brought huge changes throughout the world—including changes in how people saw their world. These changes are reflected in the relationship between various Christian denominations; in the relationship between the Christian tradition and those traditions other than Christianity; and in the relationship between the non-Indigenous community and Indigenous peoples (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples). This chapter will address some of these changes and their impact on Australia's religious landscape.

Extension

- 1 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with religion in Australia since 1945. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on this topic. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media's presentation with what you have learnt in your study of religion in Australia since 1945.

9.1 Contemporary Aboriginal spiritualities

Aboriginal spirituality: A sense of belonging

Cynthia Rowan, a descendant of the Birra Birra People, north-west of Rockhampton, speaking at the First National Conference on Aboriginality and Perceptions of Christianity, 1990:

... when I talk about Aboriginal Spirituality, I am talking about something which had its beginnings over 40 000 years ago ... So because of our diversity of cultures and diversity of experiences when, as Aboriginal People, we talk about Aboriginal Spirituality, we must be careful. It is we who must define and take responsibility for how our Spirituality is presented. For us to let others define our Spirituality is to allow them to say, 'This is Aboriginal Spirituality', and they would put it in a little box and say, 'Look, this is it here.' Does a concept of Aboriginal Spirituality from another culture adequately express and articulate to all Aboriginal clans in Australia that it is good for us to come together and talk about Aboriginal Spirituality: where we come from, how it has sustained us, and



how the Spirituality of some of our brothers and sisters has been oppressed, how it has ripped them apart? Are we going to define it for ourselves, or are we going to define it for all our brothers and sisters who are not with us today? We need to look at Aboriginal Spirituality. We need to be talking about it, but we cannot put it down in writing. It cannot be studied like theology and sociology or cultures and societies, because we come from an oral tradition and we are all at different stages of understanding our own Spirituality.

In Anne Pattel-Gray (ed.), *Aboriginal Spirituality: Past, Present, Future*, 1996, pp. 13–16

RESPOND

Briefly and in your own words, clarify what Cynthia Rowan is saying.

Aboriginal spirituality as determined by Dreaming

Glossary

country	Term used by Aboriginal peoples to refer to the land to which they belong and their place of Dreaming. Aboriginal English usage of the word is much broader than standard English.
Elders	Key persons and keepers of various knowledge within Aboriginal communities. They are chosen and accepted by their own communities as Elders in respect of:
	a kinship and as overseers of many Dreaming tracks; that is, they are 'Boss over country '
	b being leaders of large extended family networks
	c knowledge acquired and services given within the community.
estate	The heartland of a local group and the centre of their attachment to territory.
kinship	The system of relationships traditionally accepted by a particular culture and the rights and obligations they involve.

► Refer to Chapter 1, pages 10–11, for the nature of Dreaming.

As we saw in Chapter 1, Aboriginal spiritualities are not just a series of complex 'religious' practices—they are a way of life. The **kinship** systems of Aboriginal peoples, the obligations to both the land and the people that follow from their kinship and their expressions in ceremonial life are not separate from or additional to their spiritualities—they are the expression of Dreaming in a physical sense. Aboriginal ceremonies have two major purposes: they mark the relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the spirit world and the Ancestral Beings (including humans) who made the cosmos; and they also mark the stages in every Aboriginal person's life.

Kinship

Dreaming, as the basis of all aspects of life, is expressed tangibly in the complex and sophisticated network of relationships, rights and obligations within Aboriginal societies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a complex system of family relations, where each person knows their kin and their land. These extended family relationships are the core of Indigenous kinship systems that are central to the way culture is passed on and society is organised.

No matter if they are fish, birds, men, women, animals, wind or rain ... All things in our country here have Law, they have ceremony and song, and they have people who are related to them.

M. Harvey, 'The Dreaming', in J. Bradley, *Yanyuwa Country: The Yanyuwa People of Booroloola Tell of their Land*, 1988, p. xi

Kinship systems define where a person fits into the community, binding people together in relationships of sharing and obligation. They provide systems of moral and financial support within the community and define roles and responsibilities for raising and educating children.

Aboriginal peoples grow up with a mental map of the relationships of their whole society, and acquiring this mental map is an important part of a child's education. Relationships are cultivated within an extended family in which each person has a defined position. It is not unusual for a person to have many mothers and fathers, aunties, uncles, sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews. And there are special words that define the nature of these relations. As part of an Aboriginal community, what becomes important is the role played within the community.

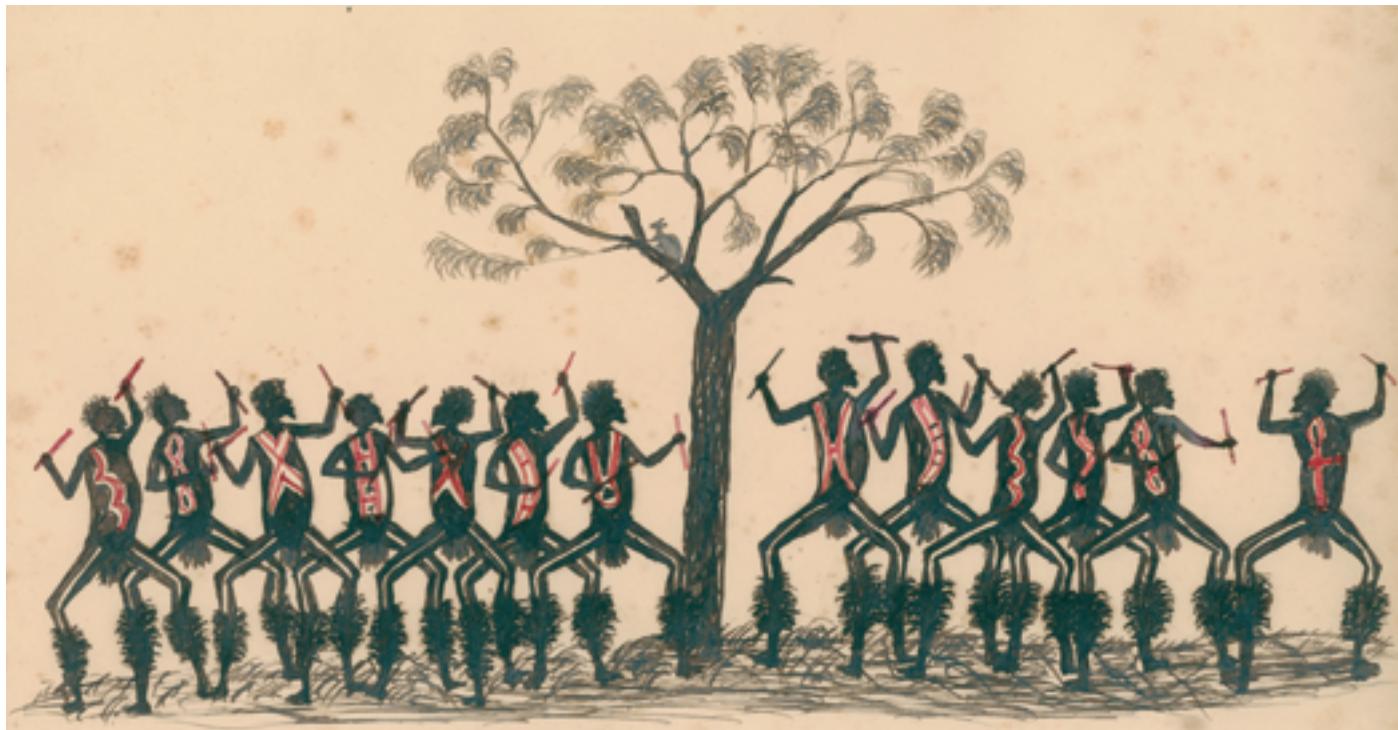


Figure 9.1.1 Corroboree, c. 1860s–1901, pen and ink drawing by Tommy McRae (c. 1830s–1901), an Aboriginal artist of the Upper Murray



Figure 9.1.2 Scenes of Aboriginal Life, c. 1850, drawing in pencil and wash by Mickey of Ulladulla (d. 1891)

RESPOND

Carefully **examine** this picture and find three examples to **demonstrate** that there is European settlement in the district. What impact would this have had on the rituals and ceremonies of the Aboriginal peoples of the area?

Ceremonial life

Traditional Aboriginal peoples have a rich ceremonial life. There are rites of passage, such as initiation and death and burial, and periodic ceremonies unconnected with the life cycle and performed at various intervals for a variety of reasons. These periodic ceremonies may range from a ceremony purely for enjoyment to ones promoting the overall health and wellbeing of the whole group.

The public corroboree or ceremonial dance is the ritual that was most familiar to early Europeans. These dances were mostly the concluding ceremony of secret/sacred rituals such as initiations and balance rites, and were the opportunity for all members of the group to come together. Sometimes they were held to celebrate a plentiful supply of food.

Death and burial rituals

For Aboriginal peoples, death is not the end of life but the last ceremony in the present life. They believe the spirits of the dead return to the Dreaming places they had come from, which is part of the eternal transition of the life force of Dreaming.

Burial grounds and the spirits of the dead are held in great fear. Often the possessions of the dead are destroyed, their shelters burned, and the whole camp moves away. Even the names of the dead cannot be spoken. (Over the last few years, the Australian media have acknowledged this, and no longer state the names of dead Aboriginal peoples unless permission to do so has been obtained from the deceased's relatives.) The dead must be buried in their own **country** and their spirits properly sung to rest.

Funeral ceremonies lay the spirits of the dead to rest in their proper places and reaffirm the place of the living in the unity of nature. Burial customs vary widely. In one part of Queensland, for example, the remains are cremated in the annual grass burning. In other places in Australia, bodies are placed on platforms, in trees, in rock-shelters, in hollow logs or in special houses for the dead; sometimes they are cremated or buried sitting up and facing the sun.



Figure 9.1.3 *Pukamani (Burial Ceremony) Poles by Tiwi People* (various artists), 1974–84, ironwood, ochres, 16 poles, max. height 290 cm.

These poles are an essential part of the elaborate Pukamani burial ceremony; they mark the grave of the deceased and are left open to the elements.

Review

- 1 Explain in your own words the concept of kinship for Indigenous Australians.
- 2 How does this concept of kinship differ from your own? For example, whom do you consider your 'kin' and why?
- 3 Explain how 'ceremonial life' gives meaning and purpose to life as an Aboriginal person.
- 4 Discuss how death and burial rituals are connected to Dreaming.

Extension

Using the internet and/or other resources, investigate the return of Aboriginal remains and explain why it is so important for Aboriginal peoples that these remains return 'home'.

Obligations to the land and people

For Aboriginal peoples, ownership of the land means that they have a responsibility to care for it and nurture it. The land and all the forms of life it contains are regarded as a sacred trust, to be preserved and passed on in a timeless cycle of mutual dependence. It is important, however, to distinguish between the economic use of the land and the ritual association with land. Land not only provides food and water, but is also the repository of the secret/sacred—the activities of Dreaming Beings.

A group will have land that they regularly search for food and water. These people will be familiar with the important ritual features of all that land, but they may not have responsibility for it all. The area of land for which they do have responsibility is their ritual **estate**. It is this ritual estate that is 'my country' and contains the sites of spiritual significance or 'sacred sites'. Learning of the story of one's country is a lifelong process that brings with it ever greater rights and responsibilities.

Ownership of the land is based upon the division and distribution of ritual responsibility for land, rather than upon the rights to use and occupy the land. Within each ritual estate, there will be at least one site left there by the Ancestral Beings. At each site (which can be as simple as a small flat stone or a hole in the ground) the spirits of

that particular site are thought to live. It is here that the spirits await the summoning of their human guardians each year, to emerge and so ensure the supply of food.

It is the responsibility of the appropriate **Elders** to properly perform the relevant rites each year. And all this relates to the kinship systems within Aboriginal societies.

Land is not bounded by the geographical limitations placed upon it by a surveyor who marks out an area and says, ‘this is your plot’. Land is the generation point of existence. It is the maintenance of existence, the spirit from which Aboriginal existence comes.

It is a living place made up of sky, clouds, rivers, trees, the wind, the sand and the spirit that created all these things—the spirit that planted my own spirit there—my own country. It is something. And yet it is not a thing. It is a living entity. It belongs to me. I belong to the land. I rest in it. I come from there.

Land is a notion that is difficult to categorise in English law. The limitations of my land are clear to me. The area from which I derive my existence is clear to me and to those people who belong in my group.

Land provides for my physical needs and provides for my spiritual needs. It is a regeneration of stories. New stories are sung from contemplation of the land. Stories are handed down from spirit men of the past who have deposited the richest at various places ... they are used for the regeneration of history—the regeneration of Aboriginal people, the continuation of their life. This is where they begin and that is where they return.

From a talk given by the then Father Patrick Dodson at the annual conference of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council at Yeppoon, January 1976.

Patrick Dodson was the first Chairperson (1991–97) of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (see pages 220–1). He was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2008.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** what Aboriginal peoples mean by ‘my country’.
- 2 ‘It belongs to me. I belong to the land. I rest in it. I come from there.’ **Explain** what this statement says about Aboriginal societies and their relationship to the land.
- 3 ‘Aboriginal spiritualities are determined by Dreaming.’ **Summarise** the key points that support this statement.

Extension

- 1 **Construct** a mind map to explore the relationship of kinship, ceremonial life and obligations to the land and people to Dreaming.
- 2 **Analyse** the statement: ‘Because the most obvious Aboriginal ceremonies early Europeans witnessed were “public” rituals, they failed to appreciate the spiritual significance of these ceremonies.’

Issues for Aboriginal spiritualities

Glossary

assimilation	A nineteenth century idea that peoples should be absorbed into the majority culture. In the context of this chapter, the peoples to be ‘improved’ were Aboriginal peoples and the majority culture was ‘civilised’ Christian culture.
evangelise	Literally means to ‘teach the gospel’. Bringing people to Christianity—‘winning souls for Christ’. The terms ‘missionary activity’ or ‘missionary work’ are often used as synonyms.
mission	An Aboriginal settlement that may or may not have been at one time a religious institution. A person is described as living ‘in or off’ a mission, rather than ‘in or at’. The name derived from the original purpose of many Aboriginal settlements—as a mission of one of the various Christian denominations. When the government took over the management, the name often remained, or was applied to Aboriginal communities that had in fact never been missions but were rather government ‘reserves’.

Dispossession

With the European settlement of Australia from 1788 there were competing interests for the land of the original inhabitants, and it was to be over a century before the ‘new’ inhabitants began to realise the effects of this dispossession.

In the beginning, it was thought that all that could be done was to ‘smooth the pillow of a dying race’ in the areas of first occupation (the colony of New South Wales). Fifty years after European settlement, ‘protection’ became the official policy—the ‘race’ was not dying so it had to be protected and **missions** and reserves or settlements were set up to ‘protect’ the Indigenous peoples. Protection, however, meant segregation and isolation from European communities and, while offering ‘protection’ for Indigenous peoples, it also allowed the taking of large tracts of land for pastoral purposes. It also meant that Christian missionaries could **evangelise** and therefore ‘civilise’, and could protect the Indigenous peoples from the negative influences of European society.

By 1911 the reserve system was in place around Australia. State-run Aboriginal Protection or Welfare Boards, which began operating in the early 1900s, controlled and supervised the lives of Indigenous Australians. These boards could decide where Indigenous peoples could live, where they could travel, who they could visit, who they might marry or have relationships with, and where and how their children could be raised. They determined which jobs Indigenous peoples could have, and withheld their wages indefinitely. They governed what property Indigenous peoples could own and how they disposed of it.

By driving Aboriginal peoples off their land, the European settlers did more than deprive them of their ‘country’. They deprived them of their independence, their culture and their spiritual world. Some missions on or near traditional lands had an active policy of destroying Aboriginal culture—ceremonies could not be held and kin from ‘outside’ could not visit. Other missions worked within traditional culture, adapting teachings and practices to suit local traditions. In most places, big ceremonial gatherings and movement of kin from one place to another were forbidden. In all states, in fact, the movement of Aboriginal peoples was controlled, in some cases very harshly.

All the work was done by Aborigines. They were told: ‘do not go around naked, do not be dirty, do not work on Sunday, and do not drink, smoke or be promiscuous.’ Corroborees were usually forbidden. Children had to wear uniforms and work, play, learn and pray according to clockwork schedules.

Richard Broome, quoted in Nigel Parbury, *Survival—A History of Aboriginal Life in New South Wales*, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, 1986, p. 51

The relocation of Aboriginal peoples to land away from their traditional area resulted in the destruction of families and cultural ties, and sometimes led to animosity between the various traditional groups struggling to survive.

The missions

The missionary institutions have been very significant as places of both cultural repression and cultural survival. Within the missions, Aboriginal peoples were provided with some protection from some of the excesses and the violence of the European community. Often, however, the price of this type of safety was cultural oppression, especially of aspects of culture such as language and ceremony.

Some missions were agents of government policy and engaged in practices such as forcibly separating Aboriginal children from their families. This was done to maximise control over the child’s education into Christian ways and beliefs. In this way, missions contributed to the suppression of Aboriginal cultural practices and languages.

Missions often also provided places where large numbers of Indigenous peoples were forced to congregate, thus unintentionally preserving some forms of cultural and community identity against the **assimilation** intentions of the majority society.

Some missionaries were frequently outspoken in their defence of Indigenous peoples, not only to save the lives of the people, but also to argue for the recognition of Aboriginals as being fully human in their intellectual ability. Most missionaries, however, were at least seeking vigorously to change the ways that Indigenous peoples expressed their spiritual relationship through the land in story and ceremony.

While large groups of Aboriginal peoples living in settlements and missions were similar in size to those that traditionally formed for ceremonial occasions, there were two important differences. Firstly, the groupings were permanent and their composition had been imposed as a result of non-Aboriginal considerations. Secondly, groups were no longer able to move around geographically, and restriction of ceremonies meant that Aboriginal peoples were much more isolated from one another than they had ever been before.

All this dislocation undermined the basis of Aboriginal culture. Without enough people to remain self-sufficient or to sustain complex religious and cultural practices, Aboriginal identity and self-esteem was difficult to maintain. Customary law and authority and a close relationship with the land were also undermined—land was lost to the more powerful European settlers.



Figure 9.1.4 Aboriginal peoples with a minister at a funeral, c. 1900. This photograph, taken in the Tilba Tilba region of the far south coast of New South Wales, is a good example of how Christian ceremonies replaced traditional Aboriginal ones.

RESPOND

Identify three aspects of this photograph that demonstrate dispossession.

The policy of protection was followed in the late 1930s by assimilation policies—policies that would stay in place until the 1960s. In 1937 the Commonwealth Government convened a conference with the states where it was officially agreed that the aim for those Aboriginal peoples not of ‘full-blood’ should be their ultimate absorption into the wider population. This policy, referred to as ‘assimilation’, was designed to solve the ‘Aboriginal problem’ by ensuring that Aboriginal peoples would lose their identity and culture within the wider community.

Under the government’s protection and assimilation policies, Aboriginal Protection Boards throughout Australia oversaw the removal of thousands of Aboriginal children. Often these children would be sent to ‘training homes’ where they were trained as domestic servants or farm labourers, or fostered out to non-Aboriginal families away from their community of origin. These children became known as ‘the Stolen Generations’.

From the late 1950s, families were increasingly encouraged, sometimes forcefully, to leave the reserves and try to ‘make it’ in the European community. Those who left the reserves were not permitted to visit family members still on the reserve.

Assimilation policies changed the way many missions and reserves operated. There was a shift in focus from protectorates for Aboriginal peoples to institutions that facilitated the assimilation of mixed-race children into European society.

The government’s policy of assimilation was not officially abandoned until 1972 when, as a direct result of growing Aboriginal activism, it was officially replaced with a policy of self-determination—defined as ‘Aboriginal communities deciding the pace and nature of their own future within a diverse Australia’.

Review

- 1 **Construct** a table that identifies the different policies for ‘managing’ Australia’s Indigenous population up until 1972.
- 2 **Distinguish** between ‘protection’ and ‘assimilation’.
- 3 How did the separation from ‘country’ affect the kinship systems and ceremonial life of Aboriginal peoples?

Extension



- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the Aboriginal history of your region after European settlement—were any missions, reserves or settlements established?
- 2 Research the history of an Aboriginal mission, reserve or settlement.
 - a When did it begin?
 - b Who ran it?
 - c Was it only for local Aboriginal peoples?
 - d When did it cease operating as a mission, reserve or settlement?

The Stolen Generations

The forced separation or ‘taking away’ of children of Aboriginal mothers and European fathers from their families occurred in every part of Australia from the late 1800s. Children were taken from Aboriginal parents so they could be brought up ‘white’ and taught to reject their Aboriginality. From the 1950s to the 1970s it was government policy. During this time as many as

100 000 children were separated from their families. These children have become known as 'the Stolen Generations'.

The separation took three forms:

- putting Indigenous children into government or church-run institutions
- adopting children into 'white' families
- fostering children into 'white' families.

The last two strategies were particularly applied to children of mixed heritage.

By separating Indigenous children from their families and traditional background, it was hoped that they would adopt European culture and behaviour, in other words, assimilate. Although never explicitly stated, the ultimate goal was to absorb the 'half-castes' into the European community with the hope that 'full-blooded' Aboriginal people would 'die out' as quickly as possible.

The children who were taken away lost their identity, culture, language and spirituality, and their self-esteem. Today many Aboriginal peoples still do not know who their relatives are or have been unable to track them down.

Aboriginal individuals and rights organisations had been active since at least the mid to late-1980s in advocating for a national inquiry into removal policies and practices. And in 1995 the Full Court of the Family Court of Australia stated that:

It is now beyond controversy that there is devastating long term effect on thousands of Aboriginal children arising from their removal from their Aboriginal families and their subsequent upbringing within a white environment.

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families was launched in August 1995. The inquiry was carried out by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the report was presented in 1997. The inquiry received submissions from many of the churches and church groups that had been actively involved in missionary activity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as those who had been under their care. Mostly the churches accepted that they share some responsibility for forcible removals because of their involvement in providing accommodation, education and work placements for children in their care.

With the wisdom of hindsight we can only wonder how as a nation, and as a Church, we failed to see the violence of what we were doing. Hopefully, today we are more vigilant regarding the values we espouse.

Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin,
submission 456, p. 2

The Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia advised the inquiry that 85 per cent of the people it interviewed, who had been forcibly removed as children, had spent at least part of their childhood in the care of a mission. Nationally, the proportion is probably somewhat lower.

It must be acknowledged that, no matter how well intentioned the motives of the Church were in its involvement in separating children from their families, its complicity has contributed to the dislocation of the people concerned, and therefore their loss of land, language, and identity.

It is evident that the present high rate of continuing social dislocation and Aboriginal imprisonment is the direct result of the separation of children from their families in which the Church was complicit.

Anglican Church of Australia, Diocese of Perth,
submission 410, p. 2

One unforeseen outcome of the national inquiry was raised by the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission:

Perhaps the saddest legacy of this [mission] experience is that in many outback communities today, there is deep division between those who wish to defend the Church to which they belong and those who wish to blame it for all the suffering they have experienced.

Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission,
submission 6.3

The legacy of separation goes beyond breaking up families, and extends to the breaking up of communities and a spirit of solidarity as well.

Another comment that must be made about the impact of missionary activity is that many missionaries gained from the contact. In place of paternalistic condescension, there grew an appreciation of the deeply spiritual foundations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural traditions.

There has been a gradual recognition that Indigenous people could make a positive contribution to Australian national identity and values, rather than simply assimilate into the ready-made, religiously packaged culture of materialism that seems to prevail in Australia.

Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission,
submission 6.2

'Sorry Day' 2008

The report from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families was called *Bringing them Home*. Among the report's numerous recommendations was one for an official apology by the Australian Government to the Stolen Generations. It was almost exactly eleven years and two months later—13 February 2008—that the nation stopped to hear the newly elected Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd deliver that apology:

I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation. ...



Figure 9.1.5 Members of Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous community gathered at Federation Mall on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra after a live broadcast of the official apology.

Review

- 1 Propose how the policies of 'protection' and 'assimilation' would have facilitated the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents.
- 2 In pairs, using the material quoted in this section, assess what reflections on their missionary activities Christian Churches and individuals within those Churches might have had in the process of making their submissions to the national inquiry. What difficulties might they have encountered in preparing their submissions?

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 204. Choose two stories and summarise what each of these stories tells you about the impact of forced separation on Aboriginal peoples.
- 2 In groups, outline points for a discussion on the topic: 'Dispossession—from land and from kinship groups—continues to affect Aboriginal spiritualities.'
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 204 to find out more about 'Sorry Day'. In three sentences, describe what the presentation tells you.

The Land Rights movement

Glossary

integration	A form of assimilation that recognises many Aboriginal peoples wish to keep a distinct identity.
Land Rights	Claims by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to repossession and compensation for use of their lands and sacred sites.
native title	The name given by the High Court of Australia to Indigenous property rights recognised by the court as handed down in the Mabo decision (3 June 1992).
self-determination	The achievement of full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples in Australian society. This involves recognition of the cultural distinctiveness and diversity of Indigenous peoples.

In the aftermath of the Second World War attitudes to assimilation changed. By the late 1960s, the policy was **integration**, not ‘assimilation’, and in 1972 **self-determination** became the dominant policy in Indigenous affairs. From the 1960s, the Aboriginal quest for justice became part of the political landscape and provided the groundwork for the **Land Rights** struggles to come.

1963—Yirrkala petition

The Yirrkala people of the Gove Peninsula in the Northern Territory presented a petition ‘written on bark’ to the Commonwealth Parliament protesting about their land being taken by a mining company.

1965—the ‘freedom riders’

Thirty people led by Charles Perkins, one of two Aboriginal students at Sydney University, undertook a bus tour of northern and western New South Wales towns to protest against racial discrimination. The tour focused national attention on racism that had been generated and supported by the so-called ‘white Australia’ policy. Indigenous peoples were often denied service in shops, separated from others in cinemas, banned from hotels and clubs and excluded from swimming pools being used by ‘whites’.

Did you know?

One of the Sydney University student ‘freedom riders’ was Jim Spigelman. In May 1998 he was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.



Figure 9.1.6 Sydney University students set out on a ‘freedom ride’ bus.

1966—Wave Hill strike

The Gurindji people went on strike to press their claim to part of the Wave Hill pastoral station in the Northern Territory.

1967—the referendum

On 27 May, Australians voted overwhelmingly to propose changes to the Constitution so that Aboriginal peoples would be counted in the Census, and the Commonwealth would have the power to make laws regarding Aboriginal peoples.



Figure 9.1.7 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam handed back the deeds to traditional Gurindji lands to Vincent Lingiari at Wattie Creek, Northern Territory, 16 August 1975. After handing back the deeds, the prime minister poured soil onto Lingiari’s hand.

RESPOND

What is the symbolism of this action?



Figure 9.1.8 The Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Canberra, July 1972

1972—the ‘Tent Embassy’

On Australia Day in 1972, a tent appeared on the lawns in front of the then Parliament House in Canberra. This was called the Aboriginal Embassy and it was here that the Aboriginal flag, designed by Luritja artist Harold Thomas, became a national symbol—black for the people, red for the land (and bloodshed) and yellow for the sun, giver of life. The Embassy became the focal point for protests against denial of rights for Aboriginal peoples, their ‘living’ conditions (which were not at all conducive to living) and the lack of action in Aboriginal affairs by federal and state governments. It caused continued embarrassment to the government as national and overseas television screens showed protesters braving the Canberra winter in their tattered tents. After a hastily gazetted ordinance to ban camping on public land in the Australian Capital Territory, Commonwealth police moved in on 20 July and pulled down the tents by force. Aboriginal peoples arrived from all over Australia to re-erect them, and again they were forcefully pulled down. There were protest marches all around Australia and the government was surprised by the amount of public support for the Aboriginal cause—Aboriginal Land Rights had become a national issue.

The Land Rights movement is both a religious and a political movement. It seeks to secure the inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples to their land so that their religious and cultural integrity is preserved. Land, as we have

seen, is at the heart of Dreaming and all relationships within Aboriginal communities are determined through relationships to land.

Did you know?

In 1888 Aboriginal peoples boycotted Australia's centenary celebrations, but few noticed. For the 1938 sesquicentenary (150th anniversary), a Day of Mourning was proclaimed. In 1970 Australia celebrated the bicentenary of Captain Cook's landing at Kurnell and it was here on the site of the old Aborigines Protection Board reserve at La Perouse that again Aboriginal Australia staged a ceremony of mourning and called for ‘Land Rights—Nationally—Now’. At the 26 January bi-centenary Australia Day celebrations in 1988, Aboriginal groups proclaimed the date as ‘Invasion Day’ to focus public attention on the issue of Land Rights.

Mabo, native title and Wik

It is my father's land, my grandfather's land, my grandmother's land. I am related to it, it give me my identity. If I don't fight for it, then I will be moved out of it and [it] will be the loss of my identity.

Father Dave Passi, plaintiff, in Mabo case in ‘Land bilong Islander’, 1990

Although various Land Rights legislation had been passed in Australian states and territories beginning with *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, it was

in the 1992 High Court judgment in *Mabo v. Queensland* (No. 2)—notably not unanimous—that the Indigenous peoples of Australia finally won a case in law regarding their ownership of land. This case was initiated by five Indigenous plaintiffs, led by Eddie Mabo, from the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait—the Meriam people. The Mabo decision overthrew the legal fiction of *terra nullius*—that is, that the land of Australia belonged to no one when the European settlers arrived in 1788.

The fiction by which the rights and interests of Indigenous inhabitants in land were treated as non-existent was justified by a policy which has no place in the contemporary laws in this country ... The common law of this country would perpetuate injustice if it were to continue to embrace the enlarged notion of *terra nullius* and to persist in characterising the Indigenous inhabitants of the Australian colonies as people too low in the scale of social organisation to be acknowledged as possessing rights and interests in land.

Justice Brennan, High Court Mabo decision, 1992

Mabo decision 1992

The High Court ruling found that a **native title** to land existed in 1788, and may continue to exist provided it has not been extinguished by subsequent Acts of government and provided Indigenous groups continue to observe their traditional laws and customs. The Mabo decision also made it clear that native title had been extinguished over freehold land. As most private land in urban Australia is freehold, it meant that there were no fears that suburban homes were at risk from land claims.

Native Title Act 1993

This legislation came into force on 1 January 1994 and recognised the existence of Aboriginal native title in Australian federal law and the native title rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Wik decision 1996

One year after Mabo, in June 1993, the Wik people (later joined by the Thayorre people) claimed native title over some traditional lands on the Cape York Peninsula in Queensland. The Wik decision, handed down by the High Court in December 1996 (*Wik Peoples v. Queensland*), determined that native title could co-exist with other rights on land held under a pastoral lease. The court ruled that as the condition of pastoral leases vary, each must be judged on its own merits. While this judgment did not determine whether or not native title exists, it did allow the Wik and Thayorre peoples to continue their claim in the Federal Court.

Native Title Amendment Act 1998

The Coalition (Liberal/National parties) government elected in March 1996 had a policy of amending the *Native Title Act* to make it more ‘workable’. Prime Minister John Howard introduced his ten-point plan to put the Wik ruling into practice—one of the proposals was a drastic curtailment of the rights of Indigenous peoples to negotiate. In October 1998, the *Native Title Amendment Act* was passed. The amended Act empowers the states and territories to legislate their own native title regimes.

Managing land claims

Since then the *Native Title Act* has been amended in 2007 and 2009 and a number of improvements have been made to streamline the management of all land claims. The Federal Court of Australia now has the central role in managing all claims, including determining whether claims will be mediated by the Court, the National Native Title Tribunal or another individual or body.

The High Court judgment (Mabo), the *Native Title Acts* and the Wik decision show a fundamental change in the way Australian law views the relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the land and dispel the idea that Australia was ever *terra nullius*. The major problem is that, while recognising the rights of Aboriginal peoples, they focus on traditional people and the ‘rights’ are limited not only to a very small percentage of Indigenous peoples, but to an even smaller segment of that group that can show a direct and continuous connection with a parcel of vacant crown land. It was to address the issues of those who fall outside this small group that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was set up in 1991 to investigate the desirability of an ‘instrument of reconciliation’.

► The process of Reconciliation is addressed at the end of this chapter on pages 219–22.

Review

- 1 **Recall** two early examples of Aboriginal protest.
- 2 When was the term ‘Land Rights’ first used?
- 3 In your own words, **define** ‘native title’?
- 4 **Distinguish** the differences between the Mabo and Wik judgments.
- 5 **Explain** how the Land Rights movement (and the Acts of Parliament that have resulted from it) sustains Dreaming.

Extension

- 1 Return to the mind map you constructed (see page 200). Add to it to illustrate that you understand the effects of dispossession on Aboriginal spiritualities.
- 2 **Examine** the importance of Mabo, native title and Wik to:
 - a Indigenous Australians living in areas first occupied by European settlers
 - b Indigenous Australians still living on or near their traditional lands
 - c Indigenous Australians living in urban areas.
- 3 'Mabo, native title and Wik provided a giant step towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.' **Discuss**.
- 4 **Outline** the importance of the Land Rights movement:
 - a for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - b to the establishment of the various native title Acts
 - c in twentieth century Australian history.
- 5 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this section and ensure that it is clear and complete.

9.2 Religious expression in Australia—1945 to the present

Glossary

ethnic	Relating to a population or particular group and their history, customs, language etc.
monocultural	Culture in which there is very little diversity in terms of ethnic groups, language etc.

The impact of immigration from Europe after the Second World War led to an increase in affiliates of the Orthodox Churches, the forming of Reformed bodies and the growth



Figure 9.2.1 Christmas service at Old Cathedral of our Lady's Protection Russian Orthodox Church in Collingwood, Victoria, 8 January 2006. Eastern and Orthodox Christians do not celebrate Christmas on 25 December—do you know why this is?

in the number of Catholics, particularly from Italian migration, as well as the formation of **ethnic** parishes in many other denominations. More recently, immigration from South-East Asia, the Middle East and Pacific nations has expanded Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim numbers considerably, while also adding to the ethnic diversity in Christian groups.

Despite the dominance of Christianity in Australian life since the Second World War, bipartisan political support for increased and diversified immigration into Australia has seen the nation emerge out of its Anglo-Celtic dominance to evolve into an open and, and for the most part, tolerant multicultural multifaith society.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 208 and **analyse** the recent research about Christian religious practice in Australia from the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). **Construct** a two-column table. In the first column, record what the NCLS says about Christian religious practice and belief in Australia that is new to you; in the second column, record what surprises you.

Australia's religious landscape since 1945

The following section outlines the changes in Australia's religious landscape through two sets of data. The first set is the Australian Census—it provides a thumbnail of those who identify with a religious tradition and, in the case of Christianity, its denominations. The second is the National Church Life Survey that identifies those who 'go to church'—quite a different picture. This section will then investigate some of the ways in which the current religious landscape is different from the earlier years and the reasons for that difference.

Table 9.1 Religions in Australia: Census data 1947–2006 (figures are percentages)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

	1947	1954	1961	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Christian											
Anglican	39.0	37.9	34.9	31.0	27.7	26.1	23.9	23.8	22.0	20.5	18.7
Baptist	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6
Catholic	20.9	22.9	24.9	27.0	25.7	26.0	26.1	27.3	27.0	26.6	25.8
Churches of Christ	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3
Lutheran	0.9	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3
Methodist*	11.5	10.9	10.2	8.6	7.3	3.4					
Orthodox	0.2	0.8	1.5	2.6	2.7	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9
Pentecostal**					0.3	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1
Presbyterian & Reformed	9.8	9.7	9.3	8.1	6.6	4.4	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.4	3.0
Salvation Army	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
Uniting						4.9	7.6	8.2	7.5	6.7	5.7
Other Christian†	2.0	3.2	3.3	4.6	4.7	5.0	5.4	3.3	3.8	2.11	2.11
Total	87.3	89.5	88.4	86.2	78.8	77.1	74.1	74.7	71.8	67.7	62.81
Non-Christian											
Buddhism	0.01	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.2	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.9	2.1
Hinduism	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.8
Islam	0.04	NA	NA	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.5	1.7
Judaism	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Other non-Christian	0.02	0.07	0.09	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.6
Total	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.6	3.4	4.8	5.7
Other											
No religion‡	0.3	0.3	0.4	6.7	8.3	10.8	12.7	12.9	16.6	15.5	18.7
Not stated/Inadequately described	10.9	9.7	10.7	6.3	12.2	11.4	12.3	11.5	9.0	11.7	11.9
Total other	11.2	10.0	11.1	13.0	20.5	22.2	23.0	23.4	25.6	27.2	30.6

* After May 1974 there was no continuing Methodist Church in Australia, although many people clearly continued to describe themselves as Methodists for some time afterwards (see pages 216–17).

** The Australian Census in 1976 was the first time 'Pentecostal Churches' were recognised as a distinct Christian denomination. They include Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Christian City Church, Christian Revival Crusade and Christian Outreach Centres.

Changing patterns of religious adherence

Three points can be made from the data in Table 9.1:

- There is a decline in the total number of people identifying with the three largest Christian denominations—Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Church (and its forebears) since the Second World War, from a high of 81.2 per cent in 1947 to 53.2 per cent in 2006.
- There is an increase in people identifying with the Orthodox Christian traditions.
- There is an increase in people identifying with traditions other than Christianity.

† 'Other Christian' includes Christian Science, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Unitarian and Wesleyan Methodist.

‡ In 1971 the instruction 'if no religion, write none' was introduced.

It is important, however, to remember that the question about religion in the Census is not compulsory, and because some people may choose not to state their religion on the Census, the ‘no religion’ and ‘not stated/inadequately described’ categories cannot be added together. It is also important to note that ‘no religion’ does not imply a blanket rejection of all religion. It can mean that people just do not wish to identify with any particular religious or denominational group. Some of these people see themselves as ‘spiritual’ although not belonging to a religious organisation. In 1971 the instruction to describe oneself as having ‘no religion’ if one had no religion was explicitly included in the Census. This was a major reason for a steep climb in the numbers of ‘no religion’ responses, and the numbers for not answering the question fell. Today it is also more acceptable to describe oneself as having ‘no religion’. Those people exploring alternative spiritualities and picking and choosing among different elements and beliefs would probably classify themselves as religious but would have difficulty in defining what their religion was.

In fact, the Census data reveals very little (if anything) about what Australians believe or even whether they ever ‘go to church’. Most cynically perhaps, it just reveals what religious institution Australians choose to identify themselves with on a Census form.

At census time most people make some sort of religious profession by describing themselves on the form as

Anglican, or Catholic, or Methodist or some other denominational adherent. I wonder what it really means. There are many ... Australians, probably some who call themselves Christians on the census return, who really have no religious profession or religious practice.

Paul Hasluck, ‘Then and now—religion’, in *Quadrant*, vol. 30, no. 11, 1992, p. 47. (Sir Paul Hasluck, who died in 1993, was Governor-General of Australia 1969–74.)

Did you know?

Jews in Australia may not be accurately reported in Census data. The Census question asks about religious denomination. For many Jews, their Jewishness is ethnic rather than religious. Some Jews would describe themselves as secular Jews or as having ‘no religion’. While the 2006 Census records almost 89 000 Jews, the number of people identifying themselves ethnically as Jews is estimated, by other sources, to be 15–20 per cent higher.

National Church Life Survey

While the Census data is limited in what it can tell us about religion in Australia, other research efforts, such as the National Church Life Survey, provide important data about Australians and their religion. The National Church Life Survey, a joint cooperative of the major churches in Australia, has conducted surveys since 1991. While these surveys complement the Census day, they are

Table 9.2 National Church Life Survey 2006, adult age profile by denomination (figures are percentages)

Source: National Church Life Survey and Australian Bureau of Statistics

	15–19 yrs	20–29 yrs	30–39 yrs	40–49 yrs	50–59 yrs	60–69 yrs	70–79 yrs	80+ yrs
Aust. Community (Census)	9	16	18	18	16	11	7	5
All Church attenders (NCLS)	6	9	11	16	17	19	16	7
Denominations								
Anglican	5	9	9	12	16	20	19	10
Baptist	8	14	15	19	17	14	9	4
Catholic	4	5	9	16	18	21	18	7
Churches of Christ	8	15	15	18	17	13	9	5
Lutheran	5	8	11	16	20	18	15	7
Pentecostal	11	22	18	21	15	8	3	1
Presbyterian	6	11	12	14	16	15	16	10
Salvation Army	6	11	12	13	17	20	15	7
Seventh-day Adventist	6	13	12	18	18	16	11	5
Uniting	3	5	6	11	15	22	24	15
Other Protestant*	9	15	14	23	16	12	9	3

* ‘Other Protestant’ includes Aboriginal Evangelical Mission and Congregational.

also limited, in that they only poll church attenders or those in close association with the churches.

The figures in the 2006 National Church Life Survey reveal that the churches have greater proportions of followers of people aged over 50 years and fewer under 40 years than in the community at large. This, however, has not always been so—a 1966 study found no differences between age groups.

National Church Life surveys reveal some facts that cannot be uncovered using Census data alone. The 2006 National Church Life Survey found, perhaps not surprisingly, that more people identify with religious organisations than actually attend church.

Table 9.3 reveals a clear difference between the low church attendance in the three largest Christian denominations (Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Church) as opposed to the stronger attendance in the evangelical Churches of Christ and Pentecostal Churches.

Table 9.3 National Church Life Survey 2001, weekly church attendance expressed as a percentage of those identifying with the denomination

Source: National Church Life Survey and Australian Bureau of Statistics

Denomination	No. of people (2001 Census)	2001 estimated weekly attendance	Per cent attending of people identifying
Anglican	3 881 162	177 700	5
Baptist	309 205	112 200	36
Catholic	5 001 624	764 800	15
Churches of Christ	61 335	45 100	74
Lutheran	250 365	40 500	16
Pentecostal	194 592	141 700*	73
Presbyterian and Reformed	637 530	42 100	7
Salvation Army	71 423	27 900	39
Seventh-day Adventist	53 844	36 600	68
Uniting	1 248 674	126 600	10

* NCLS attendance estimate for 'Pentecostal' only includes Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Bethesda, Christian City Churches, Christian Revival Crusade and Vineyard.

Did you know?

'No box to tick'

1954–76: Buddhism was not identified on the Census

1954–81: Hinduism was not identified on the Census

1954–61: Islam was not identified on the Census

RESPOND

What conclusions can you draw from this about migration patterns and the recognition of religion in Australia?

Review

- Using the Census data, **describe** the present religious landscape in Australia.
- Give three reasons why Census data alone does not give an accurate picture of Australia's religious landscape.
- Account** for how population growth affects religious affiliation percentage figures in the Census data.
- Construct** a timeline to help you analyse the changes in Australia's religious landscape since 1945.

Extension



Two significant online sources of information about religion in Australia are the National Church Life Survey and the Christian Research Association (particularly their study 'The Spirit of Generation Y'). **Investigate** some of the findings of these organisations and draw conclusions about:

- what people believe
- what they practise.

The current religious landscape

There are many reasons for the nature of Australia's current religious landscape as outlined in the Census figures.

Immigration has had the most dramatic effect leading to an increase in some groups and the decline of others. Other reasons are: the movement of people from one denomination to another; an increase in those seeking answers in new religious or spiritual movements; and an increase in those who acknowledge that they have 'no religion'.

The impact of immigration

Except for Israel, Australia has taken more immigrants relative to its existing population than any other country in the world. As well as meaning a dramatic increase in population, massive postwar immigration changed the ethnic mix of Australia.

Initially, the majority of immigrants were from European countries and were from Christian backgrounds.

In the major Christian denominations, an enormous range of ethnic communities has been catered for through the use of existing church buildings and other resources. There are several Eastern Catholic Churches in Australia, including the Ukrainian, Maronite and Melkite Churches. Essentially because of immigration, there are now fourteen Orthodox denominations in Australia.

Ethnic diversity has forced some recognition of the reality that not all Australians consider England or Ireland as their cultural homeland. Undoubtedly, post-1945 immigration of non-Anglo-Celtic people into Australia is among the most significant developments in Australia's history.



Figure 9.2.2 The story of the diversity brought to Australia with postwar immigration is reflected in this group from the Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church in Victoria.

Did you know?

While the impact of immigration in the aftermath of the Second World War led to an increase in those affiliated with the Orthodox Churches, one of the reasons for the decline in adherents to the Anglican Church was the decrease from the 1960s in the number of British migrants.

Religion and immigration

When the first migrants began arriving after the Second World War, Australian Christianity was divided along its original 'ethnic' lines—Christianity was Anglican (British), Catholic (Irish and Italian), Protestant (British) and Orthodox (Greek)—and many European Christians were seen as bringing a 'new religion' with them to Australia. Except for Jews, who were European, those who were not Christians were seen as **monocultural**—Muslims were Arabs; Buddhists were Chinese and later, Vietnamese; Hindus were Indian. Today, however, none of the religious traditions, nor the denominations within them, can be slotted into 'ethnic' or national boxes.

- Before 1901 most Jewish migrants were from Britain and then in the early years of the twentieth century many Polish, Russian and German Jews came to Australia. Just before the Second World War, a small number of Jewish refugees arrived from Nazi Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia and later much larger numbers of Eastern European survivors of the Holocaust. During the 1950s, there was a further wave of migrants from Hungary and South Africa, then Russia and Israel in the 1970s and the 1980s. More recently, South Africa has been the source of most Jewish migrants.
- The growth in Hinduism since 1991 reflects recent immigration of people with an Indian heritage, mainly from Fiji and Malaysia.
- Australian Muslims come from countries as diverse as Turkey, Lebanon, Indonesia, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and from parts of Africa such as Somalia and Ethiopia.
- There has been a remarkable growth among those identifying as Buddhists since 1986 (from 0.5 to 2.1 per cent of the population) that poses some questions. It would seem that this rate of growth is not just a product of immigration and birthrate, but an increase in the number of Australians of Anglo-Celtic background describing themselves as Buddhist. When 'Buddhism' was one of the boxes that could be ticked on the Census, it is likely that some of the people who had previously ticked the 'no religion' box, felt that the 'Buddhist' box better represented their religious leanings.

- ➲ How Australia responded to the changes that immigration brought to its religious landscape is discussed on pages 216–19.

Review

- 1 **Outline** the changes brought to Australia's religious landscape by immigration since 1945.
- 2 'Increased religious diversity brings many challenges to the religious landscape of Australia.' With a partner, **discuss** what some of these challenges might be. Share your responses with the class.

Extension

- 1 You have been asked to interview a young person from a different ethnicity and religious tradition to your own about how their religion and ethnicity impacts on their life. Prepare a list of the questions you would ask.
- 2 In groups, **classify** your questions into those about ethnicity and those about religion.
- 3 Now interview yourself!

Denominational switching

Free movement between the Anglican/Protestant denominations, it would appear, has long been a feature of Australian church life.

One of the findings of the 1991 National Church Life Survey was the high degree to which Protestants in Australia are prepared to switch denominations throughout their lifetime—in the 1991 survey, 29 per cent of the respondents had switched denomination in the last five years. The survey indicated that the denominational switchers came from a broad range of backgrounds and age groups.

I think it's fair to say that ... I come from the Methodist tradition of the Christian church. Although when I do go to church now, which is more often than Christmas and Easter, but certainly not once a week, I tend to go to an Anglican church. I don't really care what denomination it is.

Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard, 'What Our Leaders Believe', *Compass*, ABC TV, 3 October 2004

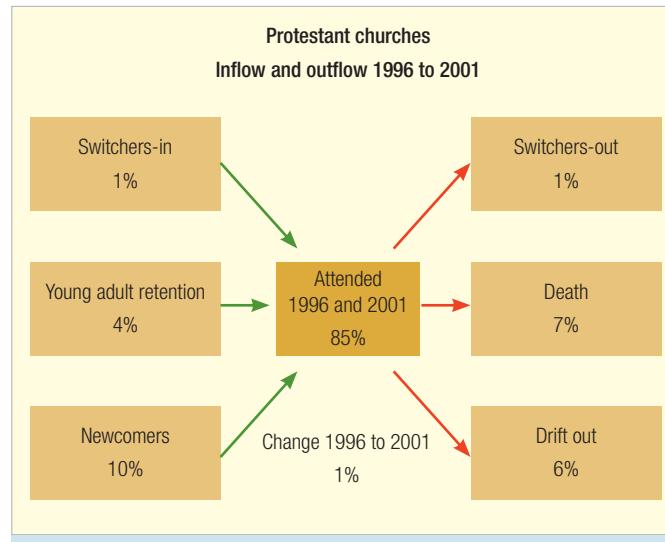


Figure 9.2.3 Protestant denominational switchers, 1996–2001

The National Church Life Survey has identified these key reasons that account for inflow and outflow from the Christian denominations:

- attenders switching from other denominations
- newcomers joining the church for the first time or rejoining after an absence of a number of years
- the birth of children often brings people back
- decreasing their frequency of attendance or ceasing to attend altogether
- death.

Today the 'shopping around' for the kind of church that suits one's particular needs reflects changing attitudes to what a church offers to a member of its congregation. Switchers place a high priority on personal spiritual fulfilment and a relatively low priority on denominational loyalty. Some Protestant church leaders fear that this may have a corrosive effect, through neglect, on their various churches' distinctiveness. Denominational loyalty is relatively high among Catholics. The importance of Catholic schools in the life of Australian Catholics is thought to be a significant reason for this.

Pentecostal Churches have a high number of switchers into their denomination. Their numbers on the 2006 Census, however, do not reflect this. This is because while they have the greatest number of 'switchers-in', they also have among the greatest number of 'switchers-out' and drifters. The National Church Life Survey estimates that through the 1990s, approximately a third of Pentecostals switched to another denomination or ceased to attend a church altogether.

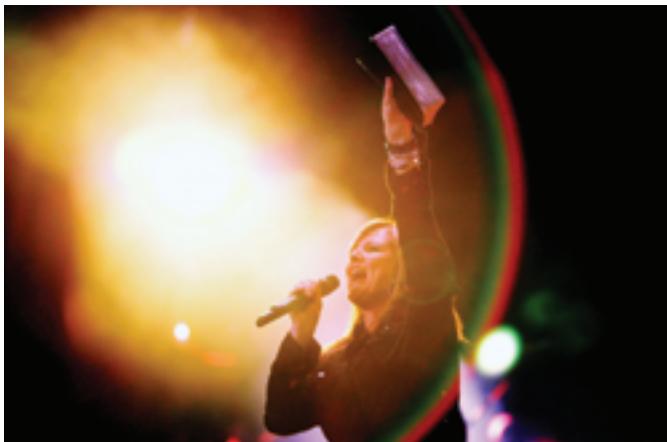


Figure 9.2.4 Worship Pastor Darlene Zschech sings at the opening of the 22nd Hillsong Conference in Sydney, 2008. Using all the latest techniques and technology—with a conservative and literalist religious outlook. Emphasis on evangelism and personal conversion wins new followers, although the effects may not be lasting. Statistics indicate that the Pentecostal Churches do not command the same ‘denomination loyalty’ as the mainstream churches.

The conservative (Evangelical and Pentecostal) churches have weathered the storm of declining church membership better than the mainstream churches. Aggressive evangelising among Pentecostals accounts for some of this, but does not explain the whole story. Well-known conservative denominations such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah’s Witnesses have been aggressively evangelising for many decades but have remained very small denominations on the Australian religious scene.

The stability in numbers in the conservative churches is puzzling, as these churches offer the very things that potential churchgoers have indicated that they do not want in a church. The Australian Community Survey (1998), jointly conducted by Edith Cowan University and the National Church Life Survey, revealed some interesting perspectives from people experiencing dissatisfaction with the churchgoing in their birth church:

- Most people who stop attending church regularly do not stop attending church completely. They continue to be searchers.
- Some people stopped attending church because they found the service boring.
- Potential churchgoers were looking for an openness to different views of religious matters and a broad approach to worship that catered for different spiritualities.
- Former regular church attenders baulk at some of the more ‘hard-line’ moral and ethical stances of their denomination on contentious issues such as abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia.

The results of this 1998 survey have been confirmed by later Australian studies such as the 2003–06 ‘The Spirit of Generation Y’ project (see page 215) and the 2007 *Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass* report.

The conservative churches emerged in the second half of the twentieth century with an emphasis on evangelism and personal conversion. This speaks to the individualism of current mainstream culture. The Pentecostal Churches are appealing to ‘switchers-in’ because they offer up-tempo religious services, focus on a gospel of personal salvation, and are less focused on the most contentious moral and ethical issues.

The mainstream churches (Catholic, Anglican and Uniting) being well established in terms of membership, developed over the twentieth century with a relatively strong emphasis on engagement in the world and social responsibility—the so-called ‘social gospel’. This often gives these churches a powerful voice in public debate, but does not contribute much to the numbers who pass under the church door each Sunday.

The conservative churches appear to shield the believer from the uncertainties of the modern world and offer a very clear assurance of salvation. All this comes at a price though. Those who enter a church with individualist motives leave just as readily and the membership of, for example, the Pentecostal Churches, following spectacular growth in the early 1990s, has become something of a revolving door.

Review

- 1 Define the terms ‘switcher’ and ‘drifter’ in the context of changing patterns of adherence to Christian denominations.
- 2 Re-read John Howard’s statement about his personal church attendance on page 213. Clarify the degree to which you think this statement reflects a more general attitude of Australian Christians to religious denominations.
- 3 Outline why people change from one Christian denomination to another.

Extension

Construct a chart to compare and contrast the priorities of denominational loyalty versus personal spiritual fulfilment in several different Christian denominations.

Secularisation and 'New Age'

► Refer to Chapter 16, pages 391–2, for more information on 'new' religious expressions.

For everyone who gives priority to a socially constructive expression of the religious life and a world-reforming agenda, there is another who prefers an inward journey of purification and personal atonement, a refuge from the material world and a direct path to divinity.

Rachel Kohn, *The New Believers: Re-imaging God*, 2003, p. 3

Another factor in the present religious landscape is increasing secularisation—that is, people separating themselves from religious influences. As well as secularisation there is a growing 'spiritual marketplace' that has given people an alternative to traditional, institutional religion. Secularism was actually furthered by the reformist agenda of nineteenth century Protestant Australia in encouraging an education system that was 'compulsory, free and secular' (see Chapter 8, page 179).

Australians have never been given much to religion, if religion is simply defined by regular attendance at religious services. There is evidence though that while church attendance moved up and down around a median of 25 per cent of the population through the twentieth century, it is well below 20 per cent in the twenty-first century.

In the World Values Survey in 2002, Australia ranked as one of the happiest nations on the planet measured against economic indicators. Despite this, Australia also has one of the world's highest rates of suicide. The paradoxes do not end there. Our national anthem invites us to rejoice 'for we are young and free', yet we have a population that is increasingly ageing.

'The Spirit of Generation Y', a research project by Australian Catholic University, Monash University and the Christian Research Association was completed in 2007. The project focused on the spirituality of generation Y (those born between 1976–90). The research found that the people in this generation of Australians are not anti-religious—they are more open to belief in God than their parents—48 per cent believe in God, 20 per cent do not, and 32 per cent are unsure. Two-thirds of those who do not believe in God, or are uncertain, do believe in a 'higher being or life force'.

They are, however, products of a more individualistic society, and one more lacking in social solidarity, than their parents. They live lives where they enjoy an incredible range of choices and this applies also to their spiritual lives.

Another important aspect much more pronounced today is that young people expect to construct their lives and experiences from an array of choices. They don't believe their identity is determined by class or affiliations; they believe they can develop their identities by the choices they make and that they can custom-build their own sense of purpose.

Barney Zwartz, religion editor of *The Age*, at the launch of *Putting Life Together*, a report on 'The Spirit of Generation Y' research project, 21 March 2007

Did you know?

A 2009 survey by the UK *Theos* think tank found that 39 per cent of Britons believe in ghosts while 22 per cent believe in astrology or horoscopes and 27 per cent accept reincarnation. Even fortune-telling is popular at 15 per cent.

An increasing tendency of Australians is to state that they have 'no religion' in each succeeding national Census. 'No religion' rose from 6.7 per cent in 1971 to 18.7 per cent in 2006. In 2008, 65 per cent of all marriages in Australia were conducted by civil celebrants, and a substantial percentage of funerals. This increase in secularism has occurred against a background of gradual globalisation and associated changes in social values and attitudes.



Figure 9.2.5 Jodi Brunner pictured in her Melbourne store Feng Shui Cures and Crystals. This photo, with its image of diverse religious icons, illustrates the postmodern religious searcher's willingness to 'shop around' for spiritual nourishment.

Since the 1970s, as many people moved away from traditional forms of religious expression, there has been a growth in the number of those seeking spiritual answers in what has been coined 'New Age' religions. The 'New Age' phenomenon is characterised by interest in the body and experience, objects and rituals, both traditional and (to a greater extent) invented.

In twenty-first century Australia, a rise in interest in new spiritualities unlocks religious seekers from dogmatic religious boundaries. People feel free to make spiritual choices, but they are potentially more adrift from the sense of belonging that traditional religious communities offer.

These religious seekers are not easily categorised or profiled with statistical data; but they do present an interesting challenge to traditional religion. Many people who identify with one of the major religious traditions incorporate non-traditional spiritual ideas and practices into their lives.

Review

- Recall** three things that characterise 'New Age' and the search for new spiritualities.
- Identify** some facts and figures in this section that illustrate the pattern of secularisation in Australian society.
- Compare** the religious beliefs of generation Y with those of their parents' generation.

Extension

- Type 'New Age spirituality' into an Australian internet search engine. How many hits did you get? Choose five sites to open and **summarise** their content.
- In your own words, **clarify** the meaning of the phrase 'gradual globalisation and associated changes in social values and attitudes'.
- Propose** what might be the 'gradual globalisation and associated changes in social values and attitudes' (page 215) that have contributed to an increase in secularisation in Australian society.
- In small groups, **extrapolate** from the available data on what Australians believe, or are searching for today, compared with what they are likely to believe in ten and twenty years from now. Make a list of your main ideas and share this with the class.

Religious dialogue in multifaith Australia

Glossary

ecumenism	The movement among Christian Churches to promote the restoration of unity among all Christians.
episcopalism	Having church authority vested in the company of bishops as a whole rather than with any individual.
interfaith dialogue	The move to greater cooperation and harmony between different religious traditions.
multicultural	Reflecting cultural diversity.

In an increasingly secularised society, the Australian mainstream churches have renewed their relevance by becoming vitally involved in issues of peace and social justice. A **multicultural**, multifaith society and an increasingly globalised world demand that a significant dimension of the pursuit of peace and social justice is the ongoing dialogue with those whose practices and beliefs are different from one's own. In Australia today, relationships between Christian Churches (**ecumenism**) and relations between the various religious traditions (**interfaith dialogue**) are characterised by mutual tolerance and respect.

Ecumenical movements

Since the 1970s, in particular, there have been many conversations between different Christian groups and denominations dealing with doctrinal matters and areas of cooperation. State Ecumenical Councils, and informal ecumenical initiatives such as the Christian Research Association, the National Church Life Survey and the Interchurch Trade Industry Mission (ITIM), are some examples. Overall, though, the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia and the emergence of the National Council of Churches in Australia in 1994 have been the most significant developments.

The Uniting Church in Australia

In the early years of the twentieth century there had been a number of moves towards ecumenism by the Protestant churches, but the failure of these demonstrated the difficulty in church union. In 1945 the Presbyterian Church voted to reopen negotiations with the Methodist and Congregational churches. Long negotiation and reflection led to votes on the principle of union in the

various churches in 1972. After 1 May 1974, there was no continuing Methodist Church. The union was completed on 22 June 1977 and the new unified church was to be known as the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). There is a continuing Presbyterian Church in Australia today, as well as a small number of Congregationalist communities.



Figure 9.2.6 Logo of the Uniting Church in Australia

The formation of the UCA was described by the then Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Francis Rush, as 'the most significant ecumenical event in Australia's history'. Today 1.1 million Australians are members of the Uniting Church in Australia, making it Australia's third largest religious community.

National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)

In 1922 at the instigation of the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, John Wright, the main Protestant churches formed the Joint Australian Council of the Churches Contemplating Reunion. Lack of agreement about **episcopanism** saw the council dissolved in the 1930s.



Figure 9.2.7 Heads of Churches at the National Council of Churches in Australia inaugural meeting in Canberra, July 1994

RESPOND

Can you identify which churches are represented?

A national council of churches, which was later to become the Australian Council of Churches (ACC), was formed in 1946. In 1994 the ACC was succeeded by the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) and for the first time the Catholic Church was officially part of this ecumenical body. In 1998 the Lutheran Church joined the NCCA. The NCCA has played a significant role as a peak body representing the voice of the Christian Churches in public debate in recent years.

'Australian Churches: Covenanting Together'

In July 2004 the members of the NCCA committed to a document entitled 'Australian Churches: Covenanting Together'. The document proposes five dimensions of commitment.

- **Dimension One:** A general commitment to common prayer, intercession and exploration of common beliefs.
- **Dimension Two:** A commitment to the shared use of resources.
- **Dimension Three:** A commitment to common mission and ministry.
- **Dimension Four:** A commitment to common sacraments.
- **Dimension Five:** A commitment to shared ordained ministries.

Different combinations of the fifteen member churches signed to each of the dimensions. For example, all members signed to dimension one; nine member churches mutually recognised baptism and agreed to the use of a common baptismal certificate; Churches of Christ and the Uniting Church agreed to share Eucharist according to pastoral need; four pairs of members made agreements about sharing with each other mutually recognised ordained ministry.

These are significant steps towards the goal of ecumenical union.

In addition to the NCCA, there are literally dozens of interdenominational and ecumenical groups operating in Australian society in a range of biblical, educational, missionary, social justice, spiritual, student-focused and theological endeavours.

Despite their theological differences, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox leaders of today meet, discuss and agree on matters of doctrine to a level unimaginable thirty years ago. The atmosphere is one of mutual respect and acceptance.

Interfaith dialogue

The postwar period, which brought with it a dramatic diversification of Australia's ethnic and religious make-up, forced a reassessment of old sectarian ways. Despite the past, Australia's long-standing cultural sense of tolerance and a 'fair go' for all left little place for sectarianism in the latter part of the twentieth century. By the mid-1980s, the recognition that religions other than Christianity were now a significant minority in Australia became an impetus towards establishing broader forums in which to address the issue of increasing religious diversity.

Many significant developments in Australia's religious communities point to a strongly developing sense of interfaith dialogue and religious harmony from the time of the Second World War to the present.

The holding of the fifth world assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in Melbourne in 1989 was a turning point in interreligious relations in Australia. Religions for Peace, as they now simply refer to themselves, continues to be a significant force in leading world interfaith dialogue—the eighth world assembly was held in Kyoto in 2006.

Evidence of the development of interfaith dialogue and cooperation was the Interfaith Appeal for Peace staged in Sydney in January 2000 to stand against religious violence in Indonesia, one of Australia's nearest neighbours and home of the world's largest Muslim population. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils jointly initiated the event.



Figure 9.2.8 The second International Interfaith Dialogue Conference in Sydney, 2003. Muslim members of the conference are inspecting a Torah in the Great Synagogue.



Figure 9.2.9 One hundred and twenty Year 11 students from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths gathered at Kincoppal Rose Bay for the Affinity Cultural Foundation's interfaith exchange in 2005. An increasing awareness of 'the other' in Australian society is leading to increased dialogue and a greater awareness of exactly who is one's neighbour. The study of religious traditions other than one's own aids in this process.

At a national level:

- the Uniting Church has established working groups on relations with both Muslim and Jewish communities
- the Catholic Church has a Committee for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- the Council of Christians and Jews has continued to expand and has developed a strong national structure
- the Commission for Dialogue with Living Faith and Community Relations of the NCCA has become far more focused.

Many of these groups are reinforced by similar state groups. As well, there are many local and grassroots initiatives such as the Women's Dialogue Network of NSW formed under the auspices of the Centre for Christian–Muslim Relations to foster closer relationships between Catholic and Muslim women. Many universities have multifaith centres.

Recent years have seen unprecedented combined action from Australia's religious leaders and their communities to further interfaith dialogue. Those who initiate interfaith dialogue and events clearly seek to find peace and harmony among Australia's diverse populous, which runs counter to the hatred and contempt that some believe motivates international terrorism.

Interfaith initiatives



- The Australian Council of Christians and Jews** is active in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Perth. The Council is made up of Christians and Jews who recognise their common heritage and seek to promote understanding. A particular focus of the Council is to stand together against antisemitism. Activities of the Council include annual Holocaust remembrance services, and education seminars and courses designed to deepen mutual understanding and respect. The Council of Christians and Jews also seeks to foster broader interfaith relations, particularly dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- The Columban Centre for Christian–Muslim Relations** was established in 1997. It has two main objectives: to foster relationships with the Muslim community; and to address the misconceptions, lack of understanding and stereotyping regarding Muslims that exist in the Christian community. It was established in response to the Christian Church's call to enter into interfaith relations, to promote this aspect of the mission of the Church. The Centre has also worked closely with the Affinity Intercultural Foundation in organising an international gathering, and supports teachers and students in the process of education for Christians about Islam. The Women's Dialogue Network is associated with the Columban Centre and has developed a network that includes Quaker, Tibetan Buddhist, Muslim, Catholic, Jewish, Parsee, Hindu and Baha'i women.
- The Affinity Intercultural Foundation** was established in 2001 by a group of young Muslim Australians who wished to extend the interaction between the Muslim community and their fellow Australians. The organisation seeks integration, tolerance and understanding through a process of dialogue and education. Like other interfaith organisations, its core objectives focus around the development of greater peace and harmony. Affinity has initiated, or been involved with, successful and ongoing dialogues with Catholic, Anglican, Protestant and Jewish groups.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** the terms 'ecumenism' and 'interfaith dialogue'.
- 2 **Construct** a two-column table that summarises the key ecumenical and interfaith dialogue initiatives in Australia since 1945.
- 3 **Describe** the impact of ecumenism on Australian Christianity to this point in Australia's history.
- 4 **Account** for the rising interest in interfaith dialogue in Australian society since 1945.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 219 and find out more about the NCCA. **Examine** what the various member churches are, and are not, prepared to do together. **Account** for the differences. What might be some of the benefits of the churches 'covenanting together'?
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 219 and **investigate** the history of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council. What are some of its initiatives?
- 3 **Evaluate** the importance of interfaith dialogue for the future of Christianity in Australia.
- 4 Organise your media file into categories to cover the changing patterns of religious adherence, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. Prepare a report that **analyses** how the media report on religion in Australia.

Aboriginal spiritualities and religious traditions—the process of Reconciliation

[It is recommended] that all political leaders and their parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided.

Final recommendation of the Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991

In 1991 the Federal Parliament unanimously voted for legislation setting up the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR), which had ten years to investigate the desirability of an ‘instrument of Reconciliation’. While the path to Australia’s reconciliation with its Indigenous peoples is still ongoing, this initiative has the support of all religious traditions.

With resolve, we commit ourselves to Reconciliation so that all may share with equity and justice, and live peacefully, in this land that is Australia.

This was declared by over twenty New South Wales church leaders during an ecumenical liturgy of Repentance, Solidarity and Commitment in St Mary’s Cathedral in December 1997, arranged by the NSW Ecumenical Council.

... crucial though [Land Rights] is, Aboriginal reconciliation is about more than land. The broader agenda is also suggested by a well-known Jewish text—the three-point plan of High Holyday liturgy, *tshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*—penitence, prayer and charity ... [This] is a moral duty we owe to Aboriginal peoples, yes. But also to history: later generations can help to cleanse history of its mistakes. We owe it, too, to Australia, our common heritage: Australians of all colours, creeds and commitments are all here to stay, and we have to learn to live together.

And we owe it to ourselves, to our conscience and our good name as decent ‘fair go’ people.

Rabbi Raymond Apple in an address at the Great Synagogue Sydney, *Shabbat*, 6 December 1997

Did you know?

In September 1993 the first national Week of Prayer for Reconciliation was held with support from all major religious groups.

On Saturday 27 May 2000 at the Sydney Opera House, the CAR presented its final proposal for a national document for Reconciliation. The next day more than 250 000 people walked for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It is estimated that during Corroboree 2000 and National Reconciliation Week, hundreds of thousands of people throughout Australia ‘walked across bridges’ for Reconciliation.



Figure 9.2.10 Corroboree 2000—the walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Hundreds of thousands of people across Australia walked for Reconciliation on 28 May 2000. Likened to ‘a rainbow serpent’, they crossed bridges for Reconciliation.

Reconciliation can mean many different things ... Above all, it must mean some form of agreement that deals with the legacies of our history, provides justice for all, and takes us forward as a nation. In the words of our Council’s vision, we should walk together towards:

‘a united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all.’

From Address to the National Press Club, April 1996, by Patrick Dodson, Chairperson, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

An important dimension of Reconciliation is recognition of the reality that Indigenous communities are as varied as any other community in Australian society. For example, the largest population of Indigenous Australians lives in Sydney (mostly in western Sydney) and has a profile quite different from Aboriginal peoples living a more traditional lifestyle in north-west Arnhem Land. Reconciliation must take different forms in keeping with the different circumstances of each community.

Today the vast majority of Indigenous Australians are affiliated with one or another of the Christian Churches. For Christian Churches the relationship between Aboriginal spiritualities and Christianity can be especially problematic.

As for the expression of Aboriginal spirituality in the churches, if a banner or flag with Aboriginal colours is present in the church, then Christians think this should be enough for Aboriginal people to feel welcome.

Lyndell Robb, 'A homeless spirit', in Anne Pattel-Gray (ed.), *Aboriginal Spirituality: Past, Present, Future*, 1996, p. 113

Many changes have taken place in the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Christian Churches since the mission days. In contrast to the early missionary days, there are now Aboriginal Christian church movements, particularly among the Protestant churches. Many churches have begun to bring together traditional Aboriginal cultural practices with different aspects of Church life, especially its ceremonial and ritual life. Most of the mainstream churches now incorporate Aboriginal ministries.

Many Aboriginal peoples today have connected Christianity into their existing Aboriginal belief systems. Others have, by learning more about their own culture, discovered meaning in the stories of their own people that revitalised their Christian beliefs.

I believe in both ways—our own and the Christian. If we had taken both ways and thought of them separately, we would have become confused. We believe in the old Law and we want to keep it; and we believe in the Bible too. So we have selected the good laws from both and put them together.

Badangga of Elcho Island, in R. M. Berndt, *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 2004, pp. 59–60

Some, whose traditions were the first to be destroyed, are reclaiming a tradition and reviving or remodelling that tradition.

Aboriginal people are right when they say that if they are not in touch with their soul, with their spirituality, they really can't live; and this is one of the big difficulties of urban living—it is against the soul.

Father Frank Fletcher MSC (Missionary of the Sacred Heart), 1999, Aboriginal Ministry Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

There are, however, deeply opposing views in the troubled relationship between Christianity and Aboriginal beliefs—opposing views within Aboriginal groups, within non-Aboriginal groups, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

For mainstream churches to try to absorb Aboriginal culture is genocidal. We will lose our traditional ways if they try to continue to marry our beliefs into their religious beliefs. It will be one more loss to a ravaged culture—it's the rape of our religion.

Chick Dixon, 'Rainbow Spirit Theology', *Compass*, ABC TV, 1 August 1999

If all us Australians are to view ourselves as part of the fabric of a larger community, the conversation between Aboriginal Dreaming, Aboriginal religions on the one hand and Christianity of its various persuasions on the other, is really the centrepiece for reconciliation. There should not be a blending of the traditions and belief systems of Christianity and Aboriginal spirituality, but an integration which is done with great respect for the elements so that you don't end up with not being able to recognise your Christianity, nor can you recognise your Aboriginality ... One of the traps is mistaking form for substance and simply 'ripping off' bits of each religion and adding them together in a fake and phoney way. If Christianity is only coming to this debate seeking social relevance—that is a weakness.

David Tacey, 'Rainbow Spirit Theology', *Compass*, ABC TV, 1 August 1999



Reconciliation Australia

Figure 9.2.11 Reconciliation Australia (RA) was established in 2001 to continue the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR). RA's vision is an Australia that provides equal life chances for all, recognising the special place, cultures and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians. RA builds partnerships and works with organisations and communities around progressing Reconciliation through real commitments and actions.

RESPOND

Give three examples of how religious traditions are 'progressing to Reconciliation through real commitments and actions'.

While 'Sorry Day' 2008 brought the long-awaited public recognition by government of past mistakes, there is still conflict within the Christian Churches about how to best achieve Reconciliation. There are those who want to revitalise Australian Christianity by an injection of Aboriginal spirituality and others who call this a new form of 'colonisation'. There are those who say that Aboriginal peoples have the right to a distinct status and culture, which helps maintain and strengthen the identity and spiritual and cultural practices of their communities.

There are so many questions that remain to be answered and a long journey still to be taken ...

