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Cambridge Studies of Religion

Stage 6 Fourth Edition

Christopher Hartney
Jonathan Noble

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Christopher Hartney
Jonathan Noble

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About the authors

Christopher Hartney BA, PhD (Syd)

Christopher grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney where many religions new to Australia have founded their communities. He began study at the University of Sydney straight after high school, but found it generally confusing and left for a number of years. He eventually returned and finished his bachelor's degree. He chose Studies of Religion units just to make up his quota but the more he studied, the more he fell in love with the subject.

He began specialising in Asian religions and wrote a doctoral thesis on Caodaism, a new religion that began in Vietnam in the 1920s. An incredible Caodaist temple can be seen on King Georges Road in Wiley Park, Sydney, and another has just opened on Wattle Avenue, Carramar. He visited Caodaist communities in North America, Europe and Vietnam, and studied French, Vietnamese and Chinese in order to complete his work. His knowledge of the religions of the world comes not only from books, but also from the hospitality of diverse religious groups around New South Wales and from his extensive travels in Europe, Africa and Asia.

In 2006 Christopher was appointed lecturer at the University of Sydney in the Department of Studies of Religion and promoted to Senior Lecturer a few years later. He teaches the two first-year units for the bachelor's degree that cover most of the material in this book: *Religion: Texts, Life and Tradition;* and *Atheism, Fundamentalism and New Religions*. Students who have completed the HSC Studies of Religion course often take these units to further expand their knowledge of this exciting field.

Christopher has more than 50 scholarly articles to his name and he has edited numerous academic journals and collected volumes of scholarship on various aspects of religion.

Jonathan Noble BTh(Hons), BA, DipEd

Jonathan was born in the 1950s as a 'baby boomer'. He is the son of a Presbyterian/Uniting Church minister and grew up in Queensland and then Western Australia, where his father was a flying Patrol Padre for the Australian Inland Mission. Formative experiences included life in outback Australia, contact with Aboriginal spirituality and life in rural ecumenical parishes.

Jonathan studied theology at the Perth Bible Institute and Moore Theological College in Sydney, as a Presbyterian candidate, and was awarded the Bachelor of Theology (Hons). He then achieved a Bachelor of Arts (Social Welfare) from Charles Sturt University.

For 18 months Jonathan worked with the homeless in inner Sydney, before being ordained in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra–Goulburn, and served as parish priest in rural parishes of that diocese, before several years at Castle Cove in Sydney. After 18 months as Executive Director of a Christian camping organisation, Jonathan went to All Saints College in Bathurst as Chaplain and Religious Studies teacher. He completed his Graduate Diploma in Education and in 2001 became a Studies of Religion teacher at the MLC School in Burwood, Sydney. He was also an elder of the Uniting Church in Strathfield.

Jonathan has also been involved in the development of the HSC Studies of Religion course in several capacities. He was elected Chairman of the Association for Studies of Religion, serving from 2006 to 2008. Jonathan has presented seminars on Studies of Religion for students and teachers in New South Wales as well as several professional papers on religious studies. He has also been a writer of the Academic Resources Curriculum Trial Examination Papers for Studies of Religion as well as writing for the *Cambridge HSC Studies of Religion Checkpoints*.

Jonathan is married with adult children and enjoys reading, movies and music, with a particular interest in travel, Asian Christian theology and Hinduism. Jonathan considers himself to be of the 'middle church' Anglican Christian tradition and attends an Anglican Church near Lake Macquarie. Jonathan was appointed Religious Studies Coordinator and teacher at St Francis Xavier College in Newcastle in 2011, but has just retired from teaching full-time. He is currently conducting research on Balinese Hinduism.

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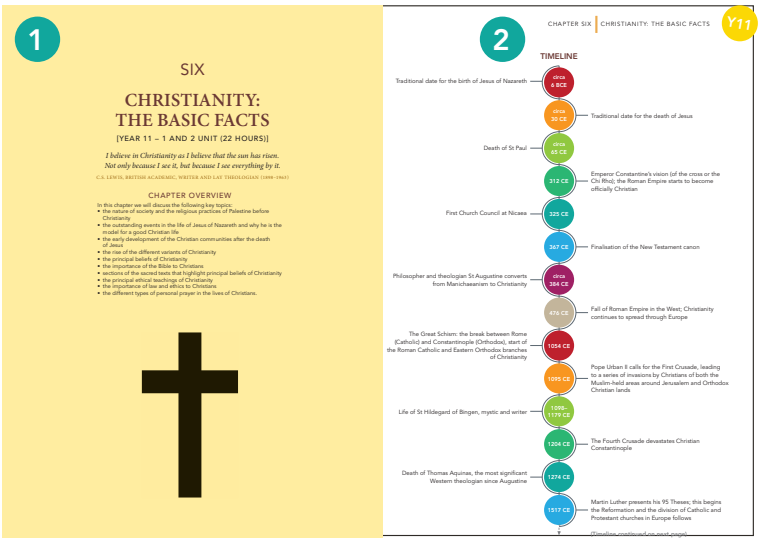


CHAPTER OPENERS 1

Chapters in *Cambridge Studies of Religion* Fourth Edition begin with:

- interesting quotes
- chapter overviews

TIMELINES 2

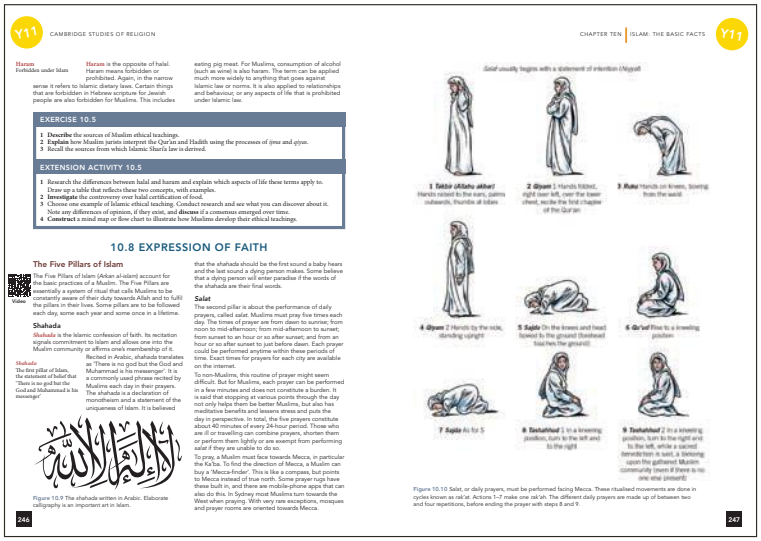
Some chapters also open with a list of key events relevant to the chapter.

DID YOU KNOW? 3

These boxes offer facts and elaborations on content to enrich your learning experience.

EXTRACTS 4

Relevant extracts from sacred texts support the material being discussed.



GLOSSARY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS 5

All of the glossary terms in each chapter are defined in the margin and in the glossary at the end of the book.

EXERCISES AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES 6

Throughout each chapter you will find a wide variety of exercises and extension activities designed to help you test and extend your knowledge.

QR CODES 7

Throughout the book, there are QR codes in the margin, which enable you to play supporting video (including interviews with representatives of each of the five religious traditions) by just pointing the camera of your phone or tablet at the code, or through aid of a QR-reader application (depending on the model that you are using).

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CASE STUDIES

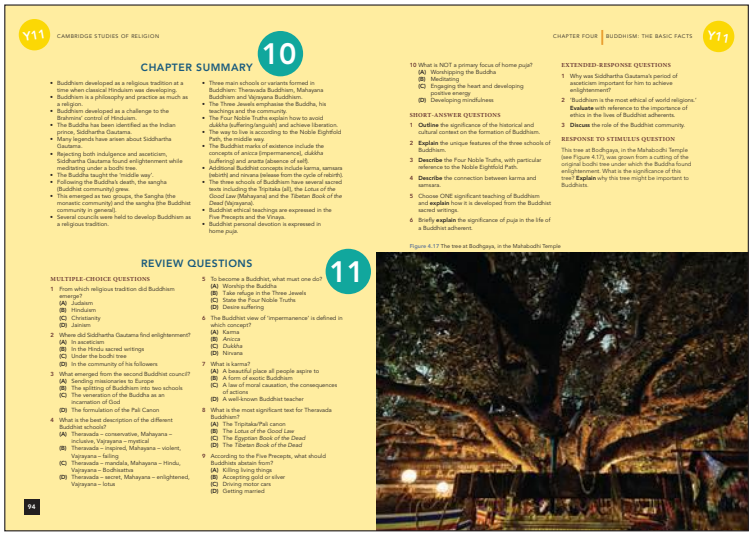
Breakout boxes are used to examine specific subjects of interest in more detail.

8

INVESTIGATE, CONSIDER AND FURTHERMORE

9

These sections invite you to **Investigate** aspects of religion or religions in greater detail; to **Consider** a variety of opinions and alternative perspectives, including your own; and to undertake further research (**Furthermore**) in areas that are of particular interest.



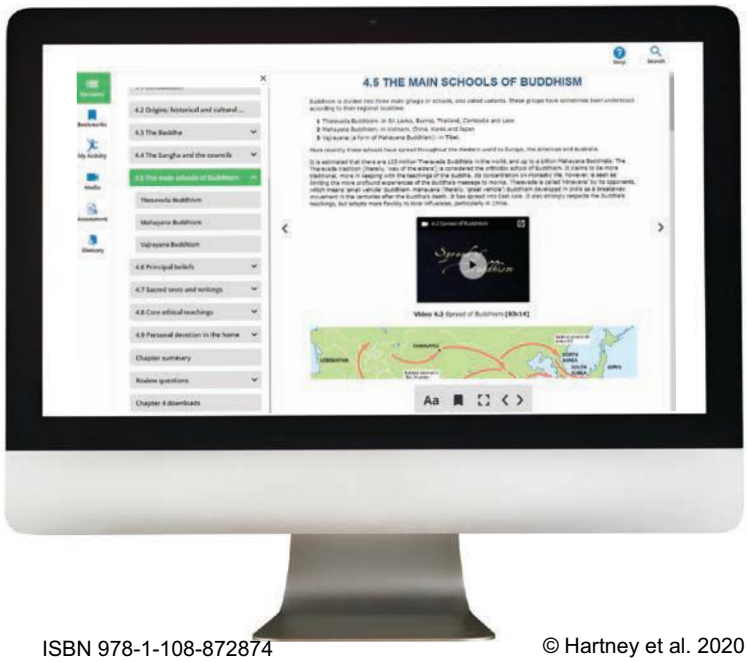
END OF CHAPTER SECTIONS

10

At the end of each chapter, you will find a **chapter summary**.

11

Review questions (**multiple-choice, short-answer, extended-response** and **response to stimulus**) will help you develop the skills you need to excel at HSC level, while **HSC exam-style questions** ensure that you are fully prepared for your exams.



INTERACTIVE TEXTBOOK

This resource comes with an online Interactive Textbook that contains audio and video to enhance your understanding (including, but not limited to, all the videos available through the QR codes in the print book) and interactive activities to support your learning.

Each of the **Depth Study** chapters has additional digital content covering further significant individuals and schools of thought. This is available in the Interactive Textbook, and also in offline digital format.

For a list of websites and links related to this book, go to www.cambridge.edu.au/sor4ed.

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Introduction

In the 2016 census, nearly 40 per cent of Australians either did not state their religion (9.1 per cent) or stated that they had no religion (30.1 per cent – this included secular beliefs such as atheism and other spiritual beliefs such as New Age). Compare this to the 1986 census, where only 12.7 per cent of Australians stated they had no religion. This suggests a significant decline in religious affiliation, or certainly an indifference to it. However, religion as a social experience is still considered by many as a vital phenomenon of life. Even the majority of atheists agree that much of our culture, politics, history and sense of self are deeply affected by religious attitudes. Moreover, in Australia's multicultural society, it is important to understand the religious and cultural attitudes of people from all around the world. The Studies of Religion course offers a way of studying these attitudes and thus understanding people more profoundly.

DID YOU KNOW?

Studies of Religion is one of the largest candidature courses of the HSC. While many Church schools encourage the course, its popularity is growing in public schools as well. Why do you think that is the case? If we are becoming a more secular (non-religious) society, why is religion of interest?

Table 1 2016 Census figures on religious affiliation in Australia. When updated Census figures are released, a new table will be available on http://www.cambridge.edu.au/GO

Religion	Number	Per cent
Buddhism	563 674	2.4%
Christianity	12 201 600	52.1%
Hinduism	440 300	1.9%
Islam	604 240	2.6%
Judaism	91 022	0.4%
Other religions	221 590	0.9%
No religion*	7 040 717	30.1%
Not stated/Inadequately described	2 238 735	9.6%

* 'No religion' includes secular beliefs (e.g. atheism) and other spiritual beliefs (e.g. New Age)
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics '2016 Census Religious Affiliation', viewed 23 April 2020

Table 2 World religious affiliation (2019 estimated)

Religion	Per cent
Buddhism	7.1%
Christianity	31.4%
Hinduism	15%
Islam	23.2%
Judaism	0.2%
Other religions	6.7%
No religion	16.4%

Source: The World Factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html

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Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned.
PAUL TILLICH, 1957

INVESTIGATE

Talk to friends, and at least one adult, about what they believe. What has influenced their religious beliefs or lack of them? What are their interests in life? How does knowing and experiencing their beliefs about religion help you to understand them better? How does knowing them help you to understand religion better? Would they identify with a religious tradition?

About the course

The HSC Studies of Religion course is not a simple subject. It is an academic subject demanding rigorous study, effort and a willingness to think carefully. It does not compare religions but treats each as a valid worldview or belief system. It does not ask you to write only about what you believe or do not believe. It does not ask you to simply record what other people believe. It does ask you to study the facts and people's experiences of religion and consider them in relation to your own experiences. During this course you will study at least two religious traditions so that you gain an insight into what religion means for a broad range of people, rather than just understanding one religion in isolation. Studies of Religion is not about **theology**.

Theology
The study of the nature of God and religious doctrine – usually with an emphasis on Christianity

That is not to say that you should completely ignore the relationship between who you are, what you believe and how you study religion. This will be a very important challenge to how you develop as a student of religion. You need to develop an understanding of the role of religion in the life of **adherents** and relate that to particular questions that will be asked in the HSC examination. The focus of this course is not just knowledge but also understanding, skills, value and attitudes. You will also see how religious traditions are relevant to life in modern Australia.

Adherent
Person who supports, identifies with or gives allegiance to a religious tradition

The aim of this book is to make your experience of Studies of Religion as interesting as possible. It is also hoped the book will give you some keys to understanding the extreme emotional and devotional dimensions of human existence often associated with religion. The glossary and chapter summaries provide you with information on each study area and indicate their importance for the assessment. Obscure and fascinating facts, questions and areas to investigate, and information are provided to add to the enjoyment of studying this subject. Activities and features will encourage you to explore aspects of religion that go beyond the syllabus.

Tips for Studies of Religion students

Throughout the book there is a range of resources that will help with your study. Reading, however, is only half the story. In this course you have just as much opportunity to experience the people, places and communities that you are studying.

Interview and visit – but be prepared and respectful!

Interview

You know many people, such as your parents, grandparents and other family members, leaders of your religious group (if you are religious), teachers, neighbours and community leaders, even your local Member of Parliament. Make the time to interview them and ask about their religious rituals and beliefs, and their experiences of religion in Australia. They are **primary sources** and their accounts are important because they were living in Australia when many of the events you will be studying took place. When you interview people, you are collecting important information about how Australian religions and the religious life of the world have developed. Make sure you prepare well. Write out lists of questions you think are important.

Primary source
A document or other material that comes directly from a person or place of interest

Take a recording device with you, or at least a notepad, and record as much as you can.

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Questions you might ask include:

- Do you belong to a particular religion?
- If you are not religious, is there a particular reason for this?
- How do you practise your religion or your spirituality?
- How have attitudes to religion in Australia changed during your lifetime?
- Do you know people who belong to another religion?
- Are people in Australia more or less religious today than in past years? Why do you think this is the case?

Adherent
Person who supports or gives allegiance to a religious tradition

Remember: hearing about religion from a person can be quite different from reading a book about that religion. Think about why this might be so. Some writers try to give you an ideal view of a particular religion. That is because they are trying to systematise a faith, simplify it and make its concepts easy to understand. In the life of an **adherent**, the expression of that religious tradition can be quite different.

Believers, though, are linked to their religion, sometimes very closely, through community and ritual, rather than just religious texts. Believers might even be part of groups inside a religion that have their own additional beliefs. If their opinions about their religion do not match with what is in the textbook, that does not make either the book or the believer wrong. It is the differences between the two, however, that will make your study more interesting. So always be thinking about any differences you might find. Note that in this course the term adherent is used, rather than believer. This term refers to a person who identifies with a religious tradition and includes those who are active and committed believers as well as those who are not so involved.

DID YOU KNOW?

Theosophists are part of a religious group dedicated to investigating the spiritualities of the world. Their resources are available to students. Try to use as many different sources of information as you can so that you gain a broader education in this subject.

CONSIDER

It can be argued that people who believe in a religious tradition cannot be impartial when discussing it. Can we learn anything useful from them? What do you think? Can people talk impartially about their own beliefs?

Anthropologists and students of religion sometimes use the terms 'emic' and 'etic' to describe approaches to societies and religions. 'Emic' refers to descriptions of a faith (or society) from the view of someone who belongs to that group. 'Etic' is a description of a group or faith by someone outside that group, someone trying to be an impartial observer. It is this last attitude that we try to encourage in this book.

Similarly, the term 'epoche' underlines a methodology of standing apart from the material you study. The word means 'bracketing or suspending judgement' and in a Studies of Religion context it suggests that the student should bracket their own beliefs (or lack of beliefs) while studying a religion, to allow a less biased approach.

Visit

There are many religious communities. You may be able to visit a church, mosque, synagogue or Hindu or Buddhist temple and speak to many religious people. When you ask someone about their faith, it is like asking 'How are you?' People are usually happy to speak about their own experiences and their faith. Remember, however, to treat all people with respect and try to research some of the customs and traditions of particular religions before visiting them or their place of worship. That way, you will be better informed and have less chance of offending through ignorance. It can be difficult to walk into someone else's temple, mosque or church. Remember, though, some of these are constructed by their communities to be public buildings and many welcome visitors. Moreover, many of the major religious communities have visitor programs, so phone and ask if you can come along, or check their websites. They often encourage school groups to visit, and meet with leaders and groups. Always remember that care is required and you need to be conscious of sensitivities

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and procedures. Modest clothing is always essential, but there may be other requirements too. For example, when visiting a mosque, girls should cover their head. When visiting a synagogue, it is boys who should cover their head. In many Buddhist and Hindu temples, it is the custom to remove your shoes. These polite expressions are appreciated by the religious communities. When planning a visit, check with the appropriate people to find out the requirements. You will find most places very welcoming. They will appreciate your enquiry and enjoy the opportunity to discuss their religious beliefs, traditions and practices.

Figure 1 Discussion and respectful questions are a natural part of exploring different religions, spirtualities and ethical systems

The media

When you research religious issues in the media, you might find that religion is an issue that journalists do not often like talking about. National and city-based newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* sometimes have staff dedicated to religious issues. Find out who these journalists are and follow their work. ABC television also broadcasts a weekly program called *Compass* that deals with religious issues. A good source for up-to-the-minute religious commentary can be found on the ABC's radio programs. See the ABC Religion and Ethics website. The ABC website contains transcripts of many of its most recent programs as well as other content in downloadable formats. This website is a very rich source of material. Use it!

There are also numerous radio and TV programs (such as documentaries) that relate to religious themes. Keep an eye on programming and check when they come on. They will often be broadcast at times that coincide with significant religious events (such as the Hajj or the Kumbha Mela – pilgrimage times in Islam and Hinduism) or with particular issues that are in public discussion (such as abortion or terrorism).

When accessing the media, you need to be aware of possible bias and use your critical skills to take this into consideration.

INVESTIGATE

Access the ABC website and find the section on 'Religion'. Other sections and programs may also be relevant, for example, 'Indigenous' or 'Education'. What sorts of programs and information are available? Does the site support just one religious tradition or many? What bias can you detect, if any? Is the information useful for your study?

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The internet

Plagiarise
Copy someone's ideas or writing without acknowledgement

Many religious communities in Australia have become experienced at posting information about their group on the internet. Resist the temptation to copy out text (**plagiarise**) from the internet. When you do use something from another source it is essential to make a reference to the original source, either in a footnote or an endnote. A very long convention of making references exists and there are at least two styles. Oxbridge (a collective term applying to Oxford and Cambridge Universities in England) style is used extensively in humanities subjects, and Harvard style is used most often in scientific texts – ask your teacher for more details on this.

Plagiarism is not the way to develop your scholarly talents, and is unethical and unlawful. It is also the case that a lot of material on the internet is biased. Whenever you come across information, always consider possible biases. This is a very important issue when studying religion. Websites run by the ABC or its counterparts, the BBC (Britain) and CBC (Canada), can provide reliable information, as do some reputable newspapers. Be careful when using Wikipedia as its information can be added to or altered by anyone, and this can lead to definite bias or even incorrect information. There is much detail on the web that is racist, extreme or based on opinion, speculation and rumour. Critical comparison of website information is a necessity. The best way to construct an argument about religions (as with most other subjects) is a comparison of a variety of reliable sources. This is the foundation of good academic thinking and research.

Bias

Gospels
The story of Jesus' life and teachings; the first four books of the New Testament

Always consider the idea that, as sincere as religious people may be, they do have an interest in explaining their religion in the best possible light and from their own particular point of view. Similarly, those opposed to religious belief will seek to show you the worst aspects of a religion. As a student, you must retain as much objectivity as you can. If you are a Christian, you have to accept that many people do not believe that Jesus returned from the dead. This is an issue of faith, not demonstrable historical truth. The only documents that tell us Jesus did rise from his tomb were written by Christians and form the core of the **Gospels**. Like a detective, you should think about why a person is saying what they say and how it changes their attitudes to life. Do people say and believe what they do because they have been influenced by others? Is it because of the group they are connected with? Or is it because of the scriptures they have read and how they have interpreted them? The study of religion is challenging and can be a mind-expanding exercise that helps us to understand the greatest wonders and the greatest challenges of the human race. Humans also have strong motivations to alter and twist events to fit what they wish to believe. It is your duty as a student to always keep this in mind.

Bias cannot always be avoided and at times can be difficult to detect. Keep an open mind and be critical of everything you read. Compare different reports and think carefully. If you are especially uncertain about bias, talk with your teacher.

Figure 2 Multiple reliable sources make for good study

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ONE

THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND BELIEFS

[YEAR 11 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (16 HOURS)]

Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams – they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do – they all contain truths.

MUHAMMAD ALI, FORMER WORLD CHAMPION BOXER AND ACTIVIST (1942–2016)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key issues:

- the nature of religion and beliefs, including considering the following debates:
  - what religion is as a worldview
  - what the supernatural dimension consists of
- the characteristics of religion, including an example of the characteristics of Judaism
- the contribution of religion to society:
  - whether there is a supreme being
  - why evil, pain and suffering exist
  - whether there is life after death
  - dynamic living religions: change versus tradition
- the nature of Aboriginal peoples' beliefs and spiritualities, particularly looking at the nature, diversity and importance of the Dreaming
- sacred sites, symbolism and art of Aboriginal peoples
- the inextricable connection of the Dreaming, the land and identity.

Please be aware that this chapter may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now deceased

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How the word 'religion' developed

TIMELINE

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1.1 THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND BELIEFS

The nature of religion

Many societies have religion, but the word 'religion' is not a word used by all societies. Many years ago, 'religion' was not distinct from 'culture' or 'society'. Unfortunately, we do not know for certain where the word 'religion' came from. Some people suggest it derives from the Latin verb 'to tie', with *religare* meaning 'to tie back'. Religion is therefore defined as a system that ties people back to either god or gods, tradition, an oath made before a god, a religious group, or a society in general. Latin scholar Carl Meissner suggests that the Romans used the word *religio* (which probably originally meant 'that which binds down') to express feelings such as devotion, fear of God and conscientiousness, as well as religious feeling and scruple and subjectivity. Interpreted actively, it means an oath or obligation of a religious nature, whereas in an objective sense it relates to sacred places and objects, acts that go against the will of God such as sins, curses and crimes, or else an object of religious fear.

The Romans had a very legalistic sense of faith tied up in the idea of '*do ut das*' which translates as 'I give [a ritual offering] so that you [gods] give [me what I am praying for]'.

From approximately 200 BCE, the Romans began importing foreign gods and goddesses into their cities. Many of these new movements formed underground 'religions' that were focused more on afterlife salvation than the '*do ut das*' legalistic structure that originally dominated. This dimension of a multicultural and multi-faith empire left its legacy in the way the word 'religion' could be used.

The Romans were **polytheists**, meaning they believed in more than one god. They developed the idea that religion must incorporate belief in divine beings and these beings inspire love and devotion, awe and reverence in their followers, and influence them to act in the right way. Religion, as it is understood, also defines what that right way is (as far as a particular society defines 'right').

Polytheism
Worship of many (*poly*) gods (*theos*)

As can be seen from the *Cambridge Dictionary*, many of the classical associations of the word 'religion' have been used in English, but some have since become obsolete. There are many connotations of this word beyond the dictionary definitions:

1 the belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship, e.g. the Christian religion

Figure 1.1 Old medicine book from Qing Dynasty of China (eighteenth century). The book records the use of acupuncture and herbal medicine. It is used to maintain 'the way' of Taoism, which is not traditionally associated with the usual concepts of religion.

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Paganism
A system of beliefs that encompasses a wide range of practices and outlooks; some pagan movements look to many gods and goddesses to explain natural phenomena; others are more animistic

Western
Western civilisation refers to cultures of European origin

Taoism
Major Chinese religion/philosophy, founded about 600 BCE; also known as Daoism

Confucianism
The religious/philosophical system based on the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE)

Dreaming
The belief system of the Australian Aboriginal peoples

2 an activity that someone is extremely enthusiastic about and does regularly, e.g. is a religion for these people.
3 the belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship.

As far as scholarly definitions of religion are concerned, many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century definitions involved some reference to a single god, developed from a Christian perspective. Many references to other cultures described them as having no religion or as **pagans**. From a **Western** point of view this might seem justified, but attitudes in the rest of the world can be far more complex. In India, 'religion' is implied in the term *sanatana dharma* or 'eternal law'. This implies, but does not necessarily require, belief in the supernatural, as some atheistic schools of Indian philosophy demonstrate. Similarly, in China the idea of Tao can imply 'the way things should be' but does not necessarily suggest that the supernatural is essential to an understanding of how Tao operates. In the religious tradition of **Taoism**, this term can be applied quite mystically. In **Confucianism**, Tao is used in a very pragmatic manner to suggest the correct way of existence.

For many Australians, 'religion' can mean church, some kind of supernatural aspect of life, a way of life, a belief system, a concept of 'god', a community or even something that spoils fun. All of these elements may be involved in trying to define 'religion'.

Many traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also find the idea of the sacred, religious or mystical hard to separate from the rest of their lives. The **Dreaming**, the essence of Aboriginal peoples' spirituality, includes the 'whole of life', including the land.

Religion as a worldview

Philosophy
The study of the general principles of knowledge

'Worldview' is also known by its German **philosophical** term *Weltanschauung*, which translates as 'the way a society sees the world'. That is, the society into which people are born greatly influences how they see the world, based on a set of cultural assumptions. People may understand 'god' to mean an all-powerful figure who created the universe, or they may assume that time operates as a line and is not circular.

People may believe they have the right to freedom of speech and that all sorts of religions are free to exist in society. These assumptions form part of a worldview. In Australia, there is an ongoing debate about freedom of religion and there are exemptions in place for anti-discrimination legislation relating to religion. Sometimes these views can be rationally justified, sometimes not – sometimes a society does things simply because of tradition. In some other parts of the world these ideas are not accepted as cultural norms.

Religions promote their own worldviews. In Hinduism and Buddhism, time operates as a cycle; that is, ages repeat themselves. This idea is harder to accept in the West where time is believed to begin at a starting point (for Christians, the starting point is in the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible) and travel in a straight line to its finish (such as the Book of Revelation in the Christian New Testament).

Confusingly, religions can find it very easy to link themselves with the prevailing political system. Some religions include their own political assumptions on how a state should work. For example, much in Judaism presupposes a Jewish monarchy, while the system of Islamic beliefs suggests that the law and some form of community leadership from the religiously learned is required for good government. It can therefore be seen that religions shape not just the religious, but the entire worldviews of a society – that is, the prism through which we see our various realities. Many of the legal codes of Western society are based on what is called the Judeo-Christian ethic, which is one example of religion influencing culture, or at least the law. Religious worldviews are a central part of many cultures and the way of life of many people.

FURTHERMORE

What is a 'religion' in Australia? On the legal front, Australian federal law makes an interesting case for what religion is. After a famous High Court decision between the Commonwealth and the Church of Scientology in 1983, a new legal definition of religion was created. Perhaps the best way of defining religion in certain instances is to examine how groups speak of *themselves* as religious entities. As Scientologists maintained before the court that they were a religion, the court had the responsibility of taking them seriously, although with numerous reservations. See if you can find the judgements for this case on the internet.

Figure 1.2 David Miscavige, ecclesiastical leader of Scientology

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The supernatural: transcendence and immanence

In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, God is said to transcend (rise above) the world; that is, God is predominantly beyond the world. This is an idea common to **monotheism**. **Transcendence** is different from **immanence**, which refers to the spirit pervading the world, particularly in the immediate realm of people's lives and experiences. A **deity** can be both immanent (in the phenomena of the material world) and transcendent (beyond the world), and this division can be used to distinguish various forms of belief. For example, **pantheism** suggests that the divine is in created order.

Some religions, such as Japanese Shinto, believe there is spirit in many parts of the environment. This idea of all-pervasive spirits is called **animism**, which is often understood as a link between spirits and the physical world. Remember that transcendence refers to the 'out there' aspects of spirituality, while immanence refers to the 'inner' aspects of spirituality. In general terms, the monotheistic religious traditions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, focus on the idea of transcendence, while Indian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, focus more on immanence. Transcendent religion refers to the god who is 'out there', while immanent religion may refer to the god who is 'in here' (within).

This transcendent dimension can, to a certain extent, can also be understood as something internal. Listen to believers' accounts of their faiths and how they speak of their religious experiences. Many Christians, for example, particularly those who are **evangelicals** or **Pentecostals**, will talk of the 'inner light of Jesus' or of Jesus entering their hearts. 'How do you know this has happened to other people?' a Christian minister was asked. He replied, 'You know that Jesus is with them because you see their life change completely'. Here we have a link between an internal change believers say has taken place and the need to constantly transform the self. The Christian concept of the Trinity includes the Holy Spirit as an immanent experience of the transcendent God.

This is something found in the lives of Buddhists, who use meditation to transform their mind, body and perception of the world. In the Buddhist example, self-transformation can be both a religious quest to reflect the true nature of the Buddha and also a philosophy to make oneself a better, more peaceful and more considerate human.

In general terms, the religious traditions that emphasise transcendence are the monotheistic religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The religious traditions that emphasise immanence include Hinduism and Buddhism. Animism and Aboriginal peoples' spiritualities also emphasise immanence, but as has been indicated previously, all religious traditions express aspects of both immanence and transcendence.

Monotheism
Worship of a single god

Transcendence
An existence above or apart from the material world

Immanence
The idea that gods or spiritual forces pervade the universe and are present in every aspect of life, as compared with the idea of transcendence

Deity
A god or goddess

Pantheism
The idea that God is in everything and the natural world

Animism
The belief that spirits inhabit all objects and have influence on people and natural events

Evangelical
From the Greek word euangelion meaning 'gospel' or 'good news', after the eighteenth century CE it refers to a Protestant movement that believes one's soul can be saved only by having faith in the atoning death of Jesus

Pentecostalism
Movement within Christianity that places emphasis on the possibility of direct contact with the Holy Spirit

EXERCISE 1.1

1 **Define** 'religion' as you see it.
2 **Explain** why the Latin term *religare* is a good word to describe religion. **Outline** some of its limitations.
3 **Discuss** your understanding of the term 'worldview'.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1.1

1 Some people believe that you should never discuss religion or politics in general conversation. Construct a 50-word opinion piece, as if it were going to be published in an online media site, about why we should actually encourage the discussion of religion.
2 Hold a small poll with family and friends. Identify which, if any, is the religion that most of your survey group identify with. Propose why that might be the case. Consider the reasons and implications.
3 Construct a short PowerPoint presentation with dot points on your initial interpretations of what is good and what is bad about religion. Upon completion of the Studies of Religion course, go back to this presentation and see if any of your views have changed.

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1.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGION

These days many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are Christians. But Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had their own spiritual beliefs before the Europeans first arrived in Australia. This spirituality was not recognised as a religion by the European settlers in Australia. The Christian settlers believed that they had a duty to provide religion to the Aboriginal peoples by converting them to Christianity, and to force them to forget about their Dreaming stories. There were, and to an extent there remain, very different attitudes to religion in Australia. When they first heard of Jesus, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples thought it was the white person's Dreaming story. They did not understand why they had to believe it as well. Whereas the European Christian settlers could not understand why the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did not have a supreme god. This is because there was no real understanding of what actually makes up, or defines, a 'religion'. An understanding of the characteristics of religion was needed to help develop a definition, or at least an understanding, of what 'religion' is.

Smart's seven characteristics of religion

Video

Ninian Smart, one of the leading scholars of religion, has provided a useful definition of religion. Smart suggests that religion comprises many or all of the following seven points. These are called the characteristics of religion and most can be found in religious traditions (although not all characteristics have the same importance).

1. a practical and ritual dimension: including worship, prayers and liturgy
2. an experiential and emotional dimension: an emotive content behind ritual and prayers or an experience of the divine
3. a narrative or mythic dimension: for instance, sacred texts, stories that pertain to a particular tradition such as Judaism's use of the Flood story or the Christian Garden of Eden story, or a Dreaming story
4. a doctrinal and philosophical dimension: a system of values, beliefs or laws
5. an ethical and legal dimension: the idea that rules have to be applied to govern behaviour of an adherent or to uphold both the values and understandings that a religion may offer to the world
6. a social and institutional dimension: including the gathered community, the institution or the actual organisations that constitute the religion
7. a material dimension: buildings, symbols, works of art and so on.

Smart is less interested in *what* people believe and trying to understand the religion and its adherents. He is more interested in *how* they express their beliefs. Under this approach, Smart's definition plays down the idea that a religion needs a supreme god. But we cannot apply a definition like this to all religions. Some traditions, such as Chinese Confucianism, have little mythic dimension. Many of these characteristics also don't apply to New Age practices. Not all religions will show all of the characteristics listed. You should also note that there are different lists of characteristics to define religions, often of different combinations or numbers, but Smart's seven characteristics generally encompass these other lists.

EXERCISE 1.2

1. Life is often spoken of as including both the sacred (to do with religion) and the secular (those areas distinct from religion). **Describe** the relationship between the sacred and the secular. **Assess** if religion regards the sacred and the secular as distinct areas of life.
2. **Explain** some of the characteristics of religion.
3. Richard Fenn, a medievalist, provides the following definition of religion. **Evaluate** how relevant you think it is.

> [Religion is] ... that which adjudicates the social and spiritual tension between those who are present and those who are absent.
>
> R.K. FENN, *THE PERSISTENCE OF PURGATORY*, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, 1995, P. 34.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1.2

1. **Identify** a religious tradition that emphasises transcendence. **Identify** a religious tradition that emphasises immanence. Design a two-column chart and note the similarities and differences between the two. **Discuss** if they should both be considered 'religions'.
2. Choose one particular religious tradition (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism or Islam). Construct a table that lists and **defines**, using examples, the characteristics of religion as they apply to that particular tradition. (Note: Do not choose Judaism as examples follow on the next page.)
3. Look at a television guide and **identify** how many shows on religion will be available in one week. **Distinguish** the variety of shows and religious traditions. Watch one and note interesting aspects of the program.

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An example of the characteristics of religion: Judaism

The Studies of Religion syllabus condenses Smart's seven characteristics into four sets of characteristics of religion:

1 beliefs and believers
2 sacred texts and writings
3 ethics
4 rituals and ceremonies.

These four headings combine several aspects to cover the main ideas developed by Smart. Here they are applied to one religious tradition, Judaism, as an example.

Beliefs and believers

There will be more on Judaism in later chapters in this book. It is important to remember this religious culture has helped keep the Jewish community unified for thousands of years. Believers who were spread out in countries from North Africa to Europe and the Middle East relied on their beliefs and practices to unify them. Their 'system of symbols' as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz described it – texts, synagogues, laws and ethics – kept the Jewish people united even when there was no Jewish state or homeland.

Ask the question: 'If Australians were suddenly thrown out of Australia and our nation had to disperse to many different countries, how easily would our symbols of Australianness would keep us together?' It would not be at all easy, but then Australia is simply a nation. It does not combine a nation and a religious system as Judaism has throughout its history. In the time of the dispersion (or **diaspora**) of the Jewish people, Jewish identity was maintained by Jewish beliefs, practices and community.

Adherents of Judaism believe in one God and the Covenant. The 'contract' (i.e. covenant) makes them the people of their God. It reflects the experiences of the Jewish people over the centuries to explain what has been the basis of their religion. Acceptance of one God (monotheism), the law prescribed and inspired by God, and the relationship expressed in the covenant with God, make up the key beliefs of Judaism.

Sacred texts and writings

The most important Jewish scripture is called the *Tenach* or Tanakh; it is also known as the Jewish Bible or Hebrew Bible. Because Christianity started as part of the Jewish religion, many parts of the Jewish Bible can be found in the first section of the Christian Bible. Christians call these texts the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. Many Jewish people find the former a pejorative term that assumes this scripture needs to be superseded by something 'new'. The Tanakh contains exciting stories and beautiful poetry, beginning with the creation of the world. It is also filled with books of law. Other stories tell of decisions made by the kings, heroes and heroines of Judaism. They show how God was either happy or not happy with what they did and said. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible are called the Torah and are believed to have been revealed to the prophet Moses on Mt Sinai. The Torah is also the source of Jewish law. The laws show Jewish people how they should live and behave.

A prophet is a person who is a messenger of God; that is, a person who has received inspiration or revelation from God that is to be communicated to either the Jewish people or to others. The Hebrew Bible is a collection of sacred scriptures, but it serves many purposes beyond recording the messages prophets have received from God. It inspires those who read it, and literature refers to it. It illustrates the nature of God, and records what God said through the prophets. When the Jewish people first had a temple (circa 1000–586 BCE), all their major rituals were held there, where, it was believed, God resided. After the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish people were forced to leave their homeland, the ritual of reading the Hebrew Bible became a significant symbol of Jewish identity.

Diaspora
The Jewish community outside Israel

Figure 1.3 A 13-year-old boy reads from the Torah scroll during his bar mitzvah. This ritual means he has gained the rights and obligations of an adult.

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Halacha
Legal code of Judaism based on the teachings of the Torah and interpretations and applications by Rabbinic authorities over the generations

Shari'a
Legal code of Islam based on the teaching of the Qur'an and other Islamic sources

Shabbat (or Sabbath)
Literally means 'cease'; important ritual observance for Jewish people beginning at sunset on Friday night and concluding at nightfall on Saturday; represents the day God rested after he created the world, as recorded in Genesis

Liturgy
A collection of rituals forming public worship

Textual
Relating to a text

Experiential
Relating to experience

When the temple was rebuilt (circa 516 BCE–70 CE), reading from the Torah and the prophets was maintained as part of temple ritual. Jewish worship today centres around the reading of the scriptures. The Hebrew Bible is read each year from cover to cover and Jewish people mark the passage of the year by reference to the place in the cycle of readings.

Ethics

The Book of Leviticus, which is the third of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, contains laws. These laws not only tell Jewish people how to behave ethically, but also how to live within their fundamental covenant relationship with God. There are laws about what to eat, how to plant crops, what to wear, how to bathe and so on. They provide a complete worldview, describing the Jewish social reality as a political and ethical entity.

Ethical commandments about how to behave include warnings on not being greedy or desiring what other people own. People should respect their parents and communities. Leviticus suggests that if each Jewish person follows these laws and ethical rules, they will be happy and prosperous, and ultimately God will be happy and grant good things to the Jewish people.

In Australia, laws are administered by the government and are applicable to all religious groups in our society. The government represents the worldview of a Western secular or non-religious democratic state with a strong, but not overwhelming, Christian heritage. In many religious systems, including Judaism, Islam and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' beliefs, the main law is a religiously sanctified law that is ordained by God. In some states in Australia, judges may allow traditional laws and punishments to work alongside government laws for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Jewish and Islamic people who live in countries such as Australia must live under local secular laws, although **Halacha** (Jewish law) or **Shari'a** (Islamic law) can still influence their lives in ethical ways and protect some dietary and funeral practices while not being in conflict with secular law.

Rituals and ceremonies

Alongside the religious book the Tanakh, Jewish rituals are inextricably linked to the togetherness of the Jewish community. One important ritual for Jewish people, regardless of their religious affiliation, is the weekly meal that marks the start of the rest day called **Shabbat**. Both a family meal and a religious event, the meal serves many functions. It is held on a Friday evening, marking the beginning of the Sabbath. It exemplifies that the most important Jewish rituals take place in the home. It places a focus on scripture, tradition and the joy of good food. It strengthens family ties by bringing all the family together to share their religion and each other's company.

Religions can be broken down into different components for discussion, such as **liturgy**, text, stories or myths, philosophy, ethics, laws, art and architecture. There are always two avenues to approaching a religion: the **textual** and the **experiential**. Anyone can read the Tanakh or other religious or academic texts. While people can read about the history of a religion, and even read its scriptures, it is also vitally important to see it in action.

Figure 1.4 Identify the items used in a Shabbat meal and discover their significance

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EXERCISE 1.3

1 **Recall** how Jewish people's identity has been maintained over the years.
2 **Explain** why the Hebrew Bible is important for Jewish people. **Assess** if it is more than just a 'sacred text'.
3 **Discuss** one important Jewish ritual and explain its significance to the Jewish community and adherents.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1.3

1 Look back at the table of the characteristics of religion you created in Extension Activity 1.2. Add examples for each characteristic from this section on Judaism. **Identify** the similarities and differences between the two religious traditions. You might also like to add examples from the additional religious traditions you will be studying in the Preliminary and HSC courses.
2 **Construct** a flow chart or mind map illustrating how the characteristics of religion interact to create a dynamic, living religion.
3 **Propose** and organise an excursion, either with fellow classmates or alone, to see a religious tradition in action.

1.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGION TO SOCIETY

Religion can make a profound contribution to how people understand themselves as human beings. It can also contribute to culture, the arts, to other people and views of the world generally. Religions discuss the basic questions of life and may address the issue of a supreme being, or an ultimate cause and reason for life. Religious beliefs can help answer some of the big questions of life, or questions of human existence, including 'Who am I?', 'Why do evil and suffering exist?' and 'Is there life after death?' Answers to these questions can offer comfort, a sense of belonging, meaning and community, and can contribute to the mental health of a society. Religion can be a conserving force, providing comfort in times of distress, a law code for society and the social norms for a culture. This is often termed 'social cohesion'.

Religion can also confront, challenge and stimulate change in a society, especially in the face of social or political injustice. Religions can also encourage extreme violence when their believers become convinced that their worldview is being challenged. The impact of religion on society can occur at an individual level, such as personal questioning of belief, or at a level of the whole community or society and culture, such as the abolition of slavery or the Civil Rights Movement. This can be called 'social transformation'.

INVESTIGATE

Do religious organisations tend towards political engagement or not? What do you think were Christian responses to Australia's engagement in war? (This was an issue that emerged in Australia during the twentieth century.)

Is there a supreme being?

Many thinkers have tried to argue that God or gods and spirits do exist. An eighteenth-century theologian named William Paley gave this argument: if you found a watch on the road, you would look at it and assume that someone must have made it. The world is far more complicated than a watch, so it must have been made by some kind of sentient being. Evolutionary theory, most clearly developed by Charles Darwin in his book of 1859, *On the Origin of Species*, argues that the world and all its complex life forms developed by natural processes. There are some religious people today who believe that Darwin's scientific theory is wrong. They are called Creationists because they believe that the Book of Genesis is literally true and the world was created by God in six days only a few thousand years ago. Many Christian people think that Genesis is a beautiful metaphor and that Darwin was right. This doesn't mean these people are not religious; many, for example, would consider themselves Christian or Jewish. They may see their God differently from the Creationists, and believe that the biblical stories were recorded for a different purpose than to provide an exact explanation for the world's origins.

DID YOU KNOW?

To counter scientific theories of evolution, a number of radical fundamentalist Christian groups in the United States have established 'Creationist Museums' to try to demonstrate that the world really was created by God in six days.

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Agnosticism
Doctrine that it is impossible to know whether God, gods or spirits exist

Atheism
Doctrine that there is no evidence for the existence of God; that gods and spirits do not exist; from the Greek '*a*' (against/no) and '*theos*' (god); an atheist is a person who holds that view

Cosmos
The universe viewed as an ordered system

Omnipotent
All powerful

Doctrine
A body of teachings that form the basis of a belief system

The existence of a supreme being is ultimately a matter of faith, intuition and emotion, and is something believers say they 'know' in their hearts. **Agnostics** have no firm belief either way. **Atheists** do not believe in gods or spirits.

In the principal religions of India, China, Japan and South-East Asia the **cosmos** is believed to have always existed. There are some stories about creator gods, but these gods created worlds out of things that already existed in different forms, and they are minor gods. Buddhists revere Buddha not as the creator of the universe but as a very wise teacher who became enlightened to an inner wisdom. Hindus worship their gods because they help create, destroy and re-create the universe, helping the souls of believers become better along the way.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Quakers (or Religious Society of Friends) were established in the 1640s as an ardently peace-loving religious group. Quakers worship by sitting quietly and they are very concerned about social justice issues. Refusing to go to war, many Quakers died on battlefields serving as ambulance drivers and medics caring for the wounded. Their concern about the horrors of the twentieth century led them to campaign to save Jewish German people from Nazi Germany. For their amazing efforts, two relief organisations represented by the religion were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.

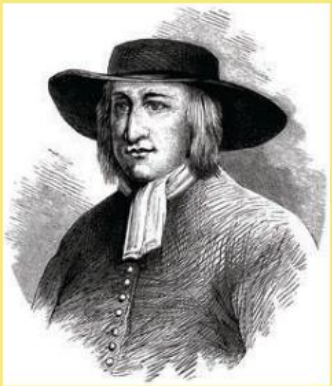

Figure 1.5 George Fox (1624–1691), founder of the Religious Society of Friends, better known as the Quakers or Friends

Why do evil, pain and suffering exist?

To this question, Buddhists reply, 'Because you desire to be in the world too much'. Buddhism is a system that helps people to see that their desires, emotions and reactions to things happening around them do not need to exist. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, pain and suffering are explained through humankind's free will. They could also be explained by the presence of the devil or Satan. Satan torments people in the hope that they will turn away from goodness. According to monotheists, Satan is a force who works against God; however, different monotheists take Satan more or less literally. This satanic argument for the existence of evil is problematic because God is supposed to be **omnipotent**, and should therefore have the power to destroy Satan. This is countered by the principle of free will, meaning that humans ultimately choose for themselves the directions of their own lives, and this can lead them to pain.

Is there life after death?

Just as some people are eager to prove the existence of God, so too they try to prove there is life after death. Most of the major religions seem to agree on this point. In Hinduism there is a **doctrine** of reincarnation: a soul exits the body after death and returns into a new body just before it is reborn. The good or bad that a person does in their life leads to an easier or more difficult new life. The Chinese believe that when a parent dies it is the duty of the son or daughter to venerate the ancestor by placing food and other offerings on the family altar. When Buddhism arrived in China, the doctrine of rebirth became very important. Rather than cancelling out ancestor worship, the doctrine of ancestor worship and reincarnation fused into a complicated idea of what happens to the soul after death.

Dynamic, living religions: change versus tradition

The characteristics of religion all contribute and interact to make a religious tradition relevant to the lives of adherents. This makes a religion a 'living religious tradition', a phrase often used in the Studies of Religion syllabus.

A living religious tradition can relate to the way a religion affects a person's life each day. This may refer to what they believe or how they act – their lifestyle and morality or the focus of their devotional life. It may refer to the occasions they celebrate – attending a church service or celebrating Christmas or Shabbat. It may relate to the way people or groups influence society, such as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. It may influence their life choices – becoming a monk or a nun or becoming vegetarian. It may influence society – lobbying or protesting legislation.

One of the tasks of the great world religions we will be examining is how they deal with death – both the individual's death and the deaths of those around them. Religious belief can offer a community great comfort in a cosmos that seems vast and uncaring. The comfort and security of a religion is nevertheless subject to time and change. Religion represents tradition and constancy, but if it is too constant, too rigid, it may become irrelevant to people. This is what makes the study of religion so exciting: examining how a religion

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can offer stability and certainty and how it reacts to the challenges of an ever-changing world.

The idea of a dynamic, living religion has been discussed and the importance for individuals mentioned. Society is also greatly influenced by religion as well. The ideas of social cohesion and social transformation have also been discussed. Religion is alive for individuals, and for society and culture, in the way it relates to day-to-day life.

INVESTIGATE

Can you think of a time when religion offered comfort and stability during a period of change or threat? Can you think of another example where religion sought to bring significant change and challenged society's views?

EXERCISE 1.4

1 Put forward one question that religions may seek to answer, and suggest an answer to the question.
2 **Recall**, based on your current knowledge, whether all religions believe in the concept of 'God'.
3 **Identify** the differences in how life after death is understood in several religions.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1.4

1 Choose one of the big questions of life such as, 'Why are we here?' **Investigate** the answer given by one of the religious traditions. **Assess** if the answer given by that religious tradition satisfies you. **Justify** why or why not.
2 John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, is considered a classic discussion of evil. **Investigate** perspectives of it on the internet and **discuss** whether it contributes to your understanding of good and evil.
3 **Construct** an outline for a talk on the following subject: 'Religion has made a great contribution to the lives of individuals as well as the community'. **Discuss** the points for and against.

1.4 AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL BELIEFS AND SPIRITUALITIES – THE DREAMING

The second part of the Nature of Religion section of the syllabus refers students to an Australian example of a belief system that encompasses many of the aspects of religion discussed. As an essentially animistic religion, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality reflects the essential characteristics of religions. However, their spiritualities are complex, comprising beliefs and practices that only those who are initiated into their complexities can fully understand. Nevertheless, the Dreaming is an appropriate subject to study to try to obtain a deeper understanding of the nature of religion.

When European settlement in Australia began, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were not even thought of as people. They were certainly not considered civilised. The early settlers saw no buildings, no written books, no organised religion they could recognise, no fences or cultivated crops, so they did not believe there was a culture to be acknowledged. They heard Dreaming stories but considered them little more than fables.

The nature of the Dreaming

The Aboriginal peoples' worldview is a distinctive religious system. Theirs is a religion very strongly linked to the land; the land remains alive with religious significance, and the form and shapes of the land demonstrate the truth of the myths told about it.

The Dreaming is a complex system of beliefs and practices. It explains the Australian landscape and empowers the people to live on the land. It promotes a distinctive worldview.

The Dreaming is not chronologically distinct from now; it is a different order of events from 'now'. The basic outline of all the Dreaming stories is that something exists - the land, a site, some rocks, a waterhole; a story is then invoked that explains how an ancestor transformed this land. In the time of the Dreaming, the environment was shaped and humanised by mythic beings (often called ancestor spirits), many of whom took animal or human form. These beings are eternal, although they may have travelled beyond the lands of the people who still sing about them. These stories are essential culturally because they explain why things are the way they are. They explain why the landscape looks as it does, why certain animals cannot be eaten and others can, how people should behave and what rituals should occur. Dreaming stories contain all the information needed to live in a place, prosper and understand the story of the land.

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Figure 1.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality reflects the essential characteristics of religions

Origins of the universe

Aboriginal peoples have stories about how certain parts of the land came to be the way they are. Many stories tell of ancestors who are lying in a state of sleep. The stories talk about them waking and doing things, but there is no general theory regarding where everything came from (including the 'universe' – a Western scientific and theological idea). The universe already existed in some form in most Dreaming stories. Aboriginal peoples do not have a universal story that explains the creation, or beginning, of everything.

In fact, this is the first interesting challenge: the issue of time. Scientists have discovered that Australian civilisation extends back 70 000 years or more, but Aboriginal peoples do not have a formal or written calendar. Yet they do follow events and changes; for example, the Arrernte people of central Australia could name 30 changes in the course of 24 hours, which included:

- the Milky Way stretching out across the centre of the sky
- bandicoots returning to their burrows
- variegated shadows
- the sky aflame with red and yellow.

Recognising these patterns throughout the day and across the year helps establish when rituals should take place. Each day repeats these patterns in differing forms, and they are not linear, nor cyclical, but more rhythmic or parallel. It is for this reason that speaking of a Dreamtime is incorrect, and reference to a Dreaming is more appropriate. The Dreaming is not a concept of time, but a class of events.

INVESTIGATE

Access the Aboriginal Australia Art and Culture Centre website and follow the links for the Dreaming. Note that, when reading or hearing Dreaming stories, there are several layers of meaning in each story. Often there is the creation of a physical feature, but there are also moral, tribal and cultural aspects. There are also deeper meanings that are only accessible to Aboriginal peoples or initiated members or elders.

Sacred sites

The term 'the Dreaming' is variously translated into Aboriginal languages and is used to refer to two things: events that are embodied in the stories told about various parts of the landscape, and actual features of that landscape. For example, during one ceremony, elders were singing a great creator-snake through the landscape; night fell and the elders stopped. An observer, the academic Tony Swain, asked what happened to the snake. The reply was simply, 'We leave him there until tomorrow when we sing him on again'.

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The cosmology of Aboriginal peoples' religion does not appear as some great theory, but rather as a code of rules, assumptions and manners that are illustrated throughout a series of stories relating to a particular cultural group.

Sacred sites are places where significant events occurred or where the ancestor spirits reside. There are often particular rituals that need to be performed in association with the sacred site or treated with particular respect. Correct relationships with sacred sites suggest responsibility to care for the site, engage the power of the site and protect the site from inappropriate use and contact.

The story told by Aunty Beryl Carmichael in the Case Study shows that the Darling River, as a sacred site, comes with its own sacred story.

Stories of the Dreaming

At the start of the Darling River creation story, something exists – the landscape and the ancestor spirits are already there. Next, something becomes active – an inactive ancestor comes to life, and then brings others into the story. Finally, because of that awakening and movement, a new awareness is brought to the people in the ritual so they can understand the land and their relation to it.

The main plot of the story is about the creation of the land, in particular, the creation of the Darling River in western New South Wales. The creation involved several ancestor spirits. Guthi-guthi is the creator-spirit who releases Weowie, the water serpent, who first creates the water features of the landscape. Old Pundu the Cod and Mudlark are also involved in this creative process, making the Darling River.

The story also tells of the creation of the two groups, Eaglehawk and Crow, which include the Ngiyaampaa and Barkandji people. From this story, an ongoing link between these two groups can be drawn and there are implications regarding their relationships. There is an underlying layer of meaning in this story that relates to the relationships between these groups and also to their **totems**. So there are other dimensions – practical and ethical ones – to the story; for example, do not eat certain species of fish or do not marry people who are taboo or forbidden. This story has implications relating to the use of the river and, in particular, to the fish that can be eaten.

Totem
Object, such as an animal, plant or particular landmark, through which the Aboriginal peoples are linked to the ancestral being responsible for their existence

Other stories leave hints regarding such things as where food is to be found and how it is to be prepared, what areas are forbidden to men or to women, and other aspects of life, including practical aspects of daily life as well as ethical, moral and tribal issues. As well as telling of creation and the development of groups, these Dreaming stories function as the law, an ethical reinforcement system, and the rituals themselves are a way of marking the rhythmic progression of events, including the growth of each generation of children into adulthood.

In this way, the Dreaming creates a reality that ensures people can inhabit the land and be at one with the ancestors. Acknowledging these rights and responsibilities ensures that all will be well and that people can rely on the Darling River to provide for their needs.

THE CREATION OF THE DARLING RIVER – A DREAMING STORY AS TOLD BY AUNTY BERYL CARMICHAEL

This is the creation story of Ngiyaampaa country, as well as the land belonging to Eaglehawk and Crow.

Long, long time ago, in the beginning, when there was no people, no trees, no plants whatever on this land, Guthi-guthi, the spirit of our ancestral being, he lived up in the sky. So he came down and he wanted to create the special land for people and animals and birds to live in.

So Guthi-guthi came down and he went on creating the land for the people. After he'd set the borders in place and the sacred sites, the birthing places of all the Dreamings, where all our Dreamings were to come out of, Guthi-guthi put one foot on Gunderbooka Mountain and another one at Mount Grenfell.

And he looked out over the land and he could see that the land was bare. There was no water in sight, there was nothing growing. So Guthi-guthi knew that trapped in a mountain – Mount Minara – the water serpent, Weowie, he was trapped in the mountain. So Guthi-guthi called out to him, 'Weowie, Weowie', but because Weowie was trapped right in the middle of the mountain, he couldn't hear him.

Guthi-guthi went back up into the sky and he called out once more, 'Weowie', but once again Weowie didn't respond. So Guthi-guthi came down with a roar like thunder and banged on the mountain and the mountain split open. Weowie the water serpent came out. And where the water serpent travelled he made waterholes and streams and depressions in the land.

So once all that was finished, of course, Weowie went back into the mountain to live and that's where Weowie lives now, in Mount Minara. But then after that, they wanted another lot of water to come down from the north, throughout our country. Old Pundu the Cod, it was his duty to drag and create the river known as the Darling River today. So Cod came out with Mudlark, his little mate, and they set off from the north and they created the big river. Flows right down, water flows right throughout our country, right into the sea now.

And of course, this country was also created; the first two tribes put in our country were Eaglehawk and Crow. And from these two tribes came many tribal people, many tribes, and we call them sub-groups today. So my people, the Ngiyaampaa people, and the Barkandji further down are all sub-groups of Eaglehawk and Crow.

So what I'm telling you – the stories that were handed down to me all come from within this country.

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The story of the creation of the Darling River is also brought to life through ritual. At the site of the river, in particular, this story becomes the centre of the action. The story of creation may be sung right through. While it is being sung, the actions of the singers or dancers may have particular significance. Through this **symbology** they re-enact the story. They follow the action of the story as it moves around the site. Woven into it is a whole range of laws and ideas. To remember the story is to remember how to live life as tradition has decreed.

Symbology
The study of symbols

It is important to remember that the Dreaming stories have several layers of meaning. The first layer may simply be the story of the creation of a particular aspect of geography, a place or an animal. But there is a deeper layer that refers to some aspect of life in the group – a way to behave, an ethical guidance. And there are even deeper layers of meaning that can only be accessed by the members of the group, or those initiated, or the elders. Similarly a work of art can have different meanings to whoever is viewing it.

Symbolism and art

The art of storytelling in Ngiyaampaa country is backed up by other arts. Body painting reflects the symbols of ancestors. Similarly, the story of creation can be drawn on the sand or painted on various surfaces. As if looking down from above the site, the ancestors and other elements can be brought alive in a map. Often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' art is just that, a map that indicates features of the country or where to find food, or how to behave on that piece of country. These maps, when done in colours on canvas or bark or in a particular style, can sometimes be sold to art collectors for large sums of money.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' art reflects aspects of life in the Australian landscape. A piece of art can be a map or tell a story. It can be a guide to finding water or food. It can tell of a journey or some women's business. Simply seeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' art as paintings is much too simplistic.

The diversity of the Dreaming

The Darling River creation story would make little sense if it were told at some other site, because at the Darling River are the river, the rocks, the waterholes and the trees that make the story real. We can also say that the site does not make sense without the story. So the story becomes a passport to this part of the land. The whole of Australia is divided into particular 'countries' for cultural groups. Each group has its own domain or 'country'. To pass through someone's country, you should know the Dreaming story attached to it.

Dreaming stories from the desert centre of Australia are going to be different from those of the north Queensland rainforest or the peaks of the Australian Alps. The Dreaming reflects the diversity of the landscape, yet there are significant common elements that enable the Dreaming to be discussed or studied as a whole, provided you are aware of the fact there is significant diversity as well.

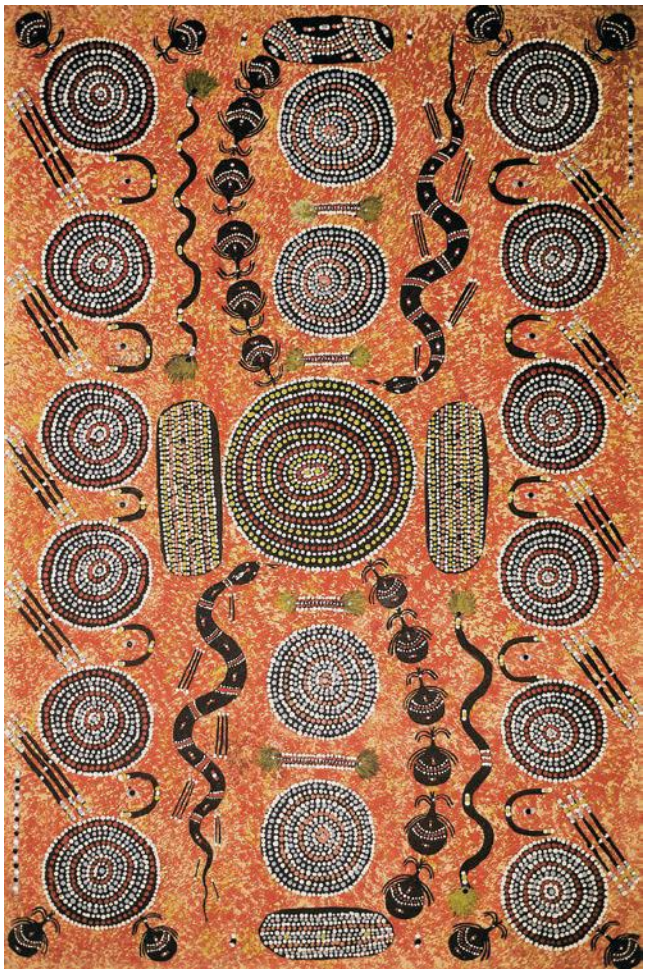

Figure 1.7 Aboriginal paintings often depict culturally significant symbols and stories

FURTHERMORE

The strength of the links to subsections of the cultural groups is played out in the documentary that relates to Rolf de Heer's film *Ten Canoes* (2006). *Making of the Ten Canoes* shows how the director became increasingly frustrated because only people in certain groups could play the roles of particular ancestors. The documentary shows how complex this classification of members can be.

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DID YOU KNOW?

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) made a long and detailed study of the belief systems of Aboriginal peoples. His book *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* was very influential. Durkheim examined the totems Aboriginal peoples use to identify themselves. These totems are sacred. For example, a group that identifies as kangaroo people does not eat kangaroos and holds the kangaroo as their sacred symbol or totem. Durkheim (himself an atheist) believed that these totems were sacred because they represented the unity of the group. Look around and you will notice that most groups, even corporations, depend on totemic symbols, logos and coats of arms to represent them. Sometimes these totemic symbols are held sacred, such as a national flag.

EXERCISE 1.5

1 **Explain** what the Dreaming is. Is it more than 'Dreamtime'?
2 **Identify** some of the features of Dreaming stories, using examples from some stories you have read or heard.
3 **Define** what 'layers of meaning' means in relation to a Dreaming story. Illustrate using another story as an example.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1.5

1 **Investigate** another Dreaming story and present the story to the class, drawing out the layers of meaning.
2 **Investigate** another Dreaming story, perhaps from your area, and **discuss** whether it could be difficult for Westerners to understand the concepts contained in the Dreaming stories.
3 Construct a table with these four headings: Origins of the universe, Sacred sites, Stories of the Dreaming, and Symbolism and art. Outline how the Dreaming relates to each.

Importance of the Dreaming

The mind map shown in Figure 1.8 illustrates how Dreaming stories present an entire worldview for Aboriginal peoples from ethics, to ways of hunting for food, the creation of art, how to make things, and how to perform magic such as love magic. The Dreaming affects the whole of life for Aboriginal peoples.

The Dreaming is intimately related to the land and prescribes rituals and responsibilities in caring for the land. It governs areas of life such as kinship, ceremonies, rituals, totems and death itself. The Dreaming determines cultural responsibilities and how to deal with conflict, such as tribal warfare, and cooperation between tribal groups. The Dreaming is Aboriginal peoples' life.

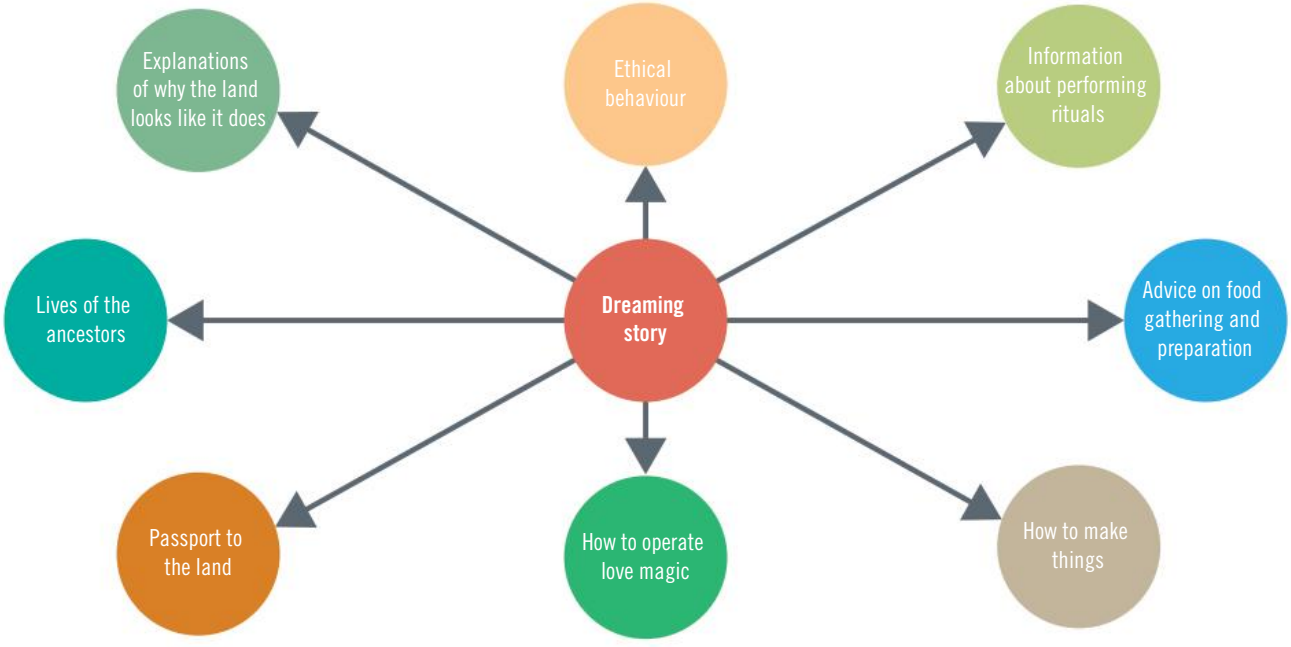

Figure 1.8 Dreaming stories present an entire worldview for Aboriginal peoples

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The inextricable connection of the Dreaming, the land and identity

There are other connections between people and land. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples speak of the land they are responsible to maintain as their 'country'. They have obligations to country, and to their group as well as ensuring the land provides for others. The group that inhabit a particular area are responsible for a particular animal which is their totem. Thus, the kangaroo people, those from a group that hold the kangaroo as its central symbol, are responsible for ceremonies that symbolically increased and decreased the population of kangaroos as they are needed for eating. But the kangaroo people never eat their totem. They eat other foods that are the totems of other groups. This helped the development of a system of group interdependence, and there seems to be very little evidence of large-scale inter-group warfare, as each group's food supply is dependent on the totems of other groups, who control the supply of that food source through their rituals.

Another way we can understand the connection to country is by looking at connections between the land and people. Aboriginal peoples often say that they are born from the land, and not at particular sites. The land is so important that separation from the land has a significantly detrimental effect on the people.

Increase rituals or singing ancestors through the landscape are traditions that hold society together. It is, we might argue, the way societies bring into being a map for understanding and making their own views of reality work.

For Aboriginal peoples there is clearly a connection between the Dreaming, the land and identity that is impossible to separate. Through their ancestor spirits, Aboriginal peoples are made part of country. The land is part of who they are. They lose their sense of meaning when their relationship with their traditional land is broken – their spirituality and identity are compromised. The land is their ancestor – as long as the land lives so do the ancestors and so do the people themselves, the Dreaming and their identity. This link to the land, identity and the Dreaming cannot be broken – it is inextricable.

INVESTIGATE

This is a picture of a famous Australian named Cathy Freeman holding the Aboriginal flag. Look at the colours of the flag. What do they symbolise? One explanation is that the black represents the Aboriginal peoples, the yellow circle represents the sun and the red represents the earth. If this is accurate, how does this relate to the Dreaming and the land? Research on the internet what the meanings of the colours are and see if the explanation given above is correct.

Figure 1.9 Cathy Freeman carries the Aboriginal flag and the Australian flag following her victory in the 400-metre run at the 2000 Olympic Games

EXERCISE 1.6

1 **Investigate** whether the Dreaming is the same across Australia. **Compare** the differences and **analyse** why these differences might exist.
2 **Describe** what the Dreaming teaches.
3 **Explain** the concept of the land and the relationship between the land and Aboriginal peoples.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1.6

1 **Discuss** the following topic: 'There is not one Dreaming, there are many'.
2 **Investigate** some Aboriginal peoples' art and write a report on a particular work that you think demonstrates the Dreaming.
3 Construct a table and list three headings: the Dreaming, the land, and the Aboriginal peoples' identity. Write comments under each heading, and highlight any that suggest a connection between these three aspects of life.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Religion can be defined in various ways.
- Religion is a way of seeing the world, a worldview.
- Religion contains a transcendent dimension and an immanent dimension.
- There are several characteristics of religion that help us understand religion.
- These characteristics include beliefs, experiences, sacred stories, ethics, and social and material dimensions.
- These characteristics can be identified when applied to a religious tradition.
- Religions contribute to the lives of individuals and society by addressing the important questions of life and influencing society.
- The Dreaming is the central concept in Aboriginal peoples' spiritualities.
- The Dreaming is commonly expressed through stories.
- Aspects of the Dreaming include the origins of a particular region/country, sacred sites, stories, and symbolism and art.
- The concept of the Dreaming is common, but the stories and characters are diverse across Australia.
- The Dreaming presents an entire worldview for Aboriginal peoples. There is an inextricable connection between the Dreaming, land and identity.

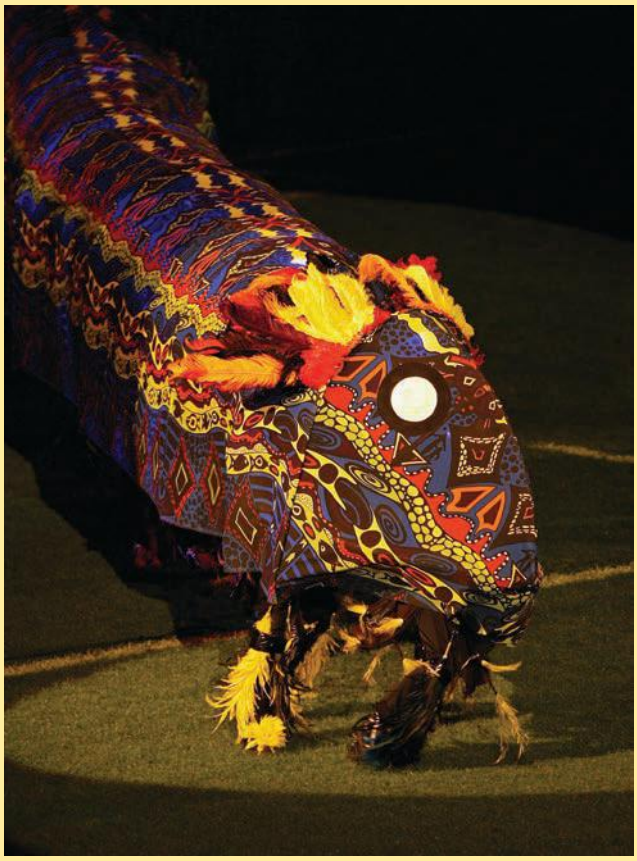

Figure 1.10 The Rainbow Serpent is an important Dreaming story. This performance of the Rainbow Serpent was prior to the start of the Australia and New Zealand Rugby League World Cup in Sydney in 2008.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 Why is religion important to understand?
- **(A)** It helps people understand multicultural Australia.
- **(B)** It helps understand people and their attitudes.
- **(C)** It affects culture, politics and history.
- **(D)** For all of the reasons of the above.

2 Members of which religion were involved in forming the current legal definition of religion in Australia?
- **(A)** Catholicism
- **(B)** Scientology
- **(C)** Hare Krishnas
- **(D)** Islam

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3 What is the significance of sacred texts and writings?
   (A) They demonstrate the buildings that adherents use.
   (B) They are rituals that adherents follow.
   (C) They were first used by the Romans.
   (D) They are source of the stories and beliefs of the religion.

4 Which of the following are characteristics of religion?
   (A) Earth, wind, fire and water
   (B) Beliefs, sacred texts, ethics, rituals and ceremonies
   (C) Song, dance, music and spoken word
   (D) None of the above

5 Which of the following might be considered the basic questions of life?
   (A) Is there a supreme being? or Who am I?
   (B) What time should people worship God?
   (C) Should I marry and have children?
   (D) Should I teach others what I have learnt?

6 What is the Dreaming?
   (A) The role of members of the tribal unit
   (B) The totem
   (C) The food gathering process
   (D) The central concept of Aboriginal peoples' spirituality

7 What does every Dreaming story contain?
   (A) Different layers of meaning
   (B) Instructions on where to find food
   (C) Maps of the tribal territory
   (D) Instructions on how to interact with the wider Australian community

8 What are sacred sites?
   (A) People who meet together each week
   (B) A series of stories
   (C) Places where ancestor spirits impacted on the landscape
   (D) Holiday places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

9 What is the Dreaming?
   (A) The same all over Australia, a common expression
   (B) More important in the city than the country
   (C) Available to all Australians
   (D) Diverse, relevant to a particular 'country' or domain

10 How are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' attitudes to the land different from those of the wider Australian community?
   (A) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not care about the land.
   (B) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are responsible for the care and stewardship of the land they inhabit.
   (C) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples sold portions of the land to the wider Australian community for large profits.
   (D) The wider Australian community only wants the land for garbage dumps.

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Compare** the ways a religion can be studied: by someone who believes and so knows the religion from the inside, or by someone who can look in from outside.

2 **Explain** the difference between the concepts of transcendence and immanence and how they are evident in different religious traditions.

3 **Describe** some possible problems with Ninian Smart's seven characteristics of religion, using examples from a religious tradition you know.

4 **Describe** one story from the Dreaming and explain how it relates to the origins of the world and to one other aspect of life including how it shows layers of meaning.

5 **Assess** if the Dreaming dictates how the individual, the family and the community should act.

6 **Discuss** the inextricable connection with the land and Aboriginal peoples.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 Propose your own ideal religion and **describe** what elements from Ninian Smart's list you think would be the most important. How would they be evident in your religion?

2 **Describe** the main features of the Dreaming stories that show how important these stories are for Aboriginal peoples.

3 The concept of the Dreaming is common, and the stories and characters are diverse across Australia. **Assess** why the Dreaming is included in Studies of Religion.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

In Douglas Adams' famous book series, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* white mice try to discover the meaning of life. They build a huge computer and it comes up with the answer '42'. They find this answer unsatisfying. So they build a larger more organic computer – the planet Earth – in order to calculate what the question is, that is answered by '42' (though after 8 million years of processing, the Earth is destroyed five minutes before an answer has been given!). What are some of the answers that satisfy you about why you are here in the world and why the universe exists? Would you describe all of these answers as religious? What are some of the answers to life that you find disappointing? What questions do you find unanswered? Does religion help you to understand the questions of life?

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TWO

RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA PRE-1945

[YEAR 11 – 2 UNIT (16 HOURS)]

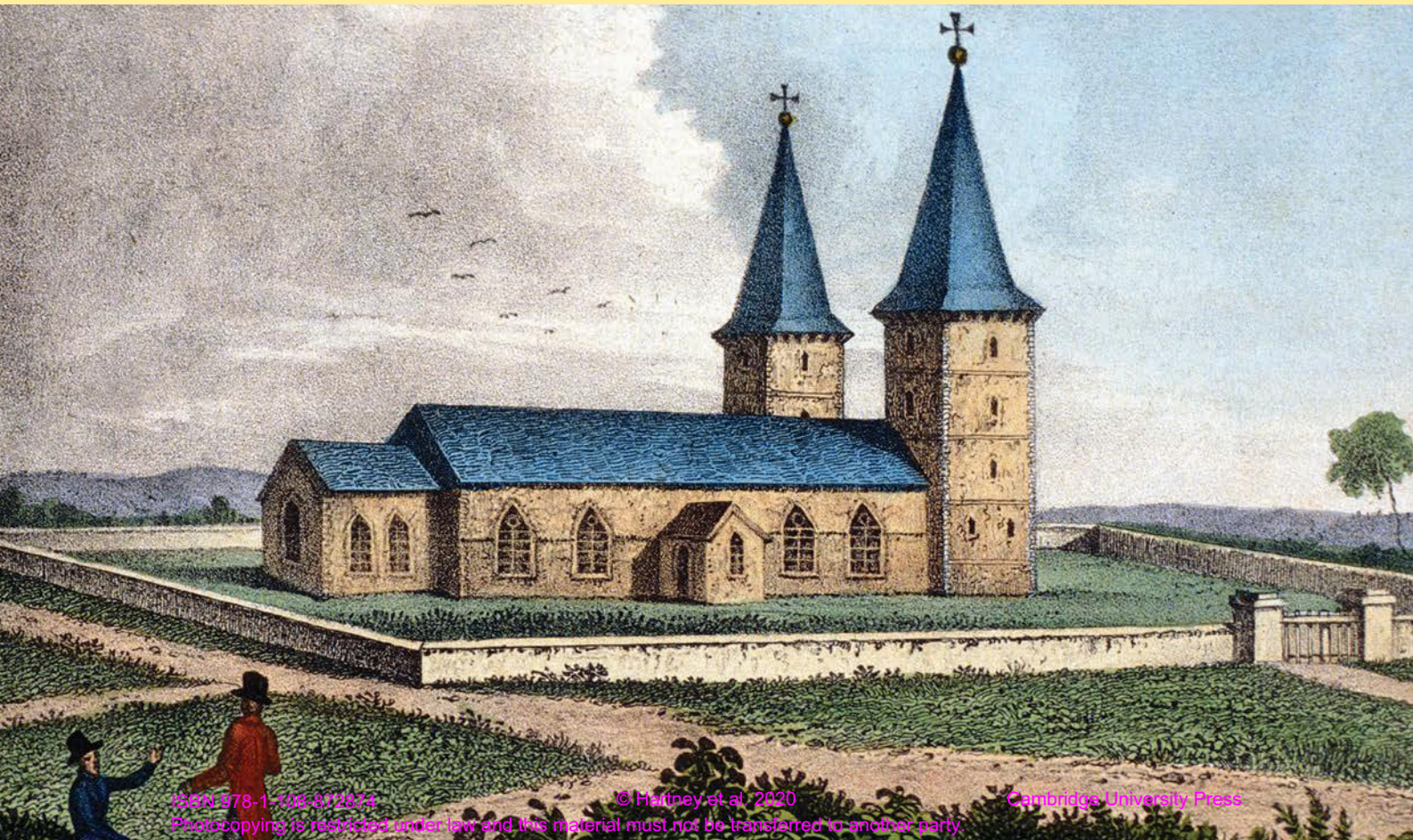
On the outer Barcoo where the churches are few,
And men of religion are scanty,
On a road never cross'd 'cept by folk that are lost,
One Michael Magee had a shanty …

AB (BANJO) PATTERSON, 'THE BUSH CHRISTENING' (1864–1941)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss:

- the arrival and establishment of Christianity, including significant people and events
- issues relating to the development of Christianity in Australia pre-1945:
  - the arrival of other religious traditions
  - sectarianism: Catholic/Protestant antagonism
  - social welfare: attempts by organisations and churches to relieve needs
- the contribution of one religious tradition, Christianity, to each of the following:
  - rural and outback communities
  - the Presbyterian Church and the Australian Inland Mission and brief comments on the Coolgardie Mosque
  - education: the Catholic Church and the Sisters of St Joseph
  - public morality: alcohol and 'wowserism'.



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2.1 ARRIVAL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

The arrival of Christianity in Australia is linked to the colonisation of Australia by the British. As the dominant religious tradition in Britain and Ireland, Christianity was exported to Australia and became the dominant religion in the new colony.

Penal
Relating to punishment

Catholic
Christian denomination of the Roman Catholic Church

Church of England
The official established church in England

Presbyterian
State Church of Scotland and others that follow a Presbyterian form of church government, governed by elders (or presbyters)

Protestant
Churches that split from the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century in protest at the Church's teachings

Baptist
A denomination of Christianity that rejects infant baptism, believing that followers should choose to be Christian of their own accord

Non-conformists
Those who do not conform to the state religion; in the case of England, the Church of England is the state religion

The early European settlers in Australia failed, for a variety of reasons, to recognise the spirituality of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who lived here. Australia had been claimed for Great Britain by Captain James Cook in 1770 when he sailed the east coast of Australia. It had been long believed there would be a substantial continent in the southern hemisphere, called *Terra Australis Incognita* (unknown land of the south). With the increasing problems in Great Britain resulting from the impact of the Industrial Revolution and issues of overcrowded prisons, Australian was seen as a place to 'dump' convicts.

Modern Australia began in 1788 with the establishment of a **penal** colony in New South Wales. The early Sydney colony was part of a broad strategy by European nations, particularly France and Britain, to export criminals and political dissenters. For example, the state of Georgia in the United States was also developed as a penal colony of Britain. New South Wales expanded through the settlement of people the British Government did not want to remain in Britain. By 1810, 12000 convicts had been sent to Australia from England and Ireland. This was less than 10 per cent of those who would come to Australia as transportation continued.

Australia was established as an outpost of the British Empire with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. Just over 700 convicts and 200 marines arrived on the First Fleet. The ships that sailed into Port Jackson to establish the new colony included a variety of religious expressions. There were between 6 and 13 Jewish people on board, and although the other people were predominantly Christians, a range of differences divided them. About one third were **Catholic**, mainly from Ireland. Many of the others, while associated with the **Church of England**, had little interest in religion.

There was one Church of England minister aboard, Reverend Richard Johnson (1753–1827). The Church of England had broken away from the Catholic Church during the reign of King Henry VIII (1509–47) and had become the state religion known as the Church of England. Richard Johnson was responsible for religious practices in the new colony. He worked with convicts, guards and sailors and developed a good relationship with the Aboriginal peoples.

Although the Church of England was the government-approved (or established) religion in England, Wales and Ireland, the **Presbyterian** Church was established in Scotland. Throughout the British Isles there were unofficial **Protestant** movements including Methodists, Quakers, **Baptists**, Unitarians and Congregationalists. These groups were known as **non-conformists** because they did not conform to the Church of England. There were few of these non-conformists among the convicts.

In addition to the Protestant Christian and Jewish groups, about a third of the convicts were Catholic, many from Ireland, and there were serious tensions, both religious and political, between these groups. There were problems evolving out of non-conformist Christians being compelled to attend Church of England services, but

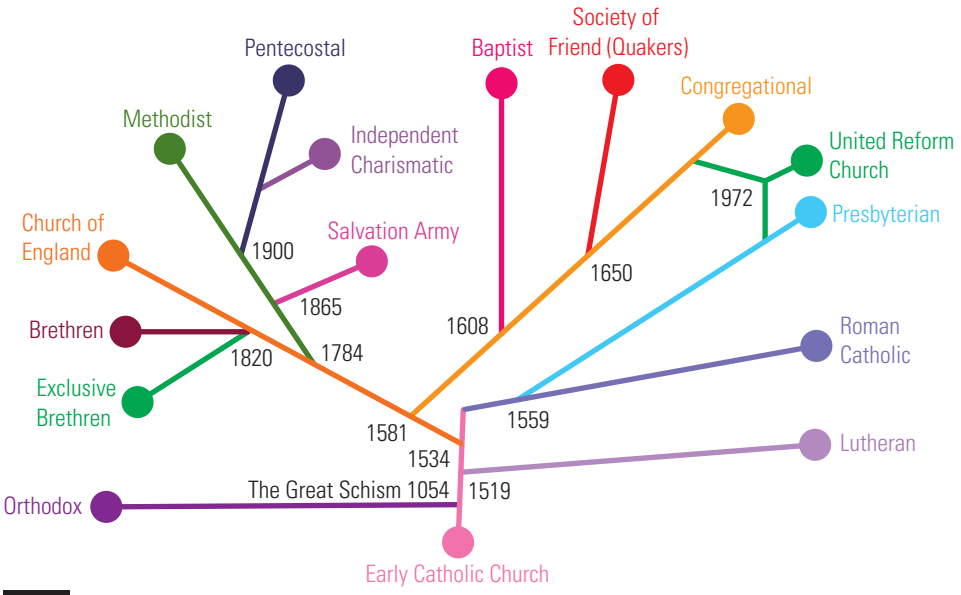

Figure 2.1 This tree shows the dates and breakaway points of Christian denominations (the date at each branch). The groups that broke away from Catholicism and the Church of England before 1788 came to be represented in the new colony of New South Wales.