Review

- 1 Where does Reconciliation fit into your mind map (page 200)? Can Reconciliation have a different meaning for Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people?
- 2 Construct a table that summarises the quotes offered in this section. Your headings should be: Writer; Religious tradition; Key point. Can you draw any general conclusion from the information you have collected in this table?

Extension

- 1 Investigate the involvement of traditions other than Christianity in the process of Reconciliation.
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, research examples of how specific Christian denominations have incorporated Aboriginal traditions into their worship. Examine whether these are examples of 'blending' or 'integration'. Are they more than 'good intentions and gestures'?
- 3 From your media file, make an assessment of how Aboriginal Reconciliation is presented in the media. Can you identify any biases in the reporting?
- 4 Investigate why Reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples is problematic for the Christian Churches.



Figure 9.2.12 *Machinetime Dreamtime*, 1981, by Trevor Nickolls (b. 1949), South Australia. 'My work is a balancing act, like walking a tightrope between my dreams and my life when I'm awake—from Dreamtime to Machinetime.'

RESPOND

How does this painting encapsulate many of the dilemmas facing urban Aboriginal peoples?

Conclusion

Great changes in the Australian religious landscape have been witnessed in the period since 1945. Greater awareness and sensitivity to Aboriginal spiritual perspectives has influenced the development of an ecological awareness in the spirituality of other Australians. A more diverse postwar Australia and globalised society have resulted in broadening ecumenical and interfaith perspectives. Greater awareness of the privilege of Australian society and the relative strife in which people in other parts of the world live has raised awareness of social justice and social analysis.

There are tensions of course. For example, there are those who seek to revitalise Australian Christianity by reference to Aboriginal spirituality against those who reject it as a new form of 'colonisation' and those who see the two as mutually incompatible.

The desire for increased ecumenism and interfaith dialogue exists uneasily with those who seek to protect against the erosion of their religious distinctiveness in the face of an increasingly secularised society.

The Christian Churches, and the other religious traditions along with them, have increasingly seen the importance of involving themselves in public debate, of being a voice in an evolving society and an evolving world. Paradoxically, despite their conservatism, the churches have often been the counter-cultural forums in which Australians have felt the freedom to make their cry for justice. This has resulted in the churches being the breeding ground of important movements, such as social reform, the leadership of women, Aboriginal Reconciliation, and social justice in employment and education. The important movements in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue illustrate also the desire of Australia's religious traditions to engage with each other and engage with the world.

Extension

- 1 **Construct** a chart or a presentation using a presentation graphics program such as Microsoft® PowerPoint® that gives an overview of the expression of religion in Australia from 1945 to the present. Don't forget to use information from your media file to **evaluate** key issues relevant to religion and belief systems in Australia post-1945.
- 2 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



See over for HSC-style exam questions. ➔

HSC-style exam questions

Section I: Part A

- Studies of Religion I and Studies of Religion II: answer all questions from this section.

Multiple-choice: Questions 1–10 (10 marks)

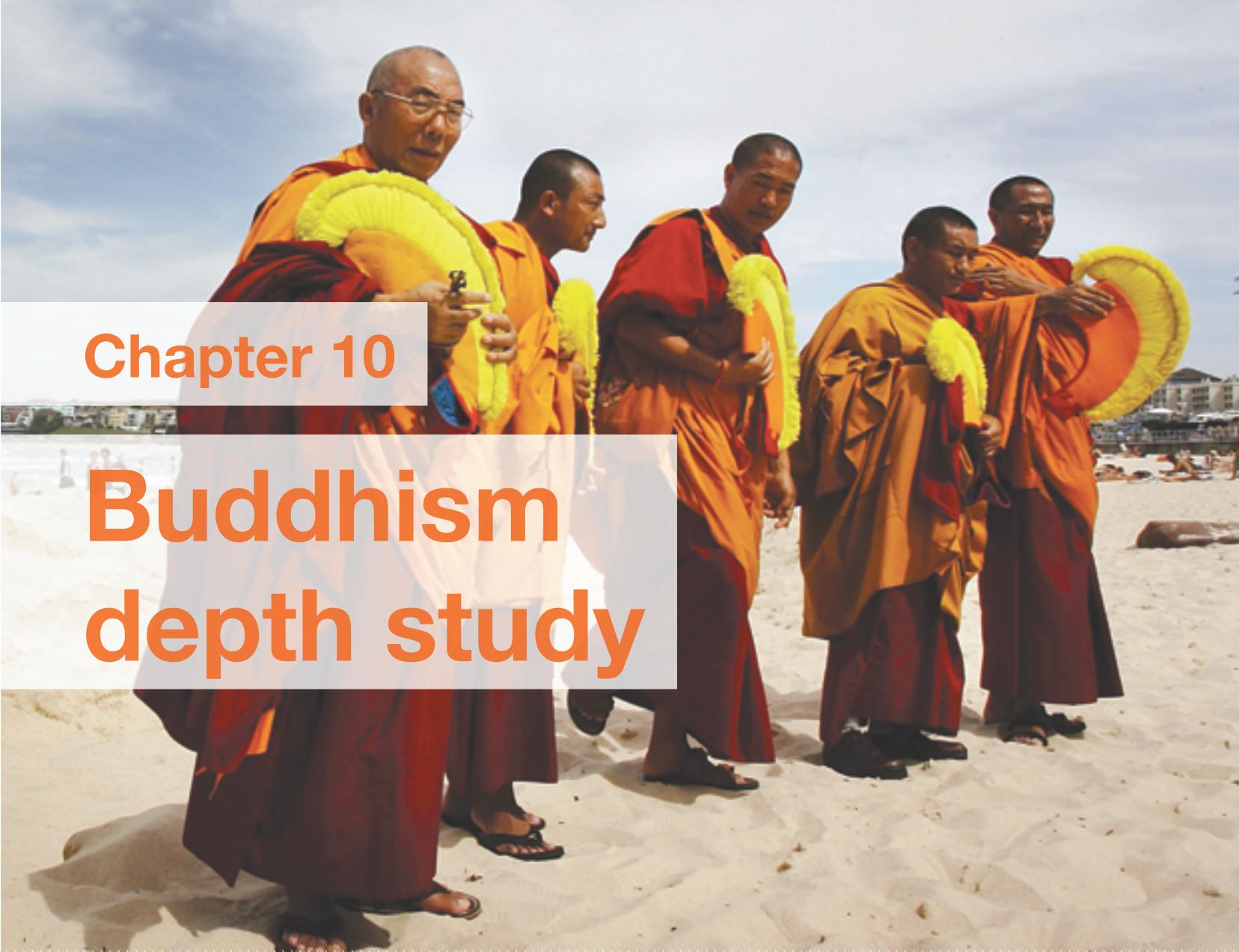
- The system of relationships that binds Aboriginal peoples to each other and to the land is:
 - Totems
 - Country
 - Kinship
 - Burial rites
 - Which of the following statements does NOT define the relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the land?
 - The land is regarded as a sacred trust.
 - Ownership of the land is based solely on the rights to use and occupy the land.
 - Land provides for both physical and spiritual needs.
 - All Aboriginal peoples have an obligation to conserve the land.
 - The official 1930s government policy aimed at replacing Aboriginal culture with the customs and values of the dominant Anglicised society was:
 - Protection
 - Orientation
 - Integration
 - Assimilation
 - Which of the following was NOT a significant outcome of the Mabo decision?
 - The overturning of the concept of *terra nullius*
 - The acknowledgement that native title existed in 1788
 - A finding that native title had been extinguished over freehold land
 - All native title claims could now be pursued
 - What did the *Native Title Act 1993* recognise?
 - The existence of Aboriginal native title in Australian federal law
 - That native title could co-exist with other rights held on land under pastoral lease
 - That the states and territories had the power to legislate their own native title regimes
 - The position of the Wik and Thayorre peoples was without legal grounding
 - Which of the following is an example of a Christian ecumenical movement in Australia?
 - The Women's Interfaith Network
 - The National Council of Churches
 - The Land Rights Movement
 - The Council of Christians and Jews
 - Immigration to Australia from South-East Asia and the Middle East has led to:
 - An increase in affiliates of the Orthodox Churches
 - A decrease in adherents to Catholicism
 - An expansion of Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim communities
 - A strengthening of the place of Christianity
- 8 The practice of moving from one branch of a religious tradition to another is:
- An example of interfaith dialogue
 - Referred to as denominational switching
 - A result of secularism
 - An indicator of the rise of 'New Age' spiritualities
- 9 The 1971 Australian Census exhibited a significant shift in responses to the question of religion. This shift is attributed to which of the following?
- The instruction: 'It is voluntary to answer the religion question.'
 - The inclusion of 'Jedi' as a distinct religious group
 - The instruction: 'if no religion, write none'
 - The inclusion of the Uniting Church as a separate Christian denomination
- As for the expression of Aboriginal spirituality in the churches, if a banner or flag with Aboriginal colours is present in the church, then Christians think this should be enough for Aboriginal people to feel welcome.
- Lyndell Robb, 'A homeless spirit' in Anne Pattel-Gray (ed.), *Aboriginal Spirituality: Past, Present, Future*, 1996, p. 113
- What statement is the author, Lyndell Robb, making about the contribution of Christianity to the process of Reconciliation?
 - The Aboriginal flag is not respected by all Christians.
 - The Christian Churches are making no effort to reconcile with Aboriginal peoples.
 - Some Christian Churches use superficial gestures to incorporate Aboriginal spiritualities.
 - There can be no Reconciliation between Aboriginal spiritualities and Christianity.

Short answer: Question 11 (5 marks)

With resolve, we commit ourselves to Reconciliation so that all may share with equity and justice, and live peacefully, in this land that is Australia.

This was declared by over twenty New South Wales church leaders during an ecumenical liturgy of Repentance, Solidarity and Commitment in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, December 1997, arranged by the NSW Ecumenical Council.

Describe the relationship between the Christian Churches in Australia and the process of Reconciliation with Indigenous Australians.



Chapter 10

Buddhism depth study

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **explain** the contribution to and **analyse** the impact of one significant person or school of thought on the development and expression of Buddhism
- **describe** and **explain** Buddhist ethical teachings on one ethical area
- **describe** one significant practice within Buddhism, **demonstrate** how this practice expresses the beliefs of Buddhism and **analyse** its significance for both the individual and the Buddhist community.



Vesak, the annual ritual celebrating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death, Federation Square, Melbourne, May 2009

10.1 Significant people and ideas

The Buddha is acknowledged within the Buddhist tradition as the most famous teacher of his own religion and the most exalted role model of someone who has succeeded on the path to *nirvana*. However, throughout its history the religion has been transmitted through the examples and teachings of a large number of unheralded monks, nuns and prominent laypeople. Other teachers and holy men who are celebrated throughout Buddhist countries have become very famous. Some such as Ananda, the Buddha's cousin, and the two early disciples Sariputta and Moggallana, lived during the Buddha's own lifetime and were famous as both pupils and teachers. Later philosophers such as Nagarjuna (second century CE) and Candrakirti (seventh century CE) became famous through their teachings. We know next to nothing about the lives of these people, though this has not stopped the rise of Buddhist literature attributing all sorts of supernatural powers to these figures—whose own philosophical treatises are incomprehensible to all but the most learned of scholars.

More is known about the famous Tibetan sages whose writings were partially autobiographical, and also about many of the founders of the various Zen schools in Japan.

Most of these figures were monks, but laypeople have also been extremely prominent in the development of the religion.

The founding of new schools within Mahayana Buddhism, especially in China and Japan, were usually traced back to a particular, often charismatic, individual, or to a monk who had spent many years meditating and undergoing austerities in a remote mountainous or forest area. Lay Buddhists have traditionally been attracted to such people because of the huge merit or good *karma* they have built up, which could be transferred as an act of compassion. This continues even today, especially in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Because of the legitimacy and authority they have by virtue of their expertise in meditation and their performance of austerities, such people are in a position to reinterpret the Buddha's teaching or to introduce new elements into existing ideas. This has become especially important in contemporary Buddhism where many Buddhist countries have had to come to terms with the impact of modern science on their cultures.

This section treats the growth of Mahayana Buddhism as a significant idea and Ashoka and Sister Dhammadinna as significant people. Ashoka had a profound impact on the spread of Buddhism in India and internationally after 250 BCE and, although Sister Dhammadinna may not rate as a significant person in world Buddhism, her visits to Australia in the 1950s had a great impact on the development of Buddhism in Australia.

Extension

- 1 Update the Buddhist list in your workbook with the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file of newspaper articles, and monitor television news and programs to do with significant Buddhist figures, practices and ethics. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics.

10.1.1 Mahayana Buddhism

Glossary

arahant	A monk who seeks to attain enlightenment only for himself.
bodhisattva	An aspirant to <i>nirvana</i> who follows a path that requires helping all others to escape <i>samsara</i> .
stupa	A monument containing relics or other sacred objects.

► Refer to Chapter 2, pages 24–7, for the schools of Buddhism.

Scholars of Buddhism have traditionally regarded Mahayana Buddhism as developing alongside various groups of monks later known as Theravada Buddhism, possibly by about the first century BCE. Theravada Buddhism then is regarded as the backdrop for the rise of Mahayana Buddhism. Other scholars have even used the term ‘Primitive Buddhism’ to describe the state of Buddhism between the time of Buddha’s death (486/483 BCE) and the ascension of Ashoka (269–232 BCE) to the throne of Magadha.

It is difficult to speak of a single mainstream of Buddhism even during the Buddha’s own lifetime. Schismatic activity—where people who disagree on matters of doctrine or behaviour create new groupings within the larger Buddhist *sangha*—was recorded even during his lifetime, and there were probably eighteen such groupings in India by the beginning of the Common Era. Though not much is known about these groups, most of whose literature has been lost, their likely existence testifies both to the vibrancy of Buddhism and its ongoing

re-interpretation. The exception here is the Theravadins, whose texts survive to the present day, and the history of the splits within Theravada is still studied from texts such as the *Kathavatthu* ‘Matters of Controversy’, which was composed decades or even centuries following the occurrence of the splits.

Mahayana Buddhism is really an umbrella term covering a whole set of schools and sub-schools, some differing considerably from each other. Its main historical function as a movement has been to act as a set of boundaries distinguishing certain types of Buddhists from others of the Theravada school.

It is not at all easy to trace the origins of Mahayana. The very attempt to trace its origins and development rests on the belief that Theravada and Mahayana can be very easily distinguished as different religious entities—that they can be easily allocated doctrinal boundaries and different forms of monkish behaviours. In truth they cannot. Most of what they have is common to both: the centrality of the Buddha as an example of a man who attained enlightenment and taught this possibility to others; a sophisticated view of the nature of reality; and a social organisation that resulted in a sharp differentiation between a monastic and lay body. They differ in how they see their own status and their relation to each other: whereas the Mahayanists distinguish themselves from the Theravadins, the reverse does not seem to have happened. They also differ in their interpretation of the *buddhavacana*—the word of the Buddha.

Despite the common base from which both developed, one would find considerable differences between the two if one were first to read a body of Theravada literature and then some Mahayana texts, or if one were to observe the appearance and behaviour of monks in a Theravadin country such as Sri Lanka and then those of a Tibetan or Chinese origin. Beyond this, some of the sub-schools of Mahayana such as Zen and Vajrayana do not appear to have any doctrinal equivalents in Theravada Buddhism.

Review

- 1 Explain what schismatic activity is.
- 2 Clarify what it means to say that ‘Mahayana Buddhism is an umbrella term’.
- 3 Recall what has been the main historical function of Mahayana Buddhism.
- 4 Identify what Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism have in common.



Figure 10.1.1 Seated figure of Bodhisattva in Sino-Tibetan style: double lotus pedestal on rectangular base, thirteenth–fourteenth century

Development of Mahayana

Mahayana is thought to have arisen as a reaction against the small-mindedness (*hina*) of the early Hinayana schools. Thus, the line of descent goes through the development of the so-called Mahasamghika split—an event that occurred perhaps at the time of the second council held at Vaishali (386 BCE). It led to the development of the eighteen schools, some of which had tendencies mirrored in literature that was subsequently identified as being Mahayanic in outlook and content. The Mahasamghika wanted a larger, less exclusive, *sangha* than the Theravadins, one that would somehow include the laity. They developed policies apparently much more conducive to the religious aspirations of the laity, rather than simply concentrating on the higher aspirations of the monks who, at least in principle, sought *nirvana*.

A Japanese scholar, Akira Hirakawa, argued in 1963 that Mahayana Buddhism first arose when groups of laypeople and monks who entered the *bodhisattva* path congregated physically around *stupas* and monasteries. The resulting process led to the development of a new form of Buddhism, one that permitted people other than just monks to aspire towards enlightenment. This group had a different social basis from that of the schools of Theravada Buddhism that existed at the same time. According to this view, the laity was demanding more inclusion in the elite path to *nirvana* previously reserved for the *arahants*, and *stupas* were places where lay Buddhists and monks and nuns congregated for the performance of religious festivals. Such places and locations were also excellent venues for teaching the *dharma*.

A more recent view of the rise and growth of Mahayana suggests that the huge number of Mahayana (and Theravada) texts translated into Chinese from 150 CE onwards, but especially after 380 CE, convey a false impression that Indian Mahayana Buddhism was a much more extensive and divergent cultural phenomenon than Theravada Buddhism. After 500 CE, with the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China, then Korea and Japan, and finally Tibet, the various Mahayanist sects—with their emphasis on the *bodhisattva* path, the existence of the Buddha nature in all sentient beings, and the presence of a transcendent god-like Buddha—convey a much richer understanding of approaches to enlightenment than are found in Theravadin countries.

The Mahayana takes a hard line against other faiths, in theory at any rate, but its attitude to the rest of the Buddhist fold is characterised by ambivalence and defensiveness, and it gives every appearance of being a minority movement ...

P. Harrison, 'Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self Image and Identity Among the Followers of the Early Mahayana', *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 10, 1987, p. 86

This brief quote justifies the idea that Mahayana Buddhism was probably just one small sect among others in India up until about 400 CE, and that most were probably Theravada schools. It is of course true that the Perfection of Wisdom literature, always regarded as among the earliest of the Mahayana literature, had been composed since the beginning of the Common Era along with some other texts listed on the next page. But because of the difficulty of their content and their composition in Sanskrit, these were probably passed around in very narrow circles, and so cannot be taken as a sign of the popularity of Mahayana in India.

Mahayana texts and teachings

The Pali Canon is the most complete of the Theravadin Canons, composed in a language derived from Sanskrit, but also having many differences from it. Other canons existed in Sanskrit but are now substantially incomplete. It is likely the Pali Canon existed in some form or other by about 140 BCE. One hundred years later, Buddhist texts in Sanskrit began to appear, and many of these depicted doctrinal tendencies that are closely related to what came to be the Mahayana.

► Refer to Chapter 2, pages 34–5, for more on the *Lotus Sutra*.

Perhaps the oldest is the *Lotus Sutra* but this is followed by the earliest of what became a complete genre of literature, the Perfection of Wisdom texts (*Prajnaparamita*). There are at least a dozen such texts and they range in size from a few lines (the *Heart Sutra*) to *The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in One Hundred Thousand Lines*.

A flood of Mahayana literature associated with Tantric practices, involving visualisation of the Buddha and particular *bodhisattvas*, appeared after the eighth century CE. From about the fourth century CE, many independent (that is, not translations of Sanskrit originals) Mahayana texts appeared in China and soon after in Tibet, Korea and Japan.

One of the principal areas of difference between the Mahayana and Theravada texts is in the differing images of the Buddha they depict. The Theravadin Pali texts present a much more austere image of the Buddha and of the monks in comparison with what is found in early Mahayana texts such as the *Lotus Sutra* and *The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Lines* (the Perfection of Wisdom literature). To some extent this matches a perception that the *sangha* in contemporary Theravadin countries are similar, whereas those *sanghas* in the Mahayanan countries are not only marked by their greater variety from the Theravadin *sangha* but also from each other. Especially in the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha is

described in a luxuriant manner through a set of highly pictorial narratives that can be easily comprehended by an audience who are not well versed in Buddhist teaching. With their sustained teaching of the doctrine of ‘skilful means’ they depict a Buddha who is much more concerned with the fate of those people who are apparently incapable of enlightenment than the Buddha depicted in Theravadin literature.

The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Lines teaches about two other fundamental Mahayana teachings: the related themes of the *bodhisattva* and the doctrine of emptiness, integrating both quite intentionally with the understanding of what it means to be a *bodhisattva*. Another important theme of this text and other Mahayana texts is the inadequacy of what they called Hinayana. It is taken to mean ‘small-minded’ (a quite derogatory term in Mahayana texts), as opposed to ‘great, expansive vehicle’. And it is this distinction that helps to convey a perception of the difference between Hinayana and Mahayana. But the author of these texts directed their critique in a manner more potent than just developing the sharp contrast expressed by the two names.



Figure 10.1.2 *Heart Sutra* of the Chuson-ji Temple, Japan, a handscroll painting on indigo-dyed paper, mid-twelfth-century CE.

This handscroll records in opulent gold calligraphy the text of the *Heart Sutra* and two other *sutras*. The outside of the cover bears the abbreviated title, *Hannya shingyo*, supported by scrolling flowers in gold. The inside cover illustration, in gold lines with gold and silver washes, depicts the Buddha Amida in the jewelled palace of his Western Paradise, attended by *bodhisattvas* and monks.

Those, however, who are certain that they have got safely out of this world (i.e. the *Arhants* [arahants] who have reached their last birth, and think they have done with it all), are unfit for full enlightenment (because they are not willing to go, from compassion, back into birth-and-death). And why? The flood of birth-and-death hems them in. Incapable of repeated rebirths, they are unable to aspire to full enlightenment.

E. Conze, *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita*, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1970, p. 15

The so-called selfishness of the Theravadin *arahants* (because they were perceived as being concerned only about their own attainment of *nirvana*) is always contrasted with the generosity of the *bodhisattva* who is required as part of his chosen path to help all other beings obtain enlightenment. A concern with the spiritual (and material) good of all beings is a formal difference between Theravada and Mahayana, reflected heavily in inscriptions from the fourth century CE onwards. In inscriptions of the former, donors of gifts present their gift as a ritual act for their deceased parents, whereas the equivalent formula in Mahayana inscriptions specify: 'Let whatever merit is here, with my parents placed in front, be for all beings to obtain supreme knowledge.' Yet, in the final analysis, those who are *arahants* are always required to exercise compassion towards all sentient beings, even if this is not so formally inscribed within the pathway they follow.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **explain** what the *sangha* is.
- 2 Prepare a chart to **outline** the development of Mahayana Buddhism. On your chart, note the appearance of the various Mahayanan texts.
- 3 **Distinguish** how the image of the Buddha in Mahayanan literature differs from the Theravadin image.
- 4 In one sentence, **summarise** the difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.
- 5 **Explain** the contribution of Mahayana to the development and expression of Buddhism.
- 6 **Analyse** the impact of Mahayana on Buddhism.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 230 and **investigate** some of the Mahayana schools. Choose two schools and write a report to **summarise** what their websites tell you about Mahayana Buddhism.

10.1.2 Ashoka (c. 304–c. 232 BCE)

The Buddha himself dominates the early history of Buddhism, along with some other monks such as Sariputta, Moggallana and Ananda, plus some prominent royal figures who gave financial support to the emerging *sangha*. But Buddhism probably remained a small splinter group up until about 300 BCE when it began a period of expansion that was strongly helped by the emergence of the Mauryan Empire after 320 BCE, covering much of northern and central India. While patronage was given to all religions by its founder, Candragupta, it was the third Mauryan emperor, Ashoka, who seems to have facilitated Buddhism's expansion throughout India and internationally.



Figure 10.1.3 This sculpture of Ashoka in Sri Lanka, dated from the twelfth century, is generally considered to be one of the finest stone sculptures in all of Asia.

Ashoka's reign can be roughly dated as 269–232 BCE. We know more about him than any other early Indian king because of the number of inscriptions carved in caves, on rocks and on pillars during the middle part of his reign, and because of his subsequent literary treatment in a body of Buddhist texts named *avadanas*. In these texts, Ashoka is presented in mythological terms, indicating that this king was seen as very important within the Buddhist tradition at least two centuries after his death.

Like other Indian kings of his time, Ashoka was sometimes required to exercise his power using violence. This seems especially to have been the case when he quelled a revolt in the eastern kingdom of Kalinga (present-day Orissa). Such was the huge death count that Ashoka apparently

questioned his policies as a king and revised them in a manner designed to cause the least amount of bloodshed. At that time, it is likely he became a lay Buddhist and began to develop his own view of *dhamma*. This word had long been known in Buddhist texts to denote the totality of the teachings of the Buddha; it was also becoming prominent in Hindu literature to denote localised customs that were being universalised in Hindu discourse. Ashoka created a kind of civil discourse, which was both religious and sociopolitical, around this term and defined his new political philosophy in terms of it. Through this and the so-called *dhamma* officers he employed to teach it throughout his empire, he placed it as the centre of a new view of society and ethical behaviour—one that emphasised honesty, compassion for others (including animals) and mutual tolerance.

Ashoka and Buddhism

Ashoka seemed to have become a lay Buddhist about twelve years into his reign as king. It was not a sudden conversion, but a slow development. And although Ashoka did have a strong influence on the expansion of Buddhism, his influence was indirect rather than being a case of direct involvement. The third council held in his capital, Pataliputra, about 251 BCE (see page 24), involved the purging of certain aberrant behaviour on the part of monks. In 250 BCE Ashoka's nephew Mahinda, who was a monk, was sent as part of a diplomatic mission to Sri Lanka and introduced Buddhism there. In addition, prominent monks were sent to Kashmir in the north-west of India, to the northern Himalayan region, and Burma (Myanmar) to the east. Thus began the internationalisation of Buddhism. But although the travelling monks may have been part of diplomatic groups sent by Ashoka, they were sent under the auspices of the Buddhist *sangha*.

The Mauryan emperors had improved transport routes within their expanded area of north India and had made the roads safe. Ashoka ordered the construction of roadside resting stops for travellers. This construction of infrastructure helped in the geographical expansion of Buddhism.

Ashoka and pilgrimage

In 248 BCE Ashoka made a pilgrimage to some famous Buddhist pilgrimage sites, including Bodh Gaya and the Buddha's birthplace of Lumbini located on the India–Nepal border. It is said that he constructed *stupas* (sacred Buddhist monuments) here and in other places. This activity, especially since it would have been publicised, represented a direct royal endorsement of Buddhism.

In turn this would have translated into a greater willingness of people from different levels of society to provide financial support for the *sangha* in their local region. Taking into account the economic stability associated with the long reigns of the first three Mauryan emperors, the expansion of the *sangha* was virtually guaranteed.



Figure 10.1.4 The capital (uppermost part) of the Lion Pillar of Sarnath. Ashoka built the Sarnath pillar to commemorate the site of the first preaching of Lord Buddha, when he taught the *dhamma* to five monks. The national emblem of India is an adaptation of this capital.

RESPOND

Download India's national emblem and flag and write two sentences to describe how Ashoka's pillar is the basis for both.

Ashoka's contribution to Buddhism

Ashoka was a lay Buddhist who also took an interest in the affairs of the *sangha*. In his famous Schism Edict, for example, he warned the members of the *sangha* against schismatic activity. And while Buddhism began its international march during his reign, his contribution to this was more in the area of financial and infrastructure support rather than direct intervention. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Ashoka represents to later generations a king who explicitly ruled according to principles directly inspired by Buddhist teachings, and so demonstrated how Buddhism could be applied in a practical situation of governance.

Review

- 1 In point form, **recall** the major events in the life of Ashoka.
- 2 Why is it noteworthy that Ashoka was a lay Buddhist who also took an interest in *sangha* affairs?
- 3 **Explain** the contribution of Ashoka to Buddhism.
- 4 In two paragraphs, **analyse** the impact of Ashoka on the development and expression of Buddhism.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 232 and **investigate** what Ashoka's edicts were.
- 2 Locate a map of Ashoka's empire. How extensive was it and what other competing political entities were there at this time?

10.1.3 Sister Dhammadinna (1881–1967)

Glossary

refuge	The taking of refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the <i>dhamma</i> and the <i>sangha</i> is a brief ritual that can be performed in private or in public by the laity and is extremely popular because of its simplicity.
Vesak	The annual ritual celebrating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death (<i>parinirvana</i>).

Sister Dhammadinna was born in the USA and lived in Sri Lanka for thirty years, probably from the early 1920s. She visited Australia twice, first in 1952 (a trip financed by the prominent Sri Lankan Buddhist scholar and diplomat, Dr G. P. Malalasekera) and again in 1957. At the time of those visits she was quite well known in Sri Lanka. She had been given patronage there by a Lady de Silva who had built a Forest Hermitage—a kind of retreat that may be located in an urban area but retains a strong atmosphere of isolation. There Sister Dhammadinna lived in a hut, leading a life of seclusion.

The paradox of all this is that her life in Sri Lanka, the little we know about it, was that of a forest-dwelling monk more concerned about meditation than the ritualistic functions of a monk who acts like a parish priest in guiding a particular designated area. In this she was following the model of the small number of other Western women who went to Sri Lanka, became ordained as nuns and lived a life of poverty and chastity in an isolated location. This model of the forest-dwelling monk who builds up huge merit is well known in Buddhism. It is believed this merit can be transferred to those not capable of engaging in the meditational lifestyle needed to produce it.

Mr Graeme Lyall, a member of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales since its inception in 1985, knew Sister Dhammadinna and has provided valuable information about her time in Sydney. He paints a picture of a strong-willed, austere woman who tested her students in different ways, held eccentric views about the identity of some of the people she came into contact with, and tried to influence most aspects of the lives of those who became her students.

When she first arrived in Sydney, in 1952, she was seventy years old and virtually penniless. Initially, she stayed with Marie Byles, who housed Sister Dhammadinna in a hut in the backyard of her own house. Eventually, she was provided with accommodation by another Sydney Buddhist, Leo Berkeley, until she moved to a granny flat in the home of Eric and Lynne Penrose. As well as conducting weekly classes at Leo Berkeley's house, she also gave lectures at the Centre Club in George Street.

Although she had a solid knowledge of Buddhism, she was somewhat eccentric. It was not unusual for her, during her lectures to cry out saying that she had had a glimpse of enlightenment. She also gave weekly lectures at the Centre Club premises in George Street, Sydney. A very old man used to attend these lectures. She claimed that she followed him to the stairs one night and he disappeared. She claimed that he was a manifestation of Sakka, king of the gods, who had come to subdue evil whilst she lectured.

Graeme Lyall, 2004

Did you know?

Marie Byles (1900–1979) was the first woman to qualify to practise law in New South Wales and was a founding member of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, the first society of Western Buddhists in Australia. As well as writing several books on Buddhism, she was an ardent bushwalker and advocate for the conservation of the environment.

It is said in the Pali meditational texts that meditators can receive a glimpse of *nirvana* at a certain point in their meditation, and both Sakka and Brahma were Hindu deities who performed protective roles in relation to the Buddha. In this sense, Sister Dhammadinna's comments are fully understandable within a Buddhist cultural background.

On 29 May 1953, she gave the **refuges** and the Five Precepts (see page 37) to a group of eight people who from then on were considered lay Buddhists. A **Vesak** celebratory ritual was held on the same day. She left Australia shortly after the refuges and lived for a while in Hawaii before returning to Australia in 1957. Once more she gave classes and lectures, though by this time the Buddhist Society of New South Wales had split into two factions. When her visa expired, Sister Dhammadinna went back to Hawaii and lived in a Zen temple there. She died in 1967.

► Refer to pages 239–41, for a description of Vesak.



Figure 10.1.5 Sister Dhammadinna in Sydney, 1953. Back row: Colin Jones, Leo Berkeley, Sister Dhammadinna, Mrs Barnard, Eric Penrose. Front row: Norbert Moshner, Graeme Lyall.

What, in conclusion, can be said of Sister Dhammadinna? She obviously had a good knowledge of Buddhist doctrine and was a proficient practitioner of meditation. With her focus on meditation and knowledge of Western culture, Sister Dhammadinna was an ideal person to visit Australia at a time when Buddhism was attracting considerable interest. When she arrived in 1952, she had lived in Sri Lanka for thirty years, and before that had been brought up in the USA. It is possible that the reasons she became a Buddhist were also reflected in the decisions of the European Australians to take the same step—although spending thirty

years in Sri Lanka would have alienated her somewhat from the changes then occurring in Europe and the USA.

It cannot be said that she was the founder of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, nor that interest in Buddhism would have subsided without her initial year-long visit. A so-called 'Little Circle of *Dhamma*' had already existed in Melbourne in 1925 and a number of influential personalities were already studying Buddhism prior to her arrival in Sydney. Yet her year in Sydney would have sustained the interest and practices of those early pioneers who helped establish Buddhism in Australia. Sister Dhammadinna was somebody who had long experience in a well-known Theravada country, she had good credentials as a meditator, and she was also able to bring a taste of an actual Buddhist culture to people whose knowledge of Buddhism had been primarily gained through books. In addition, she might have been responsible for focusing the interests of the two main Buddhist societies in Australia on Theravada rather than Mahayana Buddhism (which remained rather peripheral until the early 1970s).

To say she is a significant person in Buddhism as a whole is problematic—that would be to assume her influence in Buddhism extended beyond a group of European Australian Buddhists who were associated with the founding of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales. To them, however, she was quite significant.

Review

- 1 **Recall** the school of Buddhism to which Sister Dhammadinna belonged.
- 2 In your own words, **define** 'refuge'.
- 3 **Explain** the contribution of Sister Dhammadinna to the development and expression of Buddhism in Australia.
- 4 **Analyse** the impact of Sister Dhammadinna on Buddhism in Australia.

Extension



- 1 What do you think is the significance of the name 'Dhammadinna'?
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 233 to find out more about Sister Dhammadinna and Buddhism in New South Wales.

10.2 Ethics

Glossary

ethics

Ethics is the explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices. Its purpose is to clarify what is right and wrong and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.

The Buddha stressed the cultivation of particular **ethics**, and Buddhist ethical behaviour was grounded within the realm of individual intentionality, not of group cohesion. Intentionality was emphasised because the accrual of *karma* was a consequence of the intention to act in a particular way, not just of the physical act itself. Ethics in Buddhism are directed at a person's present situation such that, if followed, ethical behaviour will always produce positive outcomes. Ethical behaviour is also directed towards the ultimate attainment of *nirvana*, at least as far as monks and nuns are concerned.

At the most elementary (yet still difficult) level, Buddhist practice requires that negative emotions are translated into positive emotions, until the negative emotions finally disappear. Three negative emotions—greed, hatred and delusion—lie deep within the mind and, being so basic, are extremely difficult to eradicate. It is primarily through meditational practices that these will be eradicated as emotional tendencies, whereas the transformation of negative emotions to positive emotions will be achieved more easily by following the Buddha's precepts about behaviour. The Buddha's teachings on ethics could be described as having both therapeutic and spiritual implications.

► Refer to Chapter 2, page 37, for the core ethical teachings of Buddhism.

All of this is laid down with considerable emphasis in Buddhist literature, and the specific forms of ethical attitudes are defined with great precision. This means it is easier to trace changes in ethical attitudes nowadays back to what is found in the classical texts or, more pointedly, to locate precedents in canonical texts for shifts in contemporary ethical behaviour.

10.2.1 Bioethics

Glossary

bioethics

Bioethics is a science that sets a system of medical and environmental priorities for acceptable survival. In practical terms, it is a branch of ethics concerned with issues surrounding health care and the biological sciences. Such issues include the morality of abortion, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilisation and organ transplantation.

vinaya

The monastic code.

Did you know?

The term 'bioethics' was coined in 1970 by US biochemist Dr Van Rensselaer Potter as a bridge between science and humanity.

In the last decade there has been a great deal of writing on **bioethics** from scholars of Buddhism and Buddhist practitioners. Although this can be considered a response to advances in both medical technology and modernist thinking, it is possible to find passages in Buddhist canonical and post-canonical literature that have a direct bearing on what have come to be framed as bioethical questions. Abortion and euthanasia are both important subjects of bioethical discourse. Both share the characteristic of being processes that require acts of violence (admittedly, qualified violence) for their proper execution. Violence is, however, strongly condemned in Buddhism both for laypeople and for monks and nuns. Laypeople are requested to abstain from killing any living beings, although exceptions are made for people in certain occupations, such as farmers who may unintentionally have to engage in the killing of animals. In the case of monks, the intentional taking of a human's life is one of the four **vinaya** offences that lead to immediate expulsion from the *sangha*.

The classical texts go further than simply opposing acts of violence understood in the broadest possible sense. Passages in these texts against abortion and euthanasia would then seem to function as definitive precedents. The famous and still influential fifth century CE commentator Buddhaghosha expressed this view:

'Taking life,' means to murder anything that lives. It refers to the striking and killing of living beings ... 'Taking life' is then the will to kill anything that one perceives as having life, to act so as to terminate the life-force in it, in so far as the will finds expression in bodily action or in speech.

Cited in E. Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures*, 1959, pp. 70–1

The *Vinaya* goes even further than this, specifically making proscriptions against acts of abortion by the monk:

An ordained monk should not intentionally deprive a living thing of life even if it is only an ant. A monk who deliberately deprives a human being of life, even to the extent of causing an abortion, is no longer a follower of the Buddha.

Translation by D. Keown,
Buddhism and Bioethics, 1995, p. 93, *Vinaya I*, 97

This may seem obvious when applied to living beings that can be seen to be such. What about a foetus, which cannot be seen and may not be obviously a living thing?

Abortion

Buddhist literature is clear that the criterion of life is determined by the presence of consciousness (*vijnana*) in an entity, as this makes such an entity a 'sentient being'. If anything, whether god, human, animal or plant, is capable of reflective thought, it is regarded as having the capacity to know self-consciously and is therefore regarded as a sentient being. A foetus is considered to have sufficient qualities to meet the above definition, leading to the conclusion that the act of abortion is an act of violence against a living being who possesses an individuality that is distinct from that of the woman carrying it.

The correct analysis of pregnancy from a Buddhist perspective is not that the fetus is a 'part' of the mother but that one individual is temporarily housed within the body of another. Abortion is therefore neither simply the loss of part of the mother nor a temporary redirection of the life flow. In the simplest terms it is the intentional destruction of a karmic being.

D. Keown, op. cit., p. 106

Abortion was certainly known in early Buddhist literature and a number of texts in the *Vinaya* literature make reference to it. Because monks were known to possess medical knowledge, there are recorded cases where they were approached to provide drug-related remedies that would lead to abortion. The provision of these remedies was forbidden by the Buddha and any monk who provided them would have been liable for formal punishment. It is not known how common this would have been in

the period when the early texts were composed, but the prohibitions are illustrated by actual examples.

In contemporary Buddhist societies of South-East Asia, the image of monks is that they are too far removed from the 'secular' world to even engage in debates about abortion and other bioethical matters. Their traditional status as people who leave the social world to pursue a spiritual life is such that they are regarded as incapable of dealing with bioethical problems. However, while members of the monastic orders in these countries are regarded in this light, this is not so for the rest of the population who have been raised as lay Buddhists. As Buddhists, the lay members of the population should not conduct abortions because of the prohibition against killing living beings, the first of the five actions recommended against for laypeople. Nonetheless, abortions are performed and are quite widespread in Thailand, and especially Japan, even though the statistics can never be fully accurate.

A performance of an abortion has karmic implications for the aborted foetus, the person who conducts the procedure, and the woman who undergoes the abortion. Each will experience karmic consequences that must be lived out in the future. The least of these will be experienced by the aborted foetus—birth as a human is always regarded as being superior to birth in the other five life worlds, as it is only humans who are in the privileged position to attain *nirvana*. This is why the karmic consequences of abortion for those who perform it are greater than the act of violence perpetrated.

The *sangha* does not want to be involved in the abortion debate—in fact, its attitude towards it is already clear—yet abortion is widespread in many Buddhist countries. What is to be done from a Buddhist perspective? A positive response to it can scarcely be expected for the reasons already given. One resolution is the performance of rituals that are in some vague sense associated with Buddhism, and that are perhaps modelled on the transfer of merit from the living to the dead. This enables the appropriate ceremony to be placed within an existing Buddhist framework.

[In Thailand] the very common ceremonies of making money, flowers, or incense offerings to Buddhist images, and releasing birds, fish, or turtles at temples are frequently resorted to by women to assuage their feelings of guilt and to lessen the harm done to the aborted fetus. This would be achieved by transferring the merit of the ritual to the fetus.

R. Florida, 'Buddhism and Abortion', in D. Keown (ed.), *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, 2000, p. 154.

A similar resolution to the problem is found in the veneration among Japanese of the *bodhisattva* Jizo Bosatsu, whose images are made in honour of aborted foetuses. He is a *bodhisattva* who is long reputed to have assisted the dead and was especially connected with children dying in childbirth and at a very young age. Commissioning the construction of an image of him and having it formally established in a temple has become an important religious means of expressing compassion for the aborted foetus.



Figure 10.2.1 The *bodhisattva* Jizo Bosatsu

RESPOND

Explain how veneration of Jizo Bosatsu and other ceremonies can lessen the guilt of 'the intentional destruction of a karmic being'.

Euthanasia

It is not difficult to see that the same arguments that apply to abortion will also apply to euthanasia, even if the latter differs from the former in that it applies to a demonstrable living being. Both acts are instances of violence conducted against a sentient being.

Bioethical problems pertaining to elderly people have two dimensions in contemporary Buddhist countries, either in shortening or lengthening a person's natural life. Both are regarded in a similar light and both have assumed a different dimension in the last twenty years because of the substantial improvement in medical technology. But decisions on the use of this technology, especially in countries where a strong pressure on resources exists, often clash with existing belief systems.

We have here, then a conflict of values and moral perceptions between, on the one hand, the doctors who have faith in the healing powers of modern technological medicine and who have the obligation to save lives as part of their professional ethics; and on the other hand, the monk's [Venerable Buddhadasa] and his disciples' belief in the limitations of modern medicine ... this famous monk who accepted natural death had wanted to set an example of facing it without fear or anxiety, in keeping with the tenets of Buddhism. These teachings emphasise non-clinging to life, and the non-craving for the prolongation of life, that is, the acceptance of death as part of the human condition.

Pinit Ratanakul, 'To Save or Let Go: Thai Buddhist Perspectives on Euthanasia', in D. Keown, op. cit., p. 172

This is a brilliant summary of the dilemma. Medical technology can 'artificially' lengthen or shorten a person's life, but to do so violates fundamental beliefs about *karma* for a Buddhist. Buddhists do not reject the use of medical treatment. If a person is sick they should make use of available remedies, and medicine was developed to a very high level among monks in the monastic context. The two dimensions of extending or bringing an end to life apply mainly to the old.

Early Buddhist texts forbid suicide. Both taking your own life or having somebody else take it for you with your own informed consent stand directly at odds with the traditional teachings of *karma*. According to Buddhist (and Hindu) views of *karma*, many details of a person's life are determined by past actions, even to the point where the time and circumstances of one's death may be determined. Though it could be argued that suicide concludes a person's life at a particular time as determined by past *karma*, there is also the possibility that it cuts short a life that would have lasted longer if a natural death had been allowed. Cutting short one's life can lead to the consequence that the past karmic impulses that should have been lived out in that life will now have to be lived out in a later life. Hence, suicide could be understood as a cause for further rebirth. Euthanasia may well fall into this category even if it is agreed upon by the patient.

Similarly, if life is extended artificially (the opposite of euthanasia) the same problem may arise. Karmic impulses dictate a particular life span and this is violated if technology is used to prolong that life span.

There is also the question of the karmic implications for those who undertake the process of euthanasia. Ultimately, all violent acts are opposed according to Buddhist doctrine, even violent acts towards oneself,

because they will be productive of (usually) bad *karma*. In the case of the famous Thai monk Venerable Buddhadasa (1906–1993), the doctors found it necessary to use artificial means to save his life after a severe stroke. They were reluctant, however, to keep him in hospital against his own wishes because they were concerned that his inevitable death might have been attributable to them, with the accompanying karmic consequences.

While it is likely that debate about euthanasia will continue to emerge in Buddhist countries, the parameters of this debate will not be markedly different from what has been suggested here.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** the Buddhist concept of *karma*.
- 2 **Describe** the principal ethical teachings of Buddhism as covered in this section.
- 3 **Explain** how these teachings are used to determine Buddhist positions on bioethical issues.
- 4 In pairs, **discuss** whether cultural factors have any influence in a Buddhist response to bioethical issues.
- 5 **Analyse** the application of Buddhist ethical teachings to one issue of bioethics.

Extension

Go to the web destinations for page 237 and find out more about Buddhist ethics in relation to stem-cell research. Make a summary in point form of the Buddhist attitude to stem-cell research.

10.2.2 Environmental ethics

In contemporary Buddhist countries, the current situation that is applied to the treatment of the natural environment in an ethical sense is the same as that found in relation to bioethics. To even consider the idea of environmental ethics in Buddhism requires an understanding of Buddhist perspectives on the environment.

Buddhist teachings certainly take a negative attitude towards the sociocultural world of the city and the village, but deal with it in a realistic way. Monks and nuns can be in the world while they are not of it (that is, not consumed by worldly things). As for nature, there is no definitive view in the early texts. In the early *Theragatha* poems composed by monks, the natural world of forest and mountain is seen as a place of isolation and danger from animals and demons, and the courage of the monk who resides there is lauded. The theme of the heroic forest-dwelling monk is frequently found in such poems. So if the natural environment was appreciated, it was done so in a very broad sense without any real attempt to define precisely why it should be so appreciated. Isolation was important for the meditator, not the precise nature of the environment governing this isolation.

With its focus on liberation from *samsara*, Buddhist doctrine aims towards creating the conditions where a person can free themselves of the conditions that produce further rebirths. At a very basic level, then, Buddhist doctrine would result in an attitude of indifference towards the condition of the environment which, like all other phenomenal things, is conditioned by the three marks of existence.

► Refer to Chapter 2, page 29, for coverage of the three marks of existence.

Liberation, then, comes through escape from the bonds that tie us to *samsara*, not through some fundamental restructuring of existence. In this light the environmentalist agenda of restoration, though well intentioned, misses the fundamental point.

Ian Harris, 'Buddhism and Ecology', in D. Keown (ed.), *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, 2000, p. 123

This is the dilemma faced by contemporary Buddhists who want to be activists for the preservation of the environment, while wanting to anchor their activism in their tradition's understanding of the Buddha's own teachings. To put this succinctly: if a person's sole aim is to put an end to rebirth, why waste time improving the conditions from which one is attempting to escape? A qualification to this is that plants and animals are both regarded as sentient beings. The case for regarding plants as sentient beings is a difficult one, yet there is some evidence in the texts that this is how plants were regarded. If so, this would justify active intervention to preserve the environment on the basis of the monk's need to exercise compassion.



Figure 10.2.2 Monks of the Pha Luang Ba Tua temple in Thailand's Kanchanaburi province have taken on the task of protecting the endangered tigers from extinction by offering them a home within the walls of their temple.

Environmental activism

Despite the reasons against it, some Buddhist groups do engage in environmental activism. Some Buddhist monks in Thailand have been very aware of the effects of deforestation on the mountains, noticing changes in forest coverage brought about by expansion of farming areas and logging. To oppose this, monks have ordained trees as a means of preventing their logging. The tree is dressed in a monk's robe in the hope that the logger will be a Buddhist and refuse to chop it down. Justification for this is difficult to find in the literature, though there are cases of monks in the classical texts intervening to prevent a tree housing a minor deity from being cut down. Since 1966 monks in Thailand have introduced various community programs including:

... nature conservation projects, especially to highlight Buddhist teachings which relate to nature and conservation. Relevant material includes instructions to monks to recycle old robes (Vin. II.291) and not pollute water or green grass with urine or excrement (Vin. IV.205–6), and the ideal of having a quiet environment (A. V.15). The Thai-Tibetan 'Buddhist Perception of Nature Project' has distributed 3000 books of Buddhist stories and teachings related to the environment. It will be followed by 50 000 more, to be sent to all Thai monasteries and teachers in training colleges. Audio-visual and television programs are also planned.

P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 2000, p. 180

Ecological activism by Buddhist monks, based on Buddhist textual justifications, has only occurred over the past three decades. No doubt it will continue, motivated as much by pragmatic concerns to protect the environment as by

reference to passages in old texts or precedents established earlier by monks and nuns exercising compassion towards animals and plants. A Buddhist justification for the application of environmental ethics is found in the following lines:

... the Buddhist ideal is co-operation with nature, not domination—or passive submission to it. Seeking to overcome external nature is likely to be an expression of human greed and attachment.

P. Harvey, op. cit., p. 179

Ajahn Pongsak is a former Thai monk who, in the 1980s, organised villagers near Chiang Mai to help in reforestation and who taught a form of environmental ethics to villagers. He attempted to define the relationship between Buddhism and a respect for nature:

Dharma, the Buddhist word for truth and the teachings is also the word for nature. This is because they are the same. Nature is the manifestation of truth and of the teachings. When we destroy nature we destroy truth and the teachings.

P. Harvey, op. cit., p. 181

This may be considerably stretching the traditional meaning of *dhamma*, yet it is clear that the intention is to anchor an environmental responsibility into Buddhist teachings.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the significance of the forest in Buddhist literature and practice.
- 2 **Describe** the principal ethical teachings of Buddhism as covered in this section.
- 3 **Explain** how these teachings are used to determine the development of environmental ethics in Buddhism.
- 4 **Analyse** the application of Buddhist ethical teachings to a specific environmental issue.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 238 to read about the emergence of environmentalist monks in Thailand. **Construct** a chart to trace the history of these monks and projects they have initiated and/or been involved with.

10.3 Significant practices

Glossary

buddhahood	The view that all beings have within them the potentiality to become a Buddha and possess enlightening knowledge.
public devotion	The communal sharing of prayer and other religious actions beyond the home that binds the religious group as a faith community.
rite	A rite is a formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or is customary in a religious or other solemn use. Within the rite there are certain rituals ; these are established or prescribed procedures and actions for the ceremony.

Most Buddhist countries today have a rich **ritual** calendar, something that was not present within early Buddhist culture, where most of the rituals were practised in respect of Hindu and non-Hindu fertility deities. Many contemporary rituals are in fact fertility rituals and, with the exception of funerary rituals, Buddhist countries do not show much interest in performing the more typical Western '**rites** of passage'.

Some of the specifically Buddhist rituals centre around the commemoration of the Buddha himself. Others are designed to reaffirm particular relations between the *sangha* and the laity. Still others are directed towards the veneration of Buddhist deities, each having their own place within a hierarchy of functions of power and authority, with the Buddha placed at the top.

This may seem odd given the popularly held belief that Buddhism does not accommodate a belief in gods. Yet in most countries where Buddhism enjoys a strong presence, pre-Buddhist beliefs have been incorporated into Buddhist practices. This means that in studying Buddhist ritual there are very few 'pure' Buddhist rituals that are not in some way intermixed with what were originally non-Buddhist elements.

10.3.1 Vesak

Note!

Vesak (sometimes anglicised to Wesak) derives from the Sanskrit *Visakha*, but in modern South-East Asian languages it becomes Vesak, which is now the most commonly used word.

One of the most commonly performed rituals of **public devotion** in Buddhist countries, including Australia in recent years, is the celebration of Vesak or *Visakha*—the annual ritual celebrating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death (or *parinirvana*), all of which are believed by the celebrants to have occurred on the same day. By bringing together these fundamental events the ritual not only mirrors the temporal boundaries of his life, but also focuses on the religious high points of his life. In South-East Asian countries, it is performed on the full moon day of the month of *Visakha* (April–May), hence the name Vesak. It may not be coincidental that this is just before the beginning of the rainy season in these countries.

Did you know?

The decision to agree to celebrate Vesak as the Buddha's birthday was formalised at the first Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held in Sri Lanka in 1950.

The earliest occurrence of the practice of Vesak seems very old, though obviously it must come after the death of the Buddha since it celebrates his life and spiritual achievements. In the Sinhalese (literally 'from Sri Lanka') chronicle of kingship, the *Mahavamsha*, composed in the fifth century CE, most of the early Sinhalese kings are credited with performing many Vesaks. Of these kings, the earliest was the famous Dutthagamini (101–77 BCE), who erected many religious edifices and held twenty-four Vesak *pujas*. Later kings are also recorded as having performed large numbers of these. Considering early Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) was a Buddhist state, and the kings were active supporters of the religion, it is likely the Vesak ritual was a pre-eminent expression of the close connection between religion and state. Today the political implications are not so apparent, but it is inconceivable that a country where Buddhism is a prominent religion would not perform Vesak in some form or other. Today most South-East Asian Buddhist groups in Australia celebrate Vesak.



Figure 10.3.1 Preparations for Vesak at the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple at Yuroke, north-west of Melbourne



Figure 10.3.2 Sri Lankan Buddhist devotees light coconut oil lamps in a Buddhist temple in Colombo for Vesak.

Did you know?

It is likely the earliest Vesak to be held in Australia was the one performed in Sydney by Marie Byles and eight other people on 20 May 1951. Another was held in Sydney in May 1953 in the presence of Sister Dhammadinna (see pages 232–3).

Vesak in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, where Vesak day is a national holiday, lamps are specially lit and, although flowers and coconut oil are used in the ritual, it is the parading of the lights that is most important. This reaffirms the importance of the symbolism associated with the Buddha as the remover of the darkness of ignorance. It is important to note that the royal family are present at the performance of the ritual, directly connecting the religion with the state.

Vesak in Thailand

In Thailand, Vesak is the year's greatest religious holiday, and it comes during seeding and ploughing season. During the day, Buddhists will do merit and attend sermons at the temples (*wat*). In the evening, Buddhist monks throughout the country lead the laity in a magnificent candlelight procession three times around Buddhist shrines. In the villages, elders attend temple celebrations and sermons during the day. Those who have been working all day in the fields return at dusk to join the lovely candle- or torch-lit processions. These processions are enacted in every village, town and city *wat*. Each person carries flowers, three glowing incense sticks and a lighted candle in silent homage to the Buddha, his teaching and his disciples.

The procedures followed here occur in most other South-East Asian countries where Vesak is performed. Both the laity and the monks participate, indicating the great importance of the Buddha as a behavioural exemplar for both groups. Lights of various kinds are also common in many countries.

In South-East Asia, Vesak coincides with the spring festivals, and so brings rituals associated with Buddhism directly into conjunction with the agrarian calendar, reflecting a correspondence that has probably been associated with Buddhism since near its beginning.

Vesak in Burma (Myanmar)

Vesak in Burma is described thus:

The full moon of May ... is marked by watering the bo tree, the tree under which Enlightenment came to the Buddha. As at the New Year, merit is also acquired by capturing fish in the dwindling ponds and lakes, for this is the very end of the dry season, in which many lakes and riverbeds dry up, and releasing them in fresh water.

Strangely enough, Buddha Day, despite its important mythological associations, is not one of the popular festivals in Burma. In the villages it comes at the beginning of the agricultural season, and few villagers find time to take part in its various observances.

M. E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*, 2nd edn, 1987, pp. 221–2

In Burma, the most important component is a celebration of the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment. This celebration is usually made easy as most Buddhist temples contain replicas of bo or Bodhi trees and the ritual watering of one of these is not expensive in either time or money. The act of releasing fish into fresh water is an act of compassion. It is an expression of the compassionate aspect of the Buddha's own practices of generosity that were described in popular tales like the Jataka tales, which tell of the Buddha's previous lives before he attained **buddhahood**.

Even though the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment is highlighted in Vesak, most lay Buddhists would recognise this as being an unattainable goal for them, at least in this life. Yet in the use of lights and the release of fish we observe an intermingling of intellectual Buddhism with behavioural expressions of compassion, both understood well by the laity. Both expressions are essential in folk Buddhism and Vesak is a clear elaboration of the need for both levels of Buddhism to co-exist, as well as a measure of the success to which they do exist. Note that it is the monks who recite the texts—this and their central role in such rituals reaffirms the difference between the *sangha* and the laity.

Vesak in India

Although Buddhism no longer has the following in India that it has in South-East Asia, the celebration of Vesak continues, where there is a strong Tibetan and Nepalese influence. Here, on the full moon day in *Vaishakh* (the

second month in the traditional Hindu calendar followed in North India), all the important occasions related to the Buddha are combined in one.

Buddhist rituals for celebrating the three-in-one occasion are naturally elaborate. On this day, after bathing, Buddhists wear only white clothes. They gather in their *viharas* (monasteries) for worship and give alms to monks. Prayers, sermons and nonstop recitation of Buddhist scriptures resound in *viharas*, religious halls, and homes. There are day-long readings of the scriptures, before statues of the Buddha, by monks in the *viharas*. Laypeople listen to these readings, and also offer gifts such as incense, flowers and candles to the statues.

The replica of the *Bodhi Vrksa*—the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment—is hung with garlands and coloured flags. Its roots are sprinkled with milk and scented water and lamps are lit around it.

Many Buddhists spend their entire day at the *vihara* listening to discourses on the life and teachings of the Buddha or invite monks to their homes. They also reaffirm their faith in the Five Precepts—not to take life, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie and not to take alcohol or drugs that confuse the mind.

On Vesak, Buddhists refrain from eating meat. They eat kheer (rice cooked in milk and sugar), which they share with the poor. They set up stalls in public places to offer others clean drinking water and also show kindness to animals.

Aims of Vesak

Descriptions of Vesak vary slightly from country to country, but all have in common the apparent fact that despite the importance of this ritual, it does not make complex demands on its performers. The aims of Vesak are to:

- commemorate, and therefore explore, three extremely important events in the life of the Buddha
- celebrate the achievements of the Buddha and recognise his importance as a model for all Buddhists, monastic and lay, to emulate.

This explains the reading of tales about the Buddha at these events and the observance of behavioural attitudes directly associated with the life of the Buddha.

It is also important that Vesak occurs on a very significant full moon day, when planting is about to begin in anticipation of the coming rains. Somehow a connection is drawn between the Buddha himself and fertility associated with the rains.

Review

- 1 **Define** the term 'ritual' in the Buddhist context.
- 2 **Clarify** how a Buddhist would define 'public devotion'.
- 3 Re-read each of the descriptions of Vesak and **outline** their similarities and differences.
- 4 **Describe** in one paragraph the extent to which Vesak is a celebration of the Buddha's life.
- 5 **Construct** a flow chart to illustrate and **explain** the key elements of Vesak.
- 6 **Demonstrate** how the ritual of Vesak expresses the teachings of Buddhism.
- 7 **Analyse** the significance of Vesak for both the individual and the Buddhist community.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 242 and **investigate** the significance of Vesak. Write a half-page report to **summarise** your findings.

10.3.2 Pilgrimage

Ananda, a man of good family who has confidence in the Buddha's teachings should visit these four awe-inspiring places. 'Which are these four?'

Here where the Tathagata was born ... Here where he attained the unsurpassed enlightenment and perfect awakening ... Here where the Tathagata set rolling the unsurpassed wheel of *dhamma* ... Here where the Tathagata attained his final *nirvana* consisting of that *nirvana* where nothing whatever remains ...

Ananda, monks, nuns, male and female lay followers—all having confidence in the Buddha's teachings—will come to where the Tathagata was born ... And any of these who, believing in their heart, might die whilst undertaking a tour of a pilgrimage spot (*cetiyacakram*), will be reborn after death in the happy world of heaven.

Summary of *Mahaparinibbanasutta*,
Digha Nikaya 2, pp. 140–1

Four places are mentioned by the Buddha as appropriate places for what would later become famous pilgrimage spots. These places correspond to Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar respectively. As early as 250 BCE, Ashoka announced in his inscriptions that he had visited the birthplace of the Buddha in Lumbini and helped refurbish the Bodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, the spot that marks the place where the Buddha became enlightened. He also established roadside centres for providing refreshments and temporary accommodation for pilgrims going to these spots. Ashoka's is the first publicised account of pilgrimage sites, and it is very likely pilgrimages were made to these sites well before his time. Later, in the fourth and sixth centuries CE, Chinese pilgrims also visited these sites and left accurate descriptions of them as they saw them at that time.

► Refer to Chapter 2, page 20, for a map of significant places in the life of the Buddha.

Today in India, these four places remain the most important on the map of pilgrimage for Buddhists, although there are other pilgrimage sites in India and in other countries as well. Another four places that are also accorded a very high status are all associated with miraculous events in the life of the Buddha. In order, these are Rajgir, Shravasti (now just a set of ruins), Vaishali and Sankasya. The Buddha spent many years of residence during the rainy season in both Rajgir and Shravasti. Buddhists from all over the world visit the first four locations and perform rituals, in particular, at the Bodhi temple. The other four sites are to some extent off the tourist track, although a special hotel has been built to accommodate Japanese tourists who visit Rajgir. Once there, pilgrims are also able to visit Nalanda, a thirty-five acre site that contains the ruins of a huge Buddhist university that flourished from the fourth to the seventh centuries CE.

Buddhists also visit other sites, such as famous stupas and locations where celebrated monks, or occasionally nuns, have lived for many years leading an austere life of meditation. Such places are considered to be strong sources of merit, but they differ from those sites sacred to the life of the Buddha. These latter sites help focus the mind on the Buddha's achievements, and are as important as memorials and places where good merit can be accessed and where the example of the Buddha as one man who attained enlightenment can be celebrated. In contrast, the forest hermitages of prominent monks and places where Buddhist deities are famous, are attractive to pilgrims because of the availability of good merit there associated with the good karma built up over many lives by these monks.



Figure 10.3.3 Bodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, India

When is a site sacred?

Buddhist texts themselves have provided three criteria by which a particular site is to be judged as sacred. Firstly, there are those believed to contain a relic of the Buddha's body. This refers to the ritualised cremation of the Buddha's body after his death. All his bones remained after everything else was burnt and fragments of these were taken by the seven kings present at the cremation to be distributed at various locations. A famous example of such a relic is represented by the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka. It is believed to contain one of the Buddha's teeth, which was brought there in the early centuries of the Common Era. The second category relates to the kinds of things the Buddha used that he subsequently left behind. The third concerns simple reminders of the Buddha's presence, that is, stories that tell that he had visited a particular place. For the latter, the Sinhalese chronicles such as the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* provide many examples. Another category of sacred sites involves those of Buddhist deities who usually perform a protective or helping function within a designated local area.

Many of these sacred sites had probably been considered sacred before the Buddhists defined their sacredness in particular Buddhist terms. They may have been the residence of a prominent fertility deity, such as a snake god, or a place where a holy man might have dwelt for many years. This demonstrates the capacity of Buddhism to integrate within itself beliefs and practices that were originally non-Buddhist. It also enhances in the eyes of believers the amount of sacred power inherent in these sites.

Review

- 1 Recall the names of the four most important sites for Buddhist pilgrimage.
- 2 How would a Buddhist define 'sacred site'?
- 3 Recall the four categories of sacred sites for Buddhists.

Bodh Gaya

Bodh Gaya is the most important pilgrimage site for all Buddhists. The Bodhi temple is located on three acres in the eastern part of the small town of Bodh Gaya in the Indian state of Bihar. The Mahabodhi Temple ('Great Awakening Temple') is built slightly to the north of the famous Bodhi tree where the Buddha achieved his enlightenment. Cuttings of this tree have been transported to many other prominent Buddhist temples around the world so that they too can have their own Bodhi tree.

The existing temple was in ruins when the prominent Sri Lankan reformer monk Dharmapala Angarika visited it in the last years of the nineteenth century and began the process of its renovation. During the 1980s, Japanese Buddhists poured millions of dollars into the construction of a two-metre-high protective marble wall around the site. The wall creates a huge contrast between the site and the surrounding area. Outside it is noisy, traffic is constantly moving, and little street-side stalls remind us how close religion and business are. Inside it is quiet—the temple is surrounded by lush lawns, large ponds of lotus-covered water and raised daises where people can just sit and, at the southern end of the temple, many *caityas* (small funeral monuments) can be found.

Despite the groups of people who are visiting the temple itself and the surrounding shrines, it is possible to find quiet places to meditate or simply reflect. There is no compulsion to perform particular rituals and an extended

stay at the temple will enable you to see people expressing their commitment in a variety of ways. For example, a party of Japanese Buddhists may be standing before the huge Buddha image in the main hall of the temple, being instructed in the symbolism of the objects—flowers, lamps and wall hangings—surrounding the Buddha. The high point of their time there will most likely be a brief recitation of the vow of taking refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *sangha*.

Or you may see a group of Sri Lankan laypeople being led by a monk. He will be explaining the significance of the temple and simultaneously giving a teaching in Sinhalese on the main points of the Buddha's teachings in a way that the lay audience can easily understand. Next to them may be a group of Indian Buddhists being read a story in Hindi by a monk. At the raised dais at the southern end of the temple, young Westerners may be seated on meditational rugs, engaged in elementary forms of meditation, having perhaps been taught in one of the many meditation schools located in Bodh Gaya. Consistent with the inclination of most Westerners, they are probably more interested in the meditational and intellectual aspects of Buddhism than they are in its ritual and devotional processes. This reflects the different approaches of those brought up in Buddhist countries from those who were raised in predominantly Christian countries and subsequently developed an interest in Buddhism as an alternative to Christianity or secular liberalism.

Dotted around within a kilometre of the Bodhi temple are at least a dozen other temples, representing all of the Buddhist countries. The monks in them are constantly engaged in the performance of Buddhist rituals and they are often visited by prominent Buddhists such as the Dalai Lama. Each of the temples contains an area set aside for accommodating pilgrims at cheap prices, which means pilgrims can actually stay in a working monastery instead of a secular hotel. This temporarily places them in a heightened religious environment and allows them to give offerings, often financial, to the monks and/or the temple, and, in turn, to receive teachings from the monks. From this perspective the visit to Bodh Gaya should be seen as having a kind of transactional purpose where the receipt of good *karma* or merit is cultivated by the monastic order and is expected by the laity. This kind of transaction reaches back to the earliest years of Buddhism.

Finally, there are a whole range of Buddhist institutions that run meditational courses and elementary introductions to Buddhist philosophy, as well as advanced courses in *vinaya* for monks and nuns. Bodh Gaya is both an important pilgrimage spot and a central location for the propagation of Buddhist teachings and values. There is also an interesting new development there—some huge images of the Buddha are being constructed, particularly by Japanese and Tibetans, that are capable of being seen from a great distance. While a protective function can be found in the presence of these images, this kind of activity

also betrays a competitiveness about the final size of the Buddha being constructed.

A final aspect of pilgrimage that should not be overlooked is its tourism component. Since Bodh Gaya is a Buddhist pilgrimage site in India, and Buddhism currently has only a few million adherents in India, most of the pilgrims travel there from overseas. This means there is a considerable investment in time and money for those who make this pilgrimage and this will only serve to heighten the good merit they expect to receive as a consequence of attending these sites.



Figure 10.3.4 Tibetan monks praying in the shade of the Bodhi tree that grows at the site where the original bo tree once stood, under which the Buddha sat.

Review

- 1 Define the term 'ritual' in the Buddhist context.
- 2 Clarify how a Buddhist would define 'public devotion'.
- 3 Identify two aspects of pilgrimage for Buddhists.
- 4 Describe a pilgrimage to one of the major pilgrimage sites.
- 5 Demonstrate how pilgrimage expresses the teachings of Buddhism.
- 6 Analyse the significance of pilgrimage for both the individual and the Buddhist community.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 245 to find out more about Bodh Gaya.

Conclusion

In the contemporary world, Buddhism remains a vibrant, growing religion, expanding in virtually every country where it is found. Australia, with its rapidly changing number of adherents, is an excellent example of this. In the 1947 Australian Census, 411 people (0.01 per cent of the population) identified themselves as Buddhists, increasing to 139 795 (0.8 per cent) in 1991 and 418 756 (2.1 per cent) in 2006. This growth in numbers can be accounted for by the immigration of South-East Asian Buddhists to Australia, and by the charismatic presence of the Dalai Lama in teaching a particular brand of Tibetan Buddhism to Westerners.

Throughout its long history, Buddhism has adapted to broad social and cultural change. This adaptability is demonstrated in the development of Mahayana Buddhism, a movement that showed a self-conscious awareness of its difference from other forms of Buddhism that were contemporary to their period of development between 100 BCE and 400 CE. It emerged out of a broadening of religious beliefs and practices, especially deriving from new views about the nature of god that were associated with the doctrine and practice of *bhakti* flooding through Hinduism at the same time.

Under this influence, the images of the Buddha presented in literature and art expanded considerably from what they were in the Pali literature. In this literature, the

Buddha is presented as a somewhat austere figure, which contrasts with his much more expansive persona in the Mahayana literature found throughout much of Asia. In addition, *bodhisattvas* were created and became the centre of cult followings all over Asia. This expansiveness has made it possible for Buddhism to respond to ethical and philosophical questions that have arisen, especially under the influence of Western scientific thought, and contributed to its success in most Asian countries over the last century and a half.

It is especially in the area of ethics that Buddhism has continually shown itself to be capable of adapting in a manner that meets the requirements of highly differing cultures, but which enables identification with Buddhism—seen as a religion of great antiquity—to be maintained. Tradition is therefore continued in such a way as to allow whatever is new to be made to seem part of the past. One example of the maintenance of traditional values is found in the emphasis that Buddhists continue to place on the application of compassion. A fundamental requirement that compassion should be exercised towards all sentient beings means all Buddhists, ideally at least, should have an active concern in maintaining the world around them in a way that benefits everybody and causes the least possible harm. In this area, intentions and actions intersect in a positive way that can be applied by Buddhists of all persuasions. Revised ethical attitudes very easily fit within this framework of thinking.

Like all other world religions, Buddhism must provide its adherents with a sense of certainty and solidity in a world that is fragile and shifting. Since the Second World War, no Asian country has been able to escape the modernising process that has been so visible as a cultural force for change. Buddhist teaching stresses the overwhelming importance of coming to terms with change. Change is unavoidable and resistance to it will usually result in *dukkha* for oneself and others. Buddhism responds to this in the ethical sense by its pragmatic willingness to take up, albeit slowly, questions of bioethics and environmental ethics that have been at the forefront of Western ethical thinking for at least the last twenty years.

Buddhism also responds to change by offering a continual reinforcement of the Buddha's message and its relevance for daily life. This is how the annual performance of Vesak and other important rituals need to be understood. They reconfirm the importance of a Buddhist community in those countries where they are performed, they bring the laity directly into contact with the *sangha* of monks (and nuns), and finally, they function as an important reminder of the centrality of the figure of the Buddha in the life of Buddhists. Each of these rituals, even if their performance

changes slightly over time, is a constant (and is seen as such) within the religious life of Buddhists and stands almost outside of time, giving people the opportunity to see again the timeless values represented in the teachings of the Buddha and the examples set by living monks.

Extension

- 1 'Buddhist teaching stresses the overwhelming importance of coming to terms with change.' **Examine** this statement in light of what you have studied in this chapter and make a summary in point form of your response.
- 2 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 3 Organise your media file and **classify** it under the headings 'Buddhism in Australia' and 'Buddhism and the world'. Prepare a report to **summarise** how the media report on Buddhism. Does your file add to your understanding of Buddhism as a lived religion?
- 4 **Synthesise** the main features related to Buddhist people, ideas, ethics and practices in this chapter in the form of a flow chart or mind map.



Figure 10.3.5 More than 200 Buddhist nuns and monks were ordained at the Nan Tien Temple at Wollongong, New South Wales, in 2004. It was the first time Australia had hosted the ordination of international Buddhist monks and nuns.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



HSC-style exam questions

Section II

- Studies of Religion I: answer ONE question from this section.
- Studies of Religion II: answer TWO questions from TWO different religious traditions in this section.

Question 1—Buddhism (15 marks)

- | | Marks |
|---|-------|
| a Outline the Buddhist ethical teachings on ONE of the following: | 3 |
| – bioethics | |
| – environmental ethics | |
| – sexual ethics | |
| b Describe how ONE significant practice expresses the beliefs of Buddhism. Choose ONE of: | 5 |
| – pilgrimage | |
| – Temple <i>puja</i> | |
| – Vesak | |
| c Explain how ONE significant person or school of thought, other than the Buddha, has contributed to the understanding and application of Buddhist beliefs. | 7 |

To check your understanding of the style of questions for Section II and Section III, go to ‘Support materials for the Studies of Religion HSC examinations’ on the NSW Board of Studies website; or go to the web destination for page 247.



Section III

- Studies of Religion I and Studies of Religion II: answer ONE question from this section that is from a different religious tradition to the question(s) answered in Section II.

Question 1—Buddhism (20 marks)

... Therefore, do not deal with what is pleasant as loss of what is pleasant is bad. The person who has neither what is pleasant or unpleasant is not bound.

In a person whose thoughts are churned, whose passions are strong, who looks for what is pleasant, craving increases massively. He certainly makes his bondage very strong.

He who dwells in quieting his thoughts, always reflecting, dwells on what is not pleasant, he will certainly remove, he will certainly cut the bonds of death.

A person without wisdom has no meditation, nor does a person who is not meditating have wisdom. The person in whom meditation and wisdom are present is close to *nirvana*.

Dhammapada

With reference to these sayings from the *Dhammapada*, analyse how the ethical teachings and practices of Buddhism contribute to an understanding of the religion as a whole.

Chapter 11

Christianity depth study

Is God green?

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **explain** the contribution to and **analyse** the impact of one significant person or school of thought on the development and expression of Christianity
- **describe** and **explain** Christian ethical teachings on one ethical area
- **describe** one significant practice within Christianity, **demonstrate** how this practice expresses the beliefs of Christianity and **analyse** its significance for both the individual and the Christian community.



Baptism at a Greek Orthodox Church. Most Christian denominations recognise baptism as necessary for salvation.

Throughout the history of Christianity, to this very day, significant people and ideas have challenged the tradition, such as Paul of Tarsus, Pope John XXIII, Martin Luther and Catherine Booth. Sometimes these challenges have led to schisms, or rifts, that are still apparent today. At other times they have led to a revitalisation of the tradition. Often it is only in hindsight that a person or an idea is acknowledged as having shaped the tradition—in their own lifetimes, the people might have been seen as troublemakers or the ideas as heretical offshoots. Sometimes a person from a previous era is ‘rediscovered’, as happened with Hildegard of Bingen. In other times the person or idea might have been ‘right’ for then, but is no longer considered significant—maybe to be ‘rediscovered’ some time in the future!

Changing times have always brought the challenge of how to make the life, death and resurrection of Jesus present and relevant to a new generation.

This section deals with arguably the most significant Christian figure after Jesus—Paul of Tarsus; a ‘rediscovered’ person from medieval times—Hildegard of Bingen; and a ‘new’ movement or idea—feminist **theology**, whose roots lie in the women’s suffrage movement of the late nineteenth century.

11.1 Significant people and ideas

Glossary

theology

Words, writings, or academic works about the nature and existence of God and the relationship between the human and the divine. A theologian is a person who is well versed in the Church’s teachings.

Extension

- 1 Update the Christianity list in your workbook with the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file of newspaper articles, and monitor television news and programs to do with significant Christian figures, practices and ethics. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics.

11.1.1 Paul of Tarsus (c. 10 BCE–c. 65 CE)

Glossary

Asia Minor	Historically, a region in western Asia that consisted of the peninsula between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
Diaspora	The Jewish community outside Israel.
gentiles	Those who were not Jews.
missionary	A person who works to convert others to their religious faith, often in places where that religion is not widely practised.
predestination	In Paul's theology and later, this term refers to the eternal, unchanging desire by God to bring about goodness in creation and, above all, to bring about the salvation of those God wishes to save (see 1 Cor 2:7).



Figure 11.1.1 St Paul by Bernardo Daddi, 1333

RESPOND

Investigate a range of images of St Paul similar to this one and explain the symbolic meanings of the book and the sword.

Paul of Tarsus did much to advance Christianity among the **gentiles**, and is considered one of the primary sources of early Church doctrine. Some argue that it was he who first truly made Christianity a new religion, rather than a sect of Judaism. Paul, himself a Jew, spoke Greek and inherited Roman citizenship from his father. He was able to put Jewish ideas into the language of the gentiles.

Did you know?

It was Paul who first used the term 'gospel', (*euangélion*, Greek for 'the good message') when he reminded the people of the church at Corinth 'of the gospel I preached to you' (1 Cor 15:1).

Life of Paul

What we know about Paul comes from two exceptional sources: the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's own letters. The Acts of the Apostles were written after Paul's death, most likely by the same person who wrote Luke's Gospel. The author of the Acts claims that he knew Paul and even went with him on many of his journeys. It seems reasonable, however, to accept the second source, Paul's letters, as a more reliable account as they represent his own version of events.

Paul (Saul, as he was known in the Aramaic-speaking community) was a Jew and Roman citizen from the city of Tarsus in **Asia Minor** (modern day western Turkey). He was well trained in Jewish learning—in Romans (2:17–20) he speaks of holding the law of the Jews—and awaited the coming of the Messiah. He is said to have come to Jerusalem and had been commissioned by the high priest to seek out and persecute Christians in Damascus.

Since **Diaspora**, Jews like Paul lived among people they viewed as pagans; they were particularly conscious of how their religion might appear to those around them. Jews were called to be a 'light to the nations' (Isa 42:6); and the story of a crucified Messiah might have the opposite effect—it could hold Judaism up to ridicule. So Paul was tasked with eradicating this fledgling movement before it could do too much damage.

But on the road to Damascus (c. 33 CE), Paul was converted to Christianity after an overwhelming personal experience in which he saw the Lord (1 Cor 9:1) in the form of the risen Christ (1 Cor 5:8).



Figure 11.1.2 The missionary journeys of St Paul

Did you know?

The story of Paul's conversion to Christianity has put the expressions 'on the road to Damascus' or 'a Damascus experience' into our common language. They suggest the possibility that a person's fundamental outlook on life could be utterly changed in a single moment.

Naturally enough, the followers of Jesus in Damascus and Jerusalem were, at first, suspicious of their former persecutor. But first Ananais in Damascus (Acts 9:17–18) and then Barnabas in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–27) affirmed his conversion.

Following his conversion, Paul first went to live in the Nabataean kingdom (which he called 'Arabia') for three years, and then returned to Damascus (Gal 1:17–20) until he was forced to flee from that city under the cover of night (Acts 9:23–25; 2 Cor 11:32 ff.). He travelled to Jerusalem, where he met Peter and James the Just, 'the brother of Jesus' (see page 48).

It was from Jerusalem that Paul set out on his **missionary journeys**.

Paul's missionary journeys

Paul undertook three missionary journeys and established Christian communities in Asia Minor and Greece. His commission for these journeys came from Peter, although he also sought out James in Jerusalem. Certain details of his journeys remain unclear. The Acts of the Apostles record five trips to Jerusalem by Paul, while his Letters record only three. When he returned to Jerusalem after his third journey, Paul was arrested. He was imprisoned in Caesarea, but because he was a Roman citizen he was entitled to be taken to Rome for his trial. We know no more about his activity. He was probably executed in Rome under Emperor Nero some time in the early to mid-60s CE.

Contribution to the development and expression of Christianity

Paul's life was remarkable and there is little doubt that it changed the course of Christianity. He was the most effective missionary of the early Christian communities and its first theologian.

- Paul's Jewish, Roman and Greek background prepared him ideally as the 'apostle' to the gentiles.
- More than one-quarter of the Christian Scriptures are attributed to Paul, although some of these were by authors writing under Paul's prestigious name.

- His education as a Pharisee under Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) gave him an excellent rabbinical and scriptural background for writing, speaking and debating.
- As a theologian, he made clear to the early Christian communities, and subsequently to those throughout history, the meaning of following Christ (see in particular Romans—Paul's 'gospel'—and 1 Cor 15:3):

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to [many] ... Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

1 Cor 15:3–8

- In his missionary work, he established churches in the political and cultural centres of the Western world. For example, Rome, Antioch, Ephesus and Corinth, thus increasing the chances of survival for Christianity.
- Paul's theology has been used as a source of church and spiritual renewal at crucial times during the history of Christianity—for example during the Protestant and Catholic Reformations.
- Paul's writings are an extremely important summary of the Christian faith, as they were written before the completion of the gospels. Nevertheless, some scholars are still debating the meaning of Paul's writings about women. For example, in the passage 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, Paul's notorious restriction of women (cf. 1 Cor 14:33–36), regarded by some scholars as a later addition, might have resulted from disturbances caused by a small group of women in Corinthian society that did not exist in other early Christian communities. This theory raises the caution that Paul's writings need to be understood in their specific social, historical and cultural context.

The centre of Paul's teachings was the understanding that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was a historical turning point. His teachings were essential for the development and success of the early Church—otherwise it would have remained as just another Jewish sect. Paul's teachings included:

- Jesus' resurrection as a signal of the end of the need to live under Jewish law
- gentiles had as much access to the faith as Jews and that freedom from Jewish law set everyone free
- living in the *Spirit* in which the power of God was made to work through human flesh

- Christ crucified is the image and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18–25)
- the importance of preaching the gospel rather than (but not excluding) sacramental activity (see 1 Cor 1:17).

Importantly, Paul preserved Christianity's Jewish heritage, affirmed God's ongoing call to the Jewish people, and interpreted all this in the light of Jesus' message. His writings on grace, **predestination**, free will, and 'the imitation of Christ' had profound effects on later major theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Did you know?

The first writings of the New Testament to appear were not one of the four gospels but rather Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians.

Letters of Paul

Scholars generally agree that of Paul's letters, Romans, the First and Second Letters to the Corinthians and the letter to the Galatians are definitely by him. These letters are largely written to 'churches' which he had visited and talk about the particular needs of the early Christian communities to which they are addressed. For example:

- The Corinthian community is suffering from too much division and strife; he writes a letter of instruction on harmony and unity (1 Cor 1:10–17).
- The Thessalonian community is apparently anxious and confused in his absence; they receive a letter of consolation and comfort (1 Thess 2:17–5:28).
- The Galatian community seems ready to reject Paul entirely and become much more Jewish in their orientation; like a scolding parent, he berates them and tells them that they cannot turn back on the Gospel of Christ that he had given them (Gal 1:6–24, 2:1–14, 3:1–5:26).
- The Roman community comprised many Jews as well as gentiles and it is probable that Paul's Letter to the Romans was written in preparation for his journey to Rome. Paul is aware there is some conflict between gentile and Jewish Christians in the Roman church and so he outlines the essential elements of Christianity so that it will not be confused with that of 'false teachers' (Rom 1:1, 1:11–12, 1:16–17).

Review

- 1 **Describe** how Paul became a Christian.
- 2 **Identify** three reasons why Paul is so important in the history of Christianity.
- 3 **Analyse** the impact of Paul's influence on the development and expression of Christianity.

Extension

- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** and **describe** one of Paul's three journeys.
- 2 Choose one of Paul's letters, locate the community to which it was written on the map of his journeys (page 251) and briefly **summarise** its significant content.
- 3 Prepare a discussion outline for a debate on the topic: 'Without Paul, Christianity would not have become what it is today.'

11.1.2 Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

At a time when few women were in a position to write, Hildegard produced major works of theology and visionary writings. When few women were accorded respect for their intellectual achievements, she corresponded with popes such as Eugene III and Anastasius IV. Hildegard used the curative powers of natural objects for healing, and wrote treatises about natural history and the medicinal uses of plants, animals, trees and stones. She also composed music—between seventy and eighty compositions have survived (which is one of the largest repertoires among medieval composers), and she is the first composer whose biography is known.

A brief account of Hildegard of Bingen's life

Hildegard was born in 1098 at Bokelheim (in West Germany), the tenth child of a noble family. As such, she was promised to the church and raised from the age of eight in a hermitage that later became a Benedictine monastery, which had only recently added a section for women. For her education, she was sent to an **anchoress** called Jutta.

She became a nun at fifteen. She led an uneventful scholarly life until, at the age of thirty-two, she began to receive **visions** and **revelations**. When Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard was elected head of the small convent at Disibodenberg. In her early forties, Hildegard received a vision that she believed to be an instruction from God to 'write down that which you see and hear', and she began to write an account of these visions. They are contained in the book *Scivias* ('the one who knows the ways of the Lord').

And it came to pass ... when I was 42 years and 7 months old, that the heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance flowed through my entire brain. And so it kindled my whole heart and breast like a flame. Not burning but warming ... and suddenly I understood the meaning and expression of the books [religious texts that she had been reading].

Glossary

anchoress	A woman who lives apart from the world, either for the purpose of meditation or to live out particular vows she has taken. An anchoress is dedicated to a life of strict solitude or penance. Because they are not permitted to leave their dwelling, anchoresses often live in cells attached to a church so that they can receive Eucharist through an adjacent window.
martyrology	An official register of Christian martyrs and saints.
mysticism	The process of developing an intense, direct and transforming communion with God.
revelations	An important aspect of visions , revelations refer to the disclosure of persons, events and things previously hidden or only partly known; ultimately part of the self-disclosure of God. From the Latin word <i>revelare</i> meaning 'to take away the veil'.
simony	The practice of paying for holy offices or positions in the hierarchy of a church and making profit out of sacred things; named after Simon Magus, who appears in the Acts of the Apostles 8:18–24.
visions	Extraordinary communications from God that may be accompanied by images, ideas and words. Visions are not essential to the spiritual life but may be an important part of an individual's spiritual journey.



Figure 11.1.3 St Hildegard of Bingen, icon by Robert Lentz, 1997. Because she was known as a healer and miracle worker, people gathered on the riverbanks to ask for her help. She used river water to bless them, and she is shown in this icon ready to sprinkle them with water using a wild rose she has picked.

Rather than continue as part of a double house (a monastery with units for men and for women), in 1148 Hildegard decided to move the monastery to Bingen on the banks of the Rhine River, where it was on its own and not directly under the supervision of a male house. This gave Hildegard considerable freedom as an administrator, and she travelled widely in Germany and France during her four preaching tours (between 1159 and 1170). Hildegard was a woman of amazing and diverse talents, and was a figure in the cultural flowering that was part of what has been called ‘the renaissance before the Renaissance’ in twelfth-century Europe.

Hildegard, through her many letters, took to task not only the German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, but also the archbishop of Mainz. She wrote to such notable figures as King Henry II of England and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Her correspondence is quite extensive—many people of all stations of life wrote to her and received answers. She spoke out openly against corruption in the Church, particularly the practice of **simony**.

She was a keen student and recorder of the natural and scientific worlds. Her *Liber simplicis medicinae* (later *Physica*)—a collection of medical ailments and cures—underlines the uses of the natural world for the benefit of humankind. She was also an architect and inventor—she designed the plumbing system for the monastery at Bingen. In addition, she was a gifted poet, composed many liturgical songs that were collected into a cycle called the *Symphonia armoniae celestium revelationum*, and painted her visions.

We know little of Hildegard’s later years. She completed her last preaching tour in 1171, at the age of seventy-three. She continued to write regularly and administer the busy affairs of the monastery. She died in 1179 aged eighty-one.

Did you know?

Scivias, the narrative of Hildegard’s visions, was richly decorated under her direction (though not by her hand) with pictures of the visions. The book was celebrated in the Middle Ages and printed for the first time in Paris in 1513.

Contribution to the development and expression of Christianity

Hildegard’s contributions to the development and expression of Christianity have been expansive and far-reaching:

- She fought against the discrimination directed towards the sisters in her monastery by the monks of Disibodenberg and their Abbot Kuno. (Compared to the monks, the women had cramped living quarters and very limited finances.)

- At a time when philosophy and reason dominated intellectual life in Europe, she reinvigorated the **mysticism** in the tradition. She gave full expression to her visions through her three books of visions and two other major texts—a remarkable achievement for a woman at that time.
- Like her male contemporaries (for example, Bernard of Clairvaux), Hildegard embarked on extensive preaching and missionary journeys: speaking in the cathedrals, urging people to holiness and condemning corruption.
- In her monasteries, she encouraged women with music, singing, painting and spiritual gifts.
- She demonstrated that women can have a prominent place in religious life.
- She brought people to a deeper awareness of the role and importance of imagery and symbolism.

Part of this powerful symbolic language was Hildegard's imagery of 'greenness', and of shiny, precious stones (e.g. sapphires, rubies, diamonds) and especially her central concept of 'light'. Hildegard readily admitted that the source of her visions was 'the living light' (i.e. God in Christ) and was convinced that all living creatures are flooded with divine light, which she referred to as the 'sparks from the radiation of God's brilliance'.

The most distinguishing feature of her life and spirituality, which ensured her status compared with her contemporaries, was her conviction that her life was set in a prophetic mould—that her insights were directly from God and were to be shared with all of humanity. In the Middle Ages, 'prophecy' was understood as a divine revelation with implications for the past, present and future.

She was able to deliver these prophecies because it was believed that God often chose the weak and despised 'vessel' in order to confound the strong. It is important to note, therefore, that to act as a female prophet was to confirm female inferiority rather than to deny or remove it. All her activities—letter-writing to give advice, preaching, visiting monasteries, exorcising and healing—were justified on the grounds of her privileged access to the *secreta Dei* or 'the secrets of God'.

I am but a feather upon the breath of God.

Hildegard of Bingen

Hildegard's continuing impact

Hildegard's long-lasting impact on Christianity can be understood in many ways. She was a remarkable woman who was the 'first' in many fields. She recognised the essential connectedness of the cosmos in her treatises on natural history, medicine, scripture and theology. Her irrepressible spirit and outstanding intellect overcame social, physical, cultural and gender barriers to achieve timeless recognition.

She is perhaps more famous today than she was in her own time among those who met or knew of her. Although no formal canonisation has ever taken place, her name began appearing in **martyrologies** from the 1300s onwards. Hildegard was included in the *Roman Martyrology* in the sixteenth century and she appears in the calendar of saints in various Anglican Churches. Her feast is celebrated on 18 September. In the many accounts of her life, she is ranked highly among the fathers, doctors and writers of the Church.

Today's scholarly interest in women in the medieval church has led to a great interest in Hildegard, including many recordings of her music. She has also become something of a cult figure in the 'New Age' movement, where her holistic and natural view of healing and her music are appreciated.

Review

- 1 **Recall** and list key dates, ideas and events in the life of Hildegard.
- 2 **Explain** the contribution of Hildegard to the development and expression of Christianity.
- 3 **Analyse** the impact of Hildegard on the Christian tradition. In your answer, refer to her contributions to the arts, sciences and other fields.

Extension

Investigate some websites (including some music sites) to **examine** why Hildegard is a popular figure in the 'New Age' movement. Present a report of your findings.

11.1.3 Feminist theology

Glossary

ecumenical	Describing that which is directed towards dialogue and achievement of unity among all Christian Churches, and ultimately among all religious communities. Derived jointly from the Greek words <i>oikodome</i> meaning ‘the household of God’, and <i>oikoumene</i> meaning ‘the whole inhabited earth’.
feminism	A movement or doctrine that advocates equal rights and opportunities for women, especially the extension of their activities in social and political life.
feminist	A supporter of feminism (noun); or relating to the activities, literature, etc., of feminism (adjective).
feminist theology	A movement aimed at securing greater religious rights for women and challenging a predominantly masculine view of God.
hermeneutics	The science of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures.
inclusive language	Language that includes both male and female and does not discriminate against or favour either; for example, God/Holy One instead of Father, or people instead of brotherhood/man/men.
misogyny	Hatred of women.
patriarchy	A form of social organisation in which the male is dominant.
suffrage	The right to vote, especially in public elections.

Because of the **patriarchal** nature of the Jewish and Roman societies in which Christianity arose, it naturally developed into a patriarchal religious tradition, and the women of the early Christian communities (see page 50) seem to ‘disappear’. Biblical interpretation was used to support this system; for example, Eve led her husband astray and thus sin entered the world (2 Cor 11:3). When the Bible was translated into English, the male pronoun was used for God and the Spirit was also male.

Did you know?

The first usage of ‘feminism’ in print has been traced to a book review in *The Athenaeum*, 27 April 1895. *The Athenaeum* was a literary magazine published in London from 1828 to 1921. The publication was well known for publishing the very best writers of the time.

The origins of feminist theology can probably be traced to the women’s movement in some Western countries in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Many of the first Christian feminists belonged, for example, to the church leagues for women’s suffrage, and were involved in issues of education and social welfare in which they were inspired by their own progressively radical interpretations of the Christian faith.

In Australia, one of the most active women’s organisations at the time of Federation was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). One of their priorities was women’s suffrage and the WCTU was at the forefront of the movement to ensure that those women in states where women already had the vote, for example, South Australia, would not be denied the vote in federal elections.

One could argue that it is probable that church leaders were quite happy to give these women their voice to achieve the goals of temperance, prohibition and even the vote, but did not want that voice used within the Church.

What we know today as feminist theology began to develop during the era of sociocultural questioning in Western societies in the 1960s and the 1970s—it grew alongside movements for social reform such as the civil rights movement and the broader feminist movement, and the developing liberation theology (a school of theology that emphasises the Christian mission to bring justice to the poor and oppressed).

Did you know?

English Christian feminist Emily Wilding Davison was killed after throwing herself in front of the king’s horse at the 1913 English Derby in a suffragist protest. In a notable essay, Emily wrote of how the early church fathers had debated whether women had souls and only grudgingly agreed that women probably did have them.

The concerns of Christian feminist theology

The role and status of women within the Church

Although many Christian denominations have removed formal obstacles to the full participation of women in the life of the Church, in some denominations women have limited areas of access to and opportunities for meaningful participation.

A re-examination of sacred texts and their cultural overlay

The misrepresentation or under-representation of women in the sacred texts is a product of the historical contexts in which the tradition and its sacred texts developed, rather than one of theological intent.

Language and models of divinity

The images of God employed in the Christian tradition are predominantly masculine and at times alienating for women. Since there are no theological grounds for claiming that God is exclusively male, then it follows that there are no linguistic grounds for referring to God in an exclusively male manner.

She is a reflection of the eternal light,
untarnished mirror of God's active power,
image of God's goodness.

Wis 7:26

significantly. Mary Daly came to this conclusion in a later book, *Beyond God the Father* (1973). Other feminists remain committed to their historical community and believe that the original or essential message of Christianity affirms women as equals of men, but that the message had been distorted by its social context in patriarchal communities. These feminist theologians engage in a historical quest to bring to light the alternative traditions within the foundational years of Christianity and the wider development of Christianity to show these affirmative themes. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (1982) is an example of this second stage. She coined the term 'hermeneutics of suspicion'—whenever texts record only the actions of men or portray women in a negative light, one needs to be suspicious and call upon greater life experience and research.

- 3 Having searched out what they see as the authentic teachings of Christianity separate from the cultural **misogyny**, feminist theologians begin constructing a new theological system. They reinterpret the theological symbols of divinity, human nature, the material world, the origins of the world, good and evil, revelation, salvation, and redemptive community in ways that not only affirm women's full participation, but also call for a transformation of the tradition and society as integral to the authentic mission of Christianity. Rosemary Radford Reuther's *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (1983) reflects this third stage of feminist theology. It is a systematic feminist treatment of the Christian symbols. Her work explores how Christian theology has been biased by the exclusion of women's experience and female symbolism, and thus she seeks to shape an inclusive theology.

The three-stage development of feminist theology

- 1 Women recognise the male-centred and anti-woman bias in the Christian tradition and begin to analyse these patterns throughout history. Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968) is an example of this. It was a groundbreaking work regarding women's roles in the Church—a critical examination of the Catholic Church and its relationship to women.
- 2 Women search for alternative traditions that provide positive symbols to affirm women. This quest draws feminist theologians in different directions. Some feminists interested in theology conclude that the classical tradition of Christianity is incapable of affirming women as equals of men—the tradition itself is a reflection of patriarchy and cannot be reformed

Did you know?

There is strong evidence in the Christian Scriptures that Jesus treated women as equals. The frequent mention of women among the followers of Jesus (Lk 8:1–3) and the prominence of women in the early Church such as Prisca, the deaconess Phoebe, and Mary (Rom 16:1–6), indicates that they played an important role in the early Church. Paul's statement that, in Christ, the religious distinction between male and female had been eliminated (Gal 3:28) was also observed in other churches (Phil 4:3).



Figure 11.1.4 Barbara Darling (left) after her consecration as a bishop at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Melbourne on 31 May 2008 with Australia's first female bishop, Kay Goldsworthy (right)

The contributions of Christian feminist theology

Because feminist theology is such a recent movement, it is too early to make a complete assessment of its contributions and the impact of these contributions. While it is possible to appreciate the influence of the pioneering feminist theologians in a number of areas, feminist theology remains a 'work in progress'.

Study of theology

Less than twenty years ago it was still possible to take an entire course in Christian theology in most reputable institutions without making any study of feminist theology. Today courses in feminist theology are considered mainstream in all but the most conservative institutions.

Institutions

Most Protestant denominations allow for the ordination of women, though there is still an imbalance and some resistance to the appointment of women to lead congregations. While Catholic and Orthodox traditions do not allow the ordination of women, there have been some changes—women are able (with the permission of the pastor) to act in a number of ministries in the Catholic Church (lector, cantor, Eucharistic minister, altar server).

Raising awareness

The Catholic Church in Australia held a comprehensive public enquiry into the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia in 1996 and released its report *Woman and Man: One in Jesus Christ* in 1999. Whether any of the recommendations bore fruit can be considered a moot point. The Anglican Church debated the issue of women's ordination for twenty years before reaching a sort of agreement—some dioceses do and others don't! Although many Protestant churches resolved the issue of ordination decades ago, many congregations are reluctant to appoint female ministers.

Language and models of divinity

In recent years, attempts have been made to compile **inclusive language** lectionaries (books or lists of readings for church services) as well as inclusive language hymns and prayers. The hymnbook *Together in Song* has translated many hymns into gender-neutral language, as has the Anglican *Prayer Book for Australia*. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible has also been translated to use gender-neutral language where it is not specifically male or female. As with most other issues, Protestant churches have made this transition much faster than the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Mostly the liturgy of

the Catholic and Orthodox Churches remains in gender exclusive language, as does the lectionary. There are some examples, however, where individual congregations have adopted an inclusive language text for the liturgy, for example, in the Nicene Creed—‘for us and our salvation’ instead of ‘for us men and our salvation’.

Australian Christian feminist organisations

The following are some current examples of organisations involved in feminist theology.

- The **Movement for the Ordination of Women in the Anglican Church** (MOWatch) was formed in 1984 under the leadership of Patricia Brennan and Colleen Stewart. The first women to be ordained in Australia were ordained into the Anglican priesthood in Perth in 1992 and the first female bishop was consecrated in Australia in Perth on 22 May 2008.
- **Women and the Australian Church** (WATAC) is Catholic in origin (1984) and is **ecumenical** by membership. This organisation has a commitment to working together with all churches and on an interfaith basis. The aim of WATAC is to ‘model new ways of being church’, based on a ‘discipleship of equals’.
- **Ordination of Catholic Women** (OCW) has been active since 1993 when it was founded by Marie Louise Uhr and Zoe Hancock. Its aim is to support women’s call to ordination within a renewed ordained ministry.

Feminist theology is ecumenical—it has brought together women and men from different denominations. Some issues have been resolved in some denominations but not in others, and there are a variety of views within each denomination. There are conservative elements within all denominations that reject and/or oppose the claims of feminist theology.

Feminist theology has certainly been responsible for raising awareness of the gender inequalities that exist within the Church. As we have seen, there have been gradual changes from the grassroots level but, in most cases, there has been little structural change.



Figure 11.1.5 Australian feminist theologian Kathleen McPhillips

RESPOND

Describe in your own words the links between the words on the banner and the main principles of feminist theology.

Review

- 1 **Identify** the major concerns of feminist theology.
- 2 **Recall** the names of the foundational feminist theologians and **describe** their key contributions.
- 3 **Explain** the contribution of feminist theology to the development and expression of Christianity, both in its global and Australian contexts. In your answer, refer to issues such as biblical interpretation, key scripture texts, and patriarchal structures.
- 4 **Analyse** the impact of feminist theology on the Christian tradition. In your answer, refer to a range of religious, spiritual and theological areas such as scripture, theology (God), symbols, worship and language.

Extension

- 1 **Synthesise** your key learnings about Christian feminist theology in the form of a mind map or flow chart.
- 2 Based on what you have studied, **predict** the impact of feminist theology on Christianity over the next fifty years, both in Australia and internationally.

11.2 Ethics

Glossary

conscience	Refers to ‘the whole person’ trying to make judgements about who one ought to be and what one ought to do or not do; the inner sanctuary of a person where one is alone with God.
ethics	Ethics is the explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices. Its purpose is to clarify what is right and wrong and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.
natural law	The Christian belief that God implants in creation a moral law that can be detected by human intelligence apart from God’s direct revelation.

Refer to Chapter 3, pages 61–2, for the core ethical teachings of Christianity.

The role of Christian **ethics** is to provide a guide for Christians so that their daily living reflects scriptural principles and supports the purpose and value of this world, and, in particular, so that their discipleship helps bring about God’s reign. The role of **conscience** and the development of personal and corporate codes of ethics are particularly significant aspects of the Christian ethical system.

While one can talk about a shared Christian ethic based on the Decalogue or Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, there is diversity across the Christian Churches. For example, variations are evident when one considers the biblical focus of Protestant ethics, and the **natural law** and teaching authority in the Catholic and Orthodox ethical systems. All ethical issues and decisions are complicated—whether one considers their biblical basis, conscience, steps in decision-making, types of medical intervention and other factors. This section explores some of the issues involved in sexual ethics, bioethics and environmental ethics. In many instances it is difficult to separate the first two because they overlap in various ways. For example, the various methods of assisted fertilisation such as in-vitro fertilisation are both a sexual and bioethical issue.

11.2.1 Sexual ethics

Glossary

pornography	Writings, pictures, films, and similar forms designed to stimulate sexual excitement. Pornography usually focuses on women as a separate object, rather than as a person in relationship (from the Greek word <i>pornographos</i> meaning ‘the writing of harlots’).
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For most Christians, the purpose of human sexual activity is to express love and create new life in the context of marriage. Any sexual activity or expression that is not consistent with, or goes against, this purpose is considered to be morally wrong or questionable, because it opposes the divine plan as understood in the Christian tradition. This explains why many Christians view certain means of birth control, masturbation, premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse as immoral actions. The Christian viewpoint is that human persons always exist, function and relate as sexed persons. We can never act independently of our sexuality.

Human sexuality is therefore not simply about our existence as an unconnected body in the universe. It is primarily relational—less to do with procreation than with developing close relationships. This Christian view of sexuality is helpful in understanding the distinction between ‘having sex’ and ‘making love’.

Premarital and extramarital sex

Some suggest that ‘faithfulness in marriage and celibacy outside it’ is just too unrealistic for today’s Christians who live in a very liberal, highly sexualised culture. Nevertheless, this is the ideal that is taught and upheld across the Christian Churches. In 2001 for example, after some internal debate on this issue, the then national Moderator of the Uniting Church, James Haire, affirmed the Christian view that it opposes sex outside of marriage.

Although premarital sex is now widely acceptable and made easier by contraception, this is contrary to the Christian view of the deep meaning of sex as an expression of committed love and as a way of bringing new life into the world. If sexual intercourse is reduced to recreation, then promiscuity may follow, which further demeans the gift of sexuality.

It was adultery, not premarital sex that Jesus spoke specifically about, and it is interesting to note that Jesus' treatment of this is as much concerned with social justice as with sexual mores and standards. In John 7:53–8:11, Jesus willingly forgives the sin of adultery that is not to be repeated. Jesus' concern with social justice is reflected in his teachings on divorce and adultery, where he proposes equality between men and women regarding sexual behaviour—a radical concept in Jesus' time.

Today theologians use Paul's general call to purity as an argument against premarital sex.

... that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honour, not with lustful passion ...

I Thess 4:3–5

Homosexuality

Christianity teaches that the focus in any sexual act must be more on what people *are* or *are becoming* rather than on what they do or fail to do. The creation of man and woman as sexual beings is specifically linked with their creation in God's image (Gen 1:27). Hence, sexuality is linked to the growth and formation of the human person, to the very nature of God and, later in the Bible, to faithfulness to the covenant itself, and that this is specifically a heterosexual sexuality.

Some Christians view homosexuality as undermining the ideal of marriage and the traditional family; some see it as a sin—an abomination—and believe that any person who lives a homosexual lifestyle should be excluded from communion. Others however, accept homosexuality as a natural part of human life. Many Churches are divided over the issue of homosexuality—the Anglican Church of Australia does not have a formal, official policy on the issue of homosexuality. At its General Synod in 2004 it passed a resolution that 'requests Dioceses to commit themselves to listen as the Church develops a Christian response to the contemporary experience of human sexuality'. The position of the Lambeth Conference (one of the Anglican Church's global Instruments of Communion) is that 'while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture', it calls on 'all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex'.

The question of same-sex 'marriage' is also a divisive issue. Some Anglican clergy already bless same-sex relationships as do some Uniting Church ministers, but no mainstream Christian Church officially authorises them.

Did you know?

In 1987 British Quakers agreed that local groups could celebrate same-sex commitments through special acts of worship. The Quakers were the first member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland to sanction the official blessing of same-sex relationships.

The most explicit references to homosexuality in the Christian Bible are the verse from Leviticus 18:22:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

and Paul's letter to the Romans 1:26–27:

... God gave them [the wicked] up to unnatural passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for the unnatural and the men, likewise, gave up natural relations with women, and were consumed with passion for one another ...



Figure 11.2.1 'The Journey Against Sex Trafficking' uses seven transport containers to illustrate the brutal and harrowing experiences of women sold into the sex trade. Each container represents an aspect of the sex trafficking experience. This photo was taken in Trafalgar Square, London, September 2007.

RESPOND

Investigate the response of Christian groups in Australia to sex trafficking.

The contrast with this injunction 1 John 4:8, 12:

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love ... No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

sums up the dilemmas facing the Christian Churches and Christians with regard to homosexuality.

Pornography and sexual violence

Pornography is and has been an issue requiring application of Christian ethical guidelines. Christian Churches traditionally have warned about the links between an increase in pornography and sexual violence in the media.

While the media have and can play a positive and life-giving role in society, they can equally promote, or act as a vehicle for, a deformative outlook on life, family, religion and morality. Christian Churches would generally agree that the media often do not show respect for the true dignity and destiny of the human person as made in the images and likeness of God (Gen 1:27).

Christianity views pornography in the media as a violation of the right to privacy of the human body in its proper male or female nature, a violation which reduces the human person and the human body to an anonymous object of misuse for gratifying lustful desires.

The Catholic Church (1989) stated:

Pornography and sadistic violence debase sexuality, corrode human relationships, exploit individuals—especially women and young people—undermine marriage and family life, foster antisocial behaviour and weaken the moral fibre of society itself.

The Anglican Church (2002) had this to say:

Definitions pose problems, especially in a time of rapid social change, and none more so than when applied to pornography, the erotic and the obscene. The Church's Council for Mission and Public Affairs has averred that pornography refers to the representation of sexual relations where the stimulation of the reader or viewer is an integral part of the representation, and where a context of compassion, personal caring and affection is absent. It therefore represents the opposite of the sacred, private and intimate view of sex in which love, marriage and human commitment are pre-eminent.

Review

- 1 **Identify** and **explain** ten terms related to Christianity and sexual ethics (for example, ethics, natural law, justice, compassion).
- 2 **Describe** the principal ethical teachings that determine Christian approaches to sexual ethics. In your answer, refer to the nature of Jesus' own teaching and the modern Christian understandings of sexuality.
- 3 **Explain** how Christian ethical teaching is applied to one issue of sexual ethics mentioned in this section or that emerges from your research.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 262 to find out more about Christian approaches to sexual ethics. **Construct** a table in order to **classify** the range of ethical views that Christian Churches hold regarding sexual ethics.

11.2.2 Bioethics

Glossary

bioethics	Bioethics is a science that sets a system of medical and environmental priorities for acceptable survival. In practical terms, it is a branch of ethics concerned with issues surrounding health care and the biological sciences. Such issues include the morality of abortion, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilisation and organ transplantation.
gene therapy	Medical technology that seeks to correct genetic defects or diseases by replacing dysfunctional or missing genes with functioning ones.
in-vitro fertilisation (IVF)	A method of assisted reproduction that involves the collection of ova (female eggs) and sperm, which are then fertilised in a lab, before implantation in the woman's uterus.

Did you know?

The term 'bioethics' was coined in 1970 by US biochemist Dr Van Rensselaer Potter as a bridge between science and humanity.

Today there is an ever-increasing number of new and complex issues such as organ transplants, reproduction technologies and a definition of clinical death that call for a response from all religious traditions. As suggested by the definition of **bioethics**, there tends to be a spectrum of opinions about what is acceptable, rather than a definitive answer.

Some Christian Churches base their responses to bioethical issues on principles such as natural law (see page 260). For most Churches, their reasoning about what is morally right or wrong in the bioethical sphere is based on principles such as the sanctity or holiness of life, stewardship, and respect for both the unitive and procreative aspects of sexual intercourse (for the commitment and love of the couple as well as for conceiving and raising children). There are, however, a considerable variety of attitudes from denomination to denomination and the significant issue is the definition of human life.

Reproductive technologies

The common use of reproductive technologies such as **in-vitro fertilisation** (IVF) are relatively new and the responses of the Christian Churches are still emerging. IVF can be performed with the husband's sperm or that of a donor. Most Christian Churches believe that the embryo is a sacred or special creation because it is a potential human being. This means that it has the right to life and future existence.

The Christian Churches mostly now accept IVF where the husband's sperm is used, but there are differing opinions about IVF by donor. Basically, the Christian view can be summed up by the 1987 statement from the Catholic Church's Life Office:

No matter how a human being comes into existence, he or she is always a person to be loved. We should always try, however, to act in ways which respect human dignity from the very first moment of a human being's existence. Some forms of reproductive technology fail to show adequate respect for the value of human life and the meaning of procreation.

Although both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches reject IVF by donor, this statement seems to leave the question open. There is also the question of **gene therapy**, about which Christian opinions are just as varied.

Medical prolongation of life

Christians believe in the duty to protect the life given by God. Hence, Christianity has always rejected suicide as morally wrong. Early teachers in the Church, including Augustine and Aquinas, condemned rational suicide, or the wilful effort of the individual to take their own life. Failure to use ordinary means (see below) to preserve one's life is viewed as similar to suicide within the Christian tradition. The question remains—does the Christian and the Christian Church have an absolute duty to prolong life in all circumstances, regardless of the condition of the patient?

Since at least the sixteenth century, Christians have traditionally distinguished between ordinary and extraordinary means of prolonging life, teaching that a person is obliged to use ordinary means but has the choice with regard to extraordinary means. Ordinary means of preserving life are all medicines, treatments and operations that offer a reasonable hope of benefit for the patient, and which can be obtained and used without excessive expense, pain or other inconvenience. Extraordinary means refers to all of the same aspects that cannot be obtained without excessive expense, pain or other inconvenience; or which, if used, would not offer a reasonable hope of benefit.

Nevertheless, today, this distinction is far from clear and not without its own problems:

- In recent medical practice, many extreme measures to preserve life have become standard. It is probably more helpful to ask about the impact of factors such as financial burden to the family and society, levels of pain, disfigurement and, very importantly, prospects of medical benefit.
- It is difficult to arrive at a foolproof 'A' list of ordinary procedures and 'B' list of extraordinary ones. The use of a ventilator, for example, may rate as ordinary or extraordinary, depending on the condition of the patient, their stage of illness and other factors. The doctor can inform the family of the situation and possible treatments but it is primarily the patient and their family who need to determine what is ordinary and extraordinary in their unique set of circumstances.

Review

- 1 Identify and explain ten terms related to Christianity and bioethics (for example, bioethics, morality, duty).
- 2 Describe the principal ethical teachings that determine Christian approaches to bioethics. In your answer, refer to the sanctity of life, stewardship and other factors.
- 3 Explain how the application of Christian ethical teaching is applied to one issue of bioethics that is covered in this section or emerges from your research.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 264 to investigate the 10th World Congress on Bioethics. Select one issue of interest addressed at the Congress and, in point form, write a possible Christian response to it.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 264 and investigate one or more of the suggested sites. Describe and analyse Christian ethical perspectives on two bioethical issues covered by these sites.

11.2.3 Environmental ethics

Glossary

biodiversity The existence of a wide variety of plant and animal species in their natural environments, the maintaining of which is the aim of conservationists concerned about the indiscriminate destruction of rainforests and other habitats.

To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation. For humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands. For humans to injure other humans with disease. For humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances. These are sins.

His All Holiness Bartholomew I,
Greek Orthodox Patriarch, 1999



Figure 11.2.2 Coasts and oceans—an important aspect of the Australian environment. Christians argue that these should be protected as sacred places and part of God's creation.

The created universe, and our world within it, are intrinsically, wonderfully good. All space, all matter, all life, all time are the creation of God. Only human beings are created in God's image. We are therefore special, but we are part of the whole creation, and we are not equal with God. Sometimes we see much of creation as separate, and created simply for the good of people. Our indigenous brothers and sisters do not do so—for them, the earth is mother, and places, animals, plants have deep spiritual significance and sacredness.

From *Green by Grace*, Anglican Synod of Australia, 2004

The environment is one concern that has only recently been placed on the agenda of Christian Churches. Although it has long been understood as an important biblical theme, it has not always been viewed as a top priority among most Christians. For many years, the prevailing view among Christians was that human beings were superior to and in charge of all creation and could therefore do what they liked to the earth and cosmos. This entailed a misunderstanding of Christian stewardship of the earth. Particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, questions of prosperity, materialism, economics

and sheer exploitation had become more important than the need to care for the earth, which was the original vision of the book of Genesis 1–2.

How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither. For the wickedness of those who live in it, the animals and the birds are swept away, and because people said, '[God] is blind to our ways.'

Jer 12:4

In recent times, Christians have begun to ask complex questions about ecology and the environment. Such questions have sometimes stemmed from biblical insights, which have in turn challenged Christians to return to their scripture, theology and doctrine to re-examine their approach to the environment. Some classic Christian texts in this area are:

- Genesis 1–2, which states that God created the universe out of nothing and continues to sustain all creation. It also suggests that the task of human beings is to reflect God's creative love, and their covenant relationship with God, by caring for the earth as good stewards (cf. Gen 1:27) and as faithful gardeners (cf. Gen 2:15).
- Created things, whether living or non-living, are created to praise God and to enrich human life. Nevertheless, created things are important not only for their possible human use—in God's sight they are valued in their own right (see Job 38–39; Ps 104).
- The Christian Scriptures link creation with Jesus Christ, the Word of God through whom all things were made (Jn 1:3), with Christ as the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15).
- Jesus recognises the Creator as a loving Parent ('Abba') who is concerned for all created things (Mt 6:25–35) and who is also concerned for those who are good or evil (Mt 5:43 ff.). The fact that Jesus uses many images from nature (e.g. fish, birds, lilies, seeds, trees) reinforces its importance in Christian teaching.
- The risen Christ appears as Lord over all creation (Phil 2:5–11). The human race created by God has been created anew in Christ (1 Cor 15:45 ff.).
- In their writings, both St John and St Paul see the creative activity of Christ as extending not only to all humanity but reaching even to the cosmic realm and to the very extremities of the universe (Rom 8:18–25; Jn 1; Rev 22).

At least six key principles underlie Christian beliefs about ecology and the environment. They are:

- 1 The goods of the earth are to be shared by all.
- 2 It is important to live in a safe and life-giving environment.
- 3 The diversity of life has inherent value because it testifies to the grandeur and glory of God the Creator.
- 4 Aesthetic and prayerful appreciation of the beauty of the universe is a classic path to knowledge and love of God.
- 5 Attempts at resolving environmental abuses (such as pollution and acid rain) must not ignore the poor, who share the human right to authentic development.
- 6 A new spirit of solidarity among all nations is needed to resolve global environmental issues.

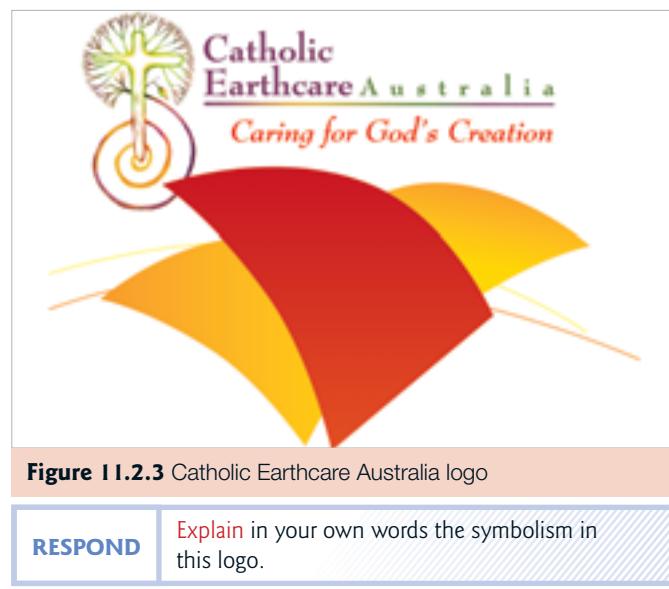
Application of Christian ethical teaching to issues of environmental ethics

Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are.

Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955)

[we commit ourselves to] addressing the negative effects of materialism; and the care for creation and for our environment.

Common Declaration of Pope Benedict XVI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams (23 Nov 2006)



RESPOND

Explain in your own words the symbolism in this logo.

Most Christian Churches today would, in principle, accept that to be fully human in the twenty-first century requires being intimately involved with caring for the earth.

Christianity in fact challenges some of its previously held views (and misinterpretations of Gen 1–2) when it argues today for a change from the dominative mentality that the earth is raw material for humans to subdue and use as they wish. From a Christian perspective today, humanity needs to change to a conservative (i.e. conservationist) or even a reverential mentality, according to which people aim to preserve the natural environment as a religious responsibility.

The range of environmental issues is enormous. For example, one could apply Christian ethical teachings to pressing issues such as World Heritage listings, wildlife trade, global warming, land clearing and sustainability. Four Australian examples that highlight the urgent need to switch from a dominative to a conservative/reverential mentality are: water usage, the impact of land clearing, endangered species and conservation. These are, of course, also global issues.

One way in which Christian ethical teachings can be applied to the issue of endangered species is to use the texts and principles cited previously in the section to argue for the interconnection of all species, the need to protect threatened species, to re-evaluate human use and abuse of the environment, and to promote **biodiversity**.

In relation to wildlife trade and conservation, the same texts and principles can be used to acknowledge that all human beings are stewards of God's creation, that life on earth is not centred on humanity itself but on the whole interconnected web of life. Christian ethical teachings such as these can be applied to raise awareness that Australia's unique plants and animals are known throughout the world and form a crucial part of our natural heritage.

Review

- Identify** and **explain** ten terms related to Christianity and the environment (for example, ethics, cosmos, pollution).
- Describe** the principal ethical teachings that are the foundation for Christian approaches to environmental ethics. In your answer, refer to important scripture passages and the six key principles listed (page 265).
- Explain** how Christian ethical teaching is applied to one issue of environmental ethics mentioned in this section or that emerges from your research.

Extension



- Investigate** the main Australian Christian Church websites to locate their most recent statements on the environment, ecology and sustainability. Prepare a short summary of these statements.
- Go to the web destinations for page 266 and **investigate** one of the suggested sites in order to **clarify** and/or **apply** Christian ethical teachings on the environment.
- Go to the web destinations for page 266 and **summarise** the main points made by the National Council of Churches in its statement about sustaining creation.

11.3 Significant practices

Glossary

rite	Any repetitive activity that forms part of a ceremony and has fixed rules. Rite can also refer to a particular ritual ceremony such as 'the rite of Baptism'.
ritual	A prescribed, repetitive form of action, sometimes accompanied by words, which forms part of a liturgy or act of worship . Examples include the sign of the cross, processing with the Bible, and the blessing of the bread and wine during the Eucharist or Lord's Supper.
worship	'Worship' is the preferred term in the Reformed Churches, and 'liturgy' in the Catholic Churches. Both refer to gatherings of the faithful for prayer and sacraments. In their specific senses, both refer to the Eucharist or Lord's Supper.

Christianity has developed into a highly **ritual**-filled tradition and many of its significant practices are acts of public **worship** associated with the sacraments. Christian tradition came to recognise seven sacraments—baptism,

penance, Confirmation (Chrismation), Eucharist, anointing of the sick, ordination, and marriage—with baptism and Eucharist being the most important. As one outcome of the Reformation, Protestantism retained only baptism and Eucharist (Lord's Supper) as genuine sacraments. Saturday or Sunday worship is the focus of Christian public worship and it is during this act of worship that the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion) is celebrated. The **rite** of baptism, which proclaims a person's membership of the Christian community, is mostly celebrated these days during Sunday worship. This section examines two significant practices in the lives of Christian adherents—Saturday or Sunday worship and baptism.

11.3.1 Saturday or Sunday worship

Glossary

ikon (icon)	A representation of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint, especially one painted in oil on a wooden panel in a traditional Byzantine style, and venerated in the Eastern Churches; from the Greek word <i>eikon</i> meaning 'image'.
iconostasis	A special sanctuary screen, covered with icons , which separates the sanctuary from the rest of the church.
Sabbath	Technically speaking, the weekly day of rest and refraining from work that was enjoined upon the Israelites, and traditionally in the Jewish tradition. From the Hebrew word <i>shabbat</i> meaning 'to cease or desist [from labour]'.

The origins of Sunday worship

As is the case for many Christian beliefs and practices, the original inspiration for Sunday worship is found in the Jewish practice of honouring the **Sabbath** (on Saturday). Its initial importance in the Jewish tradition is evident in their naming of the days of the week from 'the first day' to 'the sixth day', and then a special title given for the 'Sabbath' or 'seventh day'. On the Sabbath, no work is done, in accordance with early biblical laws (Ex 23:12; Lev 23:2–3) and both versions of the Ten Commandments or Decalogue (Ex 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15). Jewish Sabbath was a festival marked by holy rituals and sacrifices

(Lev 23:2–3), and was symbolically associated with creation (Gen 2:2–3) and with the central relationship of covenant (Ex 31:16). Later in the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath gradually came to be understood as a day devoted to physical restoration, spiritual nourishment and intellectual stimulation.

The followers of Jesus continued this observance of every seventh day as holy but soon transferred the day to Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection (Mk 16:2; Acts 20:7; and often mentioned in early Christian literature). From the fourth century CE onwards, councils and Christian legislation often mandated cessation from work and the obligation of worship on Sunday.

There is evidence that in some early Christian communities, Sunday was singled out as the most appropriate day for communal worship and 'the breaking of bread' (Acts 20:7; possibly 1 Cor 16:2). Nevertheless, there is no firm evidence that Christians considered Sunday a day of rest, that they chose it as the *only* day for worship, or that they celebrated Eucharist on Sunday only. No evidence for equating the Sabbath with Sunday is found before the end of the third century CE. These facts seemed to influence the early Reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Tyndale, Cranmer and Knox—who insisted on the value of Sunday as a day of rest and worship. However, they refused to sanction it as the Christian fulfilment of the Sabbath.

Nowadays, most Christian Churches are in agreement that Sunday is the Lord's Day and that it is to be observed as the primary holy day of obligation. The Catholic Church, however, also has Saturday evening worship and the Seventh-day Adventists observe Saturday as the Sabbath.

Did you know?

'Sunday' is the English equivalent of the Latin phrase *dies solis*, 'the day of the sun', a pre-Christian name for the weekday, but it was retained by Christians because Christ was worshipped as the *sol verus* or 'true sun'. After the 'Peace of the Church' was decreed in 313 CE, it became customary for Christians to meet at 9:00 a.m., the third hour of the Roman day. This faith commitment meant that Christians missed vital hours of employment and pay.

Features of contemporary Sunday worship

Sunday worship is the primary rite or religious act through which Christians worship God. Depending on the Christian Church in which the worship takes place, it is called variously the Mass, the Lord's Supper, the Service of the Mysteries or the Divine Liturgy. Most Christian Churches include some or all of the following features in their Sunday worship. There is evidence that this basic structure was in place as early as the second century CE.

- Welcome and Opening Rite
- Scripture readings—reading and meditation upon God's Word
- Psalm prayer
- Preaching or Homily—and reflection on the meaning of God's Word in the lives of those gathered
- Offertory—the people process with bread and wine to the altar
- Improvised prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God's work of salvation (this later became the Eucharistic Prayer)
- Communion Rite—the body of Christ is broken and shared among the faith community; also known as the Breaking of Bread, Eucharist, Lord's Supper, Mass, Oblation, and Sacrament of the altar

Later, in some churches, additions included the Penitential Rite, Intercessions or Prayers of the Faithful, recitation of the Creed (Sundays and major feasts), the formal Eucharistic Prayer, and the Dismissal Rite.

In addition, the following usually play an important part in the ritual of Sunday worship:

- Gestures—elevation of eyes and hands, striking the breast (repentance), kissing the altar, Gospel Book and Cross, sign of peace, extension of hands for blessing and for receiving communion
- Postures—standing, kneeling, sitting and prostration
- Actions—bowing, genuflection (bowing or bending of the knee), turning (orientation; for example, to the east towards Christ the Rising Sun), processions
- Sacramental actions—imposition (laying on) of hands, immersion, pouring water, anointing, breaking of bread and pouring wine.



Figure 11.3.1 The Eucharist in the Orthodox faith is no mere symbol or commemoration; it is a genuine partaking in the life of Christ.

The Sunday worship of the Orthodox and Eastern Churches, known as the Divine Liturgy, is built on one of the following seven liturgical traditions or 'Eastern rites'—Armenian, Byzantine, Coptic, Ethiopian, Chaldean, Antiochene and Maronite. Usually it is the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, and occasionally of St Basil, that probably received their present forms in the ninth century CE.

These liturgies share many of the above features but also differ in a number of important respects. For example, Eastern liturgies are distinctive because of their length (often several hours), their use of **icons** and incense, their sung liturgy, and because parts of the liturgy are hidden from view within a sanctuary enclosed by a curtain or barrier, or behind an **iconostasis**. In addition, they are characterised by rich symbolism, vestments and ceremony, which combine to have an almost overwhelming sensory impact upon the members of the congregation.

Sunday worship and the key beliefs of Christianity

The first clear links between Sunday observance and Christian belief after apostolic times are provided by Justin Martyr in Rome about 150 CE:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things [then] follow prayer, communion and an offering for the poor.

Contemporary Sunday worship in most churches affirms Christian belief in the sacredness, power and efficacy of God's Word (the Scriptures) and the central Sacrament (Eucharist, The Lord's Supper). It also acknowledges for Christians the value of:

- gathering as a faith community
- collecting money and other resources for the poor
- singing and raising one's mind and heart to God
- listening to and praying central ritual prayers such as the Eucharistic Prayer
- remembering the living and the dead
- receiving the Eucharist together
- confirming the enduring significance of love, service, compassion and justice—in their own lives, at the Eucharist, and in the gospel challenge to work for the salvation of all humankind.

Remember the Sabbath day in order to keep it holy.
Ex 20:8

Sunday worship confirms the Christian belief that:

- all things exist in and through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:3)
- God's wisdom and power are evident throughout all creation
- the Sabbath or *Shabbat* is an opportunity to imitate the Creator's joyful rest
- keeping the Sabbath holy can be achieved by 'remembering' the essential links between God and human beings.

The deeper meaning and consequences of this 'Sabbath mindset' are addressed in more detail in the next section.

The significance of Sunday worship for the individual and the community

The significance of Sunday worship for Christians is captured in various phrases common to the Christian Churches. The Sabbath or Sunday is: a celebration of the Creator's work; the weekly Easter; the first day of the week; the day of the new creation; the day of Christ-Light; and the day of the Holy Spirit. Here the deeper significance of Sunday worship for Christians will be examined in terms of three core Sabbath themes—remembering, leisure and true worship.

Before decreeing that something be done, key Sabbath passages such as Exodus 20:8–11 urge that something be *remembered*. These passages constitute a call to awaken believers' remembrance of the grand and fundamental work of God that is creation, a remembrance that inspires and dominates the entire religious life of the Christian, that fills the day on which they *rest*. Rest therefore takes on a sacred value where believers are called not only to rest as God rested but to rest *in* God.



Figure 11.3.2 Sabbath Rest, by US artist Kreg Yingst, 2000

RESPOND

Explain what you think the artist is trying to communicate about the essential nature of the Sabbath.

This, in turn, raises the issue of leisure. The Sabbath or Sunday invites human beings into a ‘resting bay’ of leisure, away from the ‘expressway’ of life. The Christian approach is that work and leisure need to be kept in a creative balance so that they can live thoroughly human lives.

Sunday worship provides opportunities for leisure along with the creation of a ‘Sabbath mindset’ where the Christian takes this philosophy about rest and leisure into the working week.

Sunday worship as ‘leisure time’ provides Christians with space to be themselves. It provides a special time of engagement with God and the faith community. Sunday worship challenges Christians to avoid ‘leisure’ opportunities that are dull and trivial, such as mindless, nonstop watching of television. It reminds them that the full and integrated Christian is one who directs free time so that it becomes the locus for creativity, for the developing of skills and the gaining of fresh insights. It is no surprise that the arts and sciences find their origin in this type of free time.

Finally, Sunday worship brings Christians back to the true meaning of ‘worship’. The essence of worship is their ability to respond with devotion or veneration in the face of the recognised presence of God—in self, others, world, cosmos, sacrament. Sunday worship provides an opportunity to ‘see’ and ‘converse’ with God using the language of words, music, bodily action and silent contemplation. It allows Christians time to express their deepest desires through the voices of adoration, reverence, sorrow for one’s failings, gratitude for past favours, and petition for future gifts.

Perhaps most importantly, Sunday worship, by its very nature, imposes an ethic upon Christians. If they are to be sincere and just, they must live so that their lives are motivated by the love of God (2 Cor 5:14). Their worship has repercussions beyond specific times and places. It challenges Christians to work for the spread of the kingdom of God, for justice and fairness, for harmony and integrity—not only for them and others, but for the environment and the whole created order.

Did you know?

‘Remembering’ is based on the Latin word *rememorari* meaning ‘to recall to mind’, ‘to be mindful of’. It is better written as ‘re-member-ing’, implying the need to allow God to put us back together again, to join with other ‘members’ of the faith community, to bring something back to one’s consciousness, and to powerfully recall a person or past event (for example, Jesus, Covenant, Exodus).

Review

- 1 **Outline** the nature and role of Saturday/Sunday worship within Christianity. In your answer, refer to the importance of the Jewish Sabbath, and the attitude of Jesus and the early Christians to the Sabbath.
- 2 **Describe** the main components of a typical Saturday/Sunday ritual in a Christian Church. **Explain** the significance of each of these components.
- 3 **Demonstrate** how Saturday/Sunday worship expresses some key beliefs of Christianity. In your answer, refer to:
 - the key elements of Saturday/Sunday worship
 - the deeper meanings of remembering, leisure and worship
 - the influence of these beliefs on the everyday lives of Christians.
- 4 **Analyse** the significance of Saturday/Sunday worship for both the individual believer and the Christian community. In your answer, refer to the most important aspects of Saturday/Sunday worship for the Christian believer (for example, reception of communion as a faith community).

Extension



- 1 **Investigate** the various types of Saturday/Sunday worship across all the Christian Churches, including the Eastern Churches. **Classify** these in a chart showing similarities and differences (for example: called Eucharist or Lord’s Supper; does or does not include icons).
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 270 and **analyse** what *one* of the suggested websites says about the nature of the Sabbath, its spirituality and its relevance for today’s Christian.

11.3.2 Baptism

Glossary

- circumcision** In this case, the Jewish religious and cultural practice in which the foreskin of the penis is cut off in keeping with the covenant established by God with Israel (Lev 12:3; Gen 17:9; Judg 14:3). In the Christian Scriptures, Paul argues against the need for circumcision (Gal 5:2–12), and its meaning is transferred to the circumcision of hearts and ears that are obedient to God (Rom 2:29; cf. Deut 10:16).
- exorcism** A ritual act to free persons, places or things from the power of evil through prayer and symbolic ritual (for example, signing with oil).

Baptism is the sacramental rite that admits a candidate into the Christian Church community. The origin of the word suggests not only ‘to dip, to immerse’—classical Greek used it in the sense of ‘turned upside down’ or ‘being overwhelmed’ such as with suffering, as when Christ and the apostles are ‘baptised’ with suffering (see Mk 10:38–39). The Christian Scriptures use ‘baptism’ in a technical sense to refer to the religious ceremony of baptism. This section will explore the significance of baptism within Christianity (including the Scriptures), how baptism reflects key Christian beliefs, and its significance for the individual and the community.

The significance of baptism

Christian baptism can be performed by a bishop, priest/minister or deacon, and mostly, is celebrated during or after the Sunday worship. Some or all of the following elements are usually present in baptism celebrated in the major Christian denominations:

- Welcoming Rite
- questioning of parents/sponsor—their willingness to have their child/sponsored adult baptised, and their responsibilities
- signing by the priest/minister, parents and godparents/sponsors of the child or adult with the sign of the cross
- a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word or readings from the Bible
- **exorcism**, followed by anointing of the child/adult with oil

- blessing of the baptismal water
- parents’ renunciation of sin and profession of faith—the Apostles’ Creed
- baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and anointing with oil
- clothing with a white garment, the giving of the candle. The *ephphatha*, or opening of the ears and mouth, is an old formula that goes back to Jesus’ healing of a deaf and mute man (Mk 7:32–35) and the practice of the early Church. This can be followed by an optional rite of blessing of the ears and mouth
- conclusion with the Lord’s Prayer and the final blessing.



Figure 11.3.3 Water is the main symbol of baptism. It can be poured or sprinkled on the person being baptised, or sometimes the candidate for baptism is dipped or immersed in water.

RESPOND

Describe the elements of baptism that are visible in this photograph.

The significance of baptism within Christianity is evident from the features of this ceremony and the entire history of the tradition, but especially from the early scriptural accounts—both the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures. According to John’s Gospel, Jesus announced the need for a spiritual rebirth through ‘water and the Spirit’ in his conversation with Nicodemus.

Jesus answered [Nicodemus], ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above ... Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit ... The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’

Jn 3:3, 5–6, 8

While baptism is central to the beliefs and ministry of Christianity, it is uncertain whether it was formally instituted by Christ during the encounter with Nicodemus, at an unspecified time before his Passion, or after his Resurrection when he commanded his disciples to baptise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19).

Did you know?

Although infant or child baptism is not mentioned in the Christian Scriptures, it is perhaps implied in passages such as Matthew 19:14, Acts of the Apostles 16:33 and 1 Timothy 2:4. Baptism by immersion or being ‘buried with Christ’ is reflected in Romans 6:4 and in the account of the Ethiopian convert in Acts of the Apostles 8:36–38.

Whatever its origins, two things are certain. Firstly, the Christian Scriptures inform us that baptism is significant for the following reasons. It is necessary for salvation and must be preceded by faith (Acts 8:13) and repentance (Acts 2:38). It is to be administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and allows believers to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:4), to form part of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), and to be cleansed of their sins (1 Cor 6:11). This understanding of baptism took its initial meaning from the baptism of John the Baptist. John’s baptism was one of repentance and hence the forgiveness of sins (Mt 3:1–3); by contrast, the baptism of Jesus conferred the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 11:15). As Matthew 3:11 indicates, John fully expected that his baptism was temporary and would be superseded by one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire—Jesus himself.

Secondly, Christians have often seen echoes of their baptismal beliefs in the Jewish Scriptures—particularly in the stories of the Flood (Gen 7–8), the passage through the Red Sea (Ex 14), the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Josh 3:16), and the rite of circumcision (Gen 17:9–14). The Jewish Scriptures

also prescribed ritual baths to cleanse adherents from impurities—such as after touching a corpse (Nm 19:19) or after being cured of leprosy (Lev 14:8–9). After purification, one was allowed to join the community in order to worship God.

Approaches to baptism across the Christian Churches

Some Christians, particularly Quakers and the Salvation Army, do not see baptism by water as necessary.

Among those that do, differences can be found in the manner of baptising and in the understanding of the significance of the rite. Most baptise ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ (Trinity); but some, for example the United Pentecostal Church of Australia, baptise in Jesus’ name only and also stress the need for a second baptism of the Spirit. Most baptise infants, others do not. Some insist on submersion or at least partial immersion of the person who is baptised, others consider that any form of washing by water is sufficient.

In the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox and Uniting Churches of Australia the ceremony of baptism contains most, if not all of the elements listed on page 271. In Orthodox Churches, Chrismation (Confirmation) and Holy Communion follow immediately.

Did you know?

In 2004 in the historic document *Australian Churches: Covenanting Together*, the following churches agreed ‘to recognise the Sacrament of Baptism administered in each other’s church’: Anglican Church, Congregational Federation, the Antiochian, Romanian and Greek Orthodox Churches, Armenian Apostolic Church, and Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches.

Baptism and the basic beliefs of Christianity

The previous sections have already established some links between baptism and the basic beliefs of Christianity. These have included that baptism is linked to beliefs about: spiritual rebirth, cleansing and purification in Christ; admission into the Christian Church; faith in the Holy Trinity, particularly in the power of the Holy Spirit; the need for salvation, faith and repentance; participation in the life, death and resurrection of Christ; and the forgiveness of sins.

In this context, the classic passage from Paul is Romans 6:3–11, which understands baptism as burial with Christ and rising with him, provides the summative statement:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Other New Testament passages that express basic Christian beliefs about baptism include:

- **Rom 8:29** Through baptism the Christian is sealed with a spiritual mark that cannot be erased. They then belong to Christ even if sin prevents them achieving the full fruits of their baptism.
- **1 Cor 10:1–12** Baptism is an exodus from slavery to new life in God.
- **1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27–28** Baptism is a liberation of our humanity that allows us to overcome barriers of division based on sex, race or social status.
- **1 Pet 2:5** Baptism allows us to become ‘living stones’ to be built into a spiritual house, and to share in the common priesthood of all believers.

The significance of baptism for the individual and community

Baptism is significant for the individual because it initiates them into the whole Christian life, introduces them to life guided by the Holy Spirit, and gives them access to any other rites or sacraments offered by their particular Church. In addition, it frees them from sin and allows them to be reborn as a son or daughter of God. They also become members of Christ and are incorporated into the Church and therefore share in its mission.

To some degree, the individual, as they mature, also shares in the rich heritage of baptismal scripture texts; and in the equally rich symbolism of the water, oil, new garment and candle typically used in the baptism ritual. For example, the candle, lit from the Easter or Paschal candle, reminds them that Christ has enlightened or illuminated them, and that they are to become ‘the light to the world’ (Mt 5:14). The individual also finds an ever-growing significance in the sacred gestures and words that form part of the baptism rite.

Baptism is significant for the Christian community in all the ways outlined above. The individual is personally involved in the baptism rite for the first time, whereas the



Figure 11.3.4 Pentecostal baptism by full immersion in New Zealand—a ritual that clearly incorporates the faith of the individual and the community.

RESPOND

Based on what you have studied so far, list reasons why baptism may be significant for this individual and the community to which she belongs.

members of the community have completed their rite of initiation and witness the baptism of the new adherent into their church community. The Christian community is aware that baptism is the sacrament of faith and helps the individual’s faith to grow. In many Churches, the baptised person, along with the entire Christian community, renew their baptismal promises each year either in the form of a recital of the Creed, or during the Easter liturgy. Baptism finds added communal significance through the role of the sponsors or godparents—firm believers and witnesses, who assist the newly baptised, whether child or adult, on the winding road of the Christian life. Indeed, the entire Christian community bears some responsibility for the faith life of the newly baptised Christian. That is why many Christian Churches insist that announcements of impending baptisms, and the actual rite of baptism take place during their official Sunday worship, when the whole Christian community is gathered.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** ‘ritual’.
- 2 **Describe** the ceremony of baptism in a specific Christian Church/denomination and **explain** the significance of each of its components.
- 3 **Outline** the role of baptism within Christianity. In your answer, refer to the two main types of baptism, and how they are reflected in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.
- 4 **Demonstrate** how baptism expresses some of the basic beliefs of Christianity. Refer in your answer to the Trinity, the resurrection, the power of the Holy Spirit and the role of the Christian community.
- 5 **Analyse** the significance of baptism for both the individual believer and the Christian community. Refer in your answer to the significance of the baptismal rite for the individual, and to the role of the community, before, during and after the baptism of an adherent.
- 6 **Synthesise** your learnings about baptism in its different expressions and across different Christian Churches in the form of a mind map or flow chart. Refer in particular to similarities and differences in their approaches.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 274 and **investigate** at least four of the suggested websites. **Construct** a chart with the following headings: Denomination; Manner of Baptism; Meaning of Baptism; Baptising Infants. What similarities and differences are there?
- 2 In pairs, **discuss** the statement: ‘Baptism is more important for the community than the individual.’

Conclusion

As Christianity advances through its third millennium, it faces many serious challenges both in terms of how it views itself, and how it is viewed by those who do not share its beliefs. Historically, Western Europe has been the traditional centre of both Catholic and Reformed Christianity. Now that centre has shifted outwards to Africa, South America, Asia and Oceania.

In terms of what has been covered in this chapter, this shift away from Western European Christianity also signals huge shifts in how Christians view their tradition, particularly in Australia. Throughout the Christian world, significant people and ideas will always support and challenge the tradition. Ethical guidelines and core beliefs will remain constant whereas interpretation of and actions based on those beliefs will vary. Ritual and sacramental expressions will always be at the heart of significant practices in the life of adherents.

Christianity’s central figure, Jesus of Nazareth, foresaw that ‘the weeds among the wheat’ (Mt 13:24–31) would be a permanent feature of human and Christian history. Christianity will always struggle with the enormous shifts mentioned above. Its words will not always match its actions. The Kingdom of God, as Jesus promised, is here but not yet fully realised. Christians are eternal pilgrims, always trying to realise Christ’s vision. Perhaps after Jesus, one of the best summations of Christianity is by the author C. S. Lewis (1898–1963):

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen.
Not only because I see it, but because I see everything by it.



Figure 11.3.5a The Salvation Army ‘StreetNet’ internet bus provides a ‘bridge’ to the disconnected homeless youth of Sydney, enabling them equal opportunity to access Centrelink online services in search of work.



Figure 11.3.5b Poster for the Jesus Pro-Am 09 NSW Christian Surfing Championships

Extension

- In groups, **discuss** how the activities of the people in Figure 11.3.5a and Figure 11.3.5b express the beliefs of Christianity. Share your discussion points with another group.
- Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- Ensure that your media file is up to date. Use this file as a basis for **analysing** how the media report on Christianity, compared with what you have learnt about significant Christian people, ideas, ethics and practices in this chapter. In your answer, refer to the effect that these aspects of Christianity are having on the tradition as a whole. How much of your file refers to Australia?
- Synthesise** the main features related to Christian people, ideas, ethics and practices in this chapter in the form of a flow chart or mind map.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



See over for HSC-style exam questions. ➔



HSC-style exam questions

Section II

- Studies of Religion I: answer ONE question from this section.
- Studies of Religion II: answer TWO questions from TWO different religious traditions in this section.

Marks

Question 2—Christianity (15 marks)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a Outline the Christian ethical teachings on ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – bioethics – environmental ethics – sexual ethics | 3 |
| <p>b Describe how ONE significant practice of Christianity supports adherents in their everyday lives. Refer to ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – baptism – marriage ceremony – Saturday/Sunday worship | 5 |
| <p>c Explain the impact of ONE significant person or school of thought on Christianity, other than Jesus.</p> | 7 |

To check your understanding of the style of questions for Section II and Section III, go to ‘Support materials for the Studies of Religion HSC examinations’ on the NSW Board of Studies website; or go to the web destination for page 276.



Section III

- Studies of Religion I and Studies of Religion II: answer ONE question from this section that is from a different religious tradition to the question(s) answered in Section II.

Question 2—Christianity (20 marks)

‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He [Jesus] said to him. ““You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

Mt 22:36–40

With reference to this passage from the New Testament, explain how the ethical teachings of Christianity link directly with the life of adherents.

Chapter 12

Hinduism depth study

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **explain** the contribution to and **analyse** the impact of one significant person or school of thought on the development and expression of Hinduism
- **describe** and **explain** Hindu ethical teachings on one ethical area
- **describe** one significant practice within Hinduism, **demonstrate** how this practice expresses the beliefs of Hinduism and **analyse** its significance for both the individual and the Hindu community.



A procession of Hindus from different temples show respect to Lord Shiva as devotees witness the consecration of the new Hindu Temple at Canning Vale, Perth, June 2008.

12.1 Significant people and ideas

The history of Hinduism is a history of its significant people and ideas. Hinduism has no structures for determining the orthodoxy or the various—and sometimes quite divergent—tendencies within the tradition. While the *brahmin* priesthood has acted as both custodian and transmitter of traditional (Sanskritic) knowledge, there has always been a different group of teachers (ascetics) working on an individual basis. Their authority and their teachings are based on their own religious experiences, which become the guide for their own interpretation of the sacred texts. All this is easily accepted in a religion that encourages several different pathways to liberation.

This section investigates *bhakti*, one of the most popular expressions of Hinduism in India; Adi Shankara, an Indian philosopher from the ninth century; and Mira Bai, a female poet from the sixteenth century.

Extension

- 1 Update the Hinduism list in your workbook with the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file of newspaper articles, and monitor television news and programs to do with significant Hindu figures, practices and ethics. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics.

12.1.1 Bhakti movement

Glossary

Pali texts	The earliest known Buddhist texts. The Pali language is closely related to Sanskrit and many words are similar in the two languages.
Puranas	<i>Purana</i> literally means ‘ancient tale’. Composed in Sanskrit, these texts are filled with myths about the Hindu gods, rituals to be performed to these gods and lists of rules giving guidance in everyday behaviour.
swami	A Hindu honorific title for either males or females. It is added to one’s name to emphasise learning.