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real hatred existed at this time between Protestants and Catholics. This was not only due to religious differences, but also because England had invaded and ruled Ireland since the sixteenth century. In fact, Catholicism was only made legal in Britain in 1829 with the *Catholic Emancipation Act*. Until then Catholics in England were required to pay additional taxes and were excluded from official participation in the state. This included being barred from attending university, as oaths of allegiance to the Established Church (the Church of England) were often imposed. The English Government was also worried that the Irish would be inspired by the French Revolution to revolt, which they did in Ireland in 1798.

For the first years of colonisation, the Church of England was the dominant denomination, and it was closely linked with the British Government. For this reason there was a lot of antagonism to the Church in Australia. The convicts, many of whom had little interest in religion, thought the chaplains forced Anglicanism on them on Sundays. These same chaplains then served as magistrates during the week. Catholic and Jewish convicts were given no opportunity to express their faiths. Non-conformists were ignored.

Indeed, Richard Johnson returned to England after 12 heartbreaking years of conflict and confrontation with the various governors of the colony, as well as with the convicts. During his years in Sydney, he had built a church that was later burned down by convicts, and he also developed one of the first successful farms. He returned to England in 1800, experiencing ill-health, and was described by his successor, the Reverend Samuel Marsden, as 'exhausted with toil, vexations and privations' (from a letter by Marsden to the Bishop of London).

Life was difficult in the early years of the colony. There were continual food shortages as the early settlers tried to adapt to the Australian conditions. The penal conditions were also harsh and there was little respect for authority. Similarly, those in authority considered the convicts the worst of humanity, described as 'filth of moral corruption' by Governor Bligh. Alcohol abuse was rife, especially because, for a time, rum was the currency of the colony. It led to an egalitarian lifestyle, a sense of mateship and larrikinism and an imbedded secularism in the developing Australia. When convicts finished serving their sentences they were generally released into the colony as emancipated citizens, the pioneers of the new nation, eventually joined by free settlers.

INVESTIGATE

Research and discover what links there might be between the French Revolution and the colonisation of Australia and, in particular, the opposition to British rule by the Irish.

Figure 2.2 A depiction of Irish rebel leader Father Clinch being shot at the Battle of Vinegar Hill, Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland, in 1798. The political unrest in Ireland transferred to the colony of Sydney where a number of Irish convicts were political prisoners.

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Riots in Castle Hill

Beneath the quiet streets of Castle Hill, a suburb in Sydney's north-west, lies buried the outcome of a brutal encounter between Irish Catholics and British soldiers that took place in the new colony. William Johnston, an Irishman who had been deported for his part in the 1798 uprising in Ireland, gathered support for an attack on the colony's administrators in 1804. Using the catch-cry of 'liberty', Johnston and more than 300 disaffected Irish Catholics began marching on Parramatta. One of the convicts involved in the movement became scared and betrayed the group to the governor. The leaders of this rebellion were caught and executed. Other members of the rebellion were punished by enforced resettlement in Newcastle. They were obliged to attend Church of England religious services.

The Catholics obtain priests

The first Australian Catholic Mass was celebrated in the new colony in 1803, carried out by Father John Dixon, a convict. Following the Castle Hill riots, which Dixon was alleged to have been part of though in fact he had tried to dissuade the rioters, he was banned by the governor from further priestly duties. It was not until 1820, at the end of the relatively enlightened governorship of Lachlan Macquarie (1810–21), that Catholics were able to attend Mass conducted by a priest. It was also during this time that building started on churches such as St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. These buildings began, initially, with land grants by the governor.

DID YOU KNOW?

Napoleon Bonaparte, who crowned himself Emperor of France after the French Revolution, planned an expedition to Australia that would have seen much of today's South Australia claimed for France and called Napoleon's Land. This never happened, yet the French still presented an ongoing threat to the new colony. The Sydney suburb of La Perouse is named after a French explorer who arrived in Botany Bay in 1788.

Together with nationalistic tensions, religion became a way of relegating Irish Catholics to a marginal existence. Tensions between Irish Catholics and British Protestants continued to divide Australian society for the next 150 years. This is known as sectarianism and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Father Joseph Therry (1790–1864) was a much-loved Catholic priest. He petitioned the colony's government for support for Catholic schools and other institutions. Although he was removed in 1824, by 1836 a series of Church Acts distributed funds to the four main denominations in Australia: the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and the Church of England. The Church Acts were important pieces of legislation that sought to assist genuine religious efforts in the colony. This government money was used to build churches and schools and pay priests and ministers. It had the effect of ensuring that the Church of England was not the state, or established, church in Australia.

Notable protestant ministers

Samuel Marsden

Richard Johnson was replaced as Church of England minister to the colony in 1810 by his assistant Samuel Marsden (1764–1838). Marsden was based in Parramatta where he owned a large amount of land. He detested Catholics and was known as the 'flogging parson' because, as well as being a religious leader, he was also a magistrate who subjected convicts to harsh punishments (one convict said of Samuel Marsden, 'He prays for our souls on Sunday, and takes it out of bodies during the rest of the week'). Samuel Marsden disliked Catholics and believed that Aboriginal peoples were not human enough to understand Christianity, and this idea was held by many colonists for some time. He thought Catholics barely worthy of the title 'human'. He stated:

> [Catholic convicts were] the most wild, ignorant and savage race that were ever favoured with the light of civilization; men that have been familiar with every horrid crime from their infancy. Their minds being destitute of every principle of Religion and Morality renders them capable of perpetrating the most nefarious Acts in cold blood. They are extremely superstitious, artful and treacherous which renders it impossible for the watchful and active government to discover their real intensions.
>
> QUOTED IN R. HUGHES, *THE FATAL SHORE*, COLLINS, LONDON, 1987, P. 30.

Marsden believed that Catholics were not fit to be a part of the colony and needed to be suppressed at all times or else they would rise up and kill the British. Catholics were often referred to as Papists and treated as agents of the Pope – a power foreign to Britain. Therefore Catholics were viewed as potential traitors to the colony and Britain merely because of their religious affiliation.

Rev. Marsden was eager to encourage free Protestant settlers to come to Sydney. Governor Macquarie challenged these ideas. Macquarie promoted ex-convicts to government service and legitimised Catholicism, but Marsden and others were shocked

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by this, and Marsden was key to the eventual dismissal of Macquarie from the role of governor.

Marsden subsequently went to New Zealand where, ironically, he is remembered with great affection, while often being a despised figure in Australian history.

John Dunmore Lang

John Dunmore Lang (1799–1878), a Presbyterian religious leader, had a great influence on both the religious and political life of the colony. He was the first Presbyterian minister in Sydney and from the early 1820s he set about establishing schools and colleges for local families. On his trips back to Britain, he encouraged free settlers to come to the colony and even obtained funding from the British Government to make this possible. Lang moved into politics and worked in the newly established New South Wales Parliament, and was at times a heavy critic of the governor. He was an early promoter of an Australian republic and did much to nurture the development of the colony throughout his long life. Lang supported free immigrants to Australia and worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Women in early Australia

The contribution of women, whose labours supported the colony and helped its religious institutions grow, was of vital importance. It was not until much later that the role of many outstanding women was discussed by writers of colonial history.

Figure 2.3 A depiction of Caroline Chisholm who was a driving force in gender equality in the mid- to late 1800s in Australia. She was called 'The Emigrant's Friend'. She is shown here meeting newly arrived emigrants on the wharves at Sydney, circa 1845.

Caroline Chisholm

Caroline Chisholm (1808–77) was a force for change within Australia. Growing up as an **adherent** of the Church of England, she was devoted to social welfare issues. She married a Catholic and converted to that denomination. She championed the movement of free settlers into Australia as a small farming class during the 1840s. She was an advocate for voting rights for all members of society at a time when voting was restricted to men who owned property. She is most remembered for her devotion to the assisted immigration of women to encourage the growth of the penal colony into a legitimate society. Chisholm encouraged women to migrate to provide wives for the male-dominated early colony. She saw female immigrants as 'God's police' who would bring new stability and order to Australia. Caroline Chisholm believed that women and families would soften the wild character of the new colony.

Adherent
Person who supports, identifies with or gives allegiance to a religious tradition

INVESTIGATE

Investigate the life of Johnson, Marsden, Lang or another early Australian religious leader. How did they contribute to the establishment of Christianity in Australia? Consult the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vols 1 and 2.

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Mary MacKillop

Mary MacKillop (1842–1909) was born in Fitzroy, Victoria. Together with Father Julian Tenison Woods, she founded an Australian teaching order in 1866, the Sisters of St Joseph. They founded this order to help establish Catholic teaching facilities throughout South Australia. By the time of MacKillop's death, nearly 1000 women had become Sisters of St Joseph in different places throughout Australia. Her influence on education is particularly notable, and will be discussed later.

Mary MacKillop's relationship with her male superiors in the Catholic Church was not easy at times and at one point she was excommunicated from the Church. She has become more famous because of the procedure completed in the Vatican to make her Australia's first saint. She will be remembered as one of many outstanding religious leaders who worked to establish Christianity in Australia and who strove to supply social and educational resources for members of their churches, and society more generally, at a time when Australia desperately needed such services.

Figure 2.4 Sister Anne Derwin of the Josephite Order speaks during the unveiling of Australia's first pure gold and silver coins commemorating the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in Sydney on 30 September 2010.

EXERCISE 2.1

1 **Describe** the arrival of Christianity in Australia.
2 **Recall** some of the reasons why there was difficulty establishing Christianity in Australia.
3 **Identify** one significant person in early Australian Christianity and **explain** their contribution.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2.1

1 **Construct** a table illustrating current attitudes to religion in Australia and how they may be related to the early days of settlement.
2 **Describe** how divisions were reflected in the Christian Church in the new Australian colony.
3 Prepare a brief oral presentation about Mary MacKillop, her significance to Australia and the reasons why she has been made a saint.

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2.2 ARRIVAL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

As well as Christianity, other major religious traditions were evident before 1945. Some, such as Judaism, came on the First Fleet. Others arrived soon after, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritualities were, of course, present before European colonisation. When looking at non-Christian religious traditions in Australia before 1945, we can consider two periods: before and after the Federation of Australia in 1901. This was a significant event. Before 1901 there were few restrictions on other religious traditions, but after 1901 things changed.

INVESTIGATE

Investigate the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (also known as the White Australia policy). What can you discover about its enforcement in Australia before 1945? How did it affect the expression of religion in Australia?

Development of Hindu communities and Hinduism in Australia

Hinduism arrived in Australia in the nineteenth century with **indentured labour** from South Asia. Because Hinduism is primarily celebrated by worship at home altars, and because South Asians were mostly denied permanent residency in the colonies of Australia, building temples was not a priority. It was not until the twentieth century, and after the end of the White Australia Policy, that Hindu communities began to officially settle and construct buildings for worship. Despite being refused entry or permanency before the 1970s, Hindus made significant contributions in the development of colonial Australia. Among European monotheists at this time, there was considerable suspicion about whether Hinduism was in fact a religion, or just another expression of paganism. Hindus are now one of the fastest developing religious groups in Australia (see recent censuses) and Hindus are among the most well educated sub-groups in our society.

Before the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, the Australian colonial governments had various attitudes on Indian immigration. Industry groups and farmers encouraged the importation of indentured labour from Asia, and India in particular. The term 'Hindus' was used to refer to all Indian people from that region, regardless of religion. Indentured workers were under contract to work at a set price for a number of years. They were not entitled to stay in Australia after their contracts expired. In this way, cheap labour could be used to take care of livestock, cut sugar cane and perform other labouring work. Before the 1840s, convicts had done this and other menial jobs. Indentured workers were treated badly and their demands for basic considerations – some were vegetarians, for example – were hardly ever met.

Once explorers had forged across the Blue Mountains and into western New South Wales, vast tracts of rural land for sheep and cattle were opened up and there was a demand for shepherds and other labourers in the area. The call for **coolie** labour by free settlers became so strong that separate colonial commissions on immigration were held in 1837, 1838 and 1841. In 1842 a coolie association was established by pastoralists. This group was resisted by many colonials, mainly freed convicts, who felt that cheap labour would worsen wage conditions for all and increase unemployment. The passion for indentured labour was also opposed by the Colonial Office in London, which remained quite influential in the new colonies of Australia. The Colonial Office during the middle of the nineteenth century was very suspicious of anything that looked like slavery.

Indentured labour
Working under a fixed-term contract with repressive conditions, often involving bringing a person to a country for a certain period of time to do a certain job

Coolie
An unskilled labourer, used in a derogatory way by the British in the colonial era

Despite the lack of government assistance, immigration from the Indian subcontinent did take place in relatively small numbers. Indian people worked initially as shepherds, itinerant workers (such as tinkers and salesmen) or servants for the wealthier colonialists. By 1854, a fourth commission brought Asian immigration to an end in New South Wales.

In Queensland, however, from the 1860s onwards, plantation-style operations for sugar cane and bananas led to the assisted immigration of Hindu and Sikh people from India. Other immigrants included people from Sri Lanka, Polynesia and Italy. The subcontinental labour was indentured. When the period of tenure was complete, various state laws made residency and employment in other areas extremely difficult.

Racism and Federation

The first major law introduced by the new Commonwealth Parliament was the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. It became law on 23 December 1901. Under this law an English-language test was used to hinder non-white immigration (a text was read out by a customs official and the immigrant was asked to write it down). On occasion, another

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European language could be used and was done so to enforce discrimination. The alleged purpose of the dictation test was to ensure that anyone wanting to enter Australia had a reasonable level of education. However, not all applicants were asked to do the test, and some did it in their own language. It was given only if an immigration officer believed a potential migrant was 'undesirable'. Invariably, this would be a person of colour or of Asian background. After the first year of this system (when some Indians who were proficient in English passed the test) the test was changed so that it did not have to be given in English. If an Asian person had been educated in English, they could be given the test in German or Spanish. Due to pre-Commonwealth immigration, in 1911 there were still 4106 'Hindoos' in Australia. 'Hindoo' was a census classification that included Muslim Afghans, Punjabi Sikhs and Indian Hindus. Sikh families in Woolgoolga, a town in northern New South Wales, where the first Australian *gurdwara* (Sikh temple) was opened in 1968, recount that their ancestors came to Australia before 1901 and, given the prevailing systems of racial control, maintained strong contact with the subcontinent:

> … men would marry and beget children to their wives in India between sojourns in Australia … With few exceptions, the wives and daughters remained in India; only recently have women emigrated in numbers.
>
> MARIE DE LEPERVANCHE, *INDIANS IN A WHITE AUSTRALIA*, 1984, P. 60.

At that time, however, Indians were British subjects and sometimes appealed to Britain with complaints of their unfair treatment in Australia. It was only through appeals from other parts of the British Empire concerning the equal treatment of British subjects in Australia that many non-white residents, including South Asian Australians, were given the vote in 1925. That was a right granted 24 years after it had been enshrined in the Constitution. By 1947, only 2189 people identified as 'Indian', an indication of the effectiveness of the White Australia policy.

Once the White Australia policy fell out of use after World War II, the focus for immigration remained on Europeans until the 1960s. As Australia entered a new period of multiculturalism, immigration from India and other parts of South Asia began in earnest. The Sri Mandir temple in Auburn reflects this policy change. Established in 1977, the present temple on this site was constructed in 2001. Its founding was followed by other, grander temples in and around the city. The Sri Venkateswara temple in Helensburgh, to the south of Sydney, begun in 1978, contains shrines for both Shaivite and Vaishnavite worshippers and hosts an annual festival to Ganesh that appeals to most Hindus. More recent temples such as the Sydney Murugan Temple (opened 2001) just outside Parramatta, demonstrate how impressive and extensive Hinduism in Australia has become.

Ashkenazim
Jewish people originally from northern and eastern Europe

Sephardim
Jewish people whose families were expelled from Spain in 1492 and mainly joined communities around the Middle East and North Africa

Figure 2.5 Sikh warrior statue of Hari Singh Nalwa at the *gurdwara* at Woolgoolga, Australia. Hari Singh Nalua was Commander-in-chief of the Sikh Khalsa Army, the army of the Sikh Empire.

Judaism in Australia

Jewish life in Australia is as old as European settlement, with between 6 and 13 Jewish convicts arriving with the First Fleet. At the time, Jewish people were often considered a denomination of Christianity. Although the first Jewish institution in Australia, the Chevra Kadisha (or Jewish Burial Society), was already formed in 1817, early Jewish convicts were often not well educated in Judaism, and it is fair to state that a Jewish community did not form until the late 1820s, when free settlers began migrating. Overwhelmingly, these settlers were middle class **Ashkenazim** from England. A small number of **Sephardim** were part of the community in South Australia. These Jewish colonial

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pioneers were concerned about social integration. They did not completely assimilate, lose their Jewish identity or become absorbed by the dominant Christian community. They considered themselves 'Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion' and were not distinct from the surrounding community in their daily practices. They saw Judaism as a denomination, a term that was more familiar to Christian thinking. To avoid conflict, the early Jewish settlers promoted the view that Judaism was primarily a matter of private conscience, as indeed was all religious expression. They were determined to stop Christianity becoming identified as the state religion, and promoted a secular approach to life in the new colony.

Forming a community

In an attempt to avoid the negative attitudes surrounding the term 'Jew' at the time, the Jewish population of the colonial days used the terms 'Hebrews' or 'Israelites' and called their congregations 'Hebrew congregations'. As a way of seeking acceptance in a largely Christian community and in order to make the community self-sufficient, organisations such as the Hebrew Philanthropic Society, founded in Sydney about 1832; the Hebrew Mutual Benefit Society, founded about 1848; the Hebrew Ladies' Maternity and Benevolent Society; and the newspapers the *Australian Israelite*, *Australasian Hebrew* and *Hebrew Standard* were all established.

Jewish people's communal life was not easy to maintain, and the founding of the Jewish Burial Society in Sydney in 1817 was a result of the desire of Jewish convicts and emancipists (those who had completed their sentences and were now free citizens) to be buried according to Jewish practice. There were already formal prayer services as, under Jewish law, all that is needed is 10 adult Jewish males (a *minyan*) to conduct a prayer service. The first Torah scrolls, crucial for the Torah reading that is carried out three times each week, were brought to Australia in 1830 by Rabbi Aaron Levy, a judge (*dayan*) of the London Rabbinical Court (Beth Din). His visit lasted five months and he helped to unify the small Sydney Jewish community, corrected its religious practices and gave the impetus for the establishment of the first formal congregation in November 1831, held in rented premises.

Certain dedicated Jewish pioneers, many of whom were either former convicts or owners of small businesses, worked in the main cities of Australia from the 1820s to build synagogues, bless cemeteries and establish the fundamentals of a congregational life. Phillip Cohen, a merchant, began holding a regular synagogue service from his home in Sydney in 1828, and in 1832 he oversaw the formation of the Sydney Hebrew Congregation. Australia's first synagogue opened in Bridge Street, Sydney, with a more permanent building in York Street, Sydney, being consecrated five years later. The Great Synagogue in Elizabeth Street

Figure 2.6 A drawing of the Synagogue in York Street, Sydney, from the 1840s

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Patriarchal/patriarchy From the Greek and Latin '*pater*' (father); refers to a system in which men hold the power in a society or in reference to the fathers of religious traditions

has housed the Sydney Hebrew Congregation for worship since 1877. Australian synagogues are not just places of worship. They are also responsible for the supervision of burial grounds and the regulation of charity, dietary laws and education. Synagogues can form the centre for all dimensions of Australian Jewish life.

Frontier Judaism was actively encouraged during the nineteenth century. During the gold rush, country towns and communities established congregations in Broken Hill, Forbes, Goulburn, Maitland, Tamworth and Toowoomba. Once minerals became scarcer, so did the number of members. While certain individuals were quite fortunate, others barely made a living as pedlars or traders. This caused migration back to the cities or assimilation into rural society, and many people married outside their own religion. The same gold-rush pattern occurred during the 1890s in Western Australia, allowing Jewish congregations at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie to flourish for a short period. Despite dwindling numbers by the turn of the century, the larger size of congregations in Sandhurst (Bendigo) and Ballarat in Victoria meant that they managed to function for a longer period of time.

Like most minority cultural and ethnic groups in rural Australia, Australian Jewish history has been characterised by urban drift. This trend was particularly evident in the German communities of Albury and Grafton during the nineteenth century. The desire to join the broader community progressively weakened artificial links to tradition, despite the introduction of a German-language press, the creation of German social organisations and the Lutheran Church's **patriarchal** influence, which helped to sustain ethnic allegiance. In order to conserve the 'Jewishness' of this unique community, group support as well as active participation in the social, religious, educational and cultural systems was needed. However, after several generations, the pressures exerted from the external community overpowered the maintenance of old ties. But Jewish identity persisted, particularly in the cities, and strong Jewish communities exist today.

Buddhism in Australia

Chinese religions arrived in Australia perhaps as early as the 1500s, when the southern oceans may have been explored by Chinese sailors. There was a strong Chinese presence during the gold-rush days of the mid-nineteenth century, and many experienced overt racism. The riots at Lambing Flat (Young, New South Wales) in 1860–61 were the most notable eruptions of violence against Asian persons.

The Chinese population was largely made up of followers of Chinese folk religions, but there were also many Buddhists. By 1891, the Chinese made up 1.2 per cent of the Australian population, although many previous residents had returned to China.

Sri Lankan Buddhists were employed as pearl divers and within Queensland cane fields. By the beginning of the twentieth century they had built a temple and planted two bodhi trees (ancient sacred fig trees) on Thursday Island. Again, as a result of the White Australia policy, many were denied residency and forced to return to their homelands.

Islam in Australia

Islam may have first come to Australia through the sixteenth-century visits of Macassan fishermen from Indonesia. Contact might even have occurred earlier, as Islam arrived in Indonesia from the 1400s onwards. It wasn't, however, until workers were required for the building of the overland telegraph line that Australia saw an influx of 'ghans' – camel drivers identified as Afghans, although many came from a number of other west-Asian regions from the late 1800s onwards. They were Muslims and lived in 'ghan towns', often outside the major settlements. They built a number of mosques; the Broken Hill mosque is one of the oldest mosques still in use in Australia. Many of these Muslims returned to their countries of origin at the end of the nineteenth century to re-join their families.

Many mosques have been built in outback Australia. Some, such as the Broken Hill mosque, are simple structures and are still in use.

Figure 2.7 The *Ghan* train that travels between Adelaide and Darwin is named after the Muslim camel drivers who helped build the overland telegraph line across central Australia.

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THE OUTBACK ISLAMIC COMMUNITY AND THE COOLGARDIE MOSQUE

The Muslim community of Coolgardie (inland Western Australia) reached 300 members by the year 1898. Some attended Friday prayer each week. Public records show that at one stage there were two mosques in Coolgardie, and public worship was being conducted in five alternative buildings. They reported three 'lay readers' along with a 'minister' – probably an imam and some lesser prayer leaders. The camel industry in Coolgardie was very large and most cameleers were Muslims. Muslim names dominated the list of camel owners, illustrating the prevalence of so-called 'Afghans'. The opening of a gold field in the neighbouring city of Kalgoorlie in 1899 was mirrored by a sudden drop in the numbers.

Many of the Muslim men in the outback married. Sometimes that meant they had a wife back in India or Afghanistan as well as a wife in Australia. For example, while he had a wife and two daughters who lived in Peshawar, camel driver Nameth Khan also married an Australian woman at the Alice Springs registry office. In 1919, both he and his Australian wife died after suffering from the Spanish influenza. His Australian daughter kept in contact with his family in India, eventually travelling to the Punjab region during the 1960s. Often they married Aboriginal and Torres Strait Isander women, who also experienced marginalisation from white Australian society. But some wives were European. These women tended to be widows or deserted wives, often with children, or else those who appreciated the financial security of camel owners with established businesses. One deserted wife who had been left with eight children married Bejah Dervish, and in 1939 their son was a member of the Simpson Desert crossing. Another couple was Gool Mahomet and a French woman who had fled a Kalgoorlie brothel. After their 1907 marriage in Coolgardie Mosque, they lived in the Ghantown and drove camels in outback South Australia.

Bullock drivers and horse teamsters competed with the camel drivers. Racial divisions became evident, as European men worked as bullockies rather than cameleers. Due to racism in the courts, cases where Muslims were assaulted or murdered were dismissed. In the west of Queensland during the 1890s, camel drivers became a major target of racial vilification. Muslims were criticised in local newspapers for abstaining from alcohol and for opening up stores such as butcher shops (to sell halal meat) and were described as 'more detestable than the Chinese'.

During this time in Queensland, racism was also very present in the growing union movement. There was a common view that both 'Afghan' and Chinese people could provide cheap labour, which undermined the white peoples' standard of living. People who were seen as racially inferior were economically exploited and the unions did not attempt to secure wage equality for all people. As Muslims were isolated socially, ostracised and racially abused by the Europeans, they did not join in the Shearers Strike, and continued carrying wool for Queensland pastoralists to railheads. This strike is considered a watershed moment in Australia's history as it almost caused the outbreak of civil war. In Queensland in 1891, due to the threat of infuriated and combative unionists, cameleers and their camels were escorted to the NSW border by the Toowoomba Infantry.

EXERCISE 2.2

1 **Compare** the arrival of Judaism with that of one of the other non-Christian religious traditions.
2 **Recall** the racist attitudes that may have been experienced by adherents to a religious tradition other than Christianity upon their arrival in Australia.
3 **Discuss** the significance of the 'Hindoo' classification in the early census. **Discuss** who it represented and your opinion on the description.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2.2

1 'Australia has long been a racist country'. Organise a class debate on the White Australia policy and the effects that it had on the arrival of the various religious traditions to Australia.
2 Organise a visit to a synagogue and present your observations to the class.
3 **Construct** a PowerPoint presentation of a place of worship from another religious tradition in your area.

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2.3 ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY PRE-1945

There were several issues that emerged surrounding the development of Christianity during the early settlement of Australia. Two of these issues, sectarianism and the need for social welfare, were evident from the beginning of settlement and lasted until at least 1945.

Sectarianism

Before 1945, European Australia found itself divided along very clear religious and political lines – with a particular division between Catholics and Protestants. This division was a form of **sectarianism**. Sectarianism can be described as belief in its own sense of rightness by a particular subgroup of a society.

Sectarianism
Excessive devotion to a particular sect or religious faith

Conscription
A legal act by a government to force its citizens to enlist in the defence forces, mainly with the objective of sending them to war

Sectarianism in Australia had clear links with the conflict between the Church of England and the Irish Catholics in Ireland prior to Australian settlement. Conflict also existed within Protestantism, arising from the prejudice in England by Church of England adherents against non-conformist churches. It was lived out in Australia in a way that strongly influenced society. Catholics and Protestants did not enter each other's churches and rarely married each other. Employment advertisements would include the line 'Catholics need not apply'. Despite the supposed egalitarian society in Australia, Catholics were generally less educated and working class, while Protestants were more educated and middle class. Employment opportunities for Catholics were generally more restricted than for Protestants.

It important to note that much of sectarianism and the English–Irish antagonism also reflected political, cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences as much as religious issues.

Daniel Mannix and the issue of conscription

Daniel Mannix (1864–1963) was born in Ireland. He was ordained as a priest in 1890 and sent to Australia in 1912 to act as an assistant to the Archbishop of Melbourne, whom he succeeded in 1917. Mannix became a focal point for sectarianism in Australia, cementing Irish Catholic unity. While he was a known supporter of Irish independence, he was also known for his strong disapproval of violence, including that perpetrated by fellow Catholics on behalf of Ireland and/or Catholicism.

In 1914, when Australia entered World War I, Mannix remained ambivalent about the war. Many Protestant ministers were urging their congregations to join the war effort at all costs. The war was devastating for Britain, and Britain placed great pressure on Australia to send more troops. Despite stating in 1915 there would be no **conscription**, Prime Minister William (Billy) Hughes (1862–1952) held a national referendum in 1916 to see whether the Australian people agreed with conscription. Hughes narrowly lost this vote, and it was Mannix who was his main opponent.

During World War I, Australian Catholics were suspected of disloyalty; more so after the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, when Ireland rebelled against British rule. Father Charles Jerger, a priest of German background, was interned in 1918 for discussing conscription in public, and deported in 1920. Historically, dislike of Catholics was based on a dislike of foreigners. It was claimed that Irish Catholics were the first 'ghetto' ethnic community. Anti-Catholic feeling was often quite subtle, but occasionally rose to the surface. Hughes exploited the sectarian differences and endorsed an anti-Catholic agenda.

Today, the idea that an archbishop could join a public debate with such success may be implausible, but in Australia during the years of sectarian division, Catholicism, anti-British sentiment and nationalism were all parts of a general social outlook. Archbishop Mannix represented a powerful subgroup of the Australian nation.

Many other Christians in Australia, especially the Methodists, also opposed conscription. The referendum was lost by a much greater margin than simply the Catholic vote.

Figure 2.8 10 August 1920: Sinn Fein demonstrators gather outside the docks at Liverpool's Pier Head for the arrival of Cardinal Daniel Mannix of Melbourne. Mannix gave influential support to the Irish cause during the War of Independence.

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INVESTIGATE

'The Anti's Creed' can be accessed on the Australian War Memorial website. Examine it and explain how it reflects sectarian attitudes during World War I. (You will need to do some research to draw out all that is mentioned.) There are other similar documents that you may find interesting on the website.

The death of sectarianism

In 1945, Australia had a population of about eight million people. The Japanese attacks on Sydney Harbour and Darwin during World War II led politicians and bureaucrats to think that such a small population could not effectively defend such a large continent. From 1945 onwards, a program of immigration was instigated by the Chifley Labor government and continued under the conservative Liberal government of Robert Menzies. The influx of new migrants to Australia following World War II, together with a growing awareness of diversity, particularly from people who had served overseas, government aid to church schools, the split within the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the changing attitudes of Australia to religion in general, all led to the demise of sectarianism as a major division in Australian society. However, its effects lingered until the 1970s.

Social welfare

Many religious communities were eager to build their own institutions for social welfare. This was especially the case in the early colony, when the government was not at all involved in the provision of social welfare. Church involvement was desperately needed in a large country with governments struggling to keep up. Today, welfare is often provided by the state. This was not the case in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Support for people who could not work or were disabled or disadvantaged came from community sources. These sources were mainly religious.

Christianity, as with many other religions, regards charity and a sense of social conscience as central to its activities. Christians can be open-hearted when it comes to offering support, but the question of belonging to a particular church emerged as a problem, particularly in the Great Depression of the 1930s. During the Great Depression, although many people were in need, priority was given by churches to church members.

Benevolent Society of New South Wales

The Benevolent Society was established by Edward Smith Hall in 1813 under the name 'The NSW Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence', changing its name in 1817 to Benevolent Society of New South Wales. One of the earliest social welfare groups in Australia, it is best known for building Australia's first maternity hospital, but was also very

Figure 2.9 In his hopeless search for a job, a man is standing in front of a door on which there is a sign that says: 'NO WORK. DON'T APPLY'. The Great Depression of the 1930s put a strain on the Church's ability to meet the needs of people, prompting the government to become involved in social welfare.

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involved in lobbying for a range of progressive social reforms. Its focus is on women and children, while also assisting the elderly and the poor.

St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society is an international society founded in France in 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam and is identified with Roman Catholicism. It was originally designed to assist the poor and less fortunate who had suffered during the turbulent times France had endured. The Australian branch of the charity began 21 years after the French establishment. By 1895, 26 bases had been set up in Sydney. The St Vincent de Paul Society became, and still is, identified with a caring Catholic Church.

Anglicare
National network of care and social justice agencies of the Anglican Church in Australia

The Salvation Army

Former Methodist minister William Booth established the Salvation Army in London in order to make assistance and religion more accessible to people living in the slums. While his work began in 1865, the name 'The Salvation Army' was not taken up until 1878. The spiritual focus of the Salvation Army was amalgamated with a focus on social welfare and charity work designed to help the struggling lower classes and homeless. The first Salvation Army meeting to be held in Australia took place on 5 September 1880. Because of its efforts in reaching out to people in need 'with no strings attached', the Salvation Army was accepted by many Australians who would normally reject the Church. Many charitable organisations, such as the Salvation Army, ran soup kitchens during the Depression to help those in need.

Other groups

Other Christian groups and denominations also became involved in the provision of social welfare, but were more regional or state-based. Many became national organisations towards the end of the twentieth century. These other groups included the Sydney Home Mission Society (which became part of **Anglicare**), Mission Australia and the Wesley Central Mission, and the Church of England Brotherhood of St Laurence (Melbourne).

The Christian church included education and medical care in its provision of social welfare. Friendly Societies also helped their members in time of need. While the government had kept out of the provision of social welfare, the economic depressions of the 1890s and the 1930s meant it had to become involved. It was not until the 1940s that government payments such as unemployment benefits and sickness benefits were introduced. Many Christian organisations continue to provide social welfare, sometimes with government funding.

EXERCISE 2.3

1 **Describe** the role of sectarianism in Australian society.
2 **Describe** the role of Daniel Mannix in the sectarian debate.
3 **Discuss** the motivation for churches to be involved in social welfare services. Does it reflect the teachings of Jesus?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2.3

1 **Discuss** in small groups why religious social welfare services needed to be implemented in the Australian colony.
2 **Debate** the following topic: 'Sectarianism has always been part of Australian history'.
3 **Investigate** one religious social welfare agency and write a comprehensive report of its history and work.

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2.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF ONE RELIGIOUS TRADITION TO ASPECTS OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE: CHRISTIANITY

During the development of the Australian nation there were many areas where religious groups helped meet the needs of the Australian people. At this time Christianity was the dominant religious tradition, but other groups were also involved in ministering to the people. The areas that most required support were rural and outback communities, education, and concerns in the community about public morality.

Rural and outback communities

With religious (mainly Christian) groups sending missionaries and community support members into the heartland of Australia, it is not surprising that religious leaders helped develop social services for the outback. For example, German Lutherans were encouraged by their home churches to travel to places, such as outback Australia, to spread Christianity. A mission, such as Hermannsburg, was both a centre for Christian activity and a community. The education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the provision of health care were of primary importance. Sometimes missionaries helped and sheltered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were being poorly treated by other white people. Some white settlers were responsible for contributing to a deterioration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' way of life. Some missionary organisations documented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history and culture, and in doing so helped to preserve it. Thus religious missions were able to provide a sense of community in the isolation of the remote outback of Australia. Christians were particularly concerned about the isolation and needs of people in the outback.

Presbyterians, the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service

Video

The Reverend John Flynn (1880–1951) of the Presbyterian Church made an outstanding contribution to the life of rural Australians. He was born in Moliagul, north-west of Melbourne in Victoria, and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1911. He was commissioned by the Presbyterian Church in 1912 to write a report on the needs of outback Australia. He wrote a report to his superiors about the problems of offering

Figure 2.10 This patient has been flown from the Australian outback by the Flying Doctor Service, 1954

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ministry services to those living in such a remote and extensive area. The report indicated there were areas of need, including isolation, poor medical care, poor communication, and lack of spiritual guidance and ministry. Flynn was then made the first superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM). In this position, he managed to serve not only the spiritual needs of the population but also, increasingly, their medical and other needs.

AIM 'patrol padres', including Flynn, travelled through the outback on horses and camels and by car. With the assistance of Alf Traeger, a pedal wireless (powered by bicycle pedals) was developed to enable people to communicate with each other and with medical services. AIM also provided educational facilities, boarding hostels, aged care and other services.

Flynn and Clifford Peel, an Australian who had served in the air force in World War I, began an aerial medical service, which later became the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The first flight left Cloncurry in 1928, but it was not until 1934 that the Australian Aerial Medical Service was formed, with bases established nationwide and the backing of both clergymen and politicians. By the time of Flynn's death in 1951, Australia was covered by what he called 'a mantle of safety'. It was innovative and valuable work that continues as the Frontier Services of the Uniting Church of Australia. It has been suggested that the work of John Flynn and the Australian Inland Mission allowed the Australian outback to be opened up and developed.

Other Christian churches were also involved in developing ministry in outback Australia, such as the Church of England (the High-Church Bush Brotherhoods, the evangelical Bush Church Aid) and several Catholic orders such as the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of St Joseph.

Figure 2.11 Grave of Reverend John Flynn in Alice Springs

Education

With the settlement of the penal colony in Australia, the government saw little need for education. Most of the convicts were illiterate and didn't see the possible benefits of education. Even the youngest convicts were not considered 'children'. Education was considered the preserve of the wealthy who could afford to pay teachers and tutors. Richard Johnson and the early chaplains provided religious education. However, as the colony accepted more free settlers and emancipated convicts settled, the importance of education became evident. The government did not provide education in the colonies; that became the role of the churches. Government did introduce legislation that had an impact on the provision of education:

- 1825: The *Schools Estate Corporation Charter* gave one-seventh of all land in the colony to the Church of England and its schools.
- 1836: The *Church Act* provided pound-for-pound funding for four churches in NSW to support clergy and education. The churches supported were the Church of England, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist. It meant that the Church of England could no longer be considered the 'state' church of NSW.
- 1862: The *Public Institutions Act* withdrew funding from churches.
- 1880: The *Public Instruction Act* introduced by Henry Parkes abolished funding to denominational education and the state now provided education that was to be 'compulsory, free and secular'.

Roman Catholics objected to education that was secular, the Church condemning government schools as 'seed-plots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness'. The impact of the *Public Instruction Act* was that the Catholic Church established its own systemic schools that continue to this day. Staffed by nuns, brothers and priests, the Catholic schools became vital to the future of Catholic parishes and community.

Attempts to develop a state education system began in 1833. The state school system that developed ensured that education was free, secular and compulsory (*Public Instruction Act 1880*). Churches had the right to provide special religious education. This was not to everybody's liking. Private schools, mainly run by the Protestant clergy, educated the upper classes of colonial society.

CONSIDER

Before World War II, Catholic schools were seen by non-Catholics as un-Australian – places where fervent priests could indoctrinate generations of young Australians. Are many old arguments against Catholic schools now being used against Muslim, Brethren or Scientologist schools? Discuss whether you think these attitudes are similar to those expressed today.

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Catholics became increasingly eager to give their children the opportunities that education afforded but sought to do so in a way that allowed for Catholic religious education. The school system of New South Wales developed into three competing systems: private Protestant schools, colonial government schools and schools built by the Catholic laity that developed into a comprehensive Catholic system of education.

Within the Catholic Church there is a long tradition of linking education to the clergy. Some of Europe's most famous schools have been run by members of the Church. Orders of monks and priests, such as the Jesuits, have become famous for their intellectual and **pedagogical** abilities. An Irish order, the Christian Brothers, took a major role.

In some Catholic families, parents encouraged religious and general education in their children. It was not surprising that Australian Catholics were eager to support the building of Catholic schools with money and labour. From 1833 to 1862 some government money was provided for the running of church schools under the Church Acts. After this date, successive governments in the colonies, such as New South Wales, and at a national level refused to fund such schools, but Catholics continued to give up their wages and their time to keep the schools running and build more.

The development of schools

Father Therry, one of the first Catholic priests in Australia, worked during the 1820s to allow Catholic religious instruction in government institutions, such as orphanages, but he was prevented by active Protestants who wanted to make Australia a non-Catholic state. To combat this, he succeeded in establishing two Catholic schools, one in Parramatta in 1821 and another in Sydney in 1822. Therry continued to work for official standing for Catholic institutions, and he challenged the government for paying money to support Church of England schools and churches. In these campaigns he was relatively successful. During the 1830s funding was offered to the four main denominations of New South Wales, including the Catholics (the *Church Act* of 1836). This funding dried up in 1863.

During the 1860s and 1870s, government commissions, public campaigns and meetings were held to decide what would become of education in the colonies. The government proposed developing a fully secular or non-religious system of education, and Catholics found that other religious groups, especially the Church of England, supported the right to have religious schools. But in the first instance things went badly. Secularists pushing for state schools were very successful. Laws for free and secular education were passed by the states. This left no state money for religious schools, which were left to fend for themselves.

This defeat galvanised Catholics around Australia. Education within the Catholic community became a vital issue. Australian bishops went regularly to Europe and America seeking Catholic teachers. Lay Catholics were told to build a school in every parish and, although there was no government funding, Catholics everywhere struggled to support their local schools. As taxpayers, Catholics felt cheated that some of the money they paid to the government was not returned in funding to church schools.

Catholic education offices were established to oversee the general administration of schools and orders of brothers, nuns and lay teachers who dedicated themselves to teaching. Because of their efforts, today the Catholic education system is the most extensive non-government education system in Australia. The Church is one of Australia's biggest employers. It was not until after the 1960s that some government funding for Catholic schools was reinstated. This is now available to schools of all established faiths.

Pedagogical
Relating to the science of teaching

One of the most significant contributions to Catholic education in Australia was the development of educational facilities by Sister Mary MacKillop. As described earlier in the chapter, with Father Julian Tenison Woods she co-founded the Sisters of St Joseph, who were devoted to caring for and teaching disadvantaged children in South Australia in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1870, there were 20 schools, orphanages and children's refuges run by the Sisters of St Joseph throughout Australia, and by 1909 more than 1000 nuns were working in schools throughout the nation. When Sister Mary was excommunicated by the Bishop of Adelaide, it led to a series of issues for the church: clashes with the Bishop of Queensland, a falling out with Father Woods, and accusations of financial and moral lapses. Much of this was because of the tremendous growth and popularity of the schools.

Mary MacKillop won papal support for her independence from interference by the Australian bishops. The Sisters of St Joseph continued to develop their schools and have influenced the lives of many Australians. Mary MacKillop's greatness was recognised in her beatification in 1995, and in 2010, her **canonisation** to be St Mary of the Cross, Australia's first Catholic saint.

Canonisation
The process whereby a person is declared a saint in the Roman Catholic Church

During these years, prior to 1945, many other Christian denominations also developed schools, many of which continue as significant independent schools today. To provide education for rural and outback communities, a number of these schools included boarding houses for students.

Public morality

Today, some of the major ethical issues as promoted by various religions, focus on bioethical concerns such as abortion and stem-cell research. At the start of the twentieth century, these issues were not of great concern, since biotechnology did not exist, and abortion, while practised, was not discussed. Before 1945, many considered alcoholism to be one of the most serious problems facing society. Today, there are numerous programs to help alcoholics, and alcoholism is even treated as a medical disease. Before 1945 many religious groups focused on the ethics of alcohol use.

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Wowser
Australian term referring to a puritanical fanatic or spoilsport

Many non-Catholic groups felt that alcohol should be banned outright. Members of these groups, known by the derisive term **wowsers**, were seen by others to be working against the very nature of Australian society. Often, however, they were concerned about the abuse of alcohol leading to financial difficulties, domestic violence and health-related problems. From the very early days of the Sydney penal colony, alcohol was important and for a time was even used as currency. The wowsers felt that a whole range of ethical issues could be addressed if consumption of alcohol could be prevented.

The wowsers

Wowser is a negative term used to describe those who attempt to impose their sense of morality on others in the community. Originally used to describe anyone deemed obnoxious or disruptive in society, including feminists and political agitators, the term was particularly used for those who tried to enforce restrictions on alcohol consumption. It is not known for sure where the term comes from. One popular suggestion is that it is an acrostic for the phrase 'We only want social evils remedied'. John Norton, editor of *The Truth* newspaper, claimed he invented the term in 1899. Another suggestion is that it comes from the old English term 'to wow' which means 'to mew as a cat, howl or bark as a dog, wail, whine, grumble, complain'. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines it as 'someone who disapproves of people enjoying themselves, particularly if this involves alcohol'. Groups who promoted this anti-alcohol policy included the Salvation Army and the Australian branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Temperance unions worked for a whole range of ethical issues. They believed that banning alcohol would keep men from the pubs and so they would spend more time with their families. The temperance unions were very much connected to women's movements, for it was believed that the absence of alcohol in society would lessen domestic violence. Temperance movements, however, were also concerned with imposing a very censorious set of attitudes on society, to the extent of stifling its creative and cultural dimensions. Temperance unions and other groups, such as Friendly Societies, began as non-profit organisations that provided insurance against illness. Opposition to alcohol was also part of a more general good-health message.

Wowsers – shutting down Australia?

In their campaigns, temperance unions were very successful in limiting the sale of alcohol. Until the 1960s, pubs were required to close at 6 p.m. This led to a phenomenon known commonly as the 'six o'clock rush' or 'six o'clock swill'. Working-class men leaving their jobs for the evening would rush to the nearest public house, where they would drink large amounts of alcohol before the pub closed at six o'clock. A number of restaurants were licensed to serve alcohol with food

Figure 2.12 Engraving depicting a mob of women destroying the stock of alcohol, spearing a revival of the temperance campaign

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at any hour, but these tended to be frequented by middle-class men and women. In fact, the temperance campaign reinforced notions of class division in Australia. Working class, often Catholic, customers faced alcohol restrictions, while middle-class restaurant patrons were allowed to drink freely.

Working-class Australians were unable to drink after six o'clock because of the pressure temperance unions exerted on the government. Temperance movements also pressured governments to limit the opening hours of entertainment venues such as cinemas, theatres and shops. In cities around Australia, it was often the case that on Sundays and in the evenings no entertainment was available for the economically and socially disadvantaged.

The wowser campaigns were markedly Protestant, not only in their moral authoritarianism but even more so in their overt anti-Catholicism. One of the reasons for this was that the people running the campaigns were themselves strongly anti-Catholic. For example, W.M. Dill Macky, who was Grand Chaplain of the fiercely Protestant Loyal Orange Lodge between 1899 and 1904, founded the Australian Protestant Defence Association (APDA) in June 1901 to achieve Protestant 'union in political action'. A manifesto spoke of 'the secret tactics and open aggressiveness of Roman Catholicism as an element of danger to the civil and religious liberties of the people of this state'. By the end of 1903, there were 135 APDA branches in New South Wales, claiming a membership of over 22 000!

The other areas of life that engaged those concerned with public morality were gambling, public bathing, breaking the Sabbath by Sunday trading, censorship and 'unconventional' sexual expression. It can be argued that these, mainly Protestant, Christians were so concerned with specific individual actions that they ignored greater social ills. One issue that particularly concerned the Christian churches was Sunday trading. Many Christians were Sabbatarians, that is, they supported the idea of keeping the Sabbath (interpreted as Sunday) holy, a day for worship and rest that should be kept free of ordinary activities. Again, the intention was good; it was to be a day when people were not forced to work, and had the time to go to church and be with their families. Unfortunately, it became an opportunity to impose restrictions on the enjoyment of others. Thus shops were not allowed to open on Sundays, hotels were not allowed to trade, sport was not allowed to be played and so on. Again, wowsers were seen as wanting to spoil people's enjoyment of life. Certainly, wowsers were prominent in censorship campaigns and this contributed to much opposition to the wowsers and their perceived desire to stop others enjoying life. Anti-wowser figures, such as artist and writer Norman Lindsay (1879–1969), took great delight in provoking Australians, and especially the wowsers. His paintings were particularly controversial.

Public morality has been an ongoing divisive issue in Australia, due in part to the religious sectarianism of the early colony and the persistent anti-authoritarian views of many Australians. While the temperance movement may have demonstrated some noble intentions, with its disapproval of excessive alcohol use and promotion of family values, in general members were eventually seen as killjoys interfering in other people's private lives.

Figure 2.13 Australian artist Norman Lindsay (1879–1969) demonstrates his skills to two young art students, September 1969. Noman Lindsay was a very controversial artist who often offended the wowsers.

EXERCISE 2.4

1 **Outline** the work of one religious tradition in rural and outback communities.
2 **Discuss** the issues related to the provision of education in the Australian colony and whether one religious tradition responded to that need.
3 **Examine** the concerns of one religious tradition, citing examples, in the area of public morality.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2.4

1 **Investigate** the influence of John Flynn on early-twentieth-century Australia and what role he played in developing outback Australia.
2 Write a paragraph on the education debate in early Australia and the role of one religious tradition.
3 Debate the topic: 'Wowsers failed to save Australia from its worst excesses'.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Christianity arrived in Australia with the convicts in 1788.
- Convicts generally resented the Church of England.
- Irish Catholics sought freedom from the Church of England and British rule.
- Catholic priests and non-conformist ministers were allowed into Australia over time.
- Samuel Marsden and John Dunmore Lang were notable religious pioneers.
- Caroline Chisholm and Mary MacKillop were strong early Catholic female leaders.
- Other religious traditions also arrived in Australia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
- Racism soon became a way of limiting other religious traditions in Australia.
- Sectarianism, the conflict within Christianity, was part of Australian life from the earliest days.
- During World War I, sectarianism was related to the issue of conscription.
- Churches were involved in providing social welfare.
- Significant welfare organisations established by Christians in the early colony still provide welfare today.
- The Presbyterian Church was a significant contributor to rural and outback communities through the Australian Inland Mission.
- The Coolgardie Mosque is one of the earliest examples of Islam in outback Australia.
- Education was provided early in the colony by the Catholic Church, which sought to educate the Catholic community.
- Mary MacKillop's Sisters of St Joseph are a good example of Catholic education being provided to the disadvantaged.
- Public morality was a particular concern of Protestants, who sought to remedy the social evils of Australian society.
- Public morality was encouraged to maintain order and family life in Australia.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 What was the state religion of England at the time of the First Fleet?
(A) Catholic
(B) Church of Scotland
(C) Church of England
(D) Methodist

2 What was the name of the second chaplain in the colony, often known as the 'flogging parson'?
(A) Arthur Phillip
(B) Samuel Marsden
(C) Richard Johnson
(D) Father Therry

3 Which religious tradition, together with Christianity, arrived on the First Fleet?
(A) Judaism
(B) Hinduism
(C) Islam
(D) Buddhism

4 Apart from the Church of England and the Catholic Church, which of the following was also represented in the early colony?
(A) Russian Orthodox
(B) Anglican Church
(C) Presbyterian Church
(D) Scientology

5 Which organisation is a Christian welfare agency that was evident in early Australia?
(A) Red Crescent
(B) Amnesty International
(C) RSPCA
(D) St Vincent de Paul

6 Which Presbyterian organisation was significantly involved in outback communities?
(A) Frontier Services
(B) Australian Board of Missions
(C) Sisters of St Joseph
(D) Australian Inland Mission

7 Who began the Sisters of St Joseph?
(A) Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Tenison Woods
(B) John Flynn and Mary MacKillop
(C) Father Julian and Henry Parkes
(D) John Flynn and Samuel Marsden

8 Which church established its own system of schools following the *Public Instruction Act* of 1880?
(A) Uniting Church
(B) Catholic Church
(C) Unitarian Church
(D) Church of England

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9 What did Sabbatarians oppose?
(A) Gambling on Saturdays
(B) Shop trading on Sundays
(C) Celebrating the Sabbath on Sundays
(D) Saturday sport

10 Which term applied to Christians who tried to impose their opinions in issues of public morality?
(A) Wowsers
(B) Temperance
(C) Catholics
(D) Methodists

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Recall** what it was that prevented the Church of England becoming the 'state church' of Australia.

2 **Describe** the arrival and establishment of one religious tradition other than Christianity prior to 1945.

3 **Describe** the contribution of Christianity to social welfare in Australia prior to 1945.

4 **Summarise** the contribution of one religious tradition to rural and outback communities.

5 **Investigate** the contribution by one religious tradition to education in Australia in the nineteenth century.

6 **Describe** 'wowserism' and **discuss** its influence on public morality in Australia.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 **Explain** why Christianity was the dominant religious tradition in nineteenth-century Australia.

2 **Discuss** the issue of conscription during World War I, with reference to the sectarian nature of Australian society.

3 **Discuss** the issue of education in Australia with reference to one religious tradition.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

> [Rev Richard] Johnson had begun to despair: a hopelessness, a sense of failure, now informed his language whenever he discussed the progress of his sacred mission – a sense of the impossibility of his task, and an even livelier one of the depravity of his charges.
>
> M. CATHCART, *MANNING CLARKE'S HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA*, MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS, MELBOURNE, 1993, P. 7.

Discuss the work of the early chaplains and clergy in Australia, noting how that work was reflected in the development of Christianity in Australia prior to 1945. Support your discussion with particular examples.

Figure 2.14 St Mary's Catholic Cathedral and Hyde Park, Sydney, in the 1920s

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THREE

RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA POST-1945

[YEAR 12 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (16 HOURS)]

Australia is not a secular country — it is a free country.
This is a nation where you have the freedom to
follow any belief system you choose.

PRIME MINISTER SCOTT MORRISON, 2018

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- contemporary Aboriginal peoples' spirituality
- Aboriginal peoples' spirituality determined by the Dreaming, kinship, ceremonial life and obligations to the land and peoples
- dispossession and how separation from the land and kinship groups and the Stolen Generations have affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- the land rights movement, looking at native title, and the Mabo and Wik decisions; the Dreaming and land rights
- religious expression in Australia from 1945 to the present
- changing patterns of religious adherence as revealed in census data
- the current religious landscape, with Christianity as the major religious tradition
- issues of immigration, denominational switching, New Age religions and secularism
- the ecumenical movement and the role of the National Council of Churches and NSW Ecumenical Council
- interfaith dialogue in multi-faith Australia
- Aboriginal spirituality and religious traditions in the process of reconciliation.

Please be aware that this chapter may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now deceased.

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TIMELINE

1945 — End of World War II; the Chifley government sets up a Department of Immigration to increase the nation's population; Australia becomes a founding member of the United Nations.

1946 — Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell introduces the major post-war immigration scheme; more than 800 Aboriginal stockmen go on strike over pay and conditions. It is revealed that they were getting minimal wages for very difficult work.

1947 — Australia agrees to take displaced people from Europe

1948 — *Nationality and Citizenship Act* introduced. Rather than Australians being identified as subjects of Britain, the Act establishes Australian citizenship.

1949 — Plans for the Snowy Mountain Scheme announced, which will employ thousands of new Australians

1950 — Assimilation adopted as official government policy to ensure the dominance of the English language and an 'Australian' way of life among new Australians

1953 — Northern Territory *Welfare Ordinance* makes Aboriginal peoples wards of the government

1955 — Hotels in New South Wales no longer have to close at 6 p.m., ending the 'six o'clock swill'

1956 — More than one million new immigrants have arrived in Australia since the war. They are mainly from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean and bring greater numbers of Catholic and Orthodox Christians.

1958 — *Migration Act* removes the dictation test, used to support the White Australia policy

1959 — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are eligible for Commonwealth Government benefits

1962 — *Commonwealth Electoral Act* allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the right to vote in all states except Queensland; Australia enters the Vietnam War

1965 — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples gain right to vote in Queensland; the Second Vatican Council brings a modernisation of Australian Catholic churches; the Freedom Rides for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' equality begin

1966 — The Wave Hill protests begin

1967 — An overwhelming 'Yes' vote in a national referendum regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' issues; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are now included in the census as part of the general population

(Timeline continued on next page)

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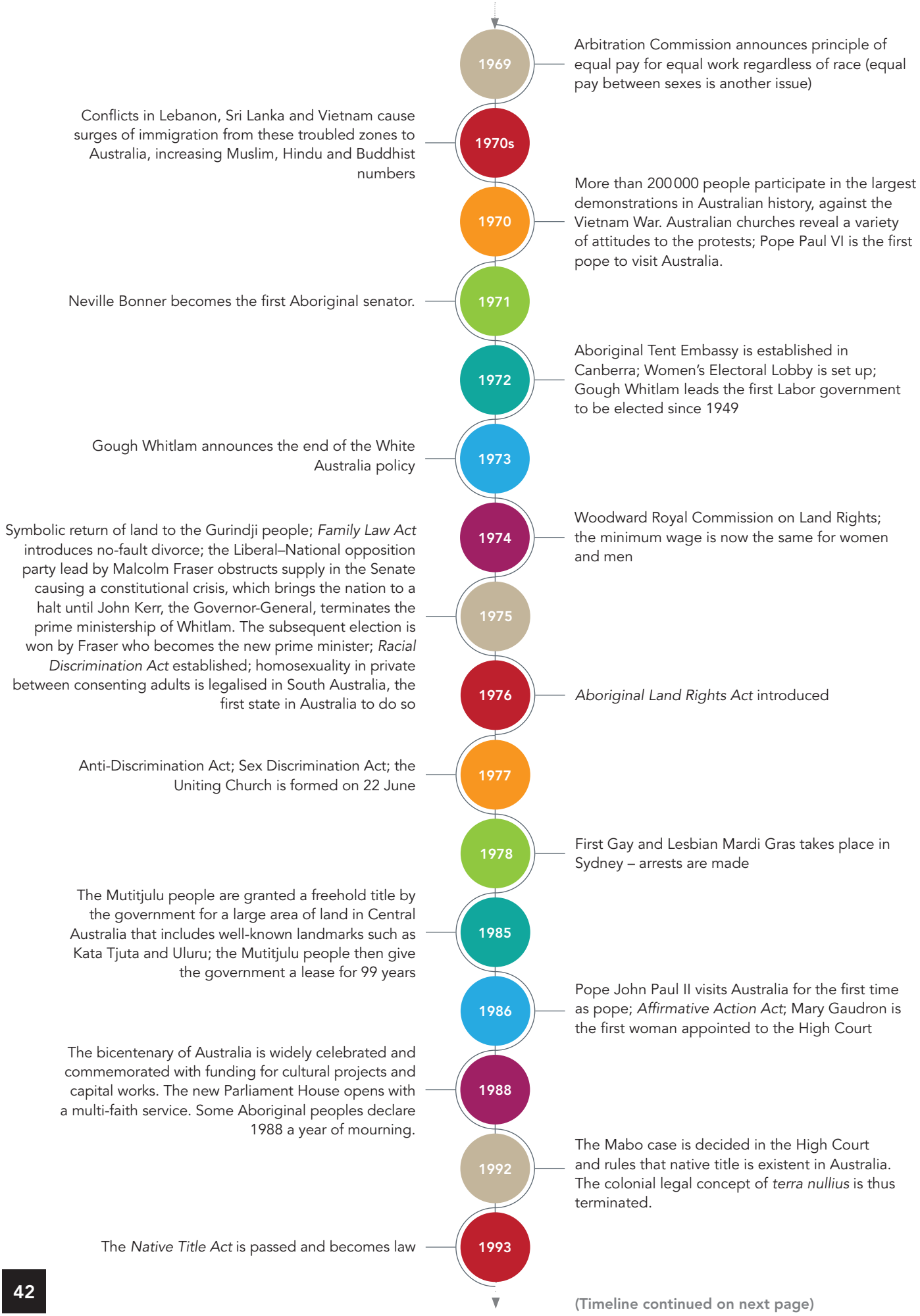

(Timeline continued on next page)

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Religious expression in Australia since 1945 has been very different from that of the first 150 years of the colony. Australia became a Commonwealth in 1901 and endured World War I (1914–18), which forged an Australian identity. The following years of the Great Depression (1930s) and World War II (1939–45) helped develop a new independence, with a cultural and political refocusing from Britain to the United States, developing a growing nationalism as well as developing Australia's sense of itself as a world citizen. In the years following the end of World War II, Australia began to focus on its responsibilities as a global citizen. This included a re-examination of the relationships with the original inhabitants of the land – the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

There was an increasing awareness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were not without spirituality, nor did they have a simple or primitive approach to the world. Australians began to understand that Aboriginal peoples' spirituality is an extremely complex worldview that includes the Dreaming, complex relationships within kinship groups and extensive obligations to the land. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had become Christians, but retained ideas from their own spirituality, developing a contextualised Christianity.

With increased migration in the years since 1945, migrants have brought new understandings of religious traditions. Immediate post–World War II migration brought more of the Catholicism of southern Europe, which was different from that of the Irish, as well as the Orthodoxy of Eastern Europe and the Islam of the Middle East. With the end of the White Australia policy in the 1970s, Asian migration brought another group of Muslims, as well as other Asian religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Conflict in the Middle East, East Asia and the Balkans brought Islam in the 1990s, and Indian professionals who migrated in the early twenty-first century brought Hinduism. Today, the religious landscape is vastly different from that of the mid-twentieth century, as the religious expression of Australians continues to develop in an increasingly globalised world.

Figure 3.1 Migrants have brought a new understanding of religious traditions to Australia. Additionally, despite ongoing debates about the arrival of asylum seekers globally, many religious groups in Australia welcome refugees.

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3.2 THE DIVERSITY OF CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITIES

The Dreaming and Aboriginal peoples' spiritualities

Dreaming stories continue to have an enormous influence on Australians today. This is despite the fact that a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been converted to Western religious traditions. A significant change has also taken place within Christian congregations in particular. Where once many Christians rejected Aboriginal peoples' spirituality and refused to allow it to be related to Christianity for fear of becoming syncretic, modern Christians have become more open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality. This openness and the influence of one religious tradition on the other can be seen positively as **contextualisation** rather than the more negatively expressed **syncretism**.

Aboriginal peoples' spirituality is connected very closely to the land, and the Dreaming stories reflect this. The worldview of Aboriginal peoples' spirituality is not only about the creation of the world, it also expresses the connection between the land and ancestor spirits, and it outlines the responsibilities of the individual and the community. It is inextricably connected to the land, transcends past, present and future, and is communicated in a variety of ways, including art, song, dance, ritual and kinship. There are regular ceremonies that enact stories sacred to specific areas; each region and landscape has its own stories, which are almost meaningless if removed from the geographical context. This is why the dispossession of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their land had such a profound effect on their religions and cultures. The basic plot of all the Dreaming stories is that something exists – the land, a site, some rocks, a waterhole – and a story is then invoked that explains how an ancestor transformed this land. The story is not simply told but, in many cases, performed. These stories are essential to the culture, for they explain why things are as they are. Dreaming stories contain all the information needed to live in a place and prosper. Before anyone walks onto someone else's land, they need to know the story of the land. With forced movements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and dispossession of the land, a sense of loss pervades their spiritualities. This is particularly the case with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have settled in urban environments.

INVESTIGATE

To gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture and spirituality, access the Aboriginal Culture website. Also consult D. Horton (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2009.

Kinship

Video

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures are centred on notions of **kinship**. All forms of social interaction, including marriage, group meetings, sports, trade and so on are determined by complicated kinship (relationship) laws. The laws determine how a person relates to others and how they belong to the community as well as their responsibilities within the community. Perhaps the first significant element in the division of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups is their languages. Before colonisation there were hundreds of separate languages that determined specific groups. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples knew a number of languages, but they always defined themselves through the original language of their own group. Within the group there are clans based on family groupings and within these clans there are further divisions into skin groups, or **moieties**. There are obligations within these social networks to care for others in times of need. Kinship also links to the Dreaming, totems and the ancestor spirits.

Contextualisation
The context of the expression; for example, expressing a religious tradition in a way that can be easily identified with its cultural context

Syncretism
Process of new religious systems developing out of the combination of two or more prevailing religions

Kinship
Family relationships that exist between people, and the rights and obligations associated with those relationships

Moieties
Skin name subsections in many Aboriginal communities

Corroboree
A ceremony, usually in the form of a dance

Rite of passage
A ritual to mark the progression of an individual through various status stages in a community

Ceremonial life

The word **corroboree** indicates a ceremony and is a term derived by settlers from one of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' words for rituals, *carriberrie*. These ceremonies often centre on retellings of Dreaming stories through singing, dancing, music and mime. Often the body of an actor is decorated to represent the spirit he or she is portraying. Other ceremonies of note include initiation ceremonies that relate to various stages of life. One example would be a **rite of passage** where a member of the group is initiated into adulthood and thus full membership of the group. These ceremonies usually involve the testing of strength, the revelation of special knowledge, the removal of the child from the mother, seclusion, the giving of a new name or sacred object, and a time of survival in the wild. Ceremonies are held to mark a person's development and new roles in the group. Ceremony also refers to balance rites, rituals to bring about harmony in nature, as well as death and burial rituals.

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Figure 3.2 A corroboree in Arnhem land

These burial ceremonies can be very elaborate. Death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures is the time when the spirit leaves the body and returns to the ancestor spirits. There are particular rituals associated with death so that the spirit is encouraged on its journey. Sometimes the body is cremated, buried or exposed, and in some areas elaborately decorated poles are erected. Often there are strict taboos associated with death rituals. This is reflected in the warnings often given on television shows that tell viewers one of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people pictured in a program has died, or that the name of a dead person will be mentioned.

Obligations to the land and people

Given the conceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' kinship and ceremonial life, it can be seen that there are heavy obligations for each individual to the land and their community. Laws of kinship encourage the growth and maintenance of a complex network of dependence and support that extends beyond family groups. These interpersonal connections are refocused through the ceremonial lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations. The togetherness of the group is emphasised by the actions at these ceremonies, and the actions themselves are determined by Dreaming stories. These Dreaming stories also connect each Aboriginal group to the land they inhabit and for which they are the custodians. The land they are responsible for is called their 'country'; it is their ritual estate. The protection and custodianship of that land becomes an integral part of the life of each individual and the culture of the group as a whole. Because the land contains the ancestor spirits, responsibility to care for the land and to nurture it is taken very seriously. Aboriginal identity is closely linked to the land. It is through the land that the Dreaming is lived and communicated.

Terra nullius
Literally 'land belonging to no one'; the doctrine that Australia was owned by no one, and thus open to European settlement

Implications related to the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

As European settlement spread across Australia, many people were forced off their traditional lands. They were dispossessed. Throughout the nineteenth century, white Australians believed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would eventually die out, or that they must be assimilated into the white Australian population to survive. In the popular thinking of the time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were racially inferior to Europeans. It was, therefore, not necessary to take into account Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' attitudes to the land. Colonial Australians had begun this process of dispossession through the cultivation of the empty land theory: ***terra nullius*** – a legal concept that the land was not owned by anyone when white settlers arrived.

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Figure 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancers perform at the welcome ceremony for the leaders attending the G20 Summit in Brisbane on 15 November 2014

The introduction of livestock and the misuse of the original environment aided in the destruction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' world, as did a vast range of diseases introduced by colonialists. The partnering of white people with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples produced what were referred to as 'half-caste' children (please note that the term 'half-caste' is now offensive and should not be used). It was policy of many state governments to remove these children into state orphanages or foster care. Over time the connectedness between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the land was broken. This was often due to the loss of language, the loss of Dreaming stories, the loss of totemic responsibilities and the loss of identity that was communicated between the community and the land.

Christian missionaries also sought to convert the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and did so very effectively. While the missions contributed greatly to the breakdown of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and culture, they also paradoxically contributed to their survival by providing a place where people could meet. Missionaries also worked to document and preserve elements of traditional culture. Some missionaries also took on a strong advocacy role in speaking up for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They even provided protection from some of the excesses of the white community. The missions and the policy of protection did lead to dispossession and affect the expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality; two of the greatest factors were separation from the land and from kinship groups.

Separation from the land

Land, as suggested previously, is intrinsic to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Most Westerners have a completely different understanding of land. In general terms, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the land and the people have a deeply **symbiotic** relationship. That is, the people have a responsibility to care for the land through management, rituals and other actions that preserve and maintain the land and in return the land will sustain them. This is very different from the European sense of land ownership.

Symbiotic
Referring to an interaction or interdependent relationship

By 1945, a number of major factors had resulted in the removal of a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their lands. This was especially the case when that land had an economic value for white settlers. The legal doctrine of *terra nullius* held that Australia was technically a land belonging to no one when the British arrived to establish their colonies, and therefore their occupation and ownership of the land were legal. Governments began to reclaim reserve land and establish control over the people already living on reserves.

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Taking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their land had a deeply traumatic effect. Separation from the land meant that they were not able to access food on the land, and cultural practices and ceremonies associated with the land could not be carried out. It also meant that Aboriginal peoples were unable to draw effectively on the spiritual power of the Dreaming and the ancestor spirits. They were also restricted in their access to sacred sites and much tribal lore and law was lost.

The government introduced a policy of protectionism, supposedly to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but its primary purpose was to isolate the people from their land and communities so that the culture would be destroyed. This was particularly applied to children and is evident in the Stolen Generations.

Separation from kinship groups

Dispossession broke up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and disturbed the religious and cultural beliefs and practices around which their lives centred, especially when people were separated or killed. Many languages were lost or severely restricted in their use. Ceremonies related to kinship were not enacted and so were lost. The place and role of tribal elders were undermined, and much cultural information regarding kinship obligations and taboos was also lost. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lost their sense of identity and belonging, not only to the land, but also to each other. This psychological effect was not perceived by most Europeans, who did not understand the deep cultural attachment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had to the land, and the support networks of their kinship groups.

The aim of the policy was to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, usually children, into the dominant 'white' culture, and was notable in the separation of children from their families, resulting in the Stolen Generations.

The Stolen Generations – separation from family

The **Stolen Generations** is a term used to describe the many children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including those of 'mixed' blood, who were removed from their families to be cared for on missions, in institutions such as the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home, or fostered with white families.

Stolen Generations
Term applied to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia taken from their families and raised to be assimilated into the white community

Genocide
Planned extermination of a national, religious or racial group

The stated aim of removing children from their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families was to protect them from the perceived abuses of their communities, to ensure they were given a good education, and to help them assimilate into Western society.

While many have argued that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, especially those who had European blood, were being neglected or abused by their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, it is difficult to prove the extent to which this occurred. In any case, given the high numbers of children removed from their families, it is difficult to believe that all had been in harmful family environments.

DID YOU KNOW?

The film *Rabbit Proof Fence* by Phillip Noyce (2002) is based on the memoirs of Doris Pilkington Garimara and gives a shocking account of how Western Australian bureaucrats such as A.O. Neville managed racial 'integration' in the early twentieth century. Although not all Australians believe the film is completely accurate, it is still a startling dramatisation of themes regarding the Stolen Generations and reflects the prevailing attitude in Australia at that time.

Perhaps one of the greatest ongoing effects of the Stolen Generations is the loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. As it was predominantly an oral culture, the removal of a generation from the lineage of cultural transmission means that far fewer children received their cultural heritage in its complete form. Instead, they were integrated to various extents into European culture. Today, there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have lost touch with the specific knowledge and culture of their communities. They feel the loss of this heritage deeply.

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families was begun in 1995 and published its report, *Bringing Them Home*, in 1997. The final report was based on the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had been forcibly separated from their families and had lost their language, culture, identity, links with the land and thus their spirituality. In many cases, they never saw their family members again. Controversially, the report concluded that **genocide** had taken place. While this removal was primarily a government initiative, Christian churches have acknowledged that they were complicit in the Stolen Generations and have sought ways of repairing the great damage done.

One of the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* report was for an official apology by the Commonwealth Government to the Stolen Generations. Throughout the late 1990s, the Howard Liberal government chose not to deliver this apology. Prime Minister John Howard believed that, however wrong their actions were, the people who took Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children from their homes had the right intentions.

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One of the first acts by the Rudd Labor government, elected in 2007, was to issue the Apology to the Stolen Generations. On 13 February 2008 the nation stopped as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered these words:

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.

Figure 3.4 Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd greets a member of Australia's Stolen Generation in the public gallery after delivering a speech where he apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for past treatment, on 13 February 2008 in Canberra, Australia

FURTHERMORE

Access the Indigenous Law Resources website and scan the *Bringing Them Home* report to find a testimony from an Aboriginal person who was taken from their family. What does this testimony reveal about the implications of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families?

Continuing effects of dispossession

As time has progressed, the effects of dispossession have become evident in many aspects of life in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As well as the despair that is often felt, there are other aspects including health problems, such as kidney disease, loss of eyesight, higher suicide rates and higher rates of incarceration. Other effects include drug and alcohol problems, lack of education opportunities and problems of adequate housing and access to community services. There is no doubt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been severely affected by dispossession, and the government policies, attitudes and lack of understanding that have facilitated it.

Land rights movement

The land rights movement is closely connected to rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in general, and to their spirituality in particular. To reclaim land means to reconnect with their cultures and with their Dreaming stories (if these stories have not already been completely lost). In some circles it has been thought that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did not strongly oppose the European move to take over land in Australia; but there has long been resistance, such as the efforts of warriors; for example, Wyndradyne in the Bathurst area, and the protests in 1938 at the Australian sesquicentenary (150-year anniversary).

One of the most significant actions was the strike at Wave Hill Station in the Northern Territory that lasted from 1966 to 1975. The station was owned by a British company, Vestys. The Gurindji people were locked out of waterholes; kangaroos, their staple diet, were killed; and they worked as stockmen and domestic help on the station as cheap labour. The strike began in 1966 over pay, but it was evident it was a demand for access to their land. The strike galvanised efforts to address the issue of land rights and in 1975, the Australian Government negotiated with Vestys to return a portion of land to the Gurindji people.

The 1967 referendum

The 1967 referendum was a very important step in the movement for equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. On 27 May 1967, the Australian

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people were asked to vote on two questions in a national referendum.

1 Section 127 of the Constitution stated that in working out the population of Australia in a census 'Aboriginal natives shall not be counted'.
   – Question 1 asked the people to overturn this so that Aboriginal people would now be counted in the census.
2 Section 51 of the Constitution stated that the Commonwealth Government could pass laws about 'the people of any race other than the Aboriginal race in any state'.
   – Question 2 asked the people to overturn this so that the Commonwealth Government would have the power to make laws regarding Aboriginal peoples.

The referendum had nothing to do with making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people citizens or giving them the vote. As Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck announced in Parliament in 1961, citizenship had been gained in 1961 and Aboriginal people received the vote in federal elections in 1962.

There was overwhelming support across the country for these changes. The 'yes' vote was supported by both the Holt Liberal government and the Labor Party. Both referendum questions were accepted by more than 90 per cent of the Australian people and by every state and territory. It was a significant moral victory and one of the few successful referenda in Australia.

EXERCISE 3.1

1 **Describe** some features of kinship.
2 **Explain** some of the factors of ceremonial life that relate to the Dreaming.
3 **Describe**, in your own words, the main findings of the *Bringing Them Home* report. Relate them to the issue of the Stolen Generations.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3.1

1 Draw a mind map linking the key issues in this section; for example, the Dreaming, land, kinship and ceremonial life.
2 Find a copy of the Redfern Park speech by Paul Keating, delivered on 10 December 1992. Why do you think this speech was so controversial when the prime minister delivered it? (A recording can be found at the National Archives website.)
3 Write a short essay on the appropriateness, or not, of the use of the word 'genocide' in the context of Australian history.

Native title

Since the 1970s, the issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' land rights has been significant in national politics. It is an issue that has often been misunderstood and has caused sharp divisions among the Australian people.

When European nations settled lands outside of Europe, they usually signed treaties with the original inhabitants. This occurred between the British and the Maori people in New Zealand (the Treaty of Waitangi; 1840), and between American settlers and Native American tribes. The treaties were often one-sided, but the principle of prior ownership was acknowledged in these documents. If uninhabited land was discovered, it was declared *terra nullius*. Captain James Cook declared this when he landed in eastern Australia in 1770, and Captain Arthur Phillip accepted the idea in 1788. Cook and Phillip believed there were very few Aboriginal people. These actions meant they felt that no treaty had to be signed with the local inhabitants. It was not until the 1960s that the issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' land rights raised its head in Australian politics.

- In 1963 the Yirrkala people from the Gove Peninsula in the Northern Territory sent a petition written on bark to the Commonwealth Parliament, protesting being driven off their land to make way for bauxite mining by the Nabalco company.
  – The bark petition failed, as the Northern Territory Supreme Court confirmed the notion of *terra nullius* and argued the Yirrkala people had no special claim over the land.
- In 1972 the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was set up on the lawns in front of Parliament House.
  – The Tent Embassy highlighted both the claim for land rights and the awful living conditions of most Aboriginal people. It was a statement that they were aliens in their own land and the Tent Embassy received international attention.
  – The Aboriginal flag was raised at this time.
- In 1974, the Woodward Royal Commission delivered its report on the issue of Aboriginal land rights in federal territory.
- In a gesture of support, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam travelled to the Northern Territory and handed over to Vincent Lingiari and the Gurindji people some of the land they had been denied in court (recall the strike at Wave Hill Station).
  – Whitlam symbolically poured soil into Lingiari's hands.
- In 1976, the Fraser government passed the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*.
  – Aboriginal peoples could now claim Crown land not being used by other people.

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  - An Aboriginal Lands Council was established to control this land.
- In 1985, Aboriginal peoples were handed ownership of Uluru.

Ultimately these were largely symbolic gestures. During the 1980s, state governments moved on the land rights issue. Western Australia and Queensland were largely unsympathetic, being more concerned about maintaining the rights of mining companies and pastoralists. Most Australian states opposed the idea of native title. Little was actually achieved in recognising land rights.

The Mabo case

'Native title' is a legal term that recognises the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the use and occupation of lands with which they have maintained a continuing, traditional connection. In the 1970s, the Queensland Government began to remove the rights of the people of Murray (Mer) Island in the Torres Strait. One of the Meriam people, Eddie Mabo, took the Queensland Government to court to try to stop this happening. He lost the case. The decision was appealed, and the case eventually reached the High Court of Australia in Canberra. The High Court decided in favour of the Meriam people and recognised the principle of native title (sadly, Eddie Mabo had died by this time). The High Court's 1992 Mabo decision was extremely important. By accepting the principle of native title, the notion of *terra nullius* was overturned.

The court decision stated that native title to land had existed before the arrival of European settlers.

The High Court affirmed that Native Title had not been extinguished on land where:

- it was not 'alienated by statute'; that is, it had not been sold or bought
- the people had had an ongoing relationship with the land since European settlement.

In 1993, the *Native Title Act* was passed by the Australian government to codify the High Court Mabo decision. This Act accepted the notion of native title in law and also recognised the rights of owners of freehold property. Nevertheless, pastoralists and miners were still concerned. Many leased (rented) property from the government. Could Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples claim native title over these lands? The new law caused enormous insecurity.

CONSIDER

'They will take your backyard!' was the cry of many who opposed the native title legislation, particularly in Queensland. This was patently false, as the High Court clearly excluded privately owned land from native title. Talk to older Australians, such as your parents or grandparents, and ask if they remember anything about this debate from the early 1990s.

Figure 3.5 The grave of land rights campaigner Eddie Mabo on Mer Island in the Torres Strait. He was buried on land that was legally his land, following the Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia.

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INVESTIGATE

There are many movies may help you understand the issues raised in this section. These are some of the most significant and helpful. *Ten Canoes* (2006) is essentially an enacted Dreaming story. It shows how these stories are told over a long period of time. *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002) is a classic explanation of the Stolen Generations issue. *Yolngu Boy* (2001) depicts the effects of dispossession on the lives of three young men. *Bran Nue Dae* (2009) is a more light-hearted musical film that touches on significant issues. The movie *Mabo* (2012) deals with the life of Eddie Mabo and the events surrounding the Mabo case.

The Wik case

This issue was dealt with by the Wik decision of 1996. In this case, the High Court argued that native title could coexist with the rights of leaseholders, although the leaseholder's title took priority where there was a conflict of interest. However, the pastoralists and the mining companies who leased lands were still concerned that the court was too much in favour of native title. This led to the *Native Title (Amendment) Act 1998* (sometimes called 'the 10-point plan') passed by Howard's Liberal government. This Act stated that native title and leasehold rights could coexist but that, in any conflict of interest, the rights of the leaseholders would come first. This act returned some power to state governments who could extinguish native title in the national interest.

The importance of the Dreaming for land rights

The Dreaming is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their expression of their spirituality. Similarly, the land is essential for the Dreaming. They are inexorably linked. Thus, land rights build upon the concepts of the Dreaming and are essential for its expression. One of the major aims of the land rights movement is to allow for the proper expression of the Dreaming.

Land rights are important to the Dreaming as they allow for the expression of rituals and ceremonies. They identify sites that are part of the country of the people, including links to totems, language and the ancestor spirits. Furthermore, it is evident that the loss of land can lead to numerous other issues related to health, wellbeing, relationships and sense of identity.

Figure 3.6 Uluru was one of the first sacred sites returned to the traditional owners, in 1985

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EXERCISE 3.2

1 **Describe** the key events in the land rights movement.
2 **Identify** the main people involved in the land rights debate, both for and against.
3 **Explain** why the issue of land rights is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3.2

1 Look up the names mentioned in the text and write notes on their relationships to the land rights movement.
2 Construct a table defining the key terms that relate to the land rights movement.
3 Prepare a debate on the following topic: 'Westerners do not understand the issues involved in the land rights movement'.

3.3 RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN AUSTRALIA – 1945 TO THE PRESENT

The religious landscape

Religious expression in Australia has changed significantly since 1945. Australia has become a microcosm of the religious life of the world, and almost every religious tradition, ancient and modern, is represented by the hundreds of communities that dot the suburbs of Australia's largest cities. The increasingly universal nature of Australian society has been created out of, and in spite of, an isolationist and often racist history. Australian Commonwealth immigration policy played the central role in restricting immigration from 1901 until the 1960s. The policy itself was a reflection of the ideal of a **homogenised** white Australia.

Thus Australia remains, in essence, a Christian nation. Public holidays tend to reflect Western Christian rituals, in particular Easter and Christmas. Christian prayers are said at the opening of parliament, and when politicians have a faith to declare to voters it tends to be Christian. Nevertheless, religious affiliations have changed radically since 1945. Christianity still claims to be the major religious tradition, but others are growing more quickly and there is a significant growth of those with no religious affiliation. Some would say that Australia is now a post-Christian society.

Homogenous
Having a common origin

Table 3.1 Numbers of adherents to religious traditions in Australia

Religion	1996	2001	2011	2016	% growth 2011–16
Buddhism	199 812	357 813	528 977	563 674	6.56%
Christianity	12 582 746	12 764 342	13 150 670	12 201 605	–7.22%
Hinduism	67 279	95 473	275 535	440 300	59.80%
Islam	200 855	281 578	476 290	604 242	26.86%
Judaism	79 805	83 993	97 336	91 025	–6.48%
Other	68 600	92 400	342 476	221 593	–35.30%
No religion*	2 948 888	2 905 993	4 796 786	7 040 717	46.78%
Not stated	1 550 585	1 835 598	1 839 649	2 238 735	21.69%

* No religion includes secular beliefs (e.g. atheism) and other spiritual beliefs (e.g. New Age)
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics '2016 Census Religious Affiliation by Sex', viewed 22 January 2018

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Table 3.2 Percentages of Australian population who adhere to religious traditions

Religion	1996	2001	2011	2016
Buddhism	1.1%	1.9%	2.5%	2.4%
Christianity	70.9%	68%	61.1%	52.1%
Hinduism	0.4%	0.5%	1.3%	1.9%
Islam	1.1%	1.5%	2.2%	2.6%
Judaism	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%
Other	0.4%	0.5%	1.6%	0.9%
No religion*	16.6%	15.5%	22.3%	30.1%
Not stated	8.7%	9.8%	9.4%	9.6%

* No religion includes secular beliefs (e.g. atheism) and other spiritual beliefs (e.g. New Age)
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics '2016 Census Religious Affiliation', viewed 22 January 2018

Table 3.3 Number of adherents to Christian traditions in Australia

Religion	1996	2001	2011	2016	% growth 2011–16
Catholic	4 799 000	5 001 600	5 439 300	5 291 839	−2.7%
Anglican	3 903 300	3 881 200	3 679 900	3 101 187	−15.7%
Uniting	1 334 900	1 248 700	1 065 800	870 188	−18.4%
Presbyterian	675 500	637 500	599 500	526 692	−12.1%
Orthodox	497 000	529 400	563 100	502 800	−10.7%
Baptist	295 200	309 200	352 500	345 144	−2.1%
Lutheran	250 000	250 400	251 900	174 023	−30.9%
Pentecostal	174 700	194 600	238 000	260 558	9.5%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, '1996 and 2001 Censuses of Population and Housing Table 12.20 Religious Affiliation', '2011 Census Religious Affiliation', viewed 6 April 2015

Changing patterns of religious adherence: using the Australian census

Questions about religious adherence are optional questions on the census forms and there has been a variety of responses over the years. Christianity is still the largest religious tradition in Australia, despite decreasing numbers among the Australian population. Within Christianity there are various expressions and these have changed significantly over the years. Since 1981, Catholics have replaced Anglicans as the largest **denomination**. Tables 3.1 to 3.3 show the numbers and percentages of people who responded to the religious question on the census forms for 1996, 2001, 2011 and 2016. (When updated census figures are released, a new table and commentary will be placed on our website.)

Denomination
An organised subgroup of the Christian church

Pentecostalism
Movement within Christianity that places emphasis on the possibility of direct contact with the Holy Spirit

These tables reveal interesting information, some of which is immediately obvious. Christianity is by far the largest religious tradition in Australia, although its share of the Australian population has dropped from 61.1 per cent in 2011 to 52.1 per cent in 2016. Catholics and Anglicans are the largest Christian denominations and the Lutheran Church has experienced the greatest decline during those five years. While small in numbers, the **Pentecostal** churches have experienced the largest proportional growth of Christian denominations over the same period, an increase of 9.5 per cent.

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INVESTIGATE

Check the NCLS and the CRA websites. What information do they contain that may be helpful to religious groups in Australia?

Other information that can be gleaned from the census includes the fact that, apart from Judaism, the main non-Christian religious traditions are growing. Hinduism is now the fastest-growing religious tradition in Australia. The other four main religious traditions, Islam (2.6 per cent, now the second-largest religious tradition), Buddhism (2.4 per cent), Hinduism (1.9 per cent) and Judaism (0.4 per cent) together make up only 7.3 per cent of the Australian population.