Since about 500 BCE, *bhakti* has embraced the most popular expressions of religious practice in India. It easily adapted to itself the other important currents of Indian devoutness, the performance of ritual and the lifestyle of renunciation. The *bhakti* movement is simply the collection of people who have grouped themselves around a particular god or goddess whom they regard as the highest being in the universe and who, it is believed, has the capacity and the willingness to benefit them both spiritually and materially. There is no overarching institutional or doctrinal control over these groups, although there may be over individual groups, but they share so many common features of belief and practice as to justify the term ‘movement’.

Origins of *bhakti*

The origins of the *bhakti* movement are lost in history. Devotion to deities is universal in human history and is probably very old in India. It is possible *bhakti* as a self-conscious form of practice had its beginnings in Buddhism. There are passages in the early *Pali texts* where the Buddha is described as a god, is declared as being unique and is praised by individuals and gods. The Buddha was an object of devotion/veneration and this becomes readily apparent in the *Sakkapanhasutta* where the Hindu god Indra definitely praises the Buddha in the manner of a devotee. Certainly, by the appearance of the earliest Mahayana texts in the first century BCE, the Buddha is depicted as the father of the universe, the saviour of all beings from *samsara* and stands at the centre of the Buddhist universe of *bodhisattvas*, monks, laypeople and deities.

► Refer to Chapter 10, page 228, for the rise of Mahayana Buddhism.

Thus, *bhakti* ideas and practices were first depicted in Buddhist literature. The *bhakti* movement promotes two basic objects of devotion—deities, and holy men and holy women. All were regarded as having supernatural powers and, importantly, were held to be able to use these powers for the benefit of people and animals in general. Holy men, of whom the Buddha was an exemplar, have been prominent throughout the history of Buddhism and Hinduism. Even today they continue to attract large followings at the centre of devotional cults. To access their powers, laypeople are required to express their desire for help from the figure to whom they are devoted, and various techniques were developed to communicate this desire—techniques designed to persuade or even to cajole help from this figure. As such, a kind of economy of exchange (obligation of reciprocity) developed that came to have both material and religious aspects to it.

Though *bhakti* might have originated in early Buddhism, its first explicit development is found in early Hindu literature. An inscription from 130 BCE shows that Krishna/Vasudeva (a form of Vishnu) was being worshipped by a group called the Bhagavatas or ‘those who follow the Bhagavan’. More generally, scholars have identified two texts—the *Svetashvatara Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita*—as pivotal in presenting the early development of *bhakti*. These texts are considered important because of how they treat their respective deities.

The *Svetashvatara Upanishad*, now recognised as dating from the early Common Era, is centred on the god Rudra, one of the deities who became part of the composite Shiva of the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. A whole theology of Rudra/Shiva as a god of devotion is worked out in the six chapters of this text. He is depicted in the important roles of creator, preserver and destroyer and, of central importance, he is said to be identical to the *Brahman*, the name of the ground of all being in the *Upanishads*. In this *Upanishad*, the god’s willingness to extend his favour to his devotees is explicitly stated.

► Refer to Chapter 4, pages 81–4, for more information on the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Similarly, the *Bhagavad Gita* develops a distinctive theology of Vishnu in its eighteen chapters. Vishnu there is called Krishna, an *avatar* of the god, demonstrating the same tendency as was done with Shiva to integrate the myths, theologies and names of many other gods into the one great god. Where the *Bhagavad Gita* differs from the *Svetashvatara Upanishad* is that it focuses as much on the devotee as it does on the god who is the object of devotion.



Figure 12.1.1 Krishna and Arjuna at Kurukshetra (eighteenth–nineteenth century, India). Krishna gives the discourse of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The plot of the *Bhagavad Gita* is very simple, revolving around a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, during which there is a transformation in the status of both figures. Initially, Krishna appears to be human, the chariot driver of the rather elevated warrior Arjuna. As the dialogue proceeds, Arjuna is slowly taught that Krishna is really a god, and that Arjuna's own status is significantly less than that of the god, who in every way is much more powerful and distinctive than he. The transformation becomes complete after Krishna reveals himself in his cosmic form in the eleventh chapter, an experience so powerful as to shatter Arjuna's knowledge of himself and his relation to the deity. After this he becomes a devotee of Krishna and the text fills in the obligations of the devotee.

We can understand the transformation of the two characters in the devotional relationship depicted in the *Bhagavad Gita* in terms of the following stages:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Spiritual ignorance of the future devotee
- 3 Beginning of spiritual realisation for the future devotee
- 4 Demonstration of the god's grace
- 5 'Conversion' of the devotee
- 6 Demonstration of the devotee's devotion
- 7 The god offers grace to his devotee
- 8 The devotee re-affirms devotion by accepting the grace
- 9 The devotee performs specific activities as an expression of devotion

These stages capture the differentiation of status and the mutual recognition of this, which must occur if the *bhakti* relationship is to be developed to its fullest potential. These stages can be found in this sequence in an enormous number of myths in the *Puranas*, a genre of texts that brings together collections of myths, lifestyle and ritual material, where the underlying point of coherence is always the devotional treatment of various gods.



Figure 12.1.2 An image of Krishna at Mathura, India

The earliest *Puranas* appeared in about the fourth century CE, the same period in which temple building began on a large scale. That both appeared at a similar time is scarcely chance, as they seem to be a response to the increasing popularity of the same religious movement. Both were preceded in history by the widespread use of images in worship. Images of the best-known Hindu gods have been dated to as early as the second century BCE in the central Indian town of Mathura, the area where Krishna worship possibly first developed. It is likely many of these images were placed in palaces or the homes of the wealthy, as there is no evidence of the occurrence of temples before the date suggested above. Then, as now, deities were worshipped in a devotional sense in sacred places, though what is significant about the fourth century CE is the conspicuous increase in the number of temples where the devotees could participate in a group *darshan* of the deity and have rituals performed by priests.

► Refer to pages 292–5, for temple worship—*puja*.

With the development of temple worship and the composition of the *Puranas*, the *bhakti* movement came to maturity as the dominant form of religious practice in South Asia. While it had certainly existed before this time, it was much more fragmented in its literary portrayal and had not been taken up by the elite Sanskritic tradition.

Worship of the gods

At first it was Vishnu and Shiva who were the centre of devotional cults. This has remained so until the present day, but formal cults also subsequently developed around Ganesha, the mother goddess under the generic name of Devi, and the monkey-headed god Hanuman. These three deities became especially important after 100 CE and are still heavily worshipped today. All three attract considerable interest because of their protective function, and Ganesha thrives because he is the creator and remover of obstacles. Their rise to virtual pan-Indian deities was marked by the production of Sanskrit literature around them, the development of a distinctive theology and an integration of these gods with the *Brahman* of the *Upanishads*.

Side by side with these high-profile gods there continued to thrive the devotional worship of a whole series of mother goddesses and lesser known male protective deities. These had probably been worshipped for at least 2000 years before the beginning of the Common Era. They differed from any of the five pan-Indian gods mentioned in the previous paragraph because the pan-Indian gods could confer liberation from *samsara* onto their devotees.

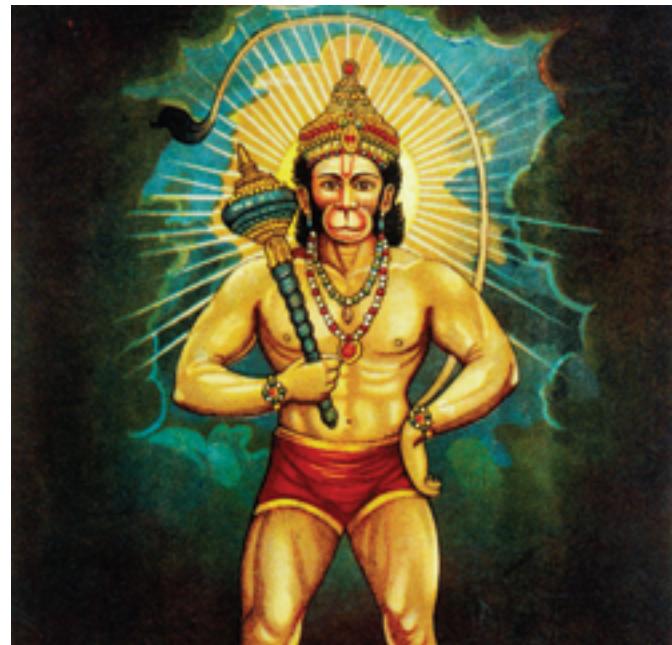


Figure 12.1.3 A contemporary illustration of Hanuman

Worship of the mother goddesses was associated more with the attainment of tangible goals and their sphere of influence was never the more metaphysical concerns found in the beliefs about the pan-Indian gods.

Although the earliest devotional texts are in Sanskrit and Pali, a body of texts in Tamil was composed around Shiva and Vishnu from the sixth century CE onwards. These texts were easily put to music in order to be sung in group worship. Tamil was the vernacular language of the far south of India at that time. This signalled the future production of devotional texts in vernacular languages as well as the use of vernacular languages for worship of the deities. Such poems are highly emotional and combine strong metaphysical beliefs and yogic practices with imagery that suggests a rich sensuality.

By the sixth century CE, certain famous individuals—usually men who had undertaken a life of ascetic renunciation—not only attracted a large cult following around themselves, but also were regarded as *avatars* of particular gods, usually Vishnu or Shiva.

Belief in the capacity of gods and holy men or holy women to complete miraculous deeds has long been a central part of the *bhakti* movement. In the literature, famous devotees will make great sacrifices to their chosen deity—such as the cutting off of bodily limbs, or sacrificing and offering of children to the deity—in the expectation that this sacrifice will be rewarded and that their bodies will be fully restored by the deity. Similar beliefs are held of the holy



Figure 12.1.4 A disciple of Hanuman in Rishikesh, India

men who often promote this feeling of mystery and other worldly activity. Miraculous events are common in the mythic biographies of all the great gods and their devotees often know these narratives by heart.

In the final analysis, the *bhakti* movement has been so successful in India because it is predicated on the possibility of the direct experience of divinity, however this might appear. Religious festivals and pilgrimages, especially where large groups are involved, as well as collective hymn singing to particular deities, all give partial access to this experience and help maintain the *bhakti* movement's vivacity.

Did you know?

A modern example of this worship phenomenon is the figure of Satya Sai Baba (born 1926) who has come to be regarded by his followers as an *avatara* of Shiva. He is said to be the incarnation of an earlier **swami** of the same name and is famous, according to his followers, for being able to manifest dust and other objects from the air. He has a large following of Indian and European devotees, who often make pilgrimage to his centre in the state of Karnataka and experience *darshan* of him when he sits on a raised platform and they file past, gazing at him, at a fixed time of day.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** ‘*avatars*’.
- 2 In your own words, **explain** the concept of *bhakti*.
- 3 **Recall** two texts that are important in the early development of *bhakti* and which deity is central to each.
- 4 **Explain** the importance of the story of Krishna and Arjuna.
- 5 **Clarify** your understanding of the devotional worship of gods in Hinduism.
- 6 In point form, **outline** the major aspects of the *bhakti* movement.
- 7 **Explain** the contribution of the *bhakti* movement to the development and expression of Hinduism.
- 8 **Analyse** the impact of the *bhakti* movement on Hinduism.

Extension

- 1 Choose one of Ganesha, the Devi Durga or Hanuman and **investigate** some of the practices associated with worship of that deity. Prepare a chart to **outline** these practices.
- 2 In small groups, **discuss** what is meant by the statement: ‘The *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* both develop a theology of the deity.’

12.1.2 Shankara (c. 700–c. 750 CE)

Glossary

hagiography A biography that treats its subject with undue reverence; biography of a saint.

Of the many philosophers who have emerged in India over the past two and a half millennia, Shankara is probably the best known and, along with the eleventh-century philosopher Ramanuja, has had a marked influence on the development of Hinduism. Shankara’s major contributions have been in the systematisation of the philosophical view known as Advaita Vedanta, and his establishment of a set of monasteries that gave some institutional shape to the growth of high caste Hinduism. Vedanta refers to

a philosophy that was developed in the *Upanishads* (the final strata of Vedic literature) and flowed through a whole series of other texts until they were systematised from one perspective by Shankara and then later by Ramanuja from the opposite perspective. Such change has had a strong influence through to the present day where the conceptions of self, *Brahman* and god taught by these two men can still easily be seen in the pronouncements and beliefs of many contemporary Hindu holy men and women, as well as prominent spokespeople for Hinduism both in India and abroad.

Shankara has been immensely important in India since about 1300 CE when a series of **hagiographies** began to be composed about him. The most important is the *Shankaradigvijaya* attributed to Madhava in the fourteenth century. That these were composed in Sanskrit meant that their accessibility would have been limited; but it also meant that his teachings were becoming universalised among *brahmin* intellectuals. These hagiographies are full of legendary stories and attribute Shankara with the capacity to change the shape of his body and other magical powers, depicting him in terms of the model expected of a holy man in medieval Hinduism.

Note!

Shankara is also known as Sankara and Shankaracharya.

Life of Shankara

A distinction must be drawn between the manner in which Shankara's own successors, who composed the hagiographies, and modern historians describe his life. The bare facts are that he probably lived between 700 and 750 CE (the traditional dating is 788–820 CE) and was born in the state of Kerala in south-western India. He probably spent time in Benares, but also travelled around India engaging in debates with his opponents and giving teachings. It is likely he also established four teaching institutions called *mathas* in locations corresponding with each of the four directions: Badarikashrama in the north, Dvaraka in the west, Puri in the east and Sringeri in the south. The purpose of education at the *mathas* is to transmit the *sanatana dharma* as expressed in Vedic literature and in later Vedanta texts to the *brahmacharins* or 'celibate students'. But the *mathas* are also centres of education in orthodox Hinduism for laypeople and dwelling places for ascetics. The head of each *matha* is given the title of Shankaracharya and Jagadguru or 'Teacher of the world'.



Figure 12.1.5 A statue depicting Shankara in the Trikuteshwara temple at Gadag in North Karnataka, southern India



Refer to Chapter 4, pages 72–3, for an explanation of *sanatana dharma*.

Sringeri, in the state of Karnataka, is the most famous of the four *mathas*. It still attracts thousands of pilgrims each year and has become very wealthy as a result. It is still regarded as a dwelling place for ascetics, a centre for philosophical study and a place where Sharada, goddess of learning, can be worshipped. It is traditionally believed that the image of the goddess found there was installed by Shankara himself.

Teachings of Shankara

Shankara was the author of four texts, mainly learned commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Brahmasutras*, the *Upanishads* and an independent text, the *Upadeshasahasri*. The basic teachings of Shankara can be determined from these texts. For him, the only reality is *Brahman* which is undifferentiated, content-less consciousness and blissful.

The Self (*atman*) is the witness, not the participant, in all actions and is identical with *Brahman*. All perception of change is ultimately unreal and derives from some kind of primordial ignorance or *avidya* that brings about the mistaken idea that the Self is independent of the *atman*, and that the person as a whole is a composite of the *atman* and material/psychological things. Only the cultivation of a mystical knowledge (*jnana*) of the Self, accompanied by renunciation of social and personal activities that produce *karma*, will lead to release from *samsara*. Knowledge of the *Brahman* is hinted at in literature such as the *Upanishads*, which must be studied and meditated upon.

Though Shankara elaborated on these teachings with great technical skill in his writings, they are accessible only to the most accomplished scholars of Sanskrit and philosophy. However, he is important in the history of medieval Hinduism because he tried to integrate his philosophy into a more comprehensive system that would accommodate existing Hindu theological positions and lay Hindu practices—including rites and forms of worship that would come to be called *smarta* Hinduism, which are widespread particularly throughout South India. In this sense he offers a vision of a unified Hinduism that integrates philosophy, devotion and lifestyle rules, including adherence to dharmic prescriptions and engagement in ritual performance.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the meaning of Vedanta.
- 2 **Outline** the life of Shankara.
- 3 **Explain** the contribution of Shankara to Hinduism.
- 4 **Analyse** the contribution of Shankara to the development and expression of Hinduism today.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 284 to find out more about Shankara.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 284 to find out about the rituals of *puja* to honour the Jagadguru of Sringeri.
- 3 **Investigate** the impact of Shankara on modern India and **discuss** the way he has become part of modern India.

12.1.3 Mira Bai (c. 1500–c. 1550)

Mira Bai is well known as a devotee of Krishna and is the earliest female poet to have composed poetry in any dialect of Hindi, which made it available to the ordinary people, not just to the learned elite. Her poetry expresses a model of devotion she herself strove to fulfil. Many works, including songs and poetry, have been attributed to her, but there is no certainty as to what is authentic or otherwise—a recent edition contains only 103 poems. Her poems are known all over India, even in areas where Hindi was not initially spoken, and many films have been made about her in the Mumbai film studios. This in itself would guarantee a huge popular audience.

The biographical fragments used to reconstruct the events of her life depict an anguished woman raised in well-to-do surroundings, who was frustrated in her marriage and showed all signs of wishing to break out of a woman's traditional role. She was born a princess in the small state of Merta, in the present-day state of Rajasthan, in about 1500. She was married around 1516 and might have been widowed not long after, though this seems unlikely on the basis of the biographical material. Later poetry affirms that she was a strong devotee of Krishna, someone who sought the company of holy men and other devotees of Krishna.



Figure 12.1.6 A depiction of Mira Bai

Apart from the biographical references in her poems, information about her life can only be obtained from other works—texts intended to describe the lives of devotees—composed in Hindi. When looking at this biographical material it must be recognised that it is hagiography, a kind of biography attempting to make a particular point about the positive value or otherwise of a person's life, rather than presenting a sequence of events in the life of a person. In Mira Bai's case there are two aspects to this—her status as a great devotee of Krishna and, conversely, the angering of her husband's family because of her love for Krishna and refusal to play the role of the dutiful wife. Both aspects are read into all the biographical fragments because they are so central for the understanding of Mira Bai as a special kind of devotee in the later devotional tradition.

On the basis of Nabhdas' biographical text *Bhaktamal* (c. 1600), some of these elements emerge in her life almost at the very time of her marriage. The following translation of the relevant passages demonstrates the blending of actual events and devotional fervour:

She followed her youthful husband around the marriage fire as tradition dictated she must, but the mantras she said in her heart as she did so tied her for life to a different youth, the one she called the Mountain Lifter. When it came time for her to depart for her new home, similarly she was uninterested in taking along the requisite dowry. All she wanted to have at her side was her image of Krishna ...

Never content with the family that marriage had given her, princess Mira proceeded to replace it with another, 'the company of the saints' ... who were 'attached to the will of Syam', that is, Krishna. Her sisters-in-law tried to dissuade her from associating with wandering mendicants and religious enthusiasts—hardly the proper involvement for a woman sheltered inside the palace—but to no avail, and before long the *rana* [mother-in-law] took action by dispatching to Mira a cup of poison intended to bring an end to such disgraceful behaviour.

... the action failed. The poison was sent in the guise of a liquid offering (*caranamrt*) to the feet of Krishna, Mira's deity, with the foreknowledge that Mira would be bound by Hindu practice to consume whatever was left over from the table of her divine Lord as *prasad*. But as she dutifully drank it, the poison became *caranamrt* indeed: 'immortal liquid from his feet.'

J. S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 1988 (new ed. 2004), pp. 124–5

Stress is placed here on the contrast between the positive effects of her role as a devotee and the strongly negative effects this had on her capacity to play her proper role in the family. Some of her resulting frustrations were played out in her devotional practice, which had strong psychological elements associated with it.

Her poems illustrate a devotion to Krishna—Krishna being the main object of worship in North Indian devotional poetry—of a style that has been called *virahabhakti* or 'love-in-separation'. Love-in-separation is based on the idea within *bhakti* theology that the devotee seeks to be close, both emotionally and physically, to the god or goddess who is the object of devotion. The high point of this closeness is attained when the deity appears before the devotee in a vision, allowing the devotee both to experience the presence of the god and to practise *darshan*. Once experienced, this can be repeated by the devotee who can witness the deity inhabiting an image, but this form of *darshan* can never match the experience of an actual vision of the deity. It is the exploration of the anguish of one who has had such a living vision of the god and who is unable to repeat it that forms the dominant theme of Mira Bai's poetry.

► Refer to Chapter 4, page 87, for explanations of *darshan*, and in this chapter, pages 279–82, for *bhakti*.

It may seem strange to build a whole theory of devotion on separation from the deity, but it makes sense within the theology of *bhakti*. All understandings of *bhakti* required that the devotee must focus on the object of devotion in some way or other, and this focus was equally valid whether the deity was close to the devotee or far away. Yet if the deity was far away a sense of poignancy and frustration could be added to the depiction of the devotional relationship. The idea is that the devotee wants to be near the god, yet the god will not permit this closeness to occur. On the side of the deity, it appears they are punishing the devotee; on the side of the devotee, they can express a very powerful longing for what can be called unrequited love. This leads the devotee to cry out their frustration with such passion and suffering as to make the deity appear in front of them. *Virahabhakti* becomes the expression of the outpouring of grief and feeling.

An extremely popular depiction of this grief occurs in narratives of the god Krishna, lover of the cow-herdesses (*gopis*) in the Vrindavan forest, a theme that dates back to the second century CE in the well-known text, the *Harivamsha*. Depicted widely in painting, sculpture and literature, the story of Krishna's loves became extremely popular after the tenth century CE and by the fifteenth century had been expressed in the Hindi poetry of Sur Das. Krishna's loves with the *gopis* became a pre-eminent instance of love-in-separation and had a strong sensual atmosphere around them. This meant it was legitimate to treat *bhakti* in similar terms, and this had been done most effectively even before Mira Bai composed her poetry.

► You can see an illustration of Krishna and the *gopis* on page 77.

For the rare *bhakti* poet who is a woman, two parameters are readily available. Firstly, it is that she is both lover and devotee—Krishna's lover and beloved; secondly, that the lost (or unrequited love) she depicts so powerfully is the opposite of what the devotee potentially could have. The following poem hints at both themes:

Life without Hari is no life, friend,
And though my mother-in-law fights,
my sister-in-law teases,
the *rana* is angered,
A guard is stationed on a stool outside,
and a lock is mounted on the door,
How can I abandon the love I have loved
in life after life?
Mira's Lord is the clever Mountain Lifter:
Why would I want anyone else?

Songs of the Saints of India, op. cit., p. 134

There are clear autobiographical elements in this poem, which is centred on the apparent anger Mira Bai's husband's family expressed towards her when—as a passionate devotee of Krishna (named Hari, 'Mountain Lifter')—she pined after Krishna as if he were her husband. Her mother-in-law (the *rana*) even attempted to poison her. Whereas this devotion towards Krishna demonstrates her alienation from her family, it also serves to increase the depth of that devotion. On the one hand, she is rebellious in not conforming to the traditional role of the devoted wife. On the other hand, she receives great veneration because of the strength of her devotion and so is a model devotee by the standards of *virahabhakti*.

Mira's special, even divine, status among *bhakti* saints has directly to do with her sex. For her, womanhood before God was no religious conceit, but a total identity. So those who treasure Mira's songs often feel that her words have an authenticity that no male poet can match. It transports her to a different level in the eyes of those who look upon her legends and sing her songs. For them and to a large extent for the poet as well, the distinction between Mira and the *gopis* who form Krishna's inner circle is blurred.

Songs of the Saints of India, op. cit., p. 122

Did you know?

The poems of Mira Bai are known as *bhajans*. The *bhajan* has a special place in India. Most *bhajans* were written between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are simple songs sung in the praise of God—complex spiritual truths are portrayed in the simple language of the ordinary people of the time. The *bhajan* is difficult to describe musically because it is not defined by any musical characteristics; it is defined by a sense of devotion—*bhakti*.

Like so many devotees, Mira Bai's mind is enchanted, captured by the god. Devotion is expressed more on the mental than the physical level. There is no interest in abstract concepts such as *Brahman*. Feeling and desire are everything in her poems, and self-control and emptying out of emotion from the mind are entirely rejected.

Let us go to a realm beyond going,
Where death is afraid to go,
Where the high-flying birds alight and play,
Afloat in the full lake of love.
There they gather—the good, the true—
To strengthen an inner regimen,
To focus on the dark form of the Lord
And refine their minds like fire.
Garbed in goodness—their ankle bells—
They dance the dance of contentment
And deck themselves with the sixteen signs
Of beauty, and a golden crown—
There where the love of the Dark One comes first
And everything else is last.

Songs of the Saints of India, op. cit., p. 140

Mira Bai's poetry and her own life stand as one expression of the very rich devotional tradition of Hinduism called *bhakti*.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'bhajan'.
- 2 **Recall** the major events of Mira Bai's life as they have been reported.
- 3 **Clarify** how Hindus explain 'love-in-separation'.
- 4 **Account** for the popularity of Mira Bai's poetry in India over the last few hundred years.
- 5 How would you **explain** Mira Bai's contribution to the expression of Hinduism?
- 6 **Analyse** the impact of Mira Bai on Hinduism.

Extension



- 1 In small groups, **discuss** what Mira Bai's poetry tells us about the feminine role in devotional poetry. Prepare a summary of your discussion.
- 2 Search the internet for some 'biographies' of Mira Bai. **Summarise** the positive points made about her life. How does your summary support the statement that hagiography is not biography?
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 287 and listen to some of Mira Bai's *bhajans*.

12.2 Ethics

Glossary

ethics	Ethics is the explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices. Its purpose is to clarify what is right and wrong and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.
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► Refer to Chapter 4, pages 84–7, for the core ethical systems of Hinduism.

For Hindus, standards of behaviour or **ethics** applicable to individuals are based on the need to maintain group

identity. This contrasts with an ethical view that offers a set of principles that an individual may apply according to any given situation that may arise. This means the response to modern ethical problems, such as those raised by new forms of technology, will necessarily be interpreted differently in India than they are in the West. Issues associated with euthanasia and abortion, for example, are more difficult to conceptualise in a society where group affiliation overrides individual choice in matters of behavioural practice. And the whole issue of ethics is somewhat complicated by the general notion of nonviolence, a strong religious ethic first developed in about 500 BCE. This ethic has always been a powerful current in the thinking of Hindu religious leaders, from the early Upanishadic sages to Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)—even when the actual society itself has been quite violent. Questions of abortion and euthanasia will inevitably rub up against the traditional problem of the sanctity of life. More generally, ethical problems that are considered significant in the West will be considered less so in India because traditional thinking is still more important than modernism when it comes to determining what constitutes significant moral questions.

12.2.1 Bioethics

Glossary

bioethics

Bioethics is a science that sets a system of medical and environmental priorities for acceptable survival. In practical terms, it is a branch of ethics concerned with issues surrounding health care and the biological sciences. Such issues include the morality of abortion, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilisation and organ transplantation.

Did you know?

The term 'bioethics' was coined in 1970 by US biochemist Dr Van Rensselaer Potter as a bridge between science and humanity.

In modern India, an interest in **bioethics** has a direct bearing on the two focal areas of abortion and euthanasia and, arguably, concerns birth control as well. In the West, these are subjects of intense and ongoing debate. In contrast, in India such debates are just beginning, and the influence of various strands of the women's movement has played an important role in bioethical questions.

Abortion

It has been estimated that there were 723 142 reported abortions in India in 2000 and it is likely there were many more unreported. While abortion has been legal under the Indian constitution since 1971, it certainly does not receive cultural assent.

Classical Sanskrit literature does recognise the process of abortion—certain medical texts describe how it can be done—and takes a negative position on it. There are several Sanskrit words that can be unambiguously translated as ‘destruction of the foetus’, where the word for destruction has the sense of ‘killing’. The practice definitely occurred as early as 1000 BCE, as abortion is regarded as a heinous crime in the *Atharva Veda*, a text dating from that time. Medicine developed as a science very early in Indian history and knowledge of human anatomy and reproductive processes was well developed. Words for miscarriage exist side by side with several words for abortion, but the former is never treated with the same moral anger as the latter.

Killing a *kshatriya* or a *vaishya* engaged in sacrifice, a menstruating woman, a pregnant woman ... (and) ... the embryo (even) of a stranger ... is tantamount to killing a *brahmin*.

Vishnudharmasutra XXXVI

This is a quote from a text of a legal nature. Many others could be cited. The severity of abortion is brought out by its direct comparison to the killing of a *brahmin*, one of the most severe crimes imaginable, for which loss of caste (and hence of one’s socially determined identity) was a possibility. Given that such statements appear often, it is clear that the unborn child was regarded as having a special status sanctioned by the authority of *dharma*.

Abortion was opposed because it was considered that the unborn foetus in some sense possessed personhood, and that the possibility of working out *karma* accrued from past lives would be lost if the foetus was not permitted to be reborn. It can also be added that extremely bad karmic consequences would result for the person performing the abortion. *Karma* implies free will in the sense that a person has control over the moral tone of the act they are about to commit. For a foetus to be aborted completely denies the possibility of this free will being exercised.

Yet another powerful cultural reason for prohibiting abortion reflected the strongly patriarchal nature of Hindu society from very early times. The lineage had to be maintained at all costs. Women were expected to produce sons who would, when adults, perform the rituals necessary to maintain the ancestors living in heaven. Female

infanticide was common and continues to the present day. But to abort a foetus might result in the abortion of a male.

In India, the traditional prohibition towards abortion clashes with the legal right of abortion under certain conditions. It is also a problem of increasing urgency for Hindus living in Western countries where the attitude towards abortion is much more liberal.

Euthanasia

... there is a growing consensus in the West that the term euthanasia is to be reserved for the concept of compassionate murder in medically defined cases of terminal illness, which involves the medical profession in the active killing of the patient given due process of decision making.

Katherine K. Young in *Hindu Ethics: Purity, Abortion and Euthanasia*, 1989, p. 72

Euthanasia is another focal point of contemporary bioethics, but in contemporary India it is a subject that receives almost no attention, except in regard to a few special cases that have reached the law courts.

Sanskrit literature does not dwell on the question of suicide or on euthanasia in the sense just defined. Nor does it see it as a problem on the boundary of medicine and the law as it is in the West. This is not to say there were no recorded instances of self-willed death. In particular, the Jain (a body of ascetics and laypeople who followed a religion that combined elements of Hinduism and Buddhism) idea of ritual starvation to death undertaken by monks is well known even among Hindus. A famous example of self-willed death is found in the figure of Drona in the seventh book of the *Mahabharata*, who, on hearing falsely of the death of his son Ashvathaman, went into a yogic posture and simply allowed himself to die. From there he went straight to heaven, his death fitting into self-willed death within the warrior ethos. There are cases of Hindu women in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries jumping off the walls of palaces in order to prevent the possibility of rape at the hands of invading Muslim troops.

Katherine Young has collected much of the evidence pertaining to what she called self-willed death (in Sanskrit, *ishtamrtyu*) in Sanskrit literature and suggests that euthanasia—that is, self-induced death in the face of incurable illness—was treated sympathetically in the early texts, only to be criticised around the tenth century CE, and became illegal with the imposition of a British-inspired legal code. In 1976 an Indian judge published a pamphlet arguing that the Jain form of ritual ‘suicide’ should not in law be regarded as suicide.

In the treatises on *Dharma*, composed between 400 BCE and 600 CE, suicide is strongly condemned, to the extent that a person who takes their own life will be reborn in hell in later lives. Yet there are exceptions made for people suffering extreme illness. Some of the commentators on the Law books allow these people to commit suicide by burning themselves on a sacrificial pyre.

Brahmin authors of the legal texts also give a religious dimension to the context of euthanasia, which helps to distinguish it from suicide. Euthanasia may be done when a person no longer can perform the rites of bodily purification, which may occur in the case of extreme illness or extreme old age.

Katherine K. Young, op. cit., p. 95

The argument behind this is complicated, resting on an analogy. If it is in accord with *dharma* not to perform rites, if one is incapacitated physically, then to take one's own life in such circumstances is also consistent with *dharma*. Of course it is impossible to know if such justifications were given when people did take their own life in conditions that would meet these requirements. *Karma* continues to play a role in all of this. Suicide produces bad *karma*, self-willed euthanasia does not. An element of personal responsibility therefore enters the picture.

Given the precedents that occur in early Hindu texts and the extensive debates about self-willed death in Hindu legal literature, much traditional weight will be given to contemporary arguments about euthanasia. Any argument developed on the basis of biological justifications of death and the capacity of the individual to make a judgement on these will need to be balanced against the traditional arguments.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** '*karma*'.
- 2 **Describe** the role of *karma* in Hindu ethics.
- 3 **Clarify** how these teachings are used to determine Hindu positions on bioethical issues.
- 4 **Demonstrate** how cultural factors influence the outcome of ethical debates when they occur.
- 5 **Describe** and **explain** Hindu ethical teachings on bioethics using specific examples.

Extension



- 1 'Traditional texts are based on the principle of inequality. Modern human rights perspectives are based on the presumption of equality.' This quote was taken from a recently published encyclopaedia of ethics. In small groups, **discuss** whether you think it summarises the problems Hindus face when dealing with contemporary bioethical questions. Give reasons for your response.
- 2 **Analyse** the application of Hindu ethical teachings on one issue of bioethics not covered in this section. Go to the web destinations for page 289 for a good starting point.

12.2.2 Environmental ethics

Protection of the environment, especially in relation to particular local ecologies, emerged as a battleground between various marginalised groups in India in the nineteenth century. During this time, the British administrators appropriated certain natural resources, especially forests, which the peasant villagers who lived near them had been using carefully for many generations. Such people had a demonstrated record of not overusing the natural resources available to them.

Certain intellectuals have written on the effects of environmental degradation at a nationwide level, and Gandhi's followers have developed an ideology of environmental ethics that links a particular notion of the environment with a specific social structure centred on self-contained villages. Much of the activity associated with the application of environmental ethics, however, has been for pragmatic purposes. Any relationship between the environment and local groups has traditionally been seen as one of interdependence—a relationship that has broken down under the demands for commercial development. Much direct action, usually involving nonviolent protest, is aimed at restoring a situation (both ideological and pragmatic) that has been lost.

Chipko, an important environmental movement in the new state of Uttarakhand (located in the foothills of the Himalayas) demonstrates the fundamental problem of the environment.

... state control was a negation of the communal appropriation of nature in Uttarakhand. Not only did forests constitute an important means of subsistence, but their products were treated, as in other peasant societies, as a free gift of nature to which all had equal access. The assertion of state monopoly ran contrary to traditional management practices. These practices were at once an affirmation of communal action orientated towards production and of the unity between humans and nature.

R. Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalayas*, 2000, p. 57

The Chipko (Tree-hugging) movement originated in north-central India in 1977 as a means of preventing trees from being removed from forests. It has become a potent symbol of the kind of environmental activism that has become common in India, but it also reveals something of the ethical foundation behind this activism. Gandhian ethics of self-sufficiency and simplicity have had a role to play here, as have attempts to anchor the protest into a more general vision of Hindu civilisation. Dr Vandana Shiva (b. 1952), a well-known activist and writer, attempts to tie the preservation of forests into 'civilisational' aspects of India's culture:

In the *Rig Veda*, the forest is described as *Aranyani*, or mother goddess, a deity that takes care of wildlife and ensures that food is available for man. *Ashramas* and forests, not urban settlements, were recognised as the highest form of cultural evolution, providing society with both intellectual guidance and material sustenance. Forest dwelling saints were given high respect as a recognition of their intellectual capabilities.

V. Shiva and J. Bandhyopadhyay, *Chipko: India's Civilisational Response to the Forest Crisis*, 1986, p. I

This may be regarded as romanticising the relationship between holy men and nature and, in mentioning the *Rig Veda*, it references the very text that for Hindus is the oldest and most prestigious. At the same time, it traces a concern for the environment back to the earliest period of Hinduism. Shiva goes further in defining the basis for an environmental ethic:

The ecological role of forests in soil and water conservation was widely recognised, and the social control on the felling of trees in ecologically sensitive areas such as riverbanks was strictly enforced.

Religious beliefs about trees were woven about their central ecological and economic role in supporting human survival. Forests, like all other vital common natural resources like water, were managed by village communities to satisfy basic needs as well as to ensure sustained productivity ...

V. Shiva and J. Bandhyopadhyay, op. cit., p. I



Figure 12.2.1 Mussoorie Community Development Program in the Himalayas. Deforestation is a severe problem in India due to the need for firewood and cattle fodder. This program shows farmers how to grow their own fodder and manage the limited soil and forestry resources.

Accordingly, over-production and consumption of production for other than subsistence is regarded as a form of violence against the earth. This only becomes strongly noticeable, however, when excessive pressure is placed on use of resources—as it has been in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, first with the appropriation of forests by the colonial administration and, after independence, with the commercialisation of forests pushed by governments. Prior to this, the pressure on land use was never so great. The conflicts that arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were due to the different expectations of small groups of traditional villagers, long regarded as having nurtured the earth, from those of the state (irrespective of whether this was the colonial or independent state). Within this broad distinction, the villagers are regarded as always having practised a form of environmental ethics, whereas the state has not.

For some of the activists in the Chipko movement, environmental ethics is based on a religious ethic. Religious symbolism is used extensively in an interview given by Dr Vandana Shiva:

Chipko started in the Himalayas ... the source of the Ganges River ... The Ganges was a mother goddess, and there were prayers for her to be brought to earth ... She just couldn't come because her power was so strong that if she landed on earth, she would just destroy. It's really symbolic of the way we get our monsoon rain. It comes so strong, so powerful, that if we don't have forest cover, we get landslides and floods. So, the god Shiva had to be requested to help in getting the Ganges down to earth. And Shiva laid out his hair, which was very matted, to break the force of the descent of the Ganga. Shiva's hair is basically seen by a lot of us in India as a metaphor for the vegetation and forests of the Himalayas.

Interview with Dr Vandana Shiva, 1988

The Chipko movement has been successful in North India because it has mobilised much of the population who have felt 'progressively alienated from nature' and this has caused a kind of environmental consciousness to develop among them. In the Garhwal district, this mobilisation has been further aided by a charismatic figure, Sunderlal Bahuguna (b. 1927), who effectively uses Gandhian methods of nonviolent resistance. He is one of the most prominent leaders of Chipko resistance, and is not a politician.

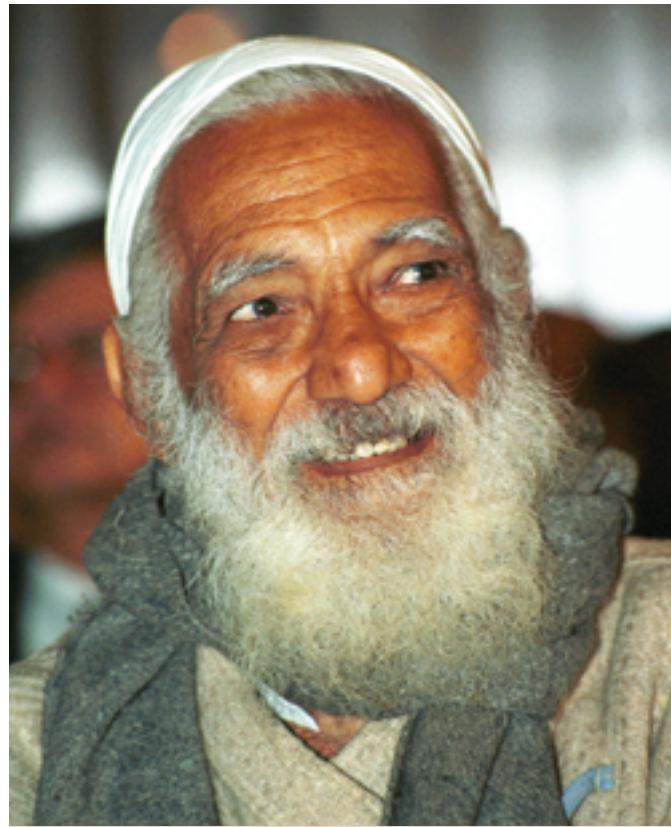


Figure 12.2.2 Sunderlal Bahuguna

Gandhian methods of non-violence and Bahuguna's personal asceticism were appreciatively responded to by the predominantly Hindu peasantry. The capacity for physical suffering (vide the hunger fast in the bitter cold) and spirit of sacrifice (*tyaga*) in an age of selfishness were constantly marvelled at by villagers who read into these acts the renunciation of worldly ambition as exhorted by Hindu scriptures.

R. Guha, *The Unquiet Woods*, 2000, p. 171

In Hindu and Buddhist literature, there is conceptual opposition between the forest and the village. The forest is regarded as a place full of potential: ferocious because of the wild animals in it, lacking in order because it has no *dharma*. The village is characterised by the opposite to all that: order, definition and regularity. Social and ritual order is, of course, fundamental in the city: rules regarding purity and impurity must be observed and to be observed they have to be strictly laid down. No such rules apply in the forest. Symbolically, the forest has no boundaries and no real content, just like the *Brahman* and the *atman*. But the village does possess clear boundaries and life is predicated upon observance of these boundaries.

For the ascetics the forest was a place where an implied initiation would take place, where their own discipline would be required to keep them aware and focused in the face of the potential dangers and uncertainties that they could expect to be confronted with. Additionally, Sanskrit poets regarded the forest in a romantic vein and descriptions of forest hermitages where ascetics live take us into the realms of fantasy.

Early Tamil poetry has a more sophisticated view of nature and landscape than Sanskrit poetry. There are five distinctive landscapes within which the subjects of the poems operate, each landscape bringing out particular features associated with love and the psychological attitudes of lovers towards each other.

Against this, we know that in the early centuries prior to the beginning of the Common Era, there was a major effort at land clearing following the discovery of iron and its use in tools. But even then, it is likely that particular tribal groups had right of access to particular forest areas or particular rivers—rights preserved by the local king in the area and known to be such. Thus, political authority sustained a symbiotic relation between a group of people and the specific geographical area around them.

In conclusion, any environmental ethics in ancient India would have been muted but would have been framed in terms of the sustenance of forest use and water supply. Today these are the resources over which there is much conflict and they continue to inspire the various strands of India's environmental movement. Some commentators have recently suggested that pilgrimage visits to sacred places could represent an opportunity for environmental education. If this is tried it will be a new development in environmental ethics in India.

Review

- Examine** the significance of the forest in Hindu literature and practice.
- Clarify** why the concept of environmental ethics is 'new' to Hinduism.
- Describe** the principal ethical teachings of Hinduism.
- Explain** how these teachings are used to determine the development of environmental ethics in India.

Extension



- Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the life of Mahatma Gandhi and Gandhian ethics of self-sufficiency and simplicity.
- Go to the web destinations for page 292 to find out more about Dr Vandana Shiva.
- Go to the web destinations for page 292 to find out more about the Chipko movement. Write a half-page report on the movement.
- Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** a specific example of an environmental program in India. Prepare a report of your findings. Go to the web destinations for page 292 for some good starting points.
- Analyse** the application of Hindu ethical teachings on one environmental issue not covered in this section.

12.3 Significant practices

Glossary

public devotion	The communal sharing of prayer and other religious actions beyond the home that binds the religious group as a faith community.
rite	A rite is a formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or is customary in a religious or other solemn use. Within the rite there are certain rituals ; these are established or prescribed procedures and actions for the ceremony.

The lifestyle of Hindus is highly ritualised. The principal forms of **ritual** activity fit into two basic categories: life cycle rituals such as marriage, and rituals performed with the explicit purpose of demonstrating a devotee's expression of devotion to a god or goddess, such as the **public devotions** of Temple *puja* and *tirthayatra* (pilgrimage). All Hindus will at some time during the year worship in a temple and many will do so once a week or more. In addition to the small *pujas* performed in the household shrine, the practice of paying a priest to perform a ritual in a temple is the most typical form of devotional observance in India. All Hindu devotions must be considered in the context of the whole ritual tradition of Hinduism. It is also important to take account of the diversity of practice in a religious tradition that is not centralised or unified.

12.3.1 Temple worship—*puja*

If you were to enter the Vinayaka (another name for Ganesha) temple in the South Indian city of Pondicherry at any time between seven and nine-thirty in the morning or from four to nine-thirty in the evening, you would be impressed by the huge hall made of stone and plaster, in the middle of which is a smaller room reached by a fenced-in walkway. This small room houses the main image of Ganesha and all the implements for use in the ritual, including oil lamps, oil, powder, paint and implements for chopping up food. Here the priests stand and are separated by a slight barrier from the worshippers. While most of the activity takes place at the entrance to this room when the devotional ritual is in full swing, other things are also happening. The whole process may seem excessively noisy and disordered. But it is not. It is simply a reflection of the



Figure 12.3.1 An elephant at the Vinayaka temple

many ways of expressing devotion to the principal god, not to mention the other gods and goddesses who may also be represented in the temple either as images or on paintings.

► Refer to Chapter 4, pages 87–8, for the basic intent of *puja*.

Most people line up in the queue to wait their turn to be close to the deity. At the head of the queue, the priest offers a prayer to the god on their behalf, and places a touch of powder on their forehead to indicate the offering has been made. Then a bell is rung. One priest utters prayers, another may cut up coconuts and a third cleans the implements used in the ritual. Devotees who have given money to the temple may be provided with a more extended *puja*, but most people are put through in a minute or so. In this form of *puja*, the priest functions as a kind of intermediary between the devotee and the god, even though the devotee still performs *darshan* before the image of the deity.

Besides those in the queue leading to the central shrine, many other people will be present in the temple at the same time. This particular temple has about fifty paintings of Ganesha, each reflecting a different aspect of the god and containing different names written in both Hindi and Tamil, on its southern and western walls. People can look at these while moving in a clockwise direction, therefore completing what is called a circumambulation, a form of worship in its own right. Most will probably have some idea of the stories associated with these pictorial images, either having heard them as a part of their religious upbringing or having read about them in one of the books about Ganesha sold in the stalls outside of the temple. Images of Vishnu and Shiva and Parvati are placed against the back of the temple on the western wall, and

worshippers can offer their own prayers to these deities. On the northern side, two other rooms lead off from the main room of the temple. In one of these there is a sub-shrine containing an image of Ganesha. It is served by a *brahmin* who, for a small fee, will offer a prayer and place a piece of red Sindura powder on the worshipper's brow.

At the main entrance of the temple an elephant, representing Ganesha with his elephant head, is chained up each day. Worshippers pose in front of it for pictures and feed it continually with peanuts and bananas bought from the roadside stalls located opposite the main entrance. These stalls testify to the very close relationship between business and religion. Fruit and coconuts to be offered to the main image in the temple are sold, as well as small pamphlets and books about Ganesha and other Hindu gods, and postcards of the gods and contemporary holy men. Finally, these stalls also stock a whole range of cheaply produced images of the gods, as well as incense holders and a variety of incense.

Beggars are seated on both sides of the road leading up to the temple, hoping to benefit from the generosity of the devotees who approach the temple at a time when they are required to engage in ritual gift-giving.

This Ganesha temple is not one of the largest in South India, or even in Pondicherry. If you were to visit the famous Shiva temple, built on over four acres in Chidambaram, you would notice the same variety, but on a much larger scale. There are always more visitors and pilgrims performing different acts of devotion to the many different images, and dozens of priests who work there for a short period before going on to a secular job. The impression often received by Westerners is that temples are chaotic. But this chaos appears very ordered when you realise that each person in the temple has a very clear understanding of what they are doing.

Temples and shrines

There are two kinds of Hindu temples. The first are the large stone or brick temples that contain one or more images of the gods. They have four walls, a roof and a special sacred place called the *garbhaghrha* or the 'house of the womb', the innermost sanctum of the temple where the image is kept and only the priests may go. These temples can accommodate many people—sometimes thousands, as is the case for the huge Shiva temple in Chidambaram. They often contain many other lesser temples and shrines, all built around the image of the god who is the focus of that particular shrine or temple. The second are the 'shrines', which are much simpler and less elaborate than the temples. These are found everywhere

in villages and towns, but are sometimes so small as to be unrecognisable. Such shrines can be a tree, an image of a deity scratched in chalk on the side of a rock or a stone wall, or a small box-like structure with an open front that can be enclosed by placing bars on the front. Sometimes such shrines will have part-time priests, but usually people will make offerings and recite prayers in whatever way they see fit.

The large number of gods in India is one reason for the large number of shrines that can be found in and around even the smallest villages. In the village of Ramkheri in western central India, for example, there are three temples—two Vishnu temples and one Shiva temple—and forty-one shrines, mostly to the mother (*mata*) goddesses such as Shakti Mata who protects the village and Shitala Mata, the smallpox goddess.

This is typical for most villages. In such villages, Vishnu and Shiva are treated as deities who are remote from the concerns of everyday life, whereas the mother goddesses are much more significant for the villagers because they have important protective functions, both for the household and village.

The rituals to many of these deities can be as simple as having the devotee stand before the image (which can be a crude sculpture, a painting on a rock, a brick, or a sapling with a few rags on it) and offering a few prayers, placing some fruit on the ground in front of it, offering an oil lamp, asking for something specific and promising further rituals if what has been requested is received. Such rituals are economical to perform in both time and money, and these shrines are probably utilised more than the large temples, even if the latter hold larger numbers of people.



Figure 12.3.2 North entrance tower of the Chidambaram temple (c. twelfth century CE)



Figure 12.3.3 Temple puja to Ganesha in Australia—offering of the sacred fire

The structure of Temple puja

In the large temples, the most basic form of worship is the *puja* and it is invariably more complex than the short rituals performed at the village shrines. It has a common form whether performed in the household or by a priest (*brahmin*) in a temple. The structure of the *puja* as the invitation, reception and entertainment of the god as a living guest can best be appreciated when its sixteen stages are listed sequentially:

- 1 Invocation of the deity
- 2 Offering a seat to or installation of the deity
- 3 Offering water for washing the feet
- 4 Offering water for washing the head and body
- 5 Offering water for rinsing the mouth
- 6 Bathing
- 7 Dressing or offering a garment
- 8 Putting on the sacred thread
- 9 Sprinkling with perfume
- 10 Adorning with flowers
- 11 Burning incense
- 12 Waving an oil lamp
- 13 Offering food
- 14 Paying homage by prostration, etc.
- 15 Circumambulation
- 16 Dismissal or taking leave

Ganesha *pujas* correspond to this basic structure. Below is a description of a Ganesha *puja* and how the intent of the *puja* is realised within the parameters established by the stages.

A Temple *puja* to Ganesha performed by the resident *brahmin* follows the same pattern, but more ornate images are used.

Ganesha *puja*

What appears to be common to all *pujas* is their goal: to bring about an enhanced level of intimacy between the worshipper and the deity. This intimacy is realised through a series of transactions.

The worshipper prepares a sacred arena (in the house) and provides an unfired, 'raw' clay image and establishes Ganesha's special presence in that image by invoking the life force and vital capacities. This process of invocation or establishment involves the transferring of both the worshipper's own and the cosmos's life force and vital capacities into the inert clay image, thus bringing it to life. It is as if Ganesha were condensed from his universal presence in the cosmos into a particular and accessible form in time and place coinciding with that of his devotees.

The worshipper then honours Ganesha-in-the-image by bathing him (in the form of a betel nut, as the clay image would dissolve in water) and by feeding, clothing, and giving the god gifts and an entertainment of songs; in short, honouring him as one would the most valuable and royal of guests.

Ganesha reciprocates by giving his obstacle-removing powers to watch over the family during the coming year. After he has enjoyed the offerings of food, Ganesha 'returns' to the family to be shared as *prasada* or leftover spiritual food ... In eating this leftover food, the devotees take into themselves the substance that has been in closest proximity to the presence of the deity and thereby receive spiritual nourishment. *Prasada* is the edible symbol of the 'real presence' in the image.

P. Courtright, *Ganesha: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings*, 1985, p. 175, used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.



Figure 12.3.4 A clay statue of Ganesha is carried on a tram in Melbourne as part of the Ganesha *puja*, August 2006. The *puja* was conducted by two priests and the immersion and dissolving of the image used in the ritual (*visarjana*) was carried out in a nearby lake.

Review

- 1 Define the term 'ritual' in the Hindu context.
- 2 How would a Hindu define 'public devotion'?
- 3 Distinguish whether there is a social dimension to Temple *puja* or if it is simply a means of communication between devotee and god. Give reasons to support your response.
- 4 Construct a flow chart to describe and explain the key elements of Temple *puja*.
- 5 How does Temple *puja* demonstrate the beliefs of Hinduism?
- 6 Analyse the significance of Temple *puja* for both the individual and the Hindu community.

Extension



- 1 By yourself or with a partner, **construct** a visual presentation to **describe** a visit to the Vinayaka temple in Pondicherry.
- 2 Go to a Hindu temple in your region and seek permission to observe the performance of a *puja*. **Evaluate** the different roles of the participants in the ritual.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 296 to look at a Ganesha *puja* and other *pujas*. List the common symbols found in each *puja*. Are these symbols covered in the information about the performance of *puja* in this section?
- 4 **Investigate** some other websites dealing with the performance of *puja*. Write a report about the information on one of these sites. **Analyse** how it compares with the information in this section. Go to the web destinations for page 296 for a good starting point.

12.3.2 Pilgrimage—*tirthayatra*

Glossary

ford	A place where a river may be crossed by wading.
<i>tirthayatra</i>	From the Sanskrit name for sacred place, <i>tirtha</i> , a word deriving from a verbal root ‘ <i>tr</i> ’, meaning ‘to take across’. This can be understood as taking the person to a state where they are released from the constraints of human bondage and able to attain union with god.

In addition to the performance of a daily *puja* to their chosen deity—the one who is the focus of most of their devotional activity—individuals at various times in their lives may undertake *tirthayatra* to holy places.

Pilgrimage is an ancient practice in India and the third book of the *Mahabharata* describes how a pilgrim is given a systematic tour of sacred places. In the pilgrimage itineraries, performance of rituals at the sacred places is said to confer upon the pilgrim more benefits than can be attained from the performance of large-scale sacrifices—a deliberate comparison indicating how devotional activity has become more important than ritual activity without

devotion. Holy places are usually located near rivers, lakes and mountains, and there are seven cities described from very early times as being most sacred.

Sacred places in Hindu literature

Places such as Benares, Kurukshetra and many other locations have been recorded in Sanskrit literature since at least 500 BCE. Special texts called *mahatmyas* have been composed as a means of glorifying these sacred places. These texts tell myths that explain the cause of the holiness of the particular location (usually the presence of a god or goddess there or the defeat of a demonic figure by a god), the ritual the pilgrim should perform there and the reward to be gained by worshipping the god. Each of the eighteen *Puranas* normally contains a description of pilgrimage places that is modelled on the long section in the third book of the *Mahabharata* and, by the sixteenth century, entire texts were devoted to providing exhaustive details of particular pilgrimage sites.

Did you know?

Benares, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, has at least fifty-two sacred places in a five-kilometre stretch on the western bank of the Ganges River. In the area of Kurukshetra, about 200 kilometres north of present-day Delhi, there are hundreds of sacred places.

Pilgrimage rituals

Performance of a pilgrimage involving the visiting of many sacred **fords** (*tirtha*) is considered a ritual (or devotional) act in its own right. At each *tirtha* the pilgrim is required to perform a relatively standard act of worship to the god of the *tirtha*. The pilgrim can do this themselves or, if sufficiently wealthy, employ a *brahmin* priest to do it for them. Below is an account of a typical form of worship at a sacred place: the pilgrimage path of the ‘Five-*tirtha*’ pilgrimage along the Ganges in Benares. Although the location is best known as a centre for the performance of funerary rituals, including the cremation of the body, the sacred sites of the Ganges are also typical *tirthas*.

At each stage of the journey, the pilgrims make a statement of intention called *sankalpa*, the explicit profession of intent to worship that accompanies every important ritual act. Learned *brahmin* pilgrims may recite the *sankalpa* for themselves, but ordinary pilgrims hear the words of their *sankalpa* from the *panda*, the pilgrim priest whom they employ. Cupping the right hand over the left and holding some grains of rice, perhaps some betel nut, some Ganges

water, and a few coins, they listen to the words as they are recited: 'I, of this family and this village, am here in Kashi [Benares] in this year, in this month, on this day, in this place, making the pilgrimage to the Five *Tirthas*.' If the pilgrim is journeying in fulfilment of some vow or in the hope of some particular end, that end will be stated. This is a *sakama* pilgrimage, made 'with desires' in mind: to bear a son, to live a long time, to recover from disease. Often, however, pilgrimage is made 'without desires', *nishkama*, without any specific personal goal in mind. It is done in the traditional words of the *sankalpa*, 'to please Shiva Vishvanatha'. As a devout housewife explained, 'rewards are in accordance with our deeds and actions. We should just do these things, like the Panchatirthi pilgrimage, and good will naturally result.'

Diana L. Eck, *Banaras: City of Light*, 1998, p. 221

There are many variants of this general procedure, but the statement of intention and the physical act of visiting the *tirtha* never varies. The ritual is an act of devotion to whichever deity resides in the *tirtha*, and it also is a sacrifice along the lines of the traditional *puja*.

On pilgrimage

Pilgrims usually travel by train or bus—or walk if they want to express their devotion in the form of bodily austerity (*tapas*). At the actual sacred sites, many stalls supply the pilgrim with food, religious items of all kinds, flower garlands for use in the ritual, religious literature, images of the god and provisions for the onward journey. The economic importance of pilgrimage can never be underestimated, just as its religious significance is central for Hindus, who are encouraged to visit the most important sacred places at least once in their lifetime. Pilgrimage has always been big business in India. The wealthy have often spent huge amounts of money in visiting sacred places, not least because of the large financial and material gifts required of *brahmins* who live at the sacred places and perform rituals there. Yet the poor are also able to make such pilgrimages as many religious organisations provide subsidised accommodation for the pilgrims.

Did you know?

The massive *Kumbh Mela* festival commemorates an ancient battle between gods and demons for a pitcher (*kumbh*). During the fight for possession, four drops of nectar fell from the pitcher and landed in Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain. The *Mela* is held every three years rotating through these four cities.

A pilgrimage to *Kumbh Mela*



Figure 12.3.5 Renouncers returning from bathing in the Ganges at *Kumbh Mela* 2007 at Allahabad

Most pilgrims follow a particular route encompassing more than one sacred site. Some others, however, focus on a single site, the most famous of these being the meeting point of the Ganges and Jumna rivers where the famous *Kumbh Mela* (Fair of the Vessel of Immortality) is held every twelve years. Meeting points of rivers are always regarded as intensely sacred, but this particular point of convergence—traditionally called Prayaga, though now named Allahabad—is especially important due to the fame and sacredness of the two rivers that come together here.

There are several *Melas* held in different locations of India, both large and small, and the precise time for their occurrence is determined astrologically. They have become so important over the past 100 years that during the *Kumbh Mela* held at Allahabad, an entire tent city will arise, a temporary *Mela* administration will be established and religious organisations will make use of it to publicise their teachings and to display their place within the hierarchy of religious groups. As such, the *Mela* is very competitive and over time different ascetic groups have built up rights that give them access to land closest to the point where the two rivers converge.

Everyone accepts that the sect of *Dasnami sadhus*, who are either naked or dress with a brief loin cloth, are the first to enter the waters and there will be tension if this precedence is violated. The *Kumbh Mela* is an extremely important meeting place for ascetics.

The *akharas* (ascetic groups) are the focal point of the *Kumbh Mela*—the big draw, with their naked *sadhus*. They are the gymnosophists, the warriors of the faith. They have the right to march in processions to the central point of the Sangam to bathe on the big days, and they guard that right jealously.

Mark Tully, *The Kumbh Mela*, 2006, p. 24

An estimated 20 million people attended the August 2001 event and approximately 800 religious organisations had registered themselves in order to be able to have a presence there. The *Mela* provides a wonderful opportunity for the propagation of religious views and dozens of religious discourses by prominent swamis are being delivered all the time during the ten days of the event. Recently, it has also been used as a forum for spreading the views of militant Hinduism, a movement strongly represented in Indian politics today. Such is the fame of the *Mela* that it is broadcast all over the world—it is even covered by the Australian television news services—and several websites now exist exclusively to cover the *Mela*.

The significance of pilgrimage

Why do such huge numbers of people attend these pilgrimage spots and swim in the rivers where so many of them are located?

- In Hindu culture, water has always been regarded as having a very strong purifying capacity, such that bathing in a sacred ford or pool can remove bad *karma* accumulated over many lives. In this sense, the performance of a pilgrimage can be seen to fast track a person's chance of escaping from *samsara* by quickly eradicating the stock of bad *karma*.
- Pilgrimage also offers the possibility of worshipping the most prominent Hindu gods, normally Vishnu and Shiva, in a much more concentrated manner than would be available in the normal ritual calendar of the village or town.
- The large *Melas* and the lesser festivals of a similar type allow individuals to experience, temporarily at least, the very heightened environment of sacrality associated with the combination of events occurring at these festivals.

Experience is fundamental in all the devotional traditions in India and the *Melas* definitely feed the need for the senses to be stimulated religiously in a variety of ways. While a *puja* may offer a small experience of the deity and of the purificatory powers of a sacred place, the *Melas* magnify this one hundredfold. To this must be added the importance of the holy men, *sadhus* and ascetics of all kinds who are in attendance in huge numbers at these festivals. The average Hindu, who lives in a village or a city and holds a secular job, is provided with the possibility of a total religious experience—*darshan* of the gods and holy men, telling of tales about the gods, community hymn singing, performance of large-scale *pujas*—concentrated into a very short space of time. It also reminds them of the presence at the heart of their culture of a body of practitioners who are genuinely seeking an escape from *samsara*.

Review

- 1 Define the term 'ritual' in the Hindu context.
- 2 How would a Hindu define 'public devotion'? Clarify how 'pilgrimage' fits into this definition.
- 3 Explain the importance of sacred places for Hindus.
- 4 Construct a chart to outline the main features of Hindu pilgrimage.
- 5 Describe a Hindu pilgrimage using specific examples.
- 6 How does pilgrimage demonstrate the beliefs of Hinduism?
- 7 Analyse the significance of pilgrimage for both the individual and the Hindu community.

Extension



- 1 Give two reasons why water is regarded in Hinduism as an agent of purification. Propose an example of how it plays this role in another culture or religious tradition.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 298 to find websites that cover the *Kumbh Mela*. Prepare a report or a graphic presentation to describe the steps of the *Kumbh Mela* pilgrimage.
- 3 In small groups, examine the proposition that experience is more important than doctrinal discussion in the context of Hindu festivals. Share three points from your discussion with other groups.

Conclusion

Many first-time visitors to India are shocked by the divergent levels of culture and the variety of cultural and religious practices on display. Like other South Asian cultures, India is both religious and secular, and both these aspects are presented in extreme ways. Urban areas appear as absolute hives of energy, with people apparently moving in all directions in a manner that seems utterly chaotic to Westerners. The kind of quietism associated with meditation and spiritual practice—emphasised in many of the religious texts and so often considered to reside in Hindu holy men—seems entirely lacking. The need for economic security seems to dominate everything. Yet, for all that, signs of religious practice are found everywhere.



Figure 12.3.6 Festival of lights (Diwali) at the Shri Shiva Vishnu temple in Carrum Downs, Victoria, November 2005

In the main streets of Hindu cities, large temples almost spill out onto the road. In the morning and evening, lines of people can be seen entering the doors of temples to perform devotional ritual and worship of the deity embodied in an image. On street corners or in side alleys, there are small shrines consisting of just a single image of a *lingam* with Nandi the bull in front, or of Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity, to name only two. These images will be placed within a small cage-like structure that contains a small opening for money to be put into a box and a few bowls containing water and other ritual substances. Even in motorised rickshaws and taxis, small brightly coloured pictures of gods are contained in small brackets, around which a small bunch of flowers will be draped each day.

Religion, then, remains highly visible in India in spite of the ever-increasing pace of life and the trappings of modernisation that have so transformed South Asia over the last fifty years. Its visibility is greatly magnified when festivals that attract huge crowds are held, such as Diwali (pan-Indian) or Durgapuja in Bengal and Pongal in Tamil Nadu. They are well-known fixtures on what is a rather full religious calendar and they offer many opportunities for displays of devotional activity. Add to this the influence that is exerted on both the economic/political elite and the masses by the teachings and proclamations of holy men and women, many of whom are constantly touring around the countryside. Hinduism still shapes the attitudes and behaviour of the people, and has a defining role in the onward movement of South Asian culture.

Religious change has become particularly important as South Asia deals with the ideological and cultural forces that come with modernisation, which in many areas is primarily a Western phenomenon. Hindu ethics, for example, have always been centred on relationships between classes within society. But now, under the influence of Western individualism, Hinduism has to come to terms with ethical problems that are based on the pre-eminence of the individual over the social class. Bioethics is one area where this is especially important as this overrides the importance of class and requires decisions to be made primarily on the basis of the sanctity of the individual. In contrast, environmental ethics do rest on the idea of class and tribal interests. Decisions to preserve environmentally sensitive areas often require the overturning of the traditional practices of particular occupational classes. But such decisions link politics and religion. Their area of concern is not yet large enough to involve a change in any aspect of Hinduism, but reinterpretations of the ethical aspects of Hinduism are occurring under pressure from environmentalist groups.



Figure 12.3.7 Hindu 'scripture' class at Cherrybrook Public School, New South Wales, 2004

In many respects, Hinduism is almost an ethnic category since most Hindus live in South Asia and Hinduism as a religion is not conducive to conversion. This does not mean that throughout its history it has remained static. South Asia has always been the home of many different ethnic and linguistic groups, all of whom have contributed to the very rich umbrella of ideas conveyed by the word 'Hinduism'. Because of the great variety of religious practices, held together by the doctrinal and ritual framework of devotion, this variety has been sustained. Devotional practices are the heart of practical Hinduism and can easily be modified to meet new technologies and new theological views. New gods have appeared over the past fifty years, yet they can very easily be accommodated into the existing doctrinal and ritual framework. The overwhelming nature of Hindu devotionalism—the

dominant feature of the religion—guarantees that, even with new pressures to adapt to, especially changing economic circumstances, the new will continue to co-exist with the old in such a way that both will be enriched.

For those Hindus living outside of South Asia, the religious fabric of society sometimes becomes very thin. There is little possibility of full ritual observance as the complete ritual calendar cannot be observed, temples are scarce and the celebrities—holy men and holy women—are largely absent. Sadly, without the continual presence of religious symbols to provide a religious texture, the religious aspect of a Hindu's ethnicity may become diffused and be reinforced only on special occasions.

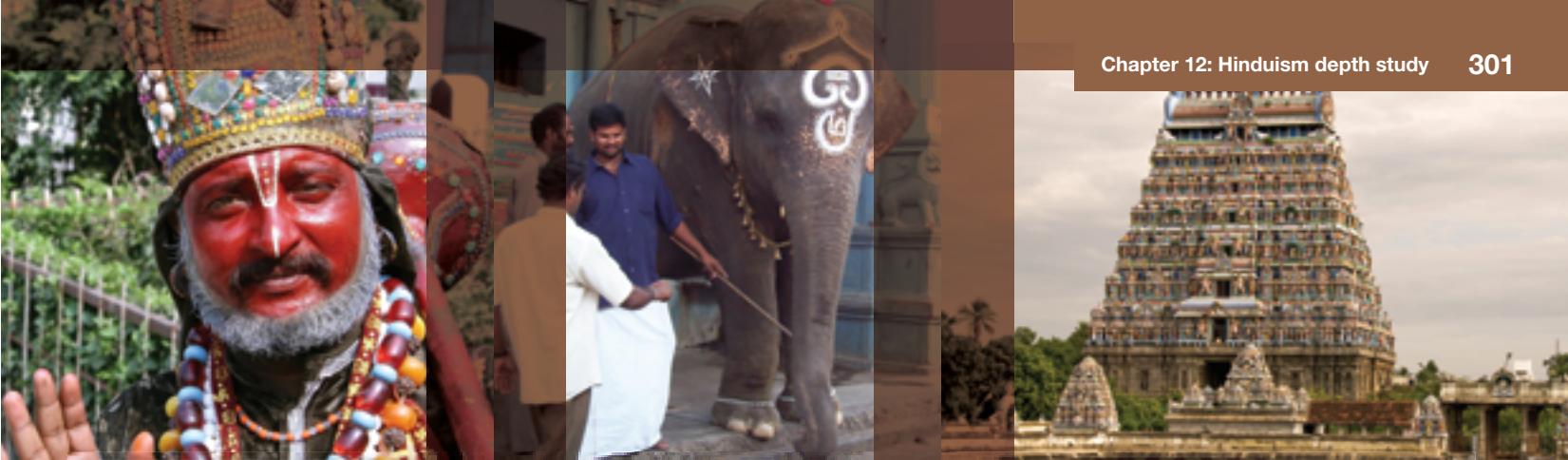
Extension

- 1 'India is both religious and secular, and both these aspects of the culture are presented in extreme ways.' Using examples, **interpret** what this statement means.
- 2 In what ways do the two photographs (Figures 12.3.6 and 12.3.7) **demonstrate** how Hindus in Australia live out their tradition?
- 3 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 4 Organise your media file and **classify** it under the headings 'Hinduism in Australia' and 'Hinduism and the world'. Prepare a report to **summarise** how the media report on Hinduism. Does your file add to your understanding of Hinduism as a lived religion?
- 5 **Synthesise** the main features related to Hindu people, ideas, ethics and practices in this chapter in the form of a flow chart or mind map.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



HSC-style exam questions

Section II

- Studies of Religion I: answer ONE question from this section.
- Studies of Religion II: answer TWO questions from TWO different religious traditions in this section.

Marks

Question 3—Hinduism (15 marks)

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| <p>a Outline ONE significant practice within Hinduism drawing from ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – marriage ceremony – pilgrimage – temple worship <p>b Explain how the beliefs of Hinduism are expressed through the practice that you have outlined in part (a).</p> <p>c Discuss the ethical teachings of Hinduism in relation to ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – bioethics – environmental ethics – sexual ethics | <p>2</p> <p>5</p> <p>8</p> |
|---|----------------------------|

To check your understanding of the style of questions for Section II and Section III, go to ‘Support materials for the Studies of Religion HSC examinations’ on the NSW Board of Studies website; or go to the web destination for page 301.



Section III

- Studies of Religion I and Studies of Religion II: answer ONE question from this section that is from a different religious tradition to the question(s) answered in Section II.

Question 3—Hinduism (20 marks)

Hinduism is a religion that encourages several different pathways to liberation.

Analyse this statement in reference to the contribution AND impact of ONE individual or school of thought on the development of Hinduism, other than the Vedas.

Chapter 13

Islam depth study



Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **explain** the contribution to and **analyse** the impact of one significant person or school of thought on the development and expression of Islam
- **describe** and **explain** Islamic ethical teachings on one ethical area
- **describe** one significant practice within Islam, **demonstrate** how this practice expresses the beliefs of Islam and **analyse** its significance for both the individual and the Muslim community.



This scroll from the fifteenth century commemorates the Hajj—the pilgrimage to Mecca—by a woman called Maymunah. Illustrated with images of Mecca and other places of interest *en route*, it is a fascinating document that combines both religious and geographical information.

13.1 Significant people and ideas

When the Prophet Muhammad died in 11 AH/632 CE, he left behind a Revelation from Allah (the Qur'an), a tradition (the *sunna* of the Prophet), and the reports of what he did, said and approved (*hadith*). There were also his companions who would assume leadership roles—who would be the teachers and interpreters—within the community, who were followers of the Prophet. In Islam,

there is a widely held belief based on *sunna* that God sends a ‘renewer’ at the beginning of each century to restore or strengthen Islam. Who is a genuine ‘renewer’ (*mujaddid*) is a matter of considerable dispute.

Through the centuries, from the earliest years of Islam, there have been individuals and groups who have had great influence on the practice of Islam. Sometimes they have been a focus for consolidation, sometimes they have challenged, and sometimes they have caused disputes that resulted in rifts within the community of Islam in a way that is still apparent today. Indeed, the major division between Sunni and Shi'i Islam occurred with the assassination of the fourth caliph only twenty-nine years after the Prophet's death.

This section will explore: the complicated legacy of 'Aisha—a wife of the Prophet; Sayyid Qutb—one of the most influential and controversial contemporary interpreters of Islam; and *tasawwuf*—Sufism, a mystical dimension of Islam that has its origins in the century after the Prophet's death.

Extension

- 1 Update the Islamic list in your workbook with the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file of newspaper articles, and monitor television news and programs to do with significant Muslim figures and Islamic practices and ethics. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics.

13.1.1 'Aisha bint Abi Bakr (c. 614–c. 678 CE)

The first written account of 'Aisha was produced some 150 years after her death. Her multiple roles in the Islamic past—as an ‘exceptional’ female in Islamic society; as a scholar and political activist; and as a close, honourable companion and wife to the Prophet—make her life a point of contention in continued debates surrounding the true lineage of Muhammad’s successors. Each of her roles is interpreted differently by Islamic scholars, making 'Aisha’s part in early Islamic tradition very complicated.