The percentage of those who declare they have no religion has increased to 30.1 per cent; the percentage of those who do not answer the optional religion question has increased to 9.6 per cent.

As well as the Australian census, information can be gained from other research tools. One of the most significant is the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), which is conducted by a cooperative venture of churches in Australia. The last NCLS was held in 2016 and a wide range of results are available on the NCLS website. The information gathered by the NCLS is more detailed about patterns of church attendance. Its main drawback is that the survey is conducted during a church service on a particular Sunday, so it does not gather information about those who are not in the church that particular day. However, the NCLS survey results are extensively used by religious groups to understand religious attitudes and to plan for the future.

The Christian Research Association (CRA) also conducts statistical and other research relevant to religious groups in Australia. The Cambridge *Encyclopaedia of Religion in Australia* also analyses religious data from the census.

It is interesting to note trends that emerge from the census data. For example, is Christianity growing or declining? Are other religious traditions growing, declining or staying the same? Does secularism have a substantial impact on Australia? Are there limitations regarding what you can infer from the information on the websites? Ensure that you include your reasoning for each of your answers.

The current religious landscape

Christianity as the major religious tradition

When Australia was colonised by the British, they brought Christianity with them, and the Church of England in particular. Since World War II, there have been significant changes to Christianity and its composition.

Catholicism was present on the First Fleet, but it remained second in numbers to the Church of England (Anglican Church). Since 1945, the Irish/English composition of Christianity has changed with the arrival of Orthodox Christianity from Eastern Europe and Southern European Catholics from Italy, Malta, Spain, Croatia and Poland. In the 1986 Australian census, the Catholic Church became the largest denomination and has retained that position. The reasons for the changes to the Australian religious community are myriad, but some of the main ones include immigration, conversion, the rise of New Age religions, secularism and the rise of atheism and non-religious worldviews and disenchantment with traditional religious traditions.

Despite a decline in the percentage of Christians, Christianity (at 52.1 per cent of the population in 2016) is by far the major religious tradition (Islam is second with 2.6 per cent). Christianity is reflected in the lifestyles of many Australians, the legal and political system and the dominant culture. Declining church attendance may be the result of an ageing population, limited Christian migrant intake and disenchantment, for a variety of reasons, with institutional Christianity. Of the Christian denominations, Pentecostalism is growing, but does have an issue with high numbers leaving as well, sometimes called the 'revolving door syndrome'.

Immigration

As suggested, immigration was extremely important in influencing Australia's religious profile in the years following 1945. Prior to 1945, the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (popularly called the 'White Australia policy') ensured that those who came to live in Australia were primarily of white Anglo-Saxon origin. Immediately following World War II, most migrants came from Europe and were Christian. Post-war migrants included Italian Catholics and Orthodox Christians from Eastern Europe and Greece.

With the Vietnam War, there was an influx of refugees (known as 'boat people') from South-East Asia. To take one example, many Vietnamese who arrived in Australia were Buddhist, but because Vietnam had been a French colony, many were also Catholic. Their arrival coincided with a relaxing of the White Australia policy and the introduction of **multiculturalism**, which replaced the former government policy of cultural assimilation. Refugees from Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia brought Buddhism, those from India and Fiji brought Hinduism, Sri Lankans brought both Buddhism and Hinduism, while refugees from Lebanon, Turkey, Indonesia and Bosnia brought Islam. Australia was not only a multicultural society; it was also to become a multi-faith society.

Multiculturalism
Policy that recognises cultural diversity within an overall cultural structure rather than expecting a nation to only reflect one particular cultural position

Hinduism in Australia

Hindus first came to Australia from what is now Indonesia, as traders to northern Australia as early as a thousand years ago. After colonisation they came as labourers, such as the Fijian workers on the sugar-cane fields in Queensland, and as itinerant traders throughout remote Australia. Many also came as servants of British people who had lived in India.

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New Age movement
Promotes and develops individual spirituality rather than (institutionalised) religion; New Age can include astrologers, yoga practitioners, séance attendees, shamans, neo-pagans and a whole range of other religious practitioners

Meditation
The practice of regulating and training the mind

Yoga
Any of various systems of discipline in the Hindu philosophical system concerned with achieving the union of the mind and body with the universal spirit

Reincarnation
The concept of rebirth in physical form to the Earth

karma
The effects of one's actions in life, be they good or bad; the natural consequences of actions

Many left as the White Australia policy came into force, but some stayed and others arrived. Due to pre-Commonwealth immigration, in 1911 there were 4106 'Hindoos' in Australia. 'Hindoo' was a census classification that included Afghan Muslims, Punjabi Sikhs and Indian Hindus. By 1947, only 2189 people identified themselves as 'Indian', an indication of the effectiveness of the White Australia policy.

Although it had been progressively modified since 1958, the White Australia policy ceased to exist completely after the election in 1972 of Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party. Since the abolition of the White Australia policy, there has been a steady stream of Hindu people arriving, mainly from India, Sri Lanka and Fiji. These are mainly professionals and their families who wanted to escape the restrictions of the caste system and the strict application of their religious tradition or escape from ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka. Although escaping their culture to an extent, once in Australia, homesickness and the need for a familiar way of life leads many Hindu people to create religious communities and temples here. India is now one of the highest source countries for migrants to Australia, so the number of Hindu people is growing quickly.

About half of Australia's Hindu people live in Sydney, with more than 90 per cent living in capital cities. Temples have been built in all Australian states except Tasmania, particularly in the capital cities. One of the most impressive is the temple at Helensburgh, south of Sydney. This is a temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu (more accurately, Lord Venkateshvara, an *avatar* or manifestation of Lord Vishnu). It is here at the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Helensburgh that the annual festival to Lord Ganesh takes place. This is the most popular festival among Hindu people in New South Wales. There is also an impressive Murugan Temple at Mays Hill, a Shaiva temple catering for the Tamil community.

While Hinduism has largely been expressed in terms of the Indian community, there has been some growth of Hinduism among Westerners, mainly as a result of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, commonly known as the Hare Krishnas.

The trend towards **New Age** religions has also introduced a number of Hindu concepts into the language and practice of many people who may not necessarily consider themselves religious. These practices include **meditation** and **yoga** and concepts such as **reincarnation** and **karma**.

Figure 3.7 A Hindu temple in Perth, Western Australia, opened in 1992

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Figure 3.8 Hindu people celebrate Holi, the festival of colours

The other experience of Hinduism familiar to many Australians is through travel to Hindu countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Fiji and one of the most popular destinations, the island of Bali in Indonesia.

Hinduism is, in general, a religious tradition that tolerates diversity. In Australia, Hinduism has a fairly homogenous expression because it is closely linked to the cultural and racial origins of the Indian subcontinent.

In the 2016 census, the percentage of Hindus increased from 1.3 per cent in 2011 to 1.9 per cent of the population, and continues to be the fastest-growing religious tradition in Australia. This suggests that Hindu immigration is increasing and that the religion is slowly spreading. Although this is still not a large percentage of the population, it does show how immigration affects the distribution of religions in Australia.

Buddhism in Australia

The earliest Buddhists in Australia were probably Chinese people who were part of the gold rushes of the 1850s. Many Chinese people had an ability to accept a diversity of religious expressions so, while many Chinese Australian people were probably also Confucian or Daoist, or worshipped ancestors and local or clan deities, they were all classified as Buddhist.

Australian society did have several prominent sympathisers with Buddhism through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These included a number of Christian Buddhist groups (although the Australian Christian churches were formally opposed to Buddhism) and the religiously curious, such as Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. Deakin was the second prime minister of Australia and a former follower of the Theosophical Society, which encompassed Buddhist teachings. While Deakin may have supported the concept of 'pure Buddhism', he was also an ardent supporter of the *Immigration Restriction Act*.

In the 1970s, Buddhism grew with the influx of Indo-Chinese refugees following the Vietnam War and communist victories in South-East Asia. The growth of Buddhism in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s coincided with growing disenchantment with traditional Western organised religion. There was also a growing interest in Eastern mysticism, of which Buddhism provides examples. The rise of New Age spirituality, which is heavily influenced by Buddhism, also contributed. Many Westerners are attracted to Buddhism as an expression of spirituality that is not necessarily theistic (based around the belief of a god or gods).

The period from the 1980s onwards saw renewed efforts in Buddhist evangelism, including the building

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Figure 3.9 Buddhist monks bless a whale sand sculpture during a Greenpeace anti-whaling protest on Bondi Beach in Sydney, 2008

of temples (such as the Nan Tien Temple near Wollongong), public seminars and visits by the Tibetan leader-in-exile, the Dalai Lama. His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama is a popular speaker in Australia, often galvanising support for the Free Tibet movement.

Because of the arrival of South-East Asian migrants, as well as Buddhism's appeal to disillusioned Westerners and other 'seekers of the truth', Buddhism grew rapidly in Australia in the early twenty-first century: from 1.9 per cent in 2001 to 2.5 per cent in 2011. In 2016, it had dropped back to 2.4 per cent, but it is still one of the largest religious traditions after Christianity. Of the religious traditions other than Christianity, Buddhism seems to have the most appeal to the Western population of Australia. Much of Buddhism's growth and diversity reflect the immigration patterns of the past 30 years. Often Buddhist groups seek to build temples and invite monks that reflect their particular cultural roots.

While Buddhism certainly reflects the diverse cultural origins of recent settlers in Australia, there are several factors that appeal to Australians in general. With the rise of a globalised society, Australians are more familiar with the teachings of religious traditions other than Christianity. Concern for the environment, the value given to life, vegetarianism and related concepts have appealed to those Australians seeking alternative values and lifestyles. Practices identified with Buddhism, such as meditation, are commonly practised and the atheistic individualism that underlies Buddhist philosophy is also attractive to modern Australians.

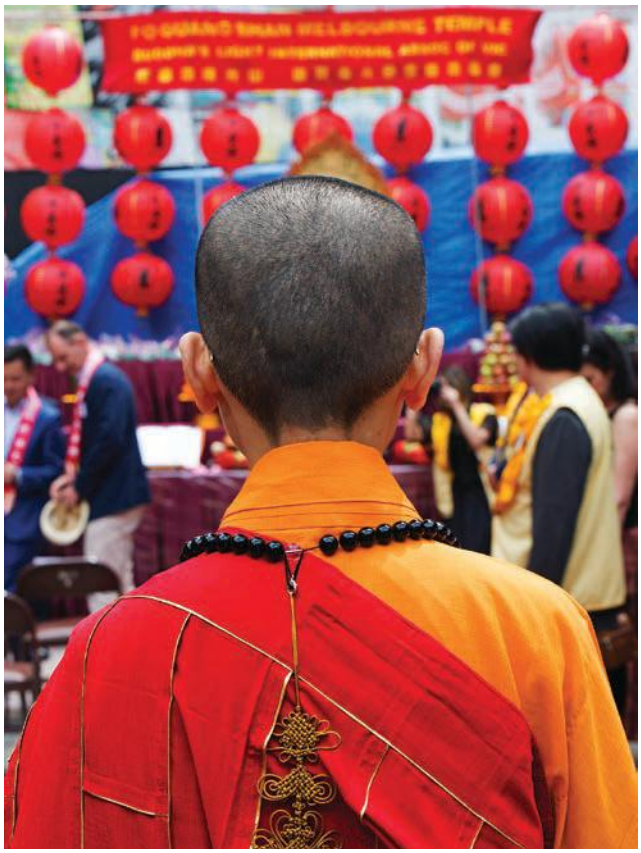

Figure 3.10 Buddhist nun at an open-air shrine in Chinatown during Chinese New Year celebrations in Melbourne

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Islam in Australia

Islam is the second-largest religious tradition in Australia, after Christianity. There are more than 600 000 Muslim people in Australia, making up about 2.6 per cent of the population (according to the 2016 census). They come from all over the world, and from virtually every continent. Most Muslim people in Australia live in Sydney or Melbourne, with concentrations in certain suburbs. Mosques have been built in some of these areas, such as the Gallipoli Mosque in Auburn (by Turkish Australians), the Lakemba Mosque in Sydney (by Lebanese Australians) and the Preston Mosque in Melbourne.

Islam may have been the first monotheistic religious tradition to have come to Australia. As early as the mid-eighteenth century, fishermen from Macassar (southern Sulawesi, in modern Indonesia) visited the north and west Australian coasts. There is also some evidence that worship in Cape York includes reference to the Arabic term for God, Allah. When European settlement began to extend into central Australia from the mid-nineteenth century, camels were used to aid that expansion. Experienced camel drivers were brought into Australia, mainly from north-west India and Afghanistan, particularly during the mid-nineteenth century (see Chapter 2).

Post–World War II migration brought Muslims as well as Christians from countries such as Turkey and Lebanon. Since the abolition of the White Australia policy and the influx of refugees from the Middle East since the late 1970s, numbers of Muslims have increased again. Migrants have come as refugees from conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and the former Yugoslavia (as well as through general migration from these countries), and also Turkey, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The majority of Muslim people in Australia are Sunni Muslims, but there are significant Shi'ite groups (for example, the Al Zahra Mosque in Arncliff, Sydney) as well as smaller groups such as the Ahmadiyya community. In the ongoing conflict between the USA and other Western nations and parts of the Arab world, Muslims have often been identified in the popular media as being the enemies of the West or of Christianity. This factor, and conflicts within the Muslim community, have made it more difficult for Islam to be accepted in Australia. The Cronulla riots of December 2005 demonstrated how racial and religious tensions can sometimes flare up.

The distinctive dress of Muslim women, such as the hijab or headscarf, has also led to misunderstandings in Australia and overseas. From time to time the emergence of extremist Muslim groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, feed hostility towards Islam. Islam in Australia is not a single identifiable cohesive community or practice. There is much diversity in Australian Islam. This ranges from traditional to liberal expressions of Muslim beliefs and practices, to the great diversity of the cultural backgrounds that exist in Australian Islam.

Figure 3.11 Men pray in Lakemba Mosque, Sydney

Figure 3.12 Muslim people have sought to adapt to Australian culture while maintaining their beliefs and practices

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EXERCISE 3.3

1 **Describe** the role of the census in relation to the changing patterns of religious adherence.
2 **Assess** how the position of Christianity as a religious tradition in Australia has changed over the years.
3 **Explain** how immigration has influenced the numbers of one religious tradition other than Christianity.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3.3

1 **Identify** one religious tradition other than Christianity in your area. Contact that group and interview a member to determine the way immigration has influenced that group.
2 Construct a graph of one aspect of the information contained in the census figures. Using that information, predict the movement of the figures in the next few years, explaining why you have drawn those conclusions.
3 Write a paragraph on the following topic: 'As Christianity declines in Australia, it will soon be overtaken as the major religious tradition in Australia.'

Denominational switching

Strictly speaking, denominational switching means the exchange of church members between different Christian denominations. An example would be a Protestant Christian from the Anglican Church choosing to join a Uniting Church service because the style of worship and the attitudes of the congregation are preferable to that individual. While this switching sometimes takes place, adherence to Christianity in general continues its slow decline.

In the 2016 census, it can be seen that identification with the Anglican faith has continued to drop, while Pentecostal identification has slightly increased. Part of the reason for this shift is that some Anglicans are choosing to join Pentecostal services. Culturally, this can be explained in a number of ways. In Pentecostal services, charismatic leaders preach with great authority. Many Christians are attracted to the freshness and vitality of these services, with their emphasis on free forms of liturgy and contemporary music led by trained musicians and singers, often involving a strong emotional response. Many Pentecostal churches have utilised technology and the media well to spread their message and advertise their services.

CONSIDER

In 2007, accusations were made that the Hillsong Church had 'hijacked' the *Australian Idol* television competition. Certainly, many of the finalists were associated with Christian groups. Perhaps that is not so surprising. In recent years Hillsong artists and music have topped the charts and received Grammy awards. Many Christian churches have an emphasis on music and singing. How many pop and rock singers do you know of who have come from church backgrounds or church choirs?

Figure 3.13 Pentecostal churches, such as Hillsong, are among those benefitting from denominational switching. Hillsong has influenced the style of worship in many other countries, such as this service in the Netherlands.

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Predominantly regional churches, they usually have larger congregations and a less formal style of worship. The Pentecostal Christian beliefs and values in some circles may be considered to be relatively conservative; for example, those regarding gender identity and relationships.

This issue of denominational switching has raised serious concerns in many church hierarchies, and considerable thought has been given to how to address some of the issues involved, to counter the possible demise of some denominational structures.

In recent years the term 'denominational switching' has also been applied to other religious traditions; for example, referring to those who change from Orthodox to Progressive Judaism.

The rise of New Age religions

The 1960s saw a strong reaction to the post-war prosperity and the generally conservative attitudes found in most Western cultures. This coincided with the beginnings of an awareness of different religious traditions, the globalised world, ease of travel, new forms of global communication and a lessening of commitment to traditional structures such as Christian churches. Although many of the New Age religions such as paganism, Wicca, the self-improvement movement and the Children of God do not feature in great numbers in the census, they are, nevertheless, part of a wider movement of interest towards non-Western or non-mainstream religions.

While New Age religions were regarded as fringe groups in the 1970s, their ideas and practices are now firmly entrenched and accepted in Australian society. These include meditation, holistic medicine, the human potential movement, vegetarianism and environmentalism.

For a more extensive discussion of the New Age movement, see the comments in Chapter 16 in 'New religious expression'.

Secularism

A significant number of Australians are not religious, and that number is growing. Secularism believes that religion should be kept separate and distinct from society. This trend towards secularism could be due to far greater levels of technological and scientific knowledge, plus the adherence of many religions to antiquated and conservative attitudes; for example, towards women, and the scandals and disputes in several Christian institutions. Of lesser importance, perhaps, is that people no longer have to follow a specific religion to be a citizen of a country, to be considered a good and moral person or to hold a position of influence in (some) societies, as was the case a few hundred years ago. Whatever the reasons, more people are deciding that religion is irrelevant to their lives and are choosing to replace traditional religions with other worldviews or have no religion at all. In general, the number of people who choose 'no religion' on the census form are considered secular. The numbers of those unaffiliated to a religion, or who identified with secular (e.g. atheism) or other spiritual beliefs (e.g. New Age), increased in the 2016 census to 30.1 per cent of the population.

It has been suggested that many people, including those who have no religious affiliation, may still pray or have spiritual experiences. This is discussed further in Chapter 16.

EXERCISE 3.4

1 **Recall** what is meant by denominational switching. Give one example.
2 **Explain** what has led to the rise of the New Age movement?
3 **Define** 'secularism'. How has it impacted on the religious life of the Australian community?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3.4

1 In a graphic form of your choice, illustrate the attractiveness of Pentecostalism in modern Australia.
2 Debate the following topic: 'The New Age is just the old age reinvented'.
3 Talk to a religious person and a secular person. Construct a table illustrating the differences in their beliefs.

Religious dialogue in multi-faith Australia

Since 1945, religious denominations have sought to break down the barriers that separate them. These barriers came from the sectarianism of previous years and the suspicion with which other religious traditions were regarded in the past. In a modern multicultural Australia, denominations cannot easily ignore each other. There have been significant moves since 1945 to develop dialogue and cooperation between the diverse groups. This began with the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948, following the end of World War II. It has taken the form of **ecumenism** and interfaith dialogue.

Ecumenism
Movement within Christian churches towards unity among different Christian denominations

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Figure 3.14 This Taize (France) ecumenical community includes different Christian variants as well as representatives of other religious traditions. This photograph is of a prayer of thanksgiving in memory of Brother Roger held in Taize. Brother Alois greets the venerable Hewon Sunim, the representative of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. With the presence of a representative from another religious tradition it becomes an example of interfaith dialogue.

Interfaith dialogue
Move to greater cooperation and harmony among different religious traditions

Ecumenism has a more particular emphasis than **interfaith dialogue**, focusing on cooperation within a particular religious tradition. It is a Christian term for discussions between different denominations of Christianity to increase understanding and effect social change cooperatively.

Interfaith dialogue is a conversation established between hierarchies of different religious faiths and their members, or initiated by members of the different religious traditions at a local level. The main aim of these conversations is to develop familiarity and promote understanding and dialogue.

Both these movements emphasise commonality rather than differences.

Ecumenical movements

Ecumenism has developed as a growing movement due to several reasons. As rural towns grow smaller, churches have seen the need to work cooperatively and share resources. Together with this fact, there is less emphasis in Australian society on denominational difference and a growing belief in the need to emphasise the unity of Christians, part of a changing ethos in Australia and across the world. One of the earliest attempts to develop ecumenism was the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) that began meetings in 1967.

National Council of Churches in Australia

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) has a number of departments that foster cooperation between the churches at formal and informal levels. It grew from several ecumenical organisations, such as the Australian Council of Churches (ACC), and was formed in 1994. An important task of the NCCA has been to reverse the racist and discriminatory legislation that was affecting the social dynamic in Australia. For example, the ACC passed a resolution in 1966 calling for several reforms in the White Australia policy. The stance of this Council represented the stance of Christianity as a whole, setting a precedent for what was to become a relentless movement against racism and towards multiculturalism. The NCCA also lobbies governments and other decision makers from a Christian perspective as well as providing resources for the churches and the Australian community. The NCCA has a varied and comprehensive approach to Christian churches working together. This can range from acting to promote peace, working to promote Christian unity, assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, training for safe churches, raising issues of social justice, supporting chaplains for disaster recovery and speaking out against gender-based violence. The NCCA is also involved in interfaith dialogue.

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NSW Ecumenical Council

The NSW Ecumenical Council (NSWEC) was established to give churches a shared voice when following their religious beliefs and undertakings in New South Wales. The NSW Ecumenical Council began in 1982, although it had its origins in 1946 as part of the development of the ACC and the NCCA. It encourages the pursuit of social justice and operates many cooperative charity events. A central tenet of this organisation is the idea of unity between those who believe in God. This attitude allows the involved churches to focus on the tasks they perceive as their Christian duties, rather than competing with one another while seeking the same ends. The NSWEC also is involved in community projects such as helping settle refugees and providing accommodation to the poor. Many initiatives are done in cooperation with the NCCA.

Uniting Church in Australia

One concrete example of ecumenism at work in a formal sense is the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), which took place on 22 June 1977. The UCA sought to develop liturgies that reflect its Australian context, encouraged social justice programs, sought to minister to different cultural communities and supported those discriminated against in Australian society, including women, who are now in positions of leadership, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the LGBTQIA community.

While much of the move towards ecumenism is formalised at official church levels, often it is the work of significant people such as Reverend Fred McKay, former Superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission, which represents ecumenism for ordinary Australians. There are many other groups involved in ecumenical projects, many at a local level and often unacknowledged at official or national levels. Other examples include the cooperative teaching of special religious education in schools, the National Church Life Survey and academic institutions such as the Australian College of Theology. Nungalinya College, a theological college in Darwin, Northern Territory, trains Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clergy for several denominations, such as the Catholic, Uniting, Lutheran and Anglican churches.

Interfaith dialogue

The years since World War II have seen the Australian community reassess its attitudes to many issues, including the place of religious traditions other than Christianity. Even Christian churches have reconsidered their long-held view that other religions are errors at best, or the work of the Devil at worst. This has led, especially since the 1970s, to a new involvement in interfaith dialogue.

Much of this dialogue is at an official level, with groups such as the NCCA involved in discussions with official bodies representing other religious traditions.

Figure 3.15 Ross Uniting Church in Tasmania

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The NCCA has established the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews. Some specific groups that also meet include the Council of Christians and Jews, in several states, which seeks to develop services and education seminars as well as encourage dialogue. The Affinity Intercultural Foundation was established by Muslim youth to help develop harmony with fellow Australians, and ISRA (Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia) focuses on education.

On the Dalai Lama's visit to Australia in 2007, the Australian National University in Canberra hosted an interfaith dialogue symposium. Several religious organisations attended. Other groups are involved in interfaith dialogue, such as the Association for Studies of Religion, which supports the teaching of Studies of Religion in schools, and regularly organises teachers' workshops that include speakers from a variety of religious traditions. Indeed, the provision of Studies of Religion in the NSW Higher School Certificate is, in itself, an example of interfaith dialogue.

In modern Australia, it is expected that religious traditions will find opportunities to maintain open dialogue in a multicultural and multi-faith society. Seeking to affirm the desire for peace, human dignity and the sanctity of human life, interfaith dialogue transcends the particular interests of any one religious tradition. Often interfaith dialogue takes place in Australian communities where it is done so at an informal level, seeking understanding and mutual respect.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality and religious traditions moving towards reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to the acknowledgement by various groups in Australia of the great injustices done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the dispossession that occurred in the past. It also expresses willingness and commitment to rectify these wrongs and, where possible, to improve the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the future.

REVEREND FRED MCKAY – OUTBACK ACHIEVER AND ECUMENIST

There can be little doubt that Reverend John Flynn was an important person in the development of the outback of Australia. As founder of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), his dream of a 'mantle of safety' was largely implemented and his depiction on the Australian $20 note is a fitting recognition of his pioneering work.

Reverend Fred McKay, a Presbyterian minister, was Flynn's successor and has been given the title of 'outback achiever' in recognition of his own work. His vision, efforts and attitudes have provided an even greater benefit to the work of the church in Australia and the development of initiatives in the outback. During World War II he served as a chaplain in northern Africa, and was particularly interested in ecumenical work with the Anglican and Catholic chaplains – a pattern for his future ecumenical efforts. Upon his return to Australia, McKay returned to parish work for a time. This gave him a chance to be with his family who, in the years ahead, would endure long separations from him.

In 1951 John Flynn died and Fred McKay was appointed his successor as Superintendent of the AIM. Under his leadership a range of initiatives began – Old Timers' Homes for aged care in Alice Springs, hostel accommodation for students in larger towns, Bush Mothers' Hostels, the Far North Children's Health Scheme, St Philip's Residential College for 500 students in Alice Springs and the John Flynn Memorial Church, also in Alice Springs. This is a uniquely Australian church, designed and built from materials gathered in the outback.

In 1956, the United Church in North Australia was formed, with McKay playing an important role. This was the forerunner to what would become the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977. Fred McKay was an innovator, a leader and a worthy successor to John Flynn. The friend of bushmen and prime ministers alike, he had the unique ability to befriend and inspire others.

Fred McKay died on 31 March 2000 and is remembered as one of the great Australians of the twentieth century. While he is often overshadowed by John Flynn, it was the leadership of Fred McKay that ensured the AIM, now the Frontier Services of the Uniting Church, continues as one of the best examples of a Christian church's ministry to outback Australia and cooperation between Christians, an example of ecumenism in action.

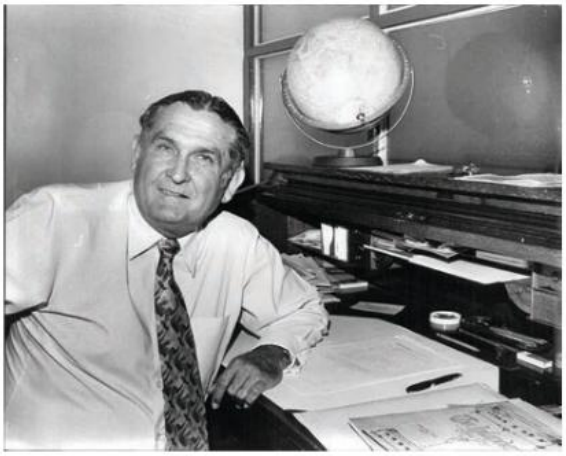

Figure 3.16 Reverend Fred McKay, Superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission, in his office at the Presbyterian Church Headquarters in 1974

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Figure 3.17 The Sea of Hands is a community initiative, embraced by many religious traditions, to show support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

After the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation ended in December 2000, Reconciliation Australia was established as a body aimed at providing an ongoing national effort for reconciliation. In order to benefit all Australians, Reconciliation Australia aims to encourage and form stronger relationships for all Australians. Its board of directors is made up of people from the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These people are esteemed leaders in their respective fields and are all driven to stop at nothing in order to foster reconciliation in Australia. Their vision is for Australia to be a country that guarantees an equal life chance for all, and one that recognises and respects the important contribution, place and culture of the first Australians: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As a non-profit and independent body, their ambition is to remove the obvious gap in life expectancy between the wider Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Reconciliation has become an important expression of spirituality in Australia, especially as religious traditions recognise the mistakes of the past. Most Christian churches have developed groups that represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the leadership of the denomination, such as the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (Uniting Church), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (Catholic) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (Anglican). Many churches have ordained Aboriginal clergy and Nungalinya College in Darwin trains Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clergy for the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran churches. Other religious traditions have also actively supported reconciliation in Australia, including Jewish leaders, the Federation of Islamic Councils, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and Vishva Hindu Praishad.

In 1996, the leaders of the Catholic and Anglican churches, as well as other Christian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, met with the Australian Government to call for reconciliation. That call was largely ignored officially by the government, but Christians and other religious leaders have forged ahead, providing examples of leadership to the nation's leaders. There have been significant changes in the relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and many aspects of Australian society. This was best expressed when thousands of people walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge on 28 May 2000 to call for reconciliation. Other walks for reconciliation took place across the nation.

Now, recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights include Welcome to Country and the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' symbols in many church services or other religious celebrations and actions, such as smoking ceremonies. It is significant that the oldest inhabitants of this land are also part of this changing life and faith, and that recognition is given to the implications of the Dreaming.

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EXERCISE 3.5

1 **Define** the terms 'ecumenism' and 'interfaith dialogue'. Make sure the difference between the two is evident.
2 **Describe** one example of ecumenism, noting its significance.
3 **Explain** one example of interfaith dialogue, noting its significance.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3.5

1 Write a paragraph about either ecumenism or interfaith dialogue, and **evaluate** its importance to a multi-faith Australian society in the future.
2 Find a Dreaming story that could relate to the teachings of one other religious tradition. Rewrite the story making those links more obvious.
3 Explore recent reconciliation efforts undertaken by a religious tradition and write a paragraph explaining how that religious tradition has, or has not, affirmed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality.

Figure 3.18 A rooftop view in Egypt shows a church's dome complete with cross and mosque minarets as these places of worship coexist harmoniously

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The Dreaming is central to Aboriginal peoples' spirituality.
- Kinship, ceremonial life and obligations to the land and people must be expressed as part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality.
- Land is one of the most important issues to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Dispossession was the active policy of the colonisers of Australia.
- Dispossession has affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lives through separation from the land and kinship groups.
- The Stolen Generations has had a lasting impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The fight for land and land rights has been evident in Australia since the early days of colonisation.
- Court decisions, such as Mabo and Wik, together with the *Native Title Act 1993*, have sought to redress the wrongs of the past.
- The Dreaming is inexorably linked to the land.
- Census data reveals much information about trends in religious adherence.
- Christianity is declining as a percentage of the population while other religious traditions are increasing.
- There is a large rise in the numbers of Australians who have no religious adherence.
- Christianity is still, by far, the major religious tradition in Australia.
- Immigration has had a great impact on religious expression in Australia since 1945, especially in the growth of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.
- Pentecostal churches have increased through the growing trend of denominational switching.
- The New Age movement has had a profound effect on the religious expression of Australians and is now firmly entrenched in Australian culture.
- The increase in the 'No religion' category of the census reveals a growing move towards secularism in Australia and a decline in commitment to Christianity in particular.
- Ecumenism is a growing significant movement in Australian Christianity.
- Fred McKay was an important Australian ecumenist.
- Interfaith dialogue is also now a feature of Australian religious life.
- All religious traditions seek to move towards reconciliation in their relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Figure 3.19 At Bunjil Shelter in in the Black Range Scenic Reserve, Victoria, is the only known rock art of Bunjil. Bunjil is a major figure within the Dreaming who is credited with creating the land, people, plants and animals of the Aboriginal peoples. He is depicted here with his dogs. This art is widely regarded as one of the most significant cultural sites in south-eastern Australia.

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HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer 10 multiple-choice questions (1 mark each) and one short-answer question (5 marks).

SECTION I – MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS (10 MARKS)

Marks

1 What best describes the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the land? **1**
- **(A)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples own the land.
- **(B)** The land was *terra nullius*.
- **(C)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have obligations to care for their 'country'.
- **(D)** No corroborees are to be performed on the land.

2 Dispossession has contributed to: **1**
- **(A)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples moving to the coast.
- **(B)** A breakdown in ceremonial life.
- **(C)** Identification with a totem.
- **(D)** The Dreaming.

3 What was one of the decisions of the Mabo High Court judgement? **1**
- **(A)** The abolition of *terra nullius*
- **(B)** The Wik decision
- **(C)** The Howard 10-Point Plan
- **(D)** Land rights and pastoral leases could coexist

4 What issue was identified as most significant in the Stolen Generations report *Bringing Them Home?* **1**
- **(A)** Dispossession
- **(B)** Tribal law
- **(C)** The White Australia policy
- **(D)** Ceremonies

5 What was the effect of the *Native Title Act*? **1**
- **(A)** Pastoral leases extinguish native title
- **(B)** Native title no longer exists
- **(C)** The concept of native title was accepted
- **(D)** Mining cannot happen on pastoral leases

6 Australia's multicultural and multi-faith society is the result of: **1**
- **(A)** Australia's convict past
- **(B)** Immigration following World War I
- **(C)** Religious conversion
- **(D)** Abolition of the White Australia policy

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Refer to Table 3.4 when answering questions 7 and 8.

Table 3.4 Percentages of the population that adhere to religious traditions in Australia

Religion	1996	2011	2016
Christianity	70.9%	61.1%	52.1%
Buddhism	1.1%	2.5%	2.4%
Islam	1.1%	2.2%	2.6%
Hinduism	0.4%	1.3%	1.9%
Judaism	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%
No religion	16.6%	22.3%	30.1%
Not stated	8.7%	8.6%	9.6%

7 What was the second-largest religious tradition in Australia in 2016? **1**
- **(A)** Christianity
- **(B)** Islam
- **(C)** Buddhism
- **(D)** No religion

8 Which of the following does **not** account for the changes in the percentage of those who indicate 'No religion'? **1**
- **(A)** Rise in Pentecostalism
- **(B)** Rise in Secularism within Australia
- **(C)** Rise of the New Age religions
- **(D)** Migration of people to Australia who identify with 'No religion'

9 Which of the following is an example of ecumenism? **1**
- **(A)** National Council of Christians and Jews
- **(B)** Uniting Church of Australia
- **(C)** Pentecostal churches
- **(D)** Affinity Intercultural Organisation

10 Which of the following is an example of interfaith dialogue? **1**
- **(A)** National Council of Churches
- **(B)** Council for Christians and Jews
- **(C)** Uniting Church of Australia
- **(D)** The New Age movement

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION (5 MARKS)

With reference to the present religious landscape, and using your own knowledge, account for the growth of the 'No religion' category in the Australian census. **5**

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FOUR

BUDDHISM: THE BASIC FACTS

[YEAR 11 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

Those who see worldly life as an obstacle to Dharma see no Dharma in everyday actions. They have not yet discovered that there are no everyday actions outside of Dharma.

DOGEN ZENJI, FOUNDER OF SOTO ZEN (1200–1253 CE)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the origins of Buddhism, with reference to the India of its day
- the life of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha
- the Buddhist community, the sangha
- the early Buddhist councils
- the three schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana
- principal teachings of Buddhism
- the Three Jewels
- the Four Noble Truths, including the Noble Eightfold Path
- the marks of existence: *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*
- karma, samsara and nirvana
- sacred texts and writings including:
  - the Tripitaka
  - the *Lotus of the Good Law*
  - the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.*
- core ethical teachings:
  - the Five Precepts
  - the Vinaya.
- personal devotion; *puja* in the home.

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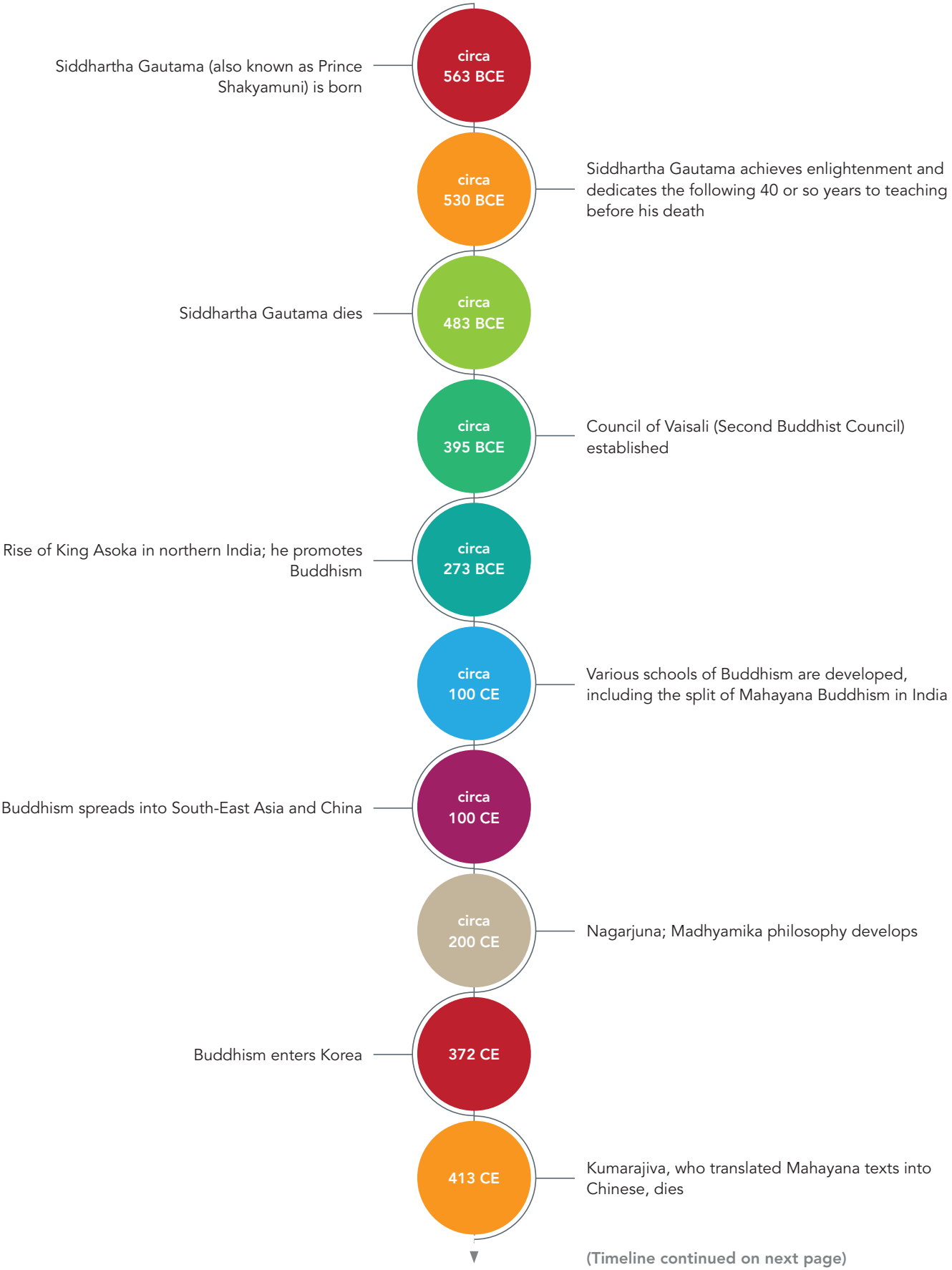
TIMELINE



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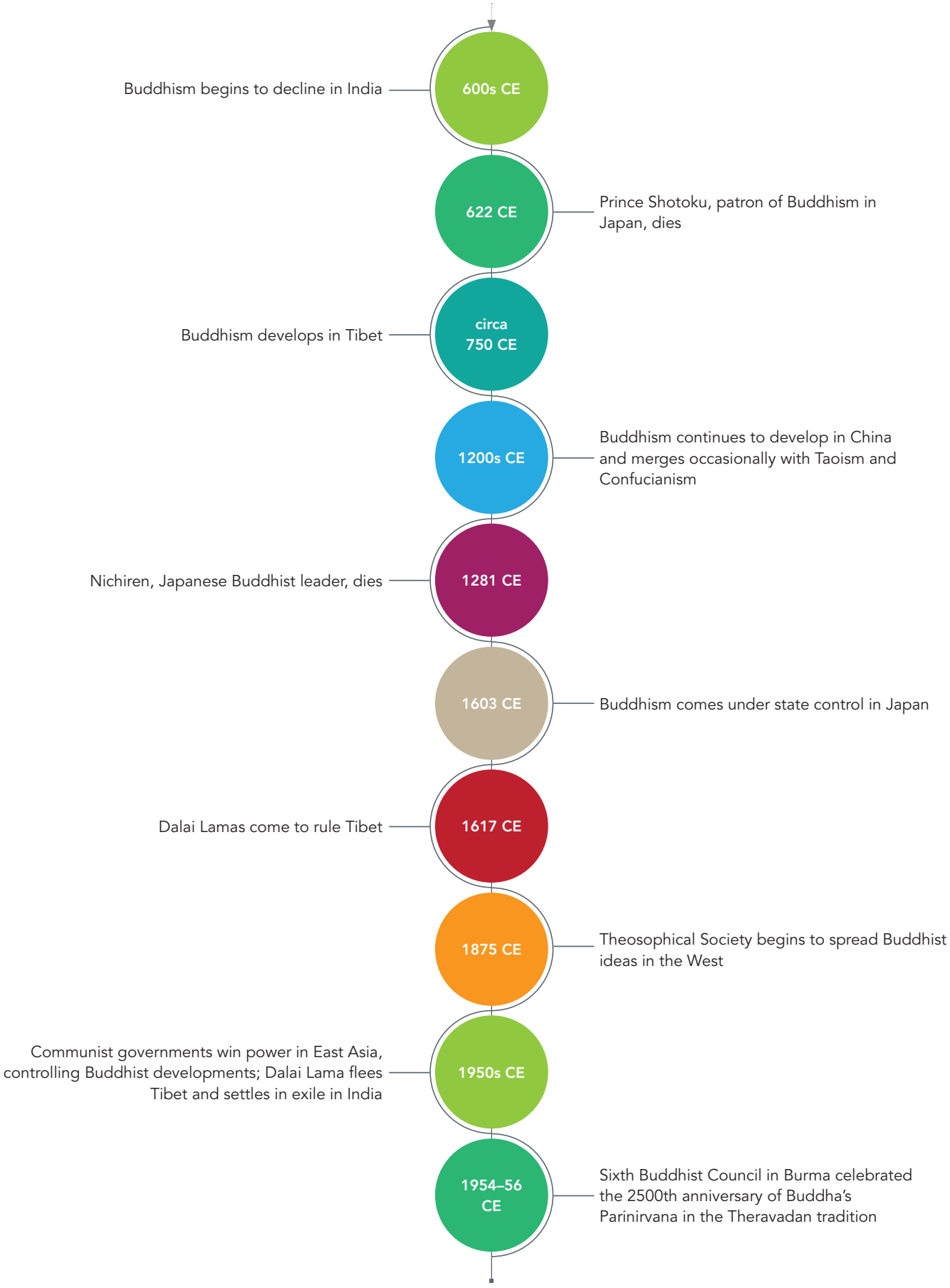

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Buddhism does not insist on a belief in God. Buddhism can be both an atheistic religion and a spirit-filled religious experience – these two aspects have much to do with its rise and growth and the variants of Buddhism. It has successfully navigated the cultural and racial distinctions evident in other religious traditions and is now the third-largest religious tradition in Australia. Buddhism claims to be a way of life that avoids the extremes of denial and indulgence and proposes a **middle way**, as taught by its founder, Siddhartha Gautama (who lived some time between 563–483 BCE), also known as the **Buddha**. This middle way is outlined in the **Noble Eightfold Path**, often represented as a wheel with eight spokes. It is sometimes called the **Dharma Wheel**.

A lotus flower is also used to symbolise Buddhism. A lotus flower has its roots in the mud, its leaves on the water and a beautiful flower standing tall.

Middle way
The middle way of Buddhism avoids the extremes of indulgence and asceticism; it is the ideal life for a Buddhist

Buddha
'Enlightened one', usually applied to Siddhartha Gautama as 'the Buddha' but there are numerous Buddhas in this tradition

Noble Eightfold Path
The Fourth Noble Truth, the middle way, the way of life for Buddhists

Dharma Wheel
Eight-spoked wheel representing the Noble Eightfold Path, the way of life for Buddhists

Figure 4.1 The eight-spoked wheel, representing the Noble Eightfold Path

INVESTIGATE

If you want to learn more about Buddhism, there are many websites on the subject. One of the best is BuddhaNet, but you might also look at the Buddhist Council of New South Wales or All About Religion websites.

4.2 ORIGINS: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Buddhism began as a branch that sprouted from the main trunk of Brahmanism, its thought and practice, around 2500 years ago. Brahmanism developed from Vedism and would emerge later as classical Hinduism. Understanding Hinduism will help to better understand Buddhism. Like Hindus, Buddhists believe there may be periods when the cosmos ceases and a new order is created in its place, but something always exists. In Hinduism, the soul (**atman**) moves through cycles of life. This system is called reincarnation.

Buddhism accepts many of the assumptions of the Indian worldview evident in Hinduism including reincarnation, but it rejects the idea that people are duty-bound to stay in the social or caste positions that they were born to. Buddhism offers a chance for universal religious and/or psychological development free from class or sex discrimination. In Buddhism, the Hindu idea of **reincarnation** persists in the concept of **samsara** (rebirth).

Atman
The Hindu 'Self', similar to the concept of the individual soul

Reincarnation
The concept of rebirth in physical form to the Earth

Samsara
Cycle of rebirth or reincarnation

Figure 4.2 The cycle of *samsara* (rebirth) was a Hindu concept accepted by the Buddha

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Nirvana
State of no suffering, desire or sense of self, resulting from enlightenment; the extinction of desire (*dukkha*)

Kshatriya (Ksatriya)
One of the four castes in India – traditionally, the ruling or military class

Varna
Concept commonly known as 'caste'; the four varna form the basis of Hindu society

Brahmin
One of the four castes in India – the priestly class

The Buddha was a man named Siddhartha Gautama, or Prince Shakyamuni (Sakyamuni), who lived around 563–483 BCE. He showed how this system of repeatedly coming back into existence could be broken. He proposed a way of ceasing to be reborn by turning off our desires for rebirth. This extinguishment of desire leads to the ultimate goal of Buddhism: **nirvana**, a word meaning the state of no desire. Adherents could, like the Buddha, achieve enlightenment and escape the cycle of samsara.

During the Upanishadic period in India (see Chapters 8 and 9 on Hinduism), which coincided or just predated the rise of Buddhism, many wanted to speak about the gods, religion and philosophy. There was a religious change in the air. Most eager to talk were the members of the **Kshatriya (Ksatriya) varna** (caste). This varna included kings, nobles and army leaders. They were not, however, the top caste and discussion on religious matters was not traditionally their domain. The priestly varna of **Brahmins** was higher in status and treated all religious matters as exclusively theirs. In those times of religious change, a number of new developments in Brahmanism became apparent, including the development of classical Hinduism in a form recognisable today. Brahminism (and Hinduism) had become a much more ritualised system of varna, with structured liturgy including sacrifices, a multitude of deities and a very formal and rigid society dominated by the priests. It is against this background that Buddhism and other similar traditions, such as Jainism, arose.

CYCLE OF REBIRTH

Hindus believe that after people die, the 'soul' (atman) becomes attached to another body and another mind. Therefore, atman live again and again through many different lifetimes. The Buddha suggested that there was no self/soul (see later the discussion of *anatta*). However, the concept of rebirth continues and the essential person (self/soul) continues the cycle of rebirth.

The life lived now is just one of thousands of lives already lived. This is called samsara (reincarnation), which means to be reborn.

If people have been good in one life, they are born into a new life that is better than the last life. If people have been bad, they are born into a worse life. This system easily explains why one person will be born with multiple talents and opportunities, and why another will not. It can be a very conservative system that easily explains away social differences and injustices.

Because Prince Siddhartha wanted to become a holy person, he had to acquire the deepest knowledge regarding these Brahmanic ideas.

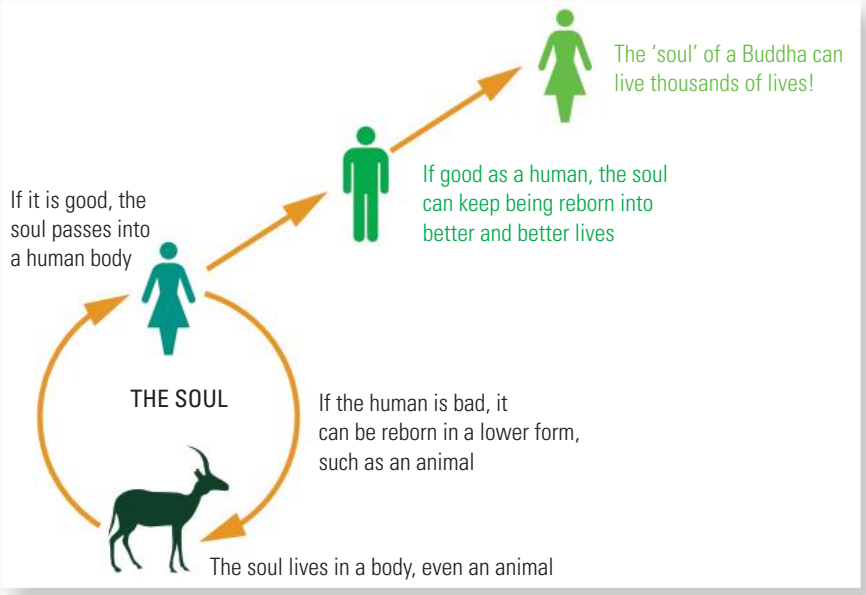

Figure 4.3 The cycle of rebirth

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4.3 THE BUDDHA

The Buddha's life and enlightenment

Siddhartha Gautama was, by birth, a member of the Kshatriya varna. Much of what is known of him is told in legends and stories recorded much later after his life. What is clear from his teachings is that he was a very significant teacher and philosopher. He tried to explain why life is the way it is and how the suffering that is part of life can be escaped.

The stories of his life are written down in texts such as *The Mahavastu* (The Great Event) and *The Buddhacarita* (The Acts of the Buddha). These books were written hundreds of years after the Buddha lived, and by this time his life had been strongly mythologised by his followers. In these books, the Buddha is challenged by demons and protected by gods as he seeks the truth. These myths seem at odds with his pragmatic non-theistic philosophy. Because of these texts, the Buddha remains both a religious leader and an extremely profound thinker. The Buddha strongly affirmed he was not a deity, simply a human being.

The ***Jataka*** stories detail incidents and events in the previous lives/births of the Buddha and appeal to the Buddhist masses. They are essentially parables. His recorded life is based around several episodes that show how he struggled to find an answer to the mysteries of human existence.

Texts written well after the Buddha lived tell the story of the person, Siddhartha Gautama. He was a prince from a royal family who lived in Kapilavastu, close to the India–Nepal border. The myths say that at his birth, a wise and holy man appeared at the palace and predicted that the boy would be either a great king or a great religious leader. His father, the king, had no intention of letting his son become a religious leader. It is said that he kept the young prince locked in the palace with all his needs taken care of. The prince grew, married young and produced a son. Once he had met his obligation to produce an heir to the throne, he left the palace and this was where his true journey to enlightenment began. Siddhartha had seen four things that posed the chief problem of his life. He saw an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a holy man. These are called the Four Sights and are very important in Buddhism. To the prince, only the holy man seemed truly happy.

These four encounters were the basis of Siddhartha's philosophy. Its central concern is the idea that all life contains suffering. Ageing, sickness and death challenge all of us.

Jataka
Tales of the Buddha in his former existences; they are Buddhist parables

It is then said that the prince threw himself into a religious life. He followed the teachings of many holy men. Many of these sages taught the prince to deny all

Figure 4.4 A mural depicting the life of Buddha in the temple Wat Phnom in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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the desires of his body. It is said the prince starved himself and lived on one grain of rice per day. Ultimately, however, the prince was dissatisfied with the difficulty and pointlessness of such activities. He proposed a middle way between a life of lavishness and extreme religious asceticism; a system that could be used by everyone. He began eating properly. By doing this, he disappointed many of his followers who believed asceticism was the correct spiritual path.

It was at about 35 years of age that the prince came to Bodh Gaya. In a deer park he sat beneath a bodhi tree and vowed not to move until he had investigated existence to his ultimate satisfaction. During one night, now the most important day for Buddhists, the prince went through an extraordinary experience in which he gained memory of the thousands of lives he had lived before. The whole of existence was shown to him through this experience. Demons taunted him but, ignoring them, the prince became 'the awakened one' or 'the enlightened one' – the meaning of the term 'Buddha'. He came to the realisation of the reality of life, expressed in the Four Noble Truths. Siddhartha can be referred to as just the Buddha, Siddhartha Buddha or Shakyamuni Buddha. Buddhists refer to anyone who has achieved enlightenment as a Buddha.

By achieving enlightenment, the Buddha was able to explain a basic plan that would allow humanity to deal with life – or, more to the point, the illusion of life. The Buddha also rejected much of the ritual of Hinduism and the role of the Brahmin priests. He determined that ascetic practices had failed in the achievement of spiritual enlightenment and that it could be achieved without the need for complex rituals or even the need for the gods. Thus the Buddha believed there was no need for devotion to God or gods.

Some Buddhists, particularly those in the West, might deny the mystical/spiritual concepts of demons, soothsayers and magic, yet they do stress that the Buddha was attempting to engage with religious issues. Moreover, many Buddhists believe that the Buddha's words contain a message of liberation for all time. A few scholars, however, seek to emphasise that Siddhartha Gautama was primarily a philosopher and that his teachings are a reaction to other philosophical movements of his day.

At the time of the Buddha, India was undergoing a social transition. The predominantly rural nations that made up India were transforming into growing urban centres. This placed a new emphasis on the individual, as men and women became separated from the village and family life that had given them their traditional identity. Powerful monarchs began to take over villages that had been run in a democratic fashion.

Sangha
The community of Buddhists, including the monastic community and the broader Buddhist community (usually refers to the monastic community when spelled with an upper case 'S' while a lower case 's' refers to the more general community of Buddhist adherents)

Figure 4.5 The Buddha tried to find enlightenment through asceticism, but rejected this path in preference to the 'middle way'. Pictured is a golden statue depicting a gaunt Buddha with ribs and veins showing while he fasted attempting to achieve enlightenment.

INVESTIGATE

Some films relating stories of the Buddha include *Little Buddha* (1993) which is a present-day story in which the life of the Buddha features. *Siddhartha* (1972) is a film based on a novel by the German author Herman Hesse; it shows the life of a man, similar to the Buddha, seeking enlightenment. Other famous Buddhists such as the Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, are the subjects of several films. See, for example, *Kundun* (1997) and *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997).

Small religious groups, or communities, were being formed, called **sanghas** – a word that became very important to Buddhists later on as these formed around the Buddha. The Buddha, then, was not only a religious leader or a simple philosopher, but also a force against the new growth of the monarchies and the perceived rigidity of the emerging Hinduism.

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At this time also, people began to seriously consider what constituted an individual. A number of philosophies developed in India to explore this issue. These philosophies were carried around India by ***shramanas***, wandering teachers and philosophers. Some of these *shramanas* were strongly religious; others were radically atheist.

Putting the Buddha in the centre of this debate indicates that he was not simply a religious leader. He struggled to find a middle way between these philosophical schools. He did this by explaining what it meant to be human. He came to understand the interactions between aspects of life that make human beings the way they are. The Buddha reasoned that life was infected by suffering, decay and death. Birth is what conditions being alive. The cause of birth is 'becoming' or coming into existence. It is a grasping for existence that causes becoming. The Buddha understood that this grasping comes from our craving for life. This craving is linked to the nature of our physical bodies, and our physical bodies are conditioned by thinking. Thus, in reversing all this, control of the mind and thinking can control the craving for life, and thus control decay and death. This led to the development of his concept of ***dukkha***, often translated as 'suffering', expressed in the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha as a model for Buddhist life

The Buddha can inspire Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. His inspirational nature can be understood as that of both a philosopher and a religious leader.

Video

The Buddha is a model of one who achieved enlightenment and so shows that it is possible. His teachings and example are a guide to help other people achieve enlightenment. The Buddha became what is known as a Bodhisattva, one who has attained enlightenment and postponed the achievement of nirvana to assist others on the path; this is a model of selflessness.

Shramana
Wandering teacher, monk or philosopher

Dukkha
Basic element of the human condition, translated as 'suffering' or 'distress' or 'anguish'

He also taught others how to achieve enlightenment through his sermons, now included in Buddhist sacred texts. As a teacher, he showed the importance of the middle way and has been an inspiration to many who seek to follow in his footsteps towards enlightenment.

Table 4.1 The qualities of the Buddha as a model for Buddhists

Qualities	As religious leader/philosopher
Forbearance	During his night of revelation, the Buddha fought off a number of spirits (or inner desires) attempting to stop him from realising his teachings. Siddhartha impressed many with his dedication to unveiling the false nature of reality and the self.
Truth over luxury	The prince left his father's palace although he was provided with everything he could want. Seeking the truth was more important. Buddhism demonstrates how, if the world is illusory, no one can find happiness in possessions.
Wisdom and insight	Seeing the old man, the sick man and the dead man, the Buddha dedicated himself to explaining why life was bound by suffering. In the process of becoming enlightened, the Buddha developed a sophisticated philosophy that describes the nature of reality and the self. He inspires others to teach and develop his system.
Tolerance and inclusiveness	The Buddha claimed that his system is a tool to help, not a dogma that has to be believed. He said that if Buddhism does not work for you, then use another system. This idea of Buddhism as a tool rather than an exclusive group is radical in comparison with most religions.

EXERCISE 4.1

1 **Explain** why both the eight-spoked wheel and the lotus flower are appropriate symbols for Buddhism.
2 **Describe** the context in which Buddhism developed and how it influenced the Buddha's ideas.
3 **Explain**, using examples from his life, why the Buddha is considered a model for Buddhist life.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 4.1

1 Construct a timeline of the life of the Buddha, noting significant events in his life.
2 Debate the following topic: 'Buddhism is an atheistic religion'.
3 Interview a Buddhist monk, nun or layperson and discover how and why the Buddha is significant to them.

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4.4 THE SANGHA AND THE COUNCILS

Formation of the Sangha

By the time Buddha reached the end of his life, he had assembled numerous disciples around him. These people were nuns and monks and formed the original community known as the Sangha. According to Buddhist texts, following his night of enlightenment, the Buddha remained seated under his tree for a number of weeks in a state of bliss that he had achieved. He was joined by five men he had known as companions before his enlightenment. These men had left Siddhartha after he returned to eating normally. The Buddha preached to these men the Four Noble Truths, and Ajnata Kaundinya became the first of the five to be known as a disciple of the Buddha.

The most vital job of the Sangha was to recount the words of the Buddha, as well as coming to an agreement on what they recalled him saying. They continue to do this today, with Buddhist councils determining the nature of texts and their validity. For part of the year, members of the Sangha would travel to India by foot and inform people about the philosophy of the Buddha. They would return to communal areas, such as parks, and to **monasteries** that had been built for them, during the rainy season.

Monasteries
Places where monks and nuns live

It was due to these practices that Buddhism became linked to monastic life. Until this point in India, religious people had either wandered the streets or, if they were Brahmin priests, had lived at temples or royal courts. The Buddhist Sangha was different in that it formed a monastic community devoted to the teaching and quest for enlightenment. The monastery or group of Buddhist teachers became the most important institution in early Buddhism. The earliest discussions and texts are now interpreted to express how the nuns and monks should conduct their lives rather than the teachings of the Buddha himself. These are called the Vinaya texts. Monks must live under the guidance of several hundred rules, which include not consuming alcohol, using any money or having sex.

There are dozens more rules for nuns. It is evident that the Buddha had allowed his system to be accessible to all people. Despite men originally being seen as having a higher status than women, women were eventually included by the Buddha to use his teachings on an equal footing with men.

When discussing the Buddhist sangha, a differentiation is generally made between the monastic community, usually spelt with an upper case 'S' (Sangha), and the wider Buddhist community, spelt with a lower case 's' (sangha).

Figure 4.6 A female monk reflects against the backdrop of the many temples in the Bagan Valley in Myanmar

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Mahapajapati requests a female Sangha

Mahapajapati was both the Buddha's aunt and his stepmother, having married his father the king alongside her elder sister, Mahamaya, the Buddha's birth mother. Mahapajapati raised the prince from infancy when his mother the queen died several days after his birth. Mahapajapati was eager for there to be a female order of the Sangha. It is said that she approached the Buddha and asked three times if women could join the Sangha. Three times the Buddha refused, probably because he was concerned about their safety. Later, Mahapajapati approached him again. This time she waited nearby with other women, their heads shaved and dressed like monks. At this point the Buddha agreed that there would be a female Sangha.

For those times, the idea that women could join a wandering order of philosopher–monks was a radical one. It has been discussed previously that the Buddha provided a system of thought and views that was open to all – not only the priestly caste of India. Because of Mahapajapati's request, Buddhism began to eradicate gender as well as class differences. The move to admit women, however, was not immediate, and the view that women can never be as spiritually developed as men remains in certain sections of Buddhism. This is most often the case in Theravadan Buddhist countries such as Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka where monasteries for women are rare.

The early councils

After the Buddha died, several councils of Buddhists were held so that everyone could agree on the words the Buddha had said, and debate rules on how members of the Sangha (nuns and monks) should live and behave.

The first council was held immediately after the death of the Buddha. At this meeting, those present settled the contents of the Dharma (the Buddha's teachings; also *dhamma*) and codified most of the rules for how a monk or nun should live, in the Vinaya texts. It is said that one of the Buddha's closest companions, Ananda, recited from memory all the Buddhist scriptures to that date, and these were accepted by all the monks. The first council was responsible for the beginning of the formation of the **Pali Canon** (**Tripitaka**), so called because it was written in the Pali language.

Pali Canon
Buddhist sacred text, otherwise called the Tripitaka; Pali is the language in which it is written

Tripitaka
Literally 'three baskets'; this is the Buddhist sacred text; sometimes called the Pali Canon

The second council was held at Vaishali perhaps 70 years later, and another great recitation of texts took place. The council was memorable as some monks were attacked for receiving money. This point was debated heatedly and eventually those monks who had touched money (against the Buddha's wishes) were judged as being in the wrong. The splits at this council led, eventually, to the formation of the variants – Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism – the latter would go on to become extremely popular in East Asia (China, Japan, Vietnam and Korea).

A few centuries after the Buddha, the Emperor Asoka, a king who had inherited or conquered most of northern India, ruled as a new convert to Buddhism. He established the third council. It was during and after this time, 200 BCE to 100 CE, that Buddhism flourished most extensively in India. It also spread outside the country as Asoka sent missionaries to both the East and the West (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of Asoka).

Figure 4.7 Seated Buddhist monks chant and read prayers at a ceremony in Laos. The original Sangha referred to the monastic community.

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The third council also resulted in an affirmation of 'the approved teaching of the elders' (Theravada) and the addition of the third part of the Pali Canon, the *Abhidharma* (or *Abhidhamma*), a discussion, or commentaries, of the Buddha's sermons and the completion of the Tripitaka.

The first two Buddhist councils were important because they allowed members of the community to overcome problems that arose after the death of the Buddha who was, while he lived, the ultimate source of authority. After his death, the members of the Sangha had to agree precisely on what he had said. Once these teachings were authenticated, the texts they formed became the new authority for the young community.

4.5 THE MAIN SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism is divided into three main groups or schools, also called variants. These groups have sometimes been understood according to their regional locations:

1 Theravada Buddhism: in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos
2 Mahayana Buddhism: in Vietnam, China, Korea and Japan
3 Vajrayana (a form of Mahayana Buddhism): in Tibet.

More recently these schools have spread throughout the Western world to Europe, the Americas and Australia.

It is estimated that there are 100 million Theravada Buddhists in the world, and up to a billion Mahayana Buddhists. The Theravada tradition (literally, 'way of the elders') is considered the orthodox school of Buddhism. It claims to be more traditional, more in keeping with the teachings of the Buddha. Its concentration on monastic life, however, is seen as limiting the more profound experiences of the Buddha's message to monks. Theravada is called Hinayana by its opponents, which means 'small vehicle' Buddhism. Mahayana (literally, 'great vehicle') Buddhism developed in India as a breakaway movement in the centuries after the Buddha's death. It has spread into East Asia. It also strongly respects the Buddha's teachings, but adapts more flexibly to local influences, particularly in China.

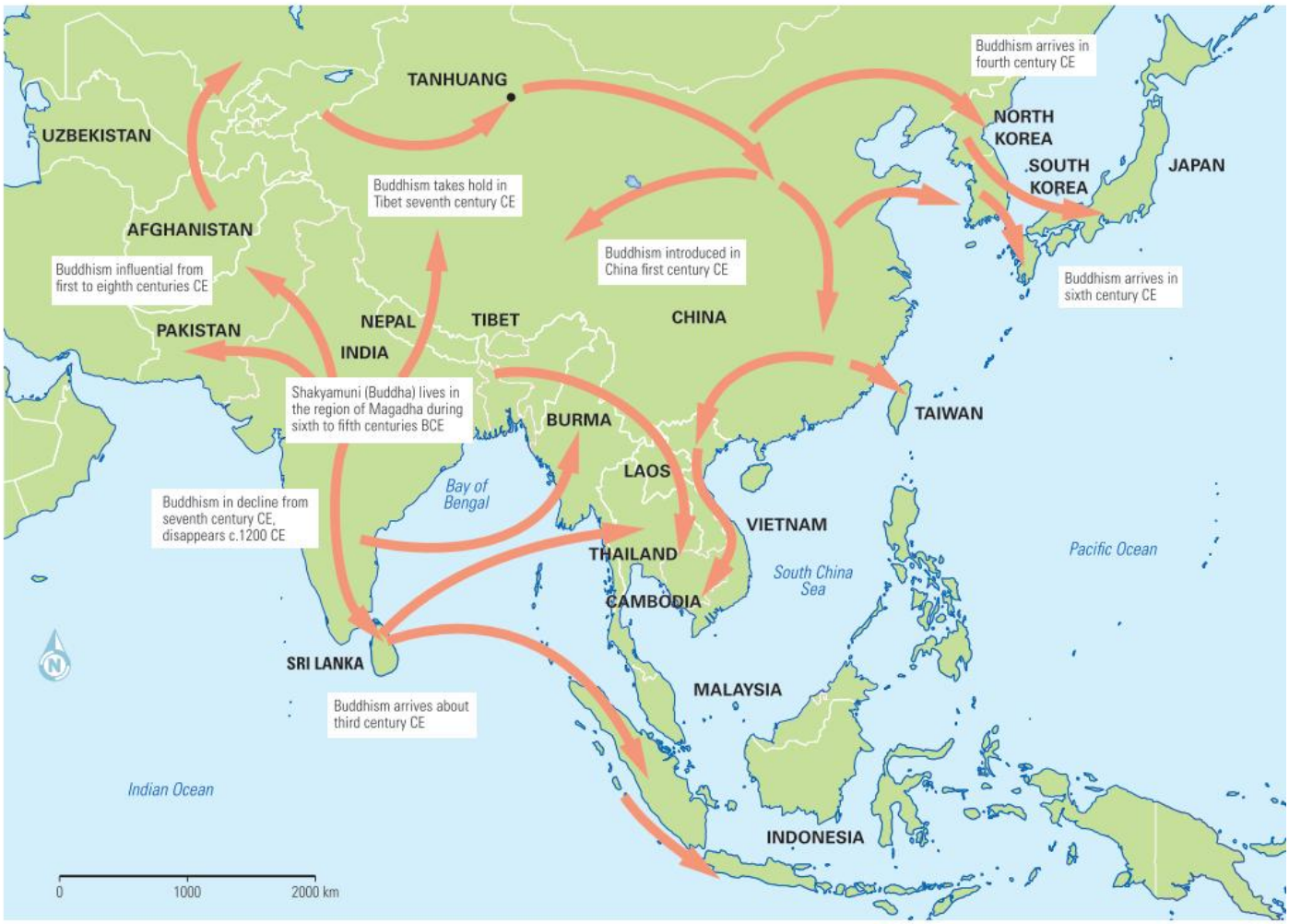

Figure 4.8 Buddhism's heart lies in South-East Asia (Theravada), East Asia (Mahayana) and the mountain regions around Tibet (Vajrayana). It is only in recent times that Buddhism has been reintroduced into its homeland of India.

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Theravada Buddhism

Theravada Buddhists claim that their form of teaching and monastic behaviour is the oldest of all the Buddhist traditions. They promote the idea that nirvana, or liberation to the realm of non-desiring, can only be achieved by those who dedicate themselves totally to the Buddha's message. Through personal experience and analysis, thought and **meditation**, Theravada Buddhists can attain nirvana, but today, most require assistance from the wise members of the Sangha. Some, like the Buddha, are able to achieve enlightenment on their own.

An ***arhat*** (Sanskrit) or *arhant* (Pali) is someone who has eliminated their desire for rebirth; that is, they have achieved enlightenment. Theravada Buddhism generally accepts that only male monks will reach enlightenment. The progress to becoming an *arhat* in the Theravada tradition marks it as different from the Mahayana tradition. In this latter tradition, the goal is not to work only for personal development, but to achieve nirvana for all beings.

In Theravada Buddhism there is a strong emphasis on monks, so much so that many nunneries in the Theravada world have closed down. This issue is not helped by the fact that the Buddha seems to have been ambivalent about the status of women. In some passages of scripture he clearly encourages nuns, while in others he suggests that Buddhism will suffer by accepting women into the Sangha. It has been suggested by modern Western Buddhists that these latter comments were added by men uncomfortable with women becoming *arhats*. Theravada Buddhism generally rejects the concept of gods, spirits and mystical influences often found in Mahayana Buddhism. It is often seen as an atheistic Buddhism, much closer to the Buddha's original teachings.

Mahayana Buddhism

Mahayana began in India as a breakaway movement within the early Buddhist community. This group changed monastic rules, adapted texts and rejected some changes that had been made in the first council of Buddhists. Mahayana then developed into several groups. One of these is the Madhyamika school of Buddhism. This school keeps to a middle way between the existence and non-existence of things – thus resolving a controversy that erupted early in Buddhist history. The other main group is the Yogacara. Mahayana Buddhism practises a 10-stage path of the **Bodhisattva** – one who has achieved enlightenment but remains dedicated to helping other people.

Mahayana Buddhists in India took their form of Buddhism to Tibet, Vietnam and China. As it adapted to Chinese culture, Mahayana became more and more popular. By the time of the Sui Dynasty in China (from circa 580 CE) Buddhism had been adopted as a major court religion and then passed into Korea.

From there, it passed into Japan, where, after a few false starts, it became a success. Madhyamika thinking had numerous elements in common with Taoism (Daoism), a religion already established in China.

Meditation
The practice of regulating and training the mind

Arhat
One who has achieved the final goal of Buddhist practice, the attainment of nirvana; an enlightened and saintly person

Mahayana is connected very closely with the Bodhisattva path. When the Buddha achieved enlightenment, and attained nirvana, he taught for a further 40 years before he died. Once he had died, he passed through Parinirvana; that is, he completed nirvana. Thus, each individual could achieve enlightenment but the path is centred on self-discovery. Early Mahayanists wondered about the rest of humanity; how could becoming enlightened help the rest of the world? A Bodhisattva, therefore, is one who achieves enlightenment but takes an oath to reincarnate, or abide in spiritual form, or even postpone nirvana to assist all beings in achieving enlightenment. In this way the Bodhisattva is delaying their own nirvana for the sake of every other being.

Mahayana Buddhists promote the Buddha not simply as a teacher but as an all-knowing transcendent being. We might say that Mahayana Buddhism is driven more by the personalities of Bodhisattvas and other religious and mystical beings, but Mahayana is also joined to a strong system of philosophy. Mahayanists developed the idea that most phenomena on Earth are empty of substance. This **doctrine** suggests that what seems real is, as the Buddha said, illusory. Mahayana Buddhism also suggests there are spiritual beings or deities that can assist adherents in their search for enlightenment; it is no longer an atheistic form of Buddhism.

Many Mahayana schools suggest that nirvana can be easily and sometimes suddenly achieved. Enlightenment is available to everyone: monk, nun, layperson, farmer and king. It is argued by Theravada Buddhists that there is much in Mahayana practice that goes beyond the teachings of the Buddha. This includes the ideas of Bodhisattvas and sudden enlightenment. Another thing that is exceptional about Mahayana is its popularity: it is by far the most popular school of Buddhism. Most Mahayana groups agree that women can achieve enlightenment as easily as men. Some groups even suggest that enlightenment can be achieved suddenly, whether or not one is in a monastery. Mahayana Buddhism is a more inclusive form of Buddhism than Theravada.

Bodhisattva
One who has achieved enlightenment but forgoes nirvana to help others achieve enlightenment

Doctrine
A body of teachings that form the basis of a belief system

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Figure 4.9 A Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism is one who has achieved enlightenment but remains on Earth to assist others. These Bodhisattva statues are at the Bai Dinh Mahayana Buddhist Temple in Vietnam.

Vajrayana Buddhism

Vajrayana (literally, 'thunderbolt') is a form of Buddhism that has developed mainly in Tibet. It is variant within Mahayana Buddhism. Vajra is also a bright, indestructible substance, so Vajrayana came to be understood as 'diamond' Buddhism. It arose from Mahayana thinking and concentrates on accessing the real core of existence – cutting away the fictions that people construct about themselves, their status and their desires. A key to Vajrayana Buddhism is the idea of ***prajna*** (also significant in Mahayana Buddhism). This kind of wisdom involves developing the ability to discriminate between the world of reality and illusion. It includes the idea of compassion and the realisation that the world is ultimately illusory.

Prajna
Sanskrit word meaning wisdom

Vajrayana Buddhism is also a version of Mahayana Buddhism that is more spiritualised and mystical. It is infused with elements of Hinduism, animism, occultism and magic and is influenced by the indigenous Bon religion of Tibet. Vajrayana Buddhism also emphasises experience over emptiness. Generally, Vajrayana Buddhism is considered a more mystical form of Buddhism. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, a manual for the soul and for mourners at death, emphasises this mystical characteristic.

Vajrayana Buddhism has become well known through the person of the Dalai Lama who, since his exile from Tibet, has become a well-known traveller and Buddhist spokesperson. The Dalai Lama is considered a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

CONSIDER

'Buddhism is just a trendy New Age view that has no place in modern Australia'. That is the opinion of some. Is it only trendy? Does it have a place in modern Australia? How does it relate to immigrant Buddhist communities? Is Buddhism simply an expression of Asian cultures? Discuss some of these ideas with your classmates.

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EXERCISE 4.2

1 **Outline** the achievements of the first two councils of Buddhism.
2 **Describe** the formation of the Buddhist Sangha. **Explain** the differences and difficulties that were encountered during the first 200 years.
3 **Explain** why Buddhism has proved to be attractive to modern Australians.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 4.2

1 **Construct** a table illustrating the features, similarities and differences of the three schools of Buddhism.
2 **Discuss** the role of women in Buddhism, with particular reference to the different schools, and comment on the achievement of enlightenment.
3 **Construct** a flow chart of the spread of Buddhism, noting significant places, people and events.

4.6 PRINCIPAL BELIEFS

Buddhism is generally perceived to be a religious tradition that focuses on the practical aspects of everyday life and ethical behaviour. The central philosophical core of Buddhist teaching is the idea of cause and effect. That is, if anguish (one type of suffering) is the effect, the aim of Buddhism is to eliminate the cause.

The Three Jewels

Dharma (Sanskrit); *dhamma* (Pali)
Right way of living, righteousness; fulfilling your purpose

The Three Jewels are the three elements central to Buddhism. The Three Jewels are the Buddha (the person), the **Dharma** (also *dhamma*; the teachings) and the sangha (the community). The Buddha is an example

Figure 4.10 A footprint of the Buddha at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. It is a sculpture rather than an actual footprint but is considered a significant relic.

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of someone who has achieved enlightenment and is thus a perfect example of life. The Dharma, the teachings, are the means to achieve enlightenment. The sangha is the fellow community journeying to achieve nirvana.

To become a Buddhist, a person takes refuge in the Three Jewels; that is, expresses their confidence in the Buddha, the teaching and the community. Usually this is done in front of a Buddhist monk.

The Buddha

There is great debate between different groups as to how influential the Buddha is. On one side, traditionalists claim he is nothing more than an example for us, a person who last incarnated 2500 years ago and has since exited the cycle of suffering and the cares of existence. At the other extreme, especially in East Asia, the Buddha is recognised as a powerful being, even a deity, to whom one can pray and ask for favours. Although Buddhists were initially wary of developing any symbol that represented the Buddha, this soon changed. At first his presence was recognised by a set of footprints – reminding Buddhists that he had once walked the Earth. There are many sites said to contain the Buddha's footprint – highly stylised as sculptures. Also, he was remembered in **stupas**, or large burial mounds. Finally, the actual form of the Buddha represented by a statue was created. Today, graceful, long-eared and other worldly Buddha statues grace all kinds of temples. His image and his life form a focus of much meditation.

Stupa
A burial mound or monument that usually has a relic contained within

Dharma

The published Dharma consists of the words the Buddha spoke. These are recited in ritual, used as a code for living, and debated as the basis of all Buddhist philosophy. They include aspects such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and accounts of teachings that the Buddha passed onto his disciples. Much of the Buddha's teaching is included in the sacred writing, the Pali Canon (or Tripitaka), the Sanskrit canon and some Chinese translations of lost Indian texts.

Sangha

The sangha is the third Jewel of Buddhism. At first, the term referred only to monks and nuns in monasteries. They were a jewel of Buddhism, for they remembered the words of the Buddha and reflected his teaching in the lives they led. Laypeople look to the Sangha for spiritual guidance, help with meditation and advice on how to live life. Lay Buddhists are responsible for providing food for monks and nuns in monasteries. Following the Buddha's example, Theravada monks and nuns travel out of their monastery each day with a begging bowl. People bring food to them and place it in their bowls as a way of earning good merit. Today the word 'sangha' is also used to refer to an entire Buddhist community: laypeople, monks and nuns all together.

Figure 4.11 Young Buddhist monks in Myanmar, members of the Sangha

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The Four Noble Truths

The Buddha spelt out a simple plan that people could follow to achieve enlightenment. It begins with four truths:

1 All life is suffering (*dukkha*)
2 The cause of suffering is attachment (or desire)
3 There is a way out of suffering – no desire, no suffering
4 A way out is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

After his night of revelation, when the Buddha discovered the Four Noble Truths, he continued to teach his doctrine for the next 40 years. He insisted that he was not a god, and tried to make it clear that no one should worship him after he was dead. The Buddha had a clear idea where he was going – he would find release from the system of reincarnation in a realm or state where all suffering is eliminated: nirvana.

The first truth: there exists *dukkha* – suffering

Suffering is woven into the very fabric of life. If one goes through thousands of years of lives, deaths and rebirths, then this doctrine puts each life into perspective. Every person's experience of life includes suffering. It is the reality of life. Sometimes the word *dukkha* is understood as 'anguish', with a deeper yearning than the word suffering would suggest. Often this first truth is expressed as the simple statement 'life is suffering'.

The second truth: there is the arising of *dukkha* – the origin of suffering

Our senses are continually seeking to be satisfied. People have a thirst for life. This thirst mostly leads to disappointment. Even if people can overcome many of their sensory desires, they still have intellectual conceits. Dogmas and philosophies can narrow perspective on life and provide the illusion that people are singularly unique and satisfied. This is ultimately a path to suffering. The Buddha teaches that people suffer because they desire and all that can be desired is impermanent, and ultimately unobtainable, so disappointment leads to suffering.

The third truth: there is the cessation of *dukkha* – there is a way out of suffering

The cessation of *dukkha* is a condition the Buddha called nirvana. Essentially nirvana, or the state devoid of defilement, is the exit point from suffering. Usually enlightenment is a state that can be achieved by those still alive, who are called *arhat*. Nirvana is the cessation of suffering, usually attained when the cycle of samsara is completed, at the time of an enlightened person's death. (Often the terms 'enlightenment' and 'nirvana' can be used interchangeably). The Buddha was in this state of enlightenment from age 35 until he died at 80. Nirvana means literally 'quenching' or 'extinction' of desire. There is a more comprehensive explanation of nirvana later in this chapter. In day-to-day life, the cessation of suffering comes from the cessation of attachment (or desire).

The fourth truth: there is the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha* – the Noble Eightfold Path

The Fourth Noble Truth is one of the ways to put Buddhist theory into practice. It is the method of attaining enlightenment, and thus nirvana. By walking the Noble Eightfold Path, one becomes a noble person. The Noble Eightfold Path is a means to end suffering. It is the avoidance of the two extremes of desire and asceticism, known as 'the middle way'. The middle way includes the following:

1 Right view is having right concepts and right ideas. It is the observation that leads us away from delusions and wrong views. It is the wisdom that truly comprehends cause and effect.
2 Right thought is not being greedy, not being angry and not being ignorant. It is far away from evil, delusion, greed and desire.
3 Right speech is wholesome verbal **karma** that includes not lying, not being double-tongued, not speaking harsh words and not using flattery.
4 Right action is behaviour that results in wholesome bodily karma that includes not killing, not stealing and not engaging in sexual misconduct.
5 Right livelihood refers to the right occupation and right way to making a living.
6 Right effort strives to do good and severs evil. It is also known as right diligence and right skilful means.
7 Right mindfulness is known as true contemplation that the body is impure, feelings are the origin of suffering, thoughts are impermanent, and all phenomena are interdependent.
8 Right concentration focuses the mind and settles the distracted body for better cultivation. This includes meditation and is very important for Buddhists.

INVESTIGATE

These are simple expressions of the Four Noble Truths, which include quite abstract ideas. You would benefit from a more detailed and comprehensive examination of these concepts.

The marks of existence

Anicca

Anicca is the absence of permanence, or the idea of impermanence. Although our lives may be constructed to suggest there are certainties, Buddhism says there are none. Not even the self is a certain and unchanging entity. Even as people perceive the world, it has already changed. As things come into existence, they are already fading and decaying. Impermanence Is the reason why desire leads to suffering – people desire things that do not last.

Karma
The effects of one's actions in life, be they good or bad; the natural consequences of actions

Anicca
Impermanence

Dukkha

Usually translated as 'suffering', *dukkha* is also linked closely to the five aggregates of personality. None of

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the aspects of personality are completely satisfactory. The self, Buddhists suggest, depends on:

1. the material shape of things in the world
2. feelings or emotions, whether pleasant or not
3. the need to process sensory or mental objects such as colours, concepts and abstractions of emotions
4. the will and intention by which people define themselves
5. discriminative consciousness; that is, the ability to discern what an object consists of.

It is upon these points, say Buddhists, that people construct the illusion that 'we are us' – the 'me' depends on these points.

What causes suffering is the fact that all these things are illusions: people do not recognise that these five aggregates are empty of a substantive existence, linking to the idea of *anicca* (impermanence). The world, according to Buddhists, is empty. At a basic level, this means that those things we consider 'real' are simply part of an existence that is insubstantial. Individuality is a social and psychological construct. Thus, *dukkha* refers to the suffering that arises from a false notion of the self, a common human condition, probably best expressed as anguish, defilement or affliction.

Anatta

Anatta can refer to the idea of non-self or the absence of an individual self. As all life is impermanent in Buddhism, so too is the idea of self. Buddhists are aware that people construct a concept of oneself. It may be that, from moment to moment, a person continually constructs and reconstructs an impermanent and ever-changing reaction to their senses. Buddhists teach that the mind is a constant flow of unstable mental states. Thus, for Buddhists, consciousness is like a flowing river, always changing in its flow. Another comparison likens the mind to a rotating wheel – only a small part of a wheel is in contact with the earth at any one time.

Anatta
The absence of self or soul

Ultimately, to accept *anatta* leads one to accept that there is nothing that separates the self from every other part of existence. That people construct themselves as individuals and hold themselves apart from all that exists is ultimately a false construction.

Karma, samsara and nirvana

There are a number of features in Buddhist teaching that are drawn from Hinduism, although with some significant differences in interpretation and meaning. These include the concepts of karma, samsara and nirvana.

Karma

Video

This is natural law, as unquestioned by Buddhists as it was by Hindus. The law of karma is a law of moral causation, the consequences of actions. That is, actions and attitudes have repercussions. These repercussions can affect people in their lives right now or in future lives. Hindus used this doctrine to explain why souls are reborn into positions of higher or lower status, why some people have better fate or luck than others, and why some people are more capable than others. In Buddhism, where the existence of the soul is doubted, karma nevertheless explains how all beings are influenced by intentional actions that accumulate reactions. The karmic energies that are created in one life accumulate and pass into another.

Karma thus encourages good behaviour, because one hopes for a better rebirth in one's next life. It also encourages sympathy with all other forms of life. Buddhist vegetarianism makes sense when it is realised that people are cutting short the journey of a sentient being on Earth simply in order to eat meat, whether an individual personally kills the animal or someone else does. In some schools of Buddhism, monks must accept the generosity of laypeople and this can include offerings of meat-based foods, but many Buddhists are vegetarians in accordance with the principle of not harming sentient beings.

Samsara

In Hinduism, samsara is the doctrine of rebirth. In Buddhist philosophy it works more as a metaphorical system for the endlessness that accompanies an unenlightened life. Nirvana is the only way to break such an unending cycle. The karmic force that is created continues after the body ceases to exist, to become evident in the next life. As a result of karma, sentient beings are reborn as a lower or higher form of life, to continue the search for enlightenment, either in the next life or in a subsequent life.

Nirvana

Nirvana is the end point of all evolved souls. Westerners might like to think of this place as being like heaven. Strict philosophical and Theravada Buddhists rely only on what the Buddha told them – that nirvana is the extinguishment of all desire for life. It is essentially a state of nothingness, a release from the cycle of samsara. Although he experienced enlightenment on the night of his revelation, the Buddha did not focus his discourses on nirvana. The Buddha gave very little indication of what nirvana is like. Some Buddhists say that this is because a frog could never explain to a tadpole what it is like to breathe air.

Other Buddhists suggest that, if Buddhahood is the realisation that the self is actually a construct ultimately empty of meaning, and that enlightenment is coming into the knowledge that everything is part of the same reality, then achieving nirvana is emptiness, devoid of concept, absolute peace, and experiencing the highest peace, the end of mortal anguish. This leads into a difficult debate that suggests if everything is actually the same – united by emptiness – then neither the self, the world nor nirvana can truthfully be spoken of as distinct entities.

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EXERCISE 4.3

1 **Discuss** if it is enough to simply recite the Three Jewels to be a Buddhist.
2 **Explain**, in your own words, the essential features of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.
3 **Construct** a glossary. Write one sentence for each of the following words, illustrating your understanding of these concepts: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, karma, samsara, nirvana.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 4.3

1 Prepare an outline for a 10-minute talk on the significance of nirvana. Draw out the differences in understanding what it really means.
2 Research the Three Jewels and write out clearly the significance of the three aspects.
3 Debate the following topic: 'Modern Australians find it difficult to accept the views of Buddhism'.

4.7 SACRED TEXTS AND WRITINGS

Initially the teachings of the Buddha were memorised by his followers and recited rather than written down. So the first sacred texts of Buddhism were transmitted through an oral tradition. The Pali Canon (or Tripitaka) is a collection that guides Theravada Buddhism. It was probably written down during the second century BCE in Sri Lanka, following the third Buddhist council where it was finalised. It was written in Pali, a language related to Sanskrit, the classical language of India (like Latin in Europe). Both Pali and Sanskrit are used for Buddhist writings.

Mahayana Buddhism accepts additional documents written in various languages; these are called the *Shastras*. Mahayana Buddhism holds that the Buddha's teachings did not cease with his death and so additional writings are being added to the sacred texts.

Figure 4.12 A Buddhist monk holds a section of the Tripitaka, written on wood blocks in the fourteenth century CE. They are contained in the Tripitaka Koreana Library in Korea.

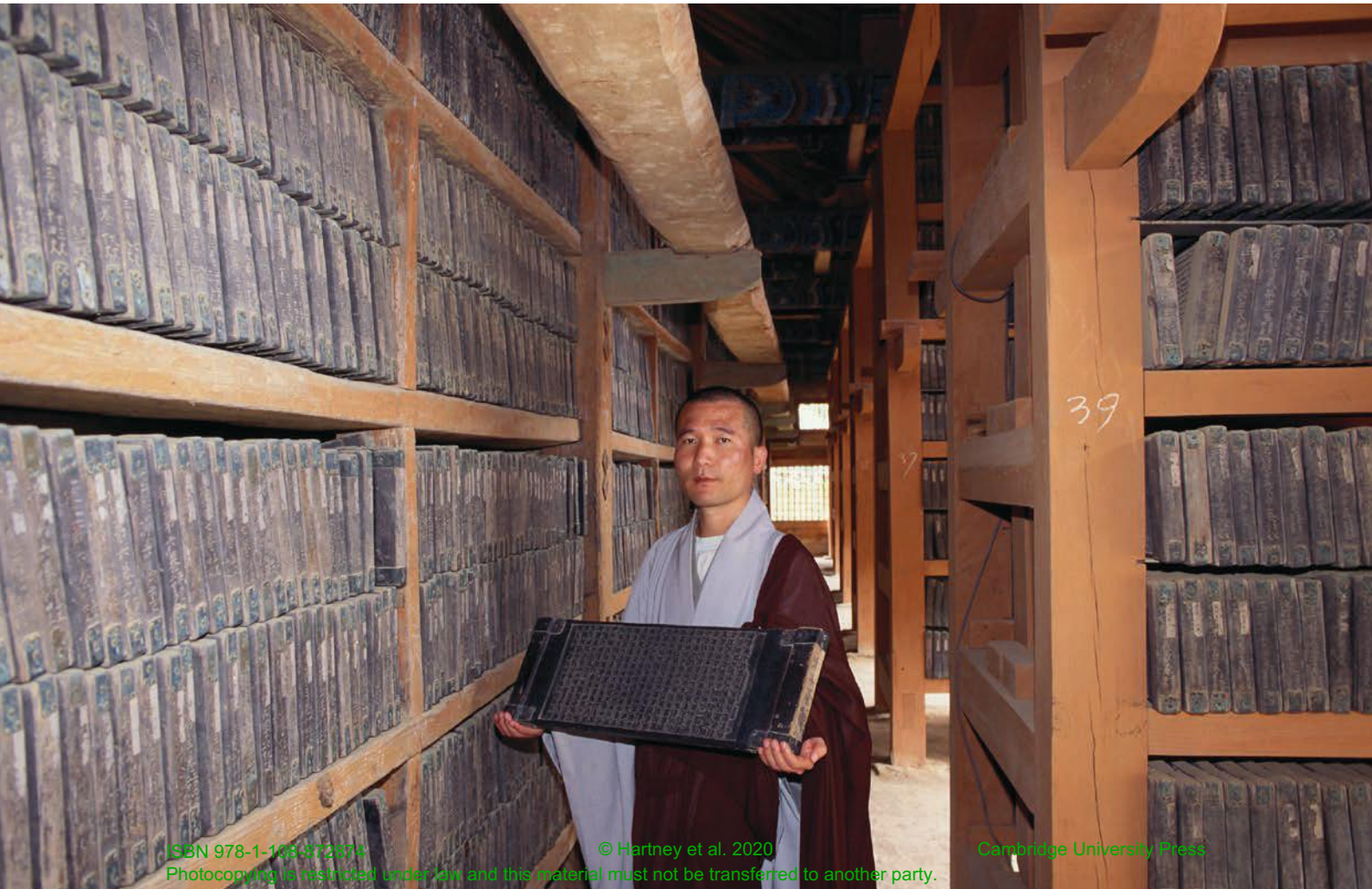

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Figure 4.13 Tibetan prayer flags are used to convey blessings, health and harmony (not prayers). While they may pre-date Buddhism in Tibet, they often depict the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

Both Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism also have their own sacred writings that are additional to the Pali Canon. Various Buddhist texts were also translated from Sanskrit into Chinese. When the Sanskrit originals were lost, the Chinese versions became very important.

Tripitaka

Video

The Tripitaka is the sacred text for Theravada Buddhism, and for all Buddhist variants. It contains a collection of the Buddha's sermons with instructions for monastic discipline. There is also a section not directly from the Buddha that is a philosophical discussion of his teachings. The texts containing words taught by the Buddha are called **sutras**.

The Tripitaka is accepted as a sacred writing by all variants of Buddhism but is the only text accepted by Theravada Buddhists. The word *tripitaka* means 'three baskets', a reference to the three sections of the Pali Canon:

- The *Vinaya Pitaka* (Discipline Collection) is comprised of the monastic rules the Buddha developed.
- The *Sutta Pitaka* (Sermon Collection) contains the Buddha's sermons written down.
- The *Abhidharmapitaka* is a philosophical and theological discussion and commentaries of the Buddha's sermons. (In the Mahayana canon this is the *Shastra* collection.)

Sutras
Sacred texts containing the words of the Buddha

Bardo Thodol
A text that guides a person through the experience of death until rebirth; also known as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*

Lotus of the Good Law

Mahayana Buddhism accepts several other works as sacred writings, such as the *Heart Sutra* and the *Lotus of the Good Law* (also known as the *Lotus Sutra*). The *Lotus of the Good Law* is the second of three works known as the *Threefold Lotus*. The *Lotus of the Good Law* teaches that all people can reach a state of enlightenment, in contrast to the usual Theravada view that only a select few scholars and monks will reach it. The emphasis in the *Lotus of the Good Law* is on skilful means and faith, rather than meditation and asceticism. The earliest translation of the *Lotus of the Good Law* came from about 300 CE.

Tibetan Book of the Dead

Vajrayana Buddhism has as its most significant text the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It is thought to have been written in the eighth century CE for a Tibetan king in a cryptic language, and hidden until the people were ready to hear its words. The actual title of the book is the **Bardo Thodol** (*bardo* means 'after death plane'

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and *thodol* means 'liberation by hearing') or the 'Great liberation upon hearing in the intermediate state'. The book was read to people as they were dying. It tells of four ***bardos*** (phases) which people travel through after death, and offers advice on how to find the heavenly realm, rather than the lower realm where the cycle of birth and death continues. It reflects the mysticism that is part of Vajrayana Buddhism. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* offers considerable insight into Tibetan Buddhist cosmology and teachings on the mind, consciousness, death and rebirth. It contains these words:

Bardo
An intermediate plane of existence or period, which in Buddhism translates as the semi-conscious state of the time between death and rebirth

> Let virtue and goodness be perfected in every way. Be not fond of the dull smoke-coloured light from hell.
> *TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD*

Extracts that demonstrate principal beliefs

The following extracts from the sacred texts demonstrate key Buddhist views.

The Buddha postpones nirvana

> I will not experience final nirvana until I have disciples who are knowers of the *dhamma* and who will pass on what they have gained from their teacher, declare it and teach the *dhamma* of wondrous effect.
> DIGHA NIKAYA 16:3.7

Bodhisattvas

> The bodhisattva is a great being who practises compassion, sympathy and joy, and so attains the stage of 'the beloved only child'. Parents are very happy when they see their son at peace. The bodhisattva who has reached this stage sees all beings like a parent sees his only son – seeing him practise goodness, the parent is delighted.
> MAHAPARINIRVANA SUTRA 470

The Dharma

> Teach the dharma which is lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely at the end. Explain with the spirit and the letter in the fashion of Brahma. In this way you will be completely fulfilled and wholly pure.
> VINAYA, MAHAVAGGA 1.11.1

Dukkha

> People compelled by craving crawl like snared rabbits.
> DHAMMAPADA 24:9

Karma

> An evil deed committed does not immediately bear fruit, just as milk does not curdle at once; but, like a smouldering fire covered with ashes, it remains with the fool until the moment it ignites and burns him.
> DHAMMAPADA 69:71

Enlightenment

> Does a holy one say within himself, 'I have obtained perfect enlightenment?' … 'No, world honoured one. If a holy one of perfect enlightenment said to himself 'Such am I', he would necessarily partake of the idea of an ego identity, a being separated individually.
> DIAMOND SUTRA 9

Nirvana

> For those in mid-stream, in great peril of the flood; for those adventuring on ageing and dying – I proclaim the isle where there is no-thing, where naught is grasped. This is the isle of no-beyond: I call it nirvana – the utter extinction of ageing and dying.
> SUTTANIPATTA 1093–4

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EXERCISE 4.4

1 **Describe** the different Buddhist sacred texts and writings.
2 **Outline** the role of the sacred texts and writings in Buddhism.
3 **Identify** the importance of the three texts mentioned in the syllabus. Support with references from the texts.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 4.4

1 Research the key Buddhist texts and find passages that demonstrate the principal views of Buddhism.
2 **Discuss** the topic: 'What is the role of sacred texts in Buddhism?'
3 Prepare a graphic presentation, for example, a PowerPoint presentation or some other media presentation, **describing** the Buddhist sacred texts and their significance.

4.8 CORE ETHICAL TEACHINGS

The guidelines given in Buddhist writings are simply that – guidelines. Yet it would be wrong to say there are no ethics in Buddhism. Ethical actions in Buddhism are less a matter of right and wrong; rather, they are more a matter of actions that are skilful or unskilful (in terms of helping to achieve enlightenment). The basis of Buddhist ethics is respect for life: not harming living beings, and seeking the welfare of all. Certainly Buddhism seeks to relate significantly to other beings and to behave in an ethical fashion. These ethics can be reflected in lifestyle practices of pacifism and vegetarianism. A primary focus of Buddhist ethics is *intention*. To intend to do good is more important than the act itself. While some emphasis is given to the sacred writings as sources of authority, much more emphasis is given to the community (sangha) for ethical authority. The sangha has teachers who provide practical guidance about ethical behaviour. The role of teachers is greatly respected in Buddhism. The words of the Buddha and the teaching of Buddhist precepts are respected and commitment to the Three Jewels is a requirement for being a Buddhist. Ethical behaviour, in Buddhism, is a means of achieving good karma, which will have consequences in this life and the next.

The Five Precepts

Fundamental Buddhist values, as related to ethical and moral teaching, are also contained within the Five Precepts. The Five Precepts are essentially a discussion of the fourth step of the Noble Eightfold Path – right action. In Buddhism, actions are viewed as related to thought, so it is difficult to single out one aspect. The Five Precepts are guides to correct behaviour rather than strict rules.

The Five Precepts are to abstain from:
1 killing living things (or harming sentient life)
2 taking what is not given
3 engaging in sexual misconduct
4 speaking falsely
5 taking drugs or drink that affect the mind.

The Five Precepts are concerned with an individual's relationship to others and the world in which they live. Thus the Five Precepts relate to the taking of life, theft, and inappropriate behaviour towards others in both sexual activity and honesty; also care for oneself by the avoidance of intoxicants and practice of the five positive attitudes.

- Precept 1 refers to *all life*, not only human life. Some Buddhists practise vegetarianism as fulfilment of this precept. Pacifism is also a means of expressing this first precept.
- Precept 2 includes *stealing*, although it is broader than this. It also covers issues such as generosity, trustworthiness and adultery.
- Precept 3 is more directly related to *sexual misconduct*. It includes actions to do with sexual responsibility, such as sexual abuse, rape, incest and adultery. The stealing of another's dignity and self-respect is another issue here. Issues such as gluttony and overindulgence in other areas of life are also included, the idea of 'sensual' misconduct is implied.
- Precept 4 includes *lying*, *slander* and *deceitful* behaviour and words. Again there is a deeper context that includes the need to listen to others and to speak lovingly.
- Precept 5 relates to things such as *alcohol* and *drugs*. It may also include tobacco and some would include junk food and anything else considered toxic to consume, such as the media. Theravada Buddhism would interpret this precept strictly to mean *no* alcohol. Mahayana Buddhism would look to the addictive nature of the intoxicant and suggest that some use may be allowed. Some Buddhists would include many medications under this precept.

Monks and nuns are guided by another Five Precepts that are especially relevant for them. These precepts are not commandments but are expectations of behaviour, and are expressed as undertakings.

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The Vinaya

The Vinaya is a framework for Buddhist monks and nuns. Monastic Buddhism has several guidelines in addition to those given to the Buddhist community at large. As well as an additional Five Precepts, the Vinaya is a guide to monastic life and directs monastic behaviour. There are another five precepts that bring the list to Ten Precepts.These are to abstain from:

1 taking untimely meals
2 dancing, music, singing and watching grotesque mime
3 the use of garlands, perfumes and personal adornments
4 the use of high seats
5 accepting gold or silver.

Some would suggest there are only another three precepts that apply. In Theravada Buddhism the Vinaya includes 227 vows for monks. Breaches of these rules have different penalties depending on the severity of the breach. For example, confession is required for eating a meal at the wrong time, but sexual activity or murder can lead to expulsion from the Sangha. However, the Vinaya is an essential guide to behaviour for those who wish to join the Sangha.

Figure 4.14 A meal shared by Buddhist monks. They avoid a 'high seat', eat at the correct time and only eat vegetarian food, thus keeping the precepts.

EXERCISE 4.5

1 **Outline** the sources of the principal ethical teachings of Buddhism.
2 **Describe** the relationship between the Ten Precepts and the Vinaya.
3 Recall what the key concepts in Buddhist ethics are.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 4.5

1 Write a paragraph **explaining** why ethics are so important to Buddhists.
2 Choose a particular ethical issue. **Evaluate** the differing views in Buddhism relating to that issue.
3 Interview a practising Buddhist and ask how they put into practice their Buddhist ethics in modern Australian life.

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4.9 PERSONAL DEVOTION IN THE HOME

Yoga
Any of various systems of discipline in the Hindu philosophical system concerned with achieving the union of the mind and body with the universal spirit

Puja
Making offerings; rituals that may be carried out at a public temple or in the home, developing positive energy

Mala
String of prayer beads, usually made up of 108 beads

Mandala
Symbolic representation of the cosmos, often drawn as an aid to meditation

koan **(or** ***gongan*****)**
Question-and-answer riddles that challenge thinking and lead to enlightenment

Buddhism is in essence a private religious tradition. The place of personal devotion in Buddhist life depends on the views and attitudes of the particular Buddhist. For example, a traditional Chinese Buddhist may aim to pay respect to their ancestors, a Tibetan may seek to appease the evil spirits, while a Westerner may see personal devotion as a time to meditate, relax and focus one's positive energies.

The practice of meditation, together with prayer, is the essential act of Buddhist worship or personal devotion as a religious expression. Meditation is related to the Hindu concept of **yoga**, a practice of conducting an inward mental search to attain liberation from the cycle of rebirth. It is the clearing of the mind and concentration on training the mind to reflect on the world as it really is or the development of positive energy or the cessation of unwanted or uncontrolled thought. It is the opposite of a 'monkey mind', as nuns at the Nan Tien Temple will say, that is, a mind that flits from idea to idea without any real concentration or understanding of those ideas.

Puja

Video

Personal devotion or ritual is called ***puja***, as in Hinduism, where it means 'worship'. *Puja* is not the same as worship, for many Buddhists do not believe in a deity to worship. *Puja* is seen as a way to engage the heart and all energies to purify oneself from negativity and develop positive energy. It is a means of experiencing the otherness of life; that is, life free from suffering, and expressing gratitude, devotion and acknowledgement of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. It is a time to honour the Buddha and others who have been guides in the way to live or to achieve enlightenment. Meditation is the primary means of experiencing this positive energy and devotion.

Puja is intensely personal and to some Buddhists it is not considered worship. For modern Western Buddhists particularly, it is a way of integrating the Dharma, internalising and actualising it through the practice of meditation. Therefore *puja* becomes a habitual routine that helps in staying on the Buddhist path or journey through life. In practice, this often means making a commitment to the practice of meditation, for instance, by setting a particular time or designating a particular space. This space is usually a room with an altar and includes cushions, a ***mala*** (string of beads) and the use of incense and bells, and often a picture or statue of the Buddha or a significant Buddhist teacher. For many it is a formalised time, with no interruptions allowed, and a commitment of focused time is demanded from the adherent.

Buddhist home shrines may include candles or lights (to represent enlightenment and/or impermanence), flowers (beauty and impermanence), incense sticks (fragrance and impermanence), a bell to help focus meditation, pictures and/or statues of the Buddha and other religious leaders. Offering bowls are also often used to make offerings to honour the Buddha. These offerings are often food, such as fruit and rice and water. Sacred texts can be placed on the altar and are chanted during the *puja*.

As mentioned, Buddhist home shrines often use a statue of the Buddha as an aid to meditation as well as a bell, incense sticks, candles and flowers. The shrine is not a place of worship but a place where meditation can focus on the higher things of life and achieving positive energy.

A number of aids can also be used to assist in the practice of meditation, such as **mandalas** and ***koans***. The mind is then conformed to the mind of the Buddha and this helps in attaining enlightenment.

Figure 4.15 Four mandalas, painted on silk in the eighteenth century

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Meditation techniques also include ***vipassana*** (insight) and ***samatha*** (calm). *Samatha* meditation aims to achieve calmness and concentration, which raises the perception of the person meditating. Calmness allows insight to be achieved. *Vipassana* meditation aims to achieve wisdom. Insight allows Buddhists to recognise what is really happening in their minds, that their thoughts and feelings, and indeed all of life, are an illusion, and thus develop right understanding of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Mandalas are often used as an aid to meditation principally in Vajrayana Buddhism. A mandala (which means 'circle' in Sanskrit) is a symbolic representation of the Buddhist worldview, a way of helping Buddhists to achieve understanding of the reality of the world.

Sometimes intricate mandalas are created out of coloured sand or grains that are then blown away or allowed to deteriorate. These mandalas represent the transient and impermanent nature of life (*anicca*), a central concept in Buddhism.

For Buddhists, personal devotion in the home is one way of developing the mindfulness necessary to apply Buddhism to their daily life as well as developing the skills, understanding and insights to achieve enlightenment and reach nirvana.

Vipassana
Meaning 'insight'; one of the most ancient meditation techniques

Samatha
A meditation technique that aims to increase the voluntary attention span

Figure 4.16 This Tibetan mandala has been painted on a monastery in Kathmandu

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Buddhism developed as a religious tradition at a time when classical Hinduism was developing.
- Buddhism is a philosophy and practice as much as a religion.
- Buddhism developed as a challenge to the Brahmins' control of Hinduism.
- The Buddha has been identified as the Indian prince, Siddhartha Gautama.
- Many legends have arisen about Siddhartha Gautama.
- Rejecting both indulgence and asceticism, Siddhartha Gautama found enlightenment while meditating under a bodhi tree.
- The Buddha taught the 'middle way'.
- Following the Buddha's death, the sangha (Buddhist community) grew.
- This emerged as two groups, the Sangha (the monastic community) and the sangha (the Buddhist community in general).
- Several councils were held to develop Buddhism as a religious tradition.
- Three main schools or variants formed in Buddhism: Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism.
- The Three Jewels emphasise the Buddha, his teachings and the community.
- The Four Noble Truths explain how to avoid *dukkha* (suffering/anguish) and achieve liberation.
- The way to live is according to the Noble Eightfold Path, the middle way.
- The Buddhist marks of existence include the concepts of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering) and *anatta* (absence of self).
- Additional Buddhist concepts include karma, samsara (rebirth) and nirvana (release from the cycle of rebirth).
- The three schools of Buddhism have several sacred texts including the Tripitaka (all), the *Lotus of the Good Law* (Mahayana) and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Vajrayana).
- Buddhist ethical teachings are expressed in the Five Precepts and the Vinaya.
- Buddhist personal devotion is expressed in home *puja*.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 From which religious tradition did Buddhism emerge?
(A) Judaism
(B) Hinduism
(C) Christianity
(D) Jainism

2 Where did Siddhartha Gautama find enlightenment?
(A) In asceticism
(B) In the Hindu sacred writings
(C) Under the bodhi tree
(D) In the community of his followers

3 What emerged from the second Buddhist council?
(A) Sending missionaries to Europe
(B) The splitting of Buddhism into two schools
(C) The veneration of the Buddha as an incarnation of God
(D) The formulation of the Pali Canon

4 What is the best description of the different Buddhist schools?
(A) Theravada – conservative, Mahayana – inclusive, Vajrayana – mystical
(B) Theravada – inspired, Mahayana – violent, Vajrayana – failing
(C) Theravada – mandala, Mahayana – Hindu, Vajrayana – Bodhisattva
(D) Theravada – secret, Mahayana – enlightened, Vajrayana – lotus

5 To become a Buddhist, what must one do?
(A) Worship the Buddha
(B) Take refuge in the Three Jewels
(C) State the Four Noble Truths
(D) Desire suffering

6 The Buddhist view of 'impermanence' is defined in which concept?
(A) Karma
(B) *Anicca*
(C) *Dukkha*
(D) Nirvana

7 What is karma?
(A) A beautiful place all people aspire to
(B) A form of exotic Buddhism
(C) A law of moral causation, the consequences of actions
(D) A well-known Buddhist teacher

8 What is the most significant text for Theravada Buddhism?
(A) The Tripitaka/Pali canon
(B) The *Lotus of the Good Law*
(C) The *Egyptian Book of the Dead*
(D) The *Tibetan Book of the Dead*

9 According to the Five Precepts, what should Buddhists abstain from?
(A) Killing living things
(B) Accepting gold or silver
(C) Driving motor cars
(D) Getting married

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10 What is NOT a primary focus of home *puja*?
- **(A)** Worshipping the Buddha
- **(B)** Meditating
- **(C)** Engaging the heart and developing positive energy
- **(D)** Developing mindfulness

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Outline** the significance of the historical and cultural context on the formation of Buddhism.

2 **Explain** the unique features of the three schools of Buddhism.

3 **Describe** the Four Noble Truths, with particular reference to the Noble Eightfold Path.

4 **Describe** the connection between karma and samsara.

5 Choose ONE significant teaching of Buddhism and **explain** how it is developed from the Buddhist sacred writings.

6 Briefly **explain** the significance of *puja* in the life of a Buddhist adherent.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 Why was Siddhartha Gautama's period of asceticism important for him to achieve enlightenment?

2 'Buddhism is the most ethical of world religions.' **Evaluate** with reference to the importance of ethics in the lives of Buddhist adherents.

3 **Discuss** the role of the Buddhist community.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

This tree at Bodhgaya, in the Mahabodhi Temple (see Figure 4.17), was grown from a cutting of the original bodhi tree under which the Buddha found enlightenment. What is the significance of this tree? **Explain** why this tree might be important to Buddhists.

Figure 4.17 The tree at Bodhgaya, in the Mahabodhi Temple

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FIVE

BUDDHISM: DEPTH STUDY

[YEAR 12 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness.

XIV DALAI LAMA

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- King Asoka as a significant person in Buddhism:
  - Asoka became a peaceful ruler after a violent beginning
  - Asoka supported Buddhism and the sangha
  - Asoka's edicts
  - Asoka ensured the spread of Buddhism.
- the XIV Dalai Lama as a significant contemporary Buddhist leader:
  - the Dalai Lama is the leader of Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism
  - he is a prominent leader on the world stage
  - the Dalai Lama has created renewed interest in Buddhism
  - the Dalai Lama travels the world, teaching about Buddhism today.
- Buddhist ethics are concerned with the consequences of actions
- Bioethics relate to the importance of sentient life and the relief of suffering
- Environmental ethics are concerned about the care of nature
- Sexual ethics are more concerned with love and respect than rules
- Buddhists generally take a liberal approach to homosexuality
- Buddhism is ideally non-discriminatory in relation to gender roles but has struggled to achieve this
- Tenzin Palmo is presented as a case study
- Significant practices generally reflect events in the life of the Buddha
- Pilgrimage is a following of the Buddha's life and search for enlightenment
- Temple *puja* is a focus on developing skilfulness
- Wesak marks the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death
- Wesak celebrations reflect the culture of devotees
- Wesak helps Buddhists focus on their own journey to enlightenment.

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the life of a significant person and the rise and development of a significant idea in Buddhism will be examined. In the HSC exam, you may be asked to explain how this person/idea contributed to the growth of Buddhism and assess the impact of the idea or person on Buddhism itself. To do this effectively, you will need to know something of the controversies surrounding the person or idea you chose to study. In this chapter of the print book, only two examples are provided. The digital versions of the book contain most of the ideas and people listed in the syllabus as well as some other possibilities.

You will also need to describe a Buddhist ethical teaching in a particular area: sexual ethics, bioethical issues or environmental ethics. In this chapter, each ethical area will be briefly discussed. The HSC exam may also ask you to explain why the issue you have chosen is important to Buddhism.

You may need to describe a significant practice within Buddhism and show, first, how it highlights Buddhist beliefs and, second, how it makes meaning for Buddhists, both individually and as a community. The practices discussed here include pilgrimage, temple *puja* and Wesak.

Figure 5.1 The interior of a Buddhist temple in London, England. Buddhism has adapted to many different cultures, including modern Western culture.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

There are many significant people and schools of thought that have influenced Buddhism and brought Buddhist influences into the world.

The syllabus allows for 'another person or school of thought' to be studied. As well as discussing the life and the contribution of the person or school of thought, you will need to analyse their impact on Buddhism. You should ensure your comments relate to Buddhism as a religious tradition, rather than world events.

King Asoka and the **XIV Dalai Lama** will be discussed in this chapter of the print book. Information on the other people and schools of thought are available in the digital version.

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King Asoka (304–232 BCE)

Asoka (also Ashoka; means 'without sorrow') was an Indian king, possibly the greatest king in the history of India. He ruled a vast empire that almost extended to the current borders of India and going beyond them in a few places. He was the grandson of Candragupta, the first king of the Mauryan dynasty, circa 327–180 BCE. Asoka ruled in 273–232 BCE. He built his empire through many bloody wars. These wars had a devastating effect on the armies and peoples of India. So sickened was he by the numbers of people who died in the battles he ordered, Asoka converted to Buddhism and tried to rule as an enlightened Buddhist layperson with a new emphasis on peace. He used his government as a vehicle for spreading Buddhism and Buddhist ideals. He had rules protecting the lives and religions of his subjects carved into a great number of rocks and stone pillars. These are known as the Rock Edicts, or the Pillar Edicts, and many are still standing today. He was also compassionate to animals and ordered good treatment of them. Asoka supported not only Buddhism, but also the other major religions of India. His rule was thus a key point in the establishment of the idea of a multi-religious and tolerant state.

INVESTIGATE

The Hindi-language film *Asoka* (2001) focuses on the early life of Asoka, rather than his later reforms. Watch the movie, note the Buddhist influences and determine why King Asoka's conversion to Buddhism was so dramatic.

Asoka's life

Asoka was raised in the court of King Bindusara but was exiled from the court by his half-brothers who were jealous of his skills as a warrior and statesman. It has been suggested that on one occasion, when wounded in battle, he was tended by Buddhist monks, which may have led to his interest in Buddhism. When he heard that his father, the king, had died, he rushed to the palace and killed all those members of his family who might have a chance of taking the throne from him, including his brothers. Once established as ruler in 270 BCE, he invaded the nearby kingdom of Kalinga and hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the ensuing battles; possibly up to half a million were killed or injured.

By this time Asoka's empire was vast, but guilt from all the bloodshed he had caused began to trouble the great emperor. He stopped fighting and concentrated on being a good man. To do this, he turned to Buddhism. Asoka travelled through India, visiting places where the Buddha had been and taught, after he achieved enlightened. It was during this period that pilgrimages to sites relating to the Buddha's life were made official.

As if he were a monk, Asoka gave up eating meat. He introduced the idea of *ahimsa* (non-violence) into his reign. He promoted acceptance of all religions and, although he was now a Buddhist, he funded other religions as well. Asoka made it clear that he detested religions that praised themselves as the true way and denounced other faiths. In his need to care for all living things, Asoka not only built numerous hospitals for

Figure 5.2 Detail from the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya in Bihar, India, which was built by King Asoka at the place where the Buddha achieved enlightenment and is a pilgrimage site of Buddhism.

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people, but also hospitals for animals, and ordered forests to be replanted. He established a Buddhist council at Pataliputra and convened the third Buddhist council (see Chapter 4). After this council, Asoka decided to send missionaries to the four corners of the world. This included sending Buddhists as far west as Greece and Egypt, and to Ghandara and Kashmir, north into the Himalayan regions, and south and east to Mysore, Burma, Malaya and Sumatra. He sent his son, Mahendra, and his daughter, Sanghamitra, to Sri Lanka, which became an important centre for Buddhism. His 13th Rock Edict states that he tried to spread Buddhism to the kings of Syria, Egypt and Macedonia.

Asoka's examples of religious tolerance, care for the environment, renunciation of war and missionary activities did a great deal to solidify Buddhism as a major Indian and world religion. As well as establishing many hospitals, he conferred numerous gifts on the sangha (Buddhist community). However, this attracted non-Buddhists and people simply looking for an easier life. As a result, the sangha lost its purity.

In the inscriptions on his pillars, Asoka wrote a great deal about Dharma (also *dhamma*). He used this word in both a Buddhist sense and in a more universal way. For him, Dharma meant morality, active social concern, religious tolerance, ecological awareness, observance of ethical precepts and renunciation of war. He spoke of the way of piety – reverence for those to whom it is due, respect for sentient life and prohibitions against what he saw as vice (envy, injustice).

In this way Asoka declared support for all religions and allowed individuals to be free to practise whatever religion they wished. After he became Buddhist, he abolished the death penalty. He ordered wells dug and hospitals built. He tried to use his government not to impress people, but to help them. Similarly, his edicts make clear that he (and, he hoped, his descendants) would rule with justice and righteousness (Dharma). The following passage is the fourth point of the 14th Rock Edict. The most important point in this section is the emphasis Asoka placed on peace.

> In the past, for many hundreds of years, killing or harming living beings and improper behaviour towards relatives, and improper behaviour towards Brahmans and ascetics, has increased. But now due to [Asoka's] *dhamma* practice, the sound of the [war] drum has been replaced by the sound of the *dhamma*.
>
> These and many other kinds of *dhamma* practice have been encouraged by [Asoka] and he will continue to promote the practice of *dhamma*. And the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons too will continue to promote *dhamma* practice until the end of time; living by *dhamma* and virtue, they will instruct in *dhamma*. Truly, this is the highest work, to instruct in *dhamma*. But practising the *dhamma* cannot be done by one who is devoid of virtue and therefore its promotion and growth are commendable.
>
> This edict has been written so that it may please my successors to devote themselves to promoting these things and not allow them to decline. Beloved-of-the-gods, King Piyadasi, has had this written 12 years after his coronation.
>
> ASOKA, 14TH ROCK EDICT

Asoka's contribution to Buddhism

Asoka never mentioned in his pillar scripts some of the points that people may consider key concepts in Buddhism. He did not mention nirvana, for example. This raises the question of how much of a Buddhist Asoka really was. Certainly, he popularised the practice of making pilgrimages to the sites where the Buddha taught. At Lumbini, where the Buddha was born, he cancelled taxes. In other places, he put up impressive memorials to the Buddha. These pilgrimages and the monuments to mark various sites along the way made Buddhist pilgrimage very important in India and it remains important to Buddhists today.

Figure 5.3 The extent of Asoka's empire, circa the mid third century BCE

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CONSIDER

It has been suggested that actions, such as the official sanction by Asoka of the Buddhist religion, led inevitably to the decline of that religion as a 'faith community' and the rise of **nominalism**. Is there any truth in that opinion? Discuss this question in relation to the actions of Asoka. Have similar things happened to other religious traditions; for instance, Emperor Constantine and Christianity?

Nominalism
Referring to those who take the name of a religion, but do not necessarily practise that religion, usually for the political and social benefits that accrue

Asoka was also responsible for constructing more Buddhist monasteries and stupas than any other ruler. Some Buddhists suggested that he built 84 000 of each, although this is an exaggeration. No doubt there was a great deal of money spent on Buddhism at this time. It is suggested that, because of his generosity, many people who were not Buddhists dressed up as monks and nuns to take advantage of the king. This introduced a level of corruption or nominalism into the Buddhist community.

Asoka was very careful in his treatment of the Buddhist community of monks and nuns. He passed a law that anyone who caused a split in the community by starting their own group would be prevented from being a monk or nun any longer. He felt it was his royal duty to keep the Sangha unified and free from dissent. Because of this, later kings who ruled over Buddhists also saw it as their duty to control the Sangha. But this government interference was not always to the benefit of Buddhism.

As the map in Figure 5.3 shows, Asoka developed the potential for a united India. Following Buddhist principles, he promoted ideals that made his nation fair and just for many. His promotion of religious tolerance was necessary, for most of the people he ruled over were not Buddhist. By refusing to impose Buddhism on his Hindu subjects, Asoka showed how all Indians could be united under one system of government. In the latter part of his reign, peace became one of the main policies of his state. His inscriptions contain many references to peace and it is here that the ideal of *ahimsa* (non-violence) is particularly important. Asoka celebrated love, tolerance and truth in the latter part of his life. His model of government influenced later Buddhist countries, such as Thailand.

Asoka also developed a strong sense of justice. His building of hospitals for the sick and also for animals showed that his compassion extended far beyond the care a ruler would usually show at this period in history. Asoka protected endangered species and set up reserves where they could remain safe. He replanted destroyed forests to ensure good environments for animals and people. These initiatives are seen as implementing Buddhist teachings into his kingdom.

Sadly, many of his reforms were forgotten when his empire fell apart after his death. His Rock Edicts, however, remain as reminders of how a fair and just society can be organised. The Asoka Chakra is also depicted on the flag of India.

Impact on Buddhism

Asoka was very advanced in his thought and practice of rulership at this time. His attitudes towards peace and his care for people, animals and the environment were very progressive. Asoka became the ideal Buddhist king. He was certainly a historical figure, but after his death many myths arose about him. These helped to exaggerate his influence. Buddhists have always held him up as a great example of a ruler.

Until Asoka's time, Buddhism was a fringe movement in India. After Asoka, Buddhism became famous in India as the religion of the court. Asoka established an ideal image of a Buddhist ruler. Kings in the rest of the Buddhist world, in countries such as Burma and Thailand, tried to copy his example. Asoka's control of the Sangha set a precedent for kings to appoint and banish monks and nuns. This political interference in Buddhist affairs was not always a good thing. After Asoka died, his dynasty fell into disarray. It is thought that his spending on Buddhist buildings weakened his state in the end. But by sending groups of Buddhist missionaries to neighbouring nations, Asoka was no doubt responsible for the early spread of Buddhism outside India during the third century BCE. Asoka's missionaries ensured that Buddhism survived in Sri Lanka when it almost died out in India. It is largely through his vision for sending out missionaries that Buddhism survived to become a world religion today. The Third Buddhist Council, initiated by Asoka, led to the inclusion of the Adhidhamma Pitaka into the Tripitaka.

Asoka himself is a dramatic example of one whose life was changed by Buddhism. Today, Asoka is a figure of importance not only to Buddhists. He is used by Indian nationalists to remind all Indians that once their country was united, humane, peaceful and strong. This was particularly important while Indian nationalists were struggling against the British who had made India part of their empire from the 1700s through to 1947. When India gained its independence, Asoka came to symbolise an enlightened government and Indian unity.

Sources on Asoka

As Asoka was the first major patron of Buddhism, Buddhists were eager to remember him. When Buddhism was brought to China, many Buddhist texts were also carried east. These were translated into Chinese and the originals were eventually lost. Most of what is known of the life of Asoka comes from at least six collections of Asoka stories. The earliest, the *Asokavadana*, was translated into Chinese around 300 CE and is available today. And, of course, there are the primary sources of his Pillar Edicts. Many of these are written in a conversational style about the way citizens should conduct themselves. No ruler prior to Asoka left such a permanent and accessible record.

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Figure 5.4 The stupa and south gate at Sanchi in India. This stupa was commissioned by Asoka to mark his wedding to his bride, Devi, who came from this area.

The style of these edicts suggests that it was the emperor himself who dictated what was being carved. It is thus believed by scholars that many of these inscriptions are Asoka's own words, without editing from scholars or interpreters.

An example of a text from one of Asoka's carvings is a warning to the kings who will come after him:

> Beloved-of-the-gods, King Piyadasi, speaks thus: To do good is difficult. One who does good first does something hard to do. I have done many good deeds, and if my sons, grandsons and their descendants up to the end of the world act in like manner, they too will do much good. But whoever among them neglects this, they will do evil. Truly, it is easy to do evil.
>
> ASOKA, V ROCK EDICT

EXERCISE 5.1

1 Detail the key events in the life of King Asoka.
2 **Describe** the contribution of King Asoka to Buddhism as a religious tradition.
3 **Analyse** the impact of Asoka on the Buddhism of his day and his ongoing influence today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.1

1 Conduct some research and **construct** an annotated timeline of King Asoka's life, noting the significant events.
2 Debate the following topic: 'King Asoka's support of Buddhism hindered rather than helped Buddhism as a religious tradition'.
3 Research the impact of Asoka on modern India and **discuss** the way he has become an icon of Indian nationalism.

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The XIV Dalai Lama (born 1935 CE)

For hundreds of years the mountainous nation of Tibet has been ruled not by kings but by religious leaders. It is believed by Tibetans that each Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of the Great Bodhisattva of Mercy, Quan Yin (the Chinese name) or Avalokiteshvara (Sanskrit or Indian name). When a Dalai Lama dies, it is the duty of Tibetans to seek out the next reincarnation of this Bodhisattva. Religiously speaking, all Dalai Lamas are the same soul moving from life to life.

Life and ideas

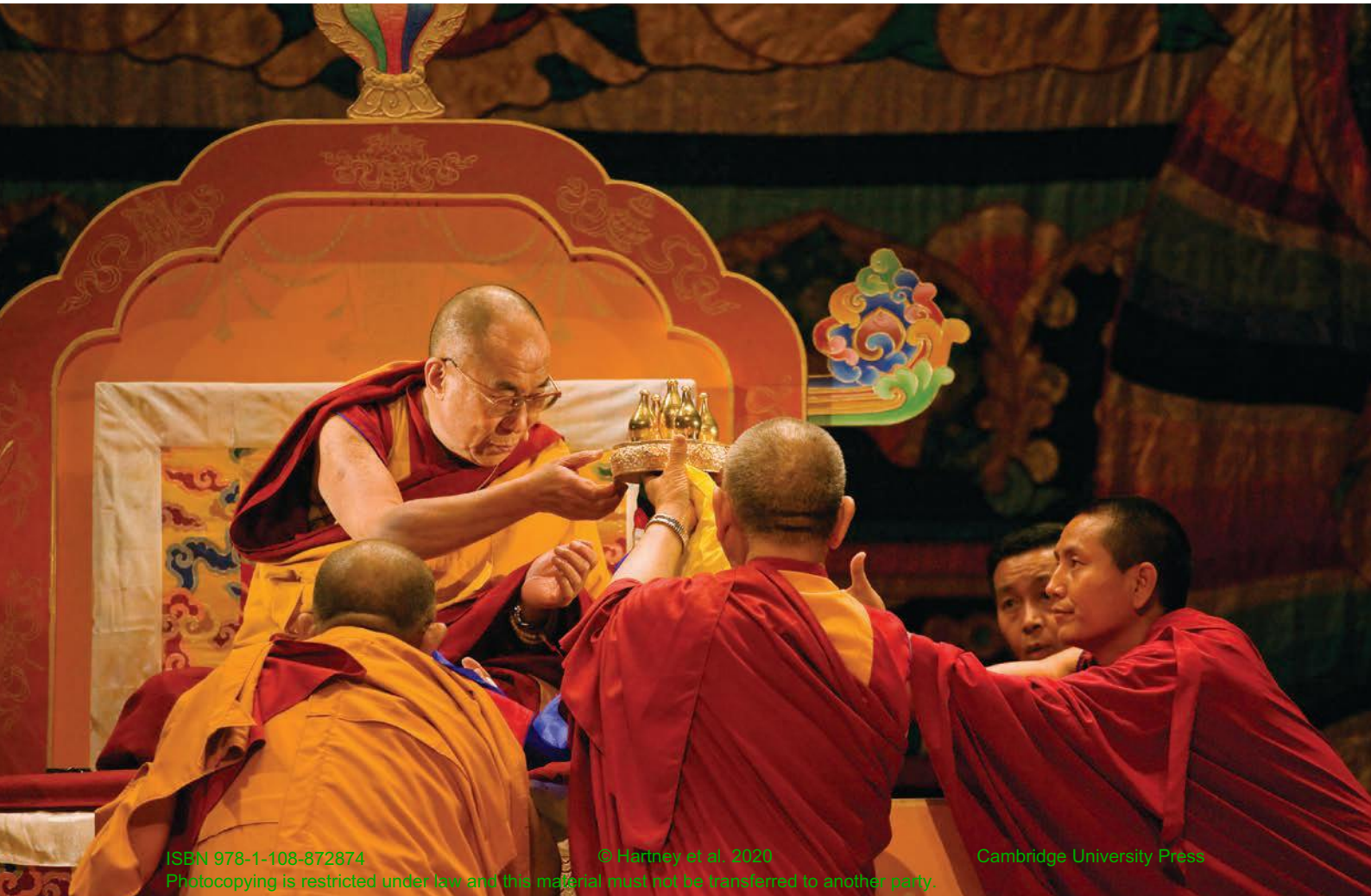
Tibetan Buddhism is known as Vajrayana Buddhism. It is a subset of Mahayana Buddhism and has its own distinct characteristics (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of Vajrayana Buddhism). Sometimes called Thunderbolt or Diamond Buddhism, Vajrayana Buddhism has been influenced by the native Bon animistic religion and by Hinduism so that is a more mystical, spiritualised form of Buddhism, complete with deities and rituals that are quite different from other forms of Buddhism. Vajrayana Buddhism stresses the importance of *prajana* (wisdom that distinguishes reality and illusion) and experience over emptiness. In Vajrayana Buddhism, people are ruled by a religious rather than a political leader. It is believed that person is the Dalai Lama, a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

The current possessor of this title, Lama Tenzin Gyatso, is the 14th reincarnation of this soul, the XIV Dalai Lama. His birth name was Lhamo Dhondrub and he came from a peasant family in northeast Tibet. In 1937, at the age of two, he was identified as the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. He was raised to the throne of Tibet on 22 February 1940 in the capital of Lhasa. He was then five years old.

After many years of education, the Dalai Lama became the fully active leader of Tibet in 1950. This was also the year in which China began its invasion of Tibet. The Dalai Lama spent the next several years in consultation with the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, trying to convince them to leave Tibet free, or at least treat Tibetans with respect and kindness. Tibetans believe the invaders were not willing to make this compromise. By 1959 Tibetans could not tolerate the Chinese presence in Tibet any longer and launched reprisals against them. This triggered severe repression of Tibetans from the Communist Party in China.

At this point the Dalai Lama felt it necessary to leave his nation. Today, more than 100 000 Tibetans live with him in Northern India, where they are granted protection. The Dalai Lama lives in Dharamsala with many of the Tibetan refugees. It is also here that schools and cultural centres ensure the continued development of Tibetan religion and culture. Theological schools and religious centres assist in doing this.

Figure 5.5 Tenzin Gyatso, the XIV Dalai Lama, blesses sacred objects while teaching Atisha's Lamp for the path to enlightenment



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The Dalai Lama has increasingly toured the world seeking support from governments for freedom in Tibet. In 1963 he developed a democratic constitution that will be implemented when Tibet is free. In all of his struggles, the Dalai Lama has tried to encourage a peaceful solution to the crisis in Tibet. For this he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. This year was marked with major freedom demonstrations in Beijing as well. It was a very difficult year for the Chinese Communist Party. The rise of the Dalai Lama's presence on the world stage increased their discomfort. There has been global, public criticism of China's invasion of Tibet and the growing settlements there. While the Dalai Lama is the head of only one variant of Buddhism, Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism, he is, for many people in the world, the public face of Tibet and considered the leader of the whole religious tradition of Buddhism.

Contribution to Buddhism

The Dalai Lama, as a world-famous Buddhist, has regularly published books on various aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhism in general, and and the application of Buddhist teachings to life. He sponsored an English translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, writing a foreword to the edition. Famous people, particularly in the United States, including actors such as Richard Gere, have joined his cause. Nevertheless, when he is not travelling the world, the Dalai Lama continues to live in a small cottage in Dharamsala in India. He rises early and meditates, like most monks, and works at Tibetan issues through writing and meetings. His message of peace and his promotion of Buddhism as a tool of peace, together with his peaceful nature, have endeared him to thousands of supporters.

The Dalai Lama has emphasised Buddhist values in his work and words. He promotes values such as compassion, forgiveness, non-violence, contentment and self-discipline. He refers to these values as secular ethics, humanitarian values that are consistent with Buddhist teachings. He is also committed to promoting religious harmony.

The Dalai Lama's contribution to Tibetan Buddhism has become most obvious in the exiled community. He has promoted the development and expression of Vajrayana Buddhism, and this has been influential in promoting Buddhism in general. He has ensured the survival of Vajrayana Buddhism. He also established theological schools and provided general Tibetan education for the exiled community.

The Dalai Lama has reached out to other religious traditions, meeting with the leaders of most faiths, promoting interfaith dialogue. He has also encouraged other religious and secular groups to adopt Buddhist forms of meditation.

Figure 5.6 The Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet, the traditional home of the Dalai Lama

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One of his most significant contributions has been to promote Buddhism to the world. His books and writings are popular, and his ability to express Buddhist teachings in a straightforward manner has made Buddhism attractive to many. He speaks frequently at conferences and demonstrates personal qualities of tolerance, compassion and kindness.

However, it is on the world stage that the Dalai Lama has made the greatest contribution. He is a well-travelled and popular world leader, and has visited Australia several times. He promotes world peace and encourages people to pursue non-violent efforts to achieve this. He assures people that world peace can be achieved by the efforts of individuals, not just world leaders. As well as the Nobel Peace Prize, he has received many international honours. He has advocated for freedom for Tibet, but by non-violent means. He has spoken on a range of other issues of international concern such as human rights, women's rights, health, the environment and sexuality. For many Westerners, he has become the face of Buddhism, so when he speaks on non-religious matters, he is viewed as representing the Buddhist position.

You should be aware that the Dalai Lama is such a significant world personality that it is important to distinguish the contribution he has made on the world stage from the impact he has had on Buddhism as a religious tradition (discussed in the next section).

Impact on Buddhism

The Dalai Lama has made a significant impact on Buddhism by ensuring the survival of Tibetan Buddhism at a time of crisis. He has made Buddhism more accessible to Buddhists across the world, in all variants. He has also facilitated a greater understanding of Buddhism in the West, winning many converts and helping it to grow as a religious tradition.

The efforts of the Dalai Lama have raised the status of Buddhism across the world, encouraging people to see it as a religion of peace. He is a powerful presence that gently but firmly advocates for change, transformation of the heart, and justice for his people. He offers a vision of ethics – a form of natural spirituality, a moral understanding that reveals those qualities in human nature that are universal.

Figure 5.7 The Dalai Lama with South African Anglican Christian Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Dalai Lama has been an outspoken advocate for interfaith dialogue and an international figure.

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INVESTIGATE

You will find many books, magazines and television programs by and about the XIV Dalai Lama. There are a number of YouTube clips featuring the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama has his own website.

Two very enjoyable films are *Kundun* (1997), directed by Martin Scorsese and made with the Dalai Lama's cooperation, which is an account of the early life of the Dalai Lama; and *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) starring Brad Pitt, which tells of early contact between the Dalai Lama and a Westerner.

EXERCISE 5.2

1 **Describe** the life of the Dalai Lama, noting key events.
2 **Discuss** the way the Dalai Lama has applied Buddhist teachings to life in the modern world.
3 **Clarify** the impact the Dalai Lama has had on modern Buddhism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.2

1 Ask a friend what they know about the Dalai Lama and **describe** their perception of him.
2 **Examine** the Free Tibet movement and note the links with the Dalai Lama. **Discuss** whether it has been an effective movement of not.
3 Watch a clip of the Dalai Lama and **analyse** what he is teaching about Buddhism.

Other people and schools of thought

The following people and schools of thought are discussed in the digital versions of this book (except for Tenzin Palmo, who is covered in a Case Study later in the chapter).

People

Nagarjuna/Nargajuna (circa 150 – 250 CE) – founder of the 'middle path' of Mahayana Buddhism; influential early Buddhist philosopher

Vasubandhu (fourth century CE) – Indian Buddhist scholar monk; founder of the Yogacara school of Buddhism

Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) (eighth century CE) – brought tantric Buddhism to Tibet; often considered the 'second Buddha'; Guru Rinpoche means 'precious master'

Sister Dhammadinna (nineteenth/twentieth century CE) – American-born Buddhist nun who helped bring Buddhism to Australia in the 1950s

Tenzin Palmo (born 1940) – second woman to be ordained in the Tibetan tradition; founded a nunnery in North India (see Case Study in this chapter)

Chen Yen (born 1937) – Taiwanese Buddhist nun who developed an emphasis on compassionate work and Buddhist charity work across the world

Schools of thought

Mahayana Buddhism – a significant variant emphasising the ability of all Buddhists to achieve enlightenment

Pure Land Buddhism – a Mahayana school of Buddhism in China and Japan that is attractive to ordinary people; emphasises faith and devotion; one calls on the Buddha 'Amitaba' for salvation to a Pure Land where enlightenment can be easily achieved

Won Buddhism – a Korean school of Buddhism that emphasises the role of the laity and the practice of meditation

Soto Zen Buddhism – influenced by Chinese Buddhism, Soto Zen emerged in Japan, emphasising the role of meditation and simplicity

5.3 ETHICS

Buddhism is often depicted as a religious tradition with a strong ethical emphasis. Generally, there is a concern about the consequences of any action. The main emphasis is on the intention of the action, on both the one acting and the one acted upon.

It might be said that in determining Buddhist ethics, the following aspects should be considered:

- Intention – Buddhists emphasise the intention of the action or actor. The intention to do no harm is important.
- Consequences – applies to both the doer and the one it affects. This relates significantly to the idea of karma, affecting the life of the one who acts.
- Context – pragmatism is important as well as the situation.
- Self-cultivation – skilful actions, rather than unskilful actions, will lead to self-liberation.

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In general, these three statements tend to underlie Buddhist ethics:

1 Do what is good (skilful)
2 Avoid what is evil (unskilful)
3 Practise so that the mind is clear.

In determining the right thing to do, Buddhists are concerned about the consequences of any action. The sacred writings teach practitioners the consequences of their actions and what will be the *result* of the action to both the one acting and the one acted upon.

An essential concept in understanding ethics in Buddhism is an understanding of personhood. Is self an illusion? If so, why is there a need to act ethically if there is no reality in an act, no reality in a person and no reality in consequences? What are the consequences of an action on self or others?

The Five Precepts, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths are particularly significant in considering Buddhist ethics. In Buddhism, rather than right or wrong actions, the concern is to perform skilful rather than unskilful actions. The role of the Sangha in guiding Buddhist ethics may be considered more important than sacred texts. Instead, the wisdom of the community would take priority.

Bioethics

Relief from suffering and the consequences of actions are important in Buddhism. The concept of playing God and absolute commands are not important. While abortion and euthanasia may seem inconsistent with Buddhist principles, the issue of suffering must be considered. Rebirth is thought to occur three days after death in some forms of Mahayana Buddhism, a difficult issue for organ donation because organs need to be used soon after death. Cloning, artificial insemination (AI) and in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) are not as problematic, because they promote life and aid rebirth.

Beginning of life

When considering issues such as abortion, the central issue for Buddhists is whether the foetus has a consciousness. If it does, then abortion is a breach of the first precept that condemns the killing of a sentient being. Many Buddhists would accept the beginning of life as taking place at conception, others would say at birth. However, in early Buddhist writings it is clear that the Buddha himself opposed the idea of abortion, and there are many Buddhists who oppose abortion as the taking of life, with serious consequences in the way that action will affect the karma of those involved in the practice. Buddhists would be wary of the conditions that would make abortion a compassionate act, such as saving the life of a mother. There are still consequences even though there is compassion.

In reality, many Buddhist countries practise abortion and there is a distancing of belief and practice in daily life, although this is not simple pragmatism. However, some pragmatism is involved in a Buddhist approach to these issues. Many Buddhists believe that an issue, such as abortion, should be decided by the people involved, with consideration of intention, consequences and the context. These decisions are made based on compassion and thus it is the one who most loves the people involved who should be involved in the decision. Again, consideration must include karma, and the issue of suffering as a consequence of the abortion, or the birth.

Cloning is an issue that has prompted much discussion among Buddhists. Some argue that the first precept should be applied strictly, thus an embryo, which is a life, cannot be harmed. Others would argue that therapeutic cloning (for research) may be acceptable. The argument may hinge on when consciousness begins, usually when the brain is emerging, which may be used to determining when life has begun. Reproductive cloning (to produce offspring identical to the parent animal) may come back to the principle of intention. Is cloning to reduce suffering? Some concern is the loss of embryos and foetuses in the process. It is apparent there is considerable debate in the Buddhist community in relation to cloning.

Organ donation has also emerged as an issue. It does seem to be in keeping with the idea of extending life. It also demonstrates generosity, renews resources and demonstrates oneness and coexistence of all life. Thus, organ donation would seem to be acceptable in Buddhism. However, the concept of leaving a corpse untouched and unharmed for several hours would counter the idea of donated organs that must be taken from the body as soon as possible after death. Some Buddhist would argue that the body doesn't actually belong to the self. Extending the life of others would be a more compassionate act, rather than not touching the corpse.

End of life

In regard to the end of life, many Buddhists support the hospice movement and the provision of palliative care as an alternative to euthanasia. This is in response to the idea that the taking of life is condemned. Euthanasia is seen as interfering with the process of life and death. While Buddhists seek to avoid suffering, they would also see suffering as a consequence of actions in life that have preceded that suffering. Again, there is the view that one should not destroy a sentient being in the taking of life. There is ongoing debate about this issue among Buddhists, especially in relation to the use of modern technology to prolong life. One should remember there are a variety of Buddhist perspectives, so you need to carefully consider the different views.

Decisions on euthanasia are made based on compassionate grounds and thus it is the one who most loves the people involved who should be making the decision. Euthanasia can be a way of preserving a person's dignity and self-respect and lessening

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their suffering. While Buddhism clearly teaches that a sentient life should not be killed, there is the suggestion in Buddhism that love and compassion may be used to guide and help decide in difficult situations. In Buddhism, dying can be considered a beautiful experience, but above all the person must feel comfortable at the time of their death.

Other issues

Issues such as cloning are not necessarily problematic, as anything that helps with giving birth is acceptable. In Buddhism, the idea of playing God is not an issue.

The production of life through reproductive cloning is giving life (and thus acceptable), not taking life (which is not acceptable). Issues have emerged in the apparent early deaths of cloned animals. Is it acceptable to give life if it is known to be diseased or damaged?

As mentioned, the concept of therapeutic cloning, where the 'death' of an embryo is involved, is more problematic. Again, consideration of the Four Noble Truths and the Five Precepts (see Chapter 4) are important in developing an understanding of a Buddhist approach to these aspects of bioethics.

EXERCISE 5.3

1 **Discuss** the sources for Buddhist bioethics. Note the emphasis given to each by different variants and the lesser importance of sacred texts.
2 **Identify** one bioethical area and note the areas of concern for Buddhists. **Discuss** areas that are controversial and areas that are not.
3 **Explain** how the concept of *dukkha* relates to Buddhist bioethics.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.3

1 Talk to a Buddhist monk and note the responses to bioethical issues from that discussion.
2 Write a paragraph on the topic: 'Modern bioethical issues are of little concern to Buddhists'.
3 Debate the following topic: 'Actions are unimportant, motivation is everything'.

Environmental ethics

Buddhists seek to maintain harmony in the world, including the physical world. Interdependence, or balance, is an important concept. To take life, or take what is not one's own, breaches Buddhist principles. Trees are particularly significant because the Buddha found enlightenment under the bodhi tree. Environmental concerns have been part of Buddhism since the efforts of King Asoka, who instituted a concern for environmental issues in his kingdom.

Buddhists seek to maintain a harmony in the world that applies to environmental issues. The concept of interdependence is important. The Buddhist approach to environmental issues is not based on a concept of a creator god, but rather a concern for balance and harmony in the world. The fact that all species depend on each other is a matter of concern to this balance.

Figure 5.8 A shrine dedicated to female spirits within the Sai Ngam forest in Thailand

This concept of balance is expressed best in the Noble Eightfold Path, the middle way. The middle way seeks to avoid the extremes of life, and this can be applied to the avoidance of the extremes related to all aspects of life in this world, including the use and misuse of the environment.

As in other areas of life, the environment should be treated with compassion and careful consideration of implications. To abuse nature and to exploit it will result in serious consequences and a lack of balance in the world.

The Five Precepts are also applied to environmental concerns, especially the first two. The middle way suggests exploitation of the environment is one of the excesses of life to be avoided, and often the actions of those who oppose environmental concerns can be considered takers of life, or of what does not belong to them.

In reference to the Five Precepts, several can be interpreted as specifically referring to the environment. The first can refer to killing animals for food but also eroding grazing land, making a strong recommendation for vegetarianism. The second can refer to disregarding the environment and taking resources.

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The Buddha is quoted as saying:

> He who has understanding and great wisdom does not think of harming himself or another, nor of harming both alike. He rather thinks of his own welfare, of that of others, of that of both, and of the welfare of the whole world. In that way one shows understanding and great wisdom.
>
> ANGUTTARA NIKYA 4:18

The Buddha's major accomplishments, including the achievement of enlightenment, were achieved under trees, so Buddhism's reverence of life extends to the inanimate as well as the animate. Some have interpreted the second element of the Noble Eightfold Path (right thought or motivation) and the Five Precepts as having a specific reference to ecological issues. Buddhists have been at the forefront of protests against deforestation and the preservation of forests.

The cultivation of plants for medicinal use since the days of King Asoka, the planting of vegetation and the digging of wells, suggest concern and care for all that the environment holds, as well as the environment itself. It is even suggested that nature can assist an adherent in finding enlightenment. Nature is an ideal place for meditation. It promotes connectedness, harmony and balance and also offers herbs and plants that can be used for healing.

Certainly, the environment represents an inter dependence, or balance, necessary to sustain life. Exploitation and excess should be avoided, a sense of connection and mutual responsibility with all beings is clear.

Care for nature has long been a Buddhist concern, and is expressed in the peaceful shrines often found in natural settings, the building of elaborate temples, such as Borobudur in Indonesia, Angkor Wat in Cambodia or the beautiful temples of Japan, as well as retreat centres found across the Buddhist world. The Nan Tien Temple in New South Wales has award-winning gardens.

Buddhists have also been prominent in environmental initiatives in many Asian countries. For example, trees in Thailand have been 'ordained' in an attempt to prevent them being cut down.

Organisations such as the Buddhist Insight Network has created the Buddhist Environmental Initiative to help preserve the environment. They seek to cultivate wisdom, live green and use resources responsibly. They are involved in education and cooperation with other like-minded people and organisations.

The Sydney Buddhist Centre offers a range of courses and resources including environmental concerns. Their environmental policy includes lifestyles that reduce an impact on the environment. They seek to monitor and manage their energy usage, and to carry out recycling.

FoodFaith is an initiative of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. It promotes work such as the B&B Highway, creating gardens that act as rest stops ('bed and breakfast') for pollinators (mainly bees) across the Sydney urban environment. It also establishes community gardens (PlantingSeeds gardens) as well as having a number of other environmental initiatives. There are many Buddhist organisations in Australia and overseas involved in environmental care and initiatives.

Figure 5.9 Many Buddhist temples are built in tree-filled settings. This is an overgrown doorway at Ta Prohm Temple in Ankgor, Cambodia, also known as Rajaviharain or Jungle Temple.

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EXERCISE 5.4

1 **Explain** why trees are important in Buddhism.
2 **Research** some concepts and beliefs that are important to Buddhist environmentalists.
3 **Describe** the role of harmony in Buddhist environmental ethics.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.4

1 Look up the website of a Buddhist organisation. **Identify** its stance on environmental ethics or concerns.
2 Create a presentation that highlights Buddhist environmental efforts, with reference to two examples.
3 Debate the following topic: 'Buddhists seek balance in the environment'.

Sexual ethics

In relation to sexual ethics, there are several significant aspects such as the desire to alleviate suffering (the Four Noble Truths) and to ensure that the path of the middle way is followed. Emphasis is also given to the third of the Five Precepts, 'abstain from engaging in sexual misconduct'. However, the definition of 'sexual misconduct' is a matter for debate. It is also obvious that sexual misconduct could easily be a breach of the other four precepts as well. It is important to note that there is no divine imperative for Buddhist teachings in sexual ethics, only guidelines to instruct the development of wisdom. The importance of karma, the consequences of actions, is an obvious issue; more important than merely satisfying desire. Urges, doing harm, and excess and skilful actions are to be considered carefully.

While the third of the Five Precepts refers to sexual misconduct, it is clear that often all five of the precepts can come into play in seeking to satisfy sexual desires. In Buddhism, sexual activity is not the primary cause of contentment. Adherents must carefully examine motivation for actions and determine what is most skilful.

> If one, longing for sexual pleasure, achieves it … for that one the pleasures diminish, he is shattered.
>
> SUTTA NIPATA 4.1

Premarital and extramarital sex

Premarital sex is a term that describes sexual activity before marriage and extramarital sex refers to any sexual activity outside of marriage. The Buddha, Prince Siddhartha, emphasised in his later life the spirit of one who has renounced all worldly concerns. In his example and the Vinaya (rules for monks and nuns), a life beyond sex, beyond marriage and beyond producing children is emphasised. Concern for premarital sex is not as important to Buddhists as moving towards a state where sexual expression is no longer an issue, where there is a concentration on the development of the mind.

Before he was enlightened and became the Buddha, Prince Siddhartha was married and his wife, Yasodhara, bore him a son, Rahula. As a royal prince, it was not until after the birth of his son and heir that the Buddha could escape the palace of his father. This part of the Buddha's story may suggest that, although enlightenment is important, marriage and having children is also an important part of Earthly life for Buddhists.

INVESTIGATE

The 2001 movie *Samsara* is the story of a Buddhist monk's search for enlightenment. However, he has to come to terms with his sexual desires. It is a beautiful film that makes obvious links to the life of Siddhartha Gautama.

Clearly, in Buddhism marriage is important. Marriage in Buddhism, however, is not a religious ceremony, it is a civil ceremony. It is not a sacramental event. Views on premarital sex, however, are difficult to outline because in India at the time of the Buddha, marriages took place early in people's lives and, as a member of a royal court, the prince would have had access to many other women, such as concubines. Premarital sex only became an issue when marriage occurred much later than puberty. Moreover, it seems that Buddhism tolerated a number of different marriage structures including **polygyny** and **polyandry**. Early Buddhist texts refer to a range of marriage types. Some were for love, others because of financial arrangements between the parents, some were permanent and others temporary. In the *Parama Sakha* it is said that a wife is a man's best friend, and in a story in the *Jataka* collection the Buddha, observing a king treating his wife badly, advised her to leave him if his behaviour did not change. The Buddha concluded that union without love was painful, a cause of suffering. Buddhism allows for flexible attitudes regarding marriage, acknowledging that the union can be positive but may also pose considerable challenges.

Polygyny
A husband having many wives

Polyandry
A wife having many husbands

As Buddhism moved out of India, local views on premarital sex would have influenced Buddhist attitudes. In East Asia, attitudes would have been dictated by custom and Confucian ethics.

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Confucian ethics place great emphasis on family unity. They forbid women and men from engaging in extramarital relationships. As with the kings of India, however, wealthy Chinese men were able to take additional wives and any number of unofficial concubines. This, again, lessens the significance of issues of premarital and extramarital sex.

The Buddha, in the *Jataka* story, suggests that the emphasis in Buddhism remains on love and mutual respect. Any relationship that causes suffering to either partner is to be avoided. Love and mutual respect are taken to a higher level by monks and nuns who renounce sex altogether, to put themselves at the service of the sangha. Celibacy remains an ideal state in Buddhism. This is because sexual intercourse is an expression of strong attachment to Earthly delights. Sex is an activity that uses energy that could be turned towards spiritual practices and the quest for enlightenment. The main state of mind to be overcome as a Buddhist proceeds towards nirvana is the desire for sense pleasures.

It might be said that premarital sex is a marginal issue in Buddhism, although more traditional societies may view it as contrary to the third precept. Marriage is an institution that is acknowledged as a good state for laypeople who wish to develop a family life, while for a Buddhist monk or nun, celibacy throughout life is the most perfect state to aspire to.

How ethics concerning premarital sex are analysed by adherents

Because of the lack of definitive prescription for or against premarital sex in Buddhist scriptures, adherents draw their perspectives from other, less explicit precepts. As noted, Buddhists from East Asia tend to be influenced by tradition and other religions that were established before the arrival of Buddhism, such as Confucianism. There are, however, distinctive Buddhist beliefs that relate to the issue of premarital and extramarital sex. It appears that, as long as both parties in a sexual relationship maintain the Buddhist virtues of honesty, generosity and loving kindness – that is, non-violent and consensual – most sexual relationships are acceptable.

The openness of Buddhist views on this issue means that scholars tend to examine not Buddhist precepts but cultural norms. That is, to know about premarital sex in China, one studies social standards. These standards are not necessarily influenced by Buddhism

Figure 5.10 Buddhism, like many religious traditions, has struggled to grapple with issues in sexual ethics, and with the distraction sexuality may be to achieving enlightenment.

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and standards also change. For example, China had more liberal attitudes to premarital sex before the 1200s, and before the rise of neo-Confucianism. This more religious form of Confucianism stresses sex only within marriage, and only for reproductive purposes.

Homosexuality

The term homosexual can designate a love relationship between two people of the same gender, or it can simply refer to the sexual, rather than emotional, behaviour of men and women with their own gender. In current discussions, these meanings are regularly confused. When the Dalai Lama was in San Francisco in 1997, it was made clear that 'His Holiness opposes violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation'. There is a prevailing attitude in Buddhism that sexuality, like the self, is a construction. The Buddhist belief in rebirth means that any individual is believed to have had many previous existences as both men and women. The Vinaya texts are quite comprehensive in forbidding all forms and variants of sex for monks and nuns. The descriptions of forbidden acts are detailed and graphic at times. The intent of the writers is clear: monks and nuns should raise themselves above sexual passion. Laypeople, however, are asked to treat their fellow humans with respect and kindness; this prescription does not forbid homosexual activity.

How ethics concerning homosexuality are analysed by adherents

Apart from the forbidding of all sexual acts for monks and nuns, Buddhism is not really concerned with homosexuality in itself. In the *Jataka* stories, for example, little is actually said about the ethics of homosexual relationships.

While a Buddhist precept warning against sexual misconduct exists, this is taken to mean sexual harassment or coercive sex, not sexual misconduct in the more specific sense of particular practices. Generally speaking, Buddhism treats homosexuality no differently from heterosexuality; that is, while it is forbidden to monks and nuns, the laity are allowed to practise homosexuality as long as it does not violate the values of loving kindness, honesty and generosity.

Nevertheless, the traditions of different cultures have influenced the practices of Buddhists living in particular societies. The Japanese have never condemned homosexuality. In fact, there are Japanese texts that connect homosexuality and Buddhism; for example, the *Chigo Kannon engi*, in which the Buddhist Bodhisattva of Mercy, Kannon, rewards a devoted monk by manifesting before him as a beautiful male novice. Buddhist countries such as Thailand struggle more with the concept of homosexuality. Adhering to a strong belief in karma, they perceive homosexuality as a punishment for misdeeds in a past life and so are less tolerant than Japanese Buddhists.

The current Dalai Lama is an advocate for respect and compassion for all humans, including homosexuals, and he suggests that homosexual relations, while not appropriate for monks and nuns, could be mutually loving and harmless. The Tibetan laity, however, sees homosexuality in a generally negative light. A fringe group of monks in Tibet, called the *ldab ldobs*, engage in athletic competitions and act as guards and policemen at various temples. They are connected with a tradition of homosexual behaviour within their community. They are also dedicated to good works in the community and committed to remaining in poverty. Because of their homosexual acts they are generally considered 'bad monks' by the community, but because of their honesty they are not seen as the worst kind of monk: the one who hypocritically hides his homosexual behaviour.

History shows that homosexuality has always been a dimension of human sexuality. Among many lay Buddhists, this fact is well understood. Buddhism is ambivalent towards homosexuality, neither praising nor condemning it. The traditional roots of different cultures practising Buddhism need to be examined to discover the impetus behind their different stances on the issue.

CONSIDER

In an interview the Dalai Lama said that the purpose of sex was reproduction. That suggests he would condemn sex for pleasure and homosexuality. Research comments that he and other Buddhist leaders have made and discuss what they say about modern Buddhist attitudes and practices. The Dalai Lama has been quoted as both criticising and accepting homosexuality.

INVESTIGATE

Conduct some research and discuss the following ideas and questions. What is sexual misconduct to the Buddhist mind? Could it be extended to include homosexuality? Should it? Consider also the different responses of different forms of Buddhism to the issue of homosexuality. How do they justify their support for / tolerance of / dislike of homosexuality?

Celibacy

Celibacy, as suggested previously, is normative in Buddhism. The Sangha is a celibate community for both males and females. Renouncing worldly attachments is considered important, even necessary for achieving enlightenment. It enables adherents to maintain focus without the attachments of family life – to move beyond sexual attachment and a life ruled by desire, which leads to *dukkha*.

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Gender roles and discrimination

The stance of a religion to gender roles is vitally important, since this determines the extent to which individuals can self-actualise through their religion. A religion's views on gender equality determines the extent to which an individual has access to religious texts, practices and training. It determines society's view on the spiritual potential of each individual based on gender (and whether or not there is a difference), and also dictates the status each individual might achieve within that religious institution. Religious views on gender roles can also affect the legal influence of certain people with regard to inheritance, marriage and other institutions, the wage rates of different individuals, their status within the family and home environments, and their ability to access education and other opportunities.

Although there was some initial debate about women's entry into the Sangha, Buddhism strives to treat men and women equally at a religious level. The Buddha agreed that women could become *arhats* (enlightened beings) and in the **Pali Canon** numerous verses were written by female *arhats*. Some even began to attain enlightenment while still within an unhappy marriage.

Pali Canon
Buddhist sacred text, otherwise called the Tripitaka; Pali is the language in which it is written

On the level of legal status, there are more Vinaya rules for nuns than there are for monks. The Vinaya 4.175–6 writes that it is harder for women to beg for alms than it is for men. This reflects the Indian attitude that it is harder for women to be in public unaccompanied than it is for men. This tends to suggest discrimination against women. It is possible that these additional rules reflect the social attitudes of the India of the day. Buddhism became a refuge for women in India, but it did not become a vehicle of social change. As Buddhism developed, Hindu attitudes to the status of women remained intact. This included the idea that people took on a woman's body because they lacked the karmic merit to be born as men. Thus, in the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, male *arhats* are considered more advanced than female *arhats*.

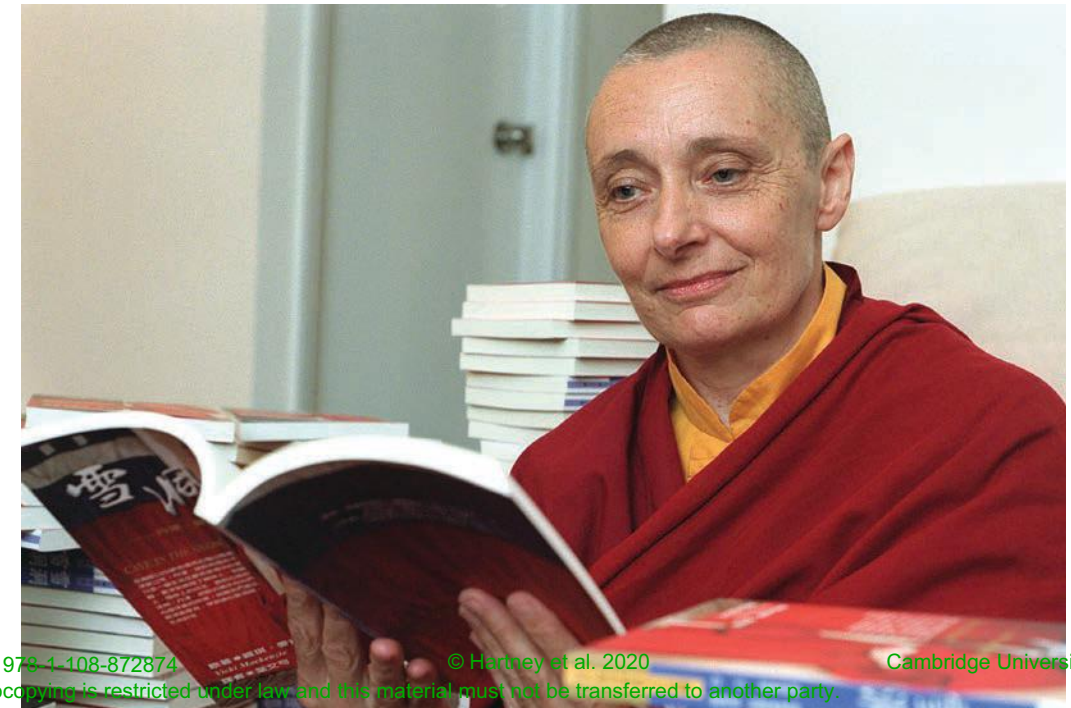
Attitudes to the status of women in Theravada Buddhism, generated predominantly by social attitudes, have meant an ongoing lack of interest in nunneries. During the twentieth century, women in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand found it easier to become nuns in the Mahayana tradition and then return home. In China, there is a focus on numerous Buddhist Bodhisattvas who are female. The most significant of these is Guanyin. Guanyin is identified in early Buddhist scriptures as the disciple Avalokiteshvara, a male Bodhisattva; this figure changes sex in China and is worshipped in female form.

In Australia, the Nan Tien Temple near Wollongong is run by nuns from a Chinese Mahayana organisation, Fo Guang Shan.

How gender roles and discrimination are analysed by adherents

As with premarital sex, this issue, too, is influenced by the social norms of different cultural groups. In East Asia, nuns and nunneries had to assimilate with Confucian attitudes to the status of women. In the *Analects*, Confucius suggested that women have a slave-like mentality and cannot be considered to have the same status as men. Perhaps because of this attitude, nunneries were placed in remote areas of China as a way of controlling the presumed sexual appetites of the nuns (although monasteries were also in remote locations). Despite these attitudes Buddhism, like Taoism, offered women an escape route from a male-dominated society. An examination of early Buddhist sutras reveals some discrimination against women, although some sutras also commend women, such as the Sumati Sutra. However, it is more fruitful to investigate cultural norms in those countries where Buddhism developed, as a way of explaining issues of gender inequality.

Figure 5.11 Tenzin Palmo, who set up the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery, which encourages women to develop their intellectual and spiritual talents'



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TENZIN PALMO

Tenzin Palmo is a woman who was born in England, and fought to encourage Buddhists to take liberal attitudes to gender roles seriously.

In India during the 1960s, Tenzin Palmo met and studied with her guru, the Eighth Khamtrul Rinpoche, in his monastery in northern India. She was ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist nun and stayed for six years. Her guru suggested she develop more intense meditation by moving to the Himalayas. Here she stayed in a small Buddhist monastery for another six years. Then, seeking even deeper meditation, she removed herself to a nearby cave where she meditated, mainly alone, for 12 years.

After this, Tenzin Palmo worked in Europe for some time, spreading the word of Buddhism. Numerous appeals came to her from Tibetans hoping she would start a nunnery and re-establish many traditions for learned Buddhist women that had been interrupted when China invaded Tibet in 1950. Tenzin Palmo made the commitment to do this.

Tashi Jong in northern India was the place selected for the nunnery. It was named Dongyu Gatsal Ling (which means Delightful Grove of the True Lineage) Nunnery. Tenzin Palmo resides there for nine months of the year, and spends the remaining three months travelling in order to raise money for the nunnery.

The nunnery is also an attempt to create a modern, environmentally friendly learning centre for Buddhist nuns and women generally. The project combines traditional ideas with modern Western assumptions. There is a strong emphasis on allowing women to develop their intellectual and spiritual talents, different from other Tibetan forms of Buddhism where women have not been given such prominence, especially in monastic life. On the social side, the nunnery will one day include a women's refuge, so it is not simply about promoting Buddhism in a narrow monastic sense.

In a traditional sense, however, the nunnery also looks forward to educating women who enter the Tibetan Togdenma tradition. This was a tradition of female yogis or teachers based most recently in the nunnery of Khamtrul.

This nunnery was destroyed by the Chinese, removing the chance for many women to achieve enlightenment and dedicate their lives to spiritual contemplation. Tenzin Palmo has taken on the transformation of numerous dimensions of Buddhism in northern India. She is leading a building project that will add to the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Her nunnery will be a place for the preservation of Tibetan culture, especially among women.

Tenzin Palmo is the current president of Sakyadhita International, which was formed in 1987 in Bodhgaya India under the patronage of the Dalai Lama. Every two years, Sakyadhita International organises a conference where Buddhist nuns and laywomen come together to share issues affecting women and the wider society. It hosted its 16th conference in late June 2019, gathering more than 800 Buddhist nuns and laywomen from 29 countries in the Blue Mountains. An initiative created at the 2019 conference was the Alliance for Buddhist Ethics. Tenzin Palmo celebrated her 76th birthday at the conference.

INVESTIGATE

Why, given the Buddhist attitude to non-discrimination in gender roles, does a woman like Tenzin Palmo still need to struggle for gender equality? To gain an understanding of this, read her book, *The Cave in the Snow*.

EXERCISE 5.5

1 **Outline** Buddhist attitudes towards premarital and extramarital sex.
2 Buddhism emphasises equality. **Discuss** the fact that many Buddhists consider women less able than men to achieve enlightenment.
3 **Explain** some Buddhist attitudes to sexual ethics, in general.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.5

1 Investigate the case of Tenzin Palmo. Discuss her role in promoting equality in Buddhism. Was she a challenge to the prevailing view of women in Buddhism for her time?
2 Talk to a Buddhist monk or nun and (if they are comfortable with this discussion) write down their understanding of sexual ethics, particularly as it relates to the Buddhist sangha.
3 Explore and write a paragraph on the different views within Buddhism on one aspect of sexual ethics.

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5.4 SIGNIFICANT PRACTICES IN THE LIVES OF ADHERENTS

There are many significant practices in the lives of Buddhists. Devotional practices in Buddhism cannot strictly be called worship as this would suggest there is a deity to be worshipped, a concept that is not essential to Buddhism. There are a number of devotional practices exercised by Buddhists that are of both an institutional and private nature. As well as regular **rites of passage** and rites of personal and public worship, Buddhists mark community events and events that relate to the life of the Buddha. Three practices will be discussed here:

1 **Pilgrimage**
2 **Temple *puja***
3 **Wesak (or Vesak)**.

Rite of passage
Ritual to mark the progression of an individual through various status stages in a community

Pilgrimage
A journey of an adherent to a place of significance in their religion

Temple *puja*
Making offerings in a temple; part of the ritual of Buddhists, often reflecting the particular cultural background of the adherents

Wesak (or Vesak)
Celebration of significant events in the life of the Buddha

Pilgrimage

Video

Buddhists conduct pilgrimages because the Buddha, before his death, taught his attendant, Ananda, to instruct his disciples to visit the pilgrimage centres with feelings of reverence. There are eight particular sites identified for Buddhist pilgrimage in northern India and southern Nepal. Four of these sites are mentioned by the Buddha, and an additional four were added by Asoka. It is a spiritual pilgrimage, rather than simply a physical journey. The aim is to share the Buddha's journey to spiritual enlightenment. The success of a pilgrimage depends on desire, mind, effort and knowledge. The aim is the development of the 'perfections' (*paramis*).

The practice of pilgrimage

The idea of pilgrimage came from the Buddha himself. Before the Buddha died, he advised his disciples to visit four places for their inspiration after he was gone:

- Lumbini, where the Buddha was born, often accompanied with miraculous events in Buddhist writings
- Bodhgaya (Buddhagaya), where he achieved enlightenment
- Deer Park in Sarnath, where he preached his first sermon and developed many of the concepts associated with Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths
- Kushinagar (Kusinara), where he died and passed into *mahaparinibbana*; that is, reached nirvana.

To these, another four places were added as significant places of pilgrimage by the time of King Asoka. They are Sravasti (Savatthi), Sankasia, Rajgir (Rajagaha) and Vaishali (Vesali). These places are all closely associated with the Buddha and scenes of his principal miracles.

All of these places are identified as being in the northern part of India and southern Nepal. Buddhists also undertake pilgrimages to other significant places, including places where important teachers have lived, famous temples and shrines, and places to undertake retreats.

The Buddhist texts suggest pilgrimages to places that contain a relic, such as a bone of the Buddha, or a place that has an object associated with the Buddha, and places that can be linked to the Buddha's life through recorded visits.

It is important to understand that a pilgrimage is essentially a spiritual journey in veneration of the Buddha and conducted in the search for enlightenment. This is what makes it a pilgrimage, rather than simply a journey.

King Asoka has been credited with the preservation of the places associated with the life of the Buddha. King Asoka conducted a pilgrimage to the eight places around 249 BCE, and erected stupas and monoliths marking the sites of these places. Many of those pillars still stand today, having been excavated during the nineteenth century. Many Buddhists have conducted pilgrimages during the years since, many from China, and have recorded their journeys.

Beliefs

For many Buddhists the pilgrimage is an once-in-a-lifetime journey, primarily because of the expense and time involved. Most pilgrims take two weeks to complete the journey to the eight places. The purpose of the pilgrimage is to show reverence to the Buddha, to renounce luxury and to share fellowship with other Buddhists.

Several beliefs of Buddhism are developed through pilgrimage. The Three Jewels are evident because the adherent visits places associated with the life of the Buddha, and share in the quest for enlightenment. As pilgrims travel, they reflect on the Dharma, reciting and meditating on the teachings of the Buddha. Pilgrims also share in the sangha, travelling with other pilgrims and also supporting the Sangha at the pilgrimage sites. Pilgrimage also develops good karma, and is a way of following the middle way, as well as developing the perfections.

Pilgrimage has strong mental, spiritual and devotional components. It becomes a physical journey that fulfils the demands of the middle way. As in all actions, the success of pilgrimage depends on desire, mind, effort and knowledge. Many Buddhists add special tasks to their pilgrimage, some believing that enduring difficulties will hasten their enlightenment.

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Figure 5.12 The four places of Buddhist pilgrimage that relate to the Buddha's life. Top left: Lumbini, top right: Bodhgaya, bottom left: Sarnath, bottom right: Kushinigar.