There is no doubt, however, that the first Muslim woman whose views have been important to Muslims throughout Islamic history was 'A'isha, wife of the Prophet. Muhammad's contemporaries, among them both *al-muhajerun* (emigrants who followed him from Mecca) and *al-Ansar* (those who helped the Prophet in Medina) considered 'A'isha a source of religious rules and an expert on issues of Islamic legislation. Ata Bin Abi Rabah (d. 120 AH/736 CE)—a prominent transmitter of *hadith*—said: “'A'isha was the most knowledgeable Muslim and had the best opinion in public affairs; 2210 sayings of the prophet Muhammad were attributed to her among which are 170 which have been approved and Bukhari took 54 sayings from them.”

'A'isha narrates, 'God's apostle said and she quotes, "If any of you feels drowsy while praying he should go to bed till his slumber is over because in praying while drowsy one does not know whether one is asking for forgiveness or for a bad thing for oneself."

Bukhari Ch 41, 161

A brief account of 'A'isha's life

'A'isha was the third wife of the Prophet Muhammad and her father was Abu Bakr, Muhammad's successor and the first 'rightly-guided' caliph. She was betrothed to the Prophet at a very early age and it is suggested the marriage was formally consummated around 624 CE when Muhammad was fifty-four. 'A'isha's marriage to the Prophet represents a cultural norm of the time—marriages which solidified family, tribal or political ties. Marriage to 'A'isha allowed the Prophet and Abu Bakr to establish a public alliance, while the young bride received honoured status as wife of the Prophet. Of the eleven or twelve wives Muhammad took, it is clear from sources that 'A'isha became his favourite. It was in her room that Muhammad died and was buried. The Prophet's Mosque—*al-Masjid al-Nabawi*—now stands on that site in Medina.

Accusation of adultery

It was during Muhammad's lifetime, when returning from an expedition with him in 5 AH/627 CE, that 'A'isha became the victim of malicious gossip. She became separated from the company when she went to look for a necklace she reported she had lost. When she returned she found that the company had left without her. She was found by a young man called Safwan ibn Al-Muattal and taken on his camel to rejoin the caravan. This led Abdullah Ibn Ubay, a known critic of the Prophet in Medina, to initiate speculation that she had committed adultery. Weeks later, when she found out about the



Figure 13.1.1 The death of the Prophet Muhammad. From the *Siyer-i Nebi* (sixteenth century) in the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

rumours, 'A'isha returned to her parents' house in grief. Muhammad sought advice and later announced that he had received a revelation confirming 'A'isha's innocence and directing that charges of adultery be supported by four eyewitnesses (*Surat al-Nur* 24:11–19 'Light').

Battle of the Camel

The first violent division among Muslims occurred when the third caliph, 'Uthman, was killed and some suspected that 'Ali b. Abi Talib, his successor, conspired in the murder. Although 'Ali was 'A'isha's stepson-in-law and denied involvement, 'A'isha formed a military expedition against him when 'Ali was delayed in finding and punishing the perpetrators. The battle, which 'Ali won, was fought near Basra in 656 CE. 'A'isha was taken prisoner, though accorded enormous reverence as a wife of the Prophet Muhammad, and later sent back to Medina. It became known as the Battle of the Camel because 'A'isha gave directives from a howdah on the back of a camel.

Sources say she often regretted her involvement in war but lived long enough to regain her position. She died peacefully in 678 CE in the month of Ramadan and was buried in the cemetery, *Jannat al-Baqi'*, across from the Prophet's Mosque, beside other companions of the Prophet.

Contribution to the development and expression of Islam

As was said earlier, analysing ‘A’isha’s legacy is complicated and the two major strands of Islam have conflicting views—views that depend on their version of the proper lineage of the Prophet’s successors (see page 99 in Chapter 5).

Some scholars suggest her involvement in the Battle of the Camel relegated ‘A’isha to a divisive role in early Islamic history. But her later focus on scholarship and teaching gave her an important legacy in Sunni Islam.

I have not known of any woman who was accused of falsifying *hadith*. To this we add, that from the time of ‘A’isha, the mother of believers, until the time of al-Zahabi the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad were not kept or related by anyone as they were kept in the hearts of women and related by them.

al-Hafez al-Zahabi (d. 1347), a renowned Muslim authority on *hadith*

Views of ‘A’isha

Sunnis hold ‘A’isha in high esteem. Many believe that she was Muhammad’s favourite wife and consider her to be *Umm al-Mu’minin* ('Mother of Believers') and among the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the household of the Prophet). For Sunnis, this household consists of the Prophet’s wives, his daughter (Fatima) and her three children, as well as his cousin and son-in-law ('Ali).

Shi’i reject the idea that ‘A’isha was the Prophet’s favourite wife and believe that Muhammad favoured none of his wives in compliance with the Qur’anic verse *Surat al-Nisa* 4:3 ‘The Women’. The Shi’i definition of *Ahl al-Bayt* includes only Fatima, ‘Ali, Hasan and Husayn (known collectively as the *Ahl al-Kisa*, ‘people of the mantle’) and the *Imams*, descendants of Fatima, whom they consider to be divinely chosen leaders of the Muslim community. Her participation in the Battle of the Camel (where she attacked ‘Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet) is widely considered the most significant reason for Shi’i contempt. They also do not believe that she conducted herself in an appropriate manner in her role as Muhammad’s wife.

Depending on your view, it can be said that:

- ‘A’isha helped preserve the details of the early years of Islam, as well as the details of the private and public life of Muhammad by narrating more than two thousand *hadith*.

- She started the method of *hadith* critique, by questioning many of the *hadith* reported by Abu Hurayra (d. 681 CE) after Muhammad’s death. She was also critical of Abu Hurayra’s skills in deducing legal conclusions from *hadith*. For example, ‘A’isha declared of Abu Hurayra ‘to whoever wanted to hear it: “He is not a good listener [to the Prophet], and when he is asked a question, he gives wrong answers.”’
- She was eloquent; her power of speech was described by al-Ahnaf (a well-known Muslim general who lived during the time of Muhammad): ‘I have heard speeches of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and ‘Ali and the *Khulafa* (successors of the Prophet) up to this day, but I have not heard speech more persuasive and more beautiful from the mouth of any person than from the mouth of ‘A’isha.’
- The Prophet is reported to have said: ‘Learn a portion of your religion from this, *humayra*, (rosy lady)’—a description given to ‘A’isha by the Prophet. She taught more than eighty major scholars in early Islamic period.
- ‘A’isha provided a role model for women’s political participation in Islamic communities.
- Some scholars claim up to one-quarter of *Shari‘a* (Islamic religious law), based on the collection of *hadiths*, have stemmed from her narrations and her teaching.

Review

- Recall** and list key dates and events in the life of ‘A’isha.
- Identify** the evidence present in this section that indicates ‘A’isha’s importance to Islam.
- Explain** the contribution of ‘A’isha to the development and expression of Islam.

Extension



- Go to the web destinations for page 305 to find out more about ‘A’isha. List six points you have learnt about ‘A’isha from the website.
- In groups, **discuss** the statement: ‘Each of her roles is interpreted differently by Islamic scholars, making ‘A’isha’s part in early Islamic tradition very complicated.’ Share your ideas with other groups.
- Analyse** the impact of ‘A’isha on Islam. In your answer, refer to differing views of ‘A’isha.

13.1.2 Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966)

Glossary

- existentialism** Any of a group of modern philosophical ideas that teach the importance of human existence and the freedom and responsibility of the individual to make decisions based on personal experience.
- jahiliyya** State of ignorance. The Arabic word is used to designate the pre-Islamic period.



Figure 13.1.2 Sayyid Qutb in prison in Cairo. Qutb spent most of the years from 1954 until his execution in 1966 in prison.

Without any doubt, Sayyid Qutb is one of the most influential and controversial contemporary interpreters of Islam and, since his execution in Cairo in 1966, is revered as the martyr of Islamic revivalism. Finding the ‘real’ story of Qutb in the legend that has developed around him is difficult and interpretations depend on how one views contemporary Islam.

Sayyid Qutb was born in the village of Musha, in the township of Qaha, in the province of Assyout in Egypt. He had two younger sisters and a younger brother. As a young boy, he received a traditional Muslim education—he had memorised the Qur'an by the age of ten—yet he went on, at Dar al-'Ulum in Cairo, to receive a modern, secular education. He qualified as an Arabic-language teacher and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1939. For six years he worked as a teacher and an inspector of schools for the Egyptian ministry of education, but then left his job and

devoted his time to freelance writing. He wrote novels, poems and a book called *Literary Criticism: Its Principles and Methodology*. His early writings reflected a ‘Western-tinged’ outlook on cultural and literary questions with traces of individualism and existentialism.

In the early 1940s, Qutb came to be more aware of the importance of the Qur'an in Islamic life and he began to take a greater interest in social reform. He wrote several articles on the artistic expression of the Qur'an, as well as two books entitled *Expression of the Qur'an* and *Scenes from the Day of Judgement*. At the end of 1948, Qutb went to the USA to study educational curricula at Colorado State College of Education and earned a master's degree. He became disillusioned with the materialistic attitude and lack of spirituality in US society and cut short his stay, returning to Egypt in August 1951. Some time after his return to Egypt, Qutb joined the Muslim Brotherhood, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, the largest Islamic movement of its time, and became the chief editor of the Brotherhood's newspaper.

The Muslim Brotherhood— *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*

This organisation was founded by Hasan al-Banna' in 1928 with a view to advocating a return to true Islam via the Qur'an and the *hadith*. It was at first a social and moral reform movement to revive Islam as a way of life and end the separation of religion and state. It complemented government activities by providing valuable community services. It was opposed to Western colonialism and imperialism, especially in Muslim countries, and it aimed at the establishment of a Muslim state where ideals of Islam could create a good society.

Although the Brotherhood was not a political party, its belief that the Islamic community (*umma*) was to exist in a state and society governed by Islamic law drew it into the political arena and al-Banna' was assassinated in 1949. The Brotherhood was banned by the Egyptian government in 1954 but offshoots of the Brotherhood still play an important and legitimate role in some Muslim countries' political processes.

In some accounts of Qutb's life, his three-year stay in the USA is portrayed as such a traumatic event, mostly because of the USA's sexual freedoms, that he returned to Egypt in 1951 in a mood of hatred and fear. His early work *Social Justice in Islam* (1949) however, shows that

even before his voyage to the USA he was building on the Islamic idea of *tawhid* (the oneness of God and, therefore, of the universal order). In it he made clear that true social justice can only be realised in Islam.

So the universe cannot be hostile to life, or to man; nor can 'Nature' in our modern phrase be held antagonistic to man, opposed to him, or striving against him. Rather she is a friend whose purposes are one with those of life and mankind. And the task of living beings is not to contend with Nature, for they have grown up in her bosom, and she and they together form a part of the single universe which proceeds from the single will.

Social Justice in Islam, trans. by John Hardie, 1970 (rev. ed.), p. 66

Did you know?

There have been six editions of *Social Justice in Islam*, the last published only two years before Qutb's death. Each of the editions after the first has changes made by the author reflecting his changing viewpoint.

Whether Qutb joined *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* before or after the assassination of al-Banna', is a matter of debate, but he certainly became more radical on his return to Egypt; and, in the early 1950s, many people in Egypt were veering in even more radical directions.

Egypt's political tensions in the 1950s

In 1952 Gamal Abd al-Nasser and a group of nationalist army officers (including Anwar Sadat who later became president of Egypt after Nasser's death in 1970) overthrew the monarchy of King Farouk and launched a nationalist revolution on Pan-Arabist grounds—the idea of a political alliance or union of all Arab states. Nasser's Pan-Arabists and the Muslim Brotherhood shared the dream of rescuing the Arab world from the legacies of European imperialism and fashioning a new kind of modernity that was going to be up-to-date on economic and scientific issues, and both movements dreamed of removing the monarchy that was collaborating with the European powers. Colonel Nasser, in the days before staging his coup d'état, is said to have paid a visit to Qutb at his home, presumably to get his backing for the coup.

But once the Pan-Arabists had thrown out the old king, the differences began to overwhelm the

similarities. The Brotherhood hoped that the young officers would accept an implementation of Islam through *Shari'a* but that was not the case—instead, Nasser cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood. Two events in particular contributed to the break: the Brotherhood's insistence on an Islamic constitution and a free press; and their denunciation of the July 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement on the Suez Canal. Sayyid Qutb was arrested, along with other leading Brothers, when *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* was accused of attempting to overthrow the government of President Nasser, and spent most of the rest of his life in prison until his execution in 1966.

Extension

Investigate Egypt under the government of President Nasser (1952–67). Reach some conclusions to assess why Nasser's policies and style of leadership alienated *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*—the Muslim Brotherhood.

Qutb's writings

What Qutb wrote is of more significance than what is known about his life. While in prison, he managed to continue with his writings, no longer in the 'Western-tinged' vein of his early literary days.

I spent thirty years of my life, wasting my life, studying European philosophy before I turned back to the Qur'an and understood the secrets of the Qur'an.

His major work is *In the Shade of the Qur'an* (*Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*)—a commentary on the Qur'an in thirty volumes, which began to appear in 1952 and was completed in prison. Apart from its length, two things are striking about the commentary: firstly, Qutb's unfailing sensitivity to the Qur'an's literary qualities; and secondly, his insistence that the Qur'an provided the principles for living and that true Muslims engage in a lifelong study of it.

Qutb began the first volume of *In the Shade of the Qur'an* by saying:

To live 'in the shade of the Qur'an' is a great blessing which can only be fully appreciated by those who experience it. It is a rich experience that gives meaning to life and makes it worth living. I am deeply thankful to God Almighty for blessing me with this uplifting experience for a considerable time, which was the happiest and most fruitful period of my life—a privilege for which I am eternally grateful.

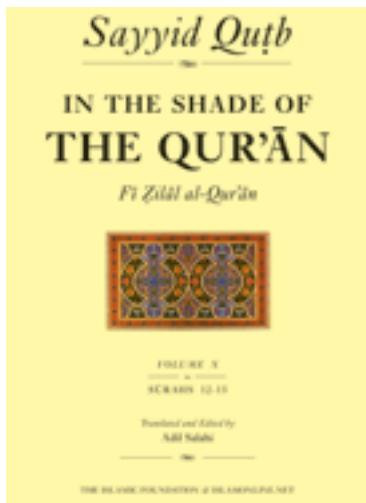


Figure 13.1.3 Cover of the English translation of *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Islamic Foundation (UK)

The Qur'an and its texts must have the last word, not archaeology and archaeologists. The Qur'an has been revealed by Him who knows the secret in the heavens and earth, who 'knows the secret and that yet more hidden' (*Surat Taha* 20:7).

From *In the Shade of the Qur'an*

After his release from prison, Qutb published a controversial book, *Milestones* (1965), which was drawn from his vast commentary on the Qur'an. *Milestones* proposed a radical transformation, not mere reform, of Islam. It was the publication of this book in 1965 that led to his re-arrest with the accusation of conspiracy against the Egyptian president. He was tried and rapidly sentenced to death based upon many excerpts from his book. Shortly before his execution, he was asked to sign a petition seeking mercy from the president. Sayyid Qutb replied:

If I have done something wrong in the eye of Allah, I do not deserve mercy; but if I have not done anything wrong, I should be set free without having to plead for mercy from any mortal.

That *Milestones* was cited at Qutb's trial gave it enormous publicity and it became a classic manifesto of the future terrorist wing of Islamic fundamentalism. It is important, however, to investigate the concepts used in Qutb's writings and how he used them. The three key concepts are '*aqida*, *jahiliyya* and *jihad*. Qutb gave a new, dynamic character to '*aqida* (creed of Islamic faith): he saw it as that ideological spiritual bond that would give young Muslims the hope of building a new Islamic society, and the stability and the power to withstand all the change around them. Traditionally, Islam was supposed

to supplant all the ideas of *jahiliyya* with the new Islamic system. Qutb, especially when he was in prison, used the term to refer to the Muslim world in the twentieth century that refused, as Nasser's Egypt did, to implement the *Shari'a* or establish an Islamic state. His understanding of the obligation of *jihad* also departs from traditional understanding. Qutb understood *jihad* as taking on many forms depending on the stage of development of the Muslim community (*umma*)—from the struggle to assert *tawhid*, to defending the community's right to 'freely practise Islamic beliefs' even if it entails the use of arms. He argued that *jihad* is mandatory and proactive in seeking to establish Allah's sovereignty on earth. He was careful to emphasise that it does not necessarily mean the use of violence—it includes preaching the use of service and wealth in the way of Allah. He was also careful to remind his readers that there is no compulsion in Islam. But if someone has chosen to live by it, then no one has the right to prevent them from doing so.

► See Chapter 15, page 373, for contemporary writings on *jihad*.

In *Milestones*, Qutb insists that the establishment of the Islamic order is in stages and he repeatedly emphasises that the need for implementing *Shari'a* would not arise until every member of the community had completely submitted to the sovereignty of Allah and by that had agreed to live under Allah's laws. Laws would then be framed merely to serve the needs of this 'living community of Islam'.

Qutb's writings emphasised the perfection and comprehensiveness of Islam, and, hence, its self-sufficiency. He proposed Islamic views as alternatives to secularism, nationalism, capitalism and communism. He hoped that Muslims could unite to form one bloc (a group of states united by a common factor), though not necessarily one Islamic nation. He was not a fundamentalist; he believed that there could be adaptations of civil law as long as they are in accord with renewed interpretations of *Shari'a*.

The development in Qutb's thinking—his ideology—and his martyrdom has profoundly influenced later Islamic activists. In the end, what he was advocating amounted to a call for Islamic revolution. Qutb 'pre-figures' in some ways the shift from a more secularist Muslim society, such as that of Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s and 1930s, to a more 'fundamentalist' or more self-consciously Islamic ideology since his death. Whatever the final judgement is, Sayyid Qutb will remain an important part of the modern history of Islam.

The [sweet taste] of this Qur'an is not to be tasted save by the one who dives into the struggle. The one who faces the same situations concerning which it was revealed and faces them in the same way [that the Qur'an] faces them. Those who search for the meaning and evidences of the Qur'an while they are sitting studying it as speech or art will never be able to discover the reality of the Qur'an from that motionless, barren sitting far away from the struggle and far away from the movement ... The reality of the Qur'an is never revealed to those who simply sit. Its inner truth will never expose itself to those who are overtaken by rest and relaxation while they serve other than Allah or submit to false lords and not to Allah.

In the Shade of the Qur'an, vol. 3

Review

- 1 **Outline** the social and cultural factors that influenced the life and work of Sayyid Qutb.
- 2 In your own words, **explain** what is meant by 'Islamic secularism'.
- 3 Give three reasons to **justify** naming Sayyid Qutb a 'significant person' in Islam.
- 4 **Explain** the contribution of Sayyid Qutb to the development and expression of contemporary Islam.
- 5 **Analyse** the effect of Sayyid Qutb's writings. In your response, **examine** how they are used to justify particular ideologies.

Extension

- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the title of *mujaddid*. **Assess** why the title can cause controversy in the Islamic community (*umma*).
- 2 **Outline** the arguments for and against giving Sayyid Qutb the title of *mujaddid*.
- 3 Type 'Sayyid Qutb' into an Australian internet search engine and choose three articles. For each article:
 - a make a brief summary of it
 - b **evaluate** its content.

13.1.3 Sufism—*tasawwuf*

Glossary

dhikr

Literally 'remembrance', 'recollection'. In *tasawwuf* the word has come to mean 'litany' in which the name of God, or a phrase such as 'God is Most Great'—*Allahu Akbar*—is repeated over and over again, often linked to bodily movement or breathing. The *dhikr* (or *zikr* in Egyptian colloquial Arabic) is often one of the most important activities of the Sufi.

hadith qudsi

A sacred or holy tradition. This is the name given to a tradition that records God's own utterances as opposed to those of the Prophet Muhammad.

mystical

The adjective applied to those practices, experiences and writings in which direct awareness of and/or union with God is the main focus.

shaykh

Meaning 'old man' or 'chief', *shaykh* is a title of respect for an Islamic religious leader. Here it refers to the master of a Sufi Order.

silsila

Literally meaning 'chain'. In *tasawwuf* this word has the technical sense of an unbroken chain of spiritual authorities or leaders, where the present *shaykh* of a Sufi Order (*tariqa*) receives legitimacy and authority.

tariqa

This word is very frequently used to designate a Sufi Order. Technically speaking, however, in *tasawwuf* it has the primary sense of a **mystical** way or path.

Did you know?

The Arabic term for Islamic mysticism, *tasawwuf*, literally means 'to dress in wool', but it has been called 'Sufism' in Western languages since the early nineteenth century. 'Sufism' derives from the Arabic term for a mystic, *Sufi*, which in turn comes from *suf* ('wool'), a reference to the woollen garment of early Islamic mystics. The Sufis are also generally known as *faqir* ('the poor') or, in Persian, *darwîsh*—in English, the words are 'fakir' and 'dervish'.

RESPOND

Look up the dictionary meanings for 'fakir' and 'dervish'.

Note!

It is important to remember that while ‘Sufism’ is described as a school of thought within Islam or a particular expression of Islam, the significant people in its development and practice, such as Rabi‘a and al-Ghazali, are very much part of mainstream Islam.

Tasawwuf is generally understood to be the inner, mystical dimension of Islam and has been described as ‘The Science of the Heart’. There is no such thing as ‘Sufism’ apart from Islam—its teachers trace their enlightenment through a chain of transmission going back to the Prophet Muhammad. Sufis see themselves to be on a spiritual journey towards God. In order to guide spiritual travellers and to express the states of consciousness on this journey, Sufis produced an enormously rich body of literature.

This journey is referred to as *tariqa* (the path). While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God and will be close to God in paradise after death and the ‘Final Judgement’, Sufis believe as well that it is possible to become close to God and to experience this closeness while one is alive. Sufis assert, furthermore, the attainment of knowledge that comes with such intimacy—‘closeness to God’—is the very purpose of creation.

The turbulent years following the Prophet Muhammad’s death and the increasing power and wealth of the Umayyads who assumed power after ‘Ali’s death (41 AH/661 CE), saw an increasing number of Muslims seeking a simpler life more in tune with the early example of Muhammad and the ‘rightly guided’ caliphs. Many of the early Sufis sought to refocus the vision and goals of the Muslim community (*umma*) to counter the emerging decline of the imperial culture.

Hasan al-Basri (21–110 AH/642–728 CE), one of the *tabi‘un*, the generation after the Companions of the Prophet, was noted for his piety and sermons. His sermons were infused with a strong sense of asceticism and detachment from worldly things and he may be considered as a prototype of the early Sufi. The early emphasis on worldly renunciation was complemented by the introduction of the element of love by Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 185 AH/801 CE), a woman from Basra and referred to as a Sufi saint, which changed asceticism into mysticism. Rabi‘a first formulated the Sufi ideal of a love of God that was disinterested, without hope for paradise and without fear of hell:

O God!

If I adore You out of fear of Hell, burn me in Hell!

If I adore You out of desire for Paradise,

Lock me out of Paradise.

But if I adore You for Yourself alone,

Do not deny to me Your eternal beauty.

Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya, *Doorkeeper of the Heart: versions of Rabi‘a*, trans. Charles Upton, 1994, p. 45

Early definitions of Sufism

All these definitions are by Sufis who lived in the ninth and tenth centuries CE and are provided by al-Sarraj (d. 378 AH/988 CE) in the earliest comprehensive book on Sufism, the *Khitah al-Luma* (The Book of Flashes).

Sufism consists of noble behaviour (*akhlaq karima*) that is made manifest at a noble time on the path of a noble person in the presence of a noble people.

Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Qassab (d. 275 AH)

Sufism is that you should be with God—without any attachment.

Ab-ul Qasim al-Junayd (d. 297 AH)

Sufism consists of abandoning oneself to God in accordance with what God wills.

Ruwaym ibn Ahmad (d. 303 AH)

Sufism is that you should not possess anything nor should anything possess you.

Sumnun (d. after 297 AH)

Sufism consists of entering every exalted quality (*khulq*) and leaving behind every desppicable quality.

Abu Muhammad al-Jariri (d. 311 AH)

Sufism is that at each moment the servant should be in accord with the most appropriate (*awla*) at that moment.

‘Amr ibn ‘Uthman al-Makki (n.d.)

Sufism consists of extending a ‘spiritual station’ (*nashr maqam*) and being in constant union (*ittisal bi-dawam*).

‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Qannad (n.d.)

NOTE!

Islamic dates are used above to highlight the fact that Sufism was part of Islam from its early days.

NOTE!

The words ‘Sufi’ and ‘Sufism’ are often misused and today many non-Muslims, and not a few Muslims, believe that Sufism is outside the sphere of Islam. Today much of what should be called pseudo-Sufism masquerades as ‘real’ Sufism, with little or no acknowledgement of what *tasawwuf* really is.

In your research, be suspicious of ‘Sufi’ material that does not mention Islam or acknowledge the Qur'an, *sunna* and *Shari'a*.

Go to the web destinations for page 311 for an extensive Sufi website.



The Sufi way

The Sufi way recognises that the obstacles to getting closer to God come primarily from one's self or ego (*nafs*). The dominance of the *nafs* can mean being overwhelmed by the need to gratify desires such as lust, anger or greed. Or it could mean being dominated by negative attitudes such as anxiety, boredom, self-pity, or even imagining that God is absent from one's experience. So the emphasis of Sufism is upon the struggle to overcome one's *nafs*. This struggle, first and foremost, involves choosing at each moment to remember and surrender actively to God. The struggle with one's *nafs* is called the greater struggle, or *jihad al-akbar*, in contrast to the lesser struggle, *jihad al-asghar*, against injustice and oppression in this world.

A godly person enlivens his heart and annihilates his ego until what is coarse becomes soft. A bright light like lightning shines in front of him, shows him the way and helps him in advancing towards Allah. Many doors push him forwards until he reaches the gate of peace and safety and arrives at the destination where he has to stay. His feet are firm and his body contented, for he uses his heart and pleases his Lord.

Sermon 218, *Imam 'Ali*. 'Ali (d. 661 CE) was the first Shi'i *Imam* and also the fourth *khalifa* who ruled over the Islamic community from 35–40 AH.

For Sufis it is ‘remembrance that makes the heart grow fonder’ and a quintessential Sufi practice is silent and vocal *dhikr* (remembering). Through *dhikr*, Sufis feel that they are able to keep an experience and awareness of Allah's presence in their consciousness and heart.

Sufi practices are often difficult to understand because the idea is that they should be experienced rather than just studied. Many of their ideas are conveyed in stories,

because the listener can enter into the story imaginatively and so experience some of its meaning.

Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185 AH/801 CE)

Apart from tradition, all that is known about Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya is that she lived in Basra (Iraq) during the second Islamic century, that she was probably a freed slave, and that she is considered to be one of the first of the Sufis, those Muslims who emphasise an intensely personal relationship with Allah.

According to tradition, Rabi'a was born free, but sold into slavery at her parents' death. She was freed by a miracle, and, except for at least one pilgrimage to Mecca, lived all her life in Basra as a celibate ascetic who debated with and taught the major religious figures of her time. These traditions come down to us from the writings of Farid al-Din 'Attar (d. 1230 CE), himself a Sufi, in his work 'Memorial of the Saints', who said that he was using earlier written sources. It is through 'Attar that we have Rabi'a's words; she herself left no written documents.



Figure 13.1.4 Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings, c. 1660–70, miniature painting by Mughal artist Bichitr. Note that one of the kings is European.

RESPOND

What does this painting tell you about the influence of Sufism?

Among Sufis, Rabi'a is accorded the first place among the earliest Islamic mystics and considered a saint (*wali*). So how does Rabi'a fit into what is seen as the prescribed or permitted role for women within Islam? Farid al-Din 'Attar (see page 311) felt compelled to support his inclusion of women in his 'Memorial of the Saints' by calling upon a *hadith*: '... the Prophet himself said that Allah does not regard your outward forms.' Leila Ahmed argues that it was the independence that Rabi'a gained by removing herself from her worldly responsibilities and following the life of a mystic that allowed her to pursue her love of God as she did:

Sufi presentations ... portray a woman pursuing spirituality and socially a life other than prescribed or permitted for women in the dominant society ... She retains full control and legal autonomy with respect to herself in that she is neither wife, nor slave, nor under any male authority, in a way ... which would have been impossible had she not withdrawn to the alternative mental and spiritual space of Sufism.

Leila Ahmed, 'Feminism and Cross-Cultural Inquiry: The Terms of Discourse in Islam', in Elizabeth Weed (ed.), *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Politics, Theory*, Routledge, 1984, p. 147

It was Rabi'a's extraordinary devotion to God and living her life according to *Shari'a* (Divine Law) that earned her the respect of not only later Sufis and historians, but also her peers. The fact that the poems, fables and sayings attributed to Rabi'a have passed through a long line of Sufi historians, commentators, and translators for almost 1300 years attests to the importance of her place in the history of Islam and its spirituality. Like the many women in the history of all religious traditions, however, her place in her tradition is controversial and not celebrated by all.

Tariqa—Sufi Orders

It was not until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE that the *tariqa* Orders were formalised and officially adopted the particular names by which they came to be identified. From the very beginning, however, the teachings of the Sufi *shaykhs* along with their different *dhikr* forms were handed down from the *shaykh* to his pupil in a continuous chain of transmission—*silsila*. The institutionalisation of the Orders really started with the followers of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. Later, a number of other Orders developed along similar lines. Despite the proliferation of *tariqa*, the Sufi path has been identified by most scholars as a threefold process:



Figure 13.1.5 Rembrandt's depiction of a Mughal miniature. The miniature illustrates the founders of the four great Sufi Orders in the Indo-Persian region. Most probably these are the Qadiri, Suhrawardi, Chishti and Naqshabandi.

- *Shari'a*—to know and carefully follow the practical and legal rulings of Islam
- *tariqa*—to engage in purification of *nafs* and in various spiritual exercises such as *dhikr* recommended by the Prophet and the established skills of *tasawwuf*
- *haqiqah*—the attainment of spiritual consciousness or inner enlightenment that witnesses that all things ultimately come from and belong to Allah.

Review

- 1 What reasons can you give to explain the emergence of *tasawwuf* within Islam?
- 2 Who was Rabi'a? Write three sentences to clarify her role in *tasawwuf*.
- 3 In your own words, describe the 'threefold process' of the Sufi path.

Extension



1 Investigate two Sufi Orders (*tariqa*). Construct a report on your research under the following headings:

- Founder and place of foundation
- Literature
- Practices
- Expansion
- Contemporary expression.

Provide a bibliography for your resources.

2 Women like Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya have played an important role in Sufism. Investigate the role of women in Sufism and prepare a report of your findings. In your report, propose reasons why women have played this role and discuss whether their role has had a positive or negative effect on the Islamic perceptions of *tasawwuf*. Go the web destinations for page 313 for some good starting points.

Later Sufis

During the early centuries, the Sufi mystics were regarded with suspicion. Abn Hamid al-Ghazali (450–505 AH/1058–1111 CE) emerged as a great reconciler. He became a Sufi and his early twelfth century writings secured a place for Sufism within the life of the community. He concluded that mystics were heirs of the Prophet by preserving the spiritual life of his prophethood.

I turned to the way of the mystics ... [I] obtained a thorough understanding of their principles. Then I realised that what is most distinctive of them can only be obtained by personal experience ['taste'—*dhawq*], ecstasy and a change of character ... I saw clearly that the mystics were men of personal experience not of words, and that I had gone as far as possible by way of study and intellectual application, so only personal experience and walking in the mystic way were left.

In W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazali*, 1963, p. 35

Did you know?

The Indonesian archipelago has a strong Sufi tradition, particularly among the Javanese. There are reports of a Sufi scholar from Indonesia, *Shaykh Abu Mas'ud Abdullah bin Mas'ud Al-Jawi*, dating back to 706 AH/1328 CE. The nine Sufi saints (*wali*) of Java are well known to all Indonesians.

While Sufism has usually been identified with Sunni Islam for certain Islamic scholars, the Sufis today are beyond Islam. Shi'i scholars and jurists, however, have found a common ground in Sufi spirituality and many Sufi practices are part of Shi'i Islam.

Al-Ghazali achieved an integration between faith, reason and mysticism that made him very accessible to the modern mind, and earned him a place as one of Islam's greatest scholars and recognition as one of the *mujaddid*—'Renewer of Islam'. Despite continued differences between the Sufis and many of the religious scholars, al-Ghazali secured a place for Sufism within the life of the community. He was a reconciler between the scholars and those Muslims who followed the Sufi path, *tasawwuf*, and he was a reviver or 'renewer' who stressed the unity of *Shari'a* (the exterior path of law) and *tariqa* (the interior or mystical path):

When you become familiar with *dhikr* [invocation of the divine name], you separate yourself [inwardly] from all other things. Now, at death, you are separated from all that is not God ... what remains is the invocation alone. If this invocation is familiar to you, you find your pleasure in it, and rejoice that the obstacles that kept you from it have been removed, so that you find yourself alone with your beloved.

Jalal al-Din Rumi (604–672 AH/1207–1273 CE) is one of the greatest of Persia's mystics and poets, and the principal inspiration behind the Sufi Order called the Mawlawiya or Mervlana. This order, often called the 'whirling dervishes', performs a whirling dance accompanied by music during their *dhikr*.

From the ritual prayer, which is the egg,
hatch the chick;
do not peck like a bird
without reverence or felicity.

Jewels of Remembrance, p. 15



Figure 13.1.6 Jalal al-Din Rumi icon by contemporary iconographer Robert Lentz, 1994

Did you know?

In 2007 UNESCO celebrated the 800th anniversary of Rumi's birth and launched a commemorative medal.

Tasawwuf is the inner spiritual dimension of Islam. The method of *tariqa* is an attempt to preserve and penetrate this dimension. It is within the mould of *Shari'a*, the Divine Law, in which that spirituality takes on its distinctive 'shape'. These three aspects of Islam are inseparable parts of an organic whole. As Imam Malik said:

He who learns jurisprudence and neglects *tasawwuf* becomes a reprobate; and he who learns *tasawwuf* and neglects jurisprudence becomes an apostate. But he who combines both will reach the Truth.

As for the many paths that have developed over the centuries, the classical Sufi saying sums it up:

Tawhid [the declaration of the Oneness of God] is one, but the paths to Allah equal the number of people since the time of Allah.

From the Qur'an and sunna of the Prophet

Al-Ghazali stressed 'the unity of *Shari'a* (the exterior path of law) and *tariqa* (the interior or mystical path)'. There are many echoes of the Qur'an and *sunna*—the basis for *Shari'a*—in the writings of the Sufi mystics.

And a soul and Him Who perfected it
And inspired it with conscience of what is wrong for it and
what is right for it.
He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow.

Surat al-Shams 91:7–9 'The Sun'

He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the
Inward; and He is Knower of all things.

Surat al-Hadid 57:3 'The Iron'

I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I
created the creation to be known.

Hadith qudsi

True worship does not lie in engaging oneself constantly in supererogatory [more than is required] prayers or in fasting copiously, but in contemplation of the creation and seeking to know the Creator through His Works. He who has known his self has known Allah.

Sunna of the Prophet

My servant continually seeks to draw near to me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him I become the ears with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, and the feet with which he walks.

Hadith qudsi Bukhari

In conclusion, against the legalism and literalism that often seems to characterise Islam, Sufism emphasises the inner spiritual dimension of Islam. It allows believers to develop an intimate and personal act of devotion to Allah. Sufism also gave impetus to Islamic arts—to poetry and music.

Review

- 1 **Explain** the contribution of Sufism to the development and expression of Islam.
- 2 **Analyse** the impact of Sufism on Islamic thought and practice. In your response, make reference to some of the conflicts that are part of the history of Sufism within Islam.

Extension



- 1 In your own words, **define** ‘mujaddid’. Why can the title of *mujaddid* cause controversy in the Islamic community (*umma*)?
- 2 **Demonstrate** why al-Ghazali is given the title of *mujaddid*.
- 3 In groups, **discuss** the statement: “Sufism” is really a Western term (see page 309) and today it is much abused/misused. Sufis prefer to use *tasawwuf* or *tariqa*. Share the results of your discussion with other groups.
- 4 Go to the web destinations for page 315 to find out more about Rumi’s songs. What insights into Sufism do the music and the lyrics give you?

In Arabic, the phrase ‘*Ilm al-Akhlaq*’ indicates ethics or morals. Islamic ethics is an extension of *Shari‘a* that is itself based on two foundations—the Qur'an, in itself ‘a healing and a guidance to those who believe’ (*Surat Fussilat* 41:44), and the *sunna* of the Prophet. The overriding concept that informs Muslim ethics is *tawhid*, the absolute Oneness of God.

This section explores some of the issues involved in sexual ethics, bioethics and environmental ethics and Islamic ethical teachings on these issues. In many instances it is difficult to separate the first two because they overlap in various ways. For example, the various methods of assisted fertilisation such as in-vitro fertilisation are both a sexual and bioethical issue.

The basis of the ethical teachings of Islam—that all actions are governed by *tawhid*, the belief in the oneness and unity of God, and *umma*, the promotion of unity and harmony within the Muslim community—show that Islam is not monolithic and a diversity of views in ethical matters does exist. This diversity derives from the various schools of **jurisprudence**, different movements within Islam, differences in cultural backgrounds and different levels of religious observance.

It is the interpretation of new issues that most distinguishes Shi‘i and Sunni, and it is in the concept of **taqlid** where the major difference lies between Sunni and Shi‘i jurisprudence. Essentially, the difference is in the concepts each have of what constitutes the *sunna* of the Prophet.

According to Sunni, the *sunna* is everything narrated from the Prophet as long as the transmitters are trustworthy. Development of *Shari‘a* for Sunni has also required *ijma‘* (consensus) and *qiyyas* (analogy), resulting in four major schools of jurisprudence. Sunni acknowledge the concept of *taqlid*, but they understand it differently. For Sunni *taqlid* is following any one of these four major schools.

Shi‘i developed its own interpretations, methodology and authority systems. Shi‘i believe that until the return of the **Mahdi**, the Twelve *Imams* instructed believers to follow the **mujtahid**. Which particular scholar (*mujtahid*) someone follows, however, is a matter of choice not compulsion.

For both Sunni and Shi‘i, *taqlid* in the matter of fundamental beliefs and practices is ruled out.

13.2 Ethics—‘Ilm al-Akhlaq

Glossary

ethics	Ethics is the explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices. Its purpose is to clarify what is right and wrong and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.
jurisprudence	The science of law.
Mahdi	Divinely guided leader who is to come in the future to establish God’s rule on earth and a socially just society, restore the community to its rightful place, and usher in a perfect Islamic society.
mujtahid	One entitled to give an independent judgement on a point of theology or law. In Iran, the title of Ayatullah has been applied to <i>mujtahids</i> in recent times.
taqlid	Literally this means ‘follow (someone)’, ‘imitate’. In Islamic legal terminology, it means to follow a mujtahid —a person who is an expert in Islamic jurisprudence .

► Refer to Chapter 5, pages 107–9, for the core ethical teachings of Islam.

13.2.1 Sexual ethics

And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.

Surat al-Rum 30:21 'Romans'

According to Islamic tradition (*sunna*), marriage is natural for human beings and celibacy has always been regarded as something to be avoided and open to all sorts of evils.

In early Islam, the growth and prosperity of the Muslim community was very important and so sexual desire was seen as a part of the nature that was not to be repressed or inhibited—the Qur'an and *hadith* provide examples of how it was part of the ‘nature and temperament of the prophets’. According to one *hadith*, love and affection for women were characteristic of the moral conduct of the prophets. The harmony of the Muslim community was also important.

Because of this, sexual relations outside marriage are forbidden and this includes homosexual relations.

Homosexuality

The Qur'an is quite specific in condemning homosexuality. It includes the story of Lot (Lut), one of the prophets sent by God to warn his people about their crimes, one of which includes sodomy.

And (We sent) Lut when he said to his people: What! do you commit an indecency which any one in the world has not done before you? Most surely you come to males in lust besides females; nay you are an extravagant people. And the answer of his people was no other than that they said: Turn them out of your town, surely they are a people who seek to purify (themselves).

Surat al-A'raf 7:80–82 'The Heights'

Contraception

Although we may think that contraception is a modern issue, Islamic medicine has known about contraception for centuries. The Muslim writers al-Razi (856–923 CE) and Avicenna (980–1037 CE) refer to different methods of contraception.

Islam is strongly pro-family and regards children as a gift from God. Muslim sexual ethics forbid sex outside of marriage, so Islam's teaching about birth control should

be understood within the context of husband and wife.

There is a range of Muslim views on this matter—

Islamic attitude towards family planning consists only of the opinion of jurists since the Qur'an and *sunna* of the Prophet say nothing about contraception. There are two contradictory views, both of which cite the Qur'an to support their opinions. The conservative group sees contraception as a form of abortion and quotes the Qur'anic verse, ‘Kill not your children, on a plea of want. We provide sustenance for you and for them’ (17.31). The liberal group led by the twelfth century scholar al-Ghazali (see page 313) uses the verse, ‘And one (God's) sign is, that he has created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and has ordained between you love and mercy’ (30.21) to support the use of contraception in certain circumstances.

Al-Ghazali argued that while abortion and infanticide were crimes against an existing being, contraception was different. While al-Ghazali accepted some of the motives for birth control, he rejected others as objectionable (*makruh*). Use of contraception for fear of having daughters is not allowed in Islam. Similarly, its use by women for personal reasons—such as that they dislike pregnancy or simply because they are not interested in having children—are not permitted (*mubah*) either. It must be noted, however, that it was the intent of contraception that was objectionable, not the concept of family planning itself.

Al-Ghazali supported use of contraceptives with one's wife to protect her from dangers of childbirth, or simply to preserve her beauty! He also supported the economic reasons for family planning such as the wish to limit the family to a manageable size. Another valid reason for practising contraception in Islam is the well-being of children. The presence of a nursing infant was a major reason for birth control. For those Muslims who follow al-Ghazali's reasoning and the fact that there is no record that the Prophet condemned withdrawal, all forms of reversible contraception, for example, condoms, intra-uterine devices, and the ‘pill’, are permissible if it is consensual between husband and wife. In the predominantly Muslim countries of Pakistan and Indonesia there are family limitation programs. More conservative Islamic leaders, however, have openly campaigned against the use of condoms or other birth control methods, thus making population planning in many countries ineffective.

The resistance to birth control was reflected in 2005, when a conference involving forty Islamic scholars from twenty-one countries urged fresh efforts to support population planning and better reproductive health services. While the participants were in favour of promoting the use of contraceptives for married couples, they were reluctant to make it part of their joint declaration for fear of reprisals from the more conservative Islamic scholars in their respective countries.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the principal ethical teachings of Islam.
- 2 **Recall** the major differences in the Sunni and Shi'i approaches to ethical decisions.
- 3 In your own words, **summarise** the circumstances under which al-Ghazali saw contraception as permissible.
- 4 **Outline** how the Muslim belief that everything should promote unity and harmony (see page 108 for al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*) **demonstrates** the principal teachings of Islam on sexual ethics.
- 5 Using specific examples, **describe** and **explain** Islamic ethical teachings on sexual ethics.

Extension



- 1 **Discuss** the statement: 'It is the "new issues" that are the ones that distinguish the differences in interpretations of sexual ethics issues in Islam.'
- 2 Using whatever means you can, **investigate** a specific example of sexual ethics to **demonstrate** the diversity of Muslim opinions. Prepare a report of your findings.
- 3 **Analyse** the application of Islamic ethical teachings to one issue of sexual ethics. Go to the web destinations for page 317 for a good starting point.

13.2.2 Bioethics

Glossary

bioethics

Bioethics is a science that sets a system of medical and environmental priorities for acceptable survival. In practical terms, it is a branch of ethics concerned with issues surrounding health care and the biological sciences. Such issues include the morality of abortion, euthanasia, **in-vitro fertilisation** and organ transplantation.

in-vitro fertilisation (IVF)

A method of assisted reproduction that involves the collection of ova (female eggs) and sperm, which are then fertilised in a lab, before implantation in the woman's uterus.

Did you know?

The term 'bioethics' was coined in 1970 by US biochemist Dr Van Rensselaer Potter as a bridge between science and humanity.

Islamic **bioethics** derives from a combination of principles, rights and duties, and, to a certain extent, a call to virtue (*ihsan*). Bioethical decision-making is carried out within a framework of values derived from revelation and tradition. Islamic bioethics emphasises the importance of preventing illness, but when prevention fails, it provides guidance not only for the physician but also to the patient. In Islam, life is sacred: every moment of life has great value, even if it is of poor quality. The saving of life is a duty and the unwarranted taking of life is a grave sin. The Qur'an affirms the reverence for human life:

... that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men.

Surat al-Ma'ida 5:32 'The Table'

And it is this passage that legitimises medical advances in saving lives and justifies the prohibition of both suicide and euthanasia:

... to protect human life in all stages and under all circumstances, doing [one's] utmost to rescue it from death, malady, pain and anxiety. To be, all the way, an instrument of God's mercy, extending ... medical care to near and far, virtuous and sinner and friend and enemy.

Oath of the Muslim Doctor, in the 1981 Islamic Code of Medical Ethics

Organ transplantation

Organ transplantation is practised in almost all Muslim countries. This generally involves kidney donations from living relatives, but donation from cadavers is increasing. The Qur'anic affirmation of bodily resurrection (*Surat al-Bayyina* 98:8 'The Clear Proof') determines many religious and moral decisions regarding cadavers.

Death is considered to have occurred when the soul has left the body, but this exact moment cannot be known with certainty. Death is therefore diagnosed by its physical signs. The concept of brain death was accepted by the majority of scholars and jurists at the Third International Conference of Islamic Jurists, in Amman, Jordan, in October 1986:

... the religious jurists based the view that if a person has reached, with certainty, the state of brain stem death, then such a person has departed from his life, and some of the rulings concerning death are applicable to him. This is in analogy to the juridical ruling about the person that reached the stage of 'movement of the slain'.

In view of all this, there was a consensus that if death of the brain stem is diagnosed with certainty, then disconnecting the person from artificial life support apparatus may be carried out.

Most, but not all, Muslim countries now accept brain death criteria. In Saudi Arabia, for example, about half of all kidneys for transplantation come from cadavers with the application of brain death criteria.

In-vitro fertilisation

The Islamic ruling on **in-vitro fertilisation** (IVF) is no exception to its rulings on mating and reproduction in general that have been already referred to. The procedure is acceptable and commendable to Islam but only if it solely involves husband and wife and if it is performed during the span of their marriage. The fusion of sperm and ovum (a step further than the sexual intercourse between man and woman) should take place only within the marriage contract. If the woman becomes widowed or divorced then the marriage contract has come to a conclusion, and stored semen of the husband would be alien to her.

Artificial insemination

Artificial insemination using the husband's semen (AIH) is acceptable as long as it remains between husband and wife, and provided that it is carried out during the span of their marriage. Its acceptability is based on the fact that the procedure takes place within an authentic marriage contract.

Artificial insemination by a donor (AID), however, is unacceptable to Islam. From the point of view of jurisprudence, Islamic law would not consider this practice adultery since it lacks the legal specifications, but morally it is considered nearly as sinful, and is legally punishable but not with the punishment of adultery. The child is not the fruit of the marriage contract and therefore robbed of its right to legitimacy.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the principal ethical teachings of Islam.
- 2 **Recall** the major differences in the Sunni and Shi'i approaches to ethical decisions.
- 3 **Outline** how the Muslim belief that everything should promote unity and harmony (see page 108 for al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*) **demonstrates** the principal teachings of Islam on bioethics.
- 4 Using specific examples, **describe** and **explain** Islamic ethical teachings on bioethics.

Extension



- 1 **Discuss** the statement: 'It is the "new issues" that are the ones that distinguish the differences in interpretations of bioethical issues in Islam.'
- 2 Using whatever means you can, **investigate** Muslim teachings on a specific bioethical issue. Prepare a report of your findings.
- 3 **Analyse** the application of Islamic ethical teachings to one issue of bioethics. Go to the web destinations for page 318 for a good starting point.

13.2.3 Environmental ethics

For a religious tradition that had its origins in the deserts of Arabia, it is not surprising that the environment features strongly in its sacred writings.

And there is no animal that walks upon the earth nor a bird that flies with its two wings but (they are) genera like yourselves; We have not neglected anything in the Book, then to their Lord shall they be gathered.

Surat al-An'am 6:38 'The Cattle'

And in the pastoral civilisation of seventh century Arabia, Prophet Muhammad had nationalised pastures, forests and water.

And the earth—We have spread it forth and made in it firm mountains and caused to grow in it of every suitable thing. And We have made in it means of subsistence for you and for him for whom you are not the suppliers. And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. And We send the winds fertilizing, then send down water from the cloud so We give it to you to drink of, nor is it you who store it up.

Surat al-Hijr 15:19–22 'Stoneland'



Figure 13.2.1 A desert region on the Arabian peninsula

Did you know?

The word *Shari'a* in Arabic literally means ‘the source of water from which you can drink without the need for an implement’; and Muslims performing the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) must not kill or harm animals (even insects), break or uproot plants, or hunt.

And He it is Who sends down water from the cloud, then We bring forth with it buds of all (plants), then We bring forth from it green (foliage) from which We produce grain piled up (in the ear); and of the palm-tree, of the sheaths of it, come forth clusters (of dates) within reach, and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, alike and unlike; behold the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it; most surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.

Surat al-An'am 6:99 'The Cattle'

In Islam, the relationship between humankind and the environment is part of social existence—an existence based on the fact that everything on earth glorifies and exalts the same God (*Surat al-Isra* 17:44 ‘The Night Journey’).

This worship is not merely based on ritual practice, since the rituals are simply the symbolic human manifestation of submission to God—the actual devotions are actions. It is humans, moreover, who are responsible for the welfare and sustenance of the global environment.

Unity, stewardship and accountability, that is, *tawhid*, *khalifa* and *akrah*, the three central concepts of Islam, are also the pillars of the environmental ethics of Islam. The relationship between humankind and the universe, as defined and clarified in the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet is as follows:

- a relationship of meditation on, and consideration and contemplation of, the universe and what it contains
- a relationship of sustainable utilisation, development and employment for humankind's benefit and for the fulfilment of its interests
- a relationship of care and nurture, for humankind's good works are not limited to the benefit of the human species, but rather extend to the benefit of created beings; and ‘there is a reward in doing good to every living thing’.

The concept of stewardship (*khalifa*) means that humans are only the managers, not the proprietors of the universe. They are thus entrusted with its care and maintenance—they should not abuse, misuse, or distort the natural resources as each generation is entitled to benefit from them. While the attitude of Islam to the environment, the sources of life and the resources of nature, is based in part on prohibition of abuse, it is also based on construction and sustainable development. *Khalifa* makes no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, and implies communal or common ownership of all environmental resources. Those who live in peace and harmony with nature are co-workers with God.

Partake of it gladly, so long as you are a benefactor, not a despoiler; a cultivator, not a destroyer.

'Ali ibn Abi Talib

Did you know?

It is a duty (*wajib*) upon Muslims to clean themselves with water before prayer (*wudu'*) and it is a devotional (*mandub*) action to have a bath before going to pray the congregational prayer on a Friday. Using water in the daily needs is *mubah* (normally permissible) but if there is a scarcity of water then to use water can become *makruh* (actions ranging from dislike to distaste) and even *haram* (prohibited). According to the tradition of the Prophet (*sunna*), he said 'do not waste' to someone who was using excessive amounts of water for *wudu'*. Muhammad was then asked whether there is wastage if water was used for the purpose of *wudu'*. He replied, 'In anything there can be waste.'

The practice

While Islam as a religion has a deep sense of respect and consideration for the natural environment, in practice, the current status quo in Muslim countries is not noticeably different from that in the rest of the world. In Muslim countries, the modern industrial culture has overtaken traditional culture and it is only in recent times that the environmental damage that comes with industrialisation has been realised. In Muslim countries, there are now areas in which development is forbidden so as to conserve natural resources, and wildlife reserves have also been introduced. There are also practical laws to safeguard water resources, to prevent overgrazing, to conserve and regenerate forests, and to limit the size of cities.

And do not make mischief in the earth after its reformation, and call on Him fearing and hoping; surely the mercy of Allah is nigh to those who do good (to others).

Surat al-'Araf 7:56 'The Heights'

International Union for Conservation of Nature

In 1994 Islamic members of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) issued this statement:

Islam promotes emphatically all measures that lead to the realisation of the common good and make it a tangible reality. In this light, it is imperative that the following principles be taken into consideration.

- 1 The conservation of the natural environment is a moral and ethical imperative.
- 2 Ethical teachings should be backed with legislation and effective enforcement of injunctions and prohibitions.
- 3 Through the institutional arrangements of society, conservation should be integrated with ecologically sustainable development.
- 4 Scientific and technical knowledge of the natural environment and the means of its conservation should continually be improved and developed through ongoing scientific research and monitoring.
- 5 The development of the earth, in order to be ecologically sustainable, should be planned and carried out in accordance with the natural constraints, ecological values and sensitivities, and inherent suitabilities of its various localities.
- 6 Developmental actions and projects undertaken in one country should not lead to any kind of damage, harm, or degradation in the natural environment of another country.
- 7 The natural environment and natural resources should not be subjected to any irreparable damage for the purpose of military or hostile actions.

They concluded with these words:

... the teachings of Islam promote all endeavours, whether local, regional, or international in scope, and call for the joining of concerted efforts in all fields to conserve, protect, and rehabilitate our natural environment. The challenge that faces us is unprecedented in its magnitude, and to meet it requires an enormous mobilisation of resources, sound strategies, and resolute action, so that we may, God willing, maintain and perpetuate a good and prosperous life for the present and future generations of mankind and all created beings.



Figure 13.2.2 In November 1999, Malaysia's eastern-most state of Sabah announced the formation of the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary to protect 27 000 hectares of wetlands on the island of Borneo. The Kinabatangan river flood plain is a precious site for wildlife and a vital source of fresh water for over 200 000 people.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the principal ethical teachings of Islam.
- 2 **Recall** the major differences in the Sunni and Shi'i approaches to ethical decisions.
- 3 **Identify** four quotations from the Qur'an and *hadith* that promote care of the environment.
- 4 **Outline** how the Muslim belief that everything should promote unity and harmony (see page 108 for al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*) **demonstrates** the principal ethical teachings of Islam on the environment.
- 5 Using specific examples, **describe** and **explain** Islamic ethical teachings on environmental ethics.

Extension



- 1 **Discuss** the statement: 'It is the "new issues" that are the ones that distinguish the differences between Sunni and Shi'i interpretations of ethical issues in Islam.'
- 2 Using whatever means you can, **investigate** a specific example of an environmental program in a Muslim country. Prepare a report of your findings. Go to the web destinations for page 321 for some good starting points.
- 3 **Analyse** the application of Islamic ethical teachings to one issue of environmental ethics. Go to the web destinations for page 321 for a good starting point.

13.3 Significant practices

Glossary

rite

A rite is a formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or is customary in a religious or other solemn use. Within the rite there are certain **rituals**; these are established or prescribed procedures and actions for the ceremony.

The **rituals** of Islam are the practical expression of the Muslim's desire to display his or her devotion to God and achieve God's pleasure and acceptance. They are not restricted only to actions to glorify God in prayer; rather, they have been extended to include all sectors of human activity. In Islam, 'ibada (worship) is everything one says or does for the pleasure of Allah. All the 'observances' connected with the five pillars (see pages 109–10) are classed as '**rites**'. The rules regarding rites represent an important part of the worshipping conduct in the daily life of a Muslim. Islamic law—*Shari'a*—sets down the prescriptions for the right conduct of prayer and pilgrimage.

Essentially, worship represents the relationship between the person and God. Islamic law has often linked ritual practices to people in order to enhance and share the spiritual experience. In congregational prayer, the individual's prayer becomes a group's worship and so deepens the spiritual links among them through their unity in practising the rituals. *Hajj* has definite timings and places, and each participant has to perform the pilgrimage within those timings and in those places; hence, performing *Hajj* evolves as a great social activity.

This section explores the funeral prayers (*Salat al-janaza*) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage) as two examples of public worship within Islam.

13.3.1 Funeral ceremony—*Salat al-janaza*

Glossary

fitna	Test or trials.
janaza	The Arabic word for bier—the frame or stand on which a corpse, or the coffin containing it, is laid before burial.
qibla	Direction of the Ka'ba at Mecca to which Muslims face when performing their daily ritual prayers.
tahajjud	Optional prayers that can be performed in the early to late hours of the night before dawn.
takbir	The act of exalting God, e.g. reciting the statement <i>Allahu Akbar</i> (God is most great).
wudu'	The means of obtaining ritual cleanliness by washing the exposed parts of the body—hands, feet and face—wiping the hair and rinsing the mouth and nostrils. One must be in a state of <i>wudu'</i> if the performance of ritual prayer is to be valid. There is also the major ablution, <i>ghusl</i> , that is carried out by all Muslims in general and specifically on the body of a dead before burial. <i>Tayammum</i> is the term used for the form of ablution to be performed when there is no water available, making use of clean sand or dry earth.

The Messenger of Allah came to us when his daughter died and said, 'Wash her three times, or five, or more than that if you think it necessary, with water and lotus leaves, and at the end put on some camphor, or a little camphor, and when you have finished let me know.' When we finished we told him, and he gave us his waist-wrapper and said, 'Shroud her with this.'

Malik's *Muwatta'*

Every soul will taste of death.

Surat al-'Imran 3:185 'The House of Imran'

When a Muslim is dying, the family gathers around to read the Qur'an and say prayers. If possible, before a Muslim dies, the call to prayer (*Adhan*) should be whispered into the person's ear. Just as this happened at birth, so Allah should be the last word a Muslim hears before death. After death, Muslims believe the soul waits in *barzakh* (place of waiting for Judgement Day). On Judgement Day, the dead will be restored to their bodies, hence, Muslims do not cremate their dead. During the judgement process, God will deal with everyone according to their beliefs and actions.

There are five main points for the preparation of a Muslim's body for final rest:

- body washing—*ghusl*
- shrouding—*kafan*
- funeral prayers—*Salat al-janaza*
- funeral procession
- burial.

In Islam, death is the beginning of eternal life. For all Muslims, performing the special rite of funeral prayers for the deceased is considered a highly significant and collective duty—*fard kifaya*. The *Salat al-janaza* is offered in congregation, facing the *qibla* with the *imam* in front. The prayer, unlike others, has neither bowing nor prostration, and is performed standing erect. All Muslims in the neighbourhood of the deceased and his or her relatives are expected to attend the rituals. The body of the deceased, facing the *qibla*, is placed on a stand in a place of prayer, a mosque or any other clean premises. Traditionally, coffins were not used for Muslim burials—in hot, dry countries a coffin was not necessary and was seen as a waste of natural resources. All participants in the prayer must perform an ablution—*wudu'*.

The funeral prayer is led by an *imam* (or the deceased's father) who must stand by the head of the body if the deceased is a man, and by the middle if it is a woman. If there is more than one body, then they should be put one in front of the other, those of the men nearest to the *imam* and those of the women furthest from him. Those who are praying divide themselves into rows behind the *imam*—everyone faces Mecca.

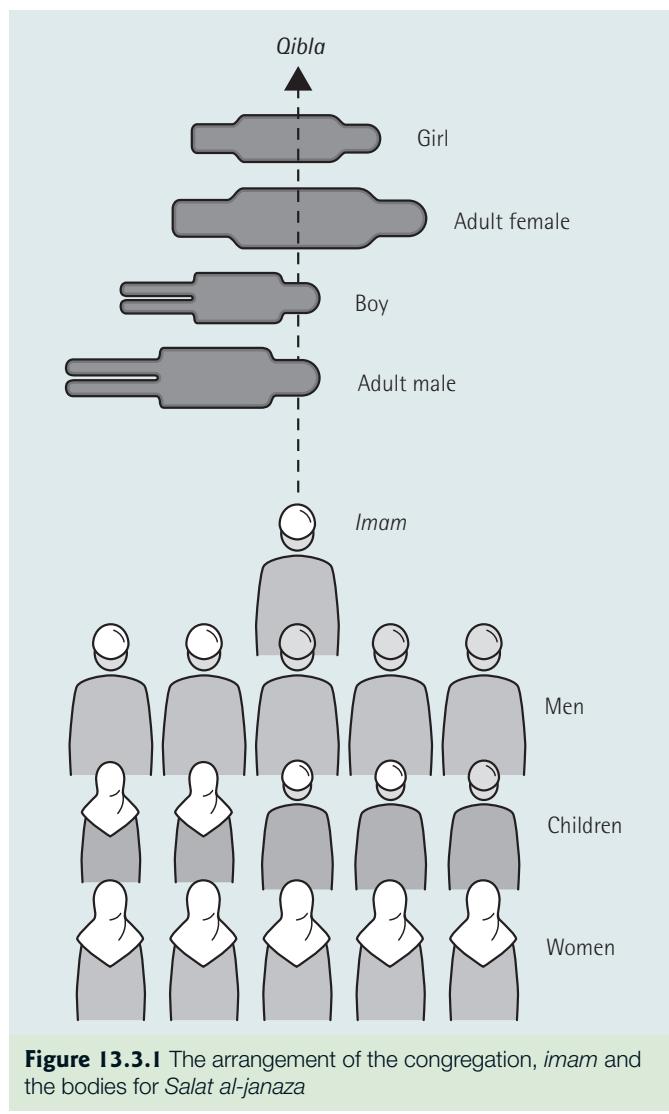


Figure 13.3.1 The arrangement of the congregation, *imam* and the bodies for *Salat al-janaza*

RESPOND

What reasons can you suggest for the different positions of the bodies in relation to the *imam*?

Yahya related to me from Malik that he had heard that 'Uthman ibn Affan and Abdullah ibn 'Umar and Abu Hurayra used to pray over the dead, both men and women, in Medina. They would put the men nearer to the *imam* and the women nearer to the *qibla*.

Malik's *Muwatta'*

Allah's Apostle informed the people about the death of al-Najashi [King of Abyssinia who helped Muslims migrate to his country] on the very day he died. He went towards the *Musalla* (praying place) and the people stood behind him in rows. He said four *takbirs* (that is, offered the Funeral prayer).

Hadith Bukhari

Abdullah ibn 'Umar used to say, 'No one should pray over a dead person unless he is in *wudu*'.

Malik's *Muwatta'*



Figure 13.3.2 Funeral at Lakemba Mosque, New South Wales

Did you know?

Islam does not insist that women come out for the *janaza* prayer, but if they are available then they should join other Muslims in the prayers. Of course, like other *salat*, this *salat* also requires *tahara* (being clean, not impure) and *wudu'* (having performed a spiritual washing). Women who are menstruating are not allowed to perform the *Salat al-janaza*.

The funeral prayer

The funeral prayer follows a set pattern and consists of four *takbir*.

- 1 Have the appropriate *niyyat* (intentions) in your heart.
 'I am reciting *salat* on this deceased with four *takbirs*, obligatory, for Allah's sake.'
- 2 Raise your hands in the usual manner and say *Allahu Akbar* (the first *takbir*); then fold your hands on your breast in the usual manner, the right hand on the left.
- 3 Read *al-Fatiha*—'The Opening' (the first *sura* of the Qur'an) quietly.
- 4 Say *Allahu Akbar* without raising the hands.
- 5 Pray for the Prophet in the same way you do in *tahajjud* at prayers.
 'O Allah! Grant peace to Muhammad and his family as you did to Ibrahim and his family. O Allah! Bless Muhammad and his family as you blessed Ibrahim and his family. Truly you are Most Glorious and Most Praiseworthy.'
- 6 Say *Allahu Akbar* (do not raise the hands).
- 7 Make *du'a* (supplication) for the deceased.
 'O Allah! Grant forgiveness to our living and to our dead, and to those who are present and to those who are absent, and to our elders and our children, to our men and women. O Allah! Those whom you grant to live, from among us, keep them alive in Islam, and those from us whom you give death, help them to die in faith.'
 'O Allah! Forgive him/her and have Mercy on him/her and keep him/her in protection and forgive him/her.'
- 8 Say *Allahu Akbar* (do not raise the hands).
- 9 Make *du'a* for the Muslims.
 'O Allah! Do not deprive us of his reward and after him/her, do not put us in *fitna* and pardon us and him/her and with him/her, have Mercy on us through your mercy, O Most Merciful.'
- 10 Say the concluding peace greetings *al-Salamu 'alaykum* right and left as in other prayers.
 'Peace be with you! Peace be upon you!'

For the funeral procession, after *Salat al-janaza*, mourners should walk in front of or beside the body. Those in cars should follow the procession. Silence is recommended and it is absolutely forbidden to accompany the body with music or loud crying.

Allah's Apostle said, 'A believer who accompanies the funeral procession of a Muslim out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's reward and remains with it till the funeral prayer is offered and the burial ceremonies are over, he will return with a reward of two Qirats [Qur'an recitations]. Each Qirat is like the size of the (Mount) Uhud. He who offers the funeral prayer only and returns before the burial, will return with the reward of one Qirat only.'

Hadith Bukhari

Muslims seek strength from the Qur'an during their bereavement, and pray for the dead person. They are taught to trust in Allah's goodness, and to accept death as a stage in their life, and not the end of it.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'ritual'.
- 2 **Recall** the five stages of the Muslim funeral ritual.
- 3 Design a flow chart to **describe** the key elements of Muslim funerary rituals.
- 4 **Demonstrate** three ways that Muslim death rituals reflect *al-Akhira*—Muslim beliefs about life and death.
- 5 **Analyse** the significance of *Salat al-janaza* for the family of the deceased and for the Muslim community.

Extension



- 1 **Investigate** the Muslim rituals for the preparation of the body, the funeral prayer and burial. **Explain** the symbolism of the rituals. Go to the web destinations for page 324 for a good starting point.
- 2 **Investigate** whether Muslims have had to change their funerary and burial rituals to accommodate Australian burial requirements. Are there any examples of local government authorities in Australia changing their regulations to allow a more traditional Muslim burial?

13.3.2 Pilgrimage—*Hajj*

Glossary

al-'Asr	The four obligatory prayers of the later afternoon.	rak'a (plural, rak'at)	A cycle or section of prayer.
al-Fajr	The two obligatory prayers between dawn and sunrise.	Ramadan	The ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar and also the Muslim month of fasting.
Hajj	The annual, week-long pilgrimage to Mecca (in modern-day Saudi Arabia), which is the fifth pillar of faith (see page 110). The complete <i>Hajj</i> occurs two months and ten days after Ramadan ends and culminates with ' <i>Id al-Adha</i> (the Festival of Sacrifice).	sa'y	The act of hurrying seven times back and forth between the hills of Safa and Marwa. Both these sites are now within the large mosque that houses the Ka'ba .
ihram	A state of consecration (dedication) in which Muslims remove their worldly clothing and put on the simple, white attire of pilgrims that is worn during ' <i>umra</i> or Hajj . For men, it consists of two seamless sheets of cloth, and simple white dresses and scarves for women. <i>Ihram</i> is also the name given to the first stage of <i>Hajj</i> . For those who have performed <i>Hajj</i> , the <i>ihram</i> can be used as their funeral wrapping.	talbiya	A prayer that asserts the pilgrim's conviction that the pilgrimage is only for the glory of Allah. This prayer is recited frequently throughout <i>Hajj</i> . Male pilgrims recite the <i>talbiya</i> loudly, whereas female pilgrims are required to recite it in a low voice.
al-'Isha'	The four obligatory prayers at night.	tashriq days	The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth days of <i>Dhu'l-Hijja</i> .
Ka'ba	The cube-shaped central shrine of Islam that is the focal point for daily prayer and the pilgrimage. Today it is in the mosque in Mecca.	tawaf	Prayers recited while moving in a circular, anticlockwise procession. There are different types of <i>tawaf</i> —for example, the <i>tawaf</i> performed by the pilgrim while walking seven times around the Ka'ba ; the <i>tawaf</i> performed as a rite of ' <i>umra</i> ; and <i>tawaf al-Ifada</i> , the last formal rite of <i>Hajj</i> .
al-Maghrib	The third of the five daily obligatory prayers performed after the disappearance of the sun below the horizon.	'umra	A set of religious and devotional rites performed in Mecca. ' <i>Umra</i> , or lesser <i>Hajj</i> , can be performed at any time during the year and, unlike <i>Hajj</i> , does not involve the rites at Mina, Muzdalifa and Arafat (see diagram on page 326).
nahr	The slaughter of an animal on the tenth day of <i>Hajj</i> . Today, instead of actually slaughtering an animal, pilgrims from overseas pay for <i>nahr</i> at <i>Hajj</i> offices and the animal is slaughtered for them with meat going to charity.	al-Zuhr	The second of the five daily obligatory prayers performed just after the sun is at its zenith.

Did you know?

According to the Qur'an, it was Abraham (Ibrahim) who, together with Ishmael (Isma'il), built the **Ka'ba**, 'the House of God', the focal point towards which Muslims turn in their worship five times each day. It was Abraham, too—known as Khalil Allah, 'the friend of God'—who established the rituals of the **Hajj**, which recall events or practices in his life and that of Hagar (Hajar) and their son Ishmael.

And accomplish the pilgrimage and the visit for Allah, but if, you are prevented, send whatever offering is easy to obtain, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination; but whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head, he should effect a compensation by fasting or alms or sacrificing, then when you are secure, whoever profits by combining the visit with the pilgrimage should take what offering is easy to obtain; but he who cannot find any offering should fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days when you return; these make ten days complete; this is for him whose family is not present in the Sacred Mosque, and be careful of your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is severe in requiting evil.

Surat al-Baqara 2:196 'The Cow'

Hajj is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation upon adult men and women whose health and means permit it, or, in the words of the Qur'an, upon 'those who can make their way there'. It is not an obligation on children, though some children do accompany their parents on this journey. It is an essential part of Muslims' faith and practice. The rites of the Hajj are elaborate, numerous and varied. These rites symbolise the essential concepts of Islam and commemorate the trials of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his family. Over two million Muslims perform the pilgrimage annually, and all Muslims celebrate the 'Id al-Adha festival in conjunction with Hajj.

Before setting out, the pilgrim should redress all wrongs, pay all debts, plan to have enough funds for their own journey and for the maintenance of their family while they are away, and prepare themselves for good conduct throughout the Hajj.

The Prophet said: 'Islam does not allow for failure to perform the Hajj.'

Hadith Abu Da'ud



Figure 13.3.3 The 'Id al-Adha festival at the Lakemba Mosque

Ihram	'Umra	Going to Mina Noon, the 8th	Going to Arafat Morning, the 9th	Going to Muzdalifa After sunset, the 9th
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean yourself (<i>ghusl</i>) Wear <i>ihram</i> garments Make intention for '<i>umra</i> Recite <i>talbiya</i> Avoid forbidden acts of <i>ihram</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make <i>tawaf</i> around the Ka'bā Pray two <i>rak'at</i> behind Maqam Ibrahim (Ibrahim's Station) Make <i>sa'y</i> between Safa and Marwa Trim hair and remove <i>ihram</i> garments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put on the <i>ihram</i> garments again Make intention for <i>Hajj</i> Remain in Mina for the Tarwīyah Day (8th day of <i>Dhu'l-Hijja</i>) and perform five prayers starting with <i>al-Zuhr</i> prayer and ending with <i>al-Fajr</i> prayer on the day of Arafat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave for Arafat on the 9th day of <i>Dhu'l-Hijja</i> and stay until sunset Stay in any part of Arafat Glorify Allah, repeat supplication, repent to Allah and ask for forgiveness Pray <i>al-Zuhr</i> and <i>al-'Asr</i>, shortened and combined at the time of <i>Zuhr</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave Muzdalifa soon on the 9th day of <i>Dhu'l-Hijja</i> Perform <i>al-Maghrib</i> and <i>al-'Isha'</i> prayers ('<i>Isha'</i> is shortened to two <i>rak'at</i>) Stay overnight and perform <i>al-Fajr</i> prayer
Going home	Farewell <i>tawaf</i> After the 12th	Return to Mina On the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th	<i>Tawaf al-Ifadha</i> On the 10th or after	Proceed to Mina Sunrise, the 10th
<p>It is preferable to visit the Prophet's Mosque at Medina, but this is not part of <i>Hajj</i></p> <p>10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to Mecca and make farewell <i>tawaf</i>. Perform two <i>rak'at</i> of <i>tawaf</i> Let the <i>tawaf</i> be the last thing you do in Mecca <p>9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend the <i>tashriq</i> days in Mina After <i>al-Zuhr</i> each day, stone the three <i>jamrat</i> (stone pillars), starting from the small and ending with <i>Jamra al-'Aqaba</i> You may leave on the 12th after stoning the <i>jamrat</i>, but it must be before sunset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make <i>sa'y</i> between Safa and Marwa After <i>tawaf al-Ifadha</i> all restrictions are lifted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortly after sunrise, leave Muzdalifa for Mina. Go to <i>Jamra al-'Aqaba</i> and stone it with seven pebbles Perform <i>nahr</i> Shave head and trim hair Take off <i>ihram</i> garments (all <i>ihram</i> restrictions are lifted except for sexual intercourse)

Figure 13.3.4 The *Hajj* journey

The symbols of Hajj

- ***ihram***: The white garments are symbolic of human equality and unity before God, since all pilgrims are dressed similarly. Money and status are no longer a factor for the pilgrims—the equality of each person before God becomes foremost.
- ***tawaf***: While performing the initial *tawaf* at the Ka‘ba, pilgrims recite: ‘Here I am at your service, O God. Here I am!’ This is meant to awaken each Muslim’s consciousness that God is the centre of their reality and the source of meaning in life, and that each person’s self-identity derives from being part of the community of Muslim believers (*ummah*).
- ***sa'y***: Performing *sa'y* re-enacts the biblical and Qur'anic story of Hajar's desperate search for life-giving water and food.
- ***jamra*** (stoning the pillars): This symbolises Abraham's stone throwing at Satan when he tried to dissuade Abraham from sacrificing his son.
- ***nahr***: This is a re-enactment of the story of Abraham who, in place of his son, sacrificed a sheep that God had provided. The meat from the slaughtered sheep is distributed to family, friends, and poor and needy people in the community. Money given for *nahr* is distributed to charity.