The aim is also development of the perfections (*paramis*). These include generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, faith, kindness, joy, reverence, gratitude, wisdom and devotion. (Theravada Buddhism may list 10 perfections.) The fellowship of other Buddhists is also an important aspect of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is a physical journey with a spiritual outcome. Buddhists conduct pilgrimages because the Buddha said they should, but primarily it is to share and experience the journey towards enlightenment that the Buddha took. It has the effect of sharing common experiences among members of the Buddhist community. That experience can be shared in mutual generosity, the showing of kindness and love and through teachings given to pilgrims.

Significance for the individual

For the individual Buddhist, pilgrimage is spiritually walking in the footsteps of the Buddha, embarking on a journey to enlightenment. It leads to the development of the perfections. Pilgrimage is the time for individual growth and learning of the teachings of the Buddha. It is also a way of developing karmic merit. It clearly identifies the individual as a Buddhist in a number of ways: pilgrims learn non-attachment, there is a heightened sense of the mystical, and it deepens the pilgrim's commitment to Buddhism as they become more aware of the Dharma and the sangha.

Significance for the community

Pilgrimage is part of the Buddhist community experience that transcends time as well as culture. It is a journey joined by the sangha over generations and from all parts of the world. This is the chance to learn from other Buddhists as well as affirming the sangha. Many pilgrims offer financial support to the monks and nuns at the sites who provide food, accommodation and teachings. It is an opportunity to receive and offer service to the Buddhist community.

Even the commercial aspects of pilgrimage – food, accommodation and so on are ways of providing assistance for the communities at the pilgrimage sites. Pilgrimage affirms the cohesion of the community, despite the differences in variants, wealth and geography. Many pilgrims will return home with objects or stories of their pilgrimage to assist others in their experience of Buddhism.

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EXERCISE 5.6

1 **Identify** the primary aim of Buddhist pilgrimage.
2 **Describe** the four major pilgrimage sites in Buddhism and explain their significance.
3 **Outline** the specific actions a pilgrim might make on a pilgrimage and **describe** the effects of those actions.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.6

1 Access the Buddhanet website. The website has a link to a collection of Buddhist electronic books. Using the eBook *Buddhist Pilgrimages* as a reference, write a diary as if you were undertaking a pilgrimage.
2 Write a paragraph **explaining** the link between pilgrimage and enlightenment.
3 Debate the following topic: 'A pilgrimage is not just a journey'.

Temple *puja*

Temple *puja* is a personal and community celebration, an occasion for making offerings with respect and reverence, rather than the conduct of worship. It stresses both the individual need for enlightenment and the community's cultural identity. The practices of *puja* are quite varied, including offerings, meditation and various rituals. Temples can be very elaborate or quite simple, often reflecting cultural traditions. They are designed to symbolise the five elements of fire, air, earth, water and space (sky). An image of Buddha is often used to inspire the worshipper. There are several types of temple *puja* ceremonies.

Buddhists generally do not have a special day of the week when they gather to worship, such as the Christian Sunday, although many temples with Asian origins do. Offerings to images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas can be made any time and in any place, although they are usually done at a temple or home shrine. The calendar of Buddhism is generally linked to the phases of the moon; that is, a lunar calendar. Festivals are generally associated with events in the life of the Buddha or the cultural traditions of the followers.

Figure 5.13 Tibetan monks praying during *puja*. In Buddhism, *puja* are expressions of honour, worship and devotional attention. Acts of *puja* include bowing, making offerings and chanting.

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Temple puja in practice

Public celebrations in Buddhism primarily stress the cooperative nature of Buddhism, as reflected in the concept of helping others to achieve enlightenment. They are not 'worship' as the term is understood by many Westerners. The main purpose of *puja* is to express gratitude to the Buddha and the Sangha for giving the Dharma. This strengthens commitment to the Dharma in the daily conduct of Buddhists. In Australia, temple *puja* is often a community celebration of cultural identity. The cooperative nature of Buddhism expressed in temple *puja*, as in Hinduism, is really an extension of individual actions. They are often allied to the monastic community of Buddhism, the Sangha. One book on Buddhism titled a chapter on relationships 'Alone, together'. In essence this describes the cooperative nature of Buddhism, but its individualism as well.

While the actual form of worship differs between the variants and schools of Buddhism, *puja* generally includes sitting on the floor with shoes removed, chanting, prayers and meditation. Worshippers will also listen to monks chanting, usually from the sacred texts and often accompanied by musical instruments.

Theravada Buddhists use what is called the Threefold *puja*, which are verses recited to revere the Buddha. The Threefold *puja* is as follows:

Opening reverence

We reverence the Buddha, the perfectly enlightened one, the shower of the way. We reverence the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, which leads from darkness to light. We reverence the sangha, the fellowship of the Buddha's disciples, that inspires and guides.

Offerings to the Buddha

Reverencing the Buddha, we offer flowers: flowers that today are fresh and sweetly blooming, flowers that tomorrow are faded and fallen.

Our bodies too, like flowers, will pass away.

Reverencing the Buddha, we offer candles: to him who is the light, we offer light.

From his greater lamp a lesser lamp we light within us: the lamp of bodhi shining within our hearts.

Reverencing the Buddha, we offer incense: incense whose fragrance pervades the air. The fragrance of the perfect life, sweeter than incense spreads in all directions throughout the world.

Reverence to the Three Jewels

We reverence the Buddha, and aspire to follow him. The Buddha was born as we are born. What the Buddha attained, we too can attain. What the Buddha has overcome we too can overcome.

We reverence the Dharma, and aspire to follow it with body, speech and mind until the end. The truth in all its aspects, the path in all its stages, we aspire to study, practise, realise. We reverence the sangha, and aspire to follow it; the fellowship of those who tread the way. As, one by one, we make our own commitment, an ever-widening circle, the sangha grows.

Apart from meditation and chanting, there is little that is common to Buddhist practices across the religious tradition. Meditation in itself is not a communal practice, although group meditation is possible. Cooperative celebrations tend to be commemorations of events in the life of the Buddha and of the cultural traditions of its adherents.

Buddhist celebrations include Asalha (the day the Buddha gave his first sermon) and Parinirvana (the day the Buddha died). Other celebrations can include pilgrimages, Wesak (the Buddha's birthday) and Chinese New Year, which are truly communal celebrations.

Mahayana Buddhism is generally more concerned about specific rituals than Theravada Buddhism. New moon and full moon are often celebrated by special offering services. Funeral rites have significance and the ashes of the dead are often stored in towers accompanied by rituals that include chanting and offering gifts.

Temples

As mentioned, Buddhist temples generally reflect the cultures that the worshippers belong to. They then become more obvious community centres where the particular cultural group meets. Some temples are ornate structures comprising several buildings that can include shrines, educational facilities, *chedi* or stupas (pagodas and burial towers) and meditation rooms. Statues of the Buddha are displayed, often depicting various aspects of his life or teaching. Images of Bodhisattvas are also displayed. Other temples may be much simpler, sometimes only rooms where meditation is practised.

Stupas often contain relics from the Buddha or his followers. Stupas have, over time, been incorporated into Buddhist temples and prayer halls. A temple usually has a place (sometimes simply a chair) where a monk will deliver a sermon. The most obvious features of Buddhist temples include statues of the Buddha, to which incense is often offered. The statue of the Buddha is the central feature. Buddhists do not believe it is an idol or the statue of a god, but rather a representation of a human being who has achieved

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enlightenment, an inspiration for all who attend the temple. The elaborate art and statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are to inspire and to help focus meditation, as are the candles, bells and incense.

Buddhist stupas (and often temples) are specifically designed to symbolise the five elements through five geometric shapes:

- fire: a conical upper structure, a candle or oil lamp symbolises enlightenment
- air: symbolised by an umbrella at the top
- earth: symbolised by the square base
- water: the round central part
- space: symbolised by the pinnacle on the top of the stupa (or temple).

The following features are nearly always also included in a temple shrine:

- an image or a statue of the Buddha: ornate or simple, it inspires the adherents as an example of the potential for all to achieve enlightenment
- incense: as the fragrance fills the room it symbolises the Buddha's teachings filling the world
- a vase or tray of flowers symbolising beauty and impermanence: often they are arranged to symbolise other aspects of Buddhist teaching, e.g. four flowers to symbolise the Four Noble Truths
- a miniature stupa often containing a Buddha relic
- Buddhist sutras: a copy of a sacred text to refer to and to remind Buddhists of the Buddha
- lamps: to symbolise the light of the Buddha's teachings illuminating the world and the minds of people.

One example of a temple shrine in contemporary Australia is the Nan Tien Temple, south of Sydney, which includes a front shrine and a large main shrine where offerings can be made, facilities for reflection and meditation, such as a lotus pond, as well as conference and lecture facilities, accommodation and a vegetarian restaurant. It has a funeral tower (pagoda) and there is a crematorium near the complex. The ashes of those who have died are interned in the pagoda. This reflects the beliefs of its mainly Chinese adherents who practise their respect for their ancestors.

The Nan Tien Temple describes itself as a 'place for devotees and visitors to experience humanistic Buddhism' and is from the Mahayana tradition.

Figure 5.14 A white stupa that is part of the Miaoying Temple in China

Figure 5.15 The Nan Tien Temple near Wollongong

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Beliefs

Temples are sacred spaces to Buddhists, even though the concept of god is not essential in Buddhism. However, in practice many Buddhists do not refute the popular belief that the spirits or gods can intervene to turn ordinary things into holy things, or ordinary places into holy places. So, Buddhists meet to engage this change from the mundane to the sublime.

Temple ceremonies and times of public worship have several purposes. There are four main types of temple ceremonies:

- the bringing of past events into the present (reconstitution)
- marking out the boundaries between the sacred and secular (demarcation)
- giving thanks and the celebration of past events (memorial)
- purifying people so the right relationship can be established between the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and the people (cleansing).

Buddhists meet to perform *puja* (worship). This may mean a formal worship of an image of Buddha. The worshipper will kneel and bow three times (representing Buddha, Dharma and sangha, the Three Jewels), and offer candles, flowers and incense. Chanting and prayer are also part of the worshipping traditions. Worship is a reminder of the process of personal transformation. Prayers such as the Threefold *puja* may be used.

Significance for the individual

For the individual, temple *puja* is an extension of home *puja*. This is linked with the personal quest for enlightenment. The meditation and teachings from the temple are useful in promoting gratitude, strengthening faith in the Dharma, which then promotes commitment to practice in daily life. Offering is the practice of generosity, which helps to gain merit, leading to enlightenment. Temple *puja* is an opportunity to learn to give, leading to a realisation of non-self.

Significance for the community

The temple is the location of the Sangha, the monastic community. They meet with the larger sangha (Buddhist community). This is also an opportunity to share with others in the mutual quest to develop skills for enlightenment. Temple *puja* emphasises community events as well as services of worship. Temple *puja* can also be a way of transferring merit to others; for example, to those who have died. Offering food to sentient beings can be a way of visualising a smooth path to enlightenment. The performance of such rituals during chanting services can be a way of transferring merit.

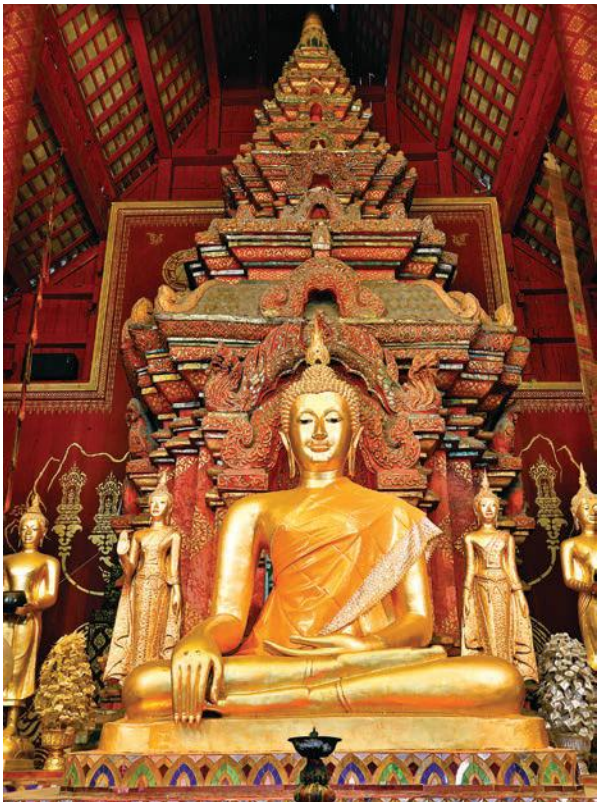

Figure 5.16 Interior of Wat Chiang Man located in Chiang Mai, Thailand

EXERCISE 5.7

1 **Describe** a Buddhist temple and how *puja* is practised at the temple.
2 **Outline** the role of the Buddhist monks in temple *puja*.
3 **Discuss** the purpose of offerings made to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas during temple *puja*.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.7

1 Visit a Buddhist temple and talk to a monk about Buddhist *puja*. Develop an understanding of its significance as a practice for the individual Buddhist.
2 Conduct some research and determine how Buddhist temples combine the cultural backgrounds of the dominant Buddhist culture and the Australian context.
3 Write a paragraph about Buddhist temple *puja*, using the heading 'Alone, together'.

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Wesak/Vesak

Video

Theravada Buddhists believe that the Buddha was born, achieved enlightenment and died all on the same day, on the full moon of the sixth lunar month (usually in April/May). The Vaisakha month is the second month in the Indian lunar calendar. Chinese Mahayana Buddhists commemorate the Buddha's birthday on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (usually in April/May too), his enlightenment on the eighth day of the 12th lunar month and his death on the 15th day of the second lunar month. Buddhists believe the Buddha's death was the day he achieved **Parinirvana**; that is, 'nirvana without remains'. The celebration of this day is known as Wesak (or Vesak). This day is a day of celebration, a time to recall the life of the Buddha and to share the journey to purification, a family celebration when all new things are honoured. Usually on this day, Buddhists light colourful lanterns and candles and bathe a decorated baby Buddha statue. A sermon on some aspect of the Buddha's life is given.

Parinirvana
The Buddha's achievement of nirvana, in its final form the day of his death

Wesak in practice

Mahayana Buddhists celebrate Wesak as the birth date of the Buddha. For Mahayana Buddhists, a statue of the Buddha is washed on this day as a reminder that all faults need to be washed away. In Australia, Wesak is a community celebration and is celebrated according to the customs of the particular cultural community. For example, the Nan Tien Temple and Buddha's Light International Association lead the Chinese Buddhist community to celebrate Wesak in a huge festival at Darling Harbour in Sydney. Smaller temples throughout the city and the suburbs also organise community events in commemoration of Wesak.

Wesak is celebrated in different forms across the world. Often in Asian countries it accompanies the planting season and merges with the anticipation of the coming growth and harvest. In many celebrations, the lighting of lamps accompanies Wesak. In other countries, Wesak is celebrated with a number of activities reflecting the culture of the community. For example, butchers are closed in Sri Lanka and huge festivals of light are held. Paper balloons are released in Thailand, houses are cleaned and animals are freed in many countries. Buddhists gather at temples to support the Sangha and hear sermons and readings from the sacred texts.

INVESTIGATE

Research the celebration of Wesak in your own area. Contact your council or look on the internet for details of a local Buddhist community. How does Wesak reflect the community the Buddhists came from? And how does it reflect the Australian community?

Figure 5.17 Vietnamese Buddhist monks bathe a Buddha statue to purify body and spirit at Wesak, Buddha's birthday celebration at a pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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Beliefs

Wesak is the day that Buddhists anticipate a spiritual cleansing, often celebrated by bathing a statue of the Buddha, and a chance to achieve new spiritual truth or enlightenment. Candles and lamps are used to depict this spiritual light. The celebrations range from quiet meditations to noisy festivals.

Buddhists use the celebration of Wesak to meditate on the way to enlightenment, to be reminded of the history of Buddhism, and to participate in actions that will bring good karma. The hearing of sermons and texts contributes to the quest for enlightenment. It is a time for renewed commitment and growth, for new beginnings. Celebrating the Buddha's birthday, enlightenment and achievement of nirvana is a reminder that this is a possibility for all Buddhists. While Theravada Buddhists celebrate these three aspects of the Buddha's life, Mahayana Buddhists generally celebrate the Buddha's birthday separately from the other two events.

Significance for the individual

The main focus of Wesak for the individual is to celebrate the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha. It is a reminder of the importance of each of these and an opportunity for the individual to focus on the personal quest for enlightenment. Wesak is a reminder of the process of personal transformation. This can be expressed by chanting sutras as well as prayers for all Buddhas. Practices such as bathing the Buddha image remind the adherent of the need for cleansing and purity of mind.

Significance for the community

Wesak is certainly a community celebration. Buddhists flock to communal festivals, temples, parades and other events. The community gathers at the temple and celebrates the Sangha, for teaching and reflection. Often gifts are given to the monks and nuns. This is a time when Buddhists truly celebrate as a community. Often the monastic *Sangha* will give special Dharma talks and spend time teaching.

Other celebrations

Other significant days of celebration in Theravada Buddhism are Asalha, or Dharma Day, when the Buddha gave his first sermon. This is the full moon of the eighth lunar month. Magha, or Sangha Day, celebrates the time when over a thousand monks gathered spontaneously to honour the Buddha. In the Theravada Buddhist calendar this is the full moon of the third lunar month. Chinese Mahayana Buddhists celebrate Sangha Day at the end of the Rainy Retreat and it is typically held with the Ullambana Festival on the eighth day of the seventh lunar month. Celebration of the sangha is another important Buddhist festival and ritual. For many, joining the sangha is a significant step in life and can be undertaken in adolescence in some communities as a rite of passage. While not strictly associated with puberty or onset of adolescence, the introduction to sangha often marks the time in a Buddhist's life when they are introduced to the Buddhist community.

EXERCISE 5.8

1 **Outline** the celebration of Wesak.
2 **Describe** the beliefs of Buddhism that are highlighted at Wesak.
3 **Assess** how Wesak is significant for individual Buddhists and the Buddhist community. Make note of differences in different communities.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5.8

1 Research or attend an Australian celebration of Wesak. Make a note of the culture it represents. What significant features are evident?
2 Prepare a graphic presentation highlighting the events and significance of Wesak, noting links to the beliefs of Buddhism.
3 Interview a Buddhist and ask them to explain the importance of Wesak to their own life and faith.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- King Asoka was converted from a violent life to the pacifism of Buddhism.
- Asoka was one of the most significant people in the development of Buddhism.
- Asoka ensured the spread of Buddhism throughout the ancient world.
- The XIV Dalai Lama has helped spread Buddhism in the Western world.
- Buddhist ethics seek to do good and overcome evil.
- Buddhist bioethics are concerned with the relief of suffering and issues related to the taking of life.
- Environmental ethics are concerned with maintaining balance in nature.
- Sexual ethics must be expressed in a way that avoids hurt and harm, and affirms what is loving and respectful.
- Women have generally had to counter patriarchal tendencies in society to achieve equality in Buddhism.
- Tenzin Palmo is an example of a woman who has achieved some significance in Buddhism.
- Pilgrimage is a chance for people to share in the life of the Buddha as they journey towards enlightenment.
- Temple *puja* reflects the cultural heritage of Buddhist communities.
- Temple *puja* is a means of developing insight and wisdom.
- Wesak is a celebration of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.
- Wesak reflects the cultural traditions of the Buddhist community.
- Wesak anticipates and demonstrates the enlightenment that is the aim of every Buddhist.

HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, you will be required to answer either a three-part, 15-mark question, or a one-part extended essay of 20 marks. That is, EITHER a question from Section II OR a question from Section III.

SECTION II

Marks

Question 1 – Buddhism (15 marks)

(a) **Describe** the contribution of ONE significant person, other than the Buddha, to Buddhism. **3**

(b) **Explain** the significance of ONE significant practice on the life of a Buddhist adherent. Draw from one of the following practices: **6**

- Pilgrimage
- Temple *puja*
- Wesak

(c) **Discuss** the importance of Buddhist ethical teachings in ONE of the following areas: **6**

- Bioethics
- Environmental ethics
- Sexual ethics

SECTION III

Question 1 – Buddhism (20 marks)

Analyse the significance of ONE Buddhist practice on the individual AND the Buddhist community. The practice must be drawn from the following: **20**

- Pilgrimage
- Temple *puja*
- Wesak

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OR

> We reverence the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, which leads from darkness to light.
> THREEFOLD PUJA

With reference to this quote, **explain** how Buddhism affects the life of the adherent as they search for enlightenment. **20**

Figure 5.18 Fire *puja* ceremonies are ritual offerings of smoke, smell and flame to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from the past, present and future, and to the Tantric deities.

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SIX

CHRISTIANITY: THE BASIC FACTS

[YEAR 11 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

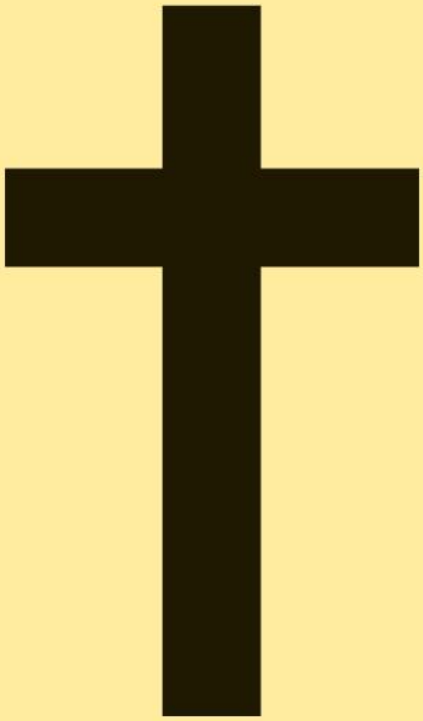
I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen.
Not only because I see it, but because I see everything by it.

C.S. LEWIS, BRITISH ACADEMIC, WRITER AND LAY THEOLOGIAN (1898–1963)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the nature of society and the religious practices of Palestine before Christianity
- the outstanding events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth and why he is the model for a good Christian life
- the early development of the Christian communities after the death of Jesus
- the rise of the different variants of Christianity
- the principal beliefs of Christianity
- the importance of the Bible to Christians
- sections of the sacred texts that highlight principal beliefs of Christianity
- the principal ethical teachings of Christianity
- the importance of law and ethics to Christians
- the different types of personal prayer in the lives of Christians.



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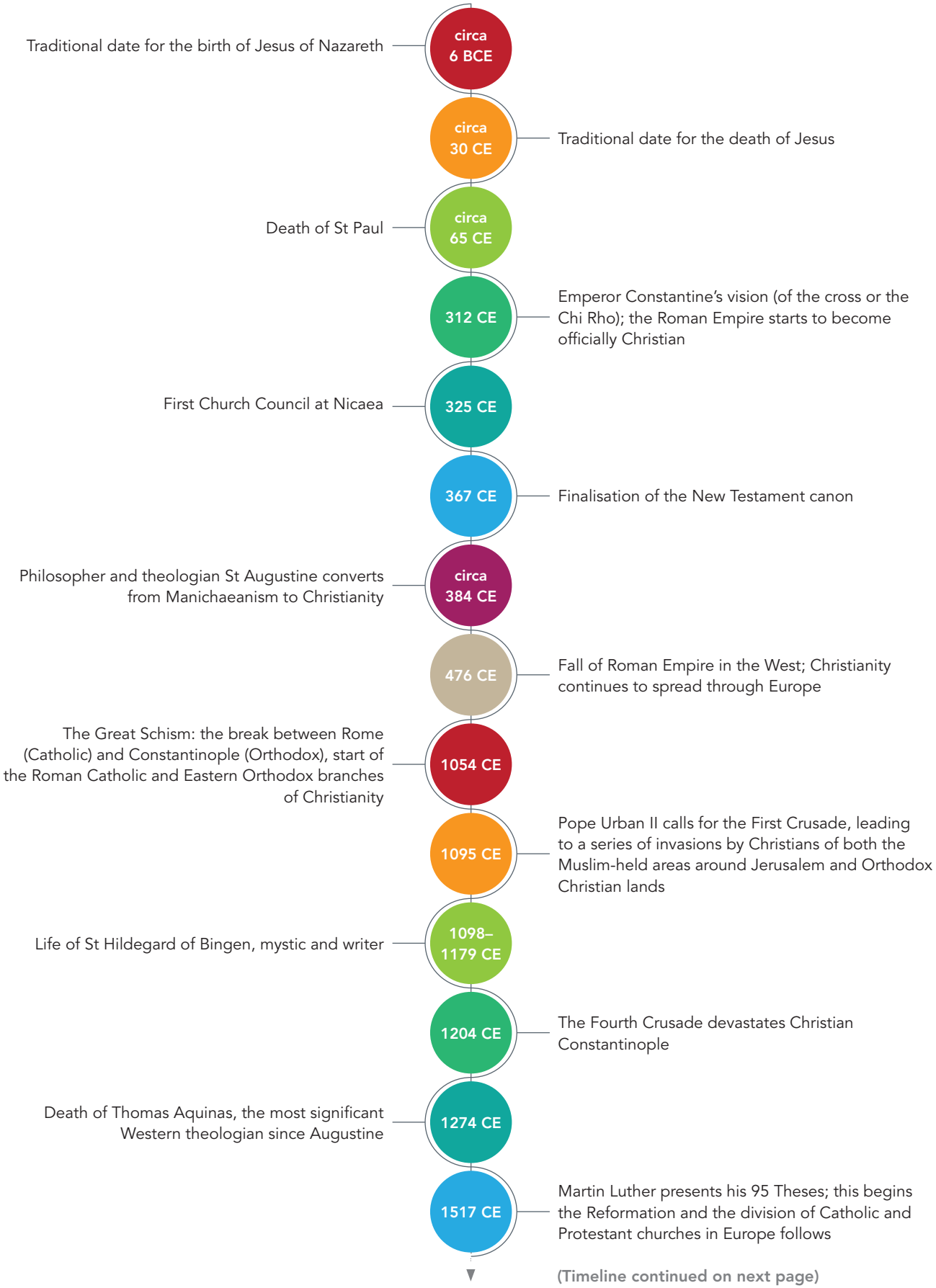

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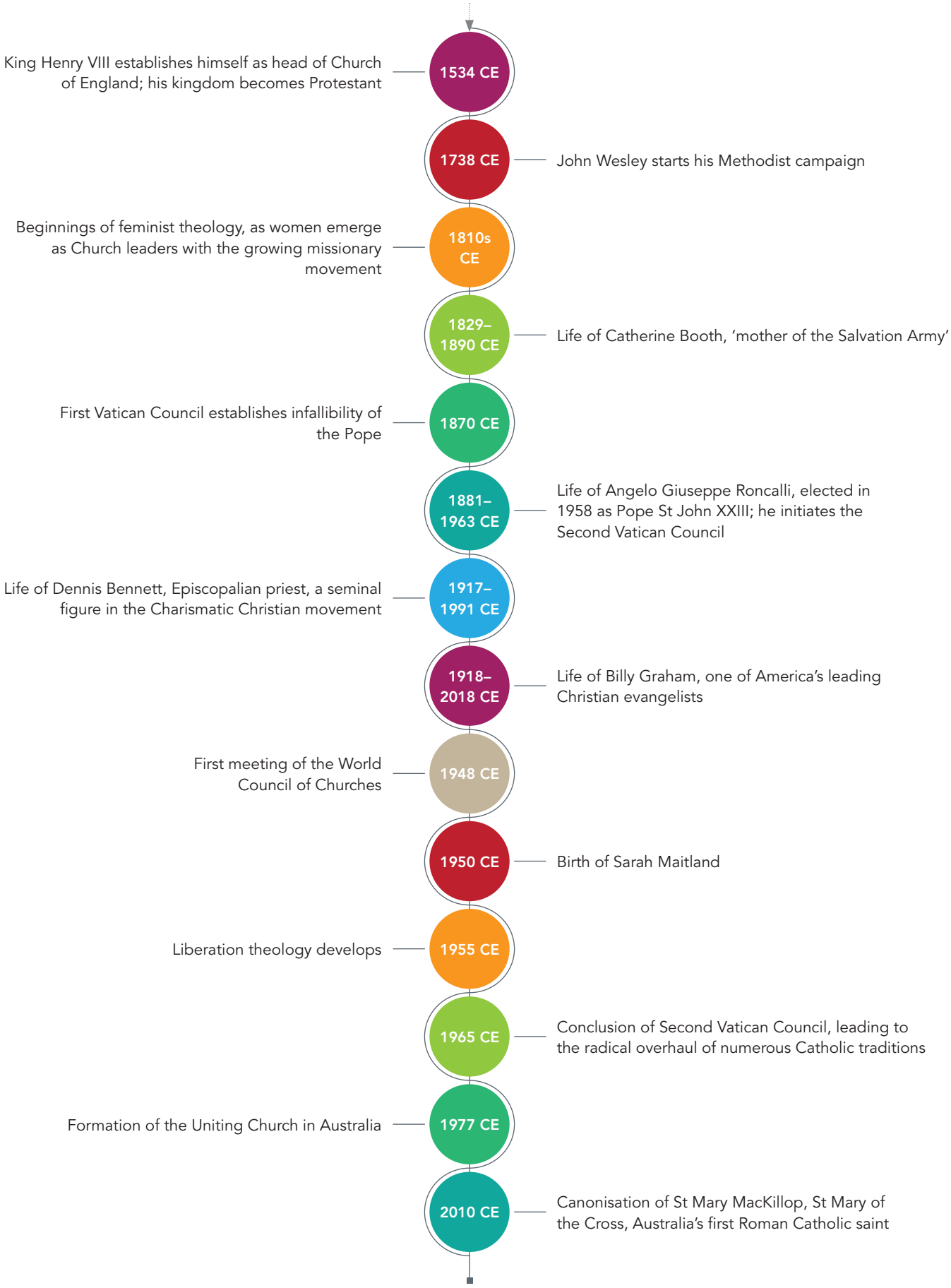

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6.1 ORIGINS: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Christianity is close to 2000 years old. It began in **Judea**, the kingdom of the **Jewish** people. **Jerusalem** was the main religious and economic centre of this region. It contained **the Temple**, the principal place of worship for Jewish people. Here Jewish priests tended the sacred house of their God and made sacrifices to him, as well as performing other ritual duties.

Christianity started as a Jewish sect. Its leaders and early followers were Jewish people. Understanding Judaism will help you understand the background of Christianity. As it grew, Christianity adapted religious ideas from societies it moved into, as well as the influences from the surrounding cultures. Early Christians were influenced by Greeks, Romans, Persians and others and incorporated some of their ideas into their growing religion.

At the time that Christianity began, the **Roman Empire** had gained almost complete control of Judea. This caused significant religious and political tension in the area. Many Jewish people wondered why their holy city, Jerusalem, was again coming under direct foreign control; it had been occupied previously by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and before that by the Persians.

The Jewish people were worried that political turmoil would engulf their culture. At this time, political and religious groups were attempting to find a way to free Judea from Rome's control. It was a time of crisis and deep self-reflection for the Jewish people. Some of them hoped that a **Messiah** would come, a man who, like others in Jewish history such as King David, would lead an independent and powerful Judea. Scholars refer to this as Messianism, which falls into a wider idea of millenarianism or the expectation that soon a great change will come. This long-awaited deliverer of political and religious freedom is referred to often in the later part of Jewish scripture (the **Tanakh** or Hebrew Bible) where prophets such as Isaiah spoke of the arrival of a saviour. Many Jewish people were waiting and hoping for change. To many, Jesus fitted this idea of a Messiah. In the stories about his life he is depicted as living his life as a Jewish person. In those stories he appealed in his calls for change to the disaffection of the Jewish people.

As well as the political tensions in Judea, Judaism was itself divided into a number of groups. These included the **Pharisees**, the **Sadducees** and the **Essenes**. The attitude of Jesus to these various groups demonstrates that he was trying to revitalise Judaism at a very difficult time. The Pharisees were progressive. They held closely to Jewish religious law, yet added many of their own interpretations. In following these rules, they declared themselves more holy than ordinary Jewish people. Jesus referred to them as hypocrites for masking the true laws with so many other rules. Paul, who later played a central role in the development of Christianity, was originally a Pharisee.

Table 6.1 The main influences on early Christianity

From Judaism	From the Greeks	From the Romans	From the Persians
Monotheism, expectation of the Messiah	Greek philosophy	*Pax Romana* (the great Empire at Peace)	Idea of the virgin birth, the Magi visit Jesus
Exile led to codified faith	Influence on Judaism (Philo)	Roman roads to speed communication in the empire	Hell as a place of punishment rather than just a place for the dead to dwell
Diaspora developed synagogues	Greek language – *lingua franca*	Safe Mediterranean, again to aid communication	Personal salvation rather than group salvation as with Judaism
Expectation of Messiah	Gymnasium-schooling model	Roman citizenship increasing at this time to many non-Romans and suggesting that the peoples of the world could be united under one social and political system	Jesus as the god Mithra whose birthday was 25 December

Judea
Part of a mountainous area (now divided between Israel and Palestine) that Jewish people believed had been promised to them by God

Jewish
Name given to the people of Israel after their exile in Babylon; the survivors were mainly from the tribe of Judah

Jerusalem
Capital city of Israel; was also the capital city of Judea

Temple, the
The temple built in Jerusalem

Roman Empire
The Roman Empire, at the time of Jesus, controlled all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea including Judea and Jerusalem; the Romans spoke Latin, but the Greek language was as important as Latin and had become the common language of the Empire

Messiah
The promised deliverer of the Jewish nation

Tanakh
Acronym for the Hebrew Bible that is made up of the Teachings: (Torah T), the writings from the Period of Prophecy (Nevi'im N) and the writings from the remaining books (Ketuvim K)

Pharisees
A religious sect that was active in Jesus' day

Sadducees
A high-status religious group of Jesus' day

Essenes
A separatist religious group in Israel in the first century CE

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CONSIDER

There are many references to Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the **Gospels**. Yet these two groups represented the religious people of his day. Try to determine why Jesus was so critical of these people (see Matthew 23, Mark 8:11–21, Mark 12:1–40, Luke 7:36–50 in the Bible).

Gospels
The story of Jesus' life and teachings; the first four books of the New Testament

The Sadducees were opposed to the Pharisees. They believed only in what was written in Hebrew scripture, and were a more conservative part of the Jewish establishment that Jesus attacked.

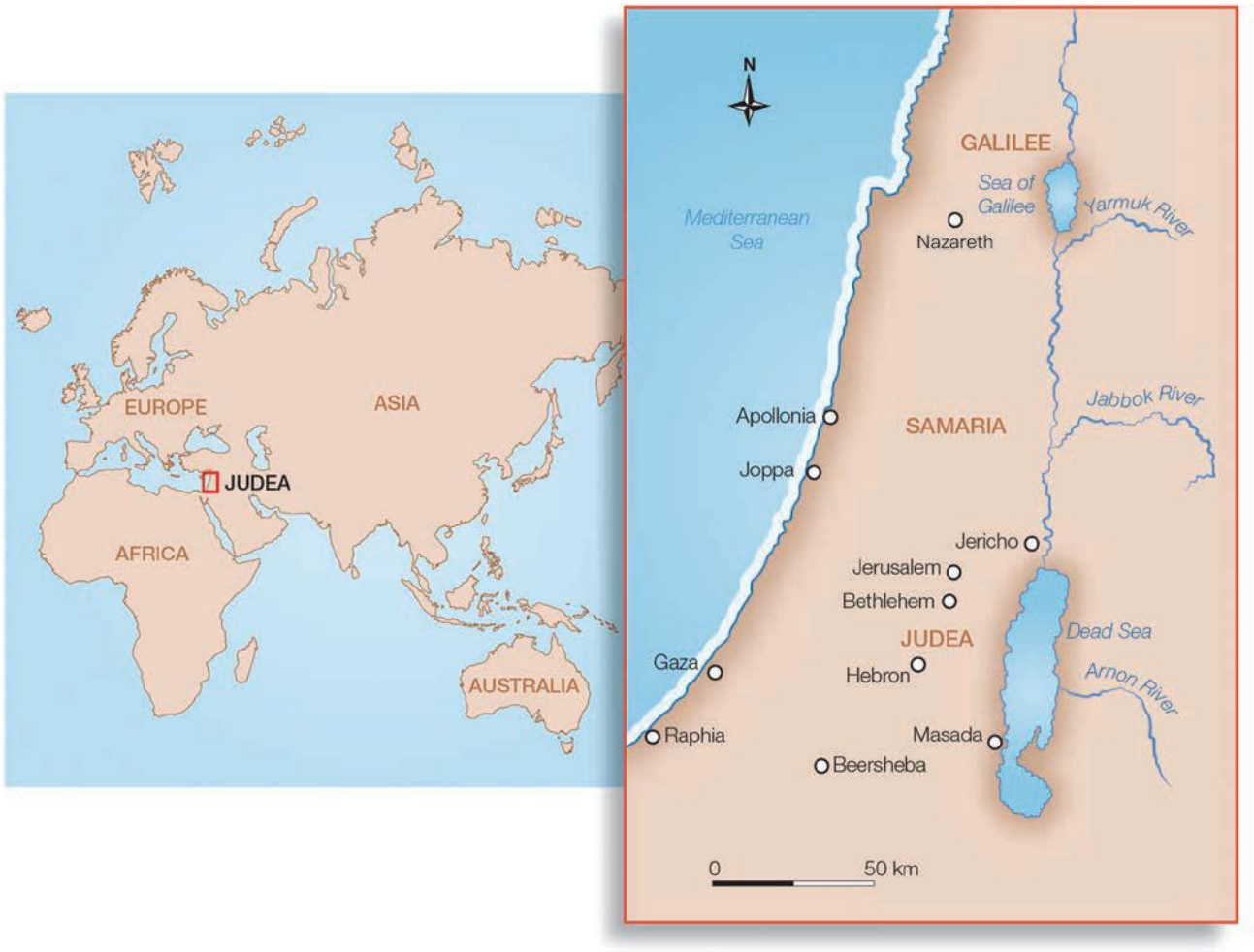

Figure 6.1 Judea at the time of Jesus' birth: the map on the left shows Judea's location in relation to the rest of the world

EXERCISE 6.1

1 **Explain** the way the Greek, Roman and Jewish people may have influenced the origins of Christianity.
2 **Describe** the different views regarding the Messiah at the time of Jesus.
3 List the major Jewish groups of Jesus' day and identify their main features.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.1

1 Explore the concept that Christianity is a Western religion. Discuss with reference to its origins.
2 **Explain** why it is necessary to understand Judaism to understand Christianity.
3 Research the following question: How did Jesus meet (or not meet) the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?

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6.2 JESUS CHRIST/JESUS OF NAZARETH

Virtually all that is known about Jesus is drawn from the New Testament, a series of texts written by early Christians some 30 to 70 years after his death. There are several references to him outside Christian texts, but there is evidence (as in the histories of the Jewish historian Josephus) that these texts have been edited by Christians. There are references to Christians in the writings of the Roman officials. This means that scholars and students must take care to understand both the mythic and literary dimensions of Jesus and the historical facts of his life. Academics tend to agree that he was an historical figure. The issue of whether he was the Son of God, as the Gospels announce, is a theological issue. Jewish and Muslim people deny the divinity of Jesus. Even with the evidence provided by the New Testament, we can see that little was known about Jesus except for the last three years of his life. Perhaps the most mythologised part of his life is the least known by his followers: his birth, childhood and adolescence.

Principal events of Jesus' life

Jesus, according to the Gospel records, was born around 6 BCE. As he is commonly referred to as Jesus of Nazareth it is possible that he was not born in Bethlehem as the **myth** of his birth states, but in Nazareth. Bethlehem, in fact, was the home town of

CONSIDER

The term myth does not mean 'made up story'. Myth refers to the expression in human language of cosmic events. It refers to the great stories of human socialisation and supernatural events couched in understandable terminology.

King David (circa 900 BCE), a famous Jewish monarch and Messiah figure. The extensive genealogy of Jesus in the opening chapters of Matthew's Gospel links Jesus with the family of King David through Jesus' legal father, Joseph. The story of Jesus' birth also states that angels who visited his mother, Mary, predicted that he would be the son of God (Luke 1:26–38, Matthew 1:18–25) through a process known as **parthenogenesis**; that is, a virgin birth. The wise men or Magi, who were possibly star worshippers from the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism, were also said to have been present soon after his birth. This Persian group had long predicted the birth of a chosen man from the womb of a virgin.

The narrative continues that, soon after he was born, Jesus' family fled to Egypt as King Herod I (a client

Myth
A spiritual or religious idea expressed in human terms

Parthenogenesis
A divine being born from a virgin without sexual intercourse

Figure 6.2 Christ the Redeemer statue overlooking Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The statue stands 30 metres high and is a symbol of Christianity across the world.

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Baptism
A religious act of purification by water that allows recipients membership of Christianity

Gnostic
From the Greek word *gnosis* meaning wisdom; Gnostic doctrines hold that the world and humanity are corrupt and only wisdom of secret matters allows humans to connect with the small spark of the divine within them

Apostle
Follower whom Jesus chose and trained for a mission of healing and preaching

Disciple
Follower of a leader or teacher

Sermon on the Mount
A moral discourse from Jesus where he unveiled his theology and philosophy to an assembled crowd

Parable
A short story containing a religious lesson

Miracle
Manifestation of the sacred or holy to produce an effect or result that seems contrary to the laws of nature

king acting for the Romans) killed all the male babies of Bethlehem. Again, there is no evidence in history that King Herod actually did this, but this part of the story parallels the similar story of the Egyptian pharaoh who killed babies at the time of Moses and is consistent with what is known about Herod the Great. After his birth, it seems that Jesus then grew up in or about the town of Nazareth.

According to the Gospels, at about the age of 30, Jesus was **baptised** by John the Baptist, a figure who was possibly a **Gnostic**, Mandaean or an Essene. Jesus wandered in the wilderness for some time and was tempted by the devil (Luke 3:21–23, 4:1–15). After this, he returned to Judea and preached for about three years. He selected a small band of 12 **apostles**, and became known as a teacher and miracle worker. In contrast with the common practice of the day, a number of female **disciples** were also part of Jesus' group, including Mary Magdalene who seems to have been present at most of the major events of Jesus' last three years. Jesus encouraged his listeners to move beyond the strict legalism of the Judaism of his day and look at motives behind actions. He stated he had come to fulfil the law of Judaism and mixed freely with those considered 'sinners and outcasts' (Matthew 5:17, Mark 2:15–16). Many of his statements reflect those of the Jewish teacher Hillel who developed a more liberal interpretation of the Laws of the Torah in the years before Jesus' birth.

The teachings of Jesus were politically and socially radical and inspiring, and examples can be found in the **Sermon on the Mount**. Jesus used **parables** (stories with various meanings for different people) as an effective teaching device (Mark 4:1–20). Jesus also worked **miracles**: healing the sick, casting out demons, evidencing power over nature and even raising the dead (see Mark 2:32–34, 4:35–41, John 11:1–44). Not surprisingly, Jesus soon came into conflict with the Jewish and Roman authorities.

In the last weeks of his life, Jesus is shown to have made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, today celebrated by Palm Sunday (Mark 11:1–11). He visited the Temple and overturned the stalls of moneychangers and other market stalls in the Temple courtyard (Mark 11:15–19). He was then involved in a series of public arguments with the

Figure 6.3 A depiction by El Greco of an angry Christ driving the moneychangers from the Temple. Events from Jesus' life have been depicted in many forms, despite questions about their historicity. For example, the Magi did not visit Jesus in the stable (but in a house), despite this being depicted in many Nativity scenes.

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Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12:13–40). After the **Last Supper** (possibly a Jewish **Passover** meal) Jesus offered his disciples **communion** of bread and wine (which became the celebration of Holy Communion in the Christian Church). He likened this to his body and his blood. On the Thursday evening, Jesus was arrested by soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane, just outside the city (Mark 14:12–50).

He was brought to trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator.

Although no Roman sources record the event, Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified by Pontius Pilate on what Christians call **Good Friday** (Mark 15:21–41). His death was considered to be necessary, by Christians, to bring **salvation** for all. He was hastily buried on the Friday evening. On the Sunday morning, a number of women went to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body for permanent burial. They found the tomb empty and angels declared he had risen from the dead (Mark 16:1–8). Over the next few weeks, Jesus was seen at several occasions, once by more than 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). Forty days after his **resurrection**, Jesus was said to have ascended into heaven (Acts 1:6–11).

Interpreting the principal events in the life of Jesus

The New Testament is the central set of texts that form Christian scripture or sacred writing. The New Testament, and perhaps a range of contemporary Gnostic texts, are the main sources for studying the stories of Jesus. The words and deeds credited to Jesus have revolutionised Western society, which for centuries has been considered 'Christian'. Many people have responded to the teachings of Jesus and have sought to implement them in their lives.

To complicate things further, there is no one simple account of the life of Jesus. Instead there are four Gospels written by early followers, but sometime after the period in which Jesus lived. Each text concentrates on various aspects of Jesus' life. A text called **Q** is supposed to be one of the earliest accounts of Jesus' teachings, but Q was only ever a hypothetical construct. It comes from the German *Quelle*, which means 'source'. Scholars will engage in a process of reconstruction, but it's not that they believe or hope to find such a hypothetical text. In fact, most scholarship nowadays is involved in assessing how oral traditions came into written form, away from just dealing with the reconstruction of the hypothetical Q. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both seem to borrow sayings and stories about Jesus from it. This is supported by the fact that the wording of these two writers is sometimes very similar. The Epistles (letters) in the New Testament attributed to Paul are the oldest Christian sources, but they say little about the details of Jesus' life. Mark is taken to be the earliest Gospel account and was written possibly 30 to 50 years after the death of Jesus. His account concentrates on the last three or four years of Jesus' life. Luke's Gospel, written after Mark's, contains additions to the story of Jesus' birth. These details are understood by some scholars today in mythological terms rather than a strictly biographical sense. 'Gospel', the term applied to these books, is regarded as a distinctive genre in literature. The suggested ages of Christian writing are shown in Table 6.2.

Last Supper
The final meal Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion

Passover
Jewish feast that celebrates the Exodus and the ideal of freedom

Communion
Literally, fellowship; has become applied to the sacrament of Holy Communion

Good Friday
The Friday before Easter that commemorates the day Jesus died

Salvation
Christians believe Jesus died to save people from the punishment of sin

Resurrection
A person coming back to life

Q
From the German *Quelle* meaning 'source'; Q is believed to be an early collection of Jesus' sayings and is apparently used by Matthew and Luke in the common words of their Gospels

INVESTIGATE

Find a copy of one of the Gospels. Mark is the shortest. Ignore the chapter and verse divisions and read the Gospel. Try to discover what is being said about Jesus. For example, Mark 1:1 says, 'This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. As you read the Gospel ask, 'who recognises Jesus as the Christ (the Messiah)? Who recognises Jesus as the Son of God and what is this telling us?'

Table 6.2 The suggested dating of Christian writings

Book	Accepted date of composition
Letters of Paul	from the 50s CE
Q (a source for Matthew and Luke)	before 65 CE
Mark	65–75 CE
Matthew	70–85 CE
Luke	85–95 CE

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Synoptic Gospels
Literally, 'seen together'; the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which share many common features

Christ
Greek word used for the Jewish term 'Messiah', the anointed one

Trinity
The concept of one God in three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

The Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew are referred to as the **Synoptic Gospels** because they take similar views of Jesus' life, with much material in common. John's Gospel is quite different from the first three. It is a later and more theologically reflective document. This is not strange because Christianity was getting close to a hundred years old when this Gospel was written and it had a different purpose. John starts his account by mentioning the *Logos*, the word of God that created the world. *Logos* is a Greek concept and illustrates the influence of Greek thought on the Judaism and Christianity of the first century. Philo, a Jewish theologian living at the time of Jesus, also writes of the *Logos*, and may have influenced John's writing. John tells us Jesus is this Word made flesh. In John's account, Jesus goes from being a Messiah to God in human form.

John introduces elements and assumptions that are Greek and calls Jesus the **Christ**, which means 'the anointed one' and was previously a title used by Greeks to refer to the god Apollo. This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word 'Messiah'. The Messiah emerges in Jewish thought as the one who will liberate the Jewish people. In Mark, Jesus is careful about stating whether he is the Messiah or not, but in John his messiahship is declared openly. This illustrates how Christian texts may have developed and expanded the story of Jesus in the hundred years after Jesus died. In John's account, Jesus leaves off being a figure of history and speaks with the authority of God. In John, the message is mystical on one level, but very clear on another level.

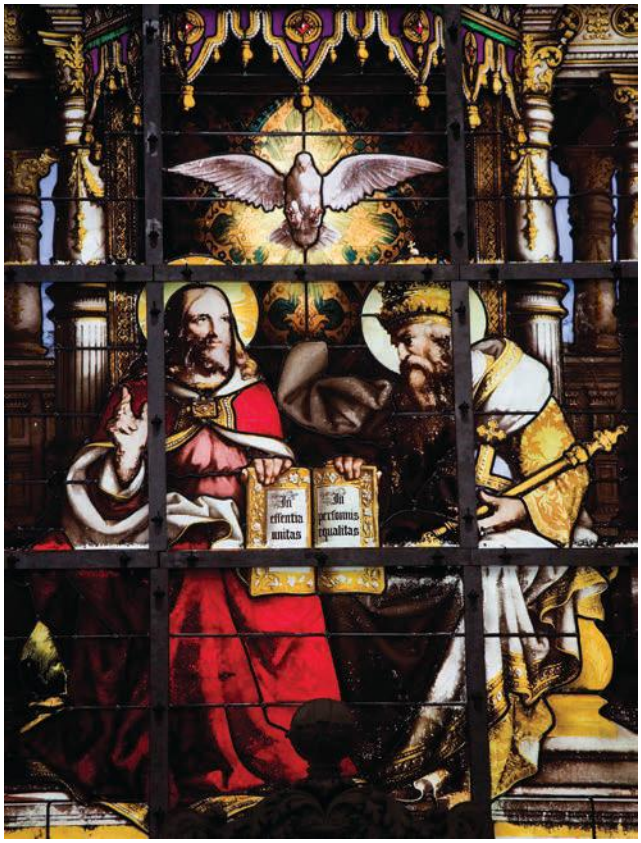

Figure 6.4 Stained-glass window depicting the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This window is in the cathedral of Brussels.

John's development of the Jesus story is the basis for the doctrine of the **Trinity**. This is belief in the idea that God is one, but existing in three persons– Father, Son and Holy Spirit – yet these three persons are an indivisible whole.

Some texts written close to the time of Jesus, that are not included in the New Testament and figure Jesus as a central character, are still being discovered. Some religious books, written at around the time of Jesus, were found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945.

The ministry of Jesus

Understanding the complex and highly literate nature of the accounts of Jesus' life can allow us to emphasise what was most important to those who wrote down and told his story. The most important part of Jesus' life starts with his contact with John the Baptist. From this point he performed a number of miracles,including driving out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead and turning water into wine. Sceptical scholars suggest that these were later exaggerations written into the story, misunderstandings, or only partly true. Some Christians agree that Jesus' miracles, like his parables, may not have happened but are part of the myth that allows us to understand essential truths. Other Christians claim that Jesus was God, so he could actually perform these miracles and turn the laws of science upside down.

On both religious and political levels, particularly in the first three Gospels, Jesus spoke about the 'Kingdom of God' (Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:28). This is a highly metaphorical term that could have been taken by a Jewish person at the time to mean the re-establishment of Judea or, as it was understood later, the Christian Heaven, or God's rule in the life of his people. This important term is understood in a number of ways by Christians. Pope Benedict XVI, in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, states that there are 'three dimensions' to the Church Fathers' interpretation of the Kingdom of God. The first is that Jesus is himself the kingdom in person; the second is that the kingdom is 'within you'; and the third is expressed in the relationship between the 'Kingdom of God' and the Church.

As a religious figure who was also a political revolutionary, Jesus said and did radical things. His sermons to gathered groups, such as the Sermon on the Mount, preached universal love and gave hope to the downtrodden. The story of his entry into Jerusalem when the city was in festive mode was a provocative act towards the authorities. The disturbance with the stalls in the temple may have led to his arrest and execution. Crucifixion was the Roman method of execution; the Jewish people used stoning.

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The New Testament suggests that the Jewish people were responsible for the death of Jesus, with particular reference to this in Matthew 27:24–25. The idea that the Jewish people and not Romans were responsible for Jesus' death has had terrible consequences, particularly in Christian Europe, of **anti-Semitism**. Anti-Semitism refers to prejudice against the Jewish people when racial theories started to become a pseudo-science in Western Europe in modernity. Prior to that, and a more ancient form of the same prejudice, was anti-Judaism – a religious prejudice against the religious system of Judaism and, consequently, the people. It was the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who actually passed the sentence of death on Jesus.

Anti-Semitism
Prejudice against Jewish people

Orthodox
Literally meaning 'keeping to the correct teachings of the Church'; has come to refer to the Eastern Church

Three days after Jesus was taken from the cross and entombed, he reportedly arose from the dead. The resurrection is regarded by believers as his greatest miracle and the part of the story that asserts his divinity. It is re-enacted during the celebration of Easter, from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Church worship, particularly in **Orthodox** services, also recreates this story.

Jesus as the model of Christian life

In Christianity, Jesus is seen as sinless and is the example Christians strive to emulate. His teachings emphasise Christian commands that apply to ethical behaviour, and his life is a model life that Christian adherents should strive to follow. He showed compassion to the needy, healed the sick, lived selflessly and taught the love of God. Jesus was described as a good man and a holy man (Acts 3:14). Christians are expected to follow this example and be good, so that others turn to God (Matthew 5:16). In the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament, the writer suggests that Jesus was the first of the new faith and the one who brought perfection, an example for all Christians to follow.

Figure 6.5 In Christianity, Jesus is an inspiration to show compassion to the needy.

> Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfector of our faith.
> HEBREWS 12:1, 2

The apostle Paul urges Timothy, his disciple, to follow him as he follows Christ, and this introduces the idea that Christians should also look to mature Christians as examples of how to live one's life.

Video

> Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 4:16-17

EXERCISE 6.2

1 **Propose** some other possible sources of information, besides the New Testament, about the life of Jesus.
2 **Clarify** what Jesus did or said that was significant to his disciples and to people today. Look at Matthew's Gospel for details.
3 **Outline** what is meant by 'the Kingdom of God', noting the different aspects that can be emphasised.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.2

1 From the multiple stories about Jesus, try to construct a timeline of the life of Jesus. Note the significant events. **Discuss** aspects of Jesus' life that are missing and what aspects are emphasised.
2 Research and **explain** whether Jesus was a political revolutionary.
3 Research the differing attitudes to Jesus and discuss why and how Jesus is a model for Christian adherents.

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6.3 DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The earliest texts in the New Testament are the letters of Paul. Paul was a Roman citizen, a well-educated Jewish person who lived in Tarsus, in modern-day Turkey. He never met Jesus in the flesh, but as a Jewish person he travelled to Jerusalem where he at first opposed the Christians and later converted to Christianity. (See the section on Paul in Chapter 7.)

The letters of Paul and the teachings of the early Apostles have been the foundation of Christian theology and practice since New Testament times. Christians developed a communal lifestyle that is spoken of in the book of Acts (see 2:42–47, 3:32–37).

They started as a group within Judaism but were eventually forced to leave that faith, developing the ideas that have become Christianity. Other early Church leaders included some of the disciples of Jesus. Following the expulsion from Judaism and the increasing conversion of gentile (non-Jewish) believers, Christianity began its journey to becoming a world religion.

The Church had to meet secretly at first because it was an illegal religion in Rome. Many early Christians were martyred because they refused to worship the Roman emperor. Christianity nevertheless became an influential movement over the three centuries following the time of Jesus, eventually becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire after the conversion of the emperor Constantine in 312 CE.

6.4 VARIANTS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The history of Christianity is a history of division, often for political or social reasons as much as theological or religious ones. Five major variants of Christianity will be discussed: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Anglicanism and Pentecostalism. Despite the differences and the historical animosity between many of these groups, most would prescribe to the creeds of the church, traditional statements of Christian belief.

INVESTIGATE

Research Meredith Lake's *The Bible Down Under* (Bible Society, 2016) and her more extensive *The Bible in Australia* (NewSouth, 2018). It discusses how the Bible and Christianity shaped Australian society.

Catholicism

Catholic
Christian denomination of the Roman Catholic Church

Apostolic Succession
The unbroken handing on of authority and belief from the time of the Apostles

Pope
Head of the Roman Catholic Church

The **Catholic** Church follows several important doctrines. One of these is the Doctrine of **Apostolic Succession**, also followed by the Anglican Church. This says that Jesus gave a sacred mission to the Apostle Peter, whom Catholic people recognise as the first **pope**, and this mission was then passed on to all other popes. In this way, the Catholic Church claims it represents the true legacy of Jesus' life. There were a number of other Christian churches set up at the same time as the one in Rome: those in Greece, Antioch, Syria and so on. These churches have difficulty with the authority claimed by the Roman Church. They agree that the Catholic pope is a Christian figure of outstanding authority, but argue he has no automatic claim of authority over their churches. Many of these churches also claim to be apostolic.

In Catholicism, **priests, bishops** and **cardinals** mediate between believers and God. All of these are under the authority of the Pope. Catholics believe that confessing their **sins** to a priest will aid their salvation. The Catholic Church recognises seven **sacraments**: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance (confession), ordination, marriage and extreme unction (anointing of the sick). These are also accepted by the Orthodox churches.

As Christianity moved across Europe, it blended with other religious practices already popular there. There was an emphasis on the role of the Virgin Mary, who is strongly worshipped among the people of the Catholic Church (as well as other Christian churches). Mary was increasingly sanctified until the Doctrine of **Immaculate Conception** was established officially in 1854. This says that Mary was born without sin. This doctrine was not developed with reference to the Christian scriptures but reflected the faith of the Catholic Church. Other ideas also developed over time. In 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons, the doctrine of **purgatory** was defined for the first time.

Priest
Someone who performs religious rites and makes sacrificial offerings

Bishop
An authority figure of the Christian clergy

Cardinal
A senior figure of the Roman Catholic Church

Sin
An act considered a transgression of divine law, an offence against God

Sacrament
A religious ceremony that celebrates an outward sign of an inner spiritual grace

Immaculate Conception
The doctrine that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was free from sin from the conception of Jesus

Purgatory
The intermediate state between death and heaven, according to Roman Catholic theology

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Figure 6.6 The Protection of the Holy Virgin Russian Orthodox Church along John Street, Cabramatta

This doctrine states that an intermediate realm exists for souls who are Christian but need to repent of their sins before entering heaven.

As time went on, popes in Rome continued to claim that the Church had authority over kings and scientists, and only they could grant entry into Heaven (the keys hanging over the entrance to St Peter's Basilica in Rome represent the keys to heaven). Church officials started selling **indulgences**, exchanging donations to the Church for the cancellation of sin. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there was also much trading of the bones of saints and other holy relics. In 1517, Martin Luther, a monk in Germany, attacked the Church for this corruption, and eventually set up (although this was not his original intention) his own religious group based only on scripture. In this way, **Protestantism** (Christians who protested against papal authority and the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century) developed. In the 1960s, the Roman Catholic Church responded to concerns for the modern church with the holding of the Second Vatican Council. There is a history of mistrust between the Catholic and Anglican churches In Australia, called sectarianism (see chapter 2).

Orthodoxy

For the first thousand years of the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches were simply those Christian Churches that existed in the eastern half of the Roman Empire and came under the control of the Emperor in Byzantium. A centre for Christianity was established at Constantinople (then called Byzantium, now Istanbul in Turkey) by the Emperor Constantine,and grew to rival Rome as the most significant Christian city. In 1054 CE, the Eastern Church (the Orthodox Church) split from the Western Church (the Roman Catholic Church). This split is called the **Great Schism**.

Both churches trace their origins to the Apostles, but over time they developed different ideas and practices. These included the pope, whose authority was not accepted in the East, the use of **icons** in the East, and some differences in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which the West says proceeds 'from the Son' as well as the Father (this is called the **filioque clause**). There is also the fact that clergy can marry in the East but not in the West.

The Orthodox churches became regional churches and reflect the different cultures and identities of their people. They spread into Greece, Russia, Serbia and other areas following the Muslim invasion of Byzantium in the fifteenth century. There are 200 million Orthodox Christians across the world, and more than 500 000 in Australia, from the Greek, Russian, Macedonian and Serbian Churches, many having arrived with post–World War II migration.

Indulgence
In Roman Catholicism, a pardon from the expectation of punishment in Purgatory after the sinner has been absolved

Protestant
Churches that split from the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century in protest at the Church's teachings

Great Schism
The split between the Western and the Eastern Churches in the eleventh century CE

Icons
Stylised pictorial representations of saints, biblical characters or stories, used as aids to worship in the Orthodox churches

Filioque clause
Literally, 'and 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'

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Protestantism

95 Theses
Pamphlet written by Martin Luther against the selling of papal indulgences

Baptist
A denomination of Christianity that rejects infant baptism, believing that followers should choose to be Christian of theirown accord

Pentecostalism
Movement within Christianity that places emphasis on the possibility of direct contact with the Holy Spirit

Proselytising
Encouraging converts from one religion to another

Evangelical
Originally, 'from the Gospels'; from the eighteenth century CE, it refers to a Protestant movement that believes one's soul can be saved only by having faith in the atoning death of Jesus

Creed
A statement of religious belief, often summarising the major concepts of that religion

catholic
Refers to the whole Christian Church. An alternative use of this lowercase form is as meaning universal, inclusive or broad-minded.

'Protestant' is not the name of any single church but a movement of religious groups in Europe opposed to various non-biblical doctrines of the Catholic Church and not accepting the power of the pope in Rome. Protestantism began with the nailing of Martin Luther's **95 Theses** to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral in Germany on 31 October 1517. Luther's protest coincided with significant political, social and theological changes in Europe and led to the breakdown of the authority of the Holy Roman Empire. Others took Luther's protests even further, including John Calvin, the theologian of a branch of Protestantism that developed as Calvinism; John Knox, who started the Protestant Church of Scotland (the Presbyterian Church); and Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss theologian who also contributed to the rise of Protestantism in Switzerland.

Protestants emphasise the authority of the Bible as opposed to the authority of the pope, the grace of God that brings forgiveness as opposed to the buying of indulgences to gain salvation, and the importance of faith as opposed to the idea of earning salvation through good works. Protestant churches generally recognise just two sacraments, baptism and Holy Communion, compared to the seven of the Catholic Church. They recognise the 'priesthood of all believers' in gaining access to God, as opposed to the role of the priest as mediator in the Catholic Church. Clergy can generally marry in Protestant churches and many have more flexible styles of church government. There are literally hundreds of Protestant denominations in Australia, the most significant being the Uniting Church in Australia, **Baptist**, Presbyterian, Lutheran and **Pentecostal** Churches. For a range of Protestant churches in Australia, see Cambridge University Press's *Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*.

Anglicanism

The Anglican Church of Australia is closely linked to the Church of England. It was a part of the Church of England until 1962, when it received its own Australian constitution. It was named the Anglican Church of Australia in 1981. The Church of England was established by the English king Henry VIII. Between 1534 and 1535, Henry made the English Parliament pass Acts of Parliament that made the king (not the pope in Rome) the head of the Catholic Church in England. Henry did this primarily because the pope would not permit his divorce from Catherine of Aragon.

From 1547 Henry's son Edward VI, surrounded by Protestant councillors, turned what was a dissenting part of the Catholic Church into a Protestant Church. Edward's successor, his sister Mary, tried to eradicate Protestantism and rejoined England to the Roman Catholic Church. But the long reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603) turned England and its Church into a Protestant domain once more through the Elizabethan Settlement, although this was theologically something of a compromise between Catholic and Protestant extremes. Traditionally, the Anglican Church stresses the importance of scripture, reason and tradition in determining matters related to beliefs and practices. This attitude has had a strong impact on how Westerners understand religion as a phenomenon that focuses around a scripture and its relation to inner emotions and convictions.

The Anglican Church in Australia continues to define itself in relation to its closeness to Catholicism. The more ritual-oriented churches in Anglicanism are referred to as Anglo-Catholic although they refuse the authority of the pope. This 'High Church' Anglicanism still has many connections to Catholic attitudes and is the more liberal arm of the Church. 'Low Church' Anglicanism is more conservative and focuses on **proselytising** in a manner similar to the Baptist, **Evangelical** and **Pentecostal** Churches. However, all Anglicans accept the **creed** statement about belonging to the 'one holy **catholic** and apostolic church'.

As Australia began life as an English colony, the Anglican Church is the largest non-Catholic denomination in Australia.

Figure 6.7 Archdeacon Kay Goldsworthy was one of the first women to be ordained within the Anglican Church, in 1992, when she was consecrated as a priest. She was the first woman to be consecrated a a bishop and was later Archbishop of Perth.

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Figure 6.8 The Garrison Church below Observatory Hill, one of the oldest buildings in Sydney

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism began as a revival movement within Christianity in the early twentieth century. It emphasises the individual's personal experience with God through the work of the Holy Spirit. This idea can be traced to the teachings of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703–91), and to ideas from the early days of Christianity. Pentecost is a time of the Jewish calendar mentioned in Leviticus 23:5–21 and Deuteronomy 16:8–10. It may originally have been a harvest festival.

Jewish Rabbis have suggested that this day commemorates the giving of the law to the prophet Moses. For Christians, Acts 2:1–14 records that a wind and tongues of fire appeared to one hundred or so early Christians on the day of Pentecost. Those present were filled with the Holy Spirit and miracles such as speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy were evidence of the Holy Spirit. This personal and emotional connection with God is the heart of this form of Christianity.

Charles F. Parham (1873–1929), an ex-Methodist minister in Topeka, Kansas, USA, conceived that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by the speaking of unknown languages. He led his Bible students into prayer to experience this. Agnes Ozman was the first of his students to begin speaking in tongues, on 1 January 1901. This led Parham to preach widely around the southern USA, using this phenomenon to enliven and revitalise Christianity in America. In Australia, Pentecostal Churches include the Hillsong and Christian City churches.

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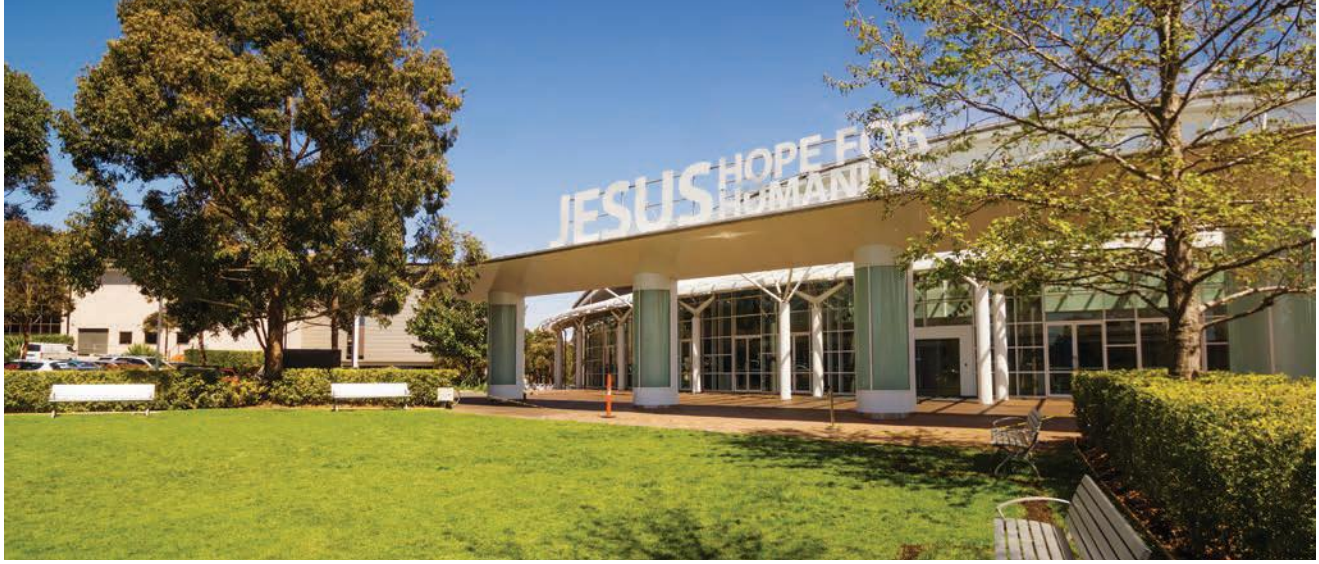

Figure 6.9 Hillsong Church in Baulkham Hills

EXERCISE 6.3

1 Draw a timeline and note the significant dates and events relating to the emergence of various churches.
2 'The Catholic Church is the true Church'. **Discuss**.
3 **Outline** the major features of the five Christian variants discussed in this section.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.3

1 Conduct some research on Philo of Alexandria. **Explain** how he may have influenced the transition from traditional Judaism to Christianity.
2 The New Testament church is often held up as the ideal church. Was this the case? **Discuss**, using examples from the New Testament, and make comparisons with the various churches today.
3 Census statistics show that the Pentecostal Church is the fastest-growing Christian church in Australia. Talk to a Pentecostal Christian, note the emphasis of the Pentecostal Church and try to determine why this growth is happening.

6.5 PRINCIPAL BELIEFS

Christianity has, over the years, organised its beliefs into a systematic theology, drawing from the sacred writings and traditions of the Church. Any Christian bookshop will have books on theology where the major Christian beliefs are laid out in a way that is easy to understand. While there are many important Christian beliefs, the major Christian beliefs will be discussed in this section.

INVESTIGATE

There are many websites on Jesus Christ and Christianity. However, you must exercise caution when accessing some of these sites. A Google search for 'Jesus Christ' will show more than 200 million links and about 115 million for 'Christianity'. Check out the sites available and explore the information available.

Council of Nicaea
The first council of the Christian Church; also produced the Nicene Creed, the Christian statement of faith; after this council, Christianity became closely associated with the state in the Roman Empire

Jesus as human and divine

As Christianity moved through the Roman Empire, an explanation had to be given of Jesus' relationship to God. There were a number of different points of view. At this time most people could understand that a man could become a god, as it was believed that Roman emperors sometimes became gods after death. But it was more difficult explaining how and why a god had made himself into a man.

Paul of Samosata became Bishop of Antioch in 260 CE. His belief was in the co-equality but difference of God and Jesus. God had remained the *Logos* or Word and Jesus was *Logos* made into flesh. After Paul came Arius, who suggested that Jesus was created by God to put God's plans into action on Earth. He believed Jesus was not eternal. Therefore the Arian view considers Jesus less god-like than God. Athanasius (296–373 CE), who was from Alexandria, suggested that Jesus was both of the same nature as God and fully human.

The Roman Emperor Constantine was becoming increasingly interested in Christianity and wanted to see the dispute resolved. He summoned the **Council of Nicaea** in 325 CE. This saw further development of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the position of Athanasius was adopted as the correct teaching of the Church: Jesus as fully human and fully divine. This is known as the hypostatic union. The ideas of Arius, however, lingered in the East and North Africa for many centuries and may be the key to understanding why Islam, which

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promotes the singularity of God, was so successful in these areas.

In the New Testament there are clear statements about both Jesus' divinity and his humanity. Many passages in the Gospels and New Testament speak of Jesus' humanity. For example, we read that Jesus was tired and slept, was hungry, suffered pain and anguish and also cried. But Jesus is also described in terms that suggest he is divine. Some of these passages include the following:

- In John 6:35, 8:12 he says 'I am' (a translation of Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God)
- In Matthew 2:2, 14:33 he is worshipped
- In Matthew 1:21 he is spoken of as the saviour
- In John 11 he is able to raise the dead
- In John 5:17–23 he is spoken of as the equal of God
- Acts 10:36 calls him 'Lord of all'
- In Matthew 25:31–46 we read of him as the judge on the final day of the world.

Death and resurrection of Jesus

The resurrection of Jesus consisted of him dying in human form on the cross, and three days later rising from the dead to live forever. The death and resurrection of Jesus have many meanings for Christians. The death of Jesus is seen as the means of saving humanity. Christians see Jesus' death as a deliberate, purposeful and effective act. The resurrection proves to believers that there is life after death. Jesus' conquering of death shows his power to bring all his followers to life after death. Jesus' death and resurrection are also spoken of in terms of a sacrifice for sin and a sign of his divinity. It is a potent and dramatic event in the lives of believers; the Gospels speak of the tomb of Jesus being found empty and appearances of Jesus to his followers over the next 40 days. Paul notes he was seen by more than 500 people after his death. Jesus' death and resurrection are linked to the concept of salvation.

Figure 6.10 Stained glass window in the Duomo, Florence, showing the resurrection of Jesus

Scriptures concerning the resurrection of Jesus

The following quotes from the New Testament describe the resurrection of Jesus.

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God.
ROMANS 6:9

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.
JOHN 11:25

Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.
I PETER 1:21

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also raise your mortal bodies by his Spirit that lives in you.
ROMANS 8:11

The nature of God and the Trinity

Video

Christian people note that God is spoken of as personal. God is not an impersonal force. God is also described as eternal, omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful) and omnipresent (present everywhere).

The early disciples of Jesus were Jewish people and believed in one God. However, they began to accept that Jesus was God and that the Holy Spirit was also a form of God. They sought to maintain their belief in one God, but acknowledge the distinct persons who expressed God in their understanding. The concept of the Trinity emerged over time; that is, the statement that there is one God, but three persons.

The word 'trinity' is not in the Bible, and some reject the idea because of that; however, there are suggestions through the whole Bible that support the concept. Christian people sought to express the key doctrines of the Church in formal statements of faith, known as creeds. These creeds developed early on, as part of ritual and worship, or simply to sum up the beliefs of the religion. Their language makes strong connections between God and Jesus. The central creed in the Western Church is the Apostles' Creed, which may or may not have been used by the Apostles of Jesus, but cites their authority. In 325 CE this creed was expanded and developed at the Council of Nicaea and it is now called the Nicene Creed. It is used in

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Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican **liturgy**. It includes statements about the nature of God and the Trinity as per the following extract.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son).

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Traditionally the Trinity has been expressed in terms that state God is one, but three persons make up the Godhead. It is considered a Christian mystery.

CONSIDER

God is generally referred to as 'he', not because God is male, but rather because God is *personal*. There is no gender-neutral personal pronoun in English, so the closest would be 'it', which is impersonal. It should be noted that the Hebrew word for 'spirit' is feminine in its construction, and some anthropomorphic terms used for God suggest feminine qualities, such as in Proverbs 8–9 (God as wisdom), Isaiah 49:14, 15, and Psalm 131:2. God is often referred to as 'Father' in the Bible and Jesus was a man, but this does not suggest an exclusive masculinity, nor does it suggest **androgyny**. (Note: this can link with 'Feminist theology' in the HSC course.)

Revelation

A revelation is the disclosure of something that could not have been revealed without the will of God. The main Christian revelation is that which God revealed through Jesus, which later took the form of the Gospels. One can distinguish between general and special revelation.

General revelation comes to Christians through the work of God they see evident in creation, and in their conscience. Special revelation is the understanding that God provided of himself through Jesus and the sacred writings of Christianity (the Bible).

liturgy
Leitourgia (the original Greek term from which liturgy derives) explains the 'work' that is done, as a community, to formalise prayer into a ritual setting that properly addresses both private and communal aspects; there is a liturgy for personal prayer as well in mainline traditions (Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican)

Androgyny
Reflecting both male and female characteristics; either a mix of, or neither, masculine or feminine

Figure 6.11 Christian people believe God is revealed in nature and conscience – general revelation. The person of Jesus and the Bible are considered forms of special revelation.

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Salvation

Another significant meaning behind Jesus' death is that it was a ritual sacrifice. This concept is developed in the New Testament (Romans 5:6–11). The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus knew that he was to die (Mark 8:31). It was his fate to die. Salvation in Christianity can mean three different things:

- deliverance from sin
- being resurrected to an afterlife
- being healed through the power of God.

Christian reconciliation concerns the first of these forms of salvation, and offers individuals the opportunity to repent (turn away from sin towards Christ), and therefore be saved from punishment for their sins.

Second, the Christian belief in Christ's resurrection, as discussed previously, is central to the belief that after death, resurrection to heaven is possible for those who are forgiven of their sins. The third aspect of salvation occurs even today. For example, the water obtained from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes is believed by Catholics to have healing properties.

Just as Jesus was raised to life after death, his sacrifice promises the same salvation for Christians. In the New Testament, salvation has a past aspect (forgiveness of sins), a present aspect (living as a 'saved' person) and a future aspect (looking forward to a life in heaven). Salvation is as much a present reality as a future deliverance.

EXERCISE 6.4

1 Write down three of the technical terms relating to Christian beliefs used in this chapter and your own definition of those terms.
2 **Explain** the Christian view of the human and the divine aspects of Jesus.
3 **Describe** how God reveals himself to human beings in general and to Christians in particular.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.4

1 Go through the Nicene Creed carefully and write down, in point form, the main concepts contained within it.
2 **Clarify** as best as you can your response to the question: 'What is the Trinity?'
3 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6:23). **Discuss** what this may mean to Christians with particular reference to the belief in salvation.

6.6 SACRED TEXTS AND WRITINGS

The sacred text for Christian people is known as the Bible. The word bible comes from the Greek term *biblia*, which means 'books'. The Bible is made up of several major sections and is a closed canon. This means it is considered complete; no new books can be added to it. This closure took place in the mid-300s CE when Christianity was increasingly becoming the only religion permitted by the authorities in the Roman Empire. The Bible is made up of many books, by many different authors, in different languages, using different styles of literature and covering hundreds of years. All these make the Bible a difficult book to read and fully understand.

The Bible

The Christian Bible is made up of several texts, some clearly Christian, others borrowed from the Jewish religious tradition. More than two-thirds of the present Bible comprises the Jewish scriptures, the Hebrew Bible. This includes the five books of the **Torah**. These are believed by Jewish and Christian people alike to have been written by Moses, containing the **Ten Commandments** and miracles performed by God to protect the Jewish people. The writings that follow in the Old Testament have been composed at various stages of Jewish history. These writings are explained in more detail in the section of this book on Judaism (see Chapter 12). The New Testament constitutes the last third of the Bible. It begins with four gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote the Synoptic Gospels and concentrate on the last three years of Jesus' life. John's Gospel is believed to have been written much later than the other three Gospels. It reflects the book of Genesis, the first book of Jewish scripture that tells of the creation of the world. In John's Gospel, all who have lived will be judged at the end of the world by Jesus.

The Acts of the Apostles follows the Gospel of John but it is unrelated in style and content. Acts records events that occurred to Jesus' followers after his death and provide interesting hints about the early life of the community. This book is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, as are the letters of St Paul. The Acts of the Apostles is a Christian record of the spread of the early Church and a companion volume to the Gospel of Luke, and it sometimes seems to contradict other passages of

Torah
First five books of the Hebrew Bible

Ten Commandments (or Decalogue)
Key components of the law given to Moses

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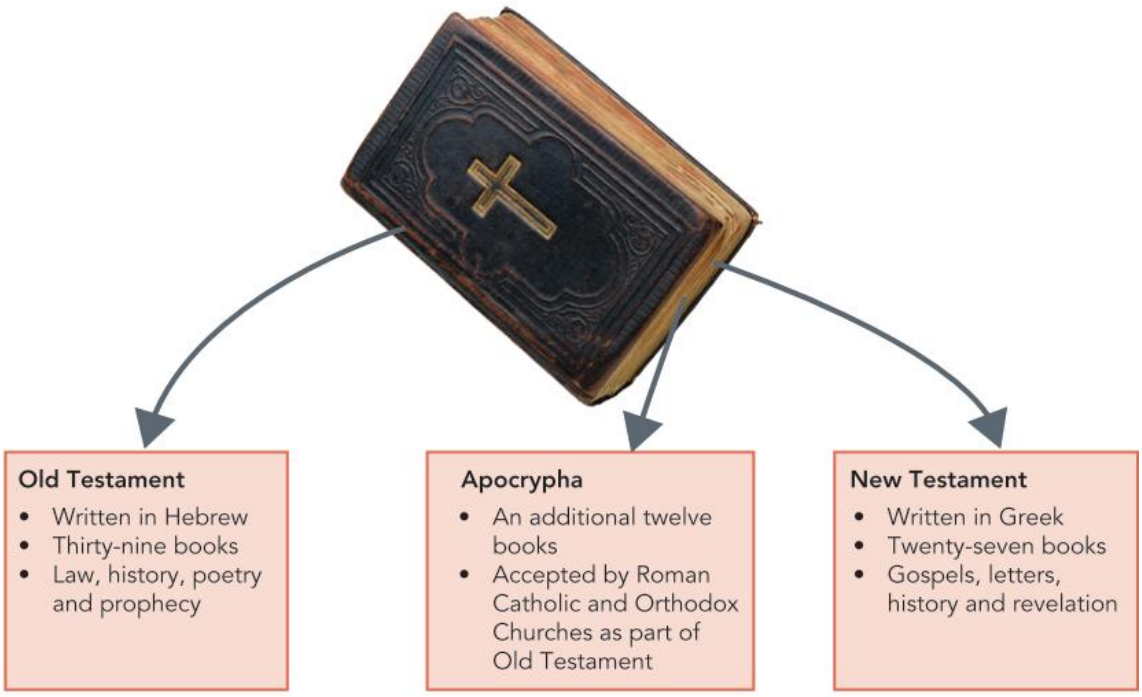

Figure 6.12 The Bible is the sacred text for Christian people. It can be considered to have three main parts. Some, but not all, Christian churches accept the Apocrpha as part of the Bible.

Epistles
Letters, a term used in the Bible, from the Greek word for letter or message

the New Testament such as in its account of the suicide of Judas. The **Epistles**, or letters, follow. Many of these were written by Paul or other early followers of Jesus. The final book is the Revelation of St John, or the Apocalypse. This is a difficult book to understand, rich in imagery and symbolism, and has led to many different interpretations of the end of the world. It is a style of writing known as apocalyptic literature.

Video

The Catholic and Orthodox versions of the Bible also include 12 books called the Apocrypha. These books are not accepted by Protestants as inspired by God but are considered valuable in filling in understanding of historical events and developing religious ideas. Up to the 1960s, the Catholic Church used a Latin translation of the Bible, made by St Jerome (347–420 CE), called the Vulgate.

CONSIDER

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. Jesus was thought to have spoken a language similar to Hebrew, Aramaic. Nevertheless, the New Testament was written in a popular form of Greek called Koine Greek. The Hebrew and Greek sections were translated by St Jerome into Latin from 382 CE. It was not until the 1500s that Europeans began reading scripture in their own languages. Before this time, illiteracy was common.

In 1611 the English and Scottish king, King James, commissioned scholars to make the first official translation of the Vulgate into English. Known as the King James Version (KJV) its language is stunning, but perhaps archaic. It has had an incredible influence on the style and development of English. We know now it is not a completely accurate translation of the ancient texts. A New King James Version (NKJV) appeared in 1982 and many other translations have also appeared, such as the important New Revised Standard Version, which uses inclusive language.

Importance of the Bible

Many Christian people consider the Bible to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) and it is thus often referred to as 'the Word of God', through which God speaks to his followers via the different authors. Christianity is the only religion that reads from the New Testament. This shows how Jesus is considered the fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament retains a strong focus on the last three years of the life of Jesus. It demonstrates to believers that he was not only a religious revolutionary, which includes political dimensions, but also the incarnation of God on Earth. Many Christian beliefs are introduced, or developes, in the Bible, particularly in the letters to the early Christians. Christians use the Bible in their own spiritual development, for their devotional lives and their understanding of God. The Bible also has a role in guiding Christian behaviour and in the practices of Christian people, such as personal prayer and liturgical worship.

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Extracts that demonstrate the principal beliefs

There are some of the many extracts from the Bible that relate to the beliefs of Christianity:

Divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.
PHILIPPIANS 2:5,6

Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

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.
1 CORINTHIANS 15:3, 4

Nature of God and the Trinity

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
MATTHEW 28:19

Revelation

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.
HEBREWS 1:1,2

Salvation

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone that believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.
JOHN 3:16

EXERCISE 6.5

1 **Define** the term 'closed canon'.
2 **Describe** the sacred writings of Christianity, with particular reference to the variants of Christianity.
3 **Explain** why the Bible is important to Christians.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.5

1 Construct a table detailing the books of the Bible, so that your understanding of them is a little clearer. Where possible, include dates, genres and authors.
2 Research and **discuss** why the Bible emphasises the final years of Jesus' life.
3 **Explain**, using examples, the following statement: 'Christians use the Bible in their own spiritual development, for their devotional lives and their understanding of God'.

6.7 CORE ETHICAL TEACHINGS

The core ethical teachings of Christianity come from a range of sources, including the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Gospels or New Testament. Some churches, particularly the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox, also draw their ethical teachings from the statements of Church Councils, the pope or the bishops of the Church. All Christians also stress the importance of an individual's conscience in developing ethics.

Video

The Ten Commandments

Christian ethics are closely related to Jewish ethics. Jewish ethics, and similarly Christian ethics, will draw from the whole of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (consider the laws in the Torah, or the prophetic ideals in the prophets of social justice such as Amos or Micah). However, the starting point, accepted by both Christian and Jewish people, is the Ten Commandments. These are the most important of the laws dictated by God to the Jewish prophet Moses. They are referred to twice in the Hebrew Bible, in Exodus 20:2–14 and Deuteronomy 5:6–18. They represent relationships with God and fellow humans.

1 The first commandment says that one must worship the Lord who delivers the commandments.
2 The second forbids the worshipping of a carved image.

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For Catholics (and Lutherans), these two commandments are considered the first commandment.

3 The third is concerned with the ethics of keeping a contract. One must not use the name of God to falsely promise to do something one does not do.
4 The fourth returns to the theme of worship and demands that the Sabbath, or the holy day of the week, be set aside, and that a time of rest should be taken.
5 The fifth demands that respect be shown by children to their parents.
6 The sixth is the ethical injunction not to murder.
7 The seventh demands that men and women keep to their marriage vows by not committing adultery, or having sex outside of marriage.
8 The eighth forbids stealing, again an ethical concern.
9 The ninth is also ethical, saying that one must not lie when speaking of another.
10 The tenth demands that one not desire one's neighbour's house or those things owned by others, and looks at motives as well as actions.

The Ten Commandments are often interpreted as rules to live by and a guide to ethical behaviour (see Chapter 12 on Judaism).

The Beatitudes

One of Jesus' most famous sermons, the Sermon on the Mount, is presented in Matthew chapters 5–7. It is an extensive discourse that touches on many significant ethical areas, looking at motives and calling for his followers to achieve an almost impossible standard of behaviour. The section begins with what has been called 'the Beatitudes'. In Matthew 5:3–13, Jesus states that certain people will be blessed with happiness (in Latin, *beatitudo* means 'happiness'). This list of people who are blessed is called the Beatitudes and is considered a summary of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Some of these Beatitudes also appear in Luke, but with different emphases. The Beatitudes are as follows:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Figure 6.13 A mosaic depicting the scene from the Sermon on the Mount, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy

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These sentiments reflect others in Hebrew scripture that offer hope and comfort to those who have little. Moreover, they suggest that if one is guided by mercy, driven to be pure and work for peace, then one will attain both happiness in this life and the chance to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Many Christian people believe that references to the Beatitudes include the whole Sermon on the Mount, which also includes the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12, do unto others as you would have them do unto you). The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount reflect the importance of motives that underlie ethical behaviour.

The Commandment of Love

There are several passages in the Bible that can be interpreted as Jesus' commandment of love. This was a constant theme in Jesus' teaching and emphasises the relationships that guide ethical behaviour.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says:

> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. This is the greatest of the commandments, and the first. And the second, is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.
> MATTHEW 22:37–39

The Greek word Jesus uses for love is *agape* which can mean an unconditional, self-sacrificing love. Jesus' command to love is also contained in these passages:

> I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.
> JOHN 13:34
>
> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friend.
> JOHN 15:13
>
> I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.
> JOHN 15:17

Jesus' own life and ministry were motivated by love. This idea of the commandment of love suggests that love, expressed in relationship with others, is a self-sacrificing love that puts the interests of others ahead of self. That creates a demanding, even impossible ethical standard for Christian adherents.

The importance of ethical teachings in the lives of adherents

The Ten Commandments can be divided into demands about how one should worship and demands about ethical behaviour. This second group of commandments focuses on the essential rules so that a community may grow. By the keeping of contracts and oaths, businesses and governments can expect that people will do what they swear to do. The seventh commandment advocates that women and men remain faithful to each other; this is not only an ethical concern about love and respect inside marriage, but also ensures that there is no risk to the property held within a family. The eighth commandment against stealing also helps guarantee the ownership of property. The ninth commandment reminds people of the importance of honesty. The last of the commandments looks beyond the act to the person's motives. Ethics are then more than actions. These commandments have formed the basis for behaviour and laws in Western society, many enshrined in law.

As well as these general rules for peaceful community living, Jesus' Beatitudes suggest that one needs meekness, patience and mercy to turn around the problems of the world. These ideals are not satisfying in themselves, but lead on towards the kingdom of Heaven. This could also refer to a perfect state or kingdom on Earth that Jesus, as a political and religious agitator, was trying to create.

Developing from the Beatitudes is Jesus' declaration that unselfish love is the ultimate way to connect with God and the ultimate purpose for each person on Earth. In the uncertain and politically challenging times in which he lived, Jesus' call for universal love was bold, brave and exciting; some would even argue it was overly optimistic.

The Pauline letters are equally a source of Christian ethics, and they also give us an indication that they were a fusion of Jewish ethics drawn from Hebrew Scriptures and the mores/vice lists to be found in Greco-Roman culture.

EXERCISE 6.6

1 Write out each of the Ten Commandments and **explain** what they mean.
2 List the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–12) and **explain** what they mean and how they are developed through the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).
3 **Discuss** what does Jesus say about love and how it motivates adherents to ethical behaviour.

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EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.6

1 'Christians don't have to take notice of the Ten Commandments because they are Jewish laws'. Research and then **discuss** this statement.
2 There are two accounts of the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1–12 and Luke 6:20–26. Construct a table listing the similar statements and note how they are different. **Discuss** why that might be the case.
3 Debate the following statement from St Augustine (354–430 CE): 'Love and do what you will'.

6.8 PERSONAL DEVOTION

Prayer

Video

While there are different forms and expressions of personal devotion for Christians, it generally revolves around prayer. A prayer can be a request, an offering of praise or an attempt to communicate with entities beyond the world. In the Christian perspective this can include God, Jesus, his mother Mary, the saints and the angels.

Prayer is essentially communication with God. It is encouraged in the Bible, where there are many examples. It is also considered a normal human response in times of need. Rather than a particular form of prayer, of which there are many, it is the attitude of heart and mind that is important. Often Christians will pray when reading the Bible to ask God to speak to them. Christians can pray out loud, in silence or simply in quiet reflection and meditation.

Christians see prayer as a way of developing their relationship with God. It is a way to bring change within the individual and community, as well as bring change to the world.

There are many examples of prayer and its role in the life of Jesus. Jesus prayed at significant events in his life, at his baptism, during his temptation, at times of distress and at his trial and crucifixion. Jesus set time aside each day for prayer. He instructed his disciples to pray, individually in quietness, and together, where he would be present. Several of his parables related to prayer.

The ideal way to pray, according to Paul, is to 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians, 5:17). In his letters, Paul commonly tells his recipients he is praying for them.

Different forms, styles and types of prayer

Jesus taught the most significant prayer in Christianity, the Lord's Prayer. Jesus spoke Aramaic and this is probably the original language of the prayer. It was translated by early Christians into Greek and then into Latin. For almost 2000 years the prayer was said in Latin, which few church-goers could understand, in churches all over Western Europe before the now common use of the Lord's Prayer in the languages of the adherents. The prayer praises God, asks for the remission of sin and hopes that the one praying will be delivered from evil. The Lord's Prayer, Pater Noster ('Our Father' in Latin) can be found in Matthew 6:9–13.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in Heaven,

Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive them that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

But deliver us from evil.

[Some churches, insert here 'For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever'. You will find this in early editions of the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer.]

Amen

Prayer is a very flexible concept for Christians. Prayers can be said using a written form or extemporary form. Extemporary prayers are those that are said off the cuff without being written down or memorised. They are prayers from the heart. Prayers can be accompanied by Bible reading, as is usual in Protestant traditions, or by using aids such as rosary beads or icons, in the Catholic or Orthodox traditions. Prayers may be spoken or silent. Prayer may be in the form of meditation, contemplative prayer or simply a prayer from the heart or mind. One common prayer for meditation, especially in the Orthodox tradition, is known as The Jesus Prayer. This probably dates from the fifth century CE and is used for meditation and contemplation. It is a simple and short prayer – 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner'.

Prayer is an important part of Christian worship, as well as personal devotion. Some churches follow a

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Prayer Book for the liturgy in services, and other, less formal worship includes a significant time of prayer. Some pray with hands folded together, heads bowed, kneeling, sitting, standing or even lying prostrate. All these different forms and styles of prayer are valid expressions of personal devotion.

Prayer can include love and devotion to God, thanks for God's care or requests for specific answers to prayer. Confession of sin is a common feature, as are requests for things to be done. Prayer for others is called intercession, and makes up part of the formal liturgical worship of many Christian churches. One of the features of the Christian church is the call to pray for the world. Many of these prayers are for the leaders of the world, the church itself (including other Christians), the community in which Christians live, for those who are sick or in need and to remember those who have died.

It could be said that prayer radiates from the one who prays in a series of categories. In the first instance one can pray for oneself alone, for one's own health and safety. Often when a Christian person takes on something new, a prayer is said. Some will pray before starting a journey or a task, or before a meal. Prayer can signal a change and help the one who prays to accommodate this change.

It can be argued that prayer thus serves a psychological function as a personal ritual and can be part of a liturgy.

From prayer regarding the self, one can also pray for family, one's community or the world. In prayer, hopes for improvement and betterment can be addressed. Prayers for world peace are often said.

For many Christians, an important expression of prayer is in the visible form of the Christian sacraments, especially baptism and Holy Communion.

Prayer is an important way to communicate with God, to think of others and to refresh the Christian adherent in an act of personal devotion.

INVESTIGATE

Go to the interactive rosary website to learn more about how the rosary is used for prayer.

Figure 6.14 Praying with raised hands is a common way to pray, especially in Pentecostal churches

Figure 6.15 One of the features of the Christian church is the call to pray for the world

EXERCISE 6.7

1 **Describe** the different types of Christian prayer, and why and where they are used.
2 **Outline** the different forms that prayers take.
3 **Discuss** why the Lord's Prayer may be considered a model prayer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 6.7

1 **Discuss** why Christians pray.
2 Debate or **discuss** the following topic: 'Written prayers are better than extemporary prayer'.
3 'Speak to the Sky' is an Australian song from the 1970s by Rick Springfield. Source it via YouTube and then **discuss** why prayer is more than that.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Christianity began with influences from the Jewish, Greek and Roman contexts.
- Knowledge of the life of Jesus of Nazareth is drawn mainly from the four Gospels.
- Christians believe Jesus was the Son of God and a significant teacher and miracle worker.
- Christians believe Jesus was crucified and resurrected.
- Jesus is an example that Christian people seek to follow.
- Christianity had humble beginnings but soon became the dominant religious tradition in Europe and rapidly spread worldwide, reaching places like Australia.
- Christian variants include the Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and other Protestant churches.
- Christians believe Jesus is both human and divine.
- Christians believe Jesus' death and resurrection were purposeful events.
- Christian beliefs include the concept of the Trinity: one God, three persons.
- God has revealed himself in many ways, but ultimately through Jesus and the Bible.
- Christians believe Jesus' death made salvation available to the world.
- The Christian sacred text is the Bible.
- The Bible is used for beliefs, ethics, devotional life and liturgical practices.
- Christian ethics are based on the Old Testament (the Ten Commandments in particular).
- The Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' command to love are principal Christian ethical principles.
- Prayer is an essential Christian spiritual discipline.
- Prayers take on different forms and embody different purposes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 Which of the following civilisations influenced early Christianity?
(A) India
(B) Greece
(C) Great Britain
(D) America

2 Jesus was:
(A) A Jewish person.
(B) A Roman person.
(C) A Christian person.
(D) A Greek person.

3 Who was one of the early leaders of the Church?
(A) Miriam
(B) Peter
(C) Cornelius
(D) Brian

4 Which of the following is a Protestant denomination?
(A) Russian Orthodox Church
(B) Presbyterian Church
(C) Roman Catholic Church
(D) The Rastafarian Church

5 What issues led to the split between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches?
(A) Icons, married clergy and papal authority
(B) Pieces of bone and other relics of the saints
(C) The location of Jesus' tomb
(D) The additional 12 books in the Bible

6 The sacred writings accepted by the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, but not Protestants, are called:
(A) The Apocrypha
(B) The Apocalypse
(C) The Gospels
(D) The Generations

7 How does Christianity describe the concept of the Trinity?
(A) Father, Mother and Saints
(B) God, fully human and fully divine
(C) God but not human
(D) Father, Son and Holy Spirit

8 What do Christians believe about revelation?
(A) There are three gods
(B) God reveals himself in general and special revelation
(C) God is present in all things
(D) God lived in two distinct eras

9 What is one of the most significant sources of ethics for Christians?
(A) What feels right at the time
(B) The 10 Commandments
(C) The teachings of the Qur'an, especially the words of Muhammad
(D) The teachings of Jesus, especially the commandment of love

10 The model for prayer given in the Christian sacred texts is called:
(A) Salat
(B) Prostration
(C) The Lord's Prayer
(D) Extemporary prayer

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SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Describe** the significance of the main events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

2 Choose one variant of Christianity and **outline** its unique features.

3 **Explain** why the humanity and divinity of Jesus are important beliefs in Christianity.

4 **Describe** general revelation and special revelation and explain their place in Christian teaching.

5 Choose one key Christian belief and **describe** how the Bible explains that aspect.

6 **Discuss** the different expressions of personal prayer in Christianity.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 **Explain** how the historical and cultural context of the first-century Middle East contributed to the rise and spread of Christianity.

2 **Outline** one key Christian belief and **explain** its significance for the life of an adherent.

3 **Analyse** the importance of Christian ethics and their expression in Christianity as a living religious tradition.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

Christians have often depicted Jesus in the dress or colour of different nations or cultures. Why is that done? Discuss whether that is an appropriate thing to do, giving your reasons.

Figure 6.16 Modern artist Pap'Nemma's depiction of a black Jesus Christ in contemporary surroundings

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SEVEN

CHRISTIANITY: DEPTH STUDY

[YEAR 12 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.

D.T. NILES (CEYLONESE CHRISTIAN LEADER)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- Paul of Tarsus (St Paul the Evangelist), considered one of the most significant persons in Christianity:
  - An early opponent of Christianity, Paul converted and essentially became its founder.
  - Paul was one of the earliest Christian theologians.
  - Many of Paul's letters are in the New Testament.
- Pope St John XXIII brought significant change to the Catholic Church:
  - St John XXII convened the Second Vatican Council.
  - The Second Vatican Council modernised the Catholic Church.
- Christian ethics draw from the teachings of Jesus.
- Bioethics relate to the commandment not to murder and to preserve life.
- Environmental ethics are concerned about caring for God's world.
- Sexual ethics are based on the teachings of the Bible.
- Traditional Christian teaching says that sexual relations must be expressed within the context of marriage – a teaching that continues to be debated today.
- The act of homosexuality is generally condemned in Christianity.
- Women are considered equal to but different from men in many of Jesus' teachings.
- There are many Christian denominations and each interprets scripture and tradition differently.
- Baptism is a significant practice in the life of Christians.
  - There are many different theological perspectives and practices of baptism
  - Baptism generally signifies the washing away of sin and rebirth
- Christian marriage reflects the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church
- Saturday/Sunday worship is as much about community as worship
- Different denominations have different emphasis in worship; sacrament and word.

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the life of a significant person or the rise and development of a significant idea in Christianity will be examined. In the HSC exam, you may be asked to explain how this person or idea contributed to the growth of Christianity and assess the impact of the idea or person on Christianity itself. To do this effectively, you will need to know about the differing views surrounding the person or idea you choose to study. Two significant persons in Christianity will be examined in this chapter of the print book, with more examples discussed in the digital chapter.

It is not only great historical personages who use their faith to change the world. Many ordinary adherents exercise their Christianity by seeking changes to society. This can be by following the significant people and schools of thought that bring new ideas to Christianity, by seeking to follow Christian ethical teachings or by participating in practices that express the importance of Christianity in the life of each individual or the Christian community.

You will also need to describe a Christian ethical teaching in a particular area: sexual ethics, bioethics or environmental ethics. In this chapter, each ethical area will be briefly discussed. The HSC exam may also ask you to explain why the issue you have chosen is important to the Christian faith.

You may need to describe a significant practice (ritual, worship, etc.) within Christianity and show, first, how it highlights Christian beliefs and, second, how it makes meaning for Christians, both individually and as a community. Baptism, marriage and Saturday/Sunday worship will be discussed.

Figure 7.1 Christian adherents seek to follow Jesus Christ in their ethics and practices

7.2 SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

There are many significant people and schools of thought that have influenced Christianity and brought Christian influences to the world.

The syllabus allows for 'another person or school of thought' to be studied. As well as discussing the life and contribution of the person or school of thought, you will need to analyse their contribution to, and impact on, Christianity.

Paul of Tarsus and **Pope St John XXIII** will be discussed in this chapter of the print book. Information on the other people and schools of thought are available in the digital version.

Paul of Tarsus (circa 10 BCE–65 CE)

Paul was one of the first great organisers of the Christian church and the first significant writer of Christian scripture. After Jesus, Paul was arguably the most significant figure in Christianity. He took a small group of Jewish people who had followed Jesus and turned these followers into a non-Jewish church with international appeal. Paul was a Jewish person who spoke Greek and inherited Roman citizenship. This enabled him to put Jewish ideas into the language of the **Gentiles** (non-Jewish people) through a new spiritual vocabulary in that new language (Greek), and Christianity grew rapidly because of his efforts. Paul is also one of the main figureheads of the **evangelical** movement. He is described as the founder of **Pauline Christianity**; that is, Christianity that has shaken off many of its Jewish practices. The earliest Christians had kept to

Gentiles
People who are not Jewish

Evangelical
Originally, 'from the Gospels'; from the eighteenth century CE, it refers to a Protestant movement that believes one's soul can be saved only by having faith in the atoning death of Jesus

Pauline Christianity
'Pauline' is a term used critically to suggest that Paul and his followers unduly corrupted the message of Jesus or at least reinterpreted Jesus' message from a Greek perspective

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Jewish law; Paul allowed a revolutionary change to enter Christianity.

The book of the New Testament called the Acts of the Apostles dedicates about half its material to Paul's life. It sometimes differs from the details found in his own letters, which makes it difficult to be sure of all the facts of his life. There is no doubt, however, that his influence on the early Christian church was enormous.

Paul's life

The portrayal of Paul's life that follows is based on a synthesis of Paul's letters and the Book of Acts. One should note the literary nature of Acts and that it is not simply a history of events (similar to the synoptic Gospels, which serve as both histories and literary works).

Paul was a Jewish man, born in Tarsus in Asia Minor (modern-day south-eastern Turkey) around 10 BCE, which makes him an older contemporary of Jesus. In his letter to the Romans (2:17–20), he speaks of holding to the law of the Jewish people and being a light to those in darkness. Scholars suggest this was his basic plan for life. It seems that Paul (named Saul before his conversion to Christianity) was a Pharisee and a scholar of Judaism.

Paul's enthusiasm was evident throughout his life. As he matured as a good Jewish man, he discovered, and was disgusted by, Christians worshipping in **synagogues**, trying to convert the Jewish people to become followers of Jesus. In Acts, Paul (called Saul at that stage) first appeared as a **persecutor** of Christianity. He stood by as Jewish people in Jerusalem stoned Stephen, an early leader of the Christians, to death. Paul then participated in the persecution of Christians carried out in Jerusalem (Acts 8). At the start of Acts 9, Paul asked for authority from the high priest of the Jewish people to go to Damascus to persecute any Christians worshipping in the synagogues there.

Synagogue
Jewish place of worship

Persecutor
Someone who oppresses or punishes others for following a particular faith

As this chapter of Acts continues, Paul suddenly underwent a dramatic and heaven-inspired change of heart. On his way to Damascus he was struck by a bright light and fell to the ground, heard the voice of Jesus and was struck blind. The voice told him to continue to Damascus where he would be guided. Blind and finding it impossible to eat, Paul was approached by Christians in Damascus and was healed.

Figure 7.2 *The Conversion of St Paul* by Luca Signorelli in the Basilica of the Holy House in Italy

From this event onwards, Saul is known as Paul.

At first the Christians did not trust Paul and feared for their lives. They knew that he had come to arrest them. But one of them, Annanias, was instructed by the voice of Jesus to lay hands on Paul, heal his sight and infuse him with the Holy Spirit. So Paul was baptised, regained his sight, began eating again and started to work for Christians.

Paul introduced a systematic plan to take Christianity to Gentiles (or non-Jewish people). His citizenship of the Roman Empire may have helped him envisage how widespread Christianity could be and needed to be. Paul spent several years in Arabia, and this was presumably the time when he developed his understanding of the Christian message. Little was heard of him for about 10 years. It is possible that he underwent a long period of Christian instruction. He

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then embarked on a missionary journey to the north of Israel and into Asia Minor. He joined the debate about the question of Gentile Christians and whether they had to keep Jewish customs and laws, and supported freedom from Jewish restrictions. He undertook other missionary journeys that brought the Christian gospel into Europe, first via Greece.

Paul spent many years imprisoned for disturbing the peace. As a Roman citizen he appealed to Caesar for a hearing and travelled to Rome, where he was imprisoned again. At this point, the Acts of the Apostles concludes. Tradition says that Paul was eventually released and continued his travels, but was jailed again. It is believed he was **martyred** by the Emperor Nero about 64 CE. During his travels, and especially during his time in jail, Paul wrote many letters, some of which have been preserved in the New Testament.

Martyr
To put someone to death who will not give up their religion, views or beliefs; it comes from the Greek word, *martys*, meaning 'witness'

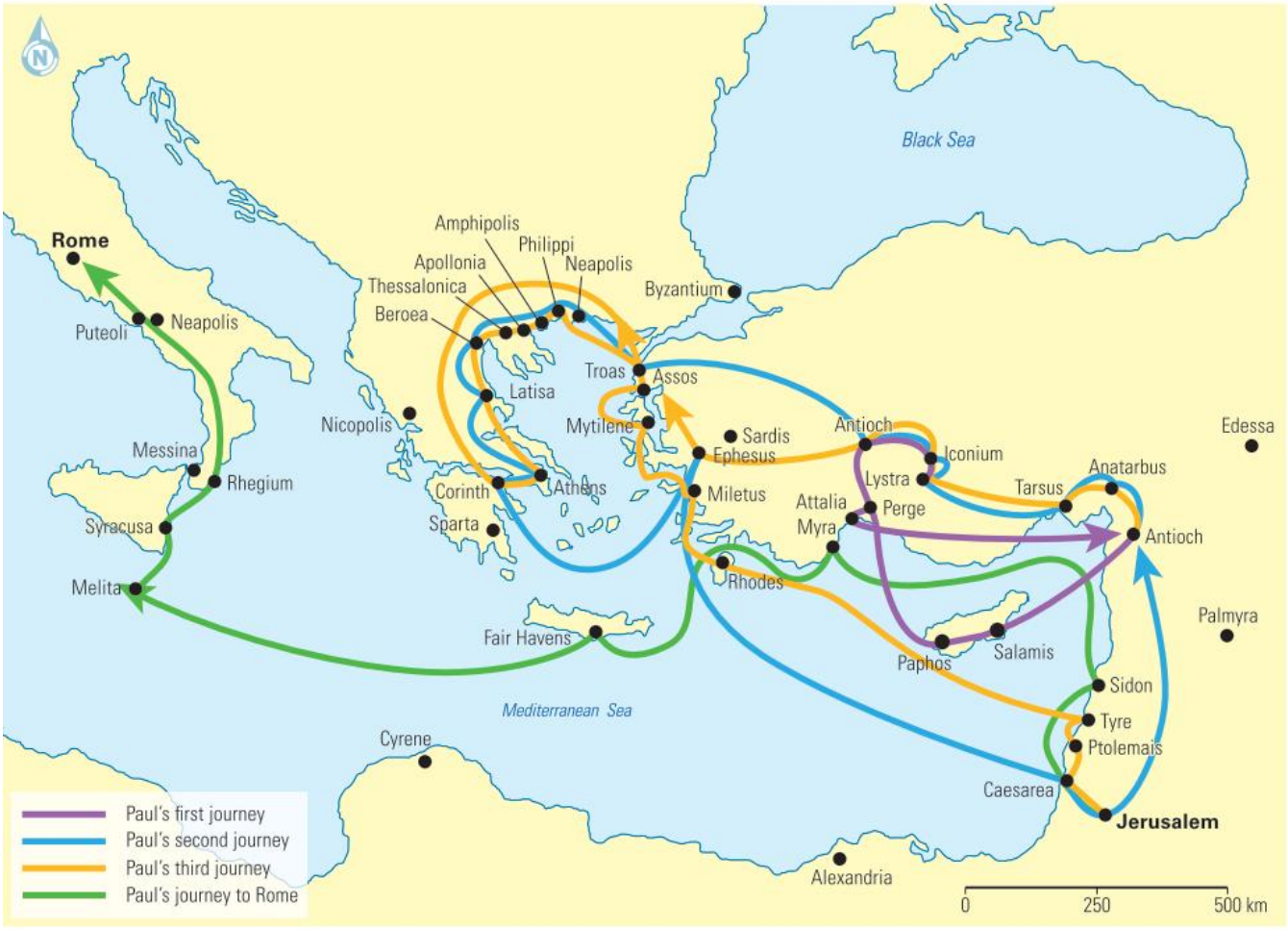

Figure 7.3 As this map shows, Paul was tireless in his travels over the lands of the eastern Mediterranean – principally through the parts of the world that spoke Greek

DID YOU KNOW?

The expressions 'on the road to Damascus' or 'a Damascene experience' are often used of people who have undergone, or are about to undergo, a 180-degree change of heart or conversion. The phrase has become general usage in the English language.

The notion of Paul's 'conversion' exists in popular consciousness, but it presupposes moving between fixed religious systems, as for instance, from Catholicism to Protestantism, or Judaism to Christianity, which was not yet fixed in Paul's time. Also, evocative artwork influences ideas and popular understanding of Paul's 'conversion' (for example, Caravaggio's depiction of Paul falling off a horse, even though there is no mention of a horse in the account in Acts). Scholars tend nowadays to prefer the term 'call' instead of 'conversion'.

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Contribution to Christianity

Before Paul, Christians lived as Jewish people. They worshipped at synagogues, ate together and carried out purity rituals that meant they could not allow non-Jewish people among them at certain times. In his Epistles (or letters), Paul encouraged them to move away from their Jewish habits, or at least become welcoming of non-Jewish people. He explained that following Jesus was now more important than following the Law of Moses and Jewish customs. Paul called himself an 'apostle to the Gentiles' (Galatians 2:8). He developed a Christian theology that was more concerned with individual belief and ethical behaviour. However, Pauline New Testament scholarship has heavily nuanced this claim in recent decades.

In the decades before Paul, Christianity only grew among disaffected Jewish people. The Jewish people who followed Jesus at this time awaited his return as a Messiah. They waited for the day when the kingdom of God that he had spoken about could be established in Jerusalem. This was concrete thinking with a political or at least geographical aim: the destruction of Rome's control over Judea and a religious kingdom established in Jerusalem. During Paul's time, however, Rome's control of its empire was unquestionable.

Paul steered Christianity away from these political upheavals by introducing Jesus as a figure of universal salvation. Many religions in the Roman Empire perceived of their gods in this way; for example, Mithraism, followers of Isis and of Cybele or the Magna Mater (Great Mother). The Jewish Messiah increasingly came to be spoken of using the Greek word **Christos** (the Golden or Anointed one – which may also supply a link to the Greek god Apollo). In Paul's words, Jesus' kingdom changed from a potential political and religious reality into a promise of eternal life in heaven. Christians were now 'stewards of God's mysteries' (1 Corinthians 4:1). Following Jesus and his teachings would guide Christians into heaven. It's important to also note that the depiction of Paul as the great expert and proponent of Christianity has, in recent decades in biblical scholarship, undergone much revision, critique and refinement.

Paul's statements on the difference between Judaism and Christianity were accepted by early Christians. His leadership kept the small but developing Christian communities together. Paul also brought the Christian Gospel to the Gentiles, some of whom received it eagerly. Christianity would no longer be seen as a Jewish **sect** but as a distinct religious movement, although it would take at least a couple more centuries before this was actually the case across the Roman Empire. Recent biblical scholarship favours a more gradual separation between simultaneously emerging Judaism *and* emerging Christianity at the time of Paul. A new trend in biblical scholarship on Paul emphasises Paul's Jewishness, and disputes that he was ever interested in wanting to establish a new religious system. Such scholarship calls attention to this notion of the distinction between Judaism and Christianity owing much to the depiction in Acts, which was then imposed upon Paul's own understanding in the letters themselves. This distinctiveness would emerge as both Christianity and Judaism developed over time as religious traditions.

Paul issued a challenge to the pagan world. The Roman Empire contained a wide range of religions, from the worship of Greek gods to groups that secretly worshipped Egyptian **deities**. Paul created a new religious tradition in which both dissenting Jewish people and converted pagans could worship together. By speaking of Jesus through Greek concepts, Paul made Christianity accessible to many of the people of the Roman Empire.

However, as mentioned previously, Judaism was already heavily influenced by Greek ideas, as evidenced by the writings of Philo of Alexandria and the Jewish historian Josephus, both contemporaries of Paul. The sharp distinction between Hellenistic Christianity and emergent Judaism relies heavily on the Book of Acts, and ignores other literature from the New Testament era.

Christos
A Greek term meaning 'anointed one'

Sect
A subgroup of a religious tradition, usually emphasising a particular aspect that makes it different from other groups of the same tradition

Deity
A god or goddess

Hellenise
To make something Greek or bring it within the sphere of Greek culture

CONSIDER

Some have suggested that Paul is the true founder of Christianity, not Jesus. What evidence can you find to support or dismiss that idea? How influential was Paul?

INVESTIGATE

Enter 'Greek mystery religions' into an internet search engine. What can you discover about them? Are they similar to Christianity? Can you detect any links? How are they different?

Impact on Christianity

Paul **hellenised** Christianity and so gave it the broad appeal it has today. Paul was largely responsible for Christianity becoming a 'world religion' by encouraging the acceptance of Gentiles, although the latest scholarship on Paul, the New Testament, and the late emergence of Christianity is focused on the more critical period of the fourth century.

Paul is also responsible for the development of Christian theology and beliefs in their current form. His acceptance of Greek thought and philosophy and their integration with Jewish beliefs foreshadow modern Christianity. Paul can possibly be seen as foreshadowing what would become Protestant Christianity, unburdened by rituals of Judaism or Catholicism.

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Many of the letters in the New Testament are thought to be authored by Paul. But Paul's influence has been challenged by those who question which of the letters were actually written by him.

The interesting question is why the author of the Book of Acts, Augustine, and later Martin Luther, felt a need to find a conceptual ally in Paul, and in the process of turning to him contributed to the way he is portrayed in modern Christianity.

Sources on Paul

Paul wrote a number of Epistles to early Christian groups (see Table 7.1), which can be found in the New Testament. Paul's letters are much earlier than the Gospels of Luke and John, and probably earlier than, or contemporary with, the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

As with many early Christians, what we know of Paul comes from Christian sources. Sections of the Epistles seem to contradict details in the book of Acts. In these cases, theologians tend to rely on the Epistles as the older and more authentic documents.

Table 7.1 Paul's letters

Source	Author	Content	Highlights
Romans	Paul	Theology and doctrine	Paul's record of the essential elements of Christianity
First Corinthians	Paul	Theology and doctrine	Operation of the church at Corinth
Second Corinthians	Paul	Addressing Jewish practices	How the church at Corinth must move beyond its Jewish practices
Galatians	Paul	Addressing Jewish practices	Relation of non-Jewish people to the holding of Jewish law
Ephesians	Disputed	Addressing heresy	Stresses that Jesus is central for salvation
Philippians	Paul	Theology and doctrine	Paul's sense of joy at life through Jesus
Colossians	Disputed	Addressing heresy	Paul again emphasises Jesus over Jewish law
First Thessalonians	Paul	Theology and doctrine	Paul's efforts at converting pagans and Jewish people to the new religion
Second Thessalonians	Disputed	Corrects reading of other Epistles	Stresses the need to follow Christian tradition faithfully to prepare for the final judgement
First Timothy	Disputed	Pastoral (addressing the nature of the Church)	The three pastorals discuss issues on leading the Christian community
Second Timothy	Disputed	Pastoral (addressing the nature of the Church)	Advice and instructions to Timothy as a church leader
Titus	Disputed	Pastoral (addressing the nature of the Church)	Beliefs, behaviour and duties of bishops and elders
Philemon	Paul	Personal intercession	A slave runs from his Christian master and Paul asks the master to take the slave back without punishment
Hebrews	Rarely acknowledged as being Paul's	Addressing Jewish practices	Holding Jesus above the teaching of the Jewish prophets

EXERCISE 7.1

1 Referring to Paul's writings, **discuss** one or two of his major ideas.
2 **Explain** the way in which Paul became a Christian and the way it changed his life.
3 **Summarise** Paul's influence on the early Church. Has that continued today?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.1

1 Debate the following topic: 'Paul was simply a good administrator who kept the early Church together, helping it to grow'.
2 Using the internet or resources in your library, **investigate** why some scholars believe Paul blended pagan and Christian ideas, thereby helping Christianity to become the first religion in the Roman Empire.
3 In small groups, **discuss** Paul's influence on Christianity today. Illustrate with examples.

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Pope St John XXIII (1881–1963 CE)

Life and ideas

Pope St John XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in northern Italy, in Sotto il Monte, a tiny village 11 km from the Lombard city of Bergamo. His origins were humble; his father was a peasant farmer and he was one of 14 children. He went off to prepare for the priesthood at the age of 11. He remained close to his family throughout his life.

Roncalli was not an especially good student. He did well enough, however, to be sent to Rome for theological studies in 1900. After only one year at the Seminario Romano, his education was interrupted when he was drafted into military service and assigned to an infantry company that was stationed near his home at Bergamo.

In 1904, Roncalli was ordained a priest. He became a graduate student and trained as a historian. Because he was a priest from the Bergamo region, he was asked by the pope, Pius X, to assist in the ceremony of consecration for a new bishop, Giacomo Radini-Tedeschi, appointed to take over the diocese of Bergamo. The new bishop was much taken by the young priest and asked him to serve as his secretary. Roncalli taught theology at the theological seminary in the Diocese and became the spiritual director, helping prepare men for the priesthood. He was influenced by Radini-Tedeschi's progressive ideas, which would become evident during his papacy.

During World War I, he returned to the army. He served in Bergamo, first as a hospital orderly and later as a military chaplain with the rank of lieutenant. Roncalli was appointed to become director of foreign missions and became well known across the Catholic Church.

In 1925, Roncalli became papal *nuncio* (an appointment similar to ambassador) to Bulgaria, where the Orthodox Church was the dominant expression of Christianity. He was appointed to positions in Greece (Orthodox) and Turkey, a Muslim nation. He was appointed papal *nuncio* to France in 1945 after World War II. This was a very unsettled time in France, as many sought revenge against those who had collaborated with the Nazis during the war. That included many of the Catholic leaders. While there, Roncalli dealt with a number of issues including the release of German seminarians who were held as prisoners of war, the hostility to the former Vichy government, and the increasingly radical ideas of the French priests.

The success of his efforts was recognised in 1953 when he became a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1957, he was appointed Patriarch of Venice and then, following the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, at the age of 76 he was elected Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and took the name John XXIII. He was recognised as a man of great kindness, energy, ability and wit. Roncalli was a compromise candidate elected on the 12th ballot. Originally, many thought he would simply be a caretaker pope who would bring few changes until a younger man could be elected. However, Pope St John XXIII began a new age within the Catholic Church and brought reform and innovation to a staid, conservative church.

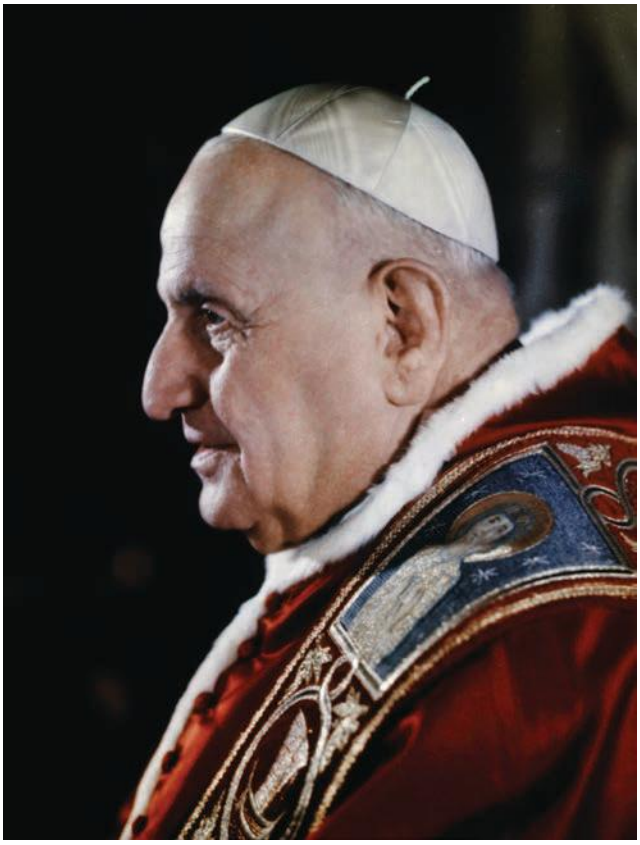

Figure 7.4 Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who became Pope St John XXIII

At the time of Pope St John XXIII's election, the Catholic Church was experiencing difficulties. It had become entrenched in conservative theological beliefs and practices. The Council of Trent, held from 1545 to 1563 to counter the teachings of the Reformation, still influenced the teaching of the Catholic Church in the mid-twentieth century. The Church had been slow in taking up new ideas: all priests had to take a vow against modernism, and the liturgy was conducted in Latin the world over. The world was changing, but the Catholic Church was not adapting its traditions. Many converts had been made in Third World countries, new forms of Bible study and interpretation were being discovered, and the rise of Pentecostal and charismatic influences had begun. There was also a push from the Church laity for greater involvement in the Church. The Catholic Church was unable to cope with these changes and often resorted to enforcing entrenched ideas and judgements.

Pope Pius XII, Pope St John XXIII's predecessor, had called for research into new methods of Bible study in 1943, but little freedom had been given to Catholic scholars.

Tragically, during the Second Vatican Council's proceedings, Pope St John XXIII died, on 3 June 1963. His body was embalmed and buried in St Peter's Basilica. In 2001, his body was placed in a glass coffin and is displayed under the altar of St Jerome inside St Peter's Basilica.

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Contribution to Christianity

In 1962, Pope St John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council, which lasted until 1965. It was to be one of the most significant councils in the history of the Catholic Church, and its influence extended across the whole Christian faith, including Protestantism. The Second Vatican Council became the start of real change within the Catholic Church.

Pope St John XXIII opened the Council with a significant address, expressing his expectation that the Council would be a chance to renew the Church, and that there would be a leap forward in the understanding of the Church's teaching and Catholic conscience. The liberals within the Church believed they had the chance, even the permission, to bring renewal. Pope St John XXIII died during the proceedings, but his influence lived on.

Pope St John XXIII also sought to bring reform to the Church through his own actions, including:

- urging reconciliation in world political crises such as those in Berlin and Cuba
- admitting many Third World Catholics to the ranks of bishops and cardinals
- seeking closer ties with the Orthodox Church
- sending representatives to the World Council of Churches
- setting up the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
- creating a commission to revise canon law
- aiming to update the Church (known as *aggiornamento* – 'to bring the church up to date').

The Second Vatican Council made significant changes to the Catholic Church, and indeed to the whole Christian church. Among the most significant changes were:

- removal of the three ills of the church:
  - triumphalism – belief that the Catholic Church alone held the truth
  - clericalism – the emphasis on clergy and exclusion of laity
  - juridicism – legalism to the detriment of people
- renewed study of the Bible
- revision of Church teachings in some areas
- renewed role for the laity
- relationship of the Catholic Church to other churches and religious traditions
- church services to be conducted in local languages (the vernacular).

Pope St John XXIII issued the encyclical *Pacem in Terras* (Peace on Earth). This is a straightforward statement that avoided diplomatic language and called for the coexistence of the communist, Marxist east and the capitalist west, and the breakdown of the Cold War.

Pope St John XXIII was primarily a reconciler. He had a warm personality that transcended differences and difficulties. He reached out to the poor and the imprisoned, and he warmly greeted world leaders and personalities. He became a much loved man who was seen to be a very human pope.

Impact on Christianity

Pope St John XXIII was largely responsible for the climate of change within the Roman Catholic Church that came through his own ideas and example and through calling the Second Vatican Council. The publication of his personal journal after his death, *Journey of a Soul*, revealed a deep traditional piety. This journal, together with his reforms and his own personality, ensured that Pope St John XXIII became a much loved and respected figure by Catholic and non-Catholic Christians throughout the world. Latin American theologians, who were developing ideas of liberation theology (discussed later in this chapter), believed they were encouraged to explore these ideas by Pope St John XXIII.

Pope St John XXIII is affectionately remembered as 'the good pope' and was beatified on 3 September 2000. He was canonised by Pope Francis on 27 April 2014 and his feast day is celebrated on 3 June. Pope St John XXIII was not just a leader to the Roman Catholic Church – he is recognised as a renewer of the church by both the Anglican and Lutheran churches. It is certainly true that Pope St John XXIII brought significant change to the Catholic Church, but also to Christianity as a whole. The opportunity existed for greater relevance to the Church's immediate community, increased lay participation and a freedom of expression that had been denied for centuries. Arguably, over time, Pope St John XXIII has had a greater influence on Christianity outside the Catholic Church, in addition to the significant change he brought to his own Church.

Figure 7.5 The Second Vatican Council in session (1965)

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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Pope St John XXIII see the following:

- Thomas Cahill, *John XXIII (Penguin lives biographies)*, New York, Viking Books, 2002.
- Peter and Margaret Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Century*, New York, Continuum International, 2000.
- Pope John XXIII, *Journey of a Soul*, New York, Geoffrey Chapman, 1965.
- The movie *The Good Pope* (2003), starring Bob Hoskins, is a biographical film of his life.

EXERCISE 7.2

1 **Describe** ONE significant contribution of Pope St John XXIII to Christianity.
2 **Explain** why that particular contribution to Christianity was so significant.
3 **Assess** the impact of Pope St John XXIII.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.2

1 Debate the topic, 'Pope St John XXIII was the most important Catholic in the twentieth century'.
2 Find a book written by Pope St John XXIII. Read it and write a review **discussing** its importance for Catholic spirituality.
3 Talk to an older Catholic adherent. **Discuss** the changes that they saw in the Catholic Church and if that change had an impact on them as a Christian adherent.

Figure 7.6 The canonisation of Pope John XXIII, along with Pope John Paul II, on 27 April 2014

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Other people and schools of thought

The following people and schools of thought are discussed in the digital versions of this book.

People

St Hildegard of Bingin (1098–1179 CE) – German mystic and abbess; prominent visionary, author, songwriter and apologist for the medieval church

Martin Luther (1483–1546 CE) – German monk who questioned the Catholic Church; he wrote the 95 Theses in an attempt to reform the Church and when his reforms were rejected, he inspired the Reformation which led to many splits from Catholicism

Catherine Booth (1829–1890 CE) – cofounder, with her husband, William, of the Salvation Army; an early feminist and a noted preacher

Billy Graham (1918–2018 CE) – an American evangelist who conducted large crusades in the mid-twentieth century; an adviser to several US presidents and his 1959 crusade in Australia and subsequent crusades led to the conversion of many current church leaders

Dennis Bennett (1917–1991 CE) – US Episcopalian priest (i.e. the Church of England in America) and author who came to believe in the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'; a noted leader of the charismatic movement who influenced Pentecostalism

Sarah Maitland (born 1950) – British author, particularly of fiction, and feminist who has had influence within feminist theology

Schools of thought

Liberation theology – movement in Latin countries that questions the power structures of the Church in society; emphasises Jesus as a revolutionary and identifies with the poor

Feminist theology – movement that questions the patriarchal structures of the Church and society; emphasises the feminine aspects of God and seeks a greater role for women in the Church.

7.3 ETHICS

The material on ethics from Chapter 6 should be revised. The underlying theme of ethics is drawn from this statement in the Jewish scriptures:

> You shall be holy … for I, the Lord, am holy.
> LEVITICUS 20:26

This command is repeated in the New Testament (see Romans 12:1 for a development of this idea). Christian ethics are largely based on the principles found in the Bible, such as the Ten Commandments, Jesus' teachings in the Beatitudes and Jesus' commandment of love.

These areas are expanded in the pages of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The words of the prophets of the eighth century BCE called for justice, and in the writings of Paul, Jesus' command for love is reinforced. Often, particularly in the writings of Paul, specific instruction is given in particular areas, such as those relating to sexuality, or more general principles that can be used in modern situations, such as might arise in the case of bioethics.

Suggested texts from the sacred writings that are significant in a Christian ethical worldview include references from both the Old and New Testaments:

> And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.
> MICAH 6:8

> Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
> AMOS 5:24

> And any other commandment [is] summed up in this word 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
> ROMANS 13:9, 10

The Bible is particularly concerned about human relationships. Marriage is probably considered the normative human relationship, reflecting the relationship between God and the Church (Ephesians 5:32). Much biblical teaching uses the context of human relationships as an expression of its ethics. Drawing on Jesus' commandment to love, many Christians use the idea of 'relational ethics' as a context for the expression of behaviour and ethics.

Bioethics

Bioethics is the study of potentially controversial aspects of biology and medicine relating to issues regarding human life. Generally, they relate to beginning of life issues, such as IVF, abortion and contraception, or end-of-life issues, such as euthanasia or future care planning. Other contemporary concerns include genetic manipulation, stem-cell research, cloning and organ donation. While surrogacy is thought to be a modern issue, it can be traced back to the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16:1-16). Christian attitudes to

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bioethics vary considerably from church to church. The significant issue is attitudes to human life, particularly the beginning and end of life. For example, abortion is usually interpreted as the taking of a life, and so condemned by the Sixth Commandment —'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13). Euthanasia is also seen as the taking of life, but a distinction is usually made between active and passive euthanasia. Generally the Catholic Church opposes such interventions while other churches are more accepting. In-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and stem-cell research are open to debate. Thus it is difficult to say there is ONE Christian ethical position in relation to bioethics.

Within those differing opinions there is a broad range of responses. Many Christians, in general terms, have difficulty with abortion and euthanasia. Issues such as gene technology and IVF are more controversial. Much of the debate revolves around questions of when life begins and whether people have the right to manipulate genes. There is also debate about what to do with any fertilised embryos that are not needed. Opinions range from some approval to total condemnation. The almost universal condemnation of the taking of human life is the key to understanding the debate on bioethics. This is a human issue, not just a religious issue.

Guidance for Christian ethics is primarily drawn from the sacred writings, the Bible, and from the decisions of church councils and synods. Many Christians also draw on the deliberations of Christian groups, ethicists, mature Christians or from a source conveying authority such as papal encyclicals. Christians also are guided by conscience and reason.

Christians believe life is sacred and it belongs to God. People should consider carefully their decisions if they want to make decisions that affect people's lives. To play God is a serious concern. While people have a responsibility to heal disease, does that mean they can also take life?

Beginning of life

Abortion is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy by medical or surgical means, and is a widely practised method of birth control. But abortion has long been an area of debate among Christians. Much of this debate is based on the interpretation of the Sixth Commandment – 'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13). The debate often includes the crucial question of when life begins – at conception, at implantation, after several weeks of gestation or at birth.

Some passages from the Bible do relate to abortion. Exodus 21:22–25 is often seen as a condemnation of abortion but it is treated as a finable offence, not a capital offence. Hosea 13:15–16 suggests abortion could be a judgement from God.

The Catholic Church opposes abortion under any circumstances. Other Christians are not so definite. This reflects the emphasis in the Catholic Church on procreation and its perception of the foetus as a human being from the moment of conception. It is believed that life is given by God and should only be taken by God. The papal encyclical *Donum vitae* (1987) addressed the issue of abortion. The Catholic Church has emphasised the role of natural law, a concept that refers to the idea of a natural moral law, as developed by the theologian Thomas Aquinas who lived in the thirteenth century.

Other Christians, such as those in the Uniting Church, allow an abortion where the health of the mother would be affected, the child was the product of rape, or where there may be deformities in the foetus. Many Christians support the right of the mother to choose, but even when the choice to proceed with an abortion is accepted, it is usually seen as the lesser of two evils and an occasion for grief. Generally, in Protestant churches, there is suspicion of edicts passed by the church councils or the pope, and the role of the individual conscience is emphasised.

Many Anglicans, for example, accept that abortion may not always be wrong. There may be relational factors to consider. Where the choice must be made between the health of the foetus and the health of the mother, the mother must be given priority. The existing relationships take priority. The foetus is a human being, but mitigating circumstances must be considered. Orthodox Christians generally have a similar view. This would be seen as emphasising Jesus' commandment to love, over the Ten Commandments.

Figure 7.7 A Yes voter celebrates the fact that in 2018, the largely Catholic country of Ireland voted to overturn the ban on abortion, which became law in 2019. Catholics make up 78 per cent of the population. The Catholic Church opposes abortion.

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Some Christians, of varied persuasions, belong to 'right to life' movements and are strongly opposed to abortion. In the USA, some 'right to lifers' have been paradoxically involved in bombing establishments that perform or promote abortions, or killing doctors who perform abortions. In Australia, abortion is now legal in all states, following the decision of the NSW parliament in 2019 to decriminalise abortion.

Issues such as IVF raise other issues. One concern, especially to the Catholic Church, is whether IVF is an assistance to the marital act of procreation or a substitute. The former is acceptable, the latter is not. The Catholic Church generally considers IVF a substitute. Some see Psalms 139:13 as cause for objection:

> For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Others see the importance of a family relationship to take priority, especially in cases of infertility.

Another issue for the Church relating to IVF is whether the donors of the egg and sperm are the birth parents or not. Storage, selection and treatment of excess embryos are also matters of concern. Stem-cell research is of concern if it is embryonic stem cells that are harmed or destroyed.

The key concern in most of these issues is finding a definition or a point where human life begins. Is it at the time of fertilisation (the Catholic view) or is it later? Much of the debate hinges on this issue in Christian bioethics.

End of life

Euthanasia (sometimes spoken of as assisted suicide) has emerged as a particular concern of Australian Christian people in recent years. Again, it is the issue of taking life that is of concern. It is considered God's prerogative to take life, not the role of any human, including doctors or relatives (Deuteronomy 32:39). Euthanasia is considered a viable option by many when there is little hope for cure of a terminal illness, and the person is suffering or experiencing great pain.

In 1995, a Northern Territory bill allowing euthanasia was passed. Many religious groups were opposed to the legislation. The Federal Government Senate Committee received thousands of submissions (more than 12 000) on the euthanasia legislation, far more than any government group has received on any subject since Federation. The federal government took steps to overturn the Northern Territory legislation and was supported by the churches, especially the Catholic and Anglican churches. It was overturned in 1997, but in the meantime several people were legally euthanised. In 2019, euthanasia was legalised in the state of Victoria.

Figure 7.8 Many churches would emphasise palliative care over euthanasia.

The National Council of Churches in Australia rejected active euthanasia (deliberately causing the death of a terminally ill person in order to bring their suffering to an end), but felt that passive euthanasia (the refusal of intervention) was more acceptable. The Anglican Synod and Catholic Bishops Conference rejected euthanasia, while the Uniting Church advocated that more money and time should be spent on **palliative care** as a more humane option, but did concede that there was room for discussion on the issue. Most churches support increased funding for palliative care as an alternative to euthanasia.

Palliative care
Palliative care is medical care that relieves pain, symptoms and stress experienced by patients who, in most cases, are dying

In 1998, the Christian Research Association analysed the results of the Australian Community Survey question on euthanasia, where people were asked questions such as 'Is euthanasia justified sometimes?' About 70 per cent of Australians (and 84 per cent of those who did not attend church regularly) were in support of the concept of euthanasia. It is apparent that the issue of euthanasia is gaining support, even among Christians.

Other issues

Other bioethical issues are frequently debated, particularly with dramatic advances in medical technology. Recently a parliamentary bill on stem-cell research was passed in the federal parliament when parliamentarians were given a conscience vote. Stem cells are cells that are yet to form into specific body parts and are able to renew themselves. They are generally found in embryos, thus the controversy. They offer the opportunity to develop treatment for many illnesses, ranging from Parkinson's disease to spinal-cord injuries.

For Christians, the argument relates to the fact that embryos are used, thus there is the issue of destroying potential human life. Part of the argument against this research is the fact that, while good results have been achieved with adult stem cells, as yet there are no proven results from embryonic stem cells. A counter-argument is that research has not yet been allowed on embryonic stem cells.

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In-vitro fertilisation (IVF) refers to the conception of a life outside the uterus, usually in scientific equipment (thus the term 'test-tube baby'). This practice has been successfully undertaken for many years. For many Christians this procedure bypasses the natural roles of the father and mother, and also leads to the problem of the disposal of fertilised embryos that are (to some) human lives. It also raises the issues of gene manipulation and the potential to modify the embryo.

Gene manipulation is becoming an issue of concern as gene technology develops as a science. This work increases the potential to alter genetic material, which raises important questions about what makes a human being, especially with the potential to swap genetic material from one species to another. This has already happened in plant material; however, hospitals and research institutions in Australia are governed by strict ethical guidelines and federal laws in this area. Gene technology raises the possibility of eradicating conditions such as Down syndrome and Parkinson's disease. It also raises the possibility of creating the 'perfect' baby. There are many ethical issues raised by these possibilities.

Other important concerns include the character and motivations of those involved in the decision-making. Carefully considered decisions about euthanasia and abortion with the input of doctors and counsellors may be more acceptable than the decisions of family members who may have personal motives.

EXERCISE 7.3

1 List the sources that are used in Christian bioethics, noting the emphasis given to each by different churches.
2 **Describe** some aspects of bioethics and highlight the areas of concern for Christians.
3 **Describe** the possibilities of modern medical technology and **explain** how they relate to an understanding of Christian bioethics.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.3

1 Write a paragraph on the topic 'Children with a severe disability should never be born'. **Identify** any ethical issues.
2 Debate the following topic: 'Modern Christians can accept the concept of euthanasia'.
3 Look up discussions in the media of bioethics. **Assess** if they contribute to a Christian understanding of bioethics.

Environmental ethics

There is an increasing awareness of environmental issues around the world, ranging from the population explosion to depletion of resources, loss of biodiversity, waste disposal (especially nuclear) and climate change. Added to this is the understanding that this world is the only place human beings can live.

Christians recognise the world as part of God's creation, and that human beings are stewards or caretakers of the world (Genesis 2:15). For some Christians, this role of caretaker means living in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way. Genesis 1:28 also gives human beings the responsibility to 'have dominion' over the world:

> Fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

Some Christians believe this gives humans the right to use, exploit and develop the world as they see fit. This passage has been the basis for the different approaches and perspectives in Christian environmental ethics. While for some Christians dominion means a licence for exploitation, for others it involves a duty of care. Psalm 8 speaks of the wonder of the created world and the responsibility of human beings. The naming of the animals (Genesis 2:20) is not suggesting a power structure but rather, given the way the concept of 'name' is used in the Old Testament, developing a relationship.

Other Christians note that creation has been cursed as a result of 'the Fall' (Genesis 3:17) and that the Earth, like humanity, awaits renewal on judgement day (Romans 8:18–25 and Revelations 21:1). Thus, as Christians share in the future glory of heaven by being redeemed by Christ, so too creation can share in the future glory (Romans 8:18–25) by experiencing the proper care of creation by human beings. This provides a Christian theological rationale for environmentalism. Many churches now have publications or groups that emphasise environmentalism. Australian Christians have sought to develop an Australian Christianity in harmony with the Australian environment.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the groundwork was done by American ecologist Aldo Leopold to develop what was called **ecotheology**. Ecotheology

Ecotheology
A theology that relates to the care of the environment

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stresses that all of creation is part of God's creative work and thus should be treated with reverence. Nature has value to God, both living and non-living – humans, animals, plants, rocks, rivers and mountains. Agreement is not always possible between the 'dominion' and 'care' approaches taken by Christians.

The Bible states that this world is God's world (Psalms 24:1), as are all the creatures upon the Earth (Psalms 50:10–11). God cares for this world (Matthew 5:45, 6:26–30) and has not renounced that care. As God's people in God's world, Christians are called to continue that care. This has implications for areas such as animal rights, global trading, genetically modified food, liberation theology and many other related issues.

In essence, Christians believe the following:

- God created the Earth.
- God appointed human beings as caretakers of the Earth.
- The Earth was 'very good' (Genesis 1:31).
- The created world has been spoiled at the Fall by selfish and sinful attitudes.
- Human beings should wisely use the Earth, protecting it as well as using its resources.
- Humans should not exploit the Earth or abuse it.
- The Earth will share in the recreation of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Many Christians believe that they should be environmentalists. However, the history of Christianity, particularly through the colonial era, was more in line with the idea of exploitation of the environment, largely in support of government expansion and colonisation. Christians do note that some of the major figures of Christian history, such as St Francis of Assisi and St Hildegard of Bingen, were dedicated to caring for the environment and God's creation. Liberation theologians, such as Leonardo Boff, have championed environmentalism.

In recent years the issue of climate change has come to the fore, with extreme weather conditions reported across the globe and an increase in natural disasters. This has led to the possibility of nuclear energy as a source of energy that is carbon-free. However, experiences such as Chernobyl and Fukushima indicate there are dangers with nuclear energy. Other issues such as deforestation and alternative energy sources have also been raised in Christian discussions of ecology and the environment. Wind and solar power are growing in Australia.

A speech by Pope John Paul II entitled 'Peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation' delivered as the 1990 World Day of Peace message gave new impetus to Catholic environmentalists. In 2015, Pope Francis addressed environmental issues and climate change in his encyclical letter *Laudato si'*.

The Australian Catholic theologian Professor Denis Edwards was deeply committed to ecotheology. Edwards was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 2012 for his contribution to the Archdiocese and to theological education. His contributions included developing the ecological tradition of the Church and his contribution to eco-mission globally. He passed away in March 2019.

Catholic Earthcare Australia was formed and the Catholic Church entered into dialogue with other churches and also with other environmentalist groups. It seeks to promote the understanding that our planet is sacred and must be protected and sustained for present and future generations. It conducts research on the environment and provides educational resources on these issues to schools and parishes.

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), the Christian ecumenical body that represents the churches in Australia, has lobbied the Australian Government on behalf of the churches about issues such as renewable energy, climate change and political decisions that result in poverty and environmental degradation. The Uniting and Catholic Churches, together with the NCCA, produced a brochure entitled *Changing Climate, Changing Creation* in conjunction with the Australian Conservation Foundation, a non-religious environmental organisation. A number of significant statements have been made by Christian leaders in support of efforts to care for the environment. Since his election in 2013, Pope Francis has made a number of important statements about the need for Catholics to show concern for the environment. His second encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015) is a strongly worded and controversial statement calling for 'swift and unified global action' to address environmental concerns.

Australian Christians are also rediscovering environmentalism as they try to develop a local spirituality in harmony with the unique Australian environment. There have been attempts to reconcile Christian theology with Australian spirituality, the desert fathers of early

Figure 7.9 Many Christians now promote the use of wind power and solar energy as environmentally responsible alternatives to coal power

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Christianity and the Australian outback. According to this approach, the Australian environment is seen as a significant part of that spirituality and must be protected.

One environmental issue that has emerged in recent years is that of genetically modified agriculture. Some Christians see this as a means of providing food to many who are starving and thus a Christian responsibility. To others this is another form of exploitation at the expense of the developing world and the richness of agricultural diversity.

Differences in opinion between Christians tend to be along political rather than denominational lines. Every Australian Christian church has called for environmental concern, and Christian churches actively work with a number of community organisations, and in cooperation with each other, to promote environmental concerns.

EXERCISE 7.4

1 List the biblical references that relate to the environment and summarise their teachings.
2 Discuss how Christians show concern for the environment.
3 **Explain** 'ecotheology' with reference to its teachings about environmental ethics.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.4

1 Look up the website of a Christian denomination. **Outline** its views on environmental ethics or concerns. **Describe** its Christian approach to environmentalism.
2 Debate the following topic: 'Dominion means that the Earth is there to be used by human beings'.
3 Research online to discover how Christian churches are cooperating with other organisations to demonstrate environmental concern.

Sexual ethics

Special note should be taken of the sources of Christian ethics. At least one of the Ten Commandments applies directly to sexual ethics. Jesus' commandment to love also has a direct implication for this area of ethics.

Premarital and extramarital sex

Premarital sex is a term that describes sexual activity before marriage. As the Bible was written in a time when people married early – just after puberty in many cases – the issue of premarital sex was relatively unimportant. Thus premarital sex is not addressed directly in Christian scripture. There are passages, such as 1 Corinthians 7:8–9, that say the solution for being 'aflame with passion' is to marry. These words sit uneasily in the modern world, where marriage between teenagers is not considered acceptable for many reasons, including its potential to interfere with education and career choices. So how are biblical statements and principles applied to the modern world?

Some modern Christian groups, such as Pentecostal churches, have taken a strong stand against premarital sex, quoting less explicit references to **purity** as evidence that Christians should retain a high level of **sexual morality**, and would advocate marriage at a younger age. In 1 Corinthians 7:1–7, Paul underlines the need for men and women to be pure of Satan's influence by being married and satisfying each other's sexual needs. His exhortations to purity are seen by some Christians as a prohibition against premarital sex.

Purity
Freedom from evil or guilt

Sexual morality
Conforming to particular rules of conduct; often, chastity

Procreation
Bringing into being, creating life

Many Christian websites focus not on scripture, but on the practicalities of abstaining from sex. They refer to unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Finally, they refer to the ideal of marriage as something that should be entered into by a man and a woman who have kept themselves in a virginal state. Thus, premarital sex is described by many Christians as something to be avoided.

In this, Christians develop the Jewish idea that sex was created by God, and sanctified by marriage for the purpose of **procreation**. Premarital sex is a challenge to the correct functioning of this system. Essentially, adherents may be encouraged to marry young and start families. The New Testament calls on men and women to remain 'pure' sexually. The Old Testament focuses its wrath on women; in Genesis, because of Eve, women are seen as temptresses responsible for the fall of humanity from paradise. Thus there are restrictions against young women who engage in premarital sex.

The ideal of marriage for life is becoming less common in Western society. The Christian view of lifelong marriage may be seen as unrealistic in today's world. In modern Australian society, young men and women marry decades later than their ancient and medieval counterparts. Moreover, marriage is even seen as irrelevant by some sectors of society. When it does take place, there are real chances of it failing. This may be partly because many marriages today are made through love. For most of history, marriages have been arranged by the parents of young people for economic, political or class-based reasons. If someone marries because of parental will and economic reasons, rather than love, then there may be less reason to divorce. It is also likely that divorce in these cases is viewed as less acceptable.

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Many Australians have developed a generally accepted morality of serial **monogamy**. That is, taking one partner, then leaving them if they fall out of love or fall in love with someone else. Then they take a new partner and start a new relationship. Opposed to this, Christian ethics on premarital sex support the traditional ideal that a man and woman will marry as virgins and remain married for life.

Sources

The major issue for **heterosexual sex** in the Christian Bible is not premarital sex but adultery, which is prohibited. Having sex with another man's wife is seen as a violation of that man's property rights. Men and women are both expected to avoid adultery. This helps explain Jesus' attitude to the woman caught in adultery (see John 8:1–11). Jesus asked the accusers to look at their motives in seeking the stoning of the woman, and their own failures. He also told the woman, 'Do not sin again'. Incest and bestiality are also prohibited in the Bible.

Some traditional followers of Christianity believe that women should be virgins when they marry. Exodus 22:16 explains how men who have sex with virgins should then marry them, or else pay monetary compensation to the virgin's father. Deuteronomy 22:13–21 deals with the issue of a man who accuses his new wife of not being a virgin. According to these passages, if there is proof that she is a virgin, the husband is penalised for his suspicions, but if no proof can be found, the woman can be stoned to death.

This attitude to women as property had changed by the time of Paul, when he asked men to 'treat younger women like sisters in purity' (1 Timothy 5:2). Modern theologians use Paul's general calls to purity as an argument against premarital sex; for example, 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

As previously stated, the New Testament is silent on the issue of premarital sex as opposed to the Jewish-based Old Testament. Therefore, silence on the part of the New Testament means that we do not have a record of this aspect of sexual ethics.

It is important to note that the books of the Bible served different purposes. Paul's stridency on issues of sexual ethics in his letters gives an indication that he was against his communities mixing with the sexual behaviours of their non-believing counterparts (or behaviours from their former lives before becoming believers in Christ), rather than the issue of premarital sex per se.

FURTHERMORE

Is premarital sex a recent concern unforeseen in the Bible? If so, can Christianity condemn this practice? Will taking a hard line on premarital sex be effective in all situations, to prevent the spread of STIs and unplanned pregnancy? Have a look at some of the Christian abstinence websites in the US; for example, Abstinence Clearinghouse.

Homosexuality

The word homosexuality is drawn from the Greek prefix *homo* meaning 'the same'. This relates to individuals who are attracted to their own gender, men to men (gay) and women to women (lesbian). The term **homosexuality** technically includes **lesbians**, but the designations gay and lesbian are seen as more inclusive. The abbreviation 'LGBTQIA' (lesbian, gay, **bisexual**, **transgender**, **queer**, **intersexed**, **asexual**) is also used as more inclusive.

Homosexuality can designate a love relationship between two people of the same gender, or it can simply refer to the sexual behaviour of men and women with their own genders. The Bible has some proscriptions against acts of homosexual sex, but in one famous case seems to accept that there can be loving relationships between people of the same gender; that is, the relationship between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20) is not condemned.

Homosexuality is understood by some Christians as a challenge to the ideal of marriage and family. Some also see it as a sin. Some Christians even believe it to be an **abomination** before God and maintain that, no matter how good or Christian a person is, if they live a homosexual lifestyle they should be excluded from communion. Conservative Christians in the United States such as Reverend Pat Robertson and Reverend Jerry Falwell even stated after the September 11 bombings in New York in 2001 that God was punishing the United States for allowing abortion and homosexuality. There are some radical Christian groups in the United States, such as the Westborough Baptist Church, that believe the United States is doomed because of its toleration of homosexuality.

On the other hand, some Christian congregations accept homosexuality as a natural part of human life and welcome homosexual Christians into their groups. This is the case with the Metropolitan Community Church, which has numerous branches in Australia including in Petersham, Sydney.

There are some ministers and pastors in the Anglican Church and the Uniting Church in Australia who are known to be gay or lesbian, and whose colleagues are ministers who are staunchly anti-homosexual. We can see that Christian responses to homosexuality are widely varied and range from acceptance to disapproval, to outright fanatical hatred.

Monogamy
Having one romantic partner at any one time

Heterosexual sex
Sex between a man and a woman

Homosexuality
A person who is attracted to other people of the same gender

Lesbian
A female homosexual

Bisexual
A person who is attracted to both sexes

Transgender
A person whose identity does not conform to the gender they were assigned at birth

Intersex
A person with attributes of both sexes

Queer
Those who do not identify with either a heteronormative identity or a specific homosexual identity

Asexual
A person who has no sexual feelings or desires

Abomination
A state of disgust and hatred; abhorrence, detestation, loathing

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Fornicators
Men and women who have sex outside of marriage

Idolater
A worshipper of idols (an idolater breaks the Second Commandment not to worship graven images)

Sodomy
Another term for homosexual practices; from a particular interpretation of the story of Sodom

History shows that homosexuality has always been a dimension of human sexuality. Some historians have debated whether particular words or phrases in one of the earliest texts ever written, the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, could be understood sexually and whether Gilgamesh and Enkidu were not just friends but lovers.

Figure 7.10 Rugby Union footballer Israel Folau caused considerable reaction by posting on social media his view that homosexuality is a sin

INVESTIGATE

Find out what you can about the contrasting views of Reverend Dorothy McRae McMahon and Reverend Fred Nile. Discuss their views. Can they both be considered Christian views?

Sources

There are a few explicit references to male homosexuality in the Christian Bible. One of the most well-known is in the Old Testament in Leviticus:

> You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.
> LEVITICUS 18:22

This clearly refers to sexual acts between men. To add to the difficulty of interpreting this, we see in Leviticus 11:12 that eating anything from the sea without fins and scales, such as oysters, is as serious a crime as a man sleeping with a man.

In the New Testament, Paul's letter to the Romans states:

> … for this reason, God gave them [the wicked] up to unnatural passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural and the men, likewise, gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.
> ROMANS 1:26–27

In this passage, however, Paul does not make clear what the 'shameless acts' or the 'due penalty' are. In another of Paul's letters we find him clearer on the penalty. In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, Paul made reference to '**fornicators**, **idolaters**, adulterers, male prostitutes, and **sodomites**' who will be excluded from the kingdom of God. Again the emphasis here is on sexual acts. And in 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul spoke similarly. There are no explicit references to lesbianism in the Bible.

One of the more famous passages that some Christians believe shows that homosexuality is condemned by God is the tale of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis 19. Certainly it is said that the inhabitants of these towns were wicked, but there is no proof in this text (or in Jewish interpretations of it) that God destroyed them because homosexuality was practised there. The major theme of this biblical passage seems to be related to rules of hospitality.

Finally, we read of King David's intense love of Jonathan in very explicit terms:

> When he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
> 1 SAMUEL 18:1

In 2 Samuel, we read King David's startling confession:

> I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, exceeding the love of a woman.
> 2 SAMUEL 1:26

Given that King David is one of the great religious heroes of the Bible and blessed by God, this seems to represent an ideal of male-to-male love. It is certainly not directly said that David and Jonathan had a sexual relationship, but these passages do stress that each man deeply loved the other.

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Gender roles and discrimination

In some Christian communities, women are regularly kept from leading spiritual roles. In the modern world, Christianity is accused of being **patriarchal** and in need of reform. **Feminist theology** is a movement aiming to increase the equality between gender roles in Christian communities. More traditional societies suggest that there are clear teachings that assign to women different roles in the community and that these rules should be followed.

In an institution as old as Christianity, one whose heritage goes back to a Jewish society that is at least 3000 years old, patriarchal assumptions abound. Genesis, which includes the story of creation, pictures the first man and woman as an **archetype** for human behaviour. Genesis contains two creation stories. In Genesis 1:27 God makes man and woman and it seems they are equal and blessed before him. In the second creation story in Genesis, from 2:18, Adam was created first, and Eve was created later from one of Adam's ribs. It is Eve who makes Adam eat of the tree of knowledge, which causes them both to be expelled from Eden. Eve is thus seen not only as an afterthought by God, but also as a temptress, and the reason for humanity's fall from paradise. Male attitudes towards women within the Christian church are framed by this and countless other stories of women as subordinate to men.

Picking up on this second Genesis story, Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy:

> Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent.
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 2:11

Paul offers his reason:

> For Adam was formed first then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but woman was and became transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

As is noted in Table 7.1, there is doubt that this letter to Timothy is really by Paul, but it nevertheless reflects attitudes to women at the time. A genuine letter by Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:34: 'Let women stay silent in church'. This is complicated by his pronouncement in Galatians 3:28: 'In baptism there is neither man nor woman'. So on one hand women must play a passive role in church, yet on the other, within that church, gender does not matter. Paul offers a confusing message on the status of women. It is a confusion that movements in feminist theology are trying to understand. Those who oppose the ordination of women to the ministry often emphasise passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34, while those who support women's ordination emphasise passages such as Galatians 3:28.

Feminist theology
A movement to look at religious teachings, particularly within Judaism and Christianity, from a feminist perspective

Patriarchal/patriarchy
From the Greek and Latin *pater* (father); refers to a system in which men hold the power in a society or in reference to the fathers of religious traditions

Archetype
A model upon which subsequent behaviour and attitudes can be based

Figure 7.11 Reverend Libby Lane (third from the left) was consecrated in 2015 as the first female bishop in the Church of England. This was all the more remarkable given that the Church of England had already debated, and allowed, women's ordination as priests since 1994.

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Sources

In addition to Genesis and Paul's comments, in Ecclesiastes it says:

> And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoever pleases God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.
>
> ECCLESIASTES 7:26

One of the most famous doctors of the Catholic Church, Thomas Aquinas, says:

> As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active power of the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of a woman comes from defect in the active power.
>
> THOMAS AQUINAS

This quote is based on the medieval idea that women played no active part in procreation but simply acted as an incubator for semen. As knowledge and attitudes change, so does the understanding of gender roles.

EXERCISE 7.5

1 Highlight the main issues of concern for Christians relating to sexual ethics.
2 **Summarise** the Bible's views on homosexuality, noting the differing views.
3 **Examine** and **evaluate** the Christian view of sexual ethics with reference to your own beliefs.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.5

1 Talk to some clergy or members of different churches. **Discuss** the varied attitudes to sexual ethics that you discover from their opinions.
2 Debate the following topic: 'There are no Christian ethics, only laws borrowed from Judaism.'
3 If Christians rely on the Bible for sexual ethics, are they doomed to be irrelevant to modern society? **Discuss** this question in small groups.

7.4 SIGNIFICANT PRACTICES IN THE LIVES OF ADHERENTS

Christians, as members of society and as adherents to a religious tradition, celebrate many events and occasions that are given religious significance. These include **rites of passage** as well as other more obviously religious practices. Three practices will be discussed here:

Rite of passage
Ritual to mark the progression of an individual through various status stages in a community

Sacrament
Religious ceremony that celebrates an outward sign of an inner spiritual grace

- Baptism celebrates the entry of a Christian into the Christian community through a rite of initiation.
- Marriage ceremonies mark the establishment of a new family unit and have an important legal and societal function.
- Saturday or Sunday worship marks the celebration of the worshipping Christian community, expressing a common practice, but individual expressions.

Baptism

Beliefs

Relating to the Greek word *baptizo*, baptism is a purifying ritual generally involving water. Either by anointing, wetting, pouring or full immersion, a person can be cleansed or made pure by baptism, and welcomed into a Christian community by this ritual. Most Christian groups recognise baptism as necessary for the salvation of the soul. But Christian groups remain in dispute as to the exact meaning of the ritual.

Baptism is one of the **sacraments** of the Church. Sacraments are religious rites that convey a deeper meaning or significance – an outward sign of an inward grace. Catholic and Orthodox churches accept seven sacraments, while Protestant churches generally accept only two: baptism and Holy Communion. It is commonly believed that the sacraments were specifically instituted by Jesus Christ and convey a special grace or spiritual blessing. Baptism is generally seen as a sign of new birth or receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Description of the practice

Some churches only baptise infants (pedobaptism), others only baptise adults (credobaptism – often called 'believer's baptism') and some baptise both. Some pour water, some sprinkle, some immerse the whole person and some will do any of these.

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Figure 7.12 Evangelical Christian pilgrims from Brazil take part in a mass baptism ceremony at the Jordan River in 2006. According to the gospels, Jesus Christ was baptised in the water of the Jordan River by John the Baptist although the actual method is not described.

Figure 7.13 Churches use different methods of baptism at different ages. Artist Egisto Lancerotto depicts a family preparing a baby for baptism

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This variety of baptism methods reflects different theological beliefs and different understandings of the meaning of the Greek word and its relevance to the Christian faith. Various Christian groups have different ways of explaining baptism. In Catholic, Orthodox and many Protestant groups, infant baptism is seen as the joining of a soul to the community of Jesus, and thus is a stage on the path to salvation or a sign of a family's relationship with God. Those who practise baptism see it as a profession of belief from the one being baptised. Some other Christian groups see it as a historical practice no longer relevant. Table 7.2 illustrates the main differences.

Baptism can be seen as a rite of passage for an individual, marking their spiritual development. It can also be seen as a purity ritual that helps define them and their relation to the group. Moreover, baptism can be seen as a standard by which to assess who is within the Christian faith and who is outside it.

Table 7.2 Different Christian views of baptism

Denomination	Beliefs about baptism	Baptise infants	Baptism as initiation into spiritual life	Type of baptism	Method of baptism derived from:
Anglican	A sign that affirms the forgiveness received by a believer through faith	Yes	High Church = Yes; Low Church = No	Immersion or pouring	Matthew 28:19 where Jesus says: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations'
Baptist	Not necessary for salvation; a sacred observance, or symbolic ritual that is a sign of having already been saved	No	No	Immersion only	Romans 6:3–4: 'buried with him (Jesus) by baptism … raised from the dead … to walk in newness of life'
Eastern Orthodox	Required because it gives forgiveness for transgressions and regeneration from the consequences of original sin	Yes, infants can also receive Holy Communion and chrismation (anointing)	Yes	Immersion three times; sprinkling or air baptism accepted in emergency	Matthew 28:19
Pentecostal	Water baptism as a ritual symbolising the acceptance of Christ as personal saviour; also baptise 'in the spirit'	No	Varies	Immersion; a 'second' spiritual baptism is also needed for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit	Varies, Romans 6:3–4
Presbyterian	One of two sacraments with the Lord's supper; a seal of the adult's current faith; a sign of the covenant relationship between the family and God	Yes	No	Sprinkling, pouring or immersion	Varies; linked to the Old Testament covenant of circumcision
Quaker	Merely an outer symbol, no longer practised	—	—	No baptism by water	—
Roman Catholic	Required for the purifying power that starts one on the path of grace; one of the seven sacraments	Yes	Yes	By anointing with water or immersion in the West, by immersion in the East	Matthew 28:19
Seventh Day Adventist	An affirmation by the believer in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ	No	No	Immersion only	Romans 6:3–4
Uniting Church of Australia	Affirms place of believer within the community	Yes	Baptism of children shows that parents are willing to guide them into the Christian life	Anointing with water	Matthew 28:19

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CONSIDER

Celebration of the sacraments is usually considered one of the signs or marks of the Christian church. Yet neither the Salvation Army nor the Society of Friends (Quakers) celebrates baptism. Why do they not do so? Are they still churches? What then is the 'mark of the church'?

There are a number of Christian symbols present in a baptism service. Water signifies cleansing, the washing away of sin and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Oil symbolises the healing role of baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Candles remind the candidate they are to be a light to the world. The 'sign of the cross' marks membership of the church and belonging to Christ. A white robe symbolises purity and newness of life. Sponsors or godparents symbolise the gathered Christian community.

Significance for the individual

For the Catholic Church, baptism is seen as the first step on the path of grace towards salvation. In Anglicanism, it allows the individual to access the sacrament of Holy Communion and, ultimately, salvation. For Orthodox faiths, baptism cancels out the automatic state of sin we are born into and provides a rebirth from which salvation can be attained. Christian groups such as the Society of Friends note that, although Jesus was baptised by John, Jesus himself never baptised anyone; therefore, they do not believe in the practice, for they do not believe they are the followers of John.

The process of washing or being anointed with water is a powerful one. The act of washing helps make one more pure. In other monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Islam, washing rituals are an important way of reconnecting with God before worship and water plays a significant role in most religious traditions.

Many Christians see baptism as a practice done in obedience to the commands of Christ, as an act of individual repentance and the washing away of sin; therefore it represents a new clean start in life.

At baptism, a profession of individual faith is made in the promises and the statement of the creed. For adults, it is made by the candidate for baptism; for infants, it is made on their behalf by the family and sponsors (godparents).

Some, but not all, churches see baptism as necessary for the salvation of the individual.

Significance for the community

Baptism allows the community to define its membership. It is a ritual that allows new members of the church to be welcomed.

The presentation by parents of their children for baptism is a declaration by those parents that they will guide their child into the Christian way of life. The appointment of godparents gives the child a set of spiritual parents who will watch over his or her religious growth.

The vows made by the congregation at a baptism mean the whole community participates at a baptism. Adult baptism confirms a new member's adhesion to the Christian group and Christian lifestyle. Baptism is usually conducted in a formal worship setting, where the church is gathered, to mark it as a communal event. It is a symbol of group cohesion.

Sources

Luke 3:16–17, Acts 2:38 and other parts of the New Testament mention baptism. Other references include Acts 2:38–39, Romans 6:1–11, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 2:12 and Titus 3:5–7. See also Acts 8:26–39 and Acts 16:29–34. See also the Catechism of the Catholic Church, sections 1212–1213.

EXERCISE 7.6

1 Write your own brief definition of what a sacrament is.
2 **Summarise** the sacrament of baptism. **Assess** how it expresses the core beliefs of Christianity.
3 Compile a list of changes, if any, to the way baptism is performed today as compared with the early days of the church.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.6

1 In pairs, speak to pastors, ministers or priests in two Christian denominations to gain greater insight into how these churches perform the sacrament of baptism.
2 As a class, debate the following statement: 'Baptism has no meaning without the Christian community's presence'.
3 Using the internet, research two or three additional Catholic sacraments, such as marriage. Construct a table that details the various points of view on these sacraments as they appear in the Bible and compare them with differing attitudes to baptism.

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Marriage

Beliefs

Marriage is an important rite of passage in Christianity. The Bible states that marriage is the reflection of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:25, 29). Thus marriage is seen by Christians to be a loving, lifelong relationship in which the couple are to be completely, even sacrificially, committed to each other.

In a religious ceremony (a wedding), the couple make vows to each other pledging their love and faithfulness, a pledge made before God. Witnesses to the marriage are required at the service, often the best man and chief bridesmaid. Rings are often exchanged at the wedding. The circular ring is considered a reminder of the relationship and, because it has no beginning or end, symbolic of their love.

According to Christian teaching there are several purposes to marriage:

- for the proper expression of the sexual relationship
- for mutual companionship
- for the good order of society in the formation of a family unit.

Traditionally marriages would not be dissolved, as Jesus taught that marriage is a permanent state (Mark 10:6–9). Divorce is generally considered a final option after all other steps to maintain the marriage have been tried. In some Christian churches, notably the Catholic Church, divorce is not recognised; the only option to dissolve a marriage is annulment: the statement that the marriage has, for a variety of reasons, never actually validly taken place.

Marriage is both a legal institution and a religious celebration. In Australia there is an increasing number of civil celebrations, as the religious aspects of marriage decrease in influence and recognition. However, many people feel that marriage is such a significant step that they still want to acknowledge it with a religious ceremony, and promises made before God. This is sometimes an acknowledgement that they need some spiritual meaning in their lives, or that they feel they will need God's help in the future of their relationship. A marriage needs to be witnessed and is a legal contract. It is also filled with significant symbolism, as the use of a church and rings suggest. In some cultures, marriages may be arranged, and these can be successful marriages.

The Bible affirms the idea that marriage usually means leaving one's parents and forming a new family unit. Passages in Genesis and the Gospel of Mark state:

> Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called woman, for out of man this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.
>
> GENESIS 2:23, 24

> Therefore what god has joined together, let no one separate.
>
> MARK 10:9

These passages recognise the formation of the family as a central unit of society and the exclusiveness of that marriage relationship, a view common to all Christians.

Marriage in a church includes vows made before God, rather than a civil authority. Thus Christians take these vows very seriously. Divorce is seen as breaking these vows made before God.

While it is easy to find statements in Catholic teaching that say that 'Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children' (Gaudium et Spes 50), this is rooted in an understanding of marriage (or matrimony) as a covenantal relationship of love. For example, the opening line of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1601–66) in its discussion of the sacrament of matrimony says: 'The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.'

The Catholic Church sees marriage as the ideal context in which to have children. Where children are not a possibility, the Catholic Church acknowledges that: 'Spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning, in both human and Christian terms. Their marriage can radiate a fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality, and of sacrifice' (CCC 1654). Thus, even if the Catholic Church can be said to hold that children are the highest end in marriage, it would be unfair to state that it sees this as the main purpose of marriage without nuance, contrasting it with other Christian positions and suggesting that Catholics do not also see marriage as a place for the expression of love (the various canons in canon law, Church documents, all affirm matrimony as a covenant of love first and foremost). Most modern Christians see marriage as the place for the expression of love in a sexual relationship, expressing affection, companionship and love.

Description of the practice

The Christian marriage service includes prayers, vows, the exchange of rings and blessings. Bible passages that relate to love or marriage (such as 1 Corinthians 13:4–10, Ephesians 5:21–33 or Genesis 2:21–24) may be read, public vows made before God and the gathered community, and a pronouncement made that the couple are 'man (or husband) and wife'. The legal documents are usually signed during the ceremony, and usually witnessed by the best man and bridesmaid. There can also be an opportunity for people to object to the wedding, although there should be good legal reasons to do so.

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Marriages are usually accompanied by great celebration. Different religious variants have different marriage traditions. Orthodox Christians exchange rings before the ceremony and a silver crown is held over the heads of the bride and groom. Often the **Eucharist** is celebrated at Roman Catholic weddings, called a Nuptial Mass.

Marriage in Christianity is rich in symbolism and reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church. Because it is a legal union between two people and such an essential institution in society, it is also governed by legal requirements and regulations.

Significance for the individual

Marriage affirms the commitment of one person to another for life. Marriage is also regarded as a rite of passage for an individual.

The individuals make promises before God in Christian marriage and it marks the start of a new family. It is an acknowledgement of the purposes of marriage: companionship, an appropriate sexual union and the good order of society, which affirms an individual commitment.

Eucharist
The consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper; the communion

Marriage is an institution that is fit for the proper expression of a sexual relationship, according to Christian teachings.

Significance for the community

Marriage affirms the family, a foundation of society. The community witness the beginning of a new family and the strengthening of society and the community.

Marriage symbolises the relationship between the Christian community and Jesus Christ. Christian marriage is recognised as a relationship that should not be undermined.

EXERCISE 7.7

1 **Explain** the theological significance of Christian marriage.
2 **Outline** the different teachings on marriage in several Christian variants.
3 **Explain** the symbolism of different aspects of a marriage service.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.7

1 Attend a Christian marriage or read a copy of a marriage service. **Describe** which aspects of the service are religious and which aspects are cultural.
2 Debate the topic: 'In a secular Australia, Christian marriages are no longer relevant'.
3 Design a Christian marriage service, making obvious the Christian teachings on marriage and ensure they are expressed in the service.

Saturday/Sunday worship

Most Christian churches have worship in church on Sundays, with many Catholic churches having Saturday evening services, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church holding all worship on Saturdays.