Muslims believe that the rites of *Hajj* were designed by God and taught by the Prophet Muhammad. The *Hajj* is designed to develop God consciousness and a sense of spiritual rebirth. It is also believed to be an opportunity to seek forgiveness of sins accumulated throughout life. Prophet Muhammad had said that a person who performs *Hajj* properly ‘will return as a newly born baby [free of all sins]’. It is also an opportunity for Muslims from all over the world to come together to worship the One God.

The experience for me, because I'm Australian-born and I've never really been outside of Australia, it was a very, very, very intriguing experience ... and it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience because I haven't seen anything like it ... You see people from all walks of life and it's very extraordinary because you'll see that there is no difference between the white man and the black man, the red man and the yellow man, the rich man and the poor man. People are all humble together. You couldn't see the difference if this man owned a million dollars or if he owned nothing.

Oman Saghir, ABC News, 27 November 2009

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** ‘ritual’.
- 2 ‘The rites of *Hajj* symbolise the essential concepts of Islam.’
 - a **Outline** the essential concepts of Islam (refer to the pillars of faith on pages 109–10).
 - b Design a flow chart to **describe** the key elements of *Hajj*.
- 3 **Demonstrate** how *Hajj* expresses the beliefs of Islam.
- 4 **Analyse** the significance of *Hajj* for the individual and for the Muslim community.

Extension

- 1 Organise a visit from a representative of the local Islamic Centre or mosque to speak about the spirit of *Hajj* and describe how Muslims celebrate ‘*Id al-Adha*’.
- 2 Interview a Muslim who has performed *Hajj*. Ask them if and how their life has changed as a result. If this is not possible, you can find articles about people’s *Hajj* journeys on the internet.

Conclusion

Islam, the world’s second most followed religion can be summed up in the two sentences: ‘There is no god but God’ and ‘Muhammad is the messenger of God’. Everyone and everything depends upon Allah and it is through the guidance of the Qur'an and the example set by the Prophet’s life that Muslims cultivate an understanding of God and surrender themselves to the will of God. The relationship between the individual and God and with the community is expressed in the living out of the five pillars and following *Shari'a*.

Throughout its history, there have been shifts in how Islam views significant people and schools of thought, and the modern world has brought new challenges to Islamic jurisprudence in regard to ethical issues. Muslims living in Australia have not always found it easy to ‘live out’ their religion according to *Shari'a* and have had to confront misconceptions about their beliefs and practices. Today, however, the practices of Islam are a normal part of Australia’s religious landscape.



Figure 13.3.5 The fast ends ... A scout leader offers dates to female Muslim scouts at Bankstown marking the end of Ramadan, *'Id al-Fitr*.

RESPOND

Investigate the symbolism of the offering of dates at the end of Ramadan.

NOTE!

Photographs of Muslims ‘living out’ their beliefs appear in Australian newspapers with captions that accept that Muslim practices are known to the readership.

Extension

- 1 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 2 Organise your media file and **classify** it under the headings ‘Islam in Australia’ and ‘Islam and the world’. Does your file add to your understanding of Islam as a lived religion? Prepare a report that **analyses** how the media report on Islam. Are the media interested in what you have been studying in this chapter?
- 3 **Synthesise** the main features related to Muslim people, ideas, ethics and practices in this chapter in the form of a flow chart or mind map.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



HSC-style exam questions

Section II

- Studies of Religion I: answer ONE question from this section.
- Studies of Religion II: answer TWO questions from TWO different religious traditions in this section.

Marks

Question 4—Islam (15 marks)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| a | Describe the application of Islam's ethical teachings on ONE of the following areas: | 4 |
| | – bioethics | |
| | – environmental ethics | |
| | – sexual ethics | |
| b | Describe the contribution to Islam made by ONE significant individual or school of thought, other than Muhammad and the four 'rightly guided' caliphs. | 4 |
| c | Assess the impact of the individual or school of thought chosen in part (b) on Islam. | 7 |

To check your understanding of the style of questions for Section II and Section III, go to 'Support materials for the Studies of Religion HSC examinations' on the NSW Board of Studies website; or go to the web destination for page 329.



Section III

- Studies of Religion I and Studies of Religion II: answer ONE question from this section that is from a different religious tradition to the question(s) answered in Section II.

Question 4—Islam (20 marks)

Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been manifest in error.

Surat al-'Imran 3:164 'The Family of Imran'

Discuss the importance of revelation in the life of Muslims.

Chapter 14

Judaism depth study

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **explain** the contribution to and **analyse** the impact of one significant person or school of thought on the development and expression of Judaism
- **describe** and **explain** Jewish ethical teachings on one ethical area
- **describe** one significant practice within Judaism, **demonstrate** how this practice expresses the beliefs of Judaism and **analyse** its significance for both the individual and the Jewish community.



A scribe checks the contents of a Torah fragment, which contains four brief passages, two from Exodus (13:1–10, 13:11–17) and two from Deuteronomy (6:4–9, 11:13–22).

The scroll is rolled tightly and then carefully placed in the *tefillin shel yad*, the *tefillin* that is wrapped around the arm for use in the synagogue service (see Figure 6.4.2, page 134).

While the passages are the same, there are different prescriptions for the *tefillin shel rosh*, which is placed on the forehead. Prescriptions are closely followed to ensure that the requirements of the *halachah* are fulfilled.

14.1 Significant people and ideas

There have been scores of influential characters who have richly embroidered the tapestry of Judaism over the ages. Of these, the most notable must be Moses, who brought his people out of slavery in Egypt and delivered them to the Promised Land in Canaan. Along the way, he repeatedly challenged them; he brought them the Law and the books that are the cornerstone of Jewish belief and practice. Many followed Moses—teaching, challenging, shaping, inspiring.

Glossary

Bavli	The Babylonian Talmud . There were, in fact, two versions of the Talmud written (see page 131).
Diaspora	The dispersion of Jews, caused by the Exile into Babylon and other scatterings of the Jewish people across all ages. Today it is the generic term used to refer to all Jews who live outside the modern State of Israel, founded in 1948.
exegete	Person skilled in explaining and interpreting difficult passages from scripture.
Judaica	Historical, literary and religious objects and information relating to Judaism.
Mishnah	Completed c. 200 CE, the Mishnah was the Oral Law established in written form. The Oral Law had developed among the teachers of the Second Temple period as the interpretation and development of the Torah. The Mishnah has six divisions: (i) laws of prayer and agriculture; (ii) laws of Sabbath and holy days; (iii) laws of marriage and divorce, including the status of women; (iv) civil and criminal laws; (v) laws about the Temple; (vi) laws about ritual cleanliness. There are sixty-three tractates (books or sections) in all.
pogroms	(Russian: devastation, destruction.) Organised mass killings, especially of Jews.
responsa	The formulations of questions and the rabbinical responses concerning the dual Torah—Oral and Written—that flowed back and forth across the Jewish world from the early Middle Ages. The term is used also to refer to the modern written rabbinical dialogue on ethical and moral issues.
Talmud	Written c. 200–500 CE, two bodies of work that formed systematic commentaries on the Mishnah (see pages 130–1).
Tosafot	A term meaning ‘additions’. The <i>Tosafot</i> is a class of writing, chiefly the critical and explanatory notes to Rashi’s Talmud commentary.
yeshivot	<i>Yeshivot</i> are Jewish religious academies. The Talmud is the major subject of study at a yeshiva (singular).

This section examines two other influential individuals, and one school of thought: Rashi, the French scholar of the eleventh century, whose important commentary on the **Talmud** had a decisive influence on Talmudic scholarship;

Moses Maimonides, a twelfth-century scholar who codified the Torah; and the *Chasidim*, a movement that provides a counterpoint to the rushing tide of modernity that constantly challenges the priorities of the Jewish community at large.

Extension

- 1 Update the Jewish list in your workbook with the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file of newspaper articles, and monitor television news and programs to do with significant Jewish figures, practices and ethics. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics.

14.1.1 Rashi—Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040–1105)

RaShI is an acronym for Rabbi Solomon (Hebrew: *Shlomo*) ben Isaac, the famous French Talmudic scholar. Rashi lived and died in the town of Troyes in the Champagne region of north-eastern France. He had completed substantial studies and was acting as a rabbi in Troyes by the age of twenty-five. Nonetheless, he seems to have been only a part-time scholar (albeit a scholar of the broadest learning in *Judaica*). We know this because he seems to have depended on his vineyards and wine production to sustain him financially. His achievements, given this limitation on his time and energies, are all the more remarkable.

His key work was his commentary on the Talmud. Rashi's commentary has been considered so important that it has been printed in all versions of the Talmud since the

printing press was invented in the fifteenth century. It is always printed on the inner column of the page, closest to the book's binding (see page 333 for an illustration of a page of the Talmud). One measure of the importance of Rashi's commentary on the Talmud is the fact that no scholar has since tried to supersede his work. On the contrary, many Jewish scholars have provided centuries of 'commentaries on the commentary', adding to the deeply layered terrain of Jewish sacred writings.

Unlike some other commentaries, Rashi's work does not paraphrase or exclude any part of the text, but carefully elucidates the whole of the text. Rashi also did important work in examining the different forms of the Talmud that had emerged by his time. He exerted a decisive influence on establishing the correct text of the Talmud; he compared different manuscripts and determined which readings should be preferred.

Rashi script

In traditional editions of the Talmud, Rashi's commentary is printed in a particular script to distinguish it from other scripts. Known as 'Rashi script', or *ktav Rashi*, it is derived from Spanish cursive script.

Rashi script was created by a Christian, Daniel Bomberg, an early sixteenth-century publisher in Venice. Bomberg completed the first complete editions of both the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmuds, the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi* (see page 131 for further details).

Most modern printings of Rashi's commentary use the standard Hebrew block script or a modern variant of it. The exception is in the Talmudic editions produced in Israeli Ultra-Orthodox *yeshiva* circles, which print Rashi's commentary in *ktav Rashi*, in keeping with tradition. Because of its limited use, Rashi script is not widely read by many Jews.

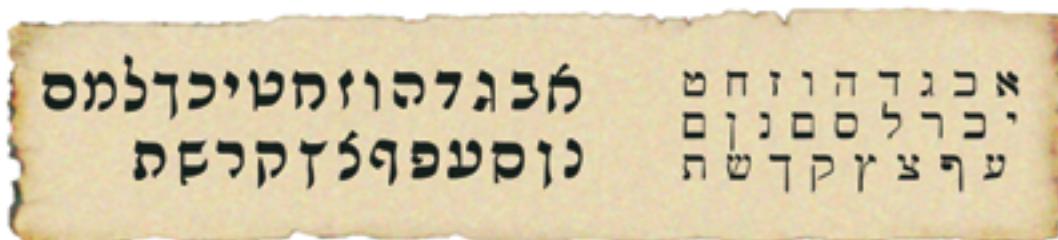


Figure 14.1.1 'Rashi script' or *ktav Rashi* (on the left) as opposed to the regular Hebrew block script (on the right). This script marks out Rashi's commentary as distinctive in Hebrew editions of the Talmud.

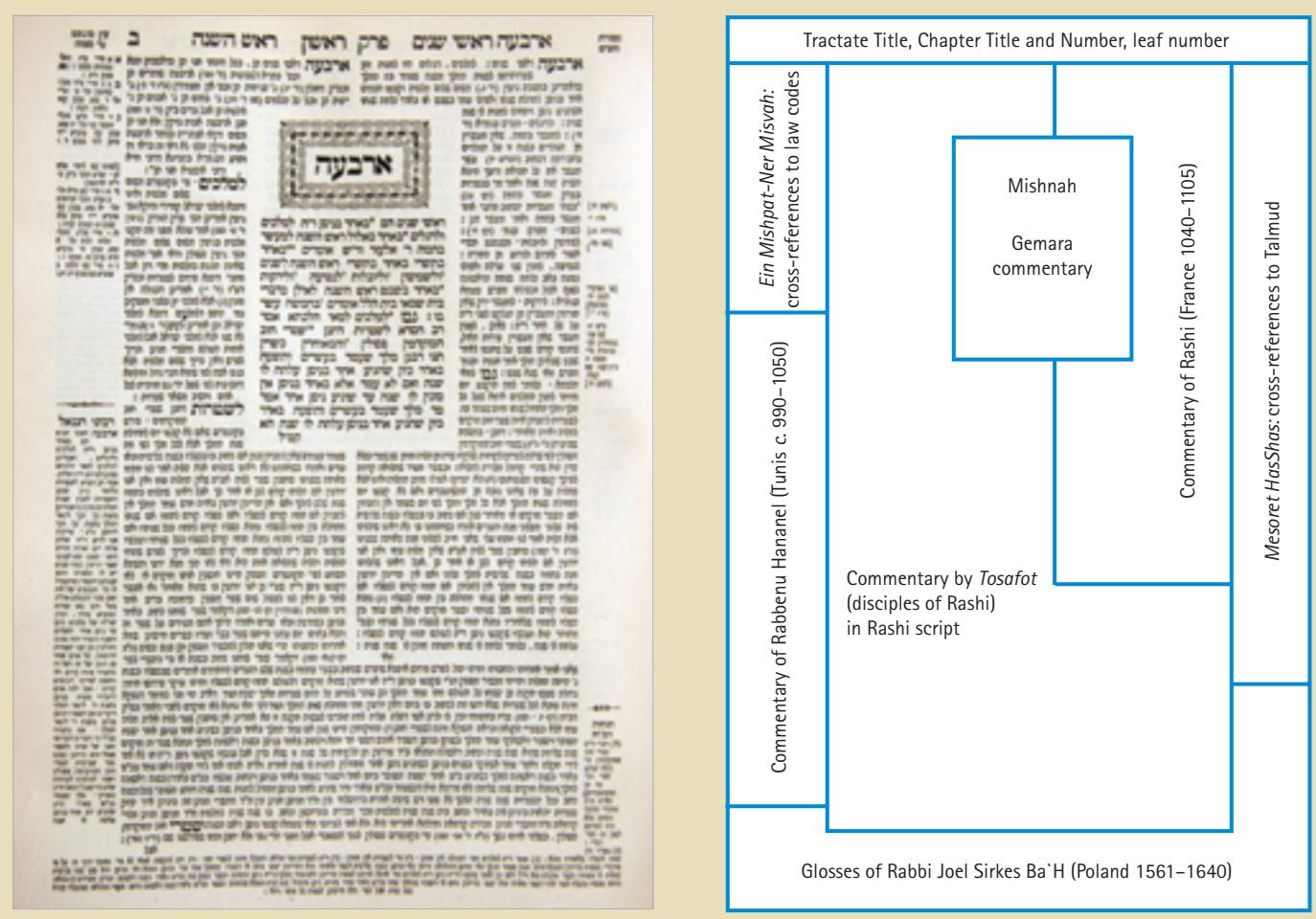


Figure 14.1.2 Layout of a typical page of the Talmud. It is the opening page (leaf 2) of the tractate *Rosh ha-Shanah* from a standard (Vilna) printed edition of the Babylonian Talmud. *Rosh ha-Shanah* has four chapters and contains the rules for proclaiming New Moon, for the New Year liturgy and for the blowing of the *shofar*. Rashi's commentary is traditionally printed along the edge of the page closest to the book's binding.

Rashi's commentary covers virtually the whole of the Babylonian Talmud (*Bavli*). Some of the commentary attributed to Rashi was not written by him, but completed by his students, among them his sons-in-law and his grandson. Rashi's students contributed to a whole class of Jewish writing known as the *Tosafot*. What made Rashi's commentary so special was its clarity, its insightfulness and his seemingly limitless knowledge of the rabbinic scholarship that had preceded him. These factors made Rashi's commentary the model that shaped future generations of rabbinic commentary.

Rashi's work, and that which it inspired, greatly extended knowledge of the Talmud. Rashi's influence increased the number of *yeshivot* in France, making them well known and important to Jewish scholars. One of the external factors that contributed to their importance occurred when the *yeshivot* of the Rhineland were destroyed in the *pogroms* of the First Crusade (1096), forcing surviving scholars to go to France to continue their study.

Ultimately, Rashi's influence spread beyond France to the rest of the **Diaspora**. In the centuries before the printing press was invented in the fifteenth century, disseminating works widely was difficult and slow. Some of Rashi's work was lost with the expulsion of Jews from France and the burning of Hebrew books in the thirteenth century. But so great was his influence and so rapid was the spread of his ideas that Rashi's commentary reached the whole of the Jewish world.

Rashi's influence even spread beyond Judaism. The fourteenth century Christian monk and **exegete**, Nicholas of Lyra, heavily used Rashi's commentary in writing his own exegesis, which in turn was used extensively by Martin Luther (the German theologian) in his writings.

Today Rashi stands as one of the great rabbis of the Jewish tradition.

Did you know?

In his commentary, Rashi frequently uses expressions from his native French, which he transliterates into Hebrew characters. These have become known as *la'azim*, and there are over 3000 of them in Rashi's commentary on the Talmud, making up a vocabulary of over 2000 words. They are easily transliterated back into the original French, and have proved valuable in the phonological (language pronunciation) and lexicographical (the study of words) reconstruction of Old French.

Review

- 1 **Identify** the evidence presented in this section that indicates Rashi's importance to Judaism.
- 2 What is the connection between the importance of the Talmud to Judaism and the work of Rashi?
- 3 **Explain** the contribution of Rashi to the development and expression of Judaism.

Extension



- 1 'Rashi exerted a decisive influence on establishing the correct text of the Talmud; he compared different manuscripts and determined which readings should be preferred.' Using material in this section and also with reference to Chapter 6, pages 130–1, **analyse** the importance of this achievement for Judaism.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 334 to see how a page of the Talmud looks and how it is structured. **Examine** the page and **synthesise** what it tells you about the importance of Rashi's commentary.

14.1.2 Moses Maimonides (1135–1204)

A pivotal individual of the teachings of Judaism is a philosopher who emerged out of the Jewish Golden Age in Spain. His name was Moses Maimonides, known in rabbinical literature as RaMBaM, an acronym derived from his given name: Rabbi Mosheh ben Maimon.

Moses Maimonides was born in the city of Córdoba, Spain, which was under Muslim rule. There he received



Figure 14.1.3 Bronze statue of Maimonides in Córdoba, Spain

an extensive Jewish and secular education. Following religious troubles in his homeland, Maimonides settled in Fez, Morocco, when he was twenty-five years old. He studied the Torah there with Rabbi Judah ha-Kohne, and also medicine, law, astronomy and philosophy with Muslim teachers. At just fifteen, Maimonides had written an essay on logic—he was, it seems, always a scholar. In 1158 he began writing his *Commentary on the Mishnah* (see Glossary, page 331). He wrote it in Arabic, the everyday language of the Jews under Muslim rule, so that the Mishnah would be understandable to Jews.

Maimonides' reputation grew steadily, and the authorities began to inquire into the religious disposition of this highly gifted young man. He was even charged by an informer with the crime of having relapsed from Islam. These circumstances caused Maimonides and his family to leave Fez in 1165. They went to Acre, then to Jerusalem, and finally to Fustat (Cairo) in Egypt where they settled.

Although Maimonides could have earned a living from his scholarly abilities, he believed that one should not earn money from the knowledge of Torah. Instead, he became a physician.

In 1177 Maimonides was recognised as head of the Jewish community of Fustat (today in Old Cairo). His duties included being a judge, an administrator who appointed officials for the community, and a supervisor of charitable organisations. In 1185 Maimonides was appointed physician to the court of the adviser to the sultan Salah al-din, and his achievements in medical research and writing brought widespread recognition.

Despite his busy schedule, Maimonides continued writing books. He produced ten medical works in Arabic. Jews

from many countries wrote him letters asking for his opinion on Jewish law, and he wrote responses to those questions. All of Maimonides' works were recognised as great contributions in his own lifetime. Maimonides died in 1204 in Fustat, but was buried in Tiberias in Israel. His gravesite is famous to this day. So influential were his works that people said of him, 'from Moses until Moses, there was none like Moses.'

Maimonides' writings

The most famous of Maimonides' works are the Hebrew masterpieces *Mishneh Torah* and *Guide for the Perplexed*, and a commentary on the Talmud (*Kitab al-Siraj*). In 1178, after ten years of work, he completed the fourteen volumes of the *Mishneh Torah*, which distilled the Talmud and all the *responsa* of the Jewish scholars into a simple code that the layperson could understand without lengthy Talmudic study. Maimonides continued to revise the work throughout the rest of his life.

Between 1185 and 1190 he completed the *Dalalat al-Ha'in* (Arabic), often known by its Hebrew title *Moreh Nevukhim*—*Guide for the Perplexed*. It was a monumental philosophical and theological work of extraordinary importance, not only for the rational development of Judaism, but for the history of philosophy in the Middle Ages. The object of the work is explained by Maimonides in the following terms:

I have composed this work neither for the common people, nor for beginners, nor for those who occupy themselves only with the Law as it is handed down without concerning themselves with its principles. The design of this work is rather to promote the true understanding of the real spirit of the Law, to guide those religious persons who, adhering to the Torah, have studied philosophy and are embarrassed by the contradictions between the teachings of philosophy and the literal sense of the Torah.

The term *Mishneh Torah* means 'The Second Law' and is the name used in the Bible itself to designate the Book of Deuteronomy, which is a kind of summary or review of the rest of the Torah. The *Mishneh Torah* is sometimes referred to as the *Yad Ha'Chazakah*, 'the mighty arm'. This is a play on the numerical value of the Hebrew word for 'arm' (*yad*) which means 'fourteen'—the number of volumes in this code.

Did you know?

According to the Muslim historian al-Kitti, Maimonides declined an appointment as physician to the court of 'the King of the Franks [Richard I of England] in Ascalon'. The coastal city of Ashkelon, in modern day Israel, is 58 kilometres south of Tel Aviv.

Some distinctive features of the *Mishneh Torah*

- It encompasses the full range of Jewish law as formulated for all ages and places. Most other Jewish law codes confined themselves to laws that were in force in their own times and lands (thereby excluding rules that apply only in the land of Israel under an independent Jewish kingdom) or which could not be observed following the destruction of the Temple.
- It completely reorganises and reformulates the laws in a clear and logical system. Earlier codes had followed the Talmud's sometimes haphazard arrangement, with only a few attempts to improve on that order.
- It presents the standard rulings without any discussion or explanation on how the decisions were reached.
- It contains a section on systematic philosophical theology, derived largely from the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and Muslim philosophers, which it regards as the most important component of Jewish law. Maimonides' interpretation of Jewish religion in terms of Greek ideas aroused much opposition.

Of central importance to Judaism is Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith (see page 125) which he enumerated in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*. These have been a guide to the principal beliefs of Judaism for centuries, and have been incorporated into most Jewish prayer books.

The thirteenth and final principle of Maimonides' Fundamental Articles of Faith is the belief in the resurrection of the dead (*Techiyat Hameitim*). Maimonides dealt summarily with the question of resurrection and did not elaborate upon it as he did with regard to the other Articles of Faith. Consequently, some of his contemporaries criticised him for his treatment of this important topic. In order to dispel all doubts concerning his stand on this question, Maimonides wrote, some twenty-five years later, his Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead. In it he reiterates unequivocally that belief in *Techiyat Hameitim* is an integral and indispensable principle of Torah faith:

And I will state that the resurrection of the dead which is widely known and recognised among our people, which is accepted by all groups among us, which is mentioned

on numerous occasions in the *tefillot*, *Aggadot*, and supplications that were composed by the Prophets and the great Sages, who fill the pages of the Talmud and the *Midrashim*—refers to the return of the soul to the body after it had departed.

Concerning this, there has never been heard any disagreement in our nation, nor does it have any [allegorical] interpretation [other than its literal meaning]. Nor is it permissible to rely upon any individual who believes otherwise.

Did you know?

As a young man, Maimonides spent many years fleeing from Muslim persecution. But in his later years, the most brutal attacks he had to endure were from his fellow Jews—his opponents proscribed parts of his code and all of the *Guide for the Perplexed*.

Maimonides' influence

Maimonides' writings enriched medieval Judaism by giving it a new philosophical language. He also attempted to purge Judaism of any superstitions he thought it had accrued over the ages. Disagreeing with one prominent rabbinic opinion, Maimonides did not regard the possibility of prophecy to have vanished with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, and—unlike a great theological predecessor a century earlier, Judah Halevi—he did not regard true prophecy as being confined to the Jews.

A famous Jew profoundly influenced by Maimonides

Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), a key figure in the emergence of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), grew up in his hometown ghetto in Dessau, Germany, absorbed in the combination of secular and Talmudic scholarship and Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. The young Mendelssohn walked to Berlin and there studied science and German language and literature (he was a native Yiddish speaker). He went on to become a famous figure in the unfolding German Enlightenment. The German playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote two plays with characters based on Mendelssohn—*The Jew* and *Nathan the Wise*. In these plays, the main character is portrayed as an enlightened thinker and possessor of a long and proud tradition. This was radically different from the stereotype of the Jew that was common at the time.

Today Jewish professional groups see Maimonides as defining the essence of what each and every Jew should be doing when faced with the demands of both their everyday work and Torah study—that is, making sure that Torah study and living have a place in their busy lives:

Every person among Israel is obligated to learn Torah. Whether he be poor or rich, complete in body or afflicted, young or old; even a person dependent on charity by going from door to door; and even a married person with children: all are obligated to fix a time for Torah study by day and by night, because it says 'And you shall meditate in it day and night' (Joshua 1:8). Among the greatest in Israel were choppers of wood and drawers of water ... and even so, they busied themselves with Torah, day and night. They were part of the ancient traditions stretching back to Moses our teacher.

Mishneh Torah 1:8:9

It is preferable to spend more on gifts to the poor than on the Purim meal or presents to friends. For no joy is greater or more glorious than the joy of gladdening the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the strangers. Indeed, the one who causes the hearts of strangers to rejoice emulates the Divine Presence.

Mishneh Torah 3:2:17

Review

- 1 **Identify** the evidence presented in this section that indicates Maimonides' importance to Judaism.
- 2 **Propose**, in complete sentences, the personal qualities that you believe a person such as Moses Maimonides would have had to be scholar, judge, administrator, doctor, author and community leader. Is it possible for one man or woman to have such a range of roles in our world today? Why or why not?
- 3 **Construct** a two-column table. From what you have read, in the first column state what aspects of Judaism Maimonides maintained (that is, reinforced but did not change). In the second column state what Maimonides introduced to Judaism that was new (that is, ways in which he took the thinking of Judaism forward).

Extension

- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, find out more about Moses Mendelssohn. Then analyse the influence of Maimonides on Moses Mendelssohn.
- 2 Investigate Maimonides' writings further and rank them in the order of their importance as you understand it.

14.1.3 The Chasidim

Glossary

assimilation	The process whereby a cultural, ethnic or religious group takes on the habits, customs and practices of the dominant culture.
menorah	A seven-branched candelabrum, resembling the one kept burning in the ancient Temple. Along with the Star of David, it is one of the main Jewish symbols.
Rebbe	The name given by <i>Chasidic</i> Jews to their charismatic leader. <i>Rebbe</i> is Yiddish for teacher. Yiddish is the Germanic-derived language of Ashkenazi Judaism (see Chapter 6, page 122).
tzaddik	The term used to refer to the leaders of <i>Chasidic</i> groups, meaning 'righteous man' in Hebrew. <i>Chasidim</i> believe that in each age there is one <i>tzaddik</i> who may in fact be the incarnation of the Messiah, and will herald the beginning of the messianic age if the generation has been dutifully observant of all the commandments of the Torah.

The revivalist movement known as *Chasidic* Judaism is, in some ways, a rejection of the world of modernity. This is in sharp contrast to all other modern forms of Judaism, which are an attempt, to a greater or lesser degree, to accommodate the experience of modernity. Today it is sometimes assumed that all so-called Ultra-Orthodox Jews are *Chasidim*, but in fact there are very strict Orthodox Jews who are completely opposed to *Chasidism*. *Chasidism* has its roots in eighteenth-century Eastern Europe, in the life of its founder, Israel Ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov.



Figure 14.1.4 Sefer Torah dedication at Chabad House of the North Shore, St Ives, New South Wales. The parading of the new Torah is a Jewish custom. It honours God and God's word. It also affirms that the Torah belongs to all, and should always be on our lips, 'sweet as honey' (Ezek 3:3).

The Baal Shem Tov (c. 1700–1760) and the Chasidim

Israel Ben Eliezer was born in Okup in the Carpathian Mountains, Ukraine, around 1700. He was orphaned at a young age, and was raised within a Jewish community that was profoundly influenced by *Kabbalah* (see feature box on page 338). He worked as a teacher's assistant and later as an innkeeper in the mountains, and he also took part in the practice of meditation. He became known as a healer and a charismatic figure. So charismatic was he that today much of his life is surrounded by wondrous legends. Perhaps as a response to the crisis of persecutions suffered by Jews in seventeenth-century Poland, he eventually founded the *Chasidic* movement. Strongly influenced by *Kabbalah*, the Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name), as he became known, taught his followers to 'cleave to God', which involved making every living moment an opportunity to experience the presence of God. The Baal Shem Tov is also known by his acronym, BeShT. Prayer was more important than Torah study to the Baal Shem Tov, and he encouraged his followers to drink, dance and sing as a means of moving closer to God.

The tradition of the *tzaddik* emerged among the followers of the *Chasidic* movement, who came after the Besht. The first generation of *tzaddikim* were actual disciples of the Besht. Because charismatic leadership was encouraged among the *Chasidim*, a variety of spiritual leaders emerged over time.

Chasidism today

Chasidic Jews often spurn contact with secular study. They are tireless and strict in their devotion to the commandments of the Torah. For them, the whole of life should be a continuous struggle to draw closer to God. It is for this reason that the *Chasidim* are well regarded by even quite assimilated Jews, who see them as the custodians of the tradition.

As suggested above, charismatic leadership is common among the various *Chasidic* movements. The leader, known as the *tzaddik*, or **Rebbe**, makes rulings and pronouncements that can take on the quality of holy writ for the followers. Many *Chasidim* will postpone important decisions (about marriage, business, even medical matters) until they receive the blessing of the *Rebbe*. Unlike other branches of the Jewish tradition, some *Chasidic* movements have a rather missionary goal, although their aim is to win over less committed Jews to *Chasidism*, rather than seek converts from outside the Jewish tradition.

Did you know?

The words of the *Baal Shem Tov* are remembered in *Yad Vashem*, the Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem and one of the modern monuments of Jewish history. Upon a prominent wall it reads: 'In remembrance lies the secret of redemption.'



Figure 14.1.5 Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), the seventh and last Lubavitcher *Rebbe*. Born in Russia, he migrated to the USA in 1941 and assumed leadership of the Lubavitch movement in 1950.

The Chasidim in Australia

Self-confident *Chasidic* communities have flourished in Sydney and Melbourne in recent years. Their self-confidence arises partly from their living in an open, tolerant society (which is at ease with their distinctive dress and lifestyle) and is partly from their importance to the larger Australian Jewish community (which sees their faithfulness to the tradition as a visible sign of Jewish strength).

While the focus of *Chasidic* communities in Australia is now in the big cities, the first organised *Chasidic* community, fleeing the Holocaust in Europe, settled in the country town of Shepparton, Victoria, in 1948. Around eight families, followers of the *Chasidic Chabad* movement, farmed the land there and established a *yeshiva* to teach their children.

From small beginnings, *Chabad* has established a network across Australia. Their numbers remain relatively small, but the enthusiasm of their commitment to Jewish thought, worship and lifestyle has given them an influence far beyond their numbers.

Kabbalah—Jewish mystical tradition

Kabbalah was a major influence in the development of *Chasidism*, and still has followers among *Chasidic* Jews. The mysticism of the *Kabbalah* flourished in Eastern Europe in the shadow of Jewish persecution towards the end of the seventeenth century. In the wake of that crisis, the *Kabbalah* provided much needed vitality in Jewish culture.

Indeed, the crises of Jewish life through the ages have met with a strong response in the form of Jewish mysticism. The Spanish Book of Splendour (*Sefer ha-Zohar*), usually known simply as the *Zohar*, is a significant text for *Kabbalists* (see page 339). The mysticism of the *Zohar* is very different from the formalism of mainstream Jewish literature of that age. *Kabbalistic* tradition makes much of letters and numbers—each has a mystical significance that only *Kabbalistic* teaching can unlock. *Kabbalah* also has a strong emphasis on messianism (belief in a Messiah).

Following the expulsion of Jews from Spain, the fringe interest in *Kabbalah* grew until it became a religious preoccupation of whole Jewish communities in other countries. A major centre of *Kabbalistic* teaching emerged in Safed in northern Palestine, under the leadership of Isaac Luria (1534–1572). Most of the table songs sung on *Shabbat* evenings come from the Safed *Kabbalists*, as do many prayers and customs commonly associated with *Shabbat* ritual.



Figure 14.1.6 Kabbalistic text. This fifteenth-century Hebrew text of Psalm 67 has been shaped into a **menorah** (candlestick). The seven branches of the *menorah*, according to Kabbalistic mysticism, add up to the name of God.

The *Zohar*

The *Zohar*, ascribed to a second-century rabbi, is most probably the work of the Spaniard Moses de Leon (c. 1240–1305). Kabbalists believe that the roots of the work are ancient. The *Zohar* contains an esoteric commentary on the Torah, as well as mystical descriptions of the nature of God and the universe. The *Zohar* proved popular upon its publication, and after the development of printing in the fifteenth century it became widely distributed among Jews. Mystical Judaism proliferated as a result. The *Zohar* reached a level of such importance that it rested on bookshelves beside the Torah and the Talmud. It maintained influence in Judaism throughout the seventeenth century, at least until the emergence of the pseudo-messiah Shabbatai Zvi (1626–1676), who was proclaimed as Messiah by some Kabbalists. After this event, *Kabbalah* became enmeshed in suspicions of heresy and its popularity and influence waned. The *Zohar* remains a highly influential sacred writing among Chasidic Jews.

Review

- 1 **Describe** the role of the Baal Shem Tov in the emergence of the *Chasidim* as a significant school of thought in Judaism.
- 2 **Propose** reasons why *Chasidic* Jews are considered by many Jews to be ‘custodians of the tradition’.
- 3 **Explain** the contribution of *Chasidism* to the development and expression of Judaism.
- 4 **Summarise** the relationship between the *Chasidim* and *Kabbalah*.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 339 to gain insight into the *Chasidic* variant of Judaism. **Analyse** the importance of the life of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson to this movement within Judaism.
- 2 **Examine** the importance of charismatic leadership in *Chasidism* both at its foundation and in contemporary times.
- 3 **Predict** what might be the future of Judaism if there were to be a continued strengthening of the influence of *Chasidism*.

14.2 Ethics

Glossary

ethics	Ethics is the explicit, philosophical and/or religious reflection on moral beliefs and practices. Its purpose is to clarify what is right and wrong and what human beings should freely do or refrain from doing.
halachah	The Jewish legal tradition, grounded in the 613 commandments of the Torah.
responsa	The formulations of questions and the rabbinical responses concerning the dual Torah—Oral and Written—that flowed back and forth across the Jewish world from the early Middle Ages. The term is used also to refer to the modern written rabbinical dialogue on ethical and moral issues.

Ethics touches on all aspects of life, from the home to school or work, from the individual to the community, from the social to the scientific. Judaism has deeply reflected ethical standpoints that help to guide the adherent in making good life choices. As new life situations present themselves in our evolving modern world—for example, around the application of new bioscience—Jewish ethicists continue the timeless debate that produces the **responsa** to answer the questions that arise. Always the answers are drawn from the wellspring of the **halachah**, which has Torah at its foundation.

14.2.1 Sexual ethics

Glossary

ascetic	A way of life that is characterised by rigorous self-denial.
mikvah (plural <i>mikvot</i>)	A Jewish ritual bath. A <i>mikvah</i> must contain a prescribed amount of ‘living water’, usually rain or spring water. The <i>mikvah</i> is used for ritual purification, by women after menstruation, and by many Orthodox Jews prior to <i>Shabbat</i> and the Holy Days.

► Refer to Chapter 6, pages 132–6, for more on *halachah* and the fundamentals of Jewish ethics.

One of the commandments of the *halachah* is to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28, 8:17, 35:11). In this context, sex and sexuality are accepted as a natural part of being human.

Yet the Hebrew Scriptures and later rabbinic literature offers two opposing views about sex and sexuality. The extreme **ascetic** view sees sexual relations as appropriate only for the purpose of procreation and it is thus a necessary evil. The view that predominates in the *halachah*, however, is that sexual intercourse for the pleasure of the married couple is wholesome and good. What typifies the *halachah* on sexual conduct is the view that sexual expression must be modest and private and is appropriate only within marriage.

Traditional Judaism adheres to the prohibition on women engaging in sexual intercourse for seven days following the cessation of the bleeding of menstruation. After this a woman must immerse herself in a **mikvah**. There are *mikvot* for this purpose in Australian cities.

In modern Jewish thought, the idea of marriage remains central to sexual relations. Modern Judaism notes that the principle that lies behind sexual relations is that of respect and concern for the dignity of the other.

There are a considerable number of sexual taboos that are specific *mitzvot* in the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah. They are drawn from Leviticus 18:6–24; they are prohibitions essentially against all forms of adultery, incest, homosexuality and bestiality. Great debate raged in the Sydney Jewish community in early 2000 when the *Australian Jewish News* published a story of a Jewish mother who accompanied her gay daughter in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras march. By contrast, 2007 stories in the same newspaper celebrated Jewish involvement in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

Did you know?

Sexuality and marriage are so important in the Talmud that one of its most extensive sections, *Nashim*, is devoted specifically to it, and often goes into great detail. For example, while it is expected that a man of independent means sleeps with his wife every night, a camel driver need only do so once every thirty days and a sailor once every six months!



Figure 14.2.1 A Chasidic family from the Ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim district of Jerusalem. Faithful to the commandment to be fruitful, Chasidic families are frequently large ones.

You will note from the features of Progressive Judaism outlined in Chapter 6, page 123, that Progressive Judaism does not see the Torah as eternally binding, but in need of reinterpretation to accommodate the real-life situations of modernity. The strict Orthodox position, on the other hand, is that the Torah provides God's law and offers all the answers to face modernity with a counter-cultural courage. You will find Jews of all shades of opinion in between these two positions.

Some rabbinical statements on sex and sexuality

Were it not for the evil impulse, no man would build a house, take a wife, beget a child, or engage in business.

Genesis Rabbah 9:9

He who is twenty years of age and is not married spends all his days in sin.

Bavli Kiddushin 29b–30a

Everything which a man wishes to do with his wife, he may do.

Bavli Berachot 62a

When a husband unites with his wife in holiness, the divine presence abides with them.

Bavli Sotah 17a

Review

- 1 Identify the foundation beliefs and documents that underpin Jewish ethics.
- 2 Clarify the principal ethical teachings in Judaism that determine sexual ethics.
- 3 Describe and explain Jewish ethical teachings on sexual ethics.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 341 to read about Jewish ethical views on sexual ethics. Construct a table that classifies the range of ethical views that Jews have on sexual matters.
- 2 Analyse the application of Jewish ethical teaching to a specific issue of sexual ethics.

14.2.2 Bioethics

Did you know?

The term 'bioethics' was coined in 1970 by US biochemist Dr Van Rensselaer Potter as a bridge between science and humanity.

As suggested by the definition of **bioethics** on page 342, there tends to be a spectrum of opinion about what is acceptable in bioethics, rather than single, definitive answers. This is especially true of Judaism, a tradition that encourages, through its rabbinical teachers, interpretation of new life situations in the light of the *halachah*. As a living religion, Judaism will continue to engage in dialogue about and respond to the moral dilemmas posed by modern advances in science and technology.

Jewish opinion can occupy the full spectrum. On one hand, because the *mitzvah* to procreate is strong in Judaism, this would encourage support for the new technologies that allow married Jews who are unable to conceive children naturally, to have them. On the other hand, Judaism is inherently conservative: there is a God-given Law and it may not be right for people to have their every desire (pages 340–1). Then again, the 'slippery slope' argument is sometimes employed in the discussion of ethics in Judaism. Some conservative authorities want

Glossary

adult cloning	The cloning of a person with the intention of reproducing a person with the same DNA as the donor of the original genetic material. Human adult cloning is currently not being actively pursued by any reputable medical team worldwide.	genetic screening	Testing groups of people to check for potential hereditary disorders.
bioethics	Bioethics is a science that sets a system of medical and environmental priorities for acceptable survival. In practical terms, it is a branch of ethics concerned with issues surrounding health care and the biological sciences. Such issues include the morality of abortion, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilisation and organ transplantation.	in-vitro fertilisation (IVF)	A method of assisted reproduction that involves collection of ova (female eggs) and sperm, which are then fertilised in a lab, before implantation in the woman's uterus.
cloning	The process of making genetically identical copies of organisms.	pre-implantation screening	With in-vitro fertilisation assisted reproduction, the screening of embryos for genetic defects prior to the implantation.
embryo	In humans, the embryo is the organism developing in the uterus between the second and the eighth week after fertilisation.	pre-natal screening	Medical techniques of examining the foetus in the womb to detect potential abnormalities.
foetus	A baby in the womb. In medical terms, the human foetal period is from eight weeks until the baby is born.	stem-cell research	Utilising undifferentiated primitive cells that have the potential to grow into a range of different cells. Stem-cell research is seeking to find cures for a broad range of human disorders.
gene therapy	Medical treatment that seeks to correct genetic defects or diseases by replacing dysfunctional or missing genes with functioning ones.	therapeutic cloning	Cloning of a person to the five-day embryo stage only. At this point, the stem cells are removed from the embryo (which is thus destroyed), for use in stem-cell treatments. This technology is currently at the research stage.

a ‘fence’ around the Law, to avoid the slippery slope—that is, they prefer to prohibit some behaviours that are not strictly forbidden according to the *halachah*, but which, if allowed, may lead to other actually prohibited behaviours.

Generally speaking, Jewish bioethics operates within the tension created between the opposite ends of this spectrum. The appropriateness of any of the new technologies is considered on the merits of the individual case, dependent upon the motives of those using it and the insights gained by a reading of the *halachah*.

Birth control and abortion

As was noted in the previous section, Jews are required to ‘be fruitful and multiply’. Having children is therefore a *mitzvah*. There may be reasons for conception to be avoided, but it is also one’s responsibility to participate in marital relations. For this reason, some birth-control methods are not allowed in Judaism. Rabbinical opinion has generally approved only the use of female contraceptive devices, such as the diaphragm and the contraceptive pill. The reasoning is that as long as the male is attempting procreation with each act of sexual intercourse, the commandment to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ is fulfilled.

Jewish views on abortion do not fit neatly into the ‘pro-choice’ or ‘anti-abortion’ camps. Generally, it is the life of the mother that is seen as paramount. In the Talmud, the **foetus** is not considered a person until the time of the birth. At the same time, Jewish commentators realise the ‘potential human being’ status of the foetus.

Abortion presents Judaism with a moral dilemma. In the first forty days of the existence of the **embryo**, it is considered by the Talmudic authorities to be merely ‘water’, and thus abortion, given the right motivations, is acceptable. The question remains whether, in any particular case, the human potentiality of the foetus becomes so compelling a factor as to make abortion morally unjustifiable. An equally important question is whether the life or health (including mental health) of the mother becomes so threatened as to morally justify abortion.

Traditional Judaism has had a strong anti-abortion message in Israel in recent years through the work of *Efrat*—The International Organization for Saving Jewish Babies. *Efrat* also has offices in the largest Jewish community in the world, the USA.

Reproductive technologies

Reproductive technologies such as **in-vitro fertilisation (IVF)**, **genetic screening**, **stem-cell research** and **cloning** are relatively new and as such, the *responsa* to them are still emerging.

IVF has majority approval among Jewish ethicists. Whatever other concerns may exist are outweighed by the greater *mitzvah* of being fruitful. As mentioned previously, the embryo in the first forty days does not have strong status in the *halachah*. The same thinking applies to concerns about embryos that are fertilised for the purposes of IVF treatments but never implanted. That is not to say that Jewish ethicists trivialise the status of the embryo. Always the expectation with IVF and other reproductive technologies is that it is being done within the context of marriage and with the intention of bearing children to loving parents.

Genetic screening in general is strongly supported by most authorities in Judaism. Tay-Sachs disease, an affliction that causes death in early childhood, is confined mostly to Jews of Eastern European descent. Genetic screening for Tay-Sachs disease has been highly successful in Israel, resulting in dramatic reductions in the number of children born with the disease. A significant part of the success of this program has been attributed to the support given to it by rabbis in their religious communities. The screening has raised the ethical question, though, of how far screening should go. Genetic screening is seen as preferable to **pre-natal screening**, which would suggest the possibility of abortion.

A technology for dealing with Tay-Sachs disease that is in between genetic screening and pre-natal screening is **pre-implantation screening**. This is where IVF-type techniques are used to separate out affected embryos and only implant healthy ones in the mother's uterus. Current Jewish ethical thinking sees this as less than ideal, but more acceptable than pre-natal screening.

Stem-cell research, gene therapy and genetic engineering

Stem-cell research that is derived from adult tissue does not present major ethical difficulties for Judaism. Among the greatest of the *mitzvot* is to save a human life. Stem-cell research shows the potential to regrow human tissue and cure presently incurable human conditions.

There is less clarity about the acceptability of foetal stem-cell research (although it still has considerable acceptance). To some the embryo is not a human person, and the research is contributing to saving human lives, therefore the research is acceptable. To others the

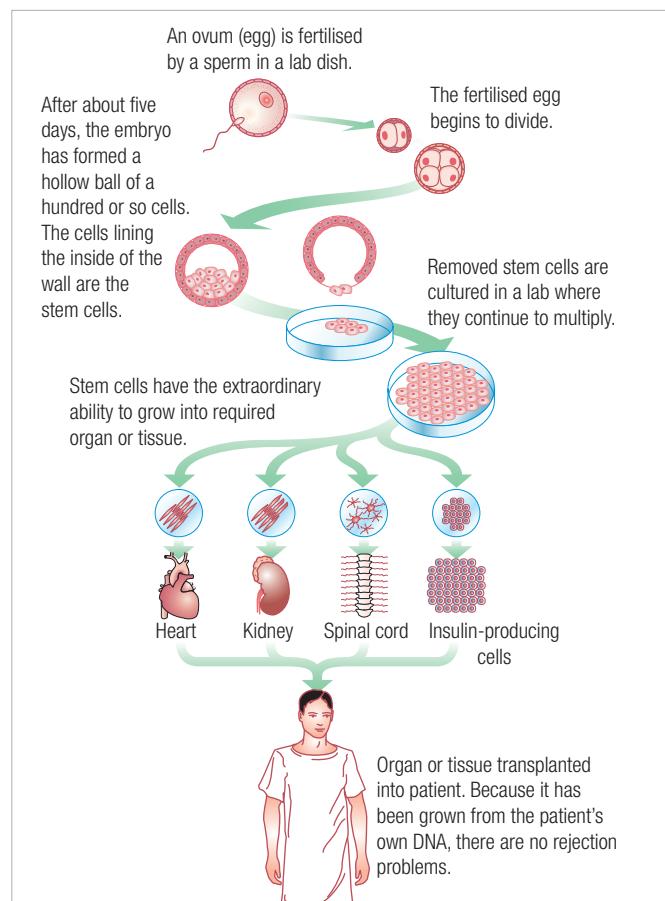


Figure 14.2.2 Diagram illustrating how stem cells can be harvested and used. This type of research is well advanced.

issue is that some foetal stem cells may be derived from (prohibited) aborted foetuses, and thus the research is not acceptable. A major source of foetal stem cells is, in fact, embryos left over from IVF.

Gene therapy is acceptable in the Jewish tradition for similar reasons to those outlined for stem-cell research; that is, the potential to save human lives is great, and the embryo does not have the status of human person. Judaism is quite clear that gene therapy can and should be used in the investigation of a cure for diseases such as Tay-Sachs disease. It is equally cautious about the 'slippery slope' of genetic engineering—the potential use of these techniques to do things other than save human lives, for example, to select for or manipulate height, intelligence, eye colour etc.

Did you know?

In gene therapy, how do doctors get the new genes into defective cells? They use carrier viruses. Viruses have the special ability to penetrate cell walls.

Cloning

In keeping with the principles that underpin the Jewish ethical approach to contraception, abortion, reproductive and gene technologies, there is no *halachic* principle that opposes cloning. **Therapeutic cloning** thus has broad support. **Adult cloning** is more problematic. Adult cloning is potentially of use to couples who wish to have a child where the father, perhaps through some tragic accident, has no sperm at all. In this case, cloning would involve removing the DNA from the mother's embryo and replacing it with DNA from samples taken from the father. Then, using IVF, the embryo would be implanted in the mother's uterus and the child would develop and be born normally. The child would be a copy of the father, although not an exact copy, because a small amount of genetic material is contained in the mother's 'empty' egg 'shell' (see Figure 14.2.3). In genetic terms, the clone is closest to (although not exactly) an identical twin of the father, albeit many years younger. The *halachah*, which

operates on the human rather than micro-scientific level, would consider the child the son of the father and the mother.

These techniques are possible but not yet practised in the medical world due to ethical considerations; the odds of success are extremely low and the possibility of things going wrong are extremely high and horrible to contemplate. The possibilities are so new that there are very few *responsa* to deal with them. In principle, the *halachah* is ethically neutral to the kind of (successful) cloning described above, but concern for the 'slippery slope' that the potential copying of another human person creates has caused great caution against adult cloning. Considering the issue here is interesting, though, because it points out the Jewish ethical approach of openness to new possibilities and dealing with situations on a case-by-case basis.

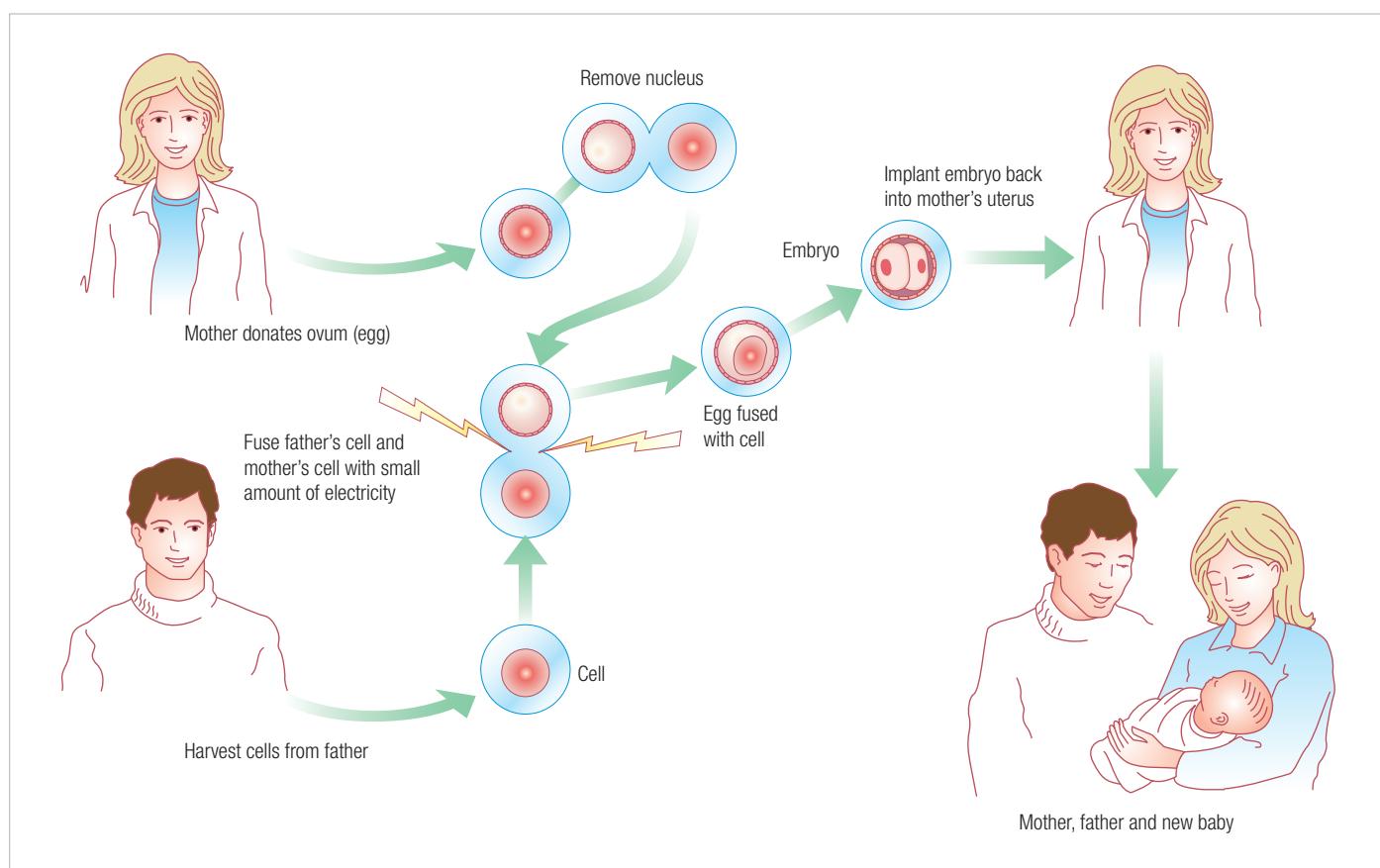


Figure 14.2.3 One potential use of adult cloning for profoundly infertile couples that may be acceptable according to the *halachah*. Note that human adult cloning is not yet possible and is banned by some countries. Efforts at the United Nations level to ban it worldwide have failed.

RESPOND

Explain why adult cloning may be acceptable according to the *halachah*.

Review

- 1 Identify the foundation beliefs and documents that underpin Jewish ethics.
- 2 Clarify the principal ethical teachings in Judaism that determine bioethics.
- 3 Classify the various bioethical technologies referred to in this section. Give a brief description of each and make connections between them where appropriate.
- 4 Discuss the Jewish ethical perspective(s) on the use of reproductive technologies.
- 5 Assess one of the arguments offered in this section in favour of the use of a particular bioethical technology.

Extension



- 1 With a partner, identify a genetic dysfunction or disease of particular interest to the Jewish population and analyse the Jewish ethical issues that arise from the application of biomedical techniques to address it. Share your findings with the class.
- 2 Do an internet search to gain a better understanding of how biomedical techniques work and some of their implications. Key terms to search are: 'cloning', 'stem cells', 'genetic engineering' and 'designer children'. Go to the web destinations for page 345 for a good starting point.
- 3 Using the internet and/or other resources, identify the distinctive Jewish perspectives of two contemporary bioethical issues not addressed in this chapter. Go to the web destinations for page 345 for some good starting points.

14.2.3 Environmental ethics

Glossary

aggadah

The non-legal tradition in Jewish religious writing. The *aggadah* of the Talmud and other later writings includes astrology, folklore, magic, medicine, parables, proverbs, speculation and stories about the rabbis.

Midrash

A form of ancient biblical commentary and interpretation, mostly written between the second and eighth centuries BCE. *Midrash* does not always take the biblical text literally, but rather through homilies and commentaries seeks to uncover the hidden meaning of the Torah.

Mishnah

Completed c. 200 CE, the *Mishnah* was the Oral Law established in written form. The Oral Law had developed among the teachers of the Second Temple period as the interpretation and development of the Torah. (See the section on the *Mishnah* in Chapter 6, pages 130–1.)

tithing

The biblical instruction in Leviticus 27:30–32 that one-tenth of one's income 'belongs to the Lord'.

Environmental ethics is the attempt to define a system of values to guide human interaction in the natural world. Environmental ethics as a specific area of intellectual inquiry emerged in the 1970s, in response to the growing realisation of the negative impact of humans on the natural environment and the need to 'change or perish'.

Worldwide concern for the environment has provided the impetus for Jews to tap into the rich 'environmental wisdom' of their tradition, looking at it with a fresh view.

What are now called environmental ethics abound in classical Jewish sources. The Hebrew Scriptures, Talmud, *Midrash*, *responsa*, and other classical Jewish sources contain literally tens of thousands of allusions to environmental concerns. Concerns include the treatment of animals, protection of food sources, water purity, excessive consumption, avoiding the pollution and overcrowding of towns and cities, and the protection of the natural environment. The biblical prophets particularly warn of the catastrophe that will result from contamination of the land. From the Hebrew Scriptures on, Judaism has seen humans as lords of creation, but at the same time needing to be deeply grateful to God for the sustenance creation brings, and responsible for its stewardship.

Modern Jewish environmentalists emerge from a non-Orthodox background. Nonetheless, in formulating their environmental ethics, they draw heavily on the *halachah* and *aggadah*, providing an opportunity for bridging the divide between different Jewish groups. Increasing interest from all the world's major religious traditions in developing a stronger environmental ethic also provides a medium, and the opportunity, for interfaith dialogue.

Did you know?

Numbers 35:4 mandates for a 'green belt' around cities and towns: 'The pasture lands of the towns, which you shall give to the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the town outward a thousand cubits all around.'

Environmentalism in the classical Jewish sources

In the hour when God created the first person, He showed him the trees in the Garden of Eden, and said to him: 'See My works, how fine they are; Now all that I have created, I created for your benefit. Think upon this and do not corrupt and destroy My world, for if you destroy it, there is no one to restore it after you.'

Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:28

Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai says: 'If you are holding a sapling in your hand, and someone says to you, "Here comes the Messiah!"— come and plant the sapling, and afterwards go and welcome the Messiah.'

Avot D'Rebbe Natan B 31

Righteous people of good deeds ... do not waste in this world even a mustard seed. They become sorrowful with every wasteful and destructive act that they see, and if they can, they use all their strength to save everything possible from destruction. But the wicked are not thus ...

Sefer Chasidim 530 (*Sefer Chasidim* is a thirteenth-century work on ethics written by Judah ben Samuel, the *Chasid* of Regensburg.)

Bal tashchit

The Talmudic principle that stands behind the Jewish environmental ethic is 'Do not destroy'. It is known in Hebrew as *bal tashchit*. This Jewish demand dates back to one of the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah:

If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down.

Deut 20:19

This verse in fact specifically refers to the destruction of trees in the course of laying siege to a city in battle. The later rabbis extend the biblical example to a general prohibition against any wasteful and wilful destruction.

The Talmud further understands that nothing was created by God without a purpose, thus the whole of creation is deserving of respect and appropriate care. Just as humans were created in God's image (Gen 2) so they are called to be creators in the world, not destroyers.

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.

Ps 24:1

Tu B'Shevat

► The *Kabbalah* is discussed on pages 338–9.

Increased environmental concern in recent decades has resulted in an evolution of the minor Jewish festival of *Tu B'Shevat*. In the *Mishnah*, *Tu B'Shevat*, unknown in the Bible, is introduced as a new year for the *tithing* of trees. It was a day on which the landholder would count the fruits on his trees so that the correct amount to be tithe to the poor could be calculated. Among the later *Kabbalists*, the tradition developed of savouring the fruits of the trees on *Tu B'Shevat* as a means of tasting God's creation and repairing their mystical relationship to it. For the nineteenth century Zionists, the festival was transformed into a special day on which to rejuvenate the land of Israel. To this day, tree planting ceremonies are customary in Israel on *Tu B'Shevat* and Diaspora children may collect money to contribute to the cause. Then, in the twentieth century, *Tu B'Shevat* was appropriated by Jewish environmentalists as a kind of Jewish earth day, where special focus on environmental issues could take place at the local community level.



Figure 14.2.4 A young boy completes his planting activities on *Tu B'Shevat*, Jewish new year for trees.

Jewish National Fund

The Jewish National Fund was founded by the Zionist movement in 1901 to acquire land in Palestine. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, its role and purpose evolved; it has become a major player in the environmental rehabilitation of the land of Israel. In the last 100 years, it has planted close to a quarter of a billion trees and created more than 400 parks throughout Israel.

The Jewish National Fund also plays a role in educating Jews around the world about Israel and the environment.

In Australia every year in February, the Jewish National Fund of Australia holds a special tree planting telethon (called Green Sunday) on a Sunday close to *Tu B'Shevat*. The Jewish National Fund's education program in Australia organises activities in Jewish schools in Sydney and Melbourne to help foster students' awareness of issues regarding the land and environment in Israel. JNFuture NSW brings together young adults in activities aimed at deepening their appreciation of environmental issues both locally and in Israel.

Review

- 1 **Clarify** the principal *mitzvah* that influences Jewish environmental ethics.
- 2 **Outline** the evolution of the minor festival of *Tu B'Shevat*.
- 3 **Describe** and **explain** Jewish ethical teachings on the environment.
- 4 **Analyse** the actual difference that the application of Jewish environmental ethics might make to the everyday life of the believer.

Extension



- 1 **Assess** the degree of accommodation of traditional Judaism to modern environmentalism.
- 2 'The wellspring of Jewish wisdom on the environment provides ample material for the development of a modern environmental ethic.' **Synthesise** the material presented in this section as a means of responding to this statement.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 347 and find out about the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). Utilising the resources on the website, **explain** what is Jewish about protecting the environment.
- 4 **Investigate** the excerpts of classical texts that support the *mitzvah* of *bal tashchit* and the COEJL's accompanying discussion. Create a summary table that **clarifies** the principles of *bal tashchit*.

14.3 Significant practices

Glossary

public devotion	The communal sharing of prayer and other religious actions beyond the home that bind the religious group as a faith community.
rite	A rite is a formal or ceremonial act or procedure that is prescribed or is customary in a religious or other solemn use. Within the rite there are certain rituals ; these are established or prescribed procedures and actions for the ceremony.

The Torah is central to the practices of Judaism. Specific **rites** containing rich layers of symbolism mark each important stage of life and are important elements of religious identity within the Jewish tradition. They are celebrations of, and memorials to, the covenant by which Jews understand their relationship to God as expressed in the Torah. To follow the *mitzvot* of the Torah is both an individual and a community responsibility in Judaism and the synagogue is the focus for community worship or **public devotion**. This section will examine the role and significance of the synagogue services and the **rituals** of marriage for the individual and the Jewish community.

14.3.1 Synagogue services

We are committed to strengthening the people of Israel by making the synagogue central to Jewish communal life.

From 'A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism', adopted at the 1999 Pittsburgh Convention, Central Conference of American Rabbis

The synagogue is the gathering place for the Jewish community, a place for prayer, song and instruction. It is the central place where Judaism expresses its public devotion. The synagogue complex usually includes classrooms, offices and facilities for recreation and education. The synagogue is the place for public worship, most particularly on *Shabbat*.

Origins of the synagogue

The emergence of the synagogue as a dimension of Judaism can be traced back to the **Exile** into Babylon in 587 BCE.

Glossary

Exile	The Exile into Babylon in 587 BCE was a turning point in Jewish history. It is recorded in 2 Kings 25.
High Holy Days	The major Jewish festivals of <i>Rosh ha-Shanah</i> and <i>Yom Kippur</i> .
Holocaust (Shoah)	The Nazi destruction of European Jewry (1942–45) including the murder of 6 million Jews.
incorporeal	Without bodily or material form.
kippah (or <i>yarmulke</i>)	The skullcap worn by Jewish males.
machzor	The special prayer book for festivals. Editions differ from age to age and from country to country, reflecting strongly the customs of the local Jewish community.
siddur	Jewish prayer book. The <i>siddur</i> usually has four sections: (i) prayers for the weekday services; (ii) prayers for <i>Shabbat</i> and holy days; (iii) special prayers said only on the holy days; and (iv) a variable final section, which may include special prayers for life-cycle religious ceremonies, such as circumcision, marriage and mourning, as well as the brief <i>Torah</i> readings for Mondays and Thursdays, or the entire Book of Psalms.
tallit	A fringed, four-cornered Jewish prayer shawl (see Num 15:38–39). It is most frequently white in colour, with blue, black or purple stripes. It is used by males in daily morning prayer.
tefillin	The two black leather boxes containing passages from the <i>Torah</i> , worn by Jewish males aged thirteen and over, that are strapped to the forehead and the arm during weekday morning services (see Deut 6:8).

Inspired by the prophets, the Jewish captives taken into Exile in Babylon found ways to maintain their religious traditions without the rituals of the Temple. Prayers replaced sacrifices; synagogues developed as places for assembly, prayer and learning.

The Pharisees, forebears of the rabbis, were champions of the synagogues in the first century CE, teaching the people and giving them access to study and worship beyond the Temple. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE the synagogue took over as the centre for Jewish prayer and worship. Tradition records that during the siege of Jerusalem, one of the leaders of the sages, Yohanan ben Zakkai, was secreted out of Jerusalem in a coffin in 68 CE

and, with the permission of the Romans, established the original *yeshiva* at Yavneh, a coastal town just south of modern Tel Aviv. Yavneh became the chief centre of Jewish learning. It was in the late first century and second century CE, and from Yavneh, that the foundations of the religious tradition we know today as Judaism were laid. The compilation of the Hebrew Scriptures was completed, the rites and festivals of the Temple were adapted and transferred to the synagogue, and above all, the intellectual ideal of Judaism as lived through the study and practice of the Torah, Written and Oral, was established.

Did you know?

In the fifth century BCE, a basic prayer was composed covering most things one could want to pray about. This is the *Shemoneh Esrei*, which means 'eighteen' and refers to the eighteen blessings originally contained within the prayer. It is also referred to as the *Amidah* (which means standing, because Jews stand while they recite it), or *Tefilah* (prayer, as in 'The Prayer', because it is the essence of all Jewish prayer). This prayer is the cornerstone of every Jewish synagogue service.

Worship at the synagogue

On entering a synagogue, all males (both Jews and non-Jewish visitors) will don the *kippah* or *yarmulke* or some other form of head covering. A special prayer shawl, known as a *tallit*, is also worn by males at every morning service. In some Orthodox synagogues, there is a custom that unmarried men do not wear the *tallit*. At weekday morning services only, Jewish males strap on the *tefillin*, one on the arm, and another on the forehead (see page 134). In some non-Orthodox synagogues, women claim the right to wear the *kippah*, *tallit* and *tefillin*, although this is not traditional practice. All worshippers use the *siddur*, the Jewish prayer book. On *Shabbat*, fasts and festivals, and on Mondays and Thursdays, the worshipper will also have the *Chumash*, the name used for the Torah.

The sanctity of a synagogue or a house of study is very great. We are warned to be in awe of the One who rests within them, God, blessed be His name, as [Lev 19:30] states: 'Fear My sanctuaries.' This applies to a synagogue and a house of study, for they are also called sanctuaries, as [Ez 11:16] states: 'I will be a small sanctuary for them' and [Megillah 29a] interprets: 'These are the synagogues and houses of study.'

Yomi 13:1

The synagogue is also a focus for the practices associated with the Jewish festivals. A special prayer book for festivals, called the *machzor*, finds its place on the bookshelves of home and synagogue. Editions differ from age to age and from country to country, reflecting strongly the customs of the local Jewish community.

There are a few significant differences in the way synagogue services are conducted in different variants of Judaism:

- In Orthodox synagogues, women and men are seated separately; in Progressive and Conservative synagogues, all sit together.
- In Orthodox, and usually Conservative synagogues, the source is in Hebrew. In Progressive synagogues, most worship is in the local language (in Australia, English), though they are increasingly using Hebrew.
- In Orthodox synagogues, the person leading the service has their back to the congregation, and prays facing the same direction as the congregation. In Conservative and Progressive synagogues, the person leading the service faces the congregation.
- Conservative and Progressive synagogues are rather rigidly structured: everybody arrives at the same time, leaves at the same time, and does the same thing at the same time. Orthodox services can be somewhat more free-form: people arrive as it suits them, catch up to everybody else at their own pace, and often do things differently from everybody else.

Did you know?

The Jewish custom of covering the head during prayer is an ancient practice. It most likely derives from the fact that in Eastern cultures it is a sign of respect to cover the head, so covering the head during prayers shows one's respect for God. In ancient Rome, servants were required to cover their heads, while free men were not—so Jews covered their heads to show that they were servants of God. In medieval times, Jews covered their heads as a reminder that God is always above them. No matter why it is done, it has always been regarded as a custom rather than a commandment (*mitzvah*).

The order of the synagogue service

Morning service—*Shacharit*

- The Verses of the Song (passages from Psalms)
- The *Shema* and its blessings
- The *Amidah* prayer
- Supplications (weekdays only)
- *Hallel* (hymns of praise, Psalms 113–118; festivals only)
- The reading of the Torah (on *Shabbat*, Mondays and Thursdays, fasts and festivals)
- *Musaf*: additional *Amidah* (on *Shabbat*, festivals and the beginning of a new month)
- Concluding Psalms, hymns and the *Aleinu* prayer:
It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to ascribe greatness to the Moulder of primeval creation, for He has not made us like the nations of the lands ... Therefore, we put our hope in you, Lord our God, that we may soon see Your mighty splendour ... On that day, the Lord will be One and His Name will be One.

Extract from *Aleinu*

Afternoon service—*Minchah*

- Psalm 145
- The *Amidah* prayer
- The *Aleinu* prayer

Evening service—*Ma'ariv*

- The *Shema* and its blessings
- The *Amidah* prayer
- The *Aleinu* prayer

Did you know?

You can tell a lot about a person's Judaism by the word they use for synagogue. Ashkenazi Orthodox Jews will frequently use the Yiddish word *shul* to refer to the synagogue. Progressive Jewish synagogues are referred to as Temples.

Jewish festivals and their relationship to the synagogue

Rosh ha-Shanah

Rosh ha-Shanah is the Jewish New Year festival, and the beginning of the **High Holy Days** period. The *shofar*, a curved ram's horn, is blown to usher in the new year and to herald the majesty of God. *Rosh ha-Shanah* is a day of judgement of the past year and a day of preparation for the year ahead. Synagogues are filled to overflowing capacity for the services on *Rosh ha-Shanah*. Special sweet foods are eaten in the home. This is a symbol of the sweetness of the year ahead.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement. This day is the climax of a period of repentance, focusing on a public confession of sins and a plea for forgiveness from God. Jews believe, however, that God will only forgive the sins of the person who has sought forgiveness from the people they have wronged. Thus, it is an obligation to try to make peace with one's neighbour in the days before *Yom Kippur*. *Yom Kippur* has twenty-five hours of complete fast, and work is forbidden as on *Shabbat*. As with the celebration of *Rosh ha-Shanah*, the synagogues are filled with people on *Yom Kippur*.