Beliefs

Christians have met for worship since the beginning of Christianity and services follow patterns that were set in those early years. Many services include the sacrament of Holy Communion. Services generally include an approach to God, the hearing of 'the word' (Bible readings and sermons) and a response to the word, in prayer and song. Many churches follow a written liturgy, while others are more informal.

Christians acknowledge the fourth of the Ten Commandments. For Catholics and Lutherans, the commandment to observe the Sabbath is enumerated as the third commandment.

> Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
> EXODUS 20:8

As Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week, Christians celebrate that day, called the Lord's Day, rather than the Sabbath (Saturday) as their holy day.

Video

This is true for most mainstream Christian denominations. A notable exception is the Seventh Day Adventist Church that keeps Saturday as its Sabbath, its day of worship (thus the name of the church).

The early Christians met, initially each day, to devote themselves to 'the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:42). They also practised a form of communalism, sharing their possessions (Acts 4:32) and 'day by day … spent much time in the temple' (Acts 2:43–47). The early church was also a time when many miracles were evident (Acts 5:12–16) and where a significant social welfare component was instituted (Acts 6:1–4). This has, in essence, remained the pattern for Christian worship, with some development and formalisation over the centuries since.

The early Christians (who were mainly Jewish people) met on the Sabbath, Saturday, as was the expectation in Judaism. Over time, the day that was recognised as the Christian Lord's Day was Sunday, the day of Jesus'

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resurrection (Acts 20:1, 1 Corinthians 16:2; also see Revelations 1:10).

Early Christian meetings included a number of components that were generally based on the synagogue worship of Judaism. These included prayer, singing of spiritual songs and psalms, readings from the sacred scriptures and messages, and sermons of the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). Generally these elements still remain the main features of Christian celebrations or services today – prayer, scripture readings, songs and sermons/messages.

As mentioned, not all Christian groups accept the celebration of Sunday as a replacement for the Sabbath. Groups such as the Seventh Day Adventist Church believe the change to Sunday was more motivated by the influence of early pagan rituals on Christianity, and that there are no explicit commands in the Bible to change the Sabbath to Sunday. Thus members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (and some other smaller groups) celebrate Saturday as the day of rest and worship, in accordance with the Ten Commandments and Jewish practice.

Roman Catholic churches often have a Saturday celebration as part of the worship of the church. This is primarily motivated by pragmatic concerns, rather than theological issues or matters of belief; in modern society, with the reality of shift work, Sunday employment, sport and other demands on people's time, Saturday can be an alternative to Sunday worship or a devotional preparation for the Sunday services.

There are many images of the church explained in the Bible, all with particular significance. These are theological concepts that reflect different ideas and understandings of the church, and thus influence the understanding of the importance of Saturday/Sunday worship. Some of these images include:

- the people of God (1 Peter 2:9, Revelations 21:3)
- the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18, Romans 12:4–8)
- the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:27, Revelations 19:7)
- the building of God (1 Peter 2:5, 1 Corinthians 3:16).

Figure 7.14 Christians often set apart a building for Saturday/Sunday worship. This is often called a church. In reality, the term 'church' refers to the people. Many Christians believe the building itself should honour and glorify God, thus many church buildings can be quite elaborate.

Figure 7.15 The Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona, designed by Antoni Gaudi. Begun in 1862, it is still unfinished. Gaudi sought to serve God through architecture, and his originality, creativity and innovation have made him a unique figure in architecture.

Meeting for worship in church fulfils several purposes. It is a time for communal worship, to hear teaching, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to experience community. It can also be an individual contemplative experience; however, church attendance suggests a communal emphasis.

Description of the practice

Different denominations emphasise various practices. Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches use a formal written liturgy contained in a prayer book. Other Protestant churches use a more informal or extemporary liturgy. However, most Christian services follow a similar pattern of songs, prayer, readings and sermon, with varied emphasis on the celebration of Holy Communion. Some celebrate Holy Communion weekly (Catholic, Orthodox and most Anglicans), others monthly (Uniting Church, Baptist and some Anglican) and some quarterly (Presbyterian).

The format of the Sunday/Saturday service generally follows a pattern similar to the following:

- approach to God:
  - introduction and call to worship
  - hymns or songs
  - prayers of approach (praise) and confession
- word of God:
  - readings from scripture
  - sermon
- response to the word of God:
  - prayers for the world (intercession)
  - Holy Communion
  - songs or hymn
  - dismissal or sending out into the world.

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Even churches where there is no written liturgy tend to follow a similar format to this (some place the sermon at the end of the service). Sometimes the typical Protestant service has been called a 'hymn sandwich' – several aspects of liturgy sandwiched by hymns – but usually the liturgy is more considered than this term would imply. Some churches emphasise the liturgy (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican), some emphasise the word (Bible) (reformed churches such as the Presbyterian Church) and others emphasise the Holy Spirit (Pentecostal and Quaker churches). The formality of the liturgy decreases in the latter examples. Some churches emphasise the sacraments, others the preaching.

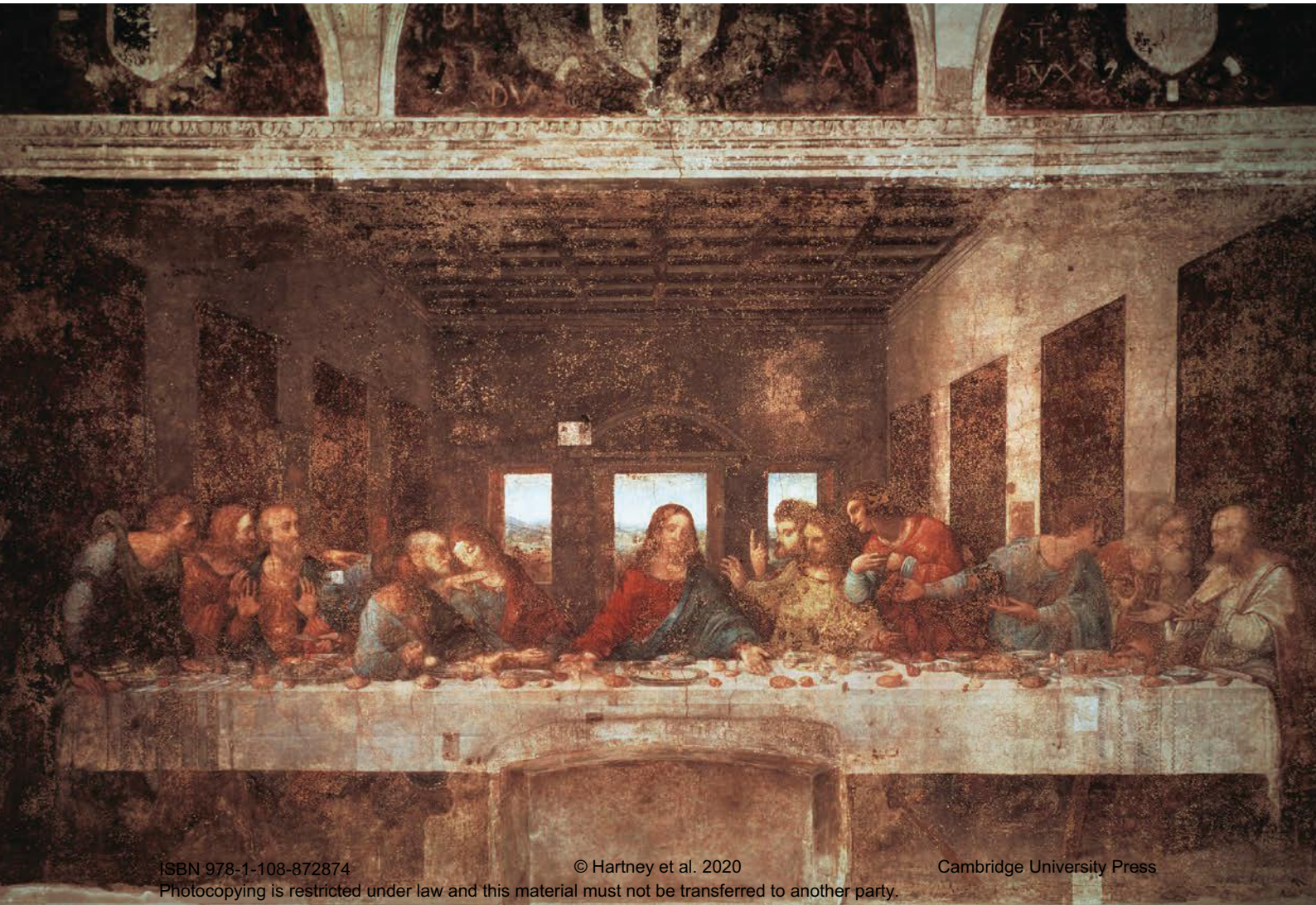
Some churches follow a lectionary, where the Bible readings are read over a cycle, usually of three years, to avoid repetition and to ensure that most of the Bible is read at some time in the three-year cycle. Many churches follow the same 'common' lectionary. Readings for each week usually include an Old Testament lesson, a Psalm, a New Testament letter and a Gospel reading. Not all are used each week in every church, but the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches usually use all readings. Other groups, such as Pentecostal churches, may not have a special time for the reading of a Bible passage, but reference is usually made to the Bible in the sermon. Most churches would regard the sermon as part of the 'word of God', a message that is given with some divine authority to explain and apply the scriptures to everyday life.

One particular and significant feature in the celebration of the Christian church is that aspect spoken of in the New Testament as 'breaking of bread'. While it may refer to a simple communal meal, or even what has been called an '*agape* meal', at the Last Supper, Jesus gave a particular significance to the breaking of bread and sharing wine. It became known as Holy Communion (or the Lord's Supper or Eucharist), the celebration and remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection. This has become a formal sacrament or ritual of the Church.

Each of the Synoptic Gospels records the Last Supper, linked to the Jewish celebration of the Passover, but given a new meaning with Jesus' imminent death (see Matthew 26:17–29, Mark 14:12–25 and Luke 22:1–22).

While John's Gospel does not refer directly to the institution of Holy Communion, most would see Jesus' discourse on the 'bread of life' as a reference to the

Figure 7.16 At the Last Supper, Jesus gave a particular significance to the breaking of bread and sharing wine. Pictured is the *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, which is in the Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy.



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significance of Holy Communion. So important is Holy Communion that Paul details institution of the sacrament in 1 Corinthians 11:17–32, and this record almost certainly predates the writing of the Gospels.

Even in the time of the New Testament, the passages that speak of the institution of Holy Communion take on the style of a formula, suggesting there was a common set of words handed down as an oral tradition to provide the form used for this celebration.

As part of the worshipping life of the Christian community, the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is celebrated. This is viewed as a principal celebration of the Christian church. In this celebration, Christians remember the death and resurrection of Jesus and anticipate his return. As part of the service, these words are often spoken:

> Christ has died
>
> Christ is risen
>
> Christ will come again.

In many churches, the celebration of Holy Communion involves a gathering of the Christian community with a focus on the altar or holy table, where bread and wine are the central features. The service usually focuses on the reading of scripture, prayer, singing of songs and hymns, a message or sermon and the celebration of Holy Communion with a prayer of thanksgiving that has similar wording across all Christian churches.

Holy Communion may be known by several names:

- Eucharist
- Holy Communion
- Lord's Supper
- Mass (which actually includes more than Holy Communion).

According to Catholic theology, in the celebration of Eucharist, (from the Greek word, *eucharistia*, which means thanksgiving) the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. The word 'communion' comes from the Greek *koinonia* meaning 'fellowship' or 'sharing'. When adherents receive communion at Mass, they believe they are brought into a closer relationship with one another, as well as with Christ.

Transubstantiation
In the Eucharist, the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ

Alb
A white linen robe with wide sleeves worn by an officiating priest

Chasuble
A sleeveless outer vestment worn by the celebrant at Mass

Receiving the body of Christ at Mass calls adherents to live out what they receive and believe, to show that Christ is present in the world through all that they do and say.

During the celebration of Holy Communion the celebrant takes the bread and wine and makes a prayer of thanksgiving. The bread is broken and distributed to those present, followed by the wine. Holy Communion is a memorial feast that echoes the last meal Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion. It was at that meal that Jesus gave the bread and wine their symbolic representation of his body and blood (Luke 22:14–23).

Figure 7.17 The celebration of Holy Communion often involves a gathering of the Christian community with a focus on the altar or holy table, where bread and wine are the central features

In practice there are considerable differences in the way Holy Communion is conducted across the variants of Christianity. These differences include the nature and role of the celebrants, the significance of sacred writings and aspects such as the buildings, elements, clothing and furniture.

In the Catholic and Orthodox denominations, only an ordained male priest can celebrate Holy Communion. They believe that when the priest offers the prayer of thanksgiving, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ, a concept known as **transubstantiation**, while retaining the appearance of bread and wine. The priests in these two variants are liturgically garbed – wearing vestments that often reflect some liturgical significance, including an **alb** and **chasuble**. The Catholic priest stands before the people celebrating the Mass, while the Orthodox priest stands in a screened area behind the iconostasis. The Holy Communion is celebrated on a special table, called an altar, echoing the imagery of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

The language of the Catholic service in Australia is usually English, except for very traditional services where Latin may be used, and services conducted in other languages for people, often migrants, who have limited English. Catholic Mass is celebrated around the

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world in the language (or vernacular) of the people of that particular place. Orthodox services are generally in the language of the particular church, although with the passage of time, English is being used more often in Australia. Communicants receive Holy Communion in the form of wafers and a sip of alcoholic wine (Catholic) or damper bread and alcoholic wine (Orthodox). Usually the wine is given on a spoon in an Orthodox church. It is believed that Jesus is really present in the elements that have been turned into the body and blood of Christ (called the real presence). Communion is usually given to the congregation, who come forward to receive the individual wafers and the wine that is usually given from a common cup.

Protestant groups have usually objected to this theological position of transubstantiation, believing it was not possible or correct to sacrifice Christ again on the church altar. However, there are significant differences within the beliefs and practices of Protestant Christianity.

Most Protestant churches take the point of view of the church reformers. The Lutheran churches accept a concept known as consubstantiation – that there is a real presence of Christ in the bread and wine, but the nature of the bread and wine have not changed. The Calvinist or Reformed view (also held by some Anglicans, Presbyterians and Uniting Church members) is that Christ is present in a spiritual, mystical sense in the celebration of Holy Communion, and that Christians are spiritually nourished in the celebration, but it is not an easily definable concept. The Zwinglian view (held by some Anglicans, Uniting Church members, Baptists and Pentecostal churches) is that the celebration of Holy Communion is merely a memorial feast, and that it is a symbolic representation of the presence of Christ.

Obviously there is considerable difference within Protestant churches in their theological positions as well as their practices. Some Anglicans are Anglo-Catholic (High Church) with a view closer to the Catholic Church, while more evangelical Anglicans (Low Church) are probably Zwinglian in their theology.

In the Anglican Church, the priest always celebrates Holy Communion. This may be a woman, as in the Anglican Church women are allowed to be ordained as priests. However, in NSW not all areas permit women to hold these positions. The Archdeacon for Women's Ministry at the Sydney Diocese, Kara Hartley, believes there are plenty of opportunities for women, but some say the reason they cannot be ordained as priests and bishops comes from the Bible. Uniting churches usually have an ordained man or woman celebrating communion. In Baptist and Pentecostal churches, a pastor or a lay member of the congregation can celebrate communion and conduct the service (the use of the term priest can be offensive to some Protestants).

Each church allows lay members of the congregation to assist in the distribution of the bread and wine. Anglicans generally use wafers and alcoholic wine, while other Protestants use ordinary bread and grape juice. In recent years grape juice has been used more frequently in all Protestant churches. The Uniting Church specifically instituted the use of grape juice in 1984, in response to requests from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to avoid alcohol in services. In an example of contextualisation, other elements are sometimes used, such as the use of yams or damper and coconut juice instead of bread and wine, by Aboriginal Anglican priest Sabo Mabo.

Figure 7.18 Christians remember the Last Supper when they eat the bread and drink the wine during Holy Communion

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Anglican churches often distribute from the front using individual wafers and the common cup, although many now use individual cups for the wine or grape juice or allow the dipping of the wafer into the wine (known as intinction). Many of the other Protestant churches allow the congregation to remain in their seats while the bread is passed around the congregation and grape juice is served in small individual cups.

Protestant churches place a great emphasis on the Bible, and the central feature of the service is generally the biblical accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Thus the table is not called an altar but rather a holy table, or simply just 'the table'. It is the lectern or the pulpit, rather than the table, which is the central piece of furniture in the Protestant churches. In most Anglican churches the priest or minister will wear liturgical vestments. Low Church Anglicans may wear just a **surplice** and scarf. Uniting Church ministers may wear an alb, or ordinary clothes. Most other Protestant ministers wear ordinary clothes.

Surplice
A loose-fitting broad-sleeved white vestment, usually of linen, worn by certain members of the clergy and choristers

Despite the variations, the sacrament of Holy Communion is considered central to the public expression of Christian worship. It is celebrated in all Christian denominations except the Salvation Army and Society of Friends (Quakers). These groups also do not celebrate baptism either.

Whether the service of Holy Communion is celebrated as part of Saturday or Sunday worship, the emphasis of Saturday/Sunday worship is generally on meeting together to share the experience of fellowship and worship. The communal singing, prayer and teaching are considered to be the meeting, not only of the congregation, but with Christ (Matthew 18:19, 20). The teaching that takes place at Saturday/Sunday worship and the common fellowship are considered essential for Christian growth.

Significance for the individual

Saturday/Sunday worship allows the individual to focus their worship on God in a formal setting. There are opportunities to build individual faith through the Bible readings, sermons, teaching, organised prayer and reflection. The celebration of Holy Communion is considered a way of individuals receiving spiritual nourishment. It is a way to express an individual's commitment to Christianity.

Significance for the community

One of the key features of Saturday/Sunday worship is the sense of community and fellowship that is engendered at the services. Meeting as a community is one of the marks of the church, the sense of the gathered body of Christ. The injunction from Jesus is that he is present whenever 'two or three are gathered in my name' (Matthew 18:20). Combined worship is also the appropriate setting for the celebration of Holy Communion. The gathered community prays for the needs of the community and the world in prayers of intercession.

EXERCISE 7.8

1 **Explain** why Christians meet for Saturday/Sunday worship.
2 **Discuss** why some Christians meet on Saturday and some meet on Sunday for worship.
3 **Describe** what is considered the central celebration in Saturday/Sunday worship and if all churches celebrate that each week.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7.8

1 **Examine** the forms of worship between several denominations of Christianity. Note and **explain** the different emphases given to aspects such as the liturgy, Holy Communion, preaching, and the inclusion of the Holy Spirit.
2 Go to the New Testament and explore passages that suggest a form of worship for Saturday/ Sunday worship. Note especially references from the Book of Acts (2:42–47, 4:32, 5:12–16, 6:1–4). **Discuss** whether this form of Christianity is recognisable in modern Saturday/Sunday worship. **Outline** what changes have happened over time and suggest reasons for this.
3 Debate the following topic: 'You can be a Christian without going to church'. How does that relate to Saturday/Sunday worship?

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Paul, formerly Saul, is a leading figure in the development of Christianity.
- Paul developed a Christianity that was acceptable in his day and today.
- Paul wrote many letters contained in the New Testament.
- Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli became Pope St John XXIII.
- Pope St John XXIII, a deeply spiritual man, sought to bring change to the Catholic Church.
- The Second Vatican Council (1962–65), convened by Pope St John XXIII, modernised the Catholic Church.
- Bioethics include issues such as abortion, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilisation and stem-cell research.
- Environmental ethics include issues such as the population explosion, depletion of resources, loss of biodiversity, waste disposal (especially nuclear) and climate change.
- Sexual ethics include issues such as premarital sex, homosexuality and gender roles.
- Christianity is generally typified by loving relationships with particular restrictions.
- Christians differ greatly in their views on the acceptability of certain types of relationships such as homosexuality.
- Baptism, a significant practice, is a sacrament of the Church.
- Baptism is a sign of repentance, new life and the Holy Spirit.
- Christian marriage represents the relationship between God and the Church.
- Christians believe marriage is a lifelong union.
- Saturday/Sunday worship is an occasion to worship God and share fellowship.
- For many Christians, the celebration of Holy Communion is the focal point of worship.
- Churches vary greatly in their understanding and expression of baptism, marriage and Saturday/Sunday worship.

Figure 7.19 Christian weddings often take place in a church, but this is not essential

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HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer either a three-part, 15-mark question, or a one-part extended essay of 20 marks. That is, EITHER a question from Section II OR a question from Section III.

SECTION II

Marks

Question 2 – Christianity (15 marks)

(a) **Describe** ONE significant practice in Christianity. The practice described must be one of the following practices: **3**

- Baptism
- Marriage ceremony
- Saturday/Sunday worship.

(b) **Analyse** the importance of Christian ethical teachings in ONE of the following areas: **6**

- Bioethics
- Environmental ethics
- Sexual ethics.

(c) **Explain** the impact of ONE significant individual or school of thought on Christianity. **6**

SECTION III

Question 2 – Christianity (20 marks)

(a) **Evaluate** the significance of ONE Christian practice on the individual Christian AND the Christian community. The practice discussed must be drawn from the following: **20**

- Baptism
- Marriage ceremony
- Saturday/Sunday worship.

(b) **Explain** the impact of ONE significant individual or school of thought on Christianity.

OR

> I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.
> C.S. LEWIS

With reference to the quotation, and from your understanding of the Christian religious tradition, **evaluate** the importance of Christianity as a living religious tradition in the life of Christian adherents. **20**

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EIGHT

HINDUISM: THE BASIC FACTS

[YEAR 11 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

Hinduism: the perennial philosophy that is at the core of all religions.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the origins of Hinduism, Hindu concepts of time and creation, reference to the Harappan civilisation, the significance of the Aryans and the debate about their influences
- the Vedic period and its influence
- the significance of the *Upanishads* for the development of Hinduism
- the concept of *sanatana dharma*
- the main features of the two influence variants, the Vaishnavas and the Shaivas
- the belief in the concepts of atman and Brahman and the relationship between the two
- the principal gods and goddesses
- the key beliefs of dharma, karma and *moksha* and their relationship
- union with God through the four kinds of yoga
- significant examples of Hindu sacred writings
- extracts from some of the Hindu sacred writings that reflect aspects of Hindu teachings
- the ethical system of Hinduism, with respect to environment, varnas and ashramas
- the significance of home *puja* as a Hindu devotional practice.

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TIMELINE

In Hindu cosmology, time is cyclical. The cycles that time moves in are huge. One cycle (*Mahayuga Caturyga*) contains four *yugas* and each of these lasts for 4 320 000 Earth years. The current time period is Kali Yuga.

In antiquity
Start of the Kali Yuga and suggested timing of the (possibly mythic) Mahabharata War (as documented in the epic poem *The Mahābhārata* [written at sometime between 500 BCE–500 CE])

From early 3200 BCE
Evidence of Indus Valley civilisations is suggested by archaeological research

1500 BCE
Migration of small groups of people speaking early Indo-Aryan languages as suggested by pioneering linguist Friedrich Max Müller. These are sometimes identified as Aryan.

1500 BCE
Vedas are in evidence in Sanskrit pre-literate oral traditions

1000 (or seventh to sixth century) BCE
Possible start of the Upanishadic period

800 BCE
Oral Vedas are in evidence in Sanskrit

circa 500 BCE
Mahavira, founder of Jainism, is born

circa 500 BCE
Prince Siddhartha, later known as Buddha, attains enlightenment. He is a contemporary of Mahavira.

326 BCE
The Greek armies of Alexander invade India, forging a stronger East–West connection in north-west India

304–232 BCE
Asokan period: Growth of Buddhism in India under the rule of the Emperor Asoka who converts to the new religion

320–545 CE
Gupta empire: Some regard this as the golden age of Indian history during which art, language, mathematics, astronomy and other sciences flourished

(Timeline continued on next page)

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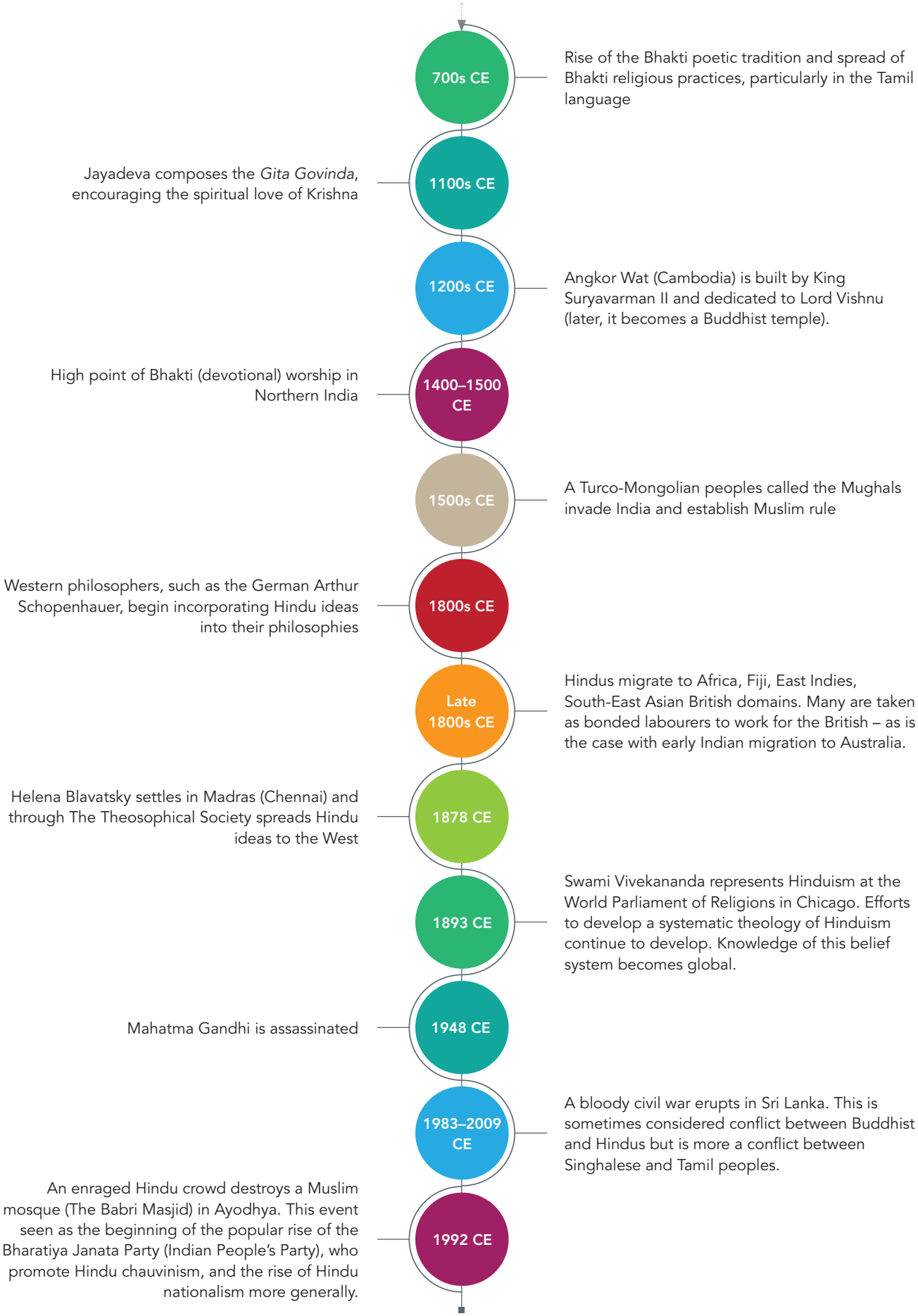

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is the name given to the major religious tradition of India. It differs from the other major religious traditions discussed in the HSC syllabus as there is no single person or time that can be tied to its founding. Its origins lie in the distant past; some consider it to be eternal. Hinduism is not a single, easily identifiable religious tradition. Rather, it has many layers and influences, including **animism**, **Vedism** and the **Bhakti movement**, and it is evidenced in many varied expressions. The complexity of traditions included in the umbrella term Hinduism ranges from Vedism, to the almost monotheistic Tamil Shaiva Siddhanta, to the Balinese Hinduism of Indonesia, to the animism and folk religion of numerous Indian village communities. Beyond this, four significant divisions of popular Hinduism are generally recognised: Vaishnava (followers of the god Lord Vishnu), Shaiva (the god Shiva), Shakti (the goddess Devi) and Smartas (who recognise the five deities, Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Devi and Ganesha as equals). The HSC syllabus focuses on the first two – Vaishnava and Shaiva. You should be aware that the syllabus reflects a particular expression of Hinduism, though there is in fact a wide range of approaches, traditions and practices.

Animism
The belief that spirits inhabit all objects and have influence on people and natural events

Vedism
The early religious system of India that developed into Hinduism

Bhakti movement
Devotional movement in Hinduism

CONSIDER

As in the case of many religious traditions, there are a variety of opinions and expressions of concern about the use of particular terms and issues. This is true when applied to Hinduism. For example, the term Aryan is sometimes used to refer to a particular language or racial group. Many scholars would prefer the term Arya, which could refer to a religious, cultural or social group. There is debate in academic circles about whether the Arya invaded India, migrated or even existed as a particular group.

Similarly, there can be a variety of opinions about the place and expression of varna and/or ashrama in Hinduism. Debate also exists about the number and nature of gods and the expression of what is called the *trimurti*. There are numerous other areas of debate in Hinduism.

You should be aware that using particular terms may be of concern and be sensitive. It is not expected that HSC students are aware of all the academic debates evident in Hinduism. The Hinduism discussed in this textbook can only reflect general ideas and you should be aware that Hinduism, as a religious tradition, can be quite varied and diverse.

INVESTIGATE

Bollywood (the Indian film industry) is a popular film industry worldwide. Indian films are loved around the world and many contain significant references to Hinduism or are based on Hindu beliefs. The 2002 *Legend of Prince Ram* is an animated retelling of the *Ramayana*. In the 1980s, two television shows stopped India – dramatisations of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, copies of which can be found online and at your local Indian spice supermarket fairly cheaply. Peter Brook's version of the *Mahabharata* is visually stunning, but made within a Western theatrical tradition. Also, *The Legend of Bagger Vance* is a striking adaptation of Lord Krishna's discourse in *Bhagavad Gita*, a call for duty amid difficult circumstances. For a larger view on Hinduism, access the websites of The Hindu Universe or Hinduism Today.

8.2 ORIGINS

The early inhabitants of the Indus valley

There are several general views as to how India and its major religious traditions developed. One older theory proposes that India was invaded or perhaps reflects a migration of people groups. Another suggests that local inhabitants developed cultures in India many thousands of years before the proposed invasion and that modern India developed from these civilisations. Ruins discovered during the twentieth century have provided evidence for the age of these civilisations.

Harappan civilisation (from 3200 BCE)

Excavations in 1926 unearthed large ancient cities along the Indus valley. The two significant towns in this area were Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. They were about 500 kilometres apart but seemed to have much in common. These towns go back to at least 2700 BCE, but are probably much older, and there is thought to be evidence of Harappan culture

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Figure 8.1 The Indus River runs through what is now Pakistan

in India today, although little is actually known of Harappan culture.

The ruins reveal towns that were very well planned. Many clay seals and tablets have been found with writing on them, but this language, unfortunately, is yet to be deciphered. Indeed some scholars are unsure the seals are actually in a language. One remarkable religious site at Mohenjo Daro is a vast bath, 3 metres deep, designed to be fed by a well and with a drain. Was this used to wash people? Or could it be a link with early agriculture (there are cattle motifs carved into the walls)? It is hard to say because not much is known about these sites yet. While there is considerable uncertainty about Harappan practices, some suggest the idea of ritual bathing carries on through to today where shrines to Hindu deities have drains so that during *puja* the deities can be washed by priests in a variety of liquids including milk and ghee (clarified butter). The sacral importance of cattle is a major theme in today's India, which some would trace back to Harappan culture.

Little is known of the Harappan civilisation so a number of speculations have arisen linking it to later Hinduism. There are suggestions that an early god similar to the Hindu god Shiva was worshipped at this time. This religion and culture has often been identified as **Dravidian**, a religion depicted as an animistic religion with an emphasis on worshipping nature. The relationship between Dravidian and Aryan influences on Hinduism remains hotly debated today.

Dravidians
A language and cultural group believed to be an indigenous people of the Indian subcontinent

Aryans
An early Indo-European people who are thought to have invaded or migrated to India several thousand years ago

The arrival of Indo-Aryan people (circa 1500 BCE)

One theory of how Hinduism developed in India is linked to the migration of people speaking Indo-Aryan languages, sometimes called the Aryans. Until recently, many European scholars speculated that around 1500 BCE groups of Indo-European people called **Aryans** migrated to India from the north. There is little concrete evidence to support this theory (the debate continues among Hindu scholars), but a number of circumstantial factors are used to explain it. The theory suggests that either in Central Asia, Russia, Eastern Europe or even Scandinavia, a large group of nomads, possibly warriors, who herded cattle and had developed spoked-wheeled chariot technology (making them militarily powerful) expanded outwards from their original homeland. Those

Figure 8.2 Steatite seal with elephant found in the ruins of the Indus valley, Mohenjo-Daro and dated from 2500–2000 BCE

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who went west became Europeans, and others migrated into India from the north, each group bringing their similar languages with them.

Some recent Western and Indian scholars have established another theory to the idea of Indo-European migration or invasion, bringing support to the idea that India simply developed without being invaded, or experiencing migrant groups. They suggest that the Aryans were in India all along and the Indo-European homeland was actually northern India. The clearest evidence of this is that India's third great river, the Sarasvati (which flowed between the Indus and the Ganges), and may have dried up around 1900 BCE, according to recent satellite evidence. With this river gone, civilisations along its bank needed to move. So, the alternative suggestion is that the Aryans left India and spread towards Europe. Both theories seek to explain why Western European and Indian languages are so closely connected in terms of vocabulary and grammar.

The Vedic period (prior to 1500 BCE)

During the Vedic period, the religion called Vedism or Brahmanism began to develop into a form that prefigures the development of Hinduism. An important part of this tradition is the existence of some very old texts called **Vedas**. They were composed in **Sanskrit** and there is a great debate as to when they were developed. The Vedas first developed as an oral tradition (rather than a series of written texts), so it is difficult to precisely date them. Less certain theories suggest that the oldest go back to 4000 BCE. More general thinking places them from 1500 to 800 BCE, reflected in the different genres of literature.

The *Rig Veda* (sometimes spelled *Rg Veda* or *Rgveda*) is deemed to be the oldest of the four main Vedic texts because of its linguistic style and it is quoted in the others, but this text does not quote them. The other Vedas are called the *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. These texts comprise many styles of writing and composition, but the oldest are prayers probably chanted during sacrifice rituals. The *Rig Veda Samhita* contains 1028 hymns. Abbreviated forms of these hymns are repeated in the *Sama* and *Yajur Vedas*. Each Veda also includes a philosophical text called the *Upanishads*, and commentaries were added later. The *Upanishads* are of equal importance and will be discussed on the next page.

The *Atharva Veda* tends to break the pattern established by the other three texts. Instead of containing prayers that relate to rituals and sacrifice, it contains remedies to ward off evil; for example, incantations for good health. Some argue that it may not be Aryan, which could be evidence that Indian religions were eager, from an early period, to mix religious practices from different traditions.

Vedic period transforms into Upanishadic period (circa 800 BCE)

Scholars assume that the Vedas were texts used by priests. This is how they are used today, particularly when offerings are made to gods and priests make sacrifices into fire (the act is called ***homa***). Ritual sacrifice involves the burning of goods such as ghee in a sacred fire. Sacrifice is performed to guarantee that the world maintains its order. The Vedas are considered by priests to contain both an eternal truth and an eternal sound. The sound '**om**', which starts most of the prayers, is said to be the original sound of the cosmos.

Vedas
The earliest sacred texts of Hinduism, first as oral traditions then written

Sanskrit
Ancient language of India used in liturgy and other aspects of life

Homa
Giving offerings to a sacred fire, usually on the floor

Om
According to some, the sound with which creation began; the symbol for Hinduism and a common symbol used in most eastern religions which originated in India

Figure 8.3 Copies of the Vedas, ancient texts written in Sanskrit

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The *Upanishads* are believed to have developed from about 800 BCE onwards. They address the relationship between **Brahman** (the ultimate reality) and **atman** (individual souls – see section 8.4 on principal beliefs), and introduce many Hindu concepts. These compositions are more personal and speculative in nature. They develop themes found in the Vedic hymns but apply this material through a series of philosophical debates. They form the foundation of Indian philosophical speculation. The word *'upanishad'* means to 'sit by a master' and refers to the 'secret connection between things'. That is, they are dialogues between a teacher and a disciple as the student learns. These texts first developed the concept of **karma**, in the sense of actions and the future realisation of the fruits of these actions.

Possible rapid development of religious life

The Upanishadic period was marked by a possible increase in religious building activity throughout India. Scholars say this indicates a movement of the Vedic religion out to the people. Urbanism, or the rise of cities, may also have contributed to this move. India's many gods – numbers range from 33 in heaven, 330 000 gods, or as the sage Yainavalkya joked, 33 million! – were still worshipped in all their variety but, as will be shown, a number of families (or systems) of gods grew in popularity; namely, the manifestations (avatars) of **Lord Vishnu** and family of **Shiva**.

Over time, various traditions developed from a ritually focused Vedic religious culture to the emergence of the 'renouncer' traditions. This is evident in the asceticism of the emerging Buddhism and Jainism and the rise of the *sannyasi* in Hinduism. The Upanishadic period was followed by a 1000 years of constant religious development. This is known as Hinduism's classical period and it extends from about 500 BCE to 500 CE. In this period, India's great religious Epics were codified from earlier myths, written, rewritten and edited. From this period of activity, Hinduism emerged in a form similar to that expressed today.

There are a number of challenges that accompany the study of Hinduism.

- As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, Hinduism is not a unified system of belief. Instead, it is a collection of vastly different religious practices that are labelled as one single tradition. This has developed over time and includes significant diversity. When discussing Hinduism, it is important to acknowledge this.
- Hinduism is not simply a religion that involves worshipping – it is a complete way of living and seeing the world. German philosophers call such an all-encompassing view a *Weltanshauung* (worldview). In English, the word civilization comes close, but is not exact. Some Hindus, for example, recognise their cultural heritage as Hindu, but do not believe in the sacred or supernatural aspects of Hinduism. They are atheists – but from a deeply Hindu cultural perspective.
- The word Hindu has developed from the Persian word Sindhu, describing the Indus River and the surrounding region. It was used by the Muslim administrators and the Hindus themselves around the fourteenth century CE. The word Hindus was also used to identify people in India who were not Muslim, Buddhist or Christian; that is, people who followed the traditional systems of life in India. These systems are often based on ideas of samsara (reincarnation) and karma. Hindu was used by the Muslim rulers of India to describe non-Muslims. Later the word proved useful to the British, who, when they carried out censuses of their empire, needed a term to identify the people who lived in the areas they began conquering in South Asia.

Brahman
The 'ultimate' or 'transcendent' principle, the underlying consciousness that pervades the universe; sometimes expressed as the concept of the ultimate god, sometimes called the great world soul or the supreme soul

Atman
The Hindu self, similar to the concept of the individual soul

Karma
The effects of one's actions in life, be they good or bad; the natural consequences of actions

Vishnu, Lord
The supreme god for Vaishnavas, and one manifestation of Brahman (the great world soul) in other traditions of Hinduism; Lord Vishnu is considered the preserver of life; other gods are explained as being manifestations, or avatars of Lord Vishnu – the god Krishna is one of these

Shiva
One of the three chief Hindu divinities, known also as the Destroyer, he is the most significant deity in the Shaivite system of deities; related to many other gods and goddesses

Figure 8.4 Bronze statue of Hindu god Shiva

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Sanatana dharma

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *sanatana dharma* became a common term used for Hinduism by Hindu thinkers to describe the system of Hinduism. *Sanatana* literally means the eternal, with no beginning and no end. Even though dharma is commonly misunderstood as a religion, there is no equivalent word in Western vocabulary. The meaning of the word dharma can vary depending on context. These can include morality, virtue, religion, religious merit, justice, right, duty, conduct, good work according to a right or rule, everlasting religion or truth or law. *Sanatana dharma* often refers to the duties and religiously ordained practices of Hinduism and may even be considered a philosophical interpretation of the religion, rather than its expression. Indians link concepts such as reincarnation, karma and the practice of yoga to attaining a connection with God. A few other conditions, such as the stages of human life, are also related to *sanatana dharma*.

EXERCISE 8.1

1 **Outline** the key events in the development of Hinduism.
2 **Describe** the changes that took place in Hinduism as it developed over the centuries into classical Hinduism.
3 **Explain** *sanatana dharma*, using examples.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 8.1

1 Research and prepare to debate the topic: 'Hinduism is just another expression of animism'.
2 **Discuss** why Hinduism is different from the other world religions included in the syllabus.
3 Research Hinduism as it is expressed in Australia. How is it different form Hinduism in India? Can you **identify** any difficulties that Hindus may encounter living a Hindu lifestyle in modern Australia?

8.3 TWO OF THE MAIN VARIANTS IN HINDUISM: VAISHNAVA AND SHAIVA

Trimurti
The three Hindu gods, Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Shiva, who make up the Hindu godhead, Brahman

Avatar
Form or manifestation of the Hindu gods, especially Lord Vishnu

Puranas
A body of Hindu sacred writings that mainly tells legends about the Hindu gods

Bali
A demon who was subjugated by Lord Vishnu in his manifestation as Vamana

Two significant Hindu religious practises are Vaishnavism, worship of Lord Vishnu as supreme, and Shaivism, worship of Lord Shiva as supreme; although it should be noted that the worship of other deities is also popular in India, such as the goddess Devi. Many Hindus identify a supreme reality, often called the 'great world soul', identified as Brahman. This expression of God is known as the ***trimurti***. Brahman is expressed in three forms; Brahma (the creator), Lord Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer or liberator). This idea of a single deity expresses the manifestation of the three divine functions of creation, preservation and destruction. Brahma is not popularly worshipped today, the main expressions of the *trimurti* today are Lord Vishnu and Shiva.

Vaishnava devotion – worship of the god Lord Vishnu

Lord Vishnu has come to hold a place in Indian religion as important as that of Shiva. Lord Vishnu is known for his ability to incarnate on Earth to promote dharma and to alleviate suffering. There are typically lists of 10 major manifestations, or **avatars**, of Lord Vishnu, and some lesser incarnations about which there is some debate. There are some variations of the 10 manifestations.

In the Vedas, Lord Vishnu is a god who is identified with the Sun and its three phases – metaphorically described as taking three strides across the sky. Later in the ***Puranas*** he is a dwarf (Vamana) and depicted as defeating the demon **Bali** (representative of egoistic self-interest) by requesting land the size of three strides. Bali, in his generosity, readily accepts the request, and Lord Vishnu then takes two steps across the entire universe and asks for the third step – Bali being humbled, offers his own head.

The *Puranas*, or stories of the ancient past, are documents that contain the family histories of certain kings and gods. In these texts there is a range of gods whose importance has increased markedly from the Vedic period. Over time, Shiva, Lord Vishnu and Devi (the mother goddess) became the most popular of the Indian deities. Also mentioned regularly are Shiva's two sons: Skanda, a war god (also known as Murugan or Karthikeya – popular in South India) and the elephant-headed Ganesh. Agni, the god of fire, is important for ritual fire sacrifices. In the *Vishnu Purana*, a text devoted completely to Lord Vishnu (and composed

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around 400 CE), he is described as the most powerful of the gods. Lord Vishnu wakes from his period of slumber between the cycles of Universal emergence and dissolution, becomes the creator god Brahma and projects the universe. He sustains the universe as Lord Vishnu, then changes into Rudra (another name for Shiva) and withdraws back into its potential phase.

Followers of Shiva (the Shaivas) and Lord Vishnu (the Vaishnavas) both see their guardian deities as the ultimate reality. In this way, some forms of Hinduism can be seen as a kind of **monotheism**, even a competitive one, offering the possibility of monotheisms. There may be thousands of gods – but each of these gods represents an aspect of the one Supreme Being (Brahman) who is manifested in different forms. In practice, many Hindus would worship a limited number of gods.

Lord Vishnu is said to manifest in the world when the dharma declines, or chaos takes over. Taking the form of a different god, or human, Lord Vishnu works to set the world back on course, and so he is known as the preserver of the universe. These manifestations are called avatars. Each avatar of Lord Vishnu is linked to a particular story or has a particular use. In the *Vishnu Purana* 10 avatars are listed:

1 Matsya (the Fish) – In the *Matsya Purana* Lord Vishnu, in fish form, saves the first man (Manu) from a great flood.
2 Kurma (the Tortoise) – As Kurma the Tortoise, Lord Vishnu supports a mountain being used as a stick by the gods to churn the Milk Ocean, producing all the things of the world and the nectar of immortality.
3 Varaha (the Boar) – Lord Vishnu rescues the Earth from the depths of the Cosmic Ocean.
4 Narasimha (the half-man, half-beast) – Lord Vishnu destroys a horrible demon.
5 Vamana (the Dwarf) – Lord Vishnu wins the world back from the demon Bali.
6 Parasurama (Fierce warrior) – Lord Vishnu comes to destroy the warriors (Kshatriyas) who are oppressing the society.
7 Ramachandra (or Rama the benevolent King) – The hero king of the Great Epic, the *Ramayana*.
8 Krishna (the complete and all-pervading being) – The most popular form of Lord Vishnu, the hero of the *Bhagavad Gita*.
9 Buddha (the enlightened one) – Born as a Prince, later attained enlightenment and preached concepts of Buddhism.
10 Kalki – A white horse (or a God on the horse) that will come at the end of this cycle to destroy the wicked and restore balance.

Monotheism
Worship of only a single god

The most famous avatar is Lord Vishnu's manifestation as Krishna, worshipped as a god by many Hindus. Krishna is one of the principal characters in India's greatest epic, the *Mahabharata* (see section 8.5 'Sacred texts and writings'). Here Krishna appears as a powerful figure. The most famous scripture in which he appears is called the *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of the Lord), a major Indian scripture that first appears as the eighteenth chapter in the *Mahabharata*. *The Bhagavad Gita* is a dialogue between Krishna and the hero of the epic, the warrior Arjuna. The discussion is dramatically set on a battlefield just before two great armies begin their rush towards each other. Although only a small part of this great epic, the *Bhagavad Gita* is often published separately and read widely as one of India's major sacred writings.

Figure 8.5 Khon is traditional dance-drama art of Thailand. This performance is a *Ramayana* epic featuring Ramachandra (Rama), one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu.

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Shaiva devotion – worship of the Lord Shiva

Shiva is a single god, but he is a deity intimately connected to a whole family of gods. Shiva has become immensely important as a local deity and a universal deity.

1 Shiva is primarily the force of transformation.
2 He represents the inversion of the Universe, the **ascetic** ideal of renunciation, whereas Lord Vishnu represents the ideal of the householder who preserves society. Shiva is married and has children.
3 Shiva as the transformer is a complex character, since transformation includes both destruction of some form and its appearance as something else (since matter is never destroyed but simply changes its form). Thus, Shiva is associated with both death and rebirth. Shiva is often expressed in an **androgynous** form, combining the masculine and feminine principles within Himself. Ultimately God in Hinduism is seen as transcending gender, although he is always presented as a male

Ascetic
Someone who practises severe self-discipline and possibly retires into solitude in order to achieve liberation

Androgynous
Reflecting both male and female characteristics; either a mix of, or neither, masculine and feminine

Lingam
A symbol associated with Shiva in Hinduism; often considered a manifestation of the deity, a column of light or a phallic symbol

Yoni
A vaginal symbol often represented together with a lingam

Thus, Shiva is represented in an iconographical manner in a number of ways:

- He is seen as the Lord of Yoga and pictured in a state of meditation, removed from the world high in the Himalayas. The Ganges River is depicted flowing through his hair as the goddess Ganga.
- He is depicted as a family man with his wife Parvati and his sons Skanda and Ganesha. The sacred bull, Nandi, is also depicted as Shiva's vehicle and is representative of the principle of dharma, or right living.
- He is portrayed as Shiva Nataraja – Lord of the Dance, eternally dancing the dance of the universe. This image demonstrates both his boundless energy and the constantly moving energy of the universe.
- Shiva is also seen in the form of a **lingam**. The lingam – a symbolic stone set in a vagina-like dish (the **yoni**) – is representative of generation.

Shiva is known as the destroyer and regenerator of the universe. Hindus believe that the cosmos goes through cycles of evolution (*sristhi*) and involution (*pralaya*). The Indian concept of time is cyclical, and ends can only ever lead to new beginnings. The trinity (*trimurti*) Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Shiva are the personifications of the threefold universal energy or projection, sustentation and dissolution. They are understood as three functional aspects of a personal deity, most commonly (but not exclusively) construed as a form of Shiva or Lord Vishnu.

Shaivas and Vaishnavas view Shiva and Lord Vishnu, respectively, as being Brahman. While these variants are recognised in formal Brahmanism, you should remember there is variety of expressions in Hinduism. Many Hindus in remote or tribal areas would predominantly worship local deities and traditions.

INVESTIGATE

The illustration of the statue of Shiva as Nataraja (Lord of the Dance) is highly symbolic and says much about Shiva. Investigate Shiva Nataraja online, and identify and explain the features that are evident in this depiction of Shiva. Compare that depiction with others that you find in your research.

A number of Hindu temples exist across New South Wales, with many dotted about the western suburbs of Sydney. Visit one of these if you can. You will see that these temples tend to be Shaiva or Vaishnava, but many of them are not exclusively so and contain statues to the gods that local worshipers wish to venerate. Australian temples are usually open in the mornings and afternoons – but some close after lunch so that the priests can rest. Friday is a very important day in the Hindu week and this is when these temples are the busiest. For this reason, it is best to avoid visiting on Fridays. If you remove your shoes at the entrance way and ask politely, most temple attendants are very happy to welcome you. Additionally, a number of great Hindu festivals take place around Sydney and on its outskirts. In many suburbs that have large Hindu-Australian populations, Divali (the festival of lights) is celebrated in parks and public spaces, and these celebrations are often supported by local councils. The Divali celebrations in and around Parramatta are the most spectacular of these. Every year around September, a great festival for the Lord Ganesh is held at the Sri Ventakeshwara Temple in Helensburg on the southern fringes of Sydney. As Ganesha appeals to both Shaivites and Vaishnavites, this festival is attended by all kinds of Australian Hindus. This festival culminates in a ritual at Stanwell Beach, where a large statue of Ganesh is brought from the temple, paraded along the beach, and then cast into the sea with much music, chanting and celebration.

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EXERCISE 8.2

1 **Identify** some of the differences between the Hindu variants.
2 **Describe** and **explain** the avatars of Vishnu.
3 **Distinguish** the various persons who are the family members of Shiva and **explain** their significance, particularly in the Australian context.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 8.2

1 Visit a Hindu temple. Identify the Hindu variant that is associated with the temple. **Describe** how it functions as a place of worship for all Hindus.
2 Research and **describe** differences between devotion to Lord Vishnu and devotion to Shiva.
3 'Brahma was never an important God in Hinduism', Prepare a 10-minute talk about the importance of the god Brahma and his significance in Hinduism today.

8.4 PRINCIPAL BELIEFS

Atman and Brahman

Atman is a word used to refer to the Self, sometimes translated as the individual soul, whereas Brahman is the concept of the ultimate reality, sometimes called the universal soul. **Panentheism** could be considered a closer explanation of Hinduism, where matter is a form of energy (*shakti*) and energy is a manifestation of consciousness – the underlying consciousness that pervades the universe is known as Brahman. So in other words only Brahman really exists. The *Upanishads* attempt to explain the relationship between these two concepts. Several schools of philosophical discourse in classical Hinduism were developed through debating these ideas. Each school deals in some way with the relation of atman (the Self) and Brahman (the Absolute). All the classical schools of Hindu philosophy begin with the human problem of seeking an ever-elusive happiness and avoiding a seemingly ever-present suffering. Suffering arises from ignorance of our true nature as atman and having a self that identifies too closely with the transient human body. In Hinduism, the predominant spiritual problem is seen in terms of 'ignorance' (*avidya*). The purpose of philosophical study and practice (dharma) is to realise our true nature as being ever-pure sparks of the divine – consisting of Being (*sat*), Consciousness (*chit*) and Bliss (*ananda*). This view is associated with non-dualistic form of Hinduism, called Advaita Vedanta (see the discussion of Shankara in section 9.2). With the dawning of this self-realisation, the cycle of births and deaths comes to an end. With the end of this life and the end of the cycle of samsara, the atman eventually reunites with Brahman.

Gods and goddesses

There are many gods worshipped in Hinduism. Lord Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma make up the *trimurti*; that is, they can be seen as manifestations of the one ultimate reality of Brahman. Indeed, while there are thousands, even millions of gods in Hinduism, many schools of Hinduism consider them to be manifestations of this one Absolute Reality, Brahman.

We will now examine some of the major gods.

Panentheism
A belief system in which the divine extends to all parts of the universe and beyond it

Ganesha

One of the most popular gods in India is Shiva's son Ganesha (or Ganesh). Ganesha is the embodiment of wisdom and the god of opportunities and good beginnings. When going to a temple to pray, an adherent first seeks out the shrine to this elephant-headed god. Devotees hold their ears and squat a few times to engage the humour and attention of Ganesha. Ganesha is then asked by the individual, or by a priest on behalf of the individual, for help in speaking with the other gods, or in beginning a particular project. The annual Ganesha Chaturthi festival in Helensburg in Sydney is very well attended by Hindus of diverse affiliations.

Figure 8.6 Idol of the god Ganesha at the Ganesh Chaturthi Festival in India

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INVESTIGATE

There are numerous websites relating to Hindu gods and goddesses. Start with the Hindu Universe and investigate some of the major gods and goddesses of Hinduism. However many gods there may be, Hindus often consider them to be manifestations of the one god or ultimate reality.

Devi

The Absolute Reality can be seen as either masculine or feminine. Devi, at one level, is the female force within the divine (*shakti*), but can also be understood as a most powerful goddess in her own right. Devi worshippers consider her to be the ultimate reality.

The Goddess is complex and has both benign and wrathful aspects. These are expressed in different forms. For example, Kali is the personification of Time and is linked to Shiva as his wife, although Parvati is also identified as Shiva's consort. Born from the mother goddess Durga during a battle with evil forces, Kali represents Durga's most fearsome aspect, because it is ultimately time that destroys everything in the world.

Despite this terrifying image, her worshippers have an exceedingly close bond with her, seeing themselves as being like her children with her as their protective mother. She became even more popular through the *Devi Mahatmya*, a dramatic text that was written in the sixth century CE, part of the *Markandeya Purana*.

Dharma, karma, and moksha

Dharma

Dharma (**dhamma** in Pali, a key concept in Buddhism) is derived from the root *dhr*, which means to uphold or maintain. It refers to that which upholds and maintains an individual, family, society or even the universe. Duty is one way of translating this word, but there is no exact equivalent in English. Dharma includes aspects such as social and familial obligations, truth, law, justice and righteousness. Some other words that have been used to translate dharma include religion, justice, law, ethics, religious merit, principle and right.

All of these are correct in some way, but none capture the complete meaning of the word dharma. It also refers to the right order of ritual sacrifice. A sacrifice must be carried out in exactly the right way. Similarly, if people live exactly as they should, then everything has been done correctly and the order of life has been preserved. Dharma may be defined as 'those acts which lead to universal good'. The Vedas teach those principles that contribute to universal wellbeing. Not to follow the Vedas in this regard would be **adharma** ('not dharma' or 'against the natural'). By practising dharma one generates positive karma that leads to spiritual growth and evolution, adharma generates negative karma that results in retrogression. Karma is the result of one's actions and should never be thought of as punishment or retribution. The idea of following dharma and accruing good karma developed into a universal idea in Hinduism and later in Buddhism. Good karma leads to a better life in the cycle of samsara.

Dharma (Sanskrit); *dhamma* (Pali)
Right way of living, righteousness; fulfilling your purpose

Adharma
Opposite of dharma: all that is bad, wrong, wicked

Moksha (or Mukti)
Release from the cycle of rebirth; reunification of the atman with Brahman, or the separation of consciousness from matter

Varna
The concept sometimes known as caste; the four varnas form the basis of Hindu society

Sannyasi
One who renounces life and dedicates themselves to strictly spiritual pursuits

Karma

Karma is, first, the 'fruits 'that result from ritual action, and the ritual action itself from doing the correct things in the right circumstances (that is, dharma). Second, karma is the consequences of one's actions (also dharma). Actions performed with a positive intent will produce positive results, either in this life or the next. All acts done with a negative intent produce negative results, also either in this life or the next.

The Vedas and the *Upanishads* suggest that correct sacrifices (*yajñas*) have their own results, irrespective of the favour or disfavour of the gods. This system is almost an automatic function of the cosmos, rather than a system of justice administered by gods who may themselves be bound by its laws. When one leaves one's body after death, karma determines one's rebirth. These ideas appeared with the development of the *Upanishads*. A life of charity, worship and thinking good thoughts will help one to achieve a better life. Rebirth as a higher form of life is the aim of karma, with the final hope of moksha (liberation), the evolution of the atman (or self) back to the godhead.

Moksha

Moksha (**or Mukti**) can be translated as release (liberation) from the cycle of samsara (reincarnation). Moksha is the ultimate spiritual goal of Hindus, although many Hindus hope for 'heaven' (*svarga*), sometimes equated with moksha. Moksha has two references – liberation from suffering here and now through the study of philosophy and the cultivation of wisdom (*jnana*), and final liberation (*mukti*) from the cycle of births and deaths. Some schools of Hindu thought propose that *mukti* is open to all, irrespective of gender or social standing. Others suggest that it can only be achieved once one has been reborn in the top of the **varna**/caste system as a Brahmin male.

One of the many paths to achieving moksha is through *sannyasa*. This is a process of renunciation predominantly carried out by men (especially those men in the Brahmin varna/caste), but available to women as well. Some choose to become ***sannyasi*** early in life; some choose to do so after having a family. Once the family has grown up, and/or if there is enough money to support the family, a male householder may make the decision to become a *sannyasi*. That means he gives up his home, family and property and withdraws from society. Many *sannyasis* go to live in ashrams (monasteries) or forests,

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Figure 8.7 A cremation at the holy city of Varanasi, India. It is believed that a person achieves moksha when cremated here.

or live as wandering monks. Some dedicate their lives to the study of the *Upanishads* and to meditation. Many ashrams are involved in social service through the operation of hospitals, clinics and schools. The Ramakrishna Mission, Divine Life Society, Chinmaya Mission and the Bihar School of Yoga are some examples.

Union with god through yoga

Yoga is a variety of physical and mental practices, an attitude and a worldview that facilitate a closer understanding with God (ultimate reality) or the realisation that one is a part of God. Yoga has become familiar to people outside India through the influence of New Age spiritualities. This is especially evident in asana (posture yoga), where participants take a posture, usually sitting, for the purpose of meditation. Often the word has been translated as 'effort' and is a means of spiritual growth. In some forms of Hinduism, there are four kinds of yoga, described over the next couple of pages. These four forms were formulated by Sri Vivekananda (see Chapter 9 A).

Karma yoga

The way of action – this form of yoga consists of proactive social engagement, doing one's duties, but with a spirit of renunciation. The essence of karma yoga is to follow your path in the world, but never to be motivated by rewards. Do your best in every circumstance but do not be perturbed by failure or success. One must dedicate all one's actions to god and to the welfare of all sentient beings (*loka-sangraha*). This sense of duty is most clearly explored in the *Bhagavad Gita*, where Krishna extols to Arjuna the necessity of following his path in life as a member of the warrior caste.

Bhakti yoga

The way of devotion – *bhakti* means blissful devotion to a god. This yoga involves the emotional practice of maintaining a loving and devoted personal relationship with that god. *Bhakti* yoga practices are known in the West particularly through the practices of the Hare Krishna movement (The International Society for Krishna Consciousness). Their singing, dancing and chanting the name of Krishna on the streets of the world is a manifestation of the love they feel for Krishna. It is a love that they wish to share by taking their devotion to the streets. Glorifying Krishna in this way is one part of a nine-part process for connecting lovingly with God:

1. hearing about the Lord
2. glorifying the Lord
3. remembering the Lord
4. serving the Lord
5. worshipping the Lord
6. offering prayers to the Lord
7. pleasing the Lord
8. building a friendship with the Lord
9. surrendering everything to the Lord. This is just one form of *bhakti* yoga.

Raja yoga

Video

The way of meditation – *raja* yoga, meaning royal or classical yoga — focuses on the expansion of the mind through meditation (***dhyana***), which creates a connection between the individual and reality. From a foundation of good physical and psychological health, one can further understand the depths of consciousness and existence through this form of yoga. Ultimately, one seeks to understand one's true essence and one's relationship with God. *Raja* yoga teaches that the body and its needs must be brought into unity with the will of the mind. Many physical practices, such as *hatha* yoga, are connected to this practice.

Yoga
Any of various systems of discipline in the Hindu philosophical system concerned with achieving union of the mind and body with the universal spirit, or attaining a state of consciousness only aware of its own nature

Dhyana
A Sanskrit term for meditation; one of the stages in yoga

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Figure 8.8 A *sannyasi* practices yoga at the source of the holy Ganges River

Jnana yoga

The way of knowledge – this yoga practice concerns itself with the seeking of knowledge about the self and the cosmos. A series of mental practices enable one to more readily connect with God. To achieve this, there are four main characteristics of *jnana* yoga:

- *viveka* – the ability to discern between what is and what is not real and eternal. This ability allows practitioners to better connect with the Divine in their lives.
- *vairagya* – the ability to detach oneself from the unreal and temporary world. Dispassion for the material world is seen as a major step towards rising above the minutiae of life and turning the mind towards cosmic issues.
- *shad-sampat* – the practising of six virtues. These include control of the mind, control of the senses, renunciation of all motivation for rewards in this life and the hereafter, endurance, faith and focus.
- *mumukshutva* – a powerful desire to achieve liberation from suffering and the cycle of births and deaths.

It is common for Hindus to follow several of these paths of yoga, particularly the first three paths. *Jnana* yoga is followed by those wishing to study Hinduism at a deeper level, because of its intellectual demands.

EXERCISE 8.3

1 **List** some of the major Hindu gods and goddesses and their characteristics.
2 Hinduism is a religion of acts and action, pilgrimage and shrine devotions. Research a major Hindu festival in India such as the Kumba Mela and consider how such an event expresses Hindu spirituality.
3 Write one sentence for each of the following words, **demonstrating** your understanding of the concepts: dharma, karma, moksha and samsara.
4 **Describe** the four kinds of yoga and, using examples, how they may be practised.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 8.3

1 Construct a table to **identify** the main Hindu gods, their qualities, relationships, areas of interest and other relevant information.
2 **Investigate** the availability of yoga in your area and what form of yoga is practiced. Discover if it is simply a form of popular mediation (such as asana) or whether it includes Hindu beliefs and practices.
3 Research the four kinds of yoga and **discuss** the practice and importance of each in the life of a modern Hindu.

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8.5 SACRED TEXTS AND WRITINGS

There are hundreds of writings that are considered sacred texts in Hinduism. These include writings in Sanskrit – for many, this is the sacred language of Hinduism (although not limited to that) – but also many texts in regional languages, including Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi. These sacred texts have been both written and handed down as an oral tradition for many generations. Many people have their own versions of these and other sacred stories, often passed on by storytelling, dance and drama. There are many regional texts that are particular to a group or village.

Hindu sacred writings are generally divided into two main categories. The *sruti* compositions, committed to written form around the third century BCE, are the 'revealed' texts and include the Vedas and *Upanishads*. The *smrti* ('remembered') writings include the Epics (*Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita*), the *Puranas* and other writings such as the *dharma shastras*. Some of the major texts will be discussed here.

The Vedas and the Upanishads

The importance of the ancient ritual texts of the Vedas has already been discussed. These are the foundational sacred texts of Hinduism. The more philosophical discussions of the *Upanishads* have also been discussed. These contain the essential sacred texts that are now almost considered the direct revelations of the gods (thus *sruti* texts). The Vedas and the *Upanishads* are the foundational texts for Hinduism.

The Epics

As classical Hinduism developed from 500 BCE to 500 CE, a range of even more popular works was developed. These are often called the Epics. The major epic works in Hinduism are the *Mahabharata* (including the *Bhagavad Gita*) and the *Ramayana*. In addition to the Epics is a significant body of texts known as the *Puranas*, mainly stories of the gods. The *Bhagavata Purana*, for example, contains many stories of Krishna.

The *Ramayana*

This great Epic tells the story of a prince, Rama (or Ram), whose wife Sita is abducted by the demon king of Lanka, Ravana. This Epic appeared during the classical period of Indian religion and was composed between 500 BCE and 100 CE. Tradition assigns it to the Tretā Yuga, the second epoch in the *yuga* theory, many aeons ago. There are some possible links to history, but the text is predominantly a great tale of loyalty. In one way it focuses on the vigorous bravery of Rama; in another on the fidelity of his wife. Sita's integrity is questioned by Rama after she is recovered from Ravana towards the end of the Ramayana's sixth book; he doubts her fidelity while she was held captive. Subsequently, she undergoes a trial by fire (*agniparīksā*). She passes this. However, her integrity is again questioned in the last (seventh) book of the *Ramayana*, which leads to her banishment. Like the *Mahabharata*, it contains the teachings of ancient Hindu wisdom, such as the conflict from strict adherence to dharma, presented in narrative form. One of the favourite modern gods of Hinduism, Hanuman the monkey king, is introduced in the *Ramayana* as a loyal and devoted friend of Rama. Rama is considered one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu.

Figure 8.9 Reciting the Vedas

The *Mahabharata*

The *Mahabharata* is an ancient work, between the Dvapara and Kali Yugas, some 400 000 years ago. Scholars suggest that between 500 BCE and 500 CE it was edited into its current form. This work is one of the great epics of world literature. It is a verse poem of more than 100 000 couplets, making it one of the longest poems ever written. It is the story of two warrior families, and their fight to expand their domains. Along the way, the gods, spirits and demons of India take part in the action. There are many conversations between characters concerning the nature of life and their religious duty.

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Figure 8.10 A painting of the chariot with Arjuna and Krishna at Kurukshetra, India. The story of the *Bhagavad Gita* is represented.

Stories from the *Mahabharata* are played out by acting and dance troupes all over India and South-East Asia. These serve as a form of education, particularly for those who cannot read. A wealthy family whose child is getting married, for example, will sponsor a troupe of actors to play out these scenes from the Epics and invite the whole village.

The *Mahabharata* describes itself as the fifth Veda. It is a popular text that has been used to spread Indian religious thinking to all groups of society, whether literate or not. Its scope ensures many aspects of the religious life of India are touched upon.

The *Bhagavad Gita*

Probably the most important section of the *Mahabharata* today is the *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of the Lord). This part of the Epic takes the form of a discussion between Arjuna, one of the heroes of the poem, and the god Krishna. The dramatic tension is high; the great battle of the story is about to take place. Arjuna drives his chariot into the battlefield to take a close look at the enemy. This is essentially a family dispute, and Arjuna can see his uncles, teachers and childhood friends on the other side. He realises he will probably kill many of them and this disturbs him greatly. He sits down in the middle of the battlefield, refusing to call for the start of the battle. His chariot driver, however, is Krishna in disguise, and a dialogue takes place between them just before the battle begins.

The message Krishna imparts to Arjuna is that he was born a warrior (Kshatriya varna) so it is his duty to fight. If he does not fulfil this duty, he is doomed to a life of public condemnation and a poor rebirth. It is a part of dharma that he must do what he is ordained, by his birth, to do. In this, the *Bhagavad Gita* reaffirms the conservative message that if everyone lives according to their class as determined by their birth, then their spiritual rewards will be great. Krishna also assures Arjuna that death is nothing to fear. Death is part of a great cycle of rebirth (samsara).

Extracts that demonstrate principal beliefs

The following are extracts from the Vedas and Epics that demonstrate principal beliefs.

The Vedas

> Lord of creation! no one other than you pervades all those that have come into being. May that be ours for which our prayers rise, may we be masters of many treasures!
>
> *RIG VEDA* 10.121.10

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This reference from the *Rig Veda* notes the fact that Brahman is central to all existence. Reality is expressed in the relationship between the adherent and God. The *Rig Veda* suggests that bringing the body and mind into a single being of desire for God is the most effective path for those seeking religious truth. This theme is underlined in other Vedas such as the *Yajur Veda*, for example:

> Subtlest of the subtle, greatest of the great, the atman is hidden in the cave of the hearts of all beings. He who, free from all urges, beholds Him overcomes sorrow, seeing by the grace of the Creator, the Lord and His glory.
>
> *SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD* 3.20

The Vedas also reveal the ultimate goal for the successful religious adherent:

> In heaven there is no fear at all. Thou, O Death, art not there, nor in that place does the thought of growing old make one tremble. There, free from hunger and from thirst and far from the reach of sorrow, all rejoice and are glad.
>
> *KATHA UPANISHAD* 1.12

The Epics

Arjuna and Krishna's conversation in the *Bhagavad Gita* includes a number of significant verses that relate to Hindu beliefs. Examples include:

> Having spoken thus, on that field of battle, Arjuna sat down in the chariot pit, letting go of arrows and bow, his heart anguished with grief … Then, to Arjuna, who was so overcome with compassion, despairing, his troubled eyes filled with tears, [Krishna] said – 'Why has this mood come over you at this bad time, Arjuna? This cowardice is unseemly to the noble, not leading to Heaven, dishonourable. Do not act like a eunuch, it does not become you! Rid yourself of this vulgar weakness of heart, stand up, enemy burner!
>
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 1:47–2:3, ON FULFILLING ONE'S DHARMA

> Think also of your duty and do not waver. There is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a righteous war.
>
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 2:31, ON THE NATURE AND DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH VARNA

> Do your work in the peace of yoga and, free from selfish desires, be not moved in success or failure. Yoga is evenness of mind – a peace that is ever the same.
>
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 2:49, ON YOGA

> This is called the state of Brahman, O Arjuna, attaining which none is deluded. By abiding in this state even at the hour of death, one attains the cessation that is Brahman.
>
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 2:72, ON MOKSHA

> He who offers to me with devotion only a leaf, or a flower, or a fruit, or even a little water, this I accept from that yearning aspirant, because with a pure heart it was offered with love.
>
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 9:26, ON DEVOTION AND WORSHIP

EXERCISE 8.4

1 **Identify** the important Hindu sacred writings.
2 **Identify** the differences and similarities between the *sruti* and *smrti* writings.
3 **Describe** ONE significant sacred story, such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Ramayana*.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 8.4

1 Research and **discuss** the following statement: 'The *Mahabharata* is a not just myth, it is history'. **Identify** the meaning of the *Mahabharata*.
2 **Investigate** the way one of the Epics is portrayed in a culture and setting outside India. **Identify** any evidence of variations within the traditional sacred text and suggest why that has happened.
3 Find the *Bhagavad Gita* online, or in written form, and highlight extracts that demonstrate the principal beliefs of Hinduism.

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8.6 ETHICAL SYSTEMS

There are a number of sources for Hindu ethics – primarily the Vedas, with secondary sources such as the *Manusmrti*, an ancient text on law and duties. One can also consider the ethical precepts set forth in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Patanjali was a fourth-century teacher who developed five political goals and five personal goals for Hindu. These are sometimes called the Ten Commitments of Hinduism.

Yama (the Precepts of Social Discipline) are:
- *ahimsa* (non-violence)
- *satya* (truthfulness)
- *asteya* (non-stealing)
- *brahmacarya* (sexual responsibility, celibacy)
- *aparigraha* (abstention from greed).

Niyama (the Precepts of Individual Discipline) are:
- *sauca* (cleanliness)
- *santosa* (contentment)
- *tapas* (austerity)
- *svadhyaya* (self-study of texts, recitation)
- *isvara pranidhana* (surrender of the self to God).

These foundational precepts, without which no spiritual progress can be made, are covered in more detail in the digital version of this book.

The most significant ethical teaching in Hinduism is ***ahimsa*** – non-violence. This was developed during the time of the renouncers. The ethical philosophy of Hinduism can be summed up in one sentence: Every act that intentionally causes suffering to another living being is a demerit (sin) and every act that benefits another living being is a merit (virtue) (*Paropakara punyaya, papaya para pidanam*). The framework for one's ethical development is called the varna-ashrama system. This framework has always been more theoretical than practical.

Ahimsa
Non-violence

Dalit
Meaning the oppressed, someone who has no varna; traditionally regarded as 'untouchable', although this term is no longer officially used; term was introduced by the social reformer Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century; in the past it was linked to *jati*, used to refer to occupational groups of a lower status

Brahmin
One of the four castes in India – the priestly class

Kshatriya (Ksatriya)
One of the four castes in India – traditionally, the ruling or military class

Jati
Term used to describe hereditary occupational groups in India; some interpret it to mean sub-caste

The four varnas

Hindu society has traditionally and theoretically been divided into four varnas. Beyond the varnas are large numbers of Hindus who are unclassified in the varna scheme. These people are sometimes identified as **Dalits** (sometimes called 'untouchables'). Although the system of varna may have been idealistically designed to decentralise the main sources of power in society and to maintain a harmonious balance, it also religiously justifies discrimination. Traditionally, the power sources that varnas represent are knowledge, land and weaponry, money and human resources. These were the allocated to **Brahmins**, **Kshatriyas**, Vaishyas and Shudras respectively. In theory, the varna system was not meant to be rigid by birth and could be changed based on skill and knowledge of an individual.

India has declared discrimination on the basis if caste to be illegal, but in practice, much discrimination still takes place in India based on varna/caste. The Indian government has introduced affirmative action to promote the advancement of Dalits and individuals from all the castes. There are standout examples of women (such as Indira Gandhi – daughter of the first prime minister of India, Nehru) and Dalits (such as Mayawati) who have risen to hold high office; however, it is also members of the Dalit class who have the most to gain from conversion away from Hinduism to Buddhism or Christianity, and an increasing number take this opportunity.

There are four general caste groupings but hundreds of different ***jatis***, or hereditary occupational groups. Duties, obligations and ethics differ according to one's profession in society.
- The Brahmins are the teachers of Hindu society. Sometimes they are priests and ritual specialists. Their duty is to study and to teach, to pursue all forms of knowledge and to preserve the Vedas.
- The Kshatriyas are the rulers, administrators and warriors. They maintain order in society. Their duty is protect the people they rule. In peacetime they are responsible for farming and taking care of land.
- The Vaishyas are the merchant class that includes skilled labour. They maintain the economy of the society
- The Shudras are the labourers and generally responsible for low- and semi-skilled jobs. Some Shudras are craftsmen and thus quite skilled.

Under the varna system, religious responsibilities (and ethics) differ; for example the practice of *ahimsa* (non-violence) is paramount for Brahmins but definitely not for the Kshatriyas. Pursuit of profit is essential for Vaishyas but not for Brahmins in modern India. Independent Hindu India has reservation quotas, often greater than 60 per cent, in jobs and educational seats in schools, for people from deprived classes in India.

Ashramas

The Hindu tradition developed a theory that divides a human life into four stages. Each stage lays out certain *niyam* or protocols of lifestyle one should follow, and certain aims one should try to achieve. Normally, these four stages are seen as loosely linked with the age of the person, however, skipping certain ashram to jump to the next one is sometimes seen in cases of people with deeper hunger for spirituality.

The classical model of the four ashramas is as follows:
- *Brahmacharya* (the life of a student; approximate ages 0–24). For those dedicated to the spiritual life, young people should learn through spiritual masters and practise celibacy.

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Figure 8.11 Brahmin priests performing a ritual ceremony

- *Grihastha* (the life of a householder; approximate ages 25–49). This is when one fulfils one's duty to society, raises a family and seeks financial security. It is the responsibility of the householder to provide for those in the other stages of life.
- *Vanaprastha* (retired life; approximate ages 50–74). One begins retiring from life, giving up desires for the material world, and becoming an exemplar for society rather than an active agent. This stage is sometimes called the hermit stage.
- *Sannyasi* (renounced life – ascetic; approximate ages 75–100). One may choose to remove oneself from life completely and be totally dedicated to spiritual pursuits.

These modes of living are advised for all members of the community; however, they are not widely practised in the modern age.

The person leading the Brahmacharya [student] mode of life should always observe rigid vows and, with senses under control, should always pay attention to the instructions he has received. Reflecting on the Vedas, he should live dutifully and wait upon his preceptor and always bowing unto him. Unengaged in the six kinds of work (such as officiating in the sacrifices of others), and never engaged with attachment to any kind of acts, never showing favour or disfavour to any one, doing good even unto his enemies. These, O sire, are the duties laid down for a Brahmacharin!

THE MAHABHARATA, SANTI PARVA, SECTION LXII

The person leading the Grihastha [householder] mode of life should, after studying the Vedas, accomplish all the religious acts laid down for him. He should beget children and enjoy pleasures and comforts. He should be without pride, and his charity should not be confined to any one sect. He should also be always devoted to the performance of the Vedic rites.

THE MAHABHARATA, SANTI PARVA, SECTION LXI

When the householder beholds wrinkles on his body and grey hair on his head, and children of his children, he should then retire into the forest. The third part of his life [from 50 to 75 years] he should pass in the observance of the Vanaprastha mode. Forest recluses may act in these ways for honouring guests and performing sacrifices. They should, during the season of the rains, expose themselves to water during the autumn. During the summer they should sit in the midst of four fires with the sun burning overhead. Throughout the year, however, they should be abstemious in diet. They sit and sleep on the bare earth. They stand on only their toes. They content themselves with the bare earth and with small mats of grass (owning no other furniture for seat or bed).

THE MAHABHARATA, SANTI PARVA, SECTION CCXLIV

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Table 8.1 The four varnas

Varna	According to the *Bhagavad Gita* 18:41–45	More generally
Brahmin	'Yoked with a pure spirit and subduing himself with fortitude, renouncing the sense objects of sound and discarding love and hatred, seeking solitude, eating lightly, restraining speech, body and mind.'	It is the duty of the Brahmin male to dedicate himself to religious matters. It is recommended that Brahmin men, after settling their family with enough money to live on, detach themselves completely from humanity, sit in forests, practise yoga and meditate; that is, become *sannyasi*.
Kshatriya	'Gallantry, energy, fortitude, capability, un-retreating steadfastness in war, liberality, and the exercise of power.'	This varna has long been connected with the ruling classes of India. Oddly enough most of the greatest teachers of the *Upanishads* were kings, and the two greatest of the avatars of Lord Vishnu were also warriors. Buddha and Mahavira are also said to have come from the warrior caste.
Vaishya	'Husbandry, cattle herding and trade.'	Purusha is 'the cosmic man'; that is, a model of society. His head is represented by the intelligentsia (Brahmin), his arms the administrators (Kshatriya), and his belly indicates the entrepreneurs (Vaishyas) Thus, this class is responsible for feeding a society. These are the merchants and skilled workers.
Shudra	'The service to society is the natural duty of the Shudra.'	The Shudras are the workers of the society. They are thought to form the majority, and are metaphorically 'the feet' of society because without them the society would stagnate and die.

Ethical behaviour in Hinduism is often seen as relative to one's position and life stage. It is a combination of duties that relate to the restrictions of varna and to the ashrama of the individual. It is the combination of these aspects that develop the dharma of the adherent. This dharma must be fulfilled to achieve the merit that will impact the future life of the adherent. This is sometimes called *Varnashrama-dharma*. All rules, duties and ethical teachings are based upon time, place and circumstance and can be adapted and changed as the need arises and as the individual develops. The sacred texts emphatically declare that even if a practice that is lauded by the Vedas is repugnant to the society in which one lives, then it is the law that should be abandoned. It is a society that collectively decides which dharmas should be followed by whom and when.

EXERCISE 8.5

1 **Outline** the sources of Hindu ethical teaching.
2 **Discuss** Hindu varna and the differences between the castes.
3 **Explain** how Hindu ethical teachings relate to the daily life of a Hindu adherent.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 8.5

1 Research the *yamas* and the *niyamas* (Ten Commitments) and write a paragraph on their place in the Hindu ethical system.
2 **Describe** the relationships between varna and ashrama. Can you give some examples of ethics as *Varnashrama-dharma*?
3 Debate the following topic: 'It is too difficult for modern people in Australia to experience the last two stages of ashrama'.

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8.7 PERSONAL DEVOTION IN THE HOME

Puja

Puja is any act that shows personal devotion and reverence to a god, a spirit or an aspect of the divine, both at home and at a temple. The word *puja* means worship or reverence, in the sense of offering honour. This can be done through chants, prayers, songs and rituals that include offerings. It often ends with a ritual called ***arati***, an offering of fire, a symbolic gesture of the desire for enlightenment. These rituals lead to a spiritual connection with the divine dimension of life.

The focus of *puja* at a temple is the shrine of a specific deity, but at home they can be more inclusive. It is common for Hindus to have a home altar dedicated to one or more gods or goddesses. It is in the home that *puja* is most commonly expressed.

A statue, an icon or a picture of a deity is often used as a basis for communication with the god. This representation (even manifestation of a god) is called a *murti* and is the object of *puja*. The icon is the interface to commune with the all-pervading Divine. Each aspect of the icon has philosophical significance and is a language of itself.

Home *puja* can be used for daily prayers, for certain celebrations during the year, to maintain a relationship with a particular deity, and to put requests to that deity for health, wealth and happiness. Often particular gods are worshipped for particular concerns; for example, Ganesha is the god of new endeavours, and Saraswati is the goddess of learning. Whether at home or at the temple, there are many steps involved in *puja*. These steps include the following features:

- Think of, or meditate on the god or goddess and invite the god/goddess into your home/ heart.
- Offer a seat to the god and offer water to wash and drink.
- Bathe and dress the image of the god, including giving the holy thread (part of a Hindu's initiation into adulthood).
- Make offerings to the god, sandalwood paste/ powder, *akshata* (rice), flowers, fragrance, light food, fruit, betel nut and leaves, and symbols of wealth such as money.
- Recite the holy names of the god and perform *arati* (light from wicks soaked in ghee).
- Prostrate before the god or goddess reciting mantras and offering flowers, prayers and requests and admitting wrongdoings and asking forgiveness.

Video

Puja
Making offerings; rituals may be carried out at a public temple or in the home

Arati
The ritual usually done at the end of *puja*; lamps burning ghee are waved before the images of the gods and a visual connection between devotee and deity is established; a sensual and symbolic gesture to highlight the desire for enlightenment and the overcoming of ignorance

Home *puja* can be an elaborate ritual, or a simple offering and prayers. A common prayer is the *Gayatri mantra*, a Sanskrit prayer that is considered the 'essence of the Vedas'.

Sanskrit prayers from the Vedas carry power and significance in themselves – it is a prayer for achieving enlightenment. Home *puja* are generally conducted at the beginning and end of each day. Most Hindu homes have a room, a corner or a shelf set up as a permanent shrine.

> He who offers to me with devotion only a leaf, or a flower, or a fruit, or even a little water, this I accept from that ardent devotee, because with a pure heart it was offered with love.
>
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 9:26

EXERCISE 8.6

1 Outline the individual actions of a home *puja* and explain what each means.
2 **Explain** why Hindu adherents offer ordinary items such as food, flowers or water to their gods.
3 **Discuss** the significance of home *puja* in the life of a Hindu adherent.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 8.6

1 Research the *Gayatri mantra*. **Discuss** whether one need's to understand the prayer they are reciting.
2 Visit a local Indian restaurant, shop or home, or interview an Australian Hindu about their daily worshipping practices. Ask about the religious aspects of the shop/restaurant/home if you can. **Identify** if there is a shrine present and what the owner does each day to venerate their deity, See if you can discover what these actions mean, why the people do them, and how these are similar to and different from some of the major points raised in this chapter.
3 Search the internet and find a prayer that Hindu worshippers would say in home *puja*. **Describe** what is expressed in that prayer.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Hinduism is an ancient religious tradition that is identified with the South Asian region, particularly India.
- Hinduism is an umbrella term for a vast variety of religious practices. Western scholars have sought to codify and systematise this variety but no attempt at this can be comprehensive.
- There is no known founder of Hinduism.
- The Harappan civilisation and the Aryan migration influenced the development of Hinduism, but there is debate about the extent of that influence.
- Hinduism, as it is understood today, had its beginnings in what is called Vedism.
- The Vedas and the *Upanishads* (the Vedanta – the end of the Vedas) are important early sacred writings.
- *Sanatana dharma* is the term that some Hindus use to describe their religious practices – the eternal law.
- Vaishnavas (following Lord Vishnu) and Shaivas (following Shiva) are the two major variants of Hinduism.
- There are very many Hindu gods that are worshipped.
- Brahman (the great world soul) and atman (the individual soul) are one in some schools of Hinduism.
- Key beliefs can be expressed in the statement, 'following dharma to generate good karma to achieve moksha and escape samsara'.
- Yoga is one way to achieve union with god (the ultimate reality).
- The *sruti* sacred texts include the Vedas and the *Upanishads*.
- The *smrti* sacred texts include the Epics – the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Puranas* and *dharma shastras* are also considered *smrti* texts.
- Hindu normative ethics are expressed in the concept of varna and ashrama – the duties and obligations according to the caste and life stages of the individual.
- Home *puja* is common for the expression of Hindu devotional life.
- Home *puja* includes both the ordinary things of life and also complex rituals.

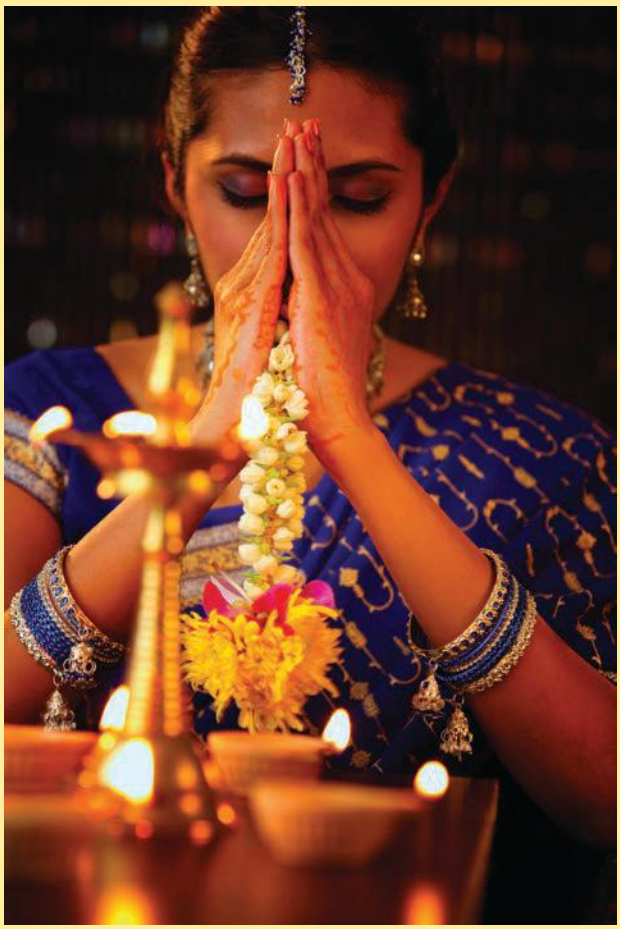

Figure 8.12 Woman praying to celebrate Diwali

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 Which of these civilisations is most closely connected to Hinduism?
(A) Dravidian
(B) Roman
(C) Greek
(D) Khmer

2 What is another name for 'the eternal law'?
(A) Eternalus religious
(B) *Sanatana dharma*
(C) Animism
(D) *Pantajali*

3 Which of these is the expression of god sometimes called the *trimurti*?
(A) Ganesha
(B) Brahma
(C) Brahmin
(D) Brahman

4 What is the ultimate aim of every Hindu life?
(A) Material wealth
(B) Happy marriage
(C) Meditation
(D) Moksha

5 What language was used for many of the Hindu sacred texts?
(A) Sanskrit
(B) Yoga
(C) *Manusmrti*
(D) *Artha*

6 The *Mahabharata* includes which important Hindu sacred writing?
(A) *Upanishads*
(B) *Bhagavad Gita*
(C) *Artha*
(D) *Moksha*

7 The Epics, such as the *Mahabharata*, are among which sacred texts?
(A) *Sruti*
(B) *Smrti*
(C) *Samsara*
(D) *Moksha*

8 What are the 'stages of life'?
(A) Moksha
(B) Varna
(C) Ashrama
(D) *Pantajali*

9 In Hinduism, what determines an appropriate ethical action?
(A) Hindu *puja*
(B) Varna and ashrama
(C) Samsara
(D) Kali and Devi

10 Typical Hindu home *puja* includes which of the following aspects?
(A) Asceticism and *sannyasi*
(B) Yoga, duty and release
(C) Offerings, prayers, ringing bells and fire
(D) Telling stories in dance and drama

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Outline** the major influences on the emergence of Hinduism as a religious tradition.

2 **Explain** the differences and similarities between Vaishnava and Shaiva Hinduism.

3 **Discuss** the importance and relevance of the major Hindu gods in the life of an adherent.

4 **Describe** how the sacred writings influence Hinduism as a living religious tradition.

5 **Explain** varna and ashrama and their application to modern life in India and Australia.

6 **Analyse** the importance of home *puja* for Hindus.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 **Outline** how the principal beliefs of Hinduism guide the life of an individual adherent.

2 **Explain** the principal beliefs of Hinduism, and illustrate your answer with particular reference to the Hindu sacred texts.

3 'People deserve to suffer in this life because of their actions in a previous life.' **Discuss** this statement with reference to the ethical teachings of Hinduism.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

This Balinese Kecak dance tells of an incident from the story of the *Ramayana*, a Hindu sacred story that has been adapted to reflect the interests of the Balinese people. How has Hinduism adapted to different cultures, and how is it reflected in the everyday lives of people across the world, and Australia in particular?

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NINE

HINDUISM: DEPTH STUDY

[YEAR 12 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

Hinduism insists on the brotherhood of not only all mankind but of all that lives.

MOHANDAS (MAHATMA) GANDHI

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- Adi Shankara as a significant guru in Hinduism:
  - Shankara became a mystic, a skilful debater and Hindu champion.
  - Shankara promoted the concept of *advaita.*
  - Shankara is venerated as the most important teacher of *advaita*, and his teaching and writings influence Hinduism today.
- Mohandas Gandhi as a significant influential person in the twentieth century:
  - Gandhi opposed British colonisation of India utilising the doctrine of *ahimsa*.
  - Gandhi opposed the idea of partitioning (separating) India and Pakistan at independence.
  - Gandhi influenced both the civil rights movement and the peace movement in India, South Africa and for African Americans.
- Hindu ethics are linked to the concept of dharma
- Bioethics are duty based rather than rights based
- Karma is significant when considering bioethics
- Environmental ethics are significant as Brahman is linked to the earth
- In Hindu society, marriage is the focus of sexual expression
- Marriage ceremonies reflect traditional cultural expressions as well as Hindu beliefs
- Pilgrimages are significant rites in the lives of Hindus
- Pilgrimages are generally made to sacred sites associated with gods and saints
- There are many sacred sites for Hindus
- The Kumbha Mela pilgrimage is the largest gathering of human beings in one place
- Temple worship is concerned about communicating with the Divine.

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter you will examine the life of a significant person or the rise and development of a significant idea in Hinduism. In the HSC exam, you may be asked to explain how a person/idea contributed to the growth of Hinduism and assess the impact of the idea or person on Hinduism itself. To do this effectively, you will need to know about some of the controversies surrounding the person or idea you choose to study. There are significant variants within Hinduism. You should be aware that the syllabus reflects one major expression of Hinduism, even though there is significantly more variety within Hinduism than this textbook allows.

Two significant persons in Hinduism will be examined in this chapter of the print book, with other examples discussed in the digital versions.

You will also need to describe a Hindu ethical teaching in a particular area: sexual ethics, bioethical issues or environmental ethics. In this chapter, each ethical area will be briefly discussed. The HSC examination may also ask you to explain why the issue you have chosen is important in Hinduism.

Finally, you may need to describe a significant practice (ritual, worship, etc.) within Hinduism and show, first, how it may highlight Hindu beliefs, and, second, how it may make meaning for Hindus both individually and as a community. The practices discussed include marriage ceremonies, pilgrimage and temple *puja* (worship).

Figure 9.1 Mohandas (or Mahatma) Gandhi is one of the best-known Hindus of the twentieth century, and has influenced many people and ideas – particularly in the field of non-violent social change. This image from 2006 shows Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (left) accompanied by South African South African President Thabo Mbeki with a bust of Gandhi at Durban's Phoenix Gandhi Settlement, the site where Gandhi began the non-violent struggle against apartheid a century ago, particularly in support of those termed 'coloured', many of Indian heritage.

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9.2 SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Sannyasi
One who becomes a renunciate and dedicates themselves to strictly spiritual pursuits

Jain
Follower of Jainism, a non-theistic religion founded in India in the fifth century BCE by Jina Mahavira

Advaita
Literally 'not two', an expression of Vedanta Hinduism

Vedanta
'The end of the Veda', thought by some to be the highest teaching of the Vedas (*veda* means 'knowledge'), the ancient Sanskrit scriptures of India

There are many significant people and schools of thought that have influenced Hinduism and brought Hindu influences to the world.

Remember, the syllabus allows for 'another person or school of thought' to be studied. This can be interpreted flexibly and could include people such as Swami Vivekananda (who helped raise interfaith understanding and is credited with bringing Hinduism to the West) or Sarada Devi (a mid-ninteenth century female spiritual leader), or other schools of thought, such as Balinese Hinduism or the Bhakti devotional movement. Also remember that, as well as discussing the life and contribution of the person or school of thought, you will need to analyse the impact on Hinduism.

Adi Shankara and **Mohandas Gandhi** will be discussed in this chapter of the print book. Information on the other people and schools of thought is available in the digital version.

Adi Shankara (circa 788–820 CE)

Adi Shankara, also known as Sankara or Shankaracharya, was born in the south of India in the region of Kerala, and probably lived from about 788 to 820 CE. These dates are speculative and he may have lived before this time. Some suggest Shankara lived about 80 BCE, but modern scholarship is less sure about this. He was born into a Brahmin family. He was an important philosopher, composer, writer and influential thinker in the development of Hinduism.

Shankara's life

Much of the information available about the life of Shankara is drawn from legends and later writings. It is believed Shankara's birth was unusual, in that his parents prayed for a son who would be brilliant but live a short life, rather than a mediocre son who would live a long time. Shankara's father died when he was seven years old and his mother took responsibility for his education, which proceeded at an unusual rate.

He undertook the *upanayana* (or sacred thread) ceremony when only seven, and by the age of 16 he was a master of theology and philosophy and had written commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

Shankara wrote commentaries on many of the Hindu sacred writings and may have been influential in reviving Hinduism in South India. Shankara's early life has also been credited with a number of miracles.

At a young age, Shankara became a ***sannyasi***. He went to Varanasi, the holy city on the Ganges River, where he taught, wrote and gathered disciples. He also journeyed to the source of the Ganges, in the Himalayan foothills, where he wrote his famous commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*. Shankara's writings are considered to be of deeply significant insight and are still used today.

He began a journey throughout India, proclaiming his ideas and debating others, including to Buddhists and **Jains** as well as other Hindu scholars. His debate with Mandana Misra (or Visvarupa) and his wife, Bharati (considered an incarnation of Saraswati), is legendary and resulted in them both becoming disciples of Shankara. In this debate, Shankara also established the theory of creation of life, which describes four different categories. To explain the theory in a practical manner he carried out a month-long experiment, leaving his earthly body and entering into a king's body right at the instance of the king's death. Upon his return into his body, he could prove his teachings on creation were backed with practical experiences. This was necessitated by Shankara's restraints as a *sannyasi*, and the different responsibilities and commitments of a Grihastha and Raja (family man and king).

After the death of his mother, Shankara fulfilled his promise to perform her funeral rites, under extreme difficulty and opposition from the Brahmins of his hometown. Shankara then returned to the ashram at Sringeri, living there for 12 years. The disciples of Shankara included Vidyaranya, a noted commentator on the Vedas.

Shankara visited Kashmir and is said to have ascended the throne of all knowledge there. He then travelled to Mount Kailas, the legendary home of Shiva, and attained moksha in death at the young age of about 32.

Shankara's contribution to Hinduism

A skilful debater, Shankara won many encounters with philosophers of other schools of thought within Hinduism and also other religious traditions. In his short lifetime he traversed the length and breadth of India and founded many temples and four *mathas* (or monasteries). Shankara established the Order of Dasanami Sannyasi to spread his philosophy of ***advaita*** (although modern scholarship suggests this order is much later than Shankara). The concept of *advaita* is considered to be an expression of **Vedanta** Hinduism.

Advaita suggest that there is only one reality: Brahman. He suggested that atman (the individual soul) is the same as Brahman. Even today, Shankara's teachings influence the modern expression of Hinduism, suggesting these concepts:

- The self is not separate, but part of the whole of existence.

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Figure 9.2 A guide speaks to visitors at the Vidyashankara temple at Sringeri, India. It is the site of the first *matha* (or monastery) founded by Shankara.

- There is one being, the 'Brahman–atman reality', that is the unity of the individual soul and the great world soul.
- Brahman is everything.
- Nothing can exist apart from Brahman.
- Brahman is real, the world is unreal.
- The individual soul is Brahman itself and is not other than Brahman.

Shankara's teaching is considered to be **monism**. He said that striving for the contemplation of the higher level of this understanding, through yoga (particularly meditation), is central to Hindu belief.

Impact of Shankara on Hinduism

Shankara's writings remain influential today. It has been said of him, 'For learning, logic and metaphysics, go to Shankara's commentaries; for gaining practical knowledge, which unfolds and strengthens devotion, go to his other works'. Shankara wrote many original works in verse that have been described as 'matchless in sweetness, melody and thought'. Shankara is considered an intellectual genius, a profound philosopher, an unsurpassed preacher, a gifted poet and a great religious reformer. His influence lives on in Hinduism some 1300 (or more) years after his time.

Shankara was influential in drawing together the different schools and expressions of Hinduism that were developing in India, synthesising Advaita Vedanta. His work played a central part in reinforcing significant aspects of Hindu philosophy in light of the challenged posed by Buddhist thought. He also contributed to the revival of Hinduism and the study of the Vedas. Some Hindus suggest that Shankara is a manifestation (avatar) of Shiva, although Shankara was actually a Vaishnava. In his short life, Shankara traversed India and is believed to have established four monasteries in the Himalayas, Sringeri, Dwaraka and Orissa: the four directions of India (although Shankara himself never mentions them).

Monism
The view that everything (including religion) is one; there are no divisions

INVESTIGATE

Access the Advaita Vedanta and Sankaracharya websites for more details about Shankara, his life and his commentaries.

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Analysing Shankara's impact

Shankara's influence lingers in modern Hinduism in his writings, his philosophy of *advaita* and his influence on the revival of Hinduism. His arguments for Hinduism may have also helped counter the rise of Buddhism. He established four *mathas* (monasteries) that are still sources of Hindu wisdom. His doctrine of *advaita* is considered one of the key teachings of modern Hinduism and an expression of pure Vedism.

EXERCISE 9.1

1 **Outline** the life of Shankara, noting significant events and teachings.
2 **Explain** the significant theological insight Shankara developed – draw out and explain the key concepts.
3 **Analyse** the ongoing impact of Shankara on Hinduism today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.1

1 **Construct** an annotated timeline of Shankara's life, noting the significant events of his life and his contributions to Hinduism. Note that the actual dates are uncertain.
2 Debate the following topic: 'Modern Hinduism does not need to depend on the writings of a man such as Shankara who lived such a long time ago.'
3 **Discuss** the concept of *advaita*. How is that concept evident in modern Hinduism?

Sect
A subgroup of a religious tradition, usually emphasising a particular aspect that makes it different to other groups of the same tradition

Ahimsa
Non-violence

Coolie
An unskilled labourer, used in a derogatory way by the British in the colonial era

Satyagraha
Literally holding on to or grasping at the truth; sometimes referred to as soul force or truth force

Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948 CE)

Mohandas Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) was one of the most significant people of the past 100 years, for his contribution not only in India but also across the world.

Gandhi influenced the India of his day and the leaders of the late twentieth century. He continues to serve as an inspiration to people all over the world. Take care that you do not just focus on Gandhi on the world stage, but determine his impact on Hinduism as a religious tradition.

Gandhi's life

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbander, in the state now known as Gujarat. His father was the *diwan* (senior minister) to the local ruler in the native state of Rajkot, where Mohandas received his schooling. He was brought up as a member of a Hindu **sect** that embraced ***ahimsa*** and vegetarianism.

He was married at 13 to Kasturba. He left his family to study law in London in 1888 and was admitted to the bar in 1891. While in London, Mohandas met groups of people disenchanted with industrialism and was attracted to the texts of the major world religions, including the Christian New Testament and the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*.

In 1893, Gandhi went to South Africa to practise law and stayed there for 21 years. He was appalled at the discrimination towards the Indian (known as 'coloured' in apartheid-era South Africa) population, often called **coolies**. He was thrown off a train in South Africa despite having a first-class ticket. In 1913, he fought for improved conditions for Indian workers in South Africa. He refused to register as an alien resident there and spent time in jail for this. He urged others to burn their registration cards as an act of civil disobedience. Gandhi was convinced that the ***satyagraha*** (soul force or truth force) was the strongest power in the world, and he gave up sex, meat, alcohol, tobacco, threats, violence and coercion in order to strengthen its power.

Figure 9.3 Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi enjoys a laugh with his two granddaughters

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In 1915, Gandhi returned to India and became involved in politics. He became President of the Indian National Congress Party and urged non-violence, non-cooperation and strikes aimed at the British colonial government. He advocated prayer and fasting and became a recognisable character because of his advocacy. Shedding Western attire, Gandhi took to wearing a loin-cloth, shawl, cheap watch and sandals. He wove the material himself from Indian cotton and did so in protest against demands that India import cloth from England. He was actively involved in civil disobedience, often resulting in time in jail. In 1930, he led a salt march to collect sea salt, in protest against the government imposing a salt tax on poor Indian peasants and farmers. While some 60 000 people were jailed, the protest march was successful, and the salt law was relaxed.

Gandhi was invited to London in 1931 to participate in a conference to negotiate terms for Indian independence. These talks were called largely because of his growing influence. He worked hard to preserve Hindu–Muslim relations and in 1932 began his 'epic fast unto death' to try and avoid divisions in India. This was a form of protest linked to the Jain religion and known as *santhara* or *sallekhana* – a fasting unto death. While he experienced many short-term victories, often at great cost to himself, he ultimately lost the struggle against the partitioning of British India into Muslim and Hindu states. The division of British India took place at Independence in 1947 and resulted in millions dying.

Gandhi was particularly concerned with the plight of the Dalits (often called 'untouchables') in India and fought to improve their lot, often against his fellow Indians. He coined the name ***Harijans*** (Children of God) and applied this to the Dalits, although some find the term to be condescending.

Gandhi, for all of his appeals to peace, was nevertheless a strong political symbol. He represented peaceful opposition to colonialism. There were some in India who felt that Indian nationalism needed to be expressed in more forceful ways, and by this they meant by more masculine and aggressive means. In this way Gandhi set the agenda for modern Indian politics.

Although he tried to remain free of party politics, many of Gandhi's followers joined the Congress party, which ruled India for most of the second half of the twentieth century during its independence. Gandhi was one of the key figures in winning that independence from Britain. After the end of World War II, when Indian independence moved towards becoming a reality, he opposed the idea of partition (separating India and Pakistan). He was aware that potentially great violence would follow a partitioned independence. Violence broke out between Hindus and Muslims in 1947 and, later, Gandhi nursed those who had been wounded in the fighting in Noakhali and Calcutta, where fighting stopped largely due to his efforts. When independence was declared on 15 August 1947, Gandhi was still working to care for the suffering, and was declared to be 'the father of the nation' by the new government.

On 30 January 1948, at the age of 79, Gandhi was assassinated, while on his way to prayers, by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist. Godse believed Gandhi was pacifying other groups at the expense of Hindu lives. Other schools of thought opposed to Gandhi believed he was not the strong symbol that was needed to represent Hinduism, but represented weakness and passivity instead.

Contribution to the development and expression of Hinduism

Mahatma Gandhi was influenced by the *Bhagavad Gita*, with its emphasis on the spiritual life and non-possession of material wealth, the *Upanishads* and especially the *Ramayana*, Rama being his personal deity. He was also influenced by Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount from the New Testament, and a number of more contemporary authors, such as Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin. Much of his thought, particularly his main principle of *ahimsa*, had a Jain and a Hindu heritage.

Harijan
Children of God; this term applies to the Dalits who were also called 'untouchables'; some find the term Harijan to be condescending and prefer the term Dalit

INVESTIGATE

The 1982 Richard Attenborough movie *Gandhi*, starring Ben Kingsley, is very true to life and highly recommended viewing. It is an excellent portrayal of Gandhi's life and the effect he had on his world. *Gandhi* won eight Academy Awards. Another movie that may be of interest is the 2005 Hindi-language film *Maine Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara* (*I Did Not Kill Gandhi*), which is not about Gandhi but about the effect he has had on modern life in a particular context. Additionally, Deepa Mahta's film *Water* (2005) discusses the issue of widows in Hinduism and touches on Gandhi's impact.

The 2018 *Doctor Who* episode *Demons of the Punjab* dealt quite sensitively with many of the horrors of British India's partition.

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CONSIDER

Were Mohandas Gandhi's views really those of a Hindu? Gandhi was greatly influenced by his Jain mentor, Rajachandra, and respected all other religions. Yet Hinduism seems to respect other religious ideas quite easily. See what you can discover about Gandhi's actual religious beliefs.

While not generally considered a great Hindu philosopher, some of Gandhi's influences and ideas have gained wide acceptance, and his influence has earned him the right to be considered someone who has made a significant contribution to Hinduism and its expression in the twentieth century. Be aware of Gandhi's contribution to Hinduism, not just to India or the peace movement. Some areas of his influence include:

- emphasising the concepts of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*
- fasting and ascetic practices, although he criticised the *sannyasi* who withdrew from society
- Theistic *advaitism*, for he believed in unity between God and the universe
- opposition to discrimination based on the caste system and support for Dalits, whom he called *Harijans*
- being open to other faiths and seeking cooperation between them
- opposition to sectarian violence
- reformation of Hinduism from within itself; for instance, he advocated the remarriage of Hindu widows who were shunned by society.

Gandhi advocated the spinning wheel as a national symbol for India. It suggested a simple, self-sufficient, non-industrial life by which people could supply their own needs and earn a little extra money. It typified the man – it was both practical and idealistic. (It is often mistakenly believed the wheel on the Indian flag is Gandhi's spinning wheel. The wheel on the flag is, in fact, Asoka's Dharma Chakra.) Many people, Hindu and non-Hindu, have been challenged by Gandhi's belief in non-violent protest and his urging of a more simple lifestyle.

Mahatma
A title given to people of outstanding character and spirituality, meaning 'great soul'

Mahatma is a title of great respect and was given to Mohandas Gandhi by Rabindranath Tagore, one of India's best-known writers. The title has endured and he is generally known today as Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi's impact on Hinduism

Gandhi's impact on Hinduism is reflected in his contributions. His views are expressed in many writings and while he is most notably an influence on the world, his thoughts on Hinduism are significant to that religious tradition as well.

Gandhi reaffirmed Hinduism as a tolerant religion, not an exclusive one. He influenced attitudes in Hinduism towards Dalits and challenged practices such as the isolation of Hindu widows. He affirmed the importance of personal devotion, in contrast to rituals. His love of the *Bhagavad Gita* promoted it to be one of the most revered and popular sacred texts. Gandhi's writings are freely available and have influenced many Hindu leaders and scholars, especially with his emphasis on *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. His emphasis on non-violence and tolerance are well known and stand in contrast to the rising Hindu nationalism evident in India today.

Figure 9.4 Mahatma Gandhi, with Indian politician Sarojini Naidu, leading the 1930 salt march to protest the British monopoly on salt production

Gandhi's impact on the world

Gandhi is particularly well known because of his work promoting peace. (See the discussion of his impact on the peace movement in Chapter 15.) Gandhi was one of the strongest opponents of British colonialism, and his ideas and passive resistance led not only to the independence of India but influenced the initiatives of many countries that were seeking independence. His teachings on non-violence have also influenced the ideas of many other great people, including Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King Jr, the Dalai Lama, John Lennon, Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi and Al Gore.

In 1925, Gandhi developed his influential concept of the Seven Social Sins, which he believed were the basis for injustice in the world:

1 politics without principle
2 wealth without work
3 pleasure without conscience
4 knowledge without character
5 commerce without morality
6 science without humanity
7 worship without sacrifice.

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These are some significant quotes attributed to Gandhi:

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.

You must be the change you want to see in the world.

Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.

I object to violence because, when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.

Strength does not come from physical capacity; it comes from an indomitable will.

A religion that takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion.

I am prepared to die, but there is no cause for which I am prepared to kill.

My religion is based on truth and non-violence.

Truth is my god. Non-violence is the means of realising him.

Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.

There can be little doubt that Mahatma Gandhi has had a great influence on the thinking of many people over the past 100 years. It is debatable however how influential he has been on Hinduism itself. That said, there are still a significant number of people who respect his ideals in India and consider him a significant person in Hinduism.

CONSIDER

If the current emphasis on anti-terrorist legislation were available to British authorities in Gandhi's day, it is possible his messages and actions would never have been made public. How would that have affected his influence and recognition?

EXERCISE 9.2

1 **Describe** ONE incident in the life of Mohandas Gandhi that you consider to be significant in demonstrating his contribution to Hinduism.
2 **Explain** the central concepts in the teachings of Gandhi and how they link to Hindu beliefs.
3 **Evaluate** Gandhi's influence on modern Hinduism, not just Indian society.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.2

1 **Investigate** one of the other people mentioned in the text who has been influenced by Gandhi. Write a paragraph about how Gandhi has influenced their life.
2 **Construct** a timeline of Gandhi's life, noting the key events and the significance of those events.
3 Read a section of Gandhi's writings and **analyse** the impact it might have had on the Hinduism of today.

Other people and schools of thought

The following people and schools of thought are discussed in the digital versions of this book.

People

Ramanuja (circa 1017–1137 CE) – Indian philosopher and theologian, who popularised the concept of *bhakti*; developed the concept of qualified monism (*vishisha advaita)*

Madhva (circa 1199–1278 CE) – developed the concept of *Dvaita Vedanta* (dualism); instituted significant social reform and his writings are still influential

Mirabai (Mira Bai) (circa 1498–1547 CE) – female Hindu mystic and poet, noted for her devotion to Krishna and her contribution to the *bhakti* movement

Ram Mohan Roy (1774–1833 CE) – Indian reformer who was concerned about political and religious reform; worked with the British to oppose *sati* (practice where a widow throws herself onto her husband's funeral pyre)

Ramakrishna (1836–1886 CE) – Hindu teacher who emphasised God-realisation, the oneness of existence, the harmony of religions and love and devotion to God

Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902 CE) – disciple of Ramakrishna who is credited with bringing Hinduism to the world's attention through his speech at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions

Schools of thought

Bhakti movement – a movement within Hinduism that emphasises devotion to a particular deity

Purva Mimamsa – literally 'prior investigation'; that is, enquiry into the first part of the Veda; a school of philosophy that investigates dharma; emphasises ritual and has its own body of literature based on the Vedas

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Vedanta – a school of philosophy that seeks to understand the true nature of reality; emphasises the *Upanishads* as sacred texts

Shaiva Siddhanta – ancient form of monotheistic Hinduism that focuses on Shiva; mainly associated with Tamil Hinduism

Balinese Hinduism – form of Hinduism that has developed on the Indonesian island of Bali; a mixture of animism, Buddhism and a unique form of Hinduism

9.3 ETHICS

The ethical system of Hinduism has been discussed in Chapter 8. In the Year 12 course, some specific issues including bioethics, environmental ethics and sexual ethics are considered.

Because Hinduism links the created world and the gods, it is not surprising that there is a strong environmental emphasis in Hinduism. Hinduism sees nature as an extension of God; the physical cosmos is a crystallisation of the mind of God. This is represented by the Hindu concept of ***rta***.

Rta
The divine pattern in nature, the universal presence that governs nature, human ethics, conduct and justice

Hinduism links the personal ethics of human conduct with the kindness or cruelty of nature. Hinduism is not simply a matter of religious belief, but a life pattern that is the fabric of existence for a Hindu – belief in practice.

The *Upanishads* state, 'Think of wealth and strive to win it by *rta* and *puja*'. The *Upanishads* also state, in answer to a king's question about the state of his kingdom, 'In my kingdom there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without an altar in his home, no ignorant person, no adulterer or adulteress' (Chandogya Upanishad 5.11.5). To this king, and to Hinduism, ethics includes educational, religious and civil as well as moral aspects.

Ethics begin with the householder (*grihastha*), whose duties include teaching and being an example of ethical living. The teaching of the Vedas has been collected into what is called the Five Constant Duties:

- dharma (virtuous living) – goodness in thought, word and deed
- *upasana* (worship) – regular devotions at home and temple
- *utsava* (holy days) – observing all Hindu festivals
- *tirthyatra* (pilgrimage) – pilgrimage at least once a year
- *samskara* (sacramental rites) – marking each ceremony.

These duties, together with the Ten Commitments and other aspects of practical Hindu living, are all part of maintaining the ethical behaviour of the *sanatana dharma*. The primary ethic is often considered to be *ahimsa*, from which many ethical implications flow. Ethics in Hinduism mean honouring, respecting and serving others.

Bioethics

One significant ethical concern of interest in modern Hindu society is that of bioethics. With Hinduism's origins being so ancient, some question its relevance to contemporary bioethical issues. But Hinduism has always proved itself adaptable to differing situations, and bioethics is no different.

Figure 9.5 Procreation is a central teaching in Hinduism and IVF is not generally an issue

Hindus tend to have few particular concerns with bioethical issues. Pragmatism seems to be the norm. The cycle of samsara (rebirth) should not be interfered with. Health implies balance, rather than simply the absence of illness. Bioethical issues would mainly be a concern where actions might affect the cycle of rebirth. Hindus have a duty-based approach to bioethics, rather than a rights-based approach, so a belief in karma is related to a holistic view of the person and a consideration of family, culture, environment and the spiritual aspects of human life. The Hindu doctrine of *ahimsa* (do no harm) must also be considered. It is believed that karma may be transferred from one human being to another, an issue in the case of organ transplants.

The implications of karma are very important in understanding Hindu bioethics. As life is a cycle of reincarnation where the karma of the person is evidenced in the subsequent life, actions that affect the potential new life (such as abortion) or a pre-emptive ending of the current life (such as euthanasia) are of considerable concern.

To a Hindu, health is not just the absence of disease or injury, but a positive state that includes the notion of balance and the concept that each individual bears a unique set of life experiences. Life is not the measure of days, but the quality of the time each person has. Bioethics relates to these issues as much as the immediate concern of the particular situation.

Abortion is usually condemned because of the importance given to children and also because it is condemned in the *Manusmrti* and in the *Atharva Veda*. Abortion has the effect of sending the atman back into

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the cycle of rebirth, as the moment of conception is the time when the atman is reborn.

Reproductive issues are notable because of the concept that the divine is present in all living beings. Contraception can be seen as part of intelligent family planning to ensure dharma is followed. Artificial insemination is not particularly of concern, with the importance given to male children and the concern of being a childless family. Certainly, procreation is a central teaching in Hinduism. In-vitro fertilisation is not generally an issue for Hindus, although the use of donor sperm might be. Indian culture puts importance on the donor's ancestry, and the varna (caste) of the father is important to some. This is related to the legal issue of who are the parents of the child.

Gene manipulation may be seen as a means of benefiting humankind, although its practice simply for sex selection would be of concern. Gene therapy to relieve suffering is acceptable, even expected.

Hinduism has an acceptance of death and dying. A dignified death is ideal, but medical intervention to prevent premature death is generally considered acceptable. Active participation in hastening death, such as euthanasia or doctor-assisted suicide, would not be acceptable in most circumstances. Hinduism gives value to living beings because of the central belief that the Supreme Being is present in all living beings. However, there are examples where euthanasia, or giving up one's life by abstaining from food in a structured process, may be considered appropriate. The *Mahabharata* speaks of Drona, who refused to eat and consequently died when he thought his son was dead. The practice of ***sati*** (or *suttee*) was historically observed by some groups in Indian society, and it was acceptable for those suffering extreme pain or illness to burn themselves in a sacrificial fire.

Sati
Where a widow throws herself onto her husband's funeral pyre

Hinduism has evolved over the years and is largely in favour of medical and scientific progress. However, it is important to remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

> As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world as in being able to remake ourselves.

EXERCISE 9.3

1 **Discuss** whether there is a single Hindu approach to bioethics. **Outline** the key aspects to be considered.
2 **Explain** the role of dharma (duty) and why it is more important than rights in Hindu ethics.
3 **Describe** some areas of bioethics and note the issues of concern for Hindus.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.3

1 Make a table of the key Sanskrit terms that relate to Hindu bioethics and write definitions in your own words.
2 Write a paragraph **analysing** the following statement: 'Tradition is more important than Hindu beliefs in determining Hindu bioethics'. Support your discussion with examples.
3 Debate the following topic: 'Death is more important than life in a Hindu approach to bioethics'.

Environmental ethics

Hindus have great reverence for the environment. According to the *Upanishads*, the world was created from the Supreme Being and Brahman 'entered into every object created'. All in this world is part of Brahman and thus should be treated with respect or even veneration.

In the Vedas, the Earth is addressed as Mother Earth and is personified as the goddess Bhumi (or Prithvi). Life on this Earth encompasses not only human beings, but also plants, birds and animals. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna identifies himself with the created world:

> See now the whole universe with all things that move and move not, and whatever your soul may yearn to see. See it all as one in me.
> *BHAGAVAD GITA* 11:7

Water is respected in the Hindu sacred writings. More than 50 hymns from the Vedas praise the Saraswati River, and the Ganges River is identified as a manifestation of the goddess Ganga. The *Manusmrti* condemns the fouling of rivers:

Video

> One should not throw urine, stool or mucus into the water.
> *MANUSMRTI* 4:56

In Hinduism, a passive response to the environment is not acceptable, and those who do not contribute to maintaining the cycle of life are considered destroyers. *Ahimsa* is interpreted as referring to the destruction of the environment as much as to the life of a human being, animal or any sentient being. Protecting the environment is part of dharma. Many of the environmental initiatives in India in the past were simply

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an expression of dharma, rather than environmental acts. Consequently, actions that will affect environment will also affect karma.

Hinduism shows considerable respect to many animals. Some of the gods of Hinduism have appeared in animal form (or half-animal), such as Ganesha and the avatars of Lord Vishnu, Kurma and Varaha. Nandi the bull, Garuda the eagle and Hanuman the monkey king are all celebrated characters in the Epics of Hinduism. This respect for animals is demonstrated in the veneration of the cow, the temples built to serve monkeys, and vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is considered to be an obvious expression of environmental ethics. It shows respect for the environment, especially regarding animal life and impacts on global deforestation to provide grazing land for cattle. Many modern Hindus also note that cattle eat most of the world's grain and reduce the efficient growing of vegetable and grain, with a consequential impact on the world's weather, forests and land use. Many trees are considered sacred in Hinduism, such as the banyan and mango trees.

India has suffered environmental degradation, due to heavy population expansion and the need for resources to meet the demands of that population. There have been significant projects underway in India to counter these trends, such as efforts to protect the Narmada River and the Chipko movement to protect forests in the Himalayan mountains. The word *chipko* means 'to hug' and the Chipko protests of the early 1970s, mainly led by women villagers, were a model for the tree huggers of Western ecological movements of that era. The Indonesian island of Bali is a Hindu enclave in a Muslim country. The rice terraces of Bali have been sculptured in an environmentally sustainable way that has ensured rice crops have been produced for generations.

A Hindu prayer notes the attitude that many Hindus have towards the environment:

> O Goddess Earth, the consort of Vishnu, you whose garments are the oceans and whose ornaments are the hills and mountain ranges, please forgive me as I walk on you this day.
>
> NĀRADA PURĀNA 1.66.1–2

In Australia, environmental awareness and animal protection are two of the programs developed and promoted by the Hare Krishna movement (ISKCON – International Society of Krishna Consciousness, a Vaishnava variant of Hinduism, organisationally founded in the US by an Indian). They operate several farm communities in New South Wales and Victoria and promote vegetarianism, as well as spiritual understanding of their sect of Hinduism, through their centres. As well as providing a protective environment for animals on their farms, they seek to develop a spiritual perspective on the environment and are committed to environmental reform. The Hindu Council of Australia promotes a Meat Free Day, launched the Hindu Climate Action Kit and is involved in interfaith initiatives, such as the multi-faith Eco-Forum and the Faith Ecology Network. They also regularly publish articles about the environment on their website.

Gandhi played a significant role in developing a Hindu approach to environmental ethics. He made the following comments about the environment:

> There is enough for everyone's need, but not enough for one person's greed.
>
> The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

EXERCISE 9.4

1 **Outline** a Hindu approach to environmental ethics.
2 **Explain** why an understanding of the Hindu gods clarifies an understanding of Hindu environmental ethics.
3 **Describe** a practical example of Hindu environmental ethics and how it expresses Hindu beliefs.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.4

1 Make a table of the key Hindu terms that relate to environmental ethics and write definitions in your own words.
2 Write a paragraph **explaining** the importance of water in Hindu beliefs and practice, and its significance for environmental ethics.
3 Prepare a PowerPoint or similar presentation to **describe** a modern example of initiatives in Hindu environmental ethics.

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Sexual ethics

Kama is one of the pleasures of life as defined by Hinduism. *Kama* essentially means enjoying the pleasures of life and refers to, among other things, sexuality. In this way Hinduism acknowledges the importance of sexuality and the need for sexual ethics. However, in some contexts there is considerable restriction on the expression of that sexuality.

The ***Kama Sutra*** is a famous Hindu text that promotes pleasure and sexual activity. In recent times, there has been a revival of interest in tantric Hinduism with a supposed emphasis on spiritual sex. Most practitioners of tantric Hinduism are in fact very austere, and the popular view, seemingly supported by erotic statues and carvings and the *Kama Sutra*, is generally a misunderstanding of Hindu practices.

Tantric Hinduism does not cater for lust in the guise of spirituality but recognises that sexual ecstasy is an aspect of divine bliss – a step in spiritual evolution.

Marriage

Marriage is regarded as the norm for Hindus unless one wishes to become an ascetic and withdraw from society to follow a god through strict self-discipline. Marriage has three main purposes:

- the promotion of dharma
- the bringing of children into the world
- the expression of sexual pleasure.

Marriage is regarded as a permanent state that should not be dissolved. It is generally delayed until completion of the first stage of ashrama (*Brahmacharya*, or the student stage). The life of a *Brahmacharya* should be chaste, so premarital sex is discouraged. Hindu sacred writings support the idea that sex should be expressed within the context of marriage. In a Hindu marriage both husband and wife share equal duty towards each other to maintain the sanctity of marriage. The extended family is considered a vital unit in society, and Hindus are urged to do their duty. Within the family there are strict religious duties to be followed by each member. These include the continuance of the family name by having sons.

Marriage is regarded as a ***samskara***, an important step in the life journey and a reflection of the divine. The gods of Hinduism marry, so it is regarded as a special privilege for human beings to marry, and a reflection of divine relationships. Marriage is still frequently arranged in Hindu society, although this is changing among India's large educated middle class. Arranged marriages are less common among Hindus living in Australia, but do still occur. Marriage consultants will be engaged by the parents of the bride and groom to check on their compatibility in terms of astrology, caste and wealth. Usually a priest is consulted to ensure the marriage partners are suitable and horoscopes are used. **Dowries** are a normal part of the arrangement in India (although declared illegal in 1961), but for Hindus in Australia this is less often the case. While divorce is now legal in the common law of India, it is still uncommon in Hindu society and often results in some social stigma. In an arranged marriage, love is not the paramount motivation, so falling out of love with a spouse is not considered a valid reason to divorce. Chastity in marriage is regarded as faithfulness to the marriage partner, not celibacy. **Polygamy** is no longer common but was common in the Hindu sacred texts and at certain periods of Indian history, especially among the elite. It can be allowed, in some circumstances, where there are no children from the first wife.

Kama Sutra
An ancient Sanskrit text giving instruction on relationships and the art of lovemaking

Samskara
A series of rituals that serve as rites of passage and mark the various stages of human life and often signify entry to a particular ashrama

Dowry
Goods or money that a bride's family brings to her husband on the marriage

Polygamy
Having more than one spouse at one time

Figure 9.6 The Khajuraho Group of Monuments is a group of Hindu temples in Madhya Pradesh, India. They house a series of ornate erotic sculptures.

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It was uncommon for traditional Hindus to enter a marriage based simply on mutual love, but it was also generally uncommon that young people were forced into an arranged marriage against their will. Some Hindus do speak of love after marriage – meaning that once all the social, caste, wealth and education issues are settled and the marriage has taken place, the couple can develop emotions for each other. In such a system of familial and social arrangements for the raising of children, divorce is seen as unnecessary unless something goes seriously wrong. In fact, in the past, particularly among Brahmins, when the husband died, *sati* (or *suttee*) was practised, where the widow threw herself onto her husband's funeral pyre. This practice became more evident during the colonial period. It was made illegal in British India in 1829. However, the status of widows in India is still of concern; many are unable to remarry and are sometimes abandoned by their families.

Polyandry
A wife having many husbands

Eunuch
Castrated male

patriarchal/patriarchy
From the Greek and Latin *pater* (father); refers to a system in which men hold the power in a society or in reference to the fathers of religious traditions

Modern Hindus are more flexible in their approach to marriage, with less emphasis on caste restrictions and greater involvement of the future husband and wife in their choices of marriage partner.

How ethics concerning premarital sex are analysed by adherents

Premarital sex is not approved of in Hindu society and is rarely spoken about. Extramarital sex is also discouraged, and husbands and wives are expected to be faithful to their spouses. Where expressions of sexuality other than the accepted ones occur, this is considered a private matter and rarely discussed. This is evident in the extreme view often presented in Bollywood movies, where a man and woman are not allowed to kiss on screen unless they are portraying a married couple.

In recent times, as Hindus have become more exposed to Western thinking and globalisation, the Hindu taboos on human sexuality are slowly breaking down. There is new recognition of the role of religion in repressing sexual expression, and greater willingness to discuss issues of sexuality. But traditional taboos are strong and Hindu norms are often maintained.

CONSIDER

There are many Hindu temples that display very explicit, erotic carvings. Why is this the case, when sexual expression otherwise seems so limited in Hinduism? How do sexual ethics relate to other aspects of Hindu sexual expression, such as those revealed in the *Kama Sutra* and tantric Hinduism?

Homosexuality

When we look at texts such as *The Mahabharata* we find a vast range of emotional and sexual activity being experienced by the heroes, heroines, and gods of that epic. Perhaps the most outstanding example is that of Draupadi – a woman who is married to Arjuna and his four brothers at the same time. It is one of the only examples of **polyandry** in sacred literature and it forms a vital part of the story.

What we find in other texts (such as the *dharma shastras*) are no heavy proscriptions against same-sex love, but the idea that this kind of love can only exist in relation to (and eventually be superseded by) male–female marriage and child-rearing. It is in this context that some scriptures seem to be against homosexuality.

Today LGBTQIA Indians are emerging from a tough period of discrimination that was partly based on social attitudes and partly on left-over British laws. In 2014, transgender people were permitted to legally change their gender without specific surgery. In 2018, the Supreme Court of India made a ruling that anti-homosexual laws were unconstitutional. At the time of writing, same-sex couples can still not be officially married, but religious or symbolic marriages are not illegal.

The *Manusmrti* text describes punishments for homosexual practices, but also for heterosexual misconduct, and refers (in chapter 3:49) to the existence of a third gender, the *hijras* (transgender people and **eunuchs**). The *Kama Sutra* also refers to homosexual practices and mentions the third gender.

There are organisations such as the Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association who consider the current resistance to homosexuality a form of homophobia imposed by British colonialism and believe that strict differentiation between male and female is not consistent with the writings and traditions of Hinduism.

Gender roles and discrimination

There is some ambivalence towards the issue of gender roles in Hinduism. There are obvious expressions that suggest a clear demarcation between genders and **patriarchal** values, such as the dowry system of Hindu marriage, the treatment of widows and the practice of *sati*.

In Hinduism, however, there is a long tradition of female deities or goddesses. Some of the most popular gods are female, such as Devi, Laksmi, Parvati and Kali. It is significant that Brahma has been almost eclipsed by his consort, Saraswati. The *Gayatri Mantra*, one of the most significant prayers in Hinduism, has been personified as the goddess Gayatri. In some Hindu traditions, male deities even offer worship to female ones: Shiva and Indra offer worship to the goddess Durga.

Women play a significant role in Indian politics and some parliaments reserve seats specifically for women to combat gender inequality. Mayawati is an Indian politician and became the first Dalit woman chief minister of any state. She served four terms as Chief

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Figure 9.7 Politician Mayawati was the first Dalit woman chief minister of any state

Minister of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state. Mayawati is regarded as a symbol of dignity and political inspiration for millions of Dalits.

One of the earliest references to the status of women is contained in the *Rig Veda*, where a woman is addressed as their commander (*Rig Veda* 10.85.26; some take this passage to be a reference to being a 'mistress of a house'). In other writings, such as the *Manusmrti*, women are granted rights to own property and to inherit wealth independently. Women are depicted as gurus and have the right to graduate from the Vedic schools. There is a famous description of Shankara's debate with the woman Bharati. According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, the *Mahabharata* was written specifically for women and for men who were not Brahmins (see *Bhagavata Purana* 1.4.25). The *Bhagavad Gita* states: 'By taking refuge in me even those of unfavourable birth, women, Vaishyas and also Shudras attain the supreme state' (*Bhagavad Gita* 9:32).

In practice, however, women have some difficulty in being treated as equals in Hindu society. Violence against women is common, and rape is an ongoing problem. Marriage is seen as a patriarchal institution and this has been perpetuated by the tradition of dowry payments. As many scholars have noted, the concept of dowry does not exist in Hindu sacred writings, and in fact the sacred texts clearly suggest that the husband is meant to ensure the wife has independent wealth. It is also noted in many texts that a woman is free to choose her husband and there is to be no exchange of dowry. Similarly, there are few references to *sati* in the sacred texts. Rather, many of the great women in significant religious texts are widows.

Divorce is also allowed in the sacred writings, if the husband is unable to father children or has become an ascetic. Widows can also remarry. There are a number of women who might not be considered 'pure' but are praised in scripture. One of the most significant is Kunti from the *Mahabharata*, who had a child out of wedlock and went on to become a loved and revered queen. When the king died, she did not commit *sati*.

It is also important to note that many Hindu teachers, saints and gurus are female. These are some of the most significant:

- Mira Bai (1503–1573) – poet and mystic who has influenced the Bhakti movement
- Sarada Devi (1853–1920) – wife and successor to Ramakrishna
- Amma (Mata Amritanandamayi, born 1953) – called the hugging saint/guru.

FURTHERMORE

The Skekhar Kapur movie *The Bandit Queen* (1994; rated R) discusses the rights of women, especially lower-caste women, in India. It is based on the true story of Phoolan Devi and graphically portrays the violence of her life in both her own treatment and her treatment of others. Phoolan Devi was eventually pardoned and elected to parliament. She opposed the making of this film and was assassinated in 2001. Another movie of interest is the Deepa Mehta (an Indo-Canadian file director) film *Water* (2005), a controversial discussion of the plight of Hindu widows in India during the 1930s. It is the last of her trilogy discussing aspects of Indian life, including *Fire* (1996; lesbianism) and *Earth* (1998; the issue of the partitioning of India in 1947 – a particularly good movie). Mehta's films have caused much controversy in India, including violent protests by some Hindus.

INVESTIGATE

Amma (Mata Amritanandamayi) has devoted her life to giving hugs to people as her special blessing. She has visited Australia several times. The websites Amma Australia and Amritapuri are devoted to her and her work. Discuss if she should be considered a saint. Assess the meaning or significance of her hugging people.

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How gender roles and discrimination are analysed by adherents

Some Hindus suggest that Indian society has become a patriarchal society largely through British influence, rather than Hindu influence. However, the concept of varna suggests that some Hindu men, particularly higher-caste men, may have a position of spiritual superiority within their religion, and that this may translate into life attitudes.

Modern Hinduism is largely presented in a masculine form, with the role of women not recognised or given as much credit as the sacred texts suggest is appropriate. There may be many reasons for this, ranging from the emphasis given to sons over daughters, to the impact of British colonialism and the feeling that Indian masculinity must be reasserted. While women are clearly active in Indian political and religious life, Hinduism is generally male-dominated, like the other major religions.

There is a call in modern feminist Hinduism to reject the influences of the West and return to Hindu roots, where women are considered spiritually powerful and, according to the *tantra* traditions, are 'friends' rather than in a subservient position.

Certainly, Hinduism is a religious tradition that raised the status of the feminine in many examples of the goddess. In modern Hinduism, that traditional status is drastically reduced. Hinduism is now seeking appropriate expressions of gender, ones that reflect its origins and central beliefs, as it seeks contemporary expression.

EXERCISE 9.5

1 **Discuss** Hindu attitudes to premarital and extramarital sex.
2 Comment on Hindu attitudes to homosexuality, with reference to texts and examples.
3 **Outline** the significance of gender in Hinduism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.5

1 Debate the topic: 'Hindus have little interest in ethical behaviour, as their current state in life is the result of previous lives'.
2 Research the concept of a 'third gender'. **Discuss** the significance of that concept in Hinduism and how it relates to Hindu sacred texts and concepts of the gods.
3 Talk to a young Australian Hindu about what Hindu sexual ethics means to them in modern Australia, or research articles on this subject. Prepare a 10-minute talk about your findings.

9.4 SIGNIFICANT PRACTICES IN THE LIVES OF ADHERENTS

Rite of passage Ritual to mark the progression of an individual through various status stages in a community

Hinduism is an elaborate religious tradition where the followers, or adherents, express their faith through a variety of rites and rituals. These include regular personal devotion, public worship and what are called **rites of passage** that mark the stages of life people pass through. Many of these events are public expressions of faith, and some are personal. Study of one of three practices is required for the HSC exam:

- Marriage is one of the rites of passage that is expressed in most religious traditions, but with some unique features in Hinduism.
- Pilgrimage is a practice that all Hindus are encouraged to complete once a year, and there are many sites available with an accompanying festival. Some are major and more significant, others of lesser importance.
- *Puja*, or worship, can be a private act, but also has a public face. Temple worship builds on the previously studied concept of home *puja*.

Marriage

Beliefs

Marriage marks entry into the householder stage of the ashramas. It is a spiritual, as well as a physical, exercise. Weddings are elaborate affairs with highly symbolised rituals.

In Hinduism there are many more than just four stages of life that are commonly celebrated in many religious traditions and cultures – birth, puberty, adulthood and death. Hinduism recognises about 16 important events in a person's life, which are called *samskara*.

Marriage in Hinduism provides a sanctioned institution for the expression of sexual relations, the social responsibilities of family life, and the fulfilment of religious duties. Single life is regarded as a lesser state in Hinduism, and an adult is regarded as not complete unless married, although some could move beyond marriage to the stage of renunciation.

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Figure 9.8 Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi, a married Hindu god and goddess

At the beginning of a marriage ceremony, particularly if the couple belong to the Shaiva variant, the god Ganesha is worshipped (the god of good fortune who removes obstacles). Vaishnavas may also pray to Ganesha or to other gods who bring good fortune. Hindu gods also marry, such as Shiva and Pavarti, Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi.

The ceremony is conducted by a priest and takes place before a sacred fire. The marriage ceremony includes offerings, the bride standing with a foot on a stone, the tying of a knot between the bride and groom, walking around the fire three times, taking seven steps together and then the recitation of hymns by the priest. Hindu weddings can be elaborate ceremonies that can last several days.

Traditionally, Hindu marriages are arranged by the parents, in consultation with priests and astrologers. The partners are usually chosen, or at least confirmed, through astrological charts. Sometimes a dowry is required, but in Australia this is often unnecessary. The time and date of the wedding is carefully selected according to astrological charts to find the most auspicious time for the ceremony. The priest usually selects the date, after consulting the horoscopes and the religious calendar to determine auspicious partners and times.

In traditional Indian society, particularly in rural areas, partners are usually of the same caste. Varna, and especially *jati*, are particularly significant as there are strict rules, restrictions and responsibilities that relate to marriage and the caste system. In Australia, caste is less significant. In Hinduism, marriage is the celebration of the 13th *samskara*. The actual celebrations of the marriage ceremonies vary between countries and even within India, particularly between rural and city marriages.

Describe the practice

Generally, a Hindu marriage has the following features, although there are significant variations.

Traditionally, a welcome ceremony is held to welcome the groom and his family to the bride's home. The ceremony is held at the home of the bride, at a temple or (more commonly in Australia) at a hired hall. Pre-wedding ceremonies often include the decoration of the bride's hands and feet with henna (a dye made from the *mahendi* plant), the performance of ablutions and the aromatic anointing of the bride's and groom's bodies.

The Hindu bride is carefully prepared for the wedding. She bathes and then wears a sari (usually red) and jewellery. Special patterns are drawn on her hands and feet with henna, and she wears special makeup of ghee (clarified butter), camphor, herbs and lamp black.

Often the bride and groom stand on a wooden plank, separated by a curtain. Rice and other grains are thrown over the couple. When the curtain is removed, the wedding begins. Usually a canopy (*mandapa*) or a stand decorated with flowers and containing fire (as a witness) are used for the marriage ceremony.

The priest (a Brahmin) says a blessing over the couple, and garlands (usually of sandalwood chips) are placed around the necks of the bride and groom. The bride also offers yoghurt and honey to the groom as a token of purity and sweetness.

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The bride shows her acceptance of her change of status by spreading turmeric on her husband's feet. The father of the bride pours out water as a symbol of giving his daughter away (*Kanyadan*). The groom recites some of the hymns from the Vedas, especially those that seem to recognise Kama, the god of love. The groom then makes promises to the bride's father to assist his new wife to achieve dharma (right conduct), *artha* (prosperity) and *kama* (pleasure). These are collectively referred to as the *purusharthas*, the 'goals of man'.

The bridegroom's shirt is tied to the bride's sari in a knot to symbolise the sacred union has taken place. Garlands of flowers and rings are exchanged. The sacred fire (representing Agni) is worshipped and *samagree* (crushed sandalwood, herbs, sugar, rice, ghee and twigs) is offered to the fire.

The groom calls on the goddess Saraswati to bless the marriage and the bride offers a sacrifice of food to the fire. The bride applies sandalwood paste to the groom's forehead, and the groom makes a red mark on the bride's forehead or places red powder in her hair. The bride is meant to display that red dot as long as they are married.

The bridegroom takes the bride's hand and they walk around the sacred fire three times. Hymns from the Vedas are chanted, and offerings of puffed rice and ghee are thrown into the fire. At the end of each circuit of the fire, the bride and groom step on a sacred stone as a symbol of the strength of their marriage. Mantras are said, to accept the responsibilities of faithfulness, love, respect and the promise of children.

The seven steps (*satpta padi*) are then taken. This is the most important part of the marriage ceremony. The bride and groom take seven steps together around the sacred fire. The steps represent promises and commitments made to each other:

1. to nourish each other
2. to grow together in strength
3. to preserve wealth
4. to share joys and sorrows
5. to have and care for children
6. to be together forever
7. the couple are married and lifelong friends.

The groom touches the bride's heart and acknowledges they are joined. This is further symbolised by the groom tying a thread containing the marks of Lord Vishnu or Shiva (according to the relevant variant) around the bride's neck.

Other customs follow, including presents to the bride from the groom's parents of cloth, flowers, garlands or gold and silver (with black beads) necklaces. Flowers are thrown over the couple, cotton may be tied around the couple or the bride's hands may be washed. The sacred flame may be carried to the groom's house, games may be played or special astrological rituals may be carried out.

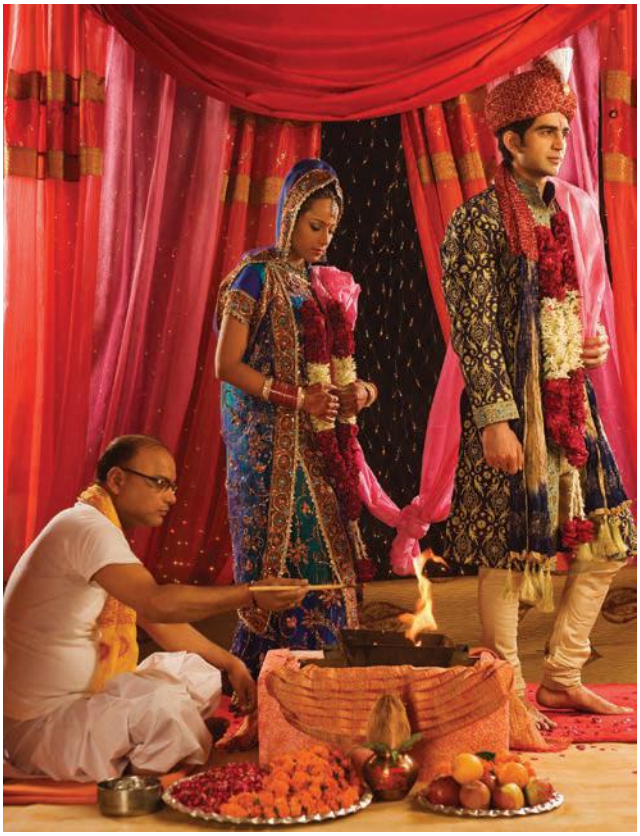

Figure 9.9 A wedding couple perform the *satpta padi*, under the *mandapa*, around the sacred fire

Significance for the individual

The Hindu sacred writings stress the permanence of marriage. Recitation of hymns and mantras from the Vedas are particularly important in the marriage ceremony, as is the acknowledgement of the fire god, Agni.

The *Manusmrti* tells all Hindu women to love and obey their husbands. As a wife is considered to be a gift to a husband from the gods, he should always support the faithful wife, thereby doing what is agreeable to the gods (*Manusmrti* 9:95).

In India, following the marriage, the couple often lives with the groom's parents. In Australia, this is less often the case. The wife is called *ardhangini*, which means the better half of the body.

Marriage is a deep and lifelong commitment for a Hindu couple. For the individual, marriage marks entry into the *grihastha* (householder) stage of life with the additional responsibilities demanded by that ashrama.

Significance for the community

While marriage has its primary significance for the couple involved, the elaborate rituals and ceremony are seen as community celebrations and events. They are seen particularly as the joining of extended families, not just the couple. The wedding ceremony is also a way to

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recognise the contributions and involvement of a wide range of significant guests from the community.

Wedding ceremonies are community events that can last several days. It affirms the role that marriage has in binding the community together, affirming many aspects of Hindu teachings and beliefs. It often affirms the particular varna or *jati* that the couple belong to and the responsibilities and requirements that go with it.

EXERCISE 9.6

1 **Describe** a Hindu wedding in detail, noting the significance of particular actions that are part of the marriage, before, during and after the ceremony.
2 **Outline** the Hindu beliefs that are expressed in a Hindu marriage.
3 **Explain** the importance of varna, and its role in a Hindu marriage.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.6

1 Create a table about a Hindu marriage with the headings 'cultural aspects' and 'Hindu practices'. Research online, go to a Hindu wedding or talk to a Hindu person and differentiate between the cultural and religious elements as you complete your table. How are they different in Australia?
2 Write a paragraph on the role of astrology in a Hindu marriage.
3 Talk to a young Hindu person or research as much as is possible, and comment on the difficulties of a modern Australian Hindu young person in fulfilling the cultural and religious expectations of marriage.

Pilgrimage

Beliefs

Pilgrimage is a journey with a particular purpose, a religious journey so that people can worship at particular places associated with their religious tradition. Pilgrimage is a significant rite in Hindu life. Hindus are encouraged to undertake a pilgrimage at least once a year, and many *sannyasi* are involved in lifelong, daily pilgrimage. Hindu writings refer to the practice of pilgrimage; the *Rig Veda* praises the wanderer and the *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* speak of the significance of particular sites. Pilgrimage usually involves travel to a particular sacred site for the purpose of ***darsan***. *Darsan* means to look at an image of a god and allow the god to see you. Thus, a pilgrimage is often made to a place where the image of a particular deity is located. Pilgrims also seek *darsan* at significant places that are linked with the gods, such as the Ganges River.

In Hinduism, places of pilgrimage include natural sites, such as rivers, crossings, mountains and other geographical locations associated with the stories of the gods. The Sanskrit and Hindi word for pilgrimage is *tirtha*, which means a river ford or crossing place. It carries the connotation of transition, from one element to another, or metaphorically from a particular state or trouble, or from one life to another (or to moksha). Places of pilgrimage also have temples containing images of the gods (called ***murti***). Some of these places are particularly significant, although there are literally thousands of pilgrimage sites associated with Hinduism. Many Hindu writings, such as the *smrti* writings (the *Puranas* and especially the *Sthala Puranas*), talk about the importance of sites and their sanctity.

Hindu pilgrims often dress lightly and often travel on foot, particularly in India (but sometimes trucks and buses are organised). By suffering discomfort, the pilgrim seeks awareness of others who suffer, forgetting their usual comfort and gaining good karma. Pilgrimages also bring Hindus together. They can create a sense of unity and community and can also be a time of learning and renewal, particularly at the feet of great gurus. Some ***sadhus*** and *sannyasi* are considered to be a means of experiencing *darsan* because of their learning or saintly lives. They occupy life between the world of illusion and the world of reality. Essentially, they have achieved moksha and have thus become deific (godlike).

Pilgrimage
A journey of an adherent to a place of significance in their religion

Darsan
To be in the presence of a deity, to see and be seen by that deity

Murti
An image in which the divine spirit is shown

Sadhu
An ascetic solely devoted to achieving liberation (moksha) through meditation

Pilgrimage offers the opportunity to pass on to others Hindu practices, debates and perspectives. Pilgrims return to their homes with increased status as a result of their pilgrimage.

Most Hindu pilgrimage sites are in India. Some sites are regarded as significant for specific pilgrimages, as are particular times.

FURTHERMORE

Conduct an online search with the words 'Hindu pilgrimage', and the first few pages of results will be travel websites that arrange pilgrimages. Discuss whether pilgrimage has become a commercial venture or was it always such? When on pilgrimage, people give money to gurus and ascetics along the way. What can you discover about these practices?

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Pilgrimage in practice

Hinduism has many sacred sites that are the focus of pilgrimages. In India there are thousands of sites, but some are particularly significant. In most other religious traditions, sacred sites tend to be associated with the founders of the tradition. This is not the case in Hinduism. Most sites are associated with the gods or significant teachers. The most sacred site is the Ganges River. It is believed that the Ganges used to flow in the heavens but was brought to Earth in response to the prayers of a holy man. Because of the great power of the Ganges, the god Shiva had to let the river flow through his hair to stop its impact from destroying the Earth. This is evident in the depictions of Shiva as Gangahara (bearer of the Ganges) that represents the descent of the Ganges. The depiction of Shiva Nataraja where Shiva is represented as the Lord of the Dance also depicts the Ganges in the hair of Shiva.

The city of Varanasi (formerly Benares) is a particularly sacred place. It is one of the oldest inhabited towns in the world and sits on the banks of the Ganges. It is dedicated to Shiva, who is believed to have lived in Varanasi. Hindus believe that bathing in the Ganges will lead to purification of the soul, especially in one of the holy cities such as Varanasi. It is also believed that if someone dies in Varanasi, this will result in their release from the cycle of rebirth. Another significant place of pilgrimage is Allahabad (originally known as Prayag) where the Ganges and the Yamuna rivers meet, along with the Sarasvati (a spiritual river that is not visible to the human eye). The Kumbha Mela festival is celebrated there every 12 years.

Another significant sacred site is Mount Kailas, just north of the border with Tibet (now in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China). Mount Kailas is understood to be the home of Shiva and Parvati, and its shape is said to remind Hindus of a lingam. At Armanath, a cave contains ice formations that some people believe resemble some Hindu gods, including a Shiva lingam, Ganesha, Parvati and other gods associated with Shiva. It is a particularly inaccessible site and so is seen as especially venerable, increasing the pilgrim's chance of moksha.

Kanchipuram is an especially sacred site in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, with Shiva temples the focus of pilgrimage. Kanchipuram is a centre for Tamil learning.

Pushkar in western India has a Brahma temple, one of the few built to worship that particular god. Each temple is built around a holy pool of water said to have sprung up from places where Brahma threw flowers. There is one particular day each year when Brahma is to be worshipped.

The cities of Mathura and Vrindivan in western India are associated with events in the life of Krishna and are visited by millions of Krishna devotees each year.

Almost every city and town in India has a shrine or temple to a resident deity, so there are countless places of pilgrimage available to Hindus. The desire to visit a particular place depends on the beliefs of the pilgrim or the variant of Hinduism followed, the particular circumstances of the devotee, and the opportunity available to go in the first place. The elephant god, Ganesha, is the example for pilgrims, as he circumnavigated the world on a pilgrimage (or managed to avoid the task, according to some), while studying Hindu scriptures.

While India has many pilgrimage sites, there are also significant sites for Hindus in other regions, such as the Sri Siva Sabraminya Swami Temple in Nadi, Fiji, the Murugan temple in the Batu Caves, Malaysia and some of the temples in Indonesia such as Temple Besakih in Bali or Prambanan in Java. Many ancient Buddhist temples are also regarded as Hindu places of pilgrimage, such as Borobudur in Java. Some have argued that Angkor Wat in Cambodia was dedicated to Lord Vishnu and built incorporating Hindu time measurements and in alignment with particular stars and planets at certain times of the year, an expression of the emphasis on astrology in Hinduism. (Archaeologists at Sydney University are leading the way in the study of Angkor.)

INVESTIGATE

Search online for Hindu pilgrimage sites. How many can you discover? Write down some of the main sites and describe why they might be significant for Hindus. What pattern emerges?

Figure 9.10 Woman performing offerings in the Ganges during a Kumbha Mela Pilgrimage Celebration in Haridwar

Significance for the individual

See the previous discussion for many aspects relating to the significance for the individual. Pilgrimage is particularly significant for the individual as pilgrims use the practice to develop good karma for the future. Other aspects include the spiritual and physical journeying, experiencing *darshan*, links with the expectations of certain ashrama, and learning from the gurus. Pilgrimage also allows the individual to visit significant sites associated with Hinduism.

Significance for the community

Pilgrimage sites involve meeting with other pilgrims and experiencing community as a corporate experience. Individuals contribute to the community financially as well as in person. Being present boosts the sense of community. Events such as the Kumbha Mela are significant communal events and include debates, teaching, communal worship and support for the needy in the community.

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KUMBHA MELA

The festival of Kumbha Mela is one of the most significant festivals to be held at a place of pilgrimage. Kumbha Mela is celebrated about every three years at one of four cities – Haridwar, Ujjain, Nasik and Prayag. About 120 million people attended the festival at Prayag in early 2019. The Prayag festival, held every 12 years, is considered the Great Kumbha Mela. The 2019 festival was the largest recorded gathering of people in human history, and the Kumbha Mela is possibly the oldest continuing religious festival in the world, although some suggest it began only 400 years ago. It is certainly the largest.

Huge tent cities are erected to accommodate the pilgrims, and the festival is attended by many *sadhus* and gurus. These are men and women who are generally reclusive. They make themselves available to people at this time of great learning. It is noteworthy that Kumbha Mela provides the opportunity for leaders of different Hindu sects to gather in an environment of mutual understanding for the sharing of ideas. Activities include religious discussions and debates (some affecting the standardisation of ideas in Hinduism), devotional singing and mass feeding of holy men and women and the poor. Medical support and other services are also offered, particularly to the poor.

The origins of Kumbha Mela are shrouded in mystery and legend. The *Puranas* tell of the churning of the oceans and the fact that four drops of ***amrita*** (the nectar of immortality) fell from the pot (***kumbha***) and created the four rivers. At certain auspicious times, the waters of those rivers turn back into the *amrita*.

Amrita
Special drink of the gods, the nectar of immortality

Kumbha
A pot that is symbolic of the womb

The churning took 12 days (human years) and thus a pilgrimage (*mela*) is made to each of these cities every 12 years. The festival date is fixed astronomically and the conjunction of particular stars, planets and constellations determines auspicious events. There are records from China of ritual bathing from the eighth century CE, which some take to be references to the Kumbha Mela. Some suggest the Hindu teacher Shankara stressed the importance of meeting with Hindu saints at the Kumbha Mela. Learning from the *sadhus* and bathing in the Ganges remain the two main events of the Kumbha Mela.

The major event that takes place at the Kumbha Mela is a ritual bathing at a particular time – the new-moon day (*Amabasya*) – as determined by astrological calculation. It is believed that people are then cleansed of their evil karma up until that day. The city of Prayag is particularly significant, being the junction of the three major Hindu rivers: the Ganges, the Yamuna and the invisible Sarasvati. Bathing at the conjunction of the three rivers (known as *sangam*) has the effect of increasing the purification of the bather 100 times. Bathing during the Kumbha Mela increases it 1000 times.

When the bathing begins, the *nagas* (naked holy men) bathe first, followed by the other gurus, *sadhus* and *sannyasi*, then the other pilgrims. Many pilgrims then return to the teachers, shop at the markets or return home, while others stay to watch the dances and dramas performed by various players, or look at the elaborate displays constructed for the event.

The Kumbha Mela has become a huge logistical effort for the Indian government, but it is primarily a pilgrimage, described by many as the greatest spiritual festival ever held.

Figure 9.11 Holy men (*sadhu/nagas*) gather at the Kumbha Mela and parade through the streets on the way to the Ganges River

INVESTIGATE

There are a number of documentary programs available on the Kumbha Mela, especially those produced by the BBC. See what you can find and also search YouTube for related videos that have been posted. ABC television released *The Holy Dip* (2014), a documentary about several Australians who participated in the Kumbha Mela.

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EXERCISE 9.7

1 **Define** the term 'pilgrimage'. What does it imply?
2 **Outline** the main beliefs of Hinduism that are discovered and developed during a pilgrimage.
3 **Describe** how pilgrimage is significant for the individual Hindu and the Hindu community.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.7

1 Ask an Australian Hindu person about pilgrimage. **Discuss** where they go on pilgrimage and why. Is it difficult to do so in Australia?
2 Prepare a graphic presentation highlighting the events and significance of a Hindu pilgrimage.
3 Imagine you are a Hindu person going to Kumbha Mela. Write a diary entry of the experience and **explain** why it is a spiritual as well as a physical journey. **Describe** whether it is both an individual and community event.

Temple worship (*puja*)

Video

Temple *puja* is essentially an extension of home *puja*. Temples are links between religion and culture, especially in settings outside of India. Australian temples are cultural community centres. Hindu temples (*mandirs* in northern India, *koyil* in southern India) are stylised buildings that represent significant aspects of Hinduism. Temple worship involves prayers, devotion to images of the gods and the recitation of texts, often Vedic texts. Worship often includes **circumambulation**, offerings, fire and chanting.

Circumambulate
To walk around something, usually as an act of worship

Beliefs

Worship (*puja*) in Hinduism is primarily a personal act, and many Hindu homes have shrines established for personal worship. Home *puja* is discussed in Chapter 8.

There are also temples that are places of worship visited by Hindus, and there are established rituals that occur at the temples. Often temple worship is an extension of personal worship. That is, when people go to a temple they meet with a priest who conducts an individual ritual for the person or family.

Temple worship has been emphasised through the history of Hinduism, and temples are considered the connecting point between religion and culture, especially in the communities of Hindus living outside of India. Often, in countries such as Australia, temples are essentially community centres where educational, community and cultural activities occur alongside religious rituals.

Hindu worship is usually comprised of prayers (mantras), devotion to images (*murtis*) and appreciation of diagrams of the universe (mandalas). In a *mandir* different parts of the building have special significance, notably the central tower or spire (generally called a *shikhara*) and the central shrine with the image of the god (*garbha griha*). Usually the priest recites the Vedas to the worshippers. The reading and prayers can, in fact, be done by any twice-born Hindu.

Hindu worship rituals and rites are classified into three categories:

- *nitya* (compulsory) – offerings to the home shrines and family gods
- *naimittika* (occasional) – important festivals and celebrations
- *kamya* (optional) – other desirable rituals such as pilgrimage.

Temple puja in practice

The temple

A Hindu temple is called a *mandir* or *koyil*. They are often ornate structures that feature elaborate carvings. These carvings are often scenes or characters from the great Epics of Hinduism, such as the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*, or images of various Hindu deities. Hindu temples vary considerably in their design and reflect the culture of the people they serve. The two most prominent forms are the northern (Nagara) and the southern (Dravida).

Temples are regarded as the earthly homes of the gods. They can range from simple shrines in fields or along roads to elaborate structures that are significant sacred sites. Usually a temple is built to honour a particular deity, but other gods may be worshipped there. Often images and shrines of several gods are included in the one temple. For example, the *mandir* at Helensburgh, south of Sydney, is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, but there is a statue of Ganesha (who is usually associated with the worship of Shiva) featured in the courtyard, and also a separate shrine to Shiva. Note that this temple follows a southern Indian (Dravida) style.

Temples are built to accommodate the worshippers of the Hindu deities. Each temple usually contains an image of a god (*murti*). The word *murti* is best translated as form or embodiment. The image is seen as an actual incarnation of a god, a form taken to receive worship. During a ceremony called *prana pratishta* (establishment of life) the image ceases to be a piece of stone or wood and becomes an actual presence of the god.

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Village temples, as well as special sacred sites such as the Ganges River, are places used for *puja*. At the temples, *puja* is an act of worship for the Hindu community, the adoration of the gods. One way of being involved in communal worship is by undertaking a pilgrimage to one of the many Hindu sacred sites. Special public events are often held on an annual basis, where many people come to celebrate and offer worship. This may include the acting out of some of the great Hindu Epics, such as the *Ramayana* story. At the Helensburgh temple, Ganesha Chaturthi is the biggest festival of the year.

Temples are usually comprised of several buildings, with a central main temple and several smaller shrines within a surrounding wall. Shrines at Hindu temples are where worshippers can go to offer their worship and to celebrate the festivals that honour the gods. Temple *puja* is not usually an organised service, but an opportunity for individuals and groups to worship together.

Most temples follow a particular design, with the requirements detailed in ancient writings called the *silpashastras*.

At the centre of most temples, built in a northern style, is a high tower that represents Mount Meru, the centre of the universe. The design of the temple follows the pattern of a mandala, a combination of circles and squares that represents the design of creation, with a central spire (*shikhara*) that holds the central image of the deity, usually in a dark, womblike shrine. This dark centre of the shrine where the deity resides is known as the *garbha griha* (womb). While some would say the design does not follow the pattern of a mandala, it is true that they are highly geometric and architecturally sophisticated.

Temple *puja* is always conducted by a priest and is usually an elaborate service that includes offerings to the deity of food, flowers, money, incense or other sacrifices. They are accompanied by chanting from the priest, usually texts from the Vedas. Often a priest will place a red mark on the forehead of a worshipper, called a *tilak*. A *tilak* usually indicates caste, marriage or membership within a variant Hindu sect. (These symbols are sometimes called bindis.)

The images of the gods (*murti*) are purified by washing them with ghee, milk products or honey. The priest is responsible for bathing, dressing and decorating the *murti* with flowers. Fire is often used and waved before the gods. There are readings from the sacred writings, chanting of prayers or mantras, and offerings of flowers, food and gifts are made to the gods, and bells are rung by the priest. The food that has been offered will then be shared among the worshippers.

Before entering a temple, devotees must purify themselves by performing ablutions and removing their shoes. Temple visits often include circumambulation in a clockwise direction, so that the shrine is always on the right, regarded as the spiritually purer side of the body. Many devotees experience the god through the viewing of the images (*darshan*). They may ask a favour, fulfil a vow, or share in the food offered to the deities (*prasada*) and thus experience the grace of the god. Holy water is used to convey blessing. The devotee will often pass their hands through the fire of the *arati* lamp to cleanse themselves.

Temple *puja* can extend through the day as people come and go with a sense of excitement and involvement. Most of the chants and rituals used by the priests are taken from the Vedas but often mantras for worship, particularly those used by the people, are taken from the *Puranas*.

Celebrations

Special celebrations are held to mark particular events or times of the year. These are often feasts and festivals. Many of these were primarily seasonal or agricultural festivals that have been given religious significance. Celebration of these festivals is part of the expression of *puja*. The more popular festivals acknowledge the birth of Rama, Krishna and Ganesha, the triumph of light over darkness or the *navaratri* (Durga *puja*).

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is one example of a festival with community religious observance. Diwali celebrates the New Year in many Hindu communities. It takes place around October/November. It is a time to worship Laksmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu and goddess of wealth and good fortune. While the new year is welcomed with signs of prosperity, it is also a time of acknowledging the triumph of good over evil

Figure 9.12 Hindu offering in a temple

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in the triumph of light over darkness. On the night of the new moon, Hindus offer light and food, especially sweets, to the deities. Often fireworks will follow the celebrations and worship.

It is common for Hindus to concentrate their worship on Lord Vishnu or Shiva, their consorts, avatars or related deities. When attending the temple for *puja*, many Hindus consider the following disciplines to be appropriate:

- washing and cleaning before going to the temple; in addition, ablutions will be performed, the washing of legs and hands
- being adorned with sacred symbols, such as ash
- taking an offering to give to the gods
- not wearing shoes within the temple
- appropriate prostration within the temple
- acknowledging the gods as the temple is entered
- thinking about the gods during worship
- chanting, praying, singing with appropriate behaviour
- donating money to the temple and priest
- returning frequently to the temple.

Worship is a daily ritual for most Hindus, performed in the home before the family shrine. In that context it is largely for the benefit of the individual. However, temple worship is also of great significance and part of the regular discipline of life for Hindus, and it takes on significance for both the individual and the community. The temple is a meeting place for Hindus, who will freely socialise at the temple when *puja* is being conducted.

Significance for the individual

While temple *puja* is a public event, it is much more an individual act. As well as the rituals conducted, the primary focus of temple *puja* is *darshan*. Temple *puja* is also an occasion to experience the grace of the gods, to perform rituals such as circumambulation and prayer, to make offerings and to seek personal cleansing. Thus, temple *puja* is extremely significant for the individual.

Significance for the community

Temple *puja* often accompanies celebrations where the community joins together. The temple can also be a cultural and educational centre, especially in Australia. In expatriate communities, such as in Australia's Indian communities, the temple becomes a significant cultural and educational centre, and the focus of community festivals and celebrations. In some ways, the temple *puja* is a statement of an institutional cultural and communal identity that transcends the actual *puja* ceremony itself.

EXERCISE 9.8

1 **Describe** the actions of temple *puja*. What is the significance of those actions?
2 **Explain** the Hindu beliefs that can be seen in the celebration of temple *puja*.
3 **Evaluate** the significance of temple *puja* for both the Hindu adherent and the community.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9.8

1 Draw a diagram of a traditional Hindu temple noting the various architectural features and their significance.
2 **Discuss** the following: 'If Hindu *puja* is primarily an individual act, why is temple *puja* important?' What importance does temple *puja* play in the life of adherents?
3 Research the role of chanting in Hindu temple worship and write a paragraph on its place in temple *puja*. What language is used and why is that significant?

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Shankara was an influential Hindu scholar who developed the concept of *advaita*.
- Shankara was a skilful debater and author of significant commentaries.
- Shankara's work is used today by Hindu scholars.
- Gandhi popularised Shankara's doctrines of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*.
- Gandhi sought to gain Indian independence through non-violence.
- Gandhi has influenced many people outside Hinduism through his approach to human rights.
- Gandhi has had a significant effect on Hindu ideas and teachings.
- Bioethics is concerned about the duty a Hindu must fulfil.
- Hindus are concerned about many aspects of the environment as it relates to the expression of God.
- Hinduism recognises pleasure as a natural part of human life.
- Hinduism has a long tradition of sexual expression in art and spirituality.
- Hindus generally have a conservative approach to sexual ethics within the confines of marriage.
- Hinduism is ambivalent to homosexuality in theory, but conservative in practice.
- Women in Hindu traditions are highly prominent as goddesses and deities.
- Women have been elected to high political positions such as prime minister and chief ministers.
- Marriage is a celebration of a significant stage of life.
- There are many cultural aspects as well as religious meaning to Hindu marriage.
- Pilgrimage is a central expression of Hindu practice.
- There are many sites that cater for Hindu pilgrims.
- Kumbha Mela, a significant Hindu pilgrimage, is the largest gathering of human beings in the world.
- Temple worship is a celebration of the presence of the gods on earth.
- There are significant rituals and practices associated with temple worship.

Figure 9.13 Sri Big Bull (Nandhi) Temple in Bangalore

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HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer either a three-part, 15-mark question, or a one-part extended essay of 20 marks. That is, EITHER a question from Section II OR a question from Section III.

SECTION II

Marks

Question 3 – Hinduism (15 marks)

(a) **Describe** Hindu ethical teachings in ONE of the following areas: **3**

- Bioethics
- Environmental ethics
- Sexual ethics.

(b) **Analyse** the impact of ONE significant individual or school of thought, other than the Vedas, on Hinduism. **6**

(c) **Analyse** the importance of ONE significant practice in Hinduism in relation to the Hindu community. The practice described must be one of the following practices: **6**

- Marriage
- Pilgrimage
- Temple *puja*.

SECTION III

Question 3 – Hinduism (20 marks)

Evaluate the contribution of ONE significant person or school of thought, other than the Vedas, to Hinduism as a living religious tradition. **20**

OR

> Perform all your actions with mind concentrated on the Divine, renouncing attachment and looking upon success and failure with an equal eye.
> *BHAGAVAD GITA*

With reference to the quotation, and an ethical area AND/OR a significant practice, analyse Hinduism as a living religious tradition. **20**

Figure 9.14 A man reads from the *Bhagavad Gita*

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TEN

ISLAM: THE BASIC FACTS

[YEAR 11 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

In a World where people are surrounded by darkness, ignorance and fear, it is a sign of hope to be celebrating Islam's message of peace and light, and the last great Messenger, born and chosen to deliver them to all mankind.

YUSUF ISLAM, ENGLISH MUSICIAN
(FORMERLY KNOWN BY HIS STAGE NAME, CAT STEVENS)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the nature of the society and the religious practices of the people of the Arabian Peninsula before the Prophet Muhammad
- the significant events in the life of the Prophet and why he is the model for a good Muslim life
- the rapid development of Islam during and after the life of the Prophet
- the rise of the Sunni and Shi'a Islam
- the principal beliefs in Islam
- the importance of the Qur'an (Koran) and the Hadith to Muslims
- the sacred texts that highlight principal beliefs in Islam
- the principal ethical teachings of Islam
- Islamic jurisprudence
- the importance of law and ethics to Muslims
- the Five Pillars of the Islamic faith.

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TIMELINE

- **circa 570 CE** — Muhammad ibn Abdullahis born
- **circa 555–619 CE** — Life of Khadijah bint Khuwaylid – an Arabian business woman, Muhammad's first wife, and the first woman to convert to Islam
- **622 CE** — Attacked in his home town for his call to monotheism, Muhammad leaves Mecca for Medina. This is called the Hijra and is year 1 of the Islamic calendar. In Medina he is recognised as both Prophet and the Leader of the City.
- **613–78 CE** — Life of A'isha bint Abu Bakr – prominent early female Muslim scholar, regarded as the Prophet's favourite wife
- **circa 605–32 CE** — Life of Fatima Al Zahra – the daughter of Muhammad
- **632 CE** — The Prophet Muhammad dies. Leadership of the Muslim community passes to the first of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs in the immediate post-prophetic period.
- **661 CE** — The Caliphate becomes a monarchy under the Umayyad clan. The governing centre of the Muslim community is moved from Medina to Damascus.
- **680 CE** — Hussein (grandson of Muhammad through Ali and Fatima) dies. His followers form into Shi'a Islam.
- **circa 711 CE** — Muslim armies begin their conquest of Spain.
- **circa 732 CE** — Battles in south of France (especially at Tours) stop Muslim expansion into France and the rest of Western Europe
- **750s CE** — Abdul (or Abd al-) Rahman, scion of the Ummayads, establishes a rival Caliphate in Cordoba, Spain, leading to 700-year rule of Muslims in southern Spain
- **750 CE** — The Umayyad Caliphate passes to the Abbasid clan.
- **762 CE** — Baghdad becomes the new capital for the Abbasid Dynasty. For several centuries, Baghdad and Cordoba compete as the great global centres for culture and learning.
- **786 CE** — The House of Wisdom, academy and intellectual centre, is established in Baghdad spearheading scientific revolution in the Muslim world.
- **874 CE** — Muhammad al-Mahdi, the 12th and last Imam in the Shi'a tradition, disappears
- **1095–99 CE** — Muslims defend themselves from constant attacks by Christian soldiers of the First Crusade in and around Jerusalem.

(Timeline continued on next page)

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

Islam has become one of the most widespread religious traditions in the modern world but is often misunderstood and misrepresented. Reasons for this may be the popular media focus on terrorist activity and differing social customs and practices. By focusing on these differences, the media often ignores the vast body of Islamic thought and tradition that has developed since Islam was founded 1400 years ago in the Arabian Peninsula. Islam is the second-largest world religion. As it has spread throughout the world, it has taken on a multitude of expressions, as peoples of different regions have adapted Islam to suit the demands of their own lives. Islam is more than a set of beliefs; it is a religion that has deep spirituality and involves ethical guidelines for everyday life, including daily ritual and prayer. The difficulty any student of Islam faces is that they need to understand there is a range of basic beliefs in this religion that brings a common spiritual purpose to members of this faith, and yet Islam is by no means a single system of faith. We might say that there are three general divisions in Islam, although the fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam including the scriptures are the same.

1. **Theological differences** on secondary beliefs and ideas on authority between Sunni and Shi'a Islam
2. **Cultural differences** between Muslims as Islam spread throughout the world, resulting differences in some aspects of Islamic law
3. **Differences in the methods of revival of Islam** in the modern era and whether Muslims should follow secularism or an Islamic vision for society.

Mecca (sometimes Makka or Makkah)
City in modern Saudi Arabia where Muhammad lived and received his first revelations; spiritual centre of the Muslim world and focus of the Hajj

Medina (Madinat al-Nabiy)
City of the prophet (also sometimes Madina or Madinah), a few hundred kilometres north of Mecca; the Prophet Muhammad migrated there in 622 CE

Bedouin
Arab desert nomad

Zoroastrianism
A Persian-based religion founded on the idea that there is a continuous struggle between a god who represents good (Ahura Mazda) and a god who represents evil (Angra Mainyu)

Clan
A small group of families

Tribe