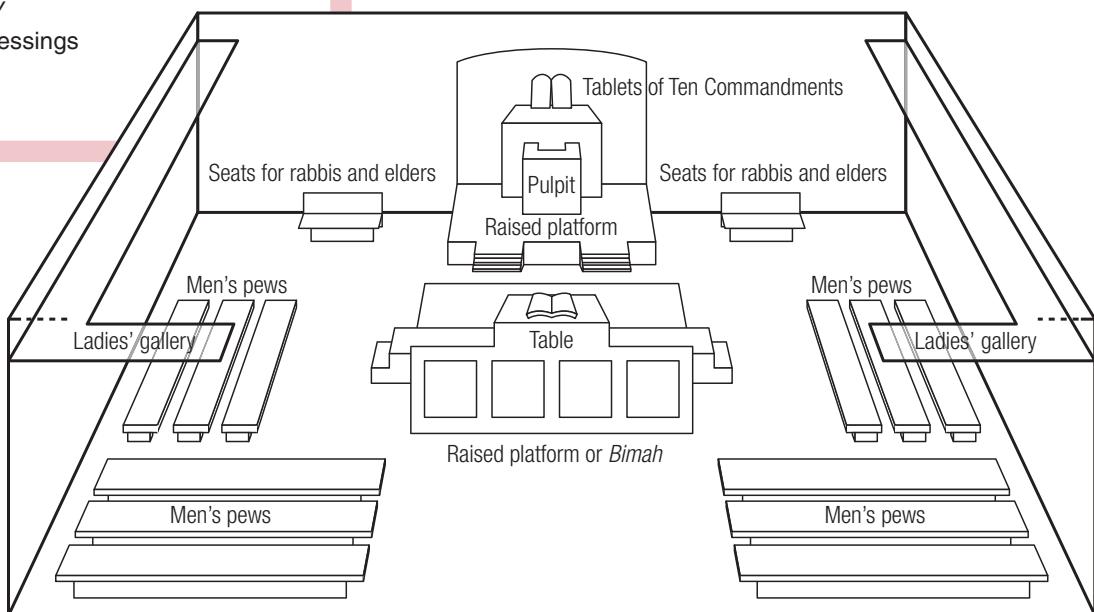


Figure 14.3.1 Plan of a typical Orthodox synagogue



Figure 14.3.2 Sounding the *shofar* to usher in the Jewish New Year

Sukkot

Sukkot is also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. A *sukkah* is built—a small impermanent structure with a roof of branches, standing under the open sky (see Lev 23:33–44). Many Jews just eat in the *sukkah*, but some will sleep in it as well for seven days. The *sukkah* is a monument to the impermanent structures in which the Israelites had to live in the desert after their Exodus from Egypt. Historically, *Sukkot* is also connected with the autumn harvest. It is a festive time (Lev 23:40). The ‘four species’—palm, myrtle, willow and etrog (a citrus fruit)—are held together and waved in the four directions of the compass, as well as up and down, in acknowledgement of the bounty of God. After *Sukkot* comes *Simchat Torah*, the Rejoicing of the Torah. The reading of the Torah for the liturgical year is completed and then recommenced, and the scrolls are paraded around the synagogue with great fanfare.

Pesach

Pesach, or Passover, commemorates the ‘passing over’ of the houses of the Israelites as God seized the firstborn of the Egyptians (Ex 12:21–30). The laws of *Pesach* revolve around eating. No leavened food is eaten, and all leaven (rising agents, such as yeast) is removed from Jewish houses. At this time, Jews eat *matzah* or unleavened bread. The *Pesach* meal, called the *Seder*, invites the

participant not merely to remember the bitterness of slavery in Egypt and the sweetness of deliverance, but to relive it. It is intended that each person at the *Seder* becomes captivated by the liturgy of the meal, so that they see themselves as actually having gone forth from Egypt. This makes the *Seder* an exciting personal and family experience. Along with the recitation of the *Pesach Haggadah*, special foods are eaten. *Pesach* is very widely practised, being celebrated by Jews of every degree of religious commitment. Many Jews attend the synagogue every day during the week-long period of *Pesach* (eight days in the Diaspora).

Shavuot

Otherwise known as Pentecost or Weeks because it occurs seven weeks after *Pesach*, *Shavuot* commemorates the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is also described in the Torah as a harvest festival (Ex 23:16). It is customary for dairy meals to be eaten on *Shavuot*, a symbol that Torah is the basic spiritual nourishment, just as milk is the most basic food. Tradition also offers the story that having received the dietary laws from Moses at Sinai, the people could only eat dairy foods, as it took time to organise the ritual slaughter of their cattle. The Ten Commandments are read in the synagogue on *Shavuot*. In Progressive Judaism, *Shavuot* is often the time designated for confirmation ceremonies for young people.

Post-biblical festivals

- **Chanukah** marks the rededication of the Temple at the end of the Maccabean Revolt of the second century BCE (1 Macc 4:36–58). During *Chanukah*, the *chanukiyah*, or eight-branched *menorah* is lit, one candle each day. The tradition is that on reclaiming the desecrated Temple, there was only enough pure oil for the lamp in the Temple to burn one day, but miraculously it lasted eight days, by which time more oil could be procured.
- **Purim**, or the Festival of Lots, has as its main feature the *Megillah*, a handwritten scroll of the Book of Esther. Whenever the name of the evil Haman is mentioned in the reading of the *Megillah* in the synagogue, people will stamp and even boo and whistle to drown out his name. (In the Book of Esther, Haman plotted to destroy the Jews in Persia—the people were saved by the intervention of Mordecai and Esther.) There is a great carnival mood, with eating and drinking and the giving of gifts of food to neighbours or friends (see Esth 9:20–23).
- **Tisha B'Av**—simply meaning the ninth day of the month of Av—is the saddest day of the Jewish year. It is a day of fast, commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples. The twenty-five hours of fasting is accompanied by many of the practices of Jewish mourning, and the Book of Lamentations, known as *Eichah*, is read in a dimly lit synagogue. *Tisha B'Av* ends a three-week period of mourning, during which time no celebrations may take place.
- **Yom ha-Shoah**, the Day of the Holocaust, is a solemn day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust. Being a recent addition to the religious calendar, rituals and symbols associated with the day are still developing. Of course, the very fact that the Holocaust happened in the lifetime of living Jews heightens the poignancy of the day in the contemporary religious calendar of Judaism.

► See The State of Israel and the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption on page 356.

- **Yom ha-Atzma'ut** is Israel Independence Day. A nation's Independence Day may not ordinarily be seen as a day primarily of religious significance, but the connection between the formation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the traditional Jewish hope for the restoration of the Promised Land makes *Yom ha-Atzma'ut* a powerful symbol of Jewish hope.

How does the synagogue express the beliefs of Judaism?

Synagogue worship focuses around reading and veneration of the Torah, and the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah are surely at the very heart of Judaism. Jewish belief in the **incorporeal** nature of God is reflected in the fact that images of God are absent from synagogues. Jewish belief that God must be worshipped finds its public expression in the synagogue. As education and social centres offering community outreach programs, synagogues are living expressions of Jewish belief.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'ritual'.
- 2 **Describe** the synagogue service.
- 3 **Identify** the role of the synagogue in each cycle of Jewish festivals and High Holy Days.
- 4 **Demonstrate** how synagogue rituals reflect the beliefs of Judaism.
- 5 **Analyse** the significance of synagogue services for:
 - a the individual
 - b the Jewish community.

Extension

- 1 In pairs, conduct a brief discussion where you **appreciate** why a thoroughly modern Jewish person may value the conservatism and tradition inherent in an Orthodox synagogue service. Write the points you come up with and share them with others in your class.
- 2 Using the illustration on page 350 as a guide and being faithful to the requirements of Judaism as you understand them, **construct** a sketch of a synagogue space that you believe best meets the need for meaningful public devotion.
- 3 **Compare** and **contrast** a typical Orthodox and a typical Progressive synagogue service. In your answer, make reference to material you have studied here, as well as what you know of Orthodox and Progressive Judaism from Chapter 6 (see pages 122–3).

14.3.2 Marriage

Glossary

aliyah	Literally means ‘going up’. <i>Aliyah</i> is the calling of a member of the congregation to read from the Torah scroll in the synagogue service.	halachah	The Jewish legal tradition, grounded in the 613 commandments of the Torah.
Bet Din	A rabbinical court, usually consisting of three judges, responsible for making judgements on matters of <i>halachah</i> . Because disputes between Jews should be contained within the community, the <i>Bet Din</i> plays an important role as a private court of arbitration.	ketubbah	The Jewish marriage contract. Traditionally written in Aramaic, it sets out the responsibilities of the husband and makes financial guarantees for the wife should the husband die or divorce her.
chuppah	The canopy under which a Jewish wedding takes place. It is sometimes a large <i>tallit</i> held overhead by four men, but more often it is an elaborately decorated canopy supported by four poles.	mikvah	A Jewish ritual bath. A <i>mikvah</i> must contain a prescribed amount of ‘living water’, usually rain or spring water. The <i>mikvah</i> is used for ritual purification, by women after menstruation, and by many Orthodox Jews prior to <i>Shabbat</i> and the Holy Days.
get	The formal Jewish bill of divorce. The <i>get</i> is handed over by a husband to his wife, although either party can take the first steps to arrange divorce proceedings.	tallit	A fringed, four-cornered Jewish prayer shawl (see Num 15:38–39). It is most frequently white in colour, with blue, black or purple stripes. It is used by males in daily morning prayer.
		yichud	The few minutes that the bride and groom spend alone together immediately after the wedding ceremony.

The rites and rituals that surround the Jewish marriage ceremony derive from instructions of the rabbis in the Talmud. Inasmuch as the Talmud, and the *halachah* it gives rise to, are grounded in the commandments of the Torah, then it is true to say—as in all aspects of Jewish life—that the Jewish wedding ceremony is grounded in Torah principles. Certainly, there are many of the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah that refer specifically to marriage—around permissible and taboo sexual relations, duties and obligations of husband and wife, and the responsibility to bear children. There is even a *mitzvah* that the newly married couple be free to enjoy each other’s company for a year! Unlike some other religious traditions, where the status of the celibate individual is held in high esteem, in Judaism there is an expectation that each man and woman will eventually marry and contribute to the ongoing growth and success of the community.

When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any related duty. He shall be free at home one year, to be happy with the wife whom he has married.

Deut 24:5

There is no direct Jewish equivalent of an ‘engagement’ as commonly practised in Western society. The couple simply make an announcement of their intention to marry. In some more traditional religious communities this is

followed by formal negotiations and agreements made about the time, place and nature of the wedding ceremony and the financial arrangements for the marriage. In the modern Jewish wedding, the betrothal (engagement) and the marriage itself take place as two parts of the one ceremony.



Figure 14.3.3 Bride and groom under a *chuppah* with the rabbi at an Orthodox Jewish wedding



Figure 14.3.4 A sample of a *ketubbah*. The text of the *ketubbah* was once composed by the sages, and it varies in its details in different Jewish communities. The composition of a *ketubbah* (the right indication of names, dates etc.) is usually done by a rabbi.

The marriage ceremony takes place under a canopy, called the *chuppah*. It may take place outdoors or in a synagogue. It can be held on any day except *Shabbat* or the High Holy Days. Strictly speaking, a rabbi is not required under Jewish Law to complete a marriage, but in practical terms, given that the laws of the state require a marriage official, a rabbi generally presides.

On the *Shabbat* preceding the wedding, the groom is entitled to an *aliyah*, a calling to read the Torah in the synagogue. This is an occasion for great rejoicing. In Reform congregations, the bride is also called to *aliyah*.

The Torah requires the bride to immerse in the *mikvah*, or ritual bath, prior to the marriage. On the day of the wedding, both bride and groom fast. They are starting out on a new life and seek forgiveness for past sins. In this sense, the wedding day has some similarities to *Yom Kippur*.

The wearing of a bride's veil is prescribed in the Jewish wedding, in imitation of Rebekah who donned the veil

as she approached her groom, Isaac (Gen 24:65). The wearing of a white dress is also customary in the Jewish wedding. *Chasidic* grooms will also wear a white coat. In some communities, the groom wears a *tallit*. White is, as it is in many cultures, a reminder of the purity and sanctity of marriage.

A *ketubbah*, or marriage contract, is prepared and signed by witnesses. The *ketubbah* sets out the responsibilities of the groom to his bride in marriage and states what maintenance will be due to the wife in the case of divorce. In the presence of witnesses, the groom accepts the obligations contained in the *ketubbah*. He indicates his acceptance by taking hold of a handkerchief or some other garment given to him by the officiating rabbi. He is then escorted to the *chuppah* by his father and the bride's father.

The bride is escorted to the *chuppah* by her mother and the groom's mother, where she stands on the groom's right. There are blessings over wine, then the ring is placed on the bride's right index finger and the groom recites the consecration in Hebrew, a declaration which in English means: 'Behold you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel.'

The *ketubbah* is read and then presented to the bride, followed by the singing of the seven wedding blessings. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the husband smashes a glass under his foot—even in their joy, the Jewish people remember the destruction of the Temple and the suffering of others.

Less traditional weddings may introduce some measure of mutuality, with the exchange of rings and the exchange of the words of consecration.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, there is the *yichud*. The new husband and wife retire to a private room for a short time, guarded by witnesses. They may break their fast together; originally, it may have been the time when the marriage was consummated. When the couple emerge, they share a banquet with their wedding guests.

Divorce is allowed in Judaism, although it is seen as a tragedy. Either party can approach the *Bet Din* for a divorce, but the husband must initiate the writing of the bill of divorce, the *get*. The divorce requires the consent of both parties. The *Bet Din* is recognised as authoritative by the secular law in Australia; there have been cases where the Family Court of Australia has ordered a party to a civil divorce to appear before a *Bet Din*. The court recognised that without the *get*, the party that wished to live by the Jewish Law would not be able to marry again.

Did you know?

The custom of lavishly decorating the *ketubbah* is relatively recent, being just four centuries old. The illustrations traditionally depict scenes from the Bible and themes relating to courtship and marriage. The art form reached its height in Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where illuminated *ketubbah* drew on the rich traditions of Renaissance and Baroque art.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** ‘ritual’.
- 2 **Identify** the signs and symbols that are a part of the Jewish marriage rite.
- 3 **Demonstrate** how the rituals in the marriage rite reflect the beliefs of Judaism.
- 4 **Analyse** the significance of the Jewish marriage ritual for:
 - a the individual
 - b the Jewish community.

Extension

- 1 What is the status of the Jewish marriage in Australian Law?
- 2 **Construct** a modern *ketubbah* of your own that, in its use of words and symbols, reflects fundamental Jewish beliefs and Jewish beliefs about marriage.

Postscript

No study of the development and expression of Judaism would be complete without reference to the ways in which events of the twentieth century—most particularly, the Holocaust—have impacted on the Jewish community. With reference to Australia, the fact that the Jewish community is an immigrant community means that events on a European stage affected the Jewish community more powerfully than other Australian communities.

The Holocaust (*Shoah*)

The most significant wave of Jewish immigration in the twentieth century took place immediately before and

after the Second World War, when the Australian Jewish community doubled in size. That wave of immigration was precipitated by increased sanctions against Jews in Germany with the election of Hitler in 1933 and then the Holocaust, known in Hebrew as the *Shoah* (total destruction). The Nazi destruction of European Jewry (1942–45) saw the murder of 6 million Jews.

It is supremely ironic that the Holocaust united Jews despite all the differences between Jewish groups and ideologies. It made no difference to the Nazis whether Jews were Orthodox or Progressive, assimilated or *Chasidic*. All Jews were to be exterminated. All Jews suffered.

The Holocaust has irrevocably refashioned Jewish self-understanding.

So comprehensively methodical was the Nazi assault as to be all-but-irresistible: hence preoccupation with ‘why didn’t they fight?’ ... is as unhealthy as it is false to the facts. Nevertheless, victims did resist the all-but-irresistible assault: hence any attempt by the victims to stay alive, to retain their dignity, to resist-in-faith despite despair must be reverently remembered.

Emil Fackenheim, ‘The Commanding Voice of Auschwitz’, *Generation*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1991, p. 31

Australian Jewish responses to the Holocaust

In remembering the Holocaust today, Jews feel that they were there, at Auschwitz or the other Nazi concentration camps. They are transformed in time and place; this transforming element makes remembering the Holocaust a sacred event for modern Jews. To exist as a Jew, to survive and prosper beyond Hitler, is to deny Hitler a posthumous victory.

Some Jews argue that this view leads to the danger of making the Holocaust the foundation of Jewish life. Jews live today despite the Holocaust—not because of it. All views acknowledge the formation of the State of Israel in 1948 as giving hope for the future of Judaism—a view that is very strong in the Australian Jewish community. There are over twenty different Australia–Israel organisations operating in New South Wales alone. The state Zionist councils, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies all date from around this time.

The *Shoah* delivered to the existing Australian Jewish community a surge of Jewish refugees and a sense of urgent purpose that resulted in significant cultural and religious growth.



Figure 14.3.5 Participants of the eighteenth 'March of the Living' at the former Nazi death camp Auschwitz, in Oswiecim, Poland, 21 April 2009. Jewish youths from all over the world gathered for the annual 'March of the Living', a Holocaust commemoration.

The State of Israel and the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption

There is a new kind of Judaism after the Holocaust. It is what one US scholar and rabbi, Jacob Neusner, has called the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption. The focus of the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption is a deep affection for the modern State of Israel. It is different from Zionism: it does not insist that those outside Israel, in places like Australia, are in exile; but it connects the Holocaust and the State of Israel in a mythical way. The redemption from the evil of the Holocaust is the formation of the State of Israel. In the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption, Jews are called to support and

proclaim modern Israel in public life; it is a religion that is not a mere private matter of conscience. The Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption strangely turns the dictum of the Jewish Enlightenment—to be a Jew at home, and assimilated in public—on its head. In the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption, one is called to be a Jew in public, but one might well be quite indistinguishable from other Australians at home.

The Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption is a new dimension to Jewish religion. It even has its own 'religious' occasions, for example, *Yom ha-Shoah* and *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*, both of which are widely acknowledged in Jewish schools in Australia and in the Jewish community generally. This kind of Judaism sometimes complements and sometimes contrasts with, the Judaism of the dual Torah, which has sustained Jews in the home and in the synagogue for 2000 years.

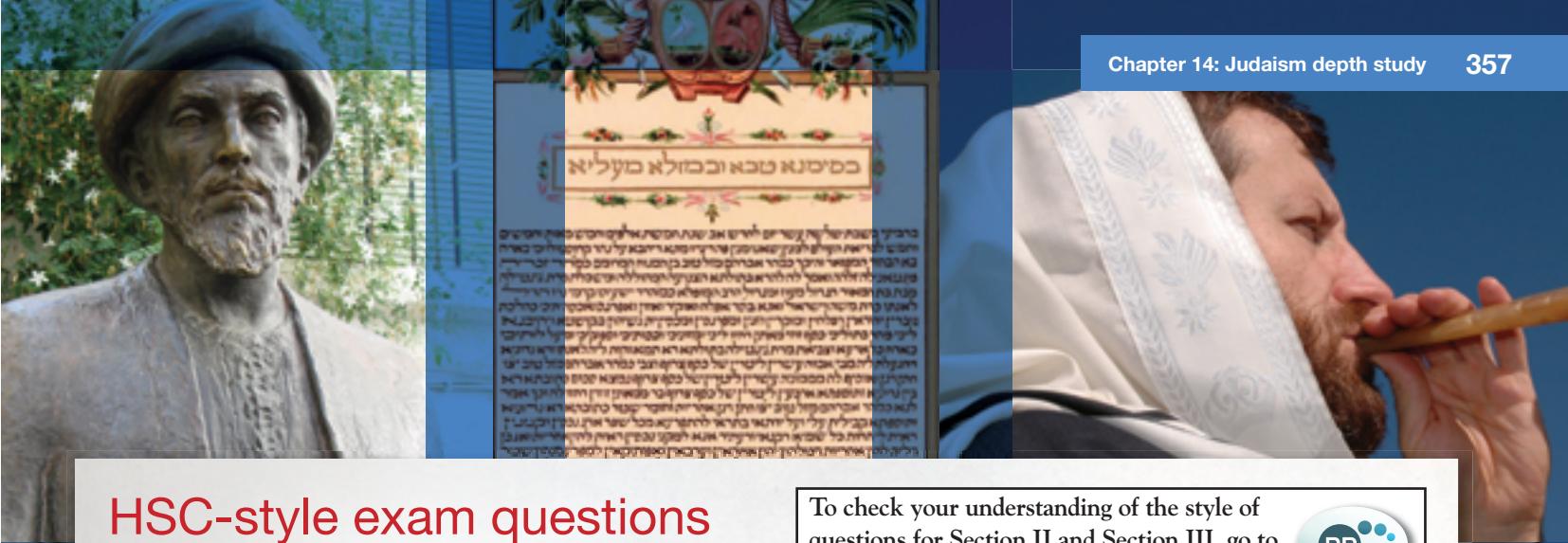
Extension

- 1 **Discuss** the ways in which the Holocaust has had an impact on Judaism generally, and Judaism as it is lived in Australia.
- 2 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 3 Organise your media file and **classify** it under the headings 'Judaism in Australia' and 'Judaism and the world'. Does your file add to your understanding of Judaism as a lived religion? Prepare a report that **analyses** how the media report on Judaism. Are the media interested in what you have been studying in this chapter?
- 4 **Synthesise** the main features related to Jewish people, ideas, ethics and practices in this chapter in the form of a flow chart or mind map.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



HSC-style exam questions

Section II

- Studies of Religion I: answer ONE question from this section.
- Studies of Religion II: answer TWO questions from TWO different religious traditions in this section.

Marks

Question 5—Judaism (15 marks)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| a | Identify the Jewish ethical teachings on ONE of the following areas: | 3 |
| | – bioethics | |
| | – environmental ethics | |
| | – sexual ethics | |
| b | Describe the contribution of ONE significant individual or school of thought to the development of Judaism, other than Abraham and Moses. | 4 |
| c | Assess the impact of the individual or school of thought chosen in part (b) on Judaism. | 8 |

To check your understanding of the style of questions for Section II and Section III, go to ‘Support materials for the Studies of Religion HSC examinations’ on the NSW Board of Studies website; or go to the web destination for page 357.



Section III

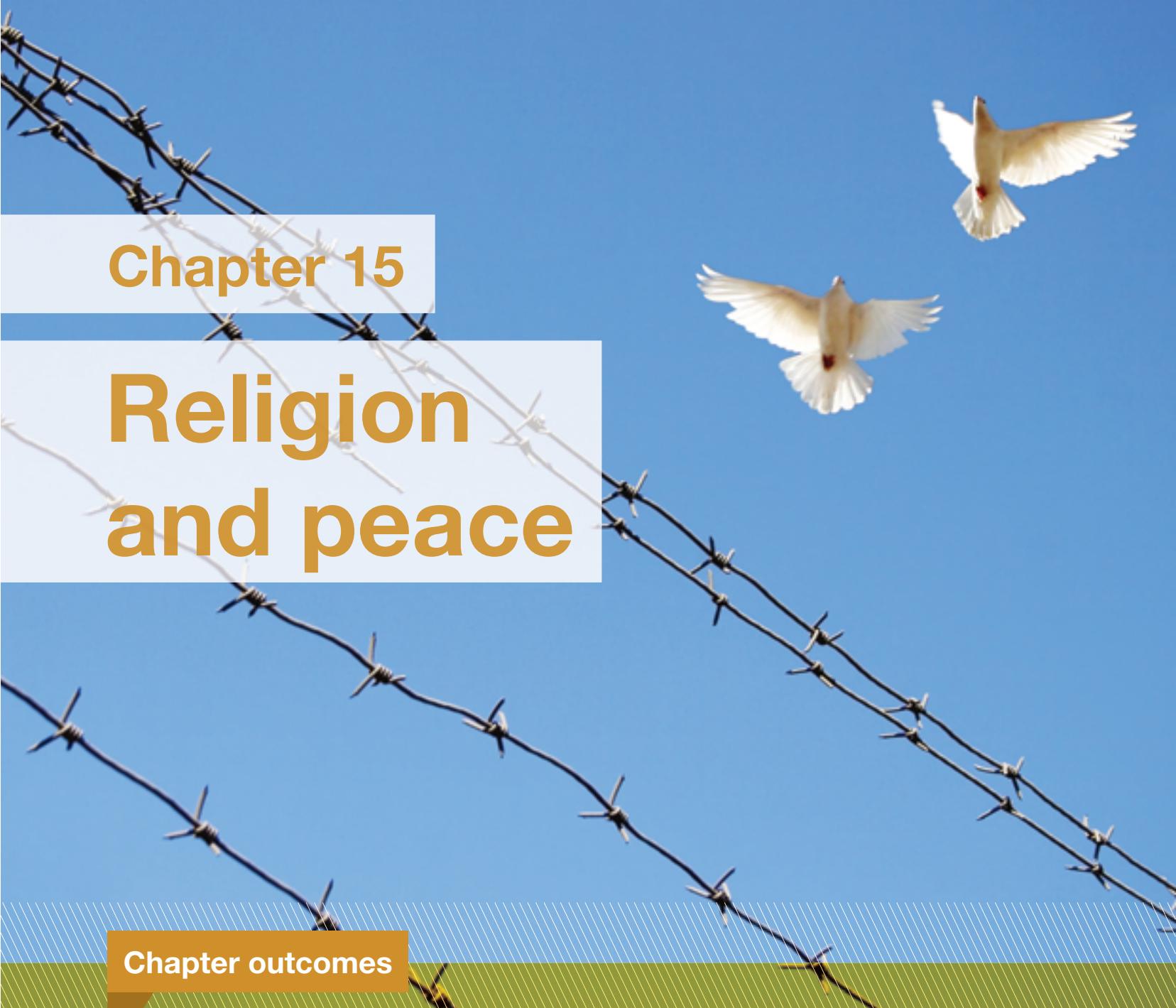
- Studies of Religion I and Studies of Religion II: answer ONE question from this section that is from a different religious tradition to the question(s) answered in Section II.

Question 5—Judaism (20 marks)

Religion is rather the attempt to express the complete reality of goodness through every aspect of our being.

F. H. Bradley 1846–1924

Discuss this statement in relation to the practices of Judaism.



Chapter 15

Religion and peace

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **investigate** the understanding of peace in *two* religious traditions and how their sacred texts inform this understanding
- **outline** the principal teachings about peace in these same *two* traditions
- **demonstrate** how these same *two* traditions guide the individual in achieving inner peace
- **discuss** how these same *two* traditions are contributing to world peace.

Introduction

Note!

This whole study is to be completed within *two* religious traditions. At the end of your investigations of peace in *two* religious traditions, go to 15.4 No simple answers on page 383.

The broad definition of peace that usually first comes to mind is a negative one: we view it as an absence of war. But is having peace only a cessation of war? Does peace between states and nations simply mean not destroying one another? And what about ‘inner’ peace—what does the expression ‘they are at peace with themselves’ mean? Do we have to be at peace with ourselves before we can be at peace with others? Is it possible to think and reflect upon peace without talking about war?

Both war and peace are linked to social being, to the living together as a social group, to the belonging to a state or to a particular nation. The biblical myth of the Tower of Babel, common to the three Semitic or Abrahamic religious traditions discussed in this chapter, can give us some insights:



‘No War’ sign painted on Sydney Opera House, 18 March 2003

Now the whole world had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there ... Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’

Gen 11:1–4

Here humans thought they could disregard their differences and unite themselves in speaking the same language and in pronouncing the same words. They thought they could build a common civilisation, identical for all—to eat, drink, play, dress, study and paint the same way; and to dwell in the same houses. But this did not happen, and the Genesis account tells us that:

... the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

Gen 11:8

The story of Abraham provides a counterpoint to the Tower of Babel—Abraham wanted to unite people by teaching them to preserve their differences.

This chapter addresses how religious traditions understand peace, how they guide individuals to inner peace, and how they contribute to world peace. In the context of the twenty-first century world, this comment made by a participant at a meeting of the Religions for Peace—USA in December 2003 raises some interesting questions:

[It was] noted that many religious leaders are reluctant to discuss the role of religion and violence, moving to discuss religion and peace as if religions are immune from violence. What religions must recognise is that religious communities exist in the midst of violence in the world and are often sources of violence, intolerance, and hatred. Unless religions recognise their role in creating and sustaining violence, secular communities will continue to marginalise religious communities in the dialogues and programs of peace-building ... In addition to this honest recognition of the role religions play in violence, a new theology of peace must emerge from a new culture that brings people together to discuss conversion, reconciliation and repentance. Without these three elements no valid theology of peace will emerge.

RESPOND

What event inspired this protest? Can you see any conflicting imagery in this photo?

Extension

- 1 In small groups, **discuss** the statement: ‘Having peace is only a cessation of war.’ Prepare a summary in point form of your discussion.
- 2 Brainstorm the difficulties you might encounter in your study of religion and peace.
- 3 **Construct** a mind map of your brainstorm from the previous question. Add to your mind map as you work through this chapter.
- 4 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 5 Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with religion and peace over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics.

15.1 Christianity

In the introduction to this chapter it was noted that peace is often placed in opposition to war, violence or conflict. Yet this is not the central meaning of peace in the Christian tradition.

Christians would understand peace, in a general sense, as a state of ordered tranquillity—of controlled calm, quiet or serenity. However, in a deeper sense, the Christian notion of peace refers not merely to the absence of overt conflict, but to that which results from actively working towards right relationships between the individual, God and one’s neighbour.

While the Christian tradition pursues ‘peace’ as its preferred path, there have been periods where violence and retribution have assumed greater dominance than peace and peacemaking. This relationship between peace, violence and war clouds the history of not only Christianity but also of most religious traditions.

Peace in the sacred texts of Christianity

► See also pages 376–9 for peace in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Christian Scriptures—the New Testament

The notion of peace in the four gospels and other Christian writings is founded on two major Jewish understandings—the fifth commandment, and Jewish words used to describe ‘peace’. In recalling the fifth commandment ‘You shall not kill’ (Ex 20:13; cf. Mt 5:21), Jesus asks for peace of heart and exposes the immorality of murderous anger and hatred. The Jewish words for ‘peace’ were translated into Greek and used in the Christian Scriptures. The main term used for ‘peace’ in the Jewish Scriptures is *shalom*. It is a Hebrew word that refers to the spiritual and material wellbeing of both individuals and the religious community as a whole, as a result of fidelity to God’s promises (Judg 6:23).

Peace as *shalom* is used to indicate peace between nations as opposed to war (1 Kings 5:12). It is also used in combination with other terms such as ‘peace and security’, ‘peace and prosperity’, ‘peace, truth and faithfulness’, and ‘righteousness that will bring peace’ (see respectively Ps 122:7; Deut 23:6; Esth 9:30; and Isa 32:17).



Figure 15.1.1 The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was one of the voices of the German anti-Nazi resistance, which cost him his life. He has been described as one of the ‘Heroes for a Culture of Peace’. Bonhoeffer is commemorated as a theologian and martyr by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the USA, the Church of England and the Church in Wales.

Although other passages speak of the connection between peace and material wellbeing blessed by God, the emphasis of this peace tends to be relational—peace exists between people or between people and God. The notion of peace as individual spiritual peace with God or internal peace of mind, disconnected from one's neighbour and the world, is not found in the Jewish Scriptures. The same, as shall be seen, is true of the Christian Scriptures and the four gospels in particular.

The Christian Scriptures, including the four gospels, build on the Jewish notion of *shalom* by presenting Jesus as the means of this peace. He not only offers peace (Jn 14:27) but, ultimately, embodies this peace in his own person—in his ministry, death and resurrection (Eph 2:14).

Did you know?

Jesus' greeting of peace, of *shalom*, is ultimately untranslatable. However, it is intended to communicate the fullness of peace and wholeness permeating every aspect of a person's life. Jesus makes this *shalom* possible through his sufferings, death and resurrection.

Peace in the gospels

- **Mark** contains two short instructions on peace. The first (Mk 5:34) occurs when Jesus unknowingly cures the woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. Despite the woman's fear and trembling, Jesus reassures her: 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.' Later on (Mk 9:50) Jesus encourages his disciples to remain true to their calling and the preaching of the gospel, even in times of hardship: 'Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.'
- **Matthew** emphasises the peace that the Twelve Apostles can choose to bestow (or withdraw) through their ministry and preaching of the gospel (Mt 10:11–13). Matthew's other text on peace is the often misinterpreted one about bringing the sword rather than peace (Mt 10:34–35, 38–39; see page 362 for a brief commentary).
- **John** contains six direct references to peace (Jn 14–20), all of which refer to Jesus' bestowal of peace on his disciples after his resurrection. The peace that Jesus brings, flowing from his life, death and resurrection, is a peace given by the



Holy Spirit that banishes all fear—a peace that cannot be gained from the world.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Jn 14:27

Interestingly, in the episode of Jesus' appearance to Thomas and the twelve (Jn 20:24–29), Jesus' reassuring words of 'Peace be with you' occur in the context of the doubting Thomas feeling the wounds of his crucifixion. Peace, suffering, perseverance and faith always exist side by side.

- Compared to the other gospel writers, **Luke** mentions 'peace' by far the greatest number of times. In his thirteen references to peace, Luke presents many of the above episodes in a slightly different context. Yet he also highlights that Jesus has been foretold as one who will guide the believer's feet into the path of peace (Lk 1:79); that his coming has brought peace to all humankind (Lk 2:14, 29); and that the wise disciple gains peace by carrying their cross and giving up all their possessions (Lk 14:25–33). Jesus is the prince of peace who enters Jerusalem (Lk 19:38), and who weeps over a Jerusalem that has rejected his message of peace (Lk 19:42). Following his appearance on the walk to Emmaus, Jesus once again appears to his disciples in Jerusalem and declares: 'Peace be with you' (Lk 24:36). As in the other gospels, this is not a vague, transitory peace, but a peace that 'startles and terrifies' the disciples. It is a peace linked to the suffering of the cross, rising from the dead, repentance and forgiveness of sins, and is available to all who desire it.

Jesus and peace

Christians believe that Jesus has been sent by God as a sign of the New Covenant, the means of a new reign of peace between God and all humanity. The Scriptures clearly characterise Jesus as one sent by God, one who offers peace, and who has become this peace through his own life, death and resurrection.

One of the most important biblical texts highlighting the meaning of Christian peace, and Jesus' role in this peace, is found in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Here Jesus is presented as the one sent from God who is identical to the peace sought by many.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us ... So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Eph 2:13–14, 17

Other important scripture references related to ‘peace’ are:

- Jesus is described as the ‘Prince of Peace’ (based on Isa 9:2–7)
- ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who harm you’ (Mt 5:9)
- ‘I give you a new commandment, love one another’ (Jn 13:43).

These, however, should be balanced against texts referring to divine judgement and violence, such as in Matthew 21:12–13, 18–22; Luke 22:35–38; and Mark 12:1–9.

According to Paul, Jesus is our peace, a peace that is directly connected with peacemaking. Jesus has achieved this peace by breaking down the wall between Jew and Gentile (between all peoples; cf. Col 1:20). All Christian peacemaking needs to be understood in the context of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Through his suffering and death on the cross, Jesus has bestowed on humanity both the peace and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23–24).

The peace that Jesus brings is also connected with keeping and doing his ‘word’, by rejecting the ‘peace of the world’, and therefore letting go of fear (Jn 14:23, 27).

The idea that violence can be an appropriate Christian response has been traced to the incident where Jesus drove the moneychangers from the Temple (Mt 21:12–13; Lk 19:45–48 and parallels), and also to a misinterpretation of the text:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Mt 10:34; see also Lk 12:51–52

Jesus’ main point here is that true peace comes from faithful obedience (listening and doing) towards God’s will. That is why the gospels have Jesus speaking of bringing not peace but a sword, creating division in families where some obey God’s will, following Jesus, and others do not.

Nevertheless, the primary orientation of Jesus’ teaching and of the Christian tradition has been towards understanding, finding and making peace, for oneself, for

one’s community and for the wider world. This means that the Christian preference is to follow Jesus’ example of selfless love or *agape*, the word used in Jesus’ instruction to ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you’ (Mt 5:44).

This preference is especially strong in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount where he declares: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’ (Mt 5:9). But, as Matthew’s Beatitudes make clear, the precondition for becoming a peacemaker is to live out all the remaining Beatitudes—to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be merciful, to be pure in heart, and even to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness (Mt 5:1–11). For the early Christians, peacemaking also meant a refusal to take part in warfare of any kind. For the first 300 years of Christianity, most followers of Jesus could not reconcile war with Jesus’ words and actions associated with the making of peace.

The early Christian communities and peace

To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 1:7

Among the early Christian communities, the understanding of peace builds upon ideas already present in the Jewish Scriptures and inspired by the life of Jesus Christ. The life, death and resurrection of Christ are clearly the foundation of Christianity’s approach to love, peace and justice. The aim of this section is to explore, and look for patterns in, a range of ‘peace’ texts that emerged from these early Christian communities.

Virtually all the letters in the Christian Scriptures (outside the four gospels), open their greeting with ‘peace’, often paired with ‘grace’ (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; and Gal 1:3). Although ‘peace’ in these writings refers to lack of strife among individuals or nations (Rev 6:4), it is also used to describe order and goodwill within the early Christian communities.

Paul frequently exhorts Christians to be at peace with one another (Rom 14:9; 1 Cor 14:33; 1 Thess 5:13). Christians are encouraged to build up relations of peace and harmony with all people, regardless of whether those ‘others’ are Christian or not (Heb 12:14). With his gaze firmly directed towards Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1–48) and the parable of the Final Judgement (Mt 25), Paul advises early Christians to concentrate on living lives of peace, and to leave any vengeance to God.

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Rom 12:18–21

This set of Christian writings also makes clear that all spiritual blessings, including peace, are from God. God is a God of peace (Rom 15:33; Phil 4:9). The peace that God brings is associated with righteousness, grace, mercy, love, joy and life (Rom 14:17; Phil 1:2). The long-term aim of the Christian is to receive the peace of God (Phil 4:7) or the peace of Christ (Col 3:15). If the Christian mind is focused on the Spirit, this in turn leads to life and peace (Rom 8:6), and the God of hope then fills the Christian with joy and peace (Rom 15:13).

The idea of peace within the community and in the wider world underlies many New Testament teachings. As we shall see, Christian teachings about peace developed with the need to understand how to apply these biblical principles to specific situations in a vastly changing and challenging world.

Review

- 1 Identify one quotation from the New Testament discussed in this section which, for you, best expresses the Christian understanding of peace. Justify your response.
- 2 Investigate significant writings in the New Testament that refer to peace. Construct a chart or a mind map to outline the ways peace is described.
- 3 Drawing on all of the quotations from the New Testament mentioned in this section, synthesise the Christian vision of peace in a single sentence of your own construction. If you find this an impossible exercise, explain why!
- 4 Prepare a summary of how the Christian understanding of peace is informed by the writings of the New Testament.

Principal teachings about peace

The Christian understanding of peace has been developed over centuries of thought and practice. The early Church (the first 300 years) was strongly pacifist (supportive of nonviolence and disarmament) but this began to change in the time of Constantine. The Council of Arles in 314 CE said that to forbid 'the state the right to go to war was to condemn it to extinction', and not long after this Christian philosophers began to formulate the doctrine of the 'just war'.

The divisions within Christianity brought with them different attitudes to war and peace. The stance of pacifism had its modern origins in the early years of the twentieth century. Its proponents included Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr and Christian Churches such as the Mennonites, Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Amish.

The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) said that peace is 'not only to enjoy but to do' and this has always been the principal Christian teaching about peace. The Jewish vision of *shalom* (Isa 54:10, 65:17–25) implies a call to become peacemakers and build communities of peace. And this vision is reinforced in the gospels, with the peace that Christ teaches—*pax Christi* (Mk 10:42–44; Mt 5:9–10, 44–47).

The doctrine for a 'just war'

At a time when the mostly Christian Roman Empire was being attacked from the north and the fall of Rome was imminent, Augustine (354–430 CE), one of the great thinkers of the early Church, proposed the idea of a morally just war.

In his massive work *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), Augustine built on the principles that originated with classical Greek and Roman philosophers to propose his theory for a just war. There are two parts of the theory:

- *Jus ad bellum*: the conditions under which the use of military force is justified
- *Jus in bello*: how to conduct a war in an ethical manner.

The just war theory attempts to reconcile three things:

- taking human life is seriously wrong
- states have a duty to defend their citizens, and defend justice
- protecting innocent human life and defending important moral values sometimes requires willingness to use force and violence.

The just war theory really has no biblical basis to its elements. It is based on the premise that war is undesirable but sometimes may be necessary to prevent a greater evil. These elements are that the war in question must:

- have a just cause and not be a matter of retribution
- be used as a last resort
- be waged by a legitimate authority
- use proportionate means and target only combatants
- have a reasonable chance of success.

Christian pacifism

Christians have a long history of refusing to take part in war.

- Within the Christian tradition the almost universal commitment to pacifism and nonviolence lasted almost three centuries.
- Christians resisted early Roman laws requiring them to renounce their faith and many were executed for this.
- For the first three centuries, Christians almost universally refused to serve in the Roman army. Again, many were executed for this.

Groups of Christians who embraced nonviolence re-emerged during and after the Reformation. Some, like the Anabaptists, would not take part in government because they didn't want to be associated in any way with the exercise of violence. The Quakers, however, were often directly involved in the politics of the day.

May we look upon our treasures, and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions.

John Woolman, Quaker, eighteenth century

The Quakers—Society of Friends

The Quakers' basic theological principle was that there was the potential for good and for evil within every person—that the battle between good and evil was raging within everyone. So Quakers could not claim that there was absolute surety within their community.

They also could not see the worldly people, government and authorities as irredeemably sinful, because they believed that everybody was on the path towards greater virtue and greater knowledge of God.

The Quakers' hope, embodied in the phrase 'everybody has that of God within them', was that even the government and authorities could be led towards a better relationship with God; for the Quakers this meant nonviolence. This opened up to them the possibility that, eventually, even the political system could be imbued with nonviolence.

Quakers hold to a 'Testimony to Peace' and refuse to participate in war as combatants.

Today many Christians are pacifists of various types, ranging from peace activists to those who need a great deal to convince them that war is justified. The Christian argument for pacifism is based in the example that Jesus sets Christians through his life, and in his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and other places.

Did you know?

Conscientious objection to war

Australia's *Defence Act 1903* was the first national legislation to grant total exemption from military service on the grounds of conscientious belief for those who could prove that the 'doctrines of their religion forbade them to bear arms or perform military service'. The *Defence Act (No 2) 1939* broadened the definition of 'conscientious' to include all beliefs, not just religious beliefs or doctrine, thus allowing members of a non-pacifist church to hold pacifist views as individuals. The *Defence Legislation Amendment Act 1992* included the recognition of conscientious objection to particular conflicts.



Figure 15.1.2 Pittwater Peace Group preparing for Palm Sunday peace march. Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter and the opening day of Holy Week (March or April), is a Christian feast day that commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the laying down of palm branches at his feet by the crowds (Jn 12:13). Today it has become traditional for Christians to rally and march for peace and justice on this day.

The development of Christian teachings on peace

The creation of modern nation states from the eighteenth century onwards, the Second World War, the forced end to colonialism, the massive development of technologically sophisticated ‘weapons of war’ and, particularly, the ‘undeclared’ war in Vietnam, saw a rethinking of Christian teachings on peace.

In 1965 the second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church stated that:

Peace cannot be obtained on earth unless the welfare of humanity is safeguarded ... A firm determination to respect the dignity of other people along with the deliberate practice of fraternal love are absolutely necessary for the achievement of peace. Accordingly, peace is also the fruit of love, for love goes beyond what justice can ensure.

Gaudium et spes, 78

And, as we shall see, this development has led to not only increased collaboration between the Christian Churches but also to a strong interfaith dimension in peace initiatives.

Review

- 1 Explain the ‘just war’ theory.
- 2 Recall the names of two Christian pacifist denominations and describe the nature of their involvement with peace issues.
- 3 Outline the principal teachings about peace in Christianity.

Extension

- 1 In small groups, prepare a discussion outline for a debate on the topic: ‘Should war be “just”, or merely “permissible”?’
- 2 Using the internet and/or other resources, investigate the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In one paragraph, explain his continuing influence on Christian teachings about peace.

Achieving inner peace

Inner peace in Christianity is achieved by right living, which is not simply a matter of following the rules or ‘imitating Christ’. Right living is the exercise of virtue, which is an inward capacity in the character of the human being, and the strength to live virtuously (because it does not come naturally) is derived from a real relationship with God.

A prayer-life, Bible-reading and being an active part of the people of God (playing, that is, an active role) are ways and means of keeping in right relationship with God as the source of virtue and its exercise—‘the heart that is virtuous will be at peace’.

That peace is impossible without forgiveness is strongly underlined in Christianity. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers to forgive their enemies, to forgive unconditionally, and repeatedly. Forgiveness is the inner dynamic of Christian peace, because one must first allow God to forgive them, and sometimes this is hard, but this is the start of the Christian journey.

Relationships with other people are often linked with one’s individual relationship with God—‘Love your Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind and with all your strength ... [and] you shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mk 12:30–31). In other words, to achieve world peace, one needs to be at peace with oneself, which means being at peace with God and with one’s neighbour.

In addition, the Christian tradition has always placed a strong emphasis on blending theory with action, and on the needs of the self balanced against the need to respond and become involved.

Review

- 1 What do Christians mean by ‘inner peace’ and how do they achieve this?
- 2 In your own words, explain why Christians believe ‘peace is impossible without forgiveness’.

Contributing to world peace

Today, when the phenomenon of violence has become increasingly complex, the Christian Churches have been challenged to work together for peace. One example of this was the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) launched in 2001 by the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001–2010 presents itself as a timely ecumenical opportunity. The churches meeting in Harare [Zimbabwe] in 1998 for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches called one another to work together during the Decade to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence. Recognising the influence of a variety of historical and existential factors on the churches' mixed response in situations of violence, the Decade calls for repentance for complicity in violence and a creative engagement with the world to find alternatives. The papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* [1963] and subsequent statements of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II also call upon the churches to work towards building a culture of peace in a world pervaded by a culture of violence. These mark a significant movement through engagement in analysis of violence to an active pursuit of the resources for and possibilities of peace with justice.

'Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the way of Christ for the sake of the World', WCC, p. 2

This initiative was taken up by the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) as 'Cultivating Peace—DOV in Australia'. DOV in Australia sought to address five major worldwide themes, the lack of which were identified by the WCC as root causes of violence:

- Truth—re-thinking and re-imagining ways of peace
- Mercy—spreading power and forgiveness
- Justice—doing justice to all
- Community—growing communities that value diversity; and a central focus to each is
- Reconciliation—recognising the 'original' sin of dispossession and rejoicing in our unity.

In their documentation the NCCA stated:

The *Decade to Overcome Violence* has a holistic understanding of violence and peace. In keeping with the heart of biblical and all great spiritual teachings, we recognise that peacemaking and reconciliation must begin (though most certainly not end) with ourselves, and with each person's need for grace, forgiveness and renewal. Reconciling the world also requires reconciling and reconciled persons.



Figure 15.1.3 Decade to Overcome Violence banner

Although this 'decade to overcome violence' has come to an end, the work continues—of course, no one imagined that violence could be overcome in a decade! It is a task—something that all humanity needs to work towards unceasingly; and it is a gift—something that human earthly peace can only dimly anticipate, and that relies on an open cooperation between human and divine forces. The ecumenical tradition of social thought and striving for peace has made it clear, through its various writings and initiatives, that the peace the world seeks is both a gift and a task.

There are many Christian groups, organisations and movements working for peace—some are formal groups, others are informal networks. Increasingly, these groups are involved on an interfaith level.

Some of these organisations are:

- Affinity Intercultural Foundation
- Pax Christi
- Religions for Peace
- Scripture Union of WA EPYC (Empowering Peacemakers in Your Community)
- Uniting Justice Australia.



Figure 15.1.4 Representatives of Pax Christi Australia (Victoria) taking part in a peace rally

Review

- 1 Is it necessary to achieve some sort of 'inner peace' before one can work for world peace? **Propose** reasons for or against to support your response.
- 2 How important is dialogue as a means of achieving world peace? Provide recent examples of this dialogue.
- 3 **Demonstrate** how Christianity can guide the individual to achieve inner peace and at the same time provide direction on how to develop peace in the world.
- 4 **Construct** a mind map to draw together all the material in this section.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 367 to find the WCC's 'Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the way of Christ for the sake of the World'. **Clarify** some of the issues it raises about the understanding of peace in the Christian tradition.
- 2 Using the web destinations for page 367 as a starting point, **investigate** what *four* Christian and/or multifaith organisations are endeavouring to achieve in relation to peace. **Construct** a table that categorises their work. Headings in your table might include (but not be limited to):
 - name of the organisation
 - principal aims/mission statement
 - membership profile
 - location(s)
 - projects
 - approaches to achieving peace.
 In a summative statement, **calculate** the degree to which Christian religious beliefs and principles influence the peace motives of the membership of these organisations.
- 3 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** how Christians are contributing to world peace in a specific region or on a particular issue.

15.2 Islam

In today's media coverage one would rarely see the words 'Islam' and 'peace' in the same discussion, yet there is much in the history of Islam that demonstrates a preference for peace over war. But, like all religious traditions, the message of the founder can get lost in the zeal for political power—the 'religion' can be used as a political tool and so the religion becomes the politics. In common with all religions, justice and peace are integral parts of Islamic teachings, and the actions of some Muslims should not be confused with the religion itself.

Peace in the sacred texts of Islam

Glossary

hijra

al-Hijra is the Arabic word for migration. In Islamic religious history, the 'migration' of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE became Year 1 of the Muslim lunar calendar—1 AH (in Latin, *anno Hegirae*).

Sahih

Literally means authentic. A term used to indicate the high level of trustworthiness in a tradition (*hadith*).

umma

Community, people, worldwide community of Muslims. This was a highly emotive word in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and remains so among Muslims today, Arab or otherwise, many of whom dream of, or regard themselves as, a single Muslim *umma*.

► Refer to Chapter 5, pages 104–7, for more on the Qur'an and *hadith*.

The sacred texts of Islam, the Qur'an and the way of the Prophet Muhammad (*sunna*) as found in the *hadith*, are fundamental to Islam. In order to investigate the understanding of peace in Islam it is necessary to understand something about the foundations of Islam and 'the way of the Prophet'.



Figure 15.2.1 *al-Salamu 'alaykum*—‘Peace be with you! Peace be upon you!’ This is the traditional and much-used Muslim greeting often rendered as ‘salam’. This greeting is also used at the end of each of the daily *salat* (prayers).

Early Islam

Muhammad was born into a tribal culture in a place and time of much physical fighting and aggression. Fighting was built into the culture of pre-Islamic Arabia in a complex and integral way—warring would distribute and redistribute limited resources from raiding and plundering but, at the same time, there were rules that prohibited fighting during certain months, the killing of non-combatants and unnecessary plunder. The Islamic community (*umma*) emerged out of this environment, and the early followers of Muhammad had to fight to survive in such a harsh economic and political environment.

Muhammad's approach to the ethics of war and peace, however, was quite different from that of pre-Islamic Arabia. This is demonstrated not only by the large body of literature comprising the Prophet's sayings and actions (*hadith*) and his biography (*sira*) compiled between the second and fourth Islamic centuries, but also in the divine revelation of the Qur'an.

Note!

Muhammad was rejected from his own tribe, the Quraysh, and was banished from his community of birth when he would not stop preaching Islam.

It is clear that Muhammad was averse to many aspects of the tribal culture into which he was born. He was not interested in affairs of tribal honour and throughout the Meccan period (610–622 CE) he showed no inclination towards the use of force, even for self-defence. On the contrary, his policy can only be described as nonviolent resistance. This policy was maintained despite escalating physical attacks directed at his followers and at him personally, and growing pressure from within the Muslim community to respond in kind. Some Qur'anic verses reflect the growing tension among Meccan Muslims over the use of force.

Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path,

And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted; but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient.

And be patient and your patience is not but by the assistance of Allah, and grieve not for them, and do not distress yourself at what they plan.

Surely Allah is with those who guard against evil and those who do good to others.

Surat al-Nahl 16:125–128 'The Bees'

Therefore bear up patiently as did the messengers endowed with constancy bear up with patience and do not seek to hasten for them their doom. On the day that they shall see what they are promised they shall be as if they had not tarried save an hour of the day. A sufficient exposition! Shall then any be destroyed save the transgressing people?

Surat al-Ahqaf 46:35 'The Sand Dunes'

Muhammad, nevertheless, insisted throughout this period on the virtues of patience and steadfastness in the face of their opponents' attacks. When the persecution of the most vulnerable Muslims (former slaves and members of Mecca's poorer families) became intense, Muhammad directed them to seek refuge in the realm of a Christian king—Abbyssinia. The Prophet's rejection of armed struggle during the Meccan period was more than mere prudence based on the Muslims' military weakness—it was derived from the Qur'an's still unfolding conception that the use of force should be avoided unless it is the 'last resort'. This ethical perspective is clearly outlined in *Surat al-Shura* 42:40–43 'The Counsel':

And the recompense of evil is punishment like it, but whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from Allah; surely He does not love the unjust.

And whoever defends himself after his being oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (to blame).

And whoever is patient and forgiving, these most surely are actions due to courage.

According to these verses, active nonviolent resistance and open defiance of persecution by non-believers is the proper Muslim response, and was in fact the Prophet's own practice during this period. Clearly, *jihad* in this extended period of Muhammad's life meant nonviolent resistance.

► Some contemporary considerations about *jihad* are discussed on page 373.

In 622 CE Muhammad left Mecca for Medina to serve as chief arbitrator in a bitter feud between Arab tribes. Medina was also a safe haven for the fragile Muslim community. It was during the ten years Muhammad spent in Medina that the Muslims became a coherent community, and it was here that *jihad* acquired its military component. In Medina the Prophet enacted a new policy towards the Quraysh, the ruling tribe of Mecca, aimed at redressing Muslim grievances. Small expeditions were authorised to investigate movements of Meccans and sometimes they raided specific caravans (groups of merchants travelling together) along the trade route to Syria. These expeditions impressed upon Meccans the new power of the Muslims, and demonstrated the need for a peaceful accommodation with the Muslims.

Did you know?

The Meccan period of the Prophet's mission lasted almost fourteen years, three years longer than the Medinan period.

The event that clearly signals a break with pre-Islamic custom occurred in the second year in Medina after *hijra*. An expedition, led by Ibn 'Abd al-Jahsh took place in the prohibited month of Rajab. According to the Prophet's instructions, the expedition was simply to reconnoitre Quraysh positions outside Mecca. When they came across a Meccan caravan, the temptation to attack overcame them—they killed one man, took two others captive, and returned to Medina with the booty. Muhammad rebuked 'Abd al-Jahsh and refused to take any share of the booty.

It was on this occasion that the following Qur'anic verse was revealed:

They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter, and hindering men from Allah's way and denying Him, and hindering men from the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it, are still graver with Allah, and persecution is graver than slaughter; and they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever—these it is whose works shall go for nothing in this world and the hereafter, and they are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide.

Surat al-Baqara 2:217 'The Cow'

The young Muslim community at Medina was surrounded by a range of groups who were hostile to Muhammad's message of Islam. The preaching of Islam and the conduct of the community's day-to-day activities had to occur within a setting characterised by outright warfare against hostile enemies—Quraysh, Bedouin tribes, the Jews of Medina and the Byzantine Empire. The Muslims of this period, according to one report, 'did not sleep or wake except with their weapons'. Qur'anic verses of the period exhorting the Prophet and his followers to fight suggest the strain that the constant threat of war must have imposed on the community.

O you who believe! answer (the call of) Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life; and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered.

Surat al-Anfal 8:24 'The Spoils'

O Prophet! urge the believers to war; if there are twenty patient ones of you they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a hundred of you they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who do not understand.

For the present Allah has made light your burden, and He knows that there is weakness in you; so if there are a hundred patient ones of you they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a thousand they shall overcome two thousand by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient.

Surat al-Anfal 8:65–66 'The Spoils'

These Qur'anic verses also point to some interesting positions about decisions to engage in conflict. Given favourable conditions (8:65), Muslims could, by virtue of their faith, win against odds of ten to one—in the battle of Badr (2 AH/624 CE), Muslim forces defeated the much larger Meccan army. The battle of al-Khandaq (5 AH/627 CE) would appear to support the position in *Surat al-Anfal* 8:66—Muslims were confronted by a much stronger force and elected to fortify their city by digging a trench around Medina, and thus avoided military confrontation with their aggressors.

Although it is very clear that Muhammad personally conducted several key campaigns after the battle of Badr, the combined evidence of the sources indicates that he remained a reluctant warrior. On several occasions he urged the use of nonviolent means or sought an early end to hostilities, often in the face of stiff opposition from his companions. At the same time, in the light of the Qur'anic revelations, he seems to have accepted unavoidable fighting in defence of what he saw as Muslim interests. The essence of his approach to war can be found in this *hadith* of *Sahih al-Bukhari*:

O people! Do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask God for safety, but when you face the enemy, be patient, and remember that Paradise is under the shade of swords.

Review

- 1 Write a brief description of the 'world' in which Islam was born.
- 2 How did Muhammad's attitudes differ from those of the prevailing tribal culture of his time?
- 3 **Outline** Muhammad's attitude to the concept of peace.
- 4 **Clarify** the actions of Muhammad to the issue of peace.
- 5 Select three quotations from the Qur'an cited in this section and **explain** how they inform an understanding of peace in Islam.

The early community

Muhammad died in 11 AH/632 CE and the Islamic leadership passed on to his successors, the four 'rightly guided' caliphs. During the thirty years of the rule of the 'rightly guided' caliphs, the Qur'anic concept of *shura* (consultation) was practised—in fact, the third caliph, 'Uthman, was elected by *shura*. Within about twenty years after Muhammad's death, Islam laid claim to the remains of the Byzantine and Persian empires in Persia, Syria-Palestine, Iraq and Egypt.

This territorial expansion did not mean forcible conversion of the conquered peoples. Abu Bakr, the first caliph, gave these rules to an army he was sending into battle—all rules that have their basis in the Qur'an.

- Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path.
- You must not mutilate dead bodies.
- Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged person.
- Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful.
- Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food.
- You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.

Did you know?

Jews and Christians had specific rights in the Muslim community. Above all, they had the right to practise their religion upon payment of a poll tax from which priests and the poor were exempt, and were freed from military service. The Qur'an counsels: 'There is no compulsion in religion' (2:256).

In 16 AH/638 CE the armies of the second 'rightly guided' caliph, 'Umar, defeated the Byzantine armies at the Battle of Yarmouk (south of Damascus). Before entering Jerusalem, 'Umar formed a covenant with the Jews, pledging protection of their religious freedom. In 19 AH/641 CE the Patriarch of Egypt invited the Muslims to help free Egypt from the Romans.

Individual Christians and Jews sometimes obtained high positions in Muslim administrations throughout the medieval period. Syriac-speaking Christians were employed by their Muslim patrons in eighth and ninth century Baghdad to translate Greek manuscripts into Arabic, thus helping to preserve the learning of the ancient world.



Figure 15.2.2 Medieval Muslim and Christian leaders play chess together, dated 1283

In 583 AH/1187 CE Salah al-Din (Saladin) recaptured Jerusalem from the Christians. Although a number of Muslim holy places had been violated, Salah al-Din prohibited acts of vengeance, and his army was so disciplined that there were no deaths or violent acts after the city surrendered. The residents were taken prisoner, but their ransom was set at a token amount.

Centuries later in 1492, Jews fleeing from the Spanish *reconquista* would find refuge in the Ottoman Empire and establish flourishing communities there.

Did you know?

In the thirteenth century, when the non-Muslim Mongols (Mughals) had taken possession of Baghdad, their ruler is said to have assembled the religious scholars of the city and posed a loaded question to them: according to their law, which alternative is preferable, the disbelieving ruler who is just or the Muslim ruler who is unjust? After moments of anguished reflection, one well-known scholar took the lead by signing his name to the response, 'the disbelieving ruler who is just'. Others are said to have followed suit in endorsing this answer.

Peace in *hadith*

That she heard Allah's Apostle saying, 'He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar.'

Sahih al-Bukhari

If anyone kills a man who had made a covenant (anyone who belongs to a non-Muslim community with whom a treaty of peace has been made, or a member of protected communities) will not experience the fragrance of paradise.

Sahih al-Bukhari and Ibn Maja

When Allah's Apostle concluded a peace treaty with the people of Hudaibiya, Ali b. Abi Talib wrote the document and he mentioned in it, 'Muhammad, Allah's Apostle'. The pagans said, 'Don't write: "Muhammad, Allah's Apostle", for if you were an apostle we would not fight with you.' Allah's Apostle asked Ali to rub it out, but Ali said, 'I will not be the person to rub it out.' Allah's Apostle rubbed it out and made peace with them on the condition that the Prophet and his companions would enter Mecca and stay there for three days, and that they would enter with their weapons in cases.

Sahih al-Bukhari

The first cases to be adjudicated between people on the Day of Judgement will be those of bloodshed.

Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim

There is a reward for kindness to every living human or animal.

Sahih Muslim and al-Tirmidhi

The merciful are shown mercy by the All Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth and god will show mercy to you.

al-Tirmidhi and Abu Da'ud

Review

- Give two reasons to *explain* why Islam was able to expand so rapidly.
- Outline* the attitudes and actions of the early Muslim communities to peace.
- How did these attitudes and actions reflect the teachings of the Qur'an?
- What is the importance of *hadith* for Muslims?
- Select three quotations from *hadith* cited in this section and *explain* how they inform an understanding of peace in Islam.

Extension



Go to the web destinations for page 372 to further your understanding of the development of Islam within the medieval period of European history. **Construct** a chart to place the early years of Islam into the context of events in Europe.

Principal teachings about peace

From its very beginnings, Islam emphasised peace as a fundamental value; in fact the word *islam* itself is derived from the root *slm*, which are the root letters for peace. Islam means establishing peace in society as well as achieving inner peace by surrendering to the will of Allah, and in the Qur'an there are repeated references to the concept of peace. Significantly, the Qur'an calls upon Muslims, 'O ye who believe! Come, all of you, into complete peace and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy' (2:208). And in *Surat 14:23*, 'And those who believe and do good are made to enter Gardens [*al-Janna* or Paradise], beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them by their Lord's permission; their greeting therein is, Peace!' The world can become like *al-Janna* only if there is peace in the world and Allah says, 'Enter it [*al-Janna*] in peace and justice' (15:46). Thus, the main attributes of *al-Janna* for which all Muslims aspire are peace and justice.

While Muslims believe that Allah desires peace and created humankind for that purpose, they also acknowledge that humans can have a tendency towards aggression, violence and greed. So for a human being, there will always be an internal struggle (*jihad*) against evil temptations, a

Did you know?

Two of the 'ninety-nine beautiful names' of Allah are *as-Salam* (the source of Peace) and *al-'Adl* (the Justice).

Muslims always write or say 'Peace be upon him' (PBUH) after the name of Muhammad and all prophets of Allah such as Nuh (Noah) and Ibrahim (Abraham). Sometimes you will see SAWS—the Arabic acronym for the same phrase.

struggle to do Allah's will every day of their lives. It is this internal struggle that is referred to as the 'greater' *jihad*. The 'lesser' *jihad* is the struggle against external evils—a war fought is the last resort after all peaceful attempts have failed. The concept of *jihad* is a notion that Westerners often misunderstand, and a concept that is often abused by some Muslims for political purposes.

When *jihad* becomes relevant is when it becomes an argument over offensive and defensive wars, and authoritarian rulers will always claim a defensive war.

Jihad is supposed to run through all aspects of a Muslim's life as it is the Muslim's duty in the world to do good and prevent harm and evil in every way. Of course, this can entail the use of force when peaceful means are not successful, but *jihad* does not necessarily involve waging war.

Some Muslim scholars argue that focusing too much on the redefinition of *jihad* will serve to pacify Muslims and push them to stop resisting foreign occupation as in Palestine and Iraq. They argue that the precedence of *jihad* to include 'just war' is well established. The only problem is when terrorists wrongly use *jihad* to rally support for their cause.

Jihad in the modern world

Much of contemporary writing on attitudes to peace in Islam focuses on the understanding of *jihad*. The concept of *jihad* has had different interpretations and different uses in the history of Muslim thought and politics. From time to time in history, Muslims have been under major onslaught, such as the Crusades from the eleventh to thirteenth century, the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century and the European Colonisation of the nineteenth century. During these times *jihad*'s external aspect of 'justified warfare' has been accentuated.

... if *jihad* is a historical concept and process, it could be comprehended in the light of its historical memory and its significance and context. This memory reveals the paradoxes of the difference between doctrine and its application in real life. It also helps to explain how the image of Islam and Muslims has been distorted not only by Western misunderstanding but, also, mainly by Muslims themselves.

Dr Nadia Mahmoud Mostafa, Professor of International Relations at Cairo University, Egypt, in the March 2003 paper 'How to comprehend *jihad*'

When the classical jurists and scholars were seeking to define the Islamic position about war, they

thought of Muslims as a powerful established society able to wage war against the sources of threat. At the same time, Christian philosophers and theologians were evolving their 'just war' theories. In both cases, they could be overly selective in their interpretation and there was a divergence in opinions about whether they were at 'war or peace'.

In Muslim thought and jurisprudence, interpretations of *jihad* are related to other terms such as *Dar al-Islam* (domain of peace) and *Dar al-Harb* (domain of war). The relationship between these terms concerns the classical Islamic vision of Muslim external relations with non-Muslims, which was mainly dictated by the circumstances of the times and norms in international relations, and divergence of opinions can be seen in historical experiences—periods of Muslim strength or weakness.

Contemporary writers such as Dr Mostafa see the need for a 'middle course' in the interpretation of *jihad*, one based on the following points:

- *Jihad* is the active expression of the Islamic commitment, responsibility and sense of duty wherever it is required in practical life. To interpret *jihad* only as offensive or defensive war is to misunderstand the meaning of the word and philosophy behind it. It is equally wrong to assume that *jihad* is a 'holy war' in the Western sense.
- To interpret the basis of Muslim relations with non-Muslims as war or peace is to misunderstand the meaning of Islam and the historic conditions that led to its definition. Islam invites people to Islam—*Da'wa*—it does not coerce them.
- *Jihad* does not exclude the possibility of aggressive armed conflict nor does it impose peace as the sole alternative in all situations. Therefore, the question of when, why, and how to use force or a peaceful orientation should be carefully addressed and answered in light of the Islamic laws and ethics of warfare, and in consideration of the realities of the contemporary world.
- *Jihad* is an intellectual instrument—war and peace are not considered as a basis for normative relations with non-Muslims.

The contemporary interpretation of *jihad* by non-Muslims and, particularly, Muslims should not be based on historical experiences. According to Dr Mostafa, Islamic thought faces a big challenge: to develop a new vision of *jihad* (especially regarding when and why to use force and by whom). Any thought that does not respond to the personality and identity of the Islamic *umma* (community) will result in more confusion and could be very harmful to the very essence of the Muslim community—its soul and its identity that is *jihad* in its fullest and broadest meaning.

Review

- 1 'Jihad is supposed to run through all aspects of a Muslim's life.' In your own words, **define** 'jihad'.
- 2 Give three examples of the use of 'salam'.
- 3 **Outline** the principal Islamic teachings about peace and **demonstrate** how these are informed by the Qur'an and hadith.

Extension

'It is necessary to develop a new vision of jihad.'

Outline discussion points for a debate on this topic.

Achieving peace

In Islam, the concept of peace is twofold. Firstly, to be at peace with God and therefore with oneself; then, secondly, to be at peace with the rest of the world. As has been demonstrated in previous sections, being at peace with God means to give oneself fully and completely to God and to enter into a covenant of peace with Him by praying, fasting, performing the *Hajj* and all of the other spiritual practices of Islam—the five pillars of faith (see pages 109–10). It is through 'submitting' to God, that one finds inner peace.

Inner peace

Islam believes it is imperative that the individual human being be at peace with themselves before the goal of universal peace may be realised. This is the real struggle, or *jihad*, for the individual. Through acceptance to obey the Will of God, reflection over the universe, prayer and meditation, individuals realise their closeness to God and become aware of God's mercy and compassion. The obligatory prayers (*salat*) are at the heart of Muslim practice and provide Muslims with opportunities for direct communion with God five times a day, and so help them to avoid too much attachment to non-essential things. The tradition identifying interior struggle as greater (that is, non-military) *jihad* has been profoundly influenced by Sufism, an ancient and diverse mystical movement that marks the spiritual dimension of Islam.

► Refer to Chapter 13, pages 309–14, for more on Sufism.

Sufism arose at the time when many Muslim rulers were apparently driven by wealth and power, and it sought to refocus the vision and goals of the Muslim community.



Figure 15.2.3 Young Muslim women participate in a peaceful protest march against war in Sydney, 23 March 2003

RESPOND

What war instigated this protest?

O soul that art at rest!
Return to your Lord, well-pleased with him,
well-pleasing Him,
O enter among My servants,
And enter into My garden.

Surat al-Fajr 89:27–30 'Daybreak'

Sufism stresses that the traveller on the spiritual path must first transcend their base desires and worldly attachments and only then will God's light enter their heart, resulting in inner peace. There can be no universal peace until there is inner peace.

While not identifying with Sufism as a movement, much contemporary writing on *jihad* has its roots in the distinction Sufism made between the 'greater' and 'lesser' *jihad* that relied on the example set by the Prophet Muhammad.

Inner peace is developed by submission to Allah and is expressed in one's relationships with one's family and the community and society, and it is put into practice through the five pillars of faith (see pages 109–10).

World peace

Islam the religion, Muslim politics, *jihad* as a 'holy war'—what a confusion of interests! But despite all this confusion, there are millions of Muslims for whom Islam is a deep spiritual experience and has nothing to do with politics or violence or the use of Islam for one's interests.

Because Islam is relatively ‘new’ to Australia, world events overtook Australians’ knowledge of Islam and Muslims, and for many Australians the media were their source of knowledge of Islam—many Australians regarded Islam and Muslims with suspicion. For Australian Muslims, their contribution to world peace and the first priorities in achieving it have been to join in initiatives established to increase non-Muslim Australians’ knowledge of what Islam is and to enter into dialogue with Christians and Jews.

Did you know?

The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews was officially formed under the three national religious bodies, which include the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. The Dialogue was officially ‘launched’ in March 2003 after twelve months of formal preparation, which was preceded by informal contact and discussions between the three bodies.

These initiatives are repeated all over the world in an endeavour to research, reflect on and speak about the real and/or alleged sources of conflict between Islam and the West. In 1989 International Scholars Annual Dialogue (ISAT) was set up by a group of Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars. ISAT deliberately consists of the same scholars from the three traditions so that over time issues can be clarified. Their meeting in Indonesia in 2000 was focused on ‘religion-state relations and building democracy’.

At the beginning of the Third Millennium one of the most pressing sets of issues within and between societies that have been predominantly shaped by Judaism, Christianity or Islam are those centring on the relationship between religion and the state, and the form the states should take. All three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have played, and continue to play, central roles in both of these intimately related issues. It has been argued that this set of issues is a key source of a ‘clash of civilisations’ between Islam and the West. Although there is *prima facie* evidence for this argument, the ISAT scholars are convinced that the thesis: (1) oversimplifies the positions of both Islam and the West on these issues, and (2) overlooks the swelling forces promoting not a ‘clash of civilisations’ but a ‘dialogue of civilisations’.

Jakarta, Indonesia, 14–19 February 2000

A Muslim cannot be a terrorist



A Muslim cannot be a terrorist; a terrorist cannot be a Muslim.

Turkish Muslim scholar
M. Fethullah Gulen (b. 1941)

The Qur'an says, ‘Killing an innocent human being is like killing the entire humanity’ (*Surat al-Ma'ida* 5:32 ‘The Table’). True Muslims who possess a thorough and balanced knowledge of the Islamic references should not allow people to stain the name of Islam with their confused minds filled with political doctrines that serve the interests of others. Correcting the wrongs and distributing good and peace is an advice conveyed to us by Prophet Muhammad, therefore, this noble duty stands before the Muslims of today.

As Australian Muslims, we categorically state that we condemn and denounce any action related to terrorism that cannot be justified by any religious teaching or common ethics, no matter what aim or objective it serves. In the name of Islam, we feel ashamed and afraid of these people who claim to be Muslims. No Muslim, who has a basic knowledge about the fundamental teachings of Islam, would support such an act. In our time, some nations around the world that are battling with constant conflicts and wars are the victims of a global struggle for self-interest. There is no place for Islam in these bloody and dirty conflicts which aim to serve only the interests of certain ideologies that wish to use Islam as a tool for propaganda.

No individual or group has the right to declare themselves as the judge, jury and executioner ... Those who claim to act in the name of Islam should study the judicial system of Islam. They will see that these rules also apply to them as well.

Media release from Affinity Intercultural Foundation,
August 2009

This media release was issued in response to the alleged suicide terrorist plot on military barracks in Australia in August 2009.

As well as Affinity Intercultural Foundation, some of the Muslim organisations that seek to contribute to peace are:

- Coalition of Women for Peace
- Muslim Peace Fellowship
- Muslim World Initiative
- World Assembly of Muslim Youth.

Review

- How would you **explain** what ‘inner peace’ means for Muslims?
- Is it necessary to achieve some sort of ‘inner peace’ before one can work for world peace? Give reasons to support your response.
- Demonstrate** how Islam can guide the individual to achieve inner peace and provide direction on how to develop peace in the world.
- Discuss** how Muslims are contributing to world peace in a specific situation.
- Construct** a mind map to draw together all the material in this section.

Extension



- Give three reasons to **explain** the importance of dialogue as a means of achieving world peace.
- Why is it important to educate non-Muslim Australians about Islam?
- Use the internet to research the ‘Journey of Promise’. What is it and who was involved?
- Search Australian websites for ‘The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews’. Write a summary of some of the comments about the dialogue and **describe** some of its initiatives.
- Using the web destinations for page 376 as a starting point, **investigate** what *four* Islamic and/or multifaith organisations are endeavouring to achieve in relation to peace. **Construct** a table to **summarise** your findings. Headings in your table might include (but not be limited to):
 - name of the organisation
 - principal aims/mission statement
 - membership profile
 - location(s)
 - projects
 - approaches to achieving peace.

In a summative statement, **calculate** the degree to which Muslim religious beliefs and principles influence the peace motives of the membership of these organisations.

15.3 Judaism

The prophetic vision of peace on earth

Glossary

Diaspora	The dispersion of Jews, caused by the Exile into Babylon and other scatterings of the Jewish people across all ages. Today it is the generic term used to refer to all Jews who live outside the modern State of Israel, founded in 1948.
halachah	The Jewish legal tradition, grounded in the 613 commandments (<i>mitzvot</i>) of the Torah .
Holocaust (<i>Shoah</i>)	The Nazi destruction of European Jewry (1942–45) including the murder of 6 million Jews.
mitzvah (plural, <i>mitzvot</i>)	Hebrew word meaning ‘commandment’.
sages	The sages are the rabbis (teachers) of the Talmudic period.
Shekhinah	The divine presence of God in the world.
Talmud	The most authoritative work of the Oral Torah (see pages 130–1).
Torah	In its narrow sense, Torah refers to the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Torah literally means ‘teaching’. The 613 commandments are contained within these Five Books of Moses. The term ‘Torah’ is often used in a much broader sense as Jewish tradition as a whole.
tractate	The term generally used for the textual divisions—books—of the Talmud .

Peace—shalom

The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. It is closely related to the Hebrew word *shalem*, meaning complete or fulfilled. It is central to the prophetic vision of Judaism that the purpose for God’s people is completed when peace reigns on earth—this is the way the world is meant to be.

From ancient times through to the present, faithful Jews draw inspiration from the sacred texts of their tradition for their understanding of what it is to lead purposeful and peaceful lives. Indeed, as will be seen in the text that

follows, the **sages** of the **Talmud** suggest that the purpose of the whole of the **Torah** (and thus the whole of Judaism) is promoting peace.

The seeking after peace is reflected strongly in the vision of the prophet Isaiah, who saw that in the days to come the Lord would judge between the nations, and the nations would ‘beat their swords into ploughshares’:

... and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Isa 2:4

The theme of peace and justice is also strongly mirrored in the prophet Micah. What God requires of the faithful is for them ‘to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God’ (Mic 6:8).

The prophet Amos, writing in the eighth century BCE, warned against the evil and corruption of the age. He foretold that actions of social injustice would be punished by God and that the only way to peace was to seek the Lord.

The city that marched out a thousand shall have a hundred left,
and that which marched out a hundred shall have ten left
to the house of Israel.
For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:
'Seek me and live.'

Am 5:3–4

Did you know?

The Hebrew name for Jerusalem is *Yerushalayim*, meaning ‘City of Peace’.

Other sacred texts about peace

The Torah, the most sacred of part of the Hebrew Scriptures, illuminates God’s covenant with Abraham, a promise, that ‘I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you’ (Gen 12:2). Abraham was charged with the responsibility to teach ‘his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice’ (Gen 18:19). After Abraham, Moses commanded his people to observe the Torah diligently, and in doing so, other nations would see them as ‘a wise and discerning people’ (Deut 4:6).

The Torah makes it clear that the Jew is not to bear a grudge, and must ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ (Lev 19:18). For early Judaism, when the Torah spoke of



Figure 15.3.1 Icon of the village of Neve Shalom—Wahat al-Salam—Oasis of Peace. Established in 1972, it is a cooperative Israeli Jewish–Palestinian community that seeks to give practical expression to its vision of peaceful coexistence.

neighbour, it meant one’s fellow Jew. But a **mitzvah** a little later in the same chapter of Leviticus indicates that to do what is right and just extends to the way one treats the foreigner.

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Lev 19:33–34

The same chapter of Micah that calls the believer to ‘walk humbly with your God’ recalls that God had sent to the people redeemers in the persons of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The sages refer particularly to Aaron as a model of the peacemaker: ‘He loved peace and pursued peace, and passed through the entire camp of Israel and promoted peace between a man and his wife, and between a man and his neighbour’ (*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 19a).

The ultimate deliverer of peace is, of course, God, and the Hebrew Scripture is replete with God’s acts of loving kindness towards his people. Made in God’s image (Gen 1:27), the people are called upon to walk after God (Deut 13:5). The Babylonian Talmud **tractate Sotah** (14b) explains exactly what that means for the Jew:

What means the text: ‘You shall walk after the LORD your God?’ (Deut. 13:5) is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after the **Shekhinah**; for has it not been said, ‘for the LORD, thy God is a devouring fire?’ (Deut. 4:24). But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed by He, as he clothes the naked ...

Some Talmudic sayings on peace

But the whole of the Law is also for the purpose of promoting peace, as it is written, Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. (Prov 3:17)

Gittin 59b

Be among the disciples of Aaron: love peace and pursue peace; love all fellow creatures, and bring them near to the Torah. (Hillel)

Pirkei Avot 1:12

The world is sustained by three things: by justice, by truth, and by peace. (Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel)

Pirkei Avot 1:18

May the One who makes peace in the heavens let peace descend on all of us and all of Israel, and let us say: Amen.

From the *Birkat HaMazon*, Grace After Meals

To walk after the attributes of the Holy One is essentially to fulfil the requirements of the **halachah**: ‘You must diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you’ (Deut 6:17). The very next verse of Deuteronomy entreats the faithful Jew to go one further: ‘Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD.’ A person who acts in this way at all times is considered a *Chasid*—a saintly person.

The prophetic vision of peace in Judaism constantly returns to the theme of sin and redemption. When the people turn away from God, they will be punished. In turning to God and being righteous to their neighbour, they will be fruitful and assured of God’s salvation.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.

Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.
Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.
Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

Ps 85:8–12

Review

- Identify one quotation from the sacred texts discussed in this section which, for you, best expresses the Jewish understanding of peace. Justify your response.
- Identify some of the key passages from the Hebrew Scriptures and rabbinical statements that capture the essence of the Jewish prophetic vision of peace on earth.
- Drawing on all of the quotations from the sacred texts mentioned in this section, synthesise the Jewish vision of peace in a single sentence of your own construction. If you find this an impossible exercise, explain why!

Principal teachings about peace

Social justice and social order is an important principle of Jewish ethical teaching, captured in the Jewish call to *tikkun olam*, ‘repair the world’.

Through *tikkun olam*, Jews join in God’s divine purpose of establishing social order through the living out of the *mizvot* of the Torah. In modern Judaism, *tikkun olam* finds expression most readily in *gemilut chasadim*, deeds of loving kindness and the teaching to love one’s neighbour.

Upon three things the world stands: The Torah; the worship of God; the bestowal of loving kindness.

Simon the Just, *Pirkei Avot* 1:2

It needs to be borne in mind that the idea of who is one’s neighbour has changed over time. In its beginnings, Judaism contended with life in a world surrounded by foreign powers—with people whose customs, beliefs and values were different to their own. In early Judaism, one’s neighbour was narrowly defined. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the consequent **Diaspora**, however, saw the need for more regular day-to-day dealings with gentiles. The writings of the sages reflect this. The desire for good relations with non-Jews saw the teaching of *gemilut chasadim* extended. In the Babylonian tractate *Nazir* (61a), the sages seek to extend the meaning of ‘one’s fellow’. It asks, ‘Does the mention of Israel always exclude Gentiles?’ So when Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 records that Adam was ‘created single, to teach you that the destruction of any person’s life is tantamount to destroying a whole world’, it is a reference to all human beings, not just Jews.

Many Talmudic references develop the concept of *gemilut chasadim* into a clear charter of social justice, as is seen in many religions. What is particularly Jewish about *gemilut chasadim* is the call to less tangible acts, over and above the physical acts of charity: praying for the sick and the unfortunate, giving good advice, and working for reconciliation between those who have fallen out. The sages also point out that it is the right intentions of *gemilut chasadim* that are the measure of its worth. Apparent loving kindness given just to boost one's own ego is of little worth at all.

The greatest hero is he who makes his enemy his friend.

Avot de-Rabbi Natan 23

There are numerous references in the Talmudic literature specifically to *gemilut chasadim* towards gentiles. Two important points should be noted. Firstly, unlike much of the Talmud, where the opinion of one sage is pitted against the view of another, passages concerning *gemilut chasadim* towards gentiles begin with 'our sages taught', indicating an ancient root and strong agreement about the teaching. Secondly, a frequent justification given in the text for the teaching is 'for the sake of peace'. Talmudic teaching on *gemilut chasadim* is proof of the potential power of religious teaching to contribute to the peaceful coexistence of peoples of different backgrounds and beliefs.

To act 'for the sake of peace' is, in fact, a common epithet in Judaism. The ordinary Jewish greeting, 'Shalom', is a prayer for peace. One can tell a 'white lie' for the sake of peace (*Shabbat* 10b). Torah is studied for its own sake or 'for the sake of peace' (*Yebamoth* 65b).

In summary, the principal teachings about peace in Judaism are to love one's neighbour; to hold steadfastly to God's commandments that will ensure a just society and social order; and to realise that there are times when to act for the sake of peace takes priority over and above other considerations.

Review

- 1 **Outline** the principal Jewish teachings about peace.
- 2 **Explain** how the concept of 'who is my neighbour?' has changed in the history of Judaism.

Extension

- 1 **Propose** some situations that you can think of where it might be best to tell a 'white lie' for 'the sake of peace'. Choose one that might involve your friends, one that might involve your family and one that might involve your wider community.
- 2 In light of your answers to the previous question, do you think it is ever right to lie 'for the sake of peace'?

Achieving inner peace

Judaism teaches that without inner peace a person is torn; without communal peace people are isolated; without global peace, the world is fractured and *shalom* remains an unrealised ideal.

As has been noted in the previous sections on teachings about peace and sacred texts, the whole of Jewish life is a struggle to cleave to the commandments of the *halachah*. A core commandment of the *halachah* is to do deeds of loving kindness—and the outcome of such living is peace and justice. In their daily lives, Jews work towards a personal peace through living out their faith.

The effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
Isa 32:17

In the daily prayers recited by devout Jews, the believer asks God to grant 'peace, goodness and blessing; life, grace and kindness; justice and mercy'.

At the end of the *Amidah* prayer recited at the synagogue service, the petitioner asks that 'the One who makes peace in the heavens bring peace to us and to all of Israel (and all of humanity)'. When the Torah is returned to the Ark in the synagogue, the prayer which says 'Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace' is recited. In these prayers can be seen the Jewish tradition's guidance for the individual in their search for inner peace.

No religion is an island; there is no monopoly on holiness ... we share the kinship of humanity, the capacity for compassion. God's spirit rests upon all, Jew or Gentile, man or woman, in consonance with their deeds. There is no truth without humility. There can be disagreement without disrespect. Should we hope for each other's failure? Or should we pray for each other's welfare? Have

we not all one God? Are we not all God's children? The hand of God is extended to all who seek God. Let our deeds reflect that we share the image of God.

From the writings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972)

For the observant Jew, the search for inner peace is at one with the desire to live out the *mitzvot*, particularly those commandments that contribute to a world of order and justice. Inner peace is a necessary precursor to the human desire to seek peace in the world.



Figure 15.3.2 Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (right) at the golden jubilee convention of the United Synagogue, 20 November 1963. He is standing with Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr (centre), who is being presented with the Solomon Schechter Award by George Maislen (left), President of the United Synagogue of America, 'for translating the prophetic vision of Abraham Lincoln into a living reality'.

Review

- 1 What do Jews mean by 'inner peace' and how do they achieve this?
- 2 Use this book's index to find all the references to *halachah* (see '*halachah*' as a sub-entry of 'Judaism'). Read these references and evaluate the relationship between *halachah* and the search for inner peace.

Extension

Using the internet and/or other resources, investigate the life of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Distinguish the elements of his peace activism that relate clearly to his Jewish roots.

Contributing to world peace

Contemporary Jewish writing on peace is often controversial. It is most powerfully influenced by the memory of the **Holocaust**. It is not possible to understand Jewish writing on peace without appreciating the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish life and thought.

Jewish responses to the Holocaust

On issues of war and peace, the Holocaust holds the greatest significance in modern Jewish consciousness. In remembering the Holocaust today, Jews feel that they were there, at Auschwitz. They are transformed in time and place; this transforming element makes the Holocaust a deeply religious event for modern Jews. To exist as a Jew, to survive and prosper beyond Hitler, is to deny Hitler a posthumous victory.

Along with many others, Jewish author and Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel sees the importance of preserving the memory of the Holocaust as a means of ensuring the future dignity of the Jewish people, and the way to peace.

Nothing provokes so much horror and opposition within the Jewish tradition as war. Our abhorrence of war is reflected in the paucity of our literature of warfare. After all, God created the Torah to do away with iniquity, to do away with war. Warriors fare poorly in the Talmud: Judas Maccabeus is not even mentioned; Bar-Kochba is cited, but negatively. David, a great warrior and conqueror, is not permitted to build the Temple; it is his son Solomon, a man of peace, who constructs God's dwelling place. Of course some wars may have been necessary or inevitable, but none was ever regarded as holy. For us, a holy war is a contradiction in terms. War dehumanises, war diminishes, war debases all those who wage it. The Talmud says, *Talmidei hukhamim shemarbin shalom baolam* (It is the wise men who will bring about peace). Perhaps because wise men remember best ...

Elie Wiesel in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, 11 December 1986

Some Jews argue that an emphasis on the Holocaust in Jewish thought leads to the danger of making it the foundation of Jewish life. But Jews live today despite the Holocaust, not because of it.

Jews of all persuasions acknowledge the importance of the modern State of Israel as a symbol of Jewish resilience and post-Holocaust survival. Any criticism of Israel runs the risk of being seen as disloyal to the memory of those who died in the death camps. One cannot understand the dilemmas of those agitating for peace in the Middle East without understanding these historical factors.



Figure 15.3.3 Elie Wiesel (b. 1928) is a Jewish writer and Holocaust survivor. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. In his writing on Judaism, he emphasises the importance of preserving a collective memory. This photo was taken in 2009.

All Jews prescribe to the principle of pursuing peace, although there is vigorous debate about the best means of achieving this amid the controversies that surround Israel and the Middle East peace process.

The opposite of love is not hate but indifference.
The opposite of faith is not arrogance but indifference;
the opposite of art is not ugliness but indifference.
And the opposite to both peace and war—indifference to
hunger and persecution.

Elie Wiesel

Neve Shalom—Wahat al-Salam—Oasis of Peace

In 1972, on a barren hill off the Jerusalem highway, halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Bruno Hassar and a few families began an experiment in peaceful coexistence between Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens. He named the village *Neve Shalom—Wahat al-Salam—Oasis of Peace*.

The village has grown to over fifty families and includes several significant enterprises: a hotel to welcome guests; a primary school with a bilingual, bi-national curriculum that is unique in Israel; and a pluralistic spirituality centre. Perhaps most significant among its accomplishments is an internationally recognised School for Peace.

The School for Peace and the village have an important symbiotic relationship. The school gives renown to the village and helps to deliver its message of the importance of understanding ‘the face of the other’ as a road to peace. The village in turn lends credibility to the teachings of the school, a living testimony to the power of peaceful, cooperative living.

Irena Klepfisz—Jewish peace activist

Irena Klepfisz (b. 1941) is a Jewish feminist academic and peace activist. She is also a child survivor of the Warsaw ghetto. Her father died in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. She writes cogently about the importance of memory for the Jew, but also about how that memory can work in the service of peace.

I have concluded that one way to pay tribute to those we loved who struggled, resisted and died is to hold on to their vision and their fierce outrage at the destruction of the ordinary life of their people. It is this outrage we need to keep alive in our daily life and apply it to all situations, whether they involve Jews or non-Jews. It is this outrage we must use to fuel our actions and vision whenever we see any signs of the disruptions of common life: the hysteria of a mother grieving for the teenager who has been shot; a family stunned in front of a vandalized or demolished home; a family separated, displaced; arbitrary and unjust laws that demand the closing or opening of shops and schools; humiliation of a people whose culture is alien and deemed inferior; a people left homeless without citizenship; a people living under military rule. Because of our experience, we recognize these evils as obstacles to peace. At those moments of recognition, we remember the past, feel the outrage that inspired the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto and allow it to guide us in present struggles.

Irena Klepfisz, cited in Sara Roy,
'Living with the Holocaust', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, Autumn 2002



Figure 15.3.4 One of the Peace Rallies held at *Neve Shalom—Wahat al-Salam—Oasis of Peace*

There are literally dozens of Jewish organisations that have as their central objective to work for a more just, peaceful and equitable world. A key focus, naturally, is a call for peace in Israel and the Palestinian territories. They are the expressions of Jewish individuals, banded together, who feel that faithfulness to the *halachah* calls them to speak out against the war and injustice that they see in the world.

A Call to Israelis, World Jewry and friends of Israel

Here is what the prime minister should say to the people:

The time for illusions is over. The time for decisions has arrived. We love the entire land of our forefathers and in some other time we would have wanted to live here alone. But that will not happen. The Arabs, too, have dreams and needs.

Between the Jordan and the Mediterranean there is no longer a clear Jewish majority. And so, fellow citizens, it is not possible to keep the whole thing without paying a price. We cannot keep a Palestinian majority under an Israeli boot and at the same time think ourselves the only democracy in the Middle East. There cannot be democracy without equal rights for all who live here, Arab as well as Jew. We cannot keep the territories and preserve a Jewish majority in the world's only Jewish state—not by means that are humane and moral and Jewish.

This 'Call' written by politician Avraham Burg (b. 1955) appeared on the 'Jewish Voice for Peace' website. Avraham Burg was Speaker of Israel's Knesset (Parliament) from 1999 to 2003. His father, Dr Yosef Burg, was a prominent leader of the Israeli National Religious Party and an Orthodox Jew.

Review

- 1 Prepare a discussion outline for Elie Wiesel's idea that peace can only be achieved if all human beings are given dignity.
- 2 Using one of the written sources other than the sacred texts in this section, **explain** how the source develops the understanding of peace in the Jewish tradition.
- 3 **Construct** a mind map to draw together all the material in this section.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 382 to find out more about the *Neve Shalom–Wahat al-Salam–Oasis of Peace*. **Critically analyse** its effectiveness as an instrument of peace.
- 2 Go to the web destinations for page 382 to find and read *Gush Shalom's 'Truth Against Truth'* document. **Discuss** the degree to which Jewish religious views on peace can contribute to lasting peace in Israel.
- 3 Use the web destinations for page 382 to **investigate** how Judaism is contributing to world peace in the Middle East peace process. **Construct** a table that categorises the work of peace organisations, which are either Jewish or include a Jewish representation:
 - Oz Ve Shalom-Netivot Shalom
 - B'Tselem—The Israeli Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
 - Jewish Peace Fellowship
 - The Shalom Center
 - Bat Shalom
 - Courage to Refuse
 - Gush Shalom
 - Jewish Voice for Peace
 - The Peres Centre for Peace
 - Givat Haviva
 - Shalom Achshav (Peace Now)
 - Geneva Initiative
 - The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel
 - Rabbis for Human Rights.
- 4 Headings in your table might include: name of the organisation; principal aims/mission statement; membership profile; location(s); projects; approaches to achieving peace. In a summative statement, **calculate** the degree to which Jewish religious beliefs and principles influence the peace motives of the membership of these organisations.
- 5 Reflecting on your response to the previous task, how important is dialogue as a means of achieving world peace?

15.4 No simple answers

Any study of ‘religion and peace’ probably leads to more questions than answers. Is it possible for religion to have the answer in today’s complex world? And whose religion are we talking about? Is there a ‘clash of civilisations’? And what is civilisation? And whose ‘civilisation’ is it? These are some very difficult questions with no simple answers.

Review

Discuss how the two religious traditions you have studied are contributing to world peace in a specific situation.

See over for HSC-style exam question. ➔

Extension

- 1 Return to the mind map you constructed at the beginning of this chapter (page 360). What would you add to it having investigated the understanding of peace in two religious traditions?
- 2 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 3 Is your media file up to date? Organise your file within these headings:
 - a specific conflict
 - b religious traditions involved.
- 4 Prepare a report that **analyses** the media’s understanding of the two religious traditions you have studied in relation to peace, and **compare** and **contrast** this with what you have learnt in your study of religion and peace.



Figure 15.4.1 One thousand school students marched to Parliament House Sydney on 18 March 2004 as part of ‘Harmony in Action, Kids Making a Difference’, involving students of all races and religions.

RESPOND

What role does this type of action play in the search for peace?



HSC-style exam question

Section IV

- Studies of Religion II only to answer this question.

Question 1 (20 marks)

The problems we face today, violent conflicts, destruction of nature, poverty, hunger, and so on, are human created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding, and a development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share.

Dalai Lama of Tibet in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, 1989

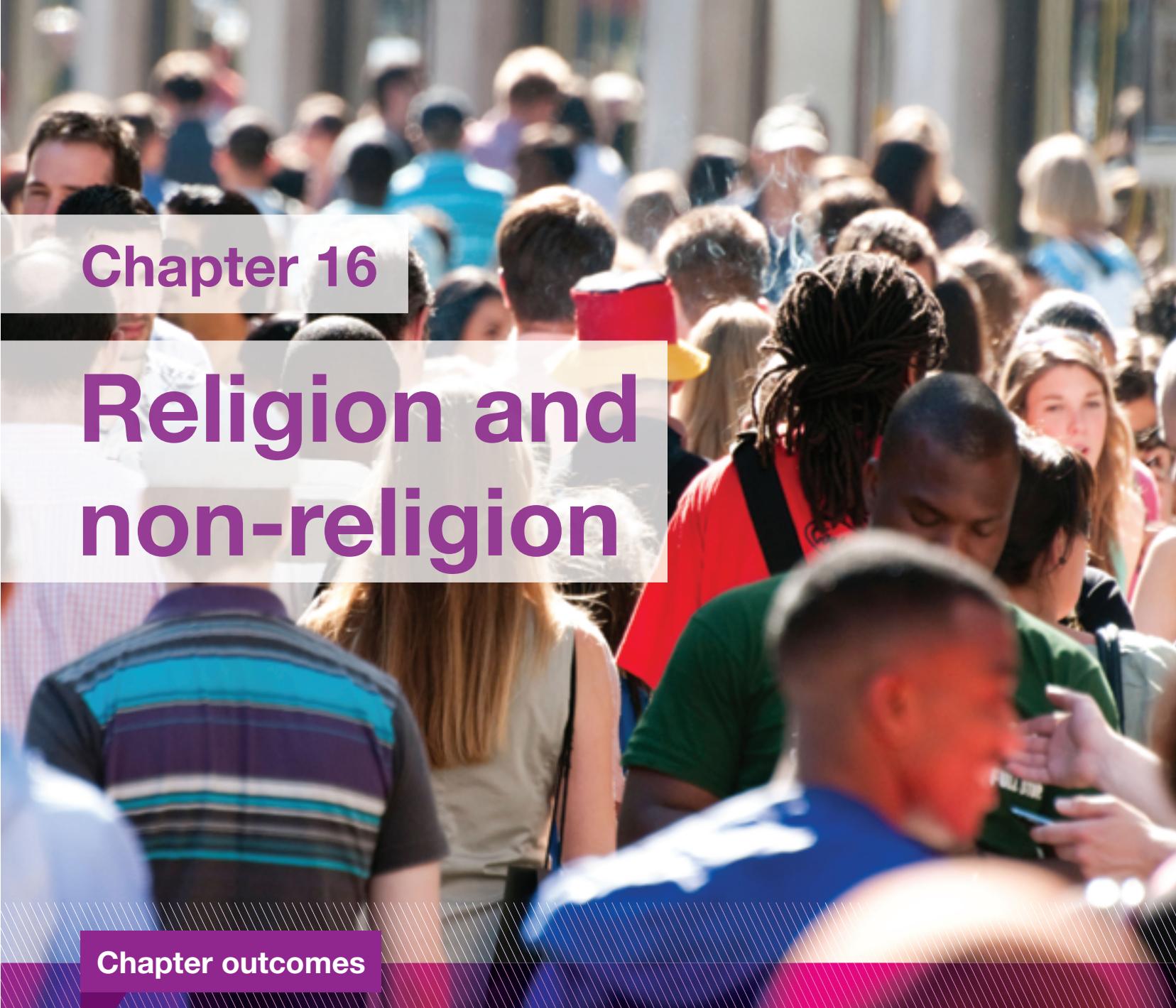
In this speech, the Dalai Lama highlighted some universal issues of world peace. Assess the degree to which TWO religious traditions are attempting to address such issues.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.





Chapter 16

Religion and non-religion

Chapter outcomes

In this chapter, students:

- **identify** expressions of the religious dimension in human history
- **evaluate** the place of the religious dimension in human history
- **investigate** the current global distribution of the five major religious traditions
- **recognise** the reasons for the rise of new religious expressions and spiritualities and **explain** influences leading to their growth
- **investigate** the human search for meaning through non-religious world views
- **compare** the difference between religious and non-religious world views.



The first 'atheist buses' started running in London on 6 January 2009. The advertising watchdog was called upon to rule on the likelihood of God's existence—the question that has taxed the minds of the world's greatest thinkers for centuries—after complaints were made about the atheist bus advertising campaign.

Introduction

As a teenager I found myself increasingly alienated from organised religion, but that didn't mean I was any less interested in God. In professional terms my degree (MA in theology) has proved about as useful as a chocolate teapot ... [Yet] I am still fascinated by those big questions ...

Richard Price is now a journalist.

Many of the 'mysteries' of life that confronted our ancestors have been solved by scientific discoveries and human achievement, but the human search for meaning continues. The fundamental questions remain:

- How do we make sense out of this life we are experiencing?
- What is its purpose?
- How do we make responsible decisions that will give meaning and coherence to life?

This search for meaning is not conducted in isolation—people seek those who have come to a similar conclusion about these questions, and 'systems' evolve. In times past, this was mostly a religious belief system that gave its believers meaning. But the evolution of science called into question the idea that there was power or divine beings whose existence 'goes beyond' the known or visible world,

and new words were coined to explain how people were trying to answer the perennial questions outside a set of religious beliefs.

For some people, in times of crisis, whether of a personal nature or when the world seemed to be in chaos, the answers of the past seemed inadequate and they have sought answers outside the religious tradition in which they were raised.

While church attendance figures in Australia demonstrate that the 'mainstream' churches are experiencing a decline in attendance, there has been a growth in the numbers of those who seek answers to 'life's fundamental questions' through belief systems other than the traditional religious models. Today there are a variety of ways in which people seek peace and wellbeing, both within and outside of traditional religious frameworks. In *Managing Religious Diversity: From Threat to Promise* (G. Bouma, ed., 1999), Philip Hughes and Alan Black argue that, in some ways, religious diversity is being managed now by the marketplace. People are looking for whatever works. They are not seeking communities to belong to, nor packages of doctrines that will provide a total and coherent perspective on life. Rather, people are looking for whatever provides them with peace and wellbeing in their present circumstances.

Extension

- 1 Maintain a list in your personal workbook where you **summarise** the meanings of the key terms, concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter.
- 2 Create and maintain a media clippings file to do with non-religious belief systems and ‘new’ religious expressions and spiritualities over the course of this chapter. Where relevant, include names and descriptions of websites on these topics. At the conclusion of the chapter, you will **analyse** your file and **compare** the media’s presentation with what you have learnt in this chapter.

16.1 The religious dimension in history

Expressions of the religious dimension

Refer to Chapter 1, pages 5–6 for the characteristics of religion.

As Chapter 1 demonstrates, throughout human history people have struggled to understand a world beyond complete understanding—the mysteries of human existence—and to find answers to what lies beyond the realm of the ordinary. The answers found to these mysteries are what have been called the ‘religious dimension’ in our lives—a world view that has a belief in a divine being and/or powers beyond the human.

The expression of this belief in something ‘beyond the human’ is often categorised under these terms: animism, polytheism and monotheism. One of the problems with this categorisation is that, unfortunately, it has been seen as a progression of sorts—from the ‘primitive’ animism to the more ‘civilised’ monotheism. Putting that aside, what do we mean by these three expressions of the ‘religious dimension’?

Animism

Animism is the belief that all natural objects have a spirit or soul independent of their physical being—that all of reality is somehow animate. The person or animal lives on after death through the presence of their spirit, which in turn takes an active role among the living. Death happened but in death people became part of the larger environment that sustained all life. It was important to respect nature as it represented the past upon which the future depended. And so, prayer, sacrifice and ritual were natural responses to a world where everything was connected—the survival of individuals and communities depended upon a harmony with all the forces that comprised their world.

Polytheism

As its name implies, polytheism is acceptance of many gods. The term has often been used negatively to mean idolatry and, as such, labelled inferior or evil. For example, the Israelites and the gods of their Babylonian oppressors; or Islam’s struggle to establish itself in the polytheistic Arabian peninsula of its origins. Polytheism can be seen as a significant expression of the human response to the complexity of the world and whatever superhuman power(s) may lie behind it—how could one god possibly oversee everything?

Monotheism

It follows then, that monotheism is the belief that there is one, and only one, divine being. More specifically, the term is often used for belief in the personal creator-God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For some, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (see page 56) rather modifies this.

Whatever explanation of that something or someone ‘beyond one’s own experience’ was reached, it needed a human response to give meaning to the explanation. Rituals, stories and ways of behaving were constructed to acknowledge and explain this ‘other’, and this is what has become known as religion.

Review

- 1 In pairs, **discuss** why religion is difficult to define. Make a list of four reasons.
- 2 **Explain** the statement: ‘There is a sense in which all religions are animistic.’
- 3 **Critically evaluate** the statement: ‘The expression of the religious dimension in human history has progressed from the “primitive” animism to the more “civilised” monotheism.’

Significance of the religious dimension

Glossary

conservative	The tendency to preserve existing conditions. The term can be used positively or negatively. To be positively conservative is to emphasise the preservation of the richness of past beliefs, institutions and practices. To be negatively conservative is to have difficulty in accepting anything that would modify what is held to be unchangeable.
culture	The way a group of organisms relate to each other to develop the sum total of ways of living built up by human beings and then transmitted from one generation to another.
Diaspora	The dispersion of Jews, caused by the Exile into Babylon and other scatterings of the Jewish people across all ages. Today it is the generic term used to refer to all Jews who live outside the modern State of Israel, founded in 1948.
radical	A person, institution or idea that favours changes or reform. From the Latin word for 'root', the term is used positively and negatively. For some, the sense is 'going back to the roots' and discerning what, for example, the founder of the religion would have done in these changed circumstances. For others, the term suggests an extreme transformation with little regard for anything in the past.

To talk about a religious dimension in human history is to explore the functions of religion—how does religion work?

Religion is both personal and social. Religion is also cultural—many of the rituals and even languages of religious traditions have their roots in the cultural origins of the tradition.

The individual

For the individual, religion provides a means of finding a place in the larger world. It offers a framework of meaning and coherence that gives direction to one's life. It provides support through rituals and celebrations for life events, and is a source of values and ideas to help make sense of life and give it some certainty.

Social cohesion

Religion also functions as a source of social cohesion—it provides meaning and purpose for the community of believers. Religion, of its nature, tends to be **conservative**. It has played an important part in maintaining and reinforcing social structures, customs and values. This is particularly obvious in times of adversity—religion offers emotional support by providing a view of a better future. The doctrines and rituals and values of religion provide continuity in a dislocated world. And these can also help preserve a **culture**.

Religion as a source of social cohesion is particularly obvious in Australia's religious history. For immigrant communities, it has been religion that has provided a constant in their new home, and this has been repeated throughout world history from the beginning of the Jewish **Diaspora** to every group of people who have been forced or have chosen to seek a life in a 'new' world. In times of rapid social change, religion offers people a sense of communal identity when all else seems to be changing and there is a feeling of alienation.

This social cohesion, however, can also function as a form of social control. Religion can support a social structure that is unjust, that denies the legitimate concerns of individuals and groups. This happened with, for example, the acceptance of slavery and the denial of rights to those not of the established religion of a particular society. Religion can be used to 'keep people in their place' and deny them autonomy.

Social transformation

The paradox of religion is that, while it can help to maintain the structures, customs and values of society, it can also offer profound criticism of those same social structures, customs and values and so be a source of social transformation. Religion can provide an achievable vision of a better world. Religion is both conservative and **radical**—it can support the established order and also challenge it. Religious groups and individuals have, throughout the course of history, been strongly critical of the social and political order. Religion is never totally the servant of society, as your explorations during this course will have demonstrated. The Exodus story of the Jewish people exemplifies the overthrow of oppression and the realisation of a better world. Many of the reform movements within the various traditions have grown out of a challenge to a tradition that appeared to be supporting the status quo.

Review

- 1 Identify how each of the three major traditions you have studied in this course provides:
 - a meaning and purpose for the individual adherent
 - b meaning and purpose for the community of believers
 - c social transformation.
- 2 Evaluate the place of the religious dimension in human history.

Extension

- 1 Analyse the differences between a 'positively conservative' and a 'negatively conservative' approach to religion. Provide examples to clarify your analysis.
- 2 In small groups, discuss the statement: 'Religion is both conservative and radical.' List the key points from your discussion and share them with the other groups.

Global distribution of the major religious traditions

It is interesting to look at statistics for the major world religions—they tell all sorts of stories. These stories are interwoven with the history of the world, particularly since the beginning of the Common Era.

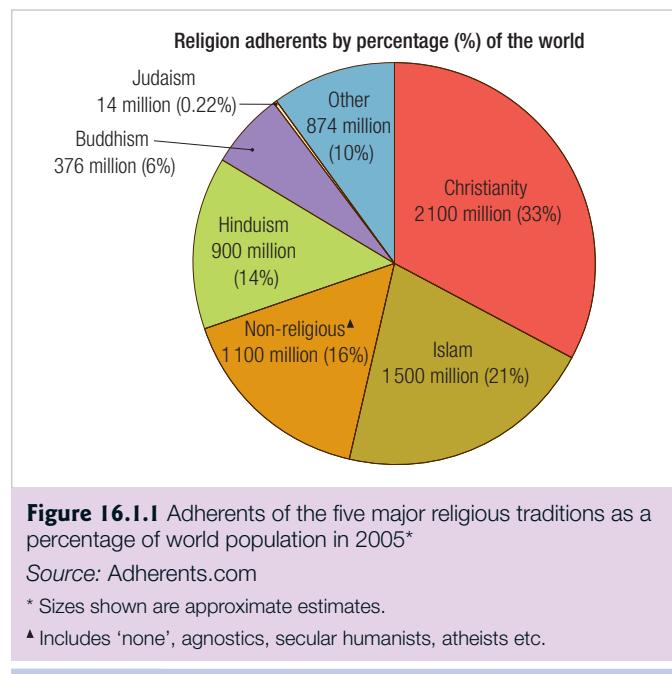
Christianity was the first expansionist religion and it filled the void created by a Roman Empire in decline. At the beginning of the seventh century CE, Christianity was faced with the new religion of Islam and, by 750 CE, the Muslim world had expanded to take in much of the then Christian world. Christianity responded to Islam with the struggle to reconquer Europe with the Crusades to the 'Holy Land' from the eleventh to the end of the fifteenth century. And the Jews of Europe and the Middle East were caught in the middle. Meanwhile, Islam had been moving across the top of Africa and down the east coast and to what was then called the Far East, including the East Indies, where it encountered Hinduism and Buddhism. At the same time, the Age of Exploration was taking the

Christians of Europe to the New World—the Americas, the Antipodes and East Asia. This was followed by the 'grab for Africa' by the European nations.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Muslim empire was in decline (although Islam continued to dominate in the regions of its earliest expansion) and Christian Europe dominated the colonial map of the world.

Basically, this is the way the world remained until the twentieth century—although the gradual emancipation of the Jews of Europe had led to the rebirth of some Jewish communities in Western Europe and many Jewish people migrated to the USA, which granted Jews full citizenship from the beginning. The Second World War saw the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust and severe dislocation in Europe led to the resettlement of many displaced people in countries outside Europe. The creation of the Jewish State of Israel in 1948 hugely increased the Jewish population that had begun settling in Palestine in the nineteenth century.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, decolonisation brought many Muslims and Hindus to countries such as the United Kingdom and France. Since then, civil wars in many regions have increased the spread of religions. In Australia's case, the need for population growth and the removal of the so-called 'white Australia' policy brought Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims to Australia.



RESPOND

Name three religions that would be included in the 'other' category.

Table 16.1 The ten largest national populations of the five major traditions in 2005. Note that while the number of adherents might be large, as a percentage of the total population of the country it could be quite small.

Source: World Christian Database

	Buddhists	Christians	Hindus	Muslims	Jews
1	China	USA	India	Pakistan	USA
2	Japan	Brazil	Nepal	India	Israel
3	Thailand	Mexico	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	France
4	Vietnam	Philippines	Indonesia	Indonesia	Argentina
5	Burma (Myanmar)	China*	Sri Lanka	Turkey	Palestine
6	Sri Lanka	Russia	Pakistan	Iran	Canada
7	Cambodia	India	Malaysia	Egypt	Brazil
8	India	Nigeria	USA	Nigeria	Great Britain
9	South Korea	Germany	South Africa	Algeria	Russia
10	Taiwan	Zaire/Congo	Burma (Myanmar)	Morocco	Germany

* Some statistics put China in third place, but accurate figures are difficult to obtain.

Note: Australia ranks fourteen in the world for Jewish population, twenty-three for Buddhists, twenty-eight for Hindus and ninety-five for Muslims.

When you compare the ranking order of the five major religious traditions in the world (Figure 16.1.1, page 389) with distributions of the traditions in Australia (Table 9.1, page 209) you will find that it is very much the same, except that Buddhism replaces Islam in second position in Australia.

The table above provides some interesting information on where the adherents of these traditions live. Even taking into account the fact that the actual percentage of the population in a specific country could be quite small, some interesting facts arise. For Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, the percentages reflect their countries of origin and the early spread of those traditions. For Jews we see the extent of the Diaspora and the dislocation caused by the Holocaust; and the figures for Christians reflect the missionary activity of that tradition.

Did you know?

Should Japan be on the list for Buddhists in Table 16.1? Estimates of the percentage of Japanese who are Buddhist vary widely. Perhaps 85 per cent of the population will cite Buddhism when asked what their preferred religion is, but 75 per cent of the population claim to be non-religious—to practise and believe in no religion. Frequently used high figures of 85 per cent or 90 per cent of Japanese being Buddhist come primarily from birth records, following a longstanding practice of family lines being officially associated with a local Buddhist temple.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 390 and use the information there and in Table 16.1 to prepare a table to show the adherents of each tradition as a percentage of total population of each country in the ‘top ten’. **Compare** and **contrast** the differences in each table.
- 2 In groups, **discuss** how the use of statistics can affect how one approaches the study of religious traditions. Make a list of the key points of your discussion and share these with the other groups.

16.2 New religious expressions

Today there are a multitude of new religious movements, expressions and spiritualities found in Australia. How one categorises them is difficult and really depends on how one defines 'religion' and 'spirituality' and whether one sees these terms as being inclusive or exclusive. Is Pentecostalism a 'religion' or a 'spirituality'? Is it 'emergent' or is it now 'mainstream'? What about the Church of Scientology? Is it a 'church', a 'cult', a 'movement'? Where does one put the Mormons and hundreds of other groups, movements and spiritualities that have their roots in Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, the so-called major traditions? It's quite a dilemma!

The Dalai Lama, in his book *Ancient Wisdom, Modern World* (1999), believes there is an important distinction between religion and spirituality. For him, spirituality is 'concerned with those qualities of the human spirit—such as love and compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony which bring happiness to both self and others'. While all these qualities are directly connected to the teachings and practices of the major religious traditions, the Dalai Lama sees no reason why the individual should not develop them without recourse to any religious or metaphysical belief system:

That is why I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without. What we cannot do without are these basic spiritualities.

Why are people open to new ideas?

In the past, religion was a community affair. A community 'owned' religious beliefs. A community celebrated religious rituals. The individual made the decision how active they wanted to be in the community. But it was primarily the community that determined the nature and expression of faith. Most people saw themselves as born into a religious community and gradually they learnt the ways of that community. Today many people do not see themselves primarily as part of religious communities. The individual has become the measure of faith. Individuals are very aware that they have choices. They exercise that right of choice. If they choose to be part of a religious community it is because they want to be, rather than because they are.



Figure 16.2.1 Open for ideas

RESPOND

In your own words, **clarify** what this cartoon is expressing.

The traditional notion of 'community' has also changed—many people do not have much to do with the localities within which they live. They neither work nor shop there. Their children may well not be educated there, and their sporting and leisure interests may be pursued in other places.

There is evidence that today's religious seekers seek not only meaning in an ontological or theological sense, but also seek religious practices which have traditionally been repressed, particularly in Protestantism. Transitional religion is, for example, about the body and experience, about objects and about rituals, both traditional—but also to a greater extent—invented.

Stewart M. Hoover, 'Religion in a Media Age', Public Lecture, University of Edinburgh, 4 March 1997

While there are many and varied reasons why people today are choosing new religious expressions and spiritualities, there is no doubt that many people are still looking for answers to those age-old questions:

- How do we make sense out of this life we are experiencing?
- What is its purpose?
- How do we make responsible decisions that will give meaning and coherence to life?

They are seeking these answers in new places because they have either 'tried' a traditional religion and found it wanting, or have never been part of a religious tradition, or need some group or organisation to support what they believe are the answers.

How one distinguishes the differences between religious and non-religious world views is becoming more difficult as both the notion of what is 'religious' and how one defines 'religious' become more complex.

When people stop believing in God, the danger is not that they will believe in nothing, but that they will believe in anything.

G. K. Chesterton 1874–1936

The search for meaning

The search for some sort of meaning to life leads people in many different directions and has led to many new religious expressions and spiritualities. Some of these are termed 'non-religious' and have a long history, like humanism—but are they necessarily non-religious? Others, while objecting to many of the 'trappings' of religion, have developed their own rituals. The following section addresses some of these questions but does not attempt to provide the answers.

In turbulent times, in times of great change, people head for the two extremes: fundamentalism and personal, spiritual experience ... With no membership lists or even a coherent philosophy or dogma, it is difficult to define or measure the unorganised New Age movement. But in every major US and European city, thousands who seek insight and personal growth cluster around a metaphysical bookstore, a spiritual teacher, or an education centre.

John Naisbitt in J. Naisbitt and P. Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000*

The philosophies and practices of those who collectively are known as followers of the 'New Age' provide a template for reasons many people are seeking new religious expressions and spiritualities. 'New Age' teachings became popular during the 1970s as a reaction against what some perceived as the failures of Christianity and of secular humanism (see pages 397–9) to provide spiritual and ethical guidance for the future. 'New Age' philosophies and practices tend to draw on four sources:

- They are attracted to world views that are not Western because they see that the Churches have been part of the Western establishment, which has been responsible for many of the current world problems. They seek solutions in the ancient and the Eastern. Many New Agers commit themselves to Eastern spiritual paths, particularly Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism, although in a Westernised form.

- There is an interest in the belief systems of the so-called 'primitive' religions of indigenous peoples. They seek to find new ways forward by revisiting the cultures suppressed by the European colonists.
- The 'New Age' movement favours creation-centred spirituality. Its adherents want to discover a simpler connection to the world of nature. One of the fastest growing aspects of 'New Age' spirituality is neo-paganism in its many forms.
- They 'look inside' themselves. The development of psychotherapies of various kinds, the popularity of transformational video and audio products, 'bodywork' and other therapies all point to the hope that one can access experiences that are transformational without having to take on religious dogma.

(Adapted from John Drane, 'Altars to unknown gods', in *The Tablet*, 30 October 1999, pp. 146–56)



Figure 16.2.2 A variety of beliefs

RESPOND What other signposts would you add?

Review

- 1 In pairs, brainstorm reasons why many people are dissatisfied with traditional religion.
Summarise the results under these headings: 'Religious reasons' and 'Material reasons'. Share your results with the rest of the class.
- 2 **Critically analyse** the results from the previous question and write a response to the statement: 'Traditional religion does not provide answers to satisfy the questions people are asking today.'
- 3 The world of G. K. Chesterton is very different from today's world. **Discuss** the implications of his statement on page 392 for those who are seeking to make sense of the life they 'are experiencing'.
- 4 **Identify** three reasons for the rise of new religious expressions and spiritualities.
- 5 **Identify** four influences on the growth of new religious expressions and spiritualities and **explain** how they may influence people to seek 'new' answers.

Extension



- 1 Go to the web destinations for page 393 to read articles about new religious expressions and spiritualities. Prepare a summary of the material to **outline** reasons for people seeking new religious expressions and spiritualities.
- 2 'New religious expressions and spiritualities' or 'new religious expressions and/or spiritualities'—is there a difference? **Discuss**.

16.3 Non-religious world views

Glossary

agnosticism	The belief that the existence or non-existence of God cannot be proved; or the belief that human knowledge is limited to experience.
apostasy (n. apostate)	Total desertion of, or departure from, one's religion.
atheism	The absence of belief in the existence of a God (or gods). Atheists might also be called humanists or rationalists, although these categories have particular historical contexts.
deist	One who believes in the existence of a god on the evidence of reason and nature only, with rejection of supernatural revelation (distinguished from theist).
humanism	A philosophy that in most cases embraces agnostic or humanist beliefs about the non-existence of a God. It goes further, however, to create ethical systems based upon reason and logic. It regards humanity as the measure of all things.
Renaissance	The Renaissance was a great cultural movement that brought about a period of scientific revolution and artistic transformation. It marks the transitional period between the era of the Middle Ages and the state of the Modern Age. The Renaissance is usually considered to have begun in the fourteenth century in Northern Europe.
sceptic (also skeptic)	From the Latin and Greek 'inquiring', 'reflective'. One who questions the validity or authenticity of something purporting to be knowledge; one who doubts the truth of the Christian religion or of important elements of it.
secular	About things not religious, sacred or spiritual.
theist	One who believes in the existence of a God or gods without the rejection of revelation.

For as long as there has been belief, there has also been doubt and disbelief; and one of the problems in the field of religion and ethical systems is that certain terms, for example, the three main and interrelated non-religious belief systems—**agnosticism, atheism** and **humanism**—have multiple and often conflicting meanings. This is reflected in Australian Census information—some agnostics and atheists specify their beliefs as a ‘religion’.

Religion, non-religion, ‘no religion’ and the Census

Question 19 What is this person’s religion?

- Answering this question is OPTIONAL.
- Examples of ‘Other—please specify’ are: Salvation Army, Hinduism, Judaism, Humanism.
- If no religion, mark the ‘No religion’ box.

In the 2006 Australian Census, 3 706 555 Australians (18.7 per cent) said they had ‘no religion’ and 2 223 957 (11.9 per cent) did not state their religion. The Australian Bureau of Statistics codes those who describe themselves as agnostics or atheists in the ‘Other—please specify’ as ‘no religion’ and they are included in the ‘no religion’ group.

It is important to remember that the question on religion in the Census is not compulsory and, because some religious people may choose not to state their religion on the Census, the ‘no religion’ and ‘not stated’ cannot be added together.

From 1971 the instruction to describe oneself as having ‘no religion’ if one had no religion was explicitly included in the Census. This was a major reason for a steep climb in the numbers of ‘no religion’ responses, and the numbers not answering the question fell.

Some points that arise from the Census figures:

- The Census does not define ‘religion’.
- ‘No religion’ does not imply a blanket rejection of all religion. It can mean that people just do not wish to identify with any particular religious or denominational group. Some of these people see themselves as ‘spiritual’ although not belonging to a religious organisation.
- It is more acceptable now to describe oneself as having no religion. Those people exploring alternative

spiritualities and picking and choosing among different elements and beliefs would probably classify themselves as religious but would have difficulty in defining what their religion was.

- From the 2001 Census to the 2006 Census there was a growth of 25.7 per cent of those with ‘no religion’ and 43.4 per cent of those who did not answer the question.

Non-religion and ‘formal’ religion

Many agnostics, atheists and humanists have a negative attitude to traditional ‘formal’ religions. Some maintain that:

- reliance on an interaction with a mythical deity interferes with one’s ability to interact with fellow humans
- reliance on God’s will, and expectations of an eternity spent in heaven reduce our motivation to solve our own problems on earth. This leads to many social evils being neglected
- such religions promote the idea that perfectly natural feelings (such as anger, lust, pride, and wanting things) are evil and sinful. The result can be feelings of guilt where none should be present
- traditional beliefs are often supported by fear of eternal punishment after death and by fear of retaliation by an angry and vengeful god during this lifetime. To live in a state of fear is unhealthy.



Figure 16.3.1 Oh Lord no!

RESPOND

What does this cartoon, by Australian Graham English, say about attitudes to belief systems?

Agnosticism

Agnosticism is a belief about the existence or non-existence of God. Since agnostics do not believe in God, they are not **theists** or **deists**; since they are not certain that God does not exist, they are not atheists. An agnostic usually holds these questions open, pending the arrival of more evidence. Agnostics are willing to change their belief if some evidence or solid proof is found in the future.

The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us, and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic. I think an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind. The whole subject [of God] is beyond the scope of man's intellect.

Charles Darwin in his *Life and Letters*

Thomas H. Huxley, a well-known English professional scientist and religious sceptic, invented the term agnostic at Cambridge in the 1840s. He combined 'a', which implies negative, with *gnostic*, a Greek word meaning 'knowledge'. He coined the term, he said, because everyone else was an '-ist' of one kind or another, and he had no label to apply to his own beliefs. He meant to distinguish himself from those whose faith provided answers to the most profound questions:

When I reached intellectual maturity, and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist, or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; a Christian or a freethinker, I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer, until at last I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last ... So I took thought and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of 'agnostic'. It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the 'gnostic' of Church history, who professed to know so much of the very things of which I was ignorant ...

T. Huxley, 'Agnosticism', in *The Nineteenth Century*, February 1889, p. 183

Did you know?

Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) was a well-known British philosopher of the twentieth century. He was arrested during the Second World War for anti-war activities and filled out a form at the gaol. The officer, noting that Russell had defined his religious affiliation as 'agnostic' commented: 'Ah yes, we all worship Him in our own way, don't we.' This comment allegedly 'kept him (Russell) smiling through the first few days of incarceration'.

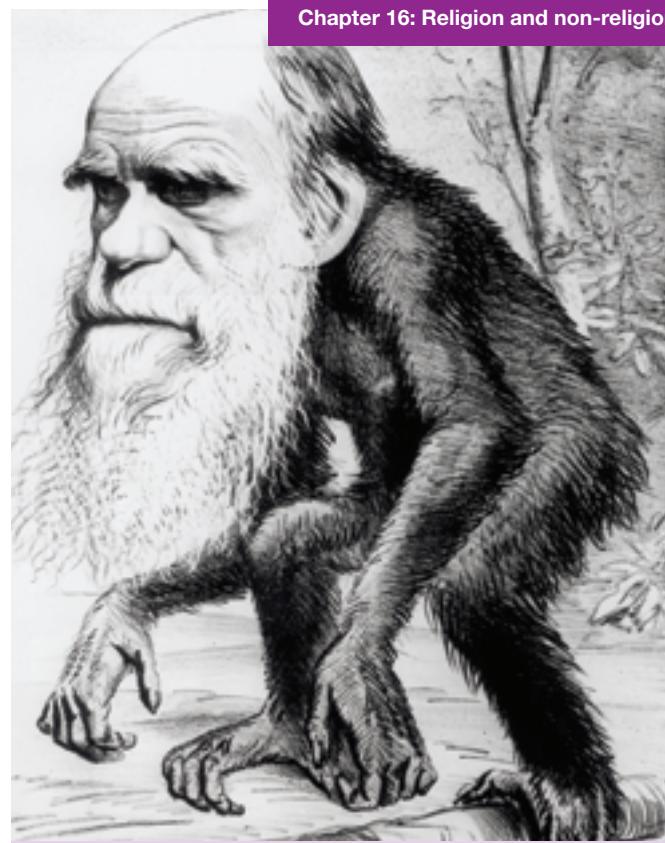


Figure 16.3.2 'A venerable orang-outang: a contribution to unnatural history.' This caricature portrays a simian Charles Darwin and appeared in *The Hornet*, 22 March 1871, when Darwin's *The Descent of Man* was first published.

RESPOND

Investigate Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and outline why it was so controversial.

Atheism

A good example of the difficulties in defining terms lies in definitions of the term 'atheist':

- an atheist is a person who lacks a belief that god(s) and/or goddess(es) exist
- an atheist is 'a person who believes there is no God' (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, p. 85).

A small child who has not developed the concept of deity would be an atheist under the first definition, but not under the latter!

Did you know?

Atheism is derived from the Greek word *atheos*, and means simply 'away from the belief in a god or gods'. In ancient Greece, the term was used to refer to people who did not believe in the official religion. In ancient Rome, Christians were often called 'atheists' because they did not believe in the pantheon of Roman gods and goddesses. Until the word 'agnosticism' came into general usage during the nineteenth century, people we now call agnostics were lumped together with atheists.

A brief history of Atheism

Modern atheism has its beginnings in post-Enlightenment Europe. The Enlightenment—an eighteenth-century European movement of philosophy and science—stressed the supremacy of reason over religious revelation or ancestral tradition. Atheism's growth is also linked with the political development of the nation-state, as nations would often try to limit the control that religious bodies had within their borders. This secularism reverberated into the debates about the broader social influence of religion as well as its role in daily life.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, advances in scientific principles and knowledge of the natural world enabled Charles Darwin to outline his theory of evolution. These scientific developments challenged religious, especially Christian, understandings of creation. At the same time, textual analysis of the Bible and archaeological excavations in the Middle East were causing people to question the Bible's reliability as a historical document.

Most atheists have analysed the available material evidence for the existence of one or more deities (gods and/or goddesses) and have concluded that there is no real evidence for the existence of deities. They believe that the universe, earth and its life probably evolved by perfectly natural processes, without intervention by a supernatural entity. They generally feel that ethical and moral systems governing human behaviour can be developed without any code of behaviour of allegedly divine origin.

Atheists are not people who are angry at God for something. That is not atheism, that is **apostasy**. Atheists only have a quarrel with people who claim everybody should believe in God because God is an objective fact that is supported by overwhelming evidence that the atheist is deliberately suppressing.

Ken Solway of the Australian Atheist Society attempts to clarify atheism when he says:

Two kinds of people claim to be atheists. The first kind are those who have not thought about the existence of a God and therefore cannot be expected to believe in such a thing, or who having thought about it see no significant reason to believe. The second kind of atheists are those who know with certainty that the existence of a God is impossible. These latter few I call the true atheists. The former kind take no position on the matter, not even that of agnosticism—they deserve a name of their own so I call them 'floaters'.

The Atheist, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1992

Did you know?

Declared atheism began in 1782, the year that Matthew Turner, a physician from Liverpool, published his *Answer to Dr. Priestley's Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*. Until Turner, atheists mostly concealed their disbelief in God by pretending to be deists.

In practice, atheists often follow the same moral code as religious people—but they arrive at the decision of what is good or bad without any help from the idea of God.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'atheism' and 'agnosticism' and **distinguish** the differences between the two definitions.
- 2 **Clarify** your definition of 'religion'.
- 3 **Deduce** whether or not it is possible to define atheism and/or agnosticism as a religion.
- 4 In point form, **outline** the essential features of atheism and agnosticism.
- 5 In groups, **discuss** how atheism and agnosticism determine the aspirations and behaviour of individuals. Prepare a list of your key points and share them with the class.

Extension



- 1 What more can you find out about Thomas H. Huxley? What were some reactions to Huxley and agnosticism? Go to the web destinations for page 396 for a good starting point.
- 2 In the 2006 Australian Census, 31 000 people stated they were atheists (up 29 per cent from 2001). **Critically analyse** the statement: 'One could be an atheist and still describe oneself as a religious person.'
- 3 Prepare a discussion outline for a debate on the topic: 'It is possible to be agnostic and remain affiliated to a religion.'

Humanism

In the end, we die and for most of us it is as if we have never been. To the individual, death is the same as nothingness as existed before mind began to develop in infancy.

Sir Macfarlane Burnet (1899–1985),
Australian scientist and Nobel Prize winner

I am a Humanist. I don't believe in any higher power than the best expressions of the human spirit, and those are to be found in personal and social relationships. Evaluating my life in those terms, I've had some mixed results. I've hurt some people and disappointed others, but I hope that on balance, I've given more than I've taken.

Professor Fred Hollows AC (1929–1993), ophthalmologist

Humanism is probably the most powerful **secular** alternative to religion to have arisen in the modern era that functions as a source of social cohesion and social transformation. Humanism is an approach to life based on humanity and reason.

- Humanists think that science and reason provide the best basis for understanding the world around us.
- Humanists believe that moral values are properly founded on human empathy and scientific understanding.
- Humanists see no convincing evidence for gods, the supernatural or life after death.
- Humanists believe that people can and will continue to find solutions to the world's problems—but believe that individual responsibility, social cooperation and mutual respect are just as important.
- Humanists believe that we have only one life—it is our responsibility to make it a good life and live it to the full.

Humanist philosophies have arisen separately in many different cultures over many thousands of years. Classically, it refers to the **Renaissance** study of the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome and promotion of the concept that truth could be discovered by human effort.

The word 'humanism' has a number of meanings, and this can cause some confusion when trying to explain it. There are, however, two major schools of 'traditional' humanism—rational humanism (often called 'secular humanism') and scientific humanism (often called 'ethical humanism')—which can be grouped together as modern humanism.

A humanist was knocked down and injured outside a Catholic church. The priest ran out and asked, 'Do you believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?' The humanist responded, 'Here I am dying and you ask me riddles!'

Rational humanism

'I refuse to prove that I exist,' says God, 'for proof denies faith, and without faith I am nothing.' 'But,' says Man, 'The Babel fish is a dead giveaway, isn't it? It could not have evolved by chance. It proves you exist, and so therefore, by your own arguments, you don't. QED.' 'Oh dear,' says God, 'I hadn't thought of that,' and promptly disappears in a puff of logic. 'Oh, that was easy,' says Man, and for an encore goes on to prove that black is white and gets himself killed on the next pedestrian crossing.

Douglas Adams (1952–2001), *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (book one of the series) p. 50

'On "the effecting of all things possible"' is the title of an essay by Peter Medawar in his book *The Strange Case of the Spotted Mice and Other Classic Essays on Science* (2006). Medawar's essay title comes from Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* published in 1627—his 'dream of what the world might have been, and might still become, if human knowledge were directed towards improving the worldly condition of man [sic]'. The new spirit of inquiry that flourished in the seventeenth century saw many of Bacon's ambitions for science fulfilled—the great achievement of the last half of the seventeenth century was to arrive at a general scheme of belief within which the cultivation of science was seen to be very proper, very useful, and by no means irreligious. This larger conception or purpose, of which science was a principal agent, is called 'rational humanism'. Rational humanism became the dominant philosophic influence in human affairs for the next 150 years, and by the end of the eighteenth century the spokespersons of Reason and Enlightenment had taken completely for granted many of the ideas that had seemed exhilarating and revolutionary in the century before.

Many thinkers during the Enlightenment held to the belief that human progress was possible through a rational application of the human mind. The mind, they argued, must be free to explore the world; it must not be encumbered by superstition or unthinking tradition. And the philosophers of the Enlightenment developed the notion of egalitarianism—the presumption of, and belief in, the equality of all humanity from which was born modern democracy.

It was during the nineteenth century, when the conflict between science and religion arose, that humanism acquired its modern association with atheism or agnosticism.

Scientific humanism

... as I construe the phrase scientific humanism the first word indicates an approach to matters of fact while the second refers primarily to fundamental criteria of evolution. To adopt such a scientific approach unreservedly is to accept as ultimate in all matters of fact and real existence the appeal to the evidence of experience alone; a court subordinate to no higher authority, to be overridden by no prejudice, however comfortable.

Paul Kurtz (ed.), 'Scientific Humanism' in *The Humanist Alternative*, 1973, p. 109

Scientific humanism is the term used to describe the intellectual movement directed towards justice, equality and world peace. Its ethics were essentially those of modern Christianity—indeed it has many Christian supporters—but it placed its faith in progress and ‘salvation’ in science and technology. It was felt that through the determination of ethical men and women, humanity’s problems—want, ignorance and disease—were to be directly addressed.

Its roots, of course, were the same as rational humanism but the major difference was that scientific humanism laid its emphasis on the scientific method, the systemisation of which began with Isaac Newton (1642–1726).

The scientific method or process

- Scientists propose new assertions about our world in the forms of theories: observations, hypotheses and deductions.
- Predictions from these theories are tested by experiment.
- A theory that is convincing enough to make fallible predictions can then be tested reproducibly in this way.

Carl Sagan (1934–1996) explained that at the heart of science there are two distinguishing features that make it uniquely valuable as the foundation of a workable world view. One of these is the self-correcting mechanism that not only allows for, but encourages, an unrelenting process of testing propositions in terms of their workability and falsifiability. The other is an essential balance between two attitudes: ‘an openness to new ideas, no matter how counter-intuitive, and the most ruthless skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new’. He explained as well that ‘scientists do not seek to impose their needs and wants

on Nature, but instead humbly interrogate Nature and take seriously what they find’. In fact, scientific theories, by their very nature, cannot be negotiated or politically imposed.

The founder of contemporary scientific humanism could be said to be the biologist Sir Julian Huxley (1887–1975), a grandson of Thomas H. Huxley (page 395) and the first Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1946. In Article 1 of UNESCO’s Constitution can be seen the principles held by scientific humanists:

The ... main objective is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms.

And later on UNESCO stated that in schools, all subjects should be taught in a manner to foster the spirit of scientific humanism—science with a conscience and technology with a heart, both at the service of humanity.

Scientific humanism rejects the notion that science can ultimately answer all questions, but stresses that science has the objective tools to address many of the world’s problems. Scientific humanism has been defined by US philosopher Corliss Lamont (1902–1995) as ‘a naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon science and reason, democracy and human compassion’.

Prominent Australian humanists

Since 1983 the Council of Australian Humanist Societies has presented the Australian Humanist of the Year Award. A brief biography of some of the award recipients gives a glimpse into the face of humanism in Australia.

2004—Professor Peter Singer (1946–), philosopher

With uncompromising commitment to clear thinking and to secular democratic principles, he has developed reasoned, practical approaches to contemporary human problems. His courageous re-appraisal of traditional ethics gives guidance for the challenges raised by biotechnology and promotes ethical relations with the biosphere.



2005—Dr Tim Flannery (1956–), biologist and author

His evolutionary expertise has led him to propound bold and compelling views on population carrying capacity, immigration, the doctrine of *terra nullius*, Indigenous Australians' understanding of the environment and the need for non-Indigenous Australians to face up to these issues. He was named Australian of the Year in 2007.



Figure 16.3.3 Dr Tim Flannery

2006—Peter Cundall (1927–), television presenter

Finding the horrors of war could be allayed by gardening, he became a landscape gardener, then a garden writer who spearheaded the organic food-growing movement. He is a champion of self-sufficiency, spreading through the media his encouraging message, 'anyone can do this'. His boundless enthusiasm has brought many to appreciate nature, and he is a persistent fighter both for the environment and for peace.

2007—Dr Inga Clendinnen (1934–), historian and essayist

Her interests lie in understanding how people think and introducing other people to the problems and lessons of history. The core of her work is the idea of difference: different individuals and cultures see the world differently, and this needs to be respected and nurtured. A recurring theme is the attitudes to violence, war and death that form an often unexamined part of every society.

Calling oneself an atheist or an agnostic is a declaration of one's position on the existence of God rather than a 'belief system' that determines one's aspirations and behaviour. Humanists can be either agnostic or atheist in their approach to the existence or not of a Supreme Being or God, but it is their humanism that determines their ethics.

Review

- 1 In your own words, **define** 'humanism'.
- 2 Prepare a brief summary of the history of humanism.
- 3 **Outline** in point form the positions held by:
 - a rational humanism
 - b scientific humanism.
- 4 Is it possible to make distinctions between rational humanism and scientific humanism? If so, how would you **distinguish** them?
- 5 In small groups, **discuss** how humanism determines the aspirations and behaviour of individuals. Make a list of your key points and share them with other groups.

Extension



- 1 Using the internet and/or other resources, **investigate** the life of Peter Medawar. Write three short paragraphs that **summarise** his career and achievements.
- 2 **Construct** a table to show the differences between agnosticism, atheism and humanism.
- 3 Go to the web destinations for page 399 and find out more about the Humanist Society of New South Wales. Select one other prominent Australian humanist and **investigate** him/her more thoroughly. Prepare a brief report on your selection.
- 4 The profiles of prominent Australian humanists demonstrate that humanists are very involved in making a better world for their fellow humans. Is it possible to **distinguish** differences in their social activism from that of adherents to a religious tradition? **Propose** reasons why and why not.

16.4 The difference in world views

What do we mean by a world view? Probably it means how we see the world and its people living together. For some, the question of the creation of the universe—how planet earth and its people fit into the larger universe, and whether there is an ‘ultimate reality’ is the ‘big’ question—and the answer to that determines how we view the human person and how we live together. For others, the major question is how do we live together as humans on this finite planet?

- Refer to Chapter 1, page 4 for a good background to understanding the religious and non-religious world views.

What separates a ‘religious’ world view from a ‘non-religious’ one is the concept of the transcendent—a belief in a divine being and/or powers beyond the human. But this can also be a bit of a trap. Buddhism, for example, does not seem to have much concern about a transcendent reality. Buddhism, however, seeks to motivate its adherents to move beyond the limits of the ordinary and be awokened to the unknown.

To emphasise differences can lead to all sorts of dogmatism and neglect the realities of the world today. In the area of how we as humans live together in this world, there is more often ‘common cause’ than differences. The area of environmental ethics is a good example of this.

It is impossible to ignore the influence of humanism in the pursuit of knowledge. Over the last fifty or so years, religious traditions have acknowledged that a ‘scientific’ approach to inquiry can be positive for the tradition rather than threaten it—for example, biblical scholarship for Judaism and Christianity has given greater insights into their sacred texts.

Did you know?

Can a distinction be drawn between a conscientious decision based on a religious doctrine and a conscientious belief not so based? Australian courts have defined a conscientious belief as a belief based on a seriously and deeply held moral conviction whether or not it is part of a religious doctrine or creed. They have affirmed that the term ‘conscience’ of itself is not to be restricted by the ambit of ‘religion’. Nor is the term ‘religion’ to be defined restrictively. The Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia warned that ‘each person chooses the content of his [sic] religion’ and ‘[i]t is not for a court upon some *a priori* basis, to disqualify certain beliefs as incapable of being religious in character’. (See page 364 for conscientious objection and military service.)

Review

- 1 How would you **define** ‘world view’?
- 2 **Compare** the response of *two* religious belief systems and *one* non-religious belief system to:
 - a the concept of the transcendent
 - b the human person
 - c social responsibility.

Extension

- 1 **Discuss** the statement: ‘In the twenty-first century the distinction between religious and non-religious world views is not as obvious as it was in the nineteenth century.’
- 2 What challenges do non-religious world views present to ‘traditional’ religion? Suggest three ‘challenges’ and give reasons for your suggestions.
- 3 **Propose** three points for and against the statement: ‘Each person chooses the content of their own religion.’ Organise a class debate on the topic.

Conclusion

While it is obvious that Christianity continues to have a primary influence in Australian society, the diversity of religious expression continues to grow. Migration has increased the number of adherents to traditions other than Christianity, and it has also increased the number of variants/strands within Christianity. And the longer a religious group has been in Australia, the more likely there will be ‘leakage’ in its membership. As we have seen, there is an increasing number of people who subscribe to belief systems or have beliefs about the world and how it and its people function that are outside the traditional religious models. All these factors raise a number of questions and challenges, and not only for Christianity.

For the mainstream Christian Churches, the challenge lies both in their practices and in how they present their message to people. For the other major traditions, it is the challenge of keeping within the community those young people who are removed from the cultural and religious heritage of their parents and grandparents. It is also a challenge for Australian media and their reporting of Australian religion and culture.

Extension

- 1 Check your list of key terms, concepts and ideas from this chapter and ensure that it is clear and complete.
- 2 Check your media file and **analyse** its contents. In your analysis, there are two things to keep in mind—how do the media report on emergent spiritualities/religions and is their ‘religion’ reporting mainly to do with traditional religions? What about non-religious belief systems—do they get a mention?
- 3 Brainstorm some of the questions and challenges facing traditional religions in Australia. **Predict** what Australia’s religious landscape might be in the twenty-second century.
- 4 In pairs, **discuss** the statement: ‘It is impossible to arrive at a definition of “religion” that will satisfy everyone.’ Make a list of your key points and share them with the class.
- 5 **Propose** your own definition of ‘religion’ and give reasons to support it.

Summarise

For each chapter outcome, build your own summary notes that draw from:

- work in class and at home
- this student book
- other print and media sources
- the internet
- additional resources at Pearson Places.



See over for HSC-style exam questions. ➔



HSC-style exam questions

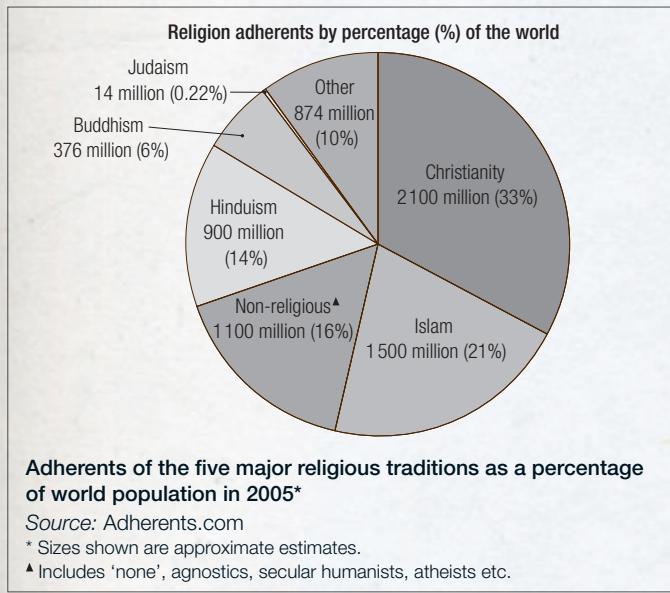
Section I: Part B

- Studies of Religion II:** answer all questions from this section.

Multiple-choice: Questions 12–21 (10 marks)

- 12 The belief that spiritual forces animate the spiritual world beyond the human person is known as:
- Humanism
 - Polytheism
 - Agnosticism
 - Animism
- 13 Polytheism is:
- The acceptance of one God
 - The acceptance of many gods
 - The absence of belief in a God or gods
 - The questioning of the existence of God
- 14 Which of the following best describes the potential of the religious dimension to support migrants in Australia?
- Religion provides a source of isolation.
 - Religion provides a sense of personal fulfilment.
 - Religion enables social cohesion.
 - The religious dimension is irrelevant for all migrants.

Questions 15 and 16 refer to the following diagram that provides statistics for religious world views.



- 15 What percentage of the global population in 2005 is represented by religious world views typically defined as monotheistic?
- 20%
 - 21%
 - 54.22%
 - 60.22%
- 16 The category 'Non-religious' includes which of the following world views?
- Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism and charism
 - Atheism, agnosticism and humanism
 - Animism, polytheism and Sufism
 - Dadaism, surrealism and expressionism
- 17 How would an agnostic respond to the question of the existence of God?
- Based on scientific evidence, God does not exist.
 - The diversity of religious expressions points to the existence of many gods.
 - Science and reason, not God, provide everything needed to understand the world.
 - True knowledge of the existence or otherwise of God is beyond human capacity for knowing.
- 18 The elevation of human reason as the primary source of individual authority and guiding principle for right action is most closely associated with:
- Rational humanism
 - Religious individualism
 - Scientific humanism
 - Theistic expressionism
- 19 Which of the following is NOT an example of a new religious spirituality or expression?
- Age of Aquarius
 - Sufism
 - Human Potential Movement
 - Channelling



'Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the kind of money where I don't really care either way.'

Short answer: Question 22 (5 marks)

In turbulent times, in times of great change, people head for the two extremes: fundamentalism and personal, spiritual experience.

John Naisbitt in J. Naisbitt and P. Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000*

To what extent does this statement explain the rise of new religious spiritualities and expressions?

- 20 Which influence on the growth of new religious expressions is highlighted in the above cartoon?
- Scientific progress
 - Disenchantment with traditional religious practice and guidance
 - The rise of materialism
 - The growth of ecological awareness
- 21 Which of the following dimensions highlights the primary difference between religious and non-religious world views?
- The concept of the transcendent
 - The notion of social responsibility
 - The importance of the environment
 - The role of individual conscience

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Page numbers in **bold** refer to key terms in **bold** type in the text.

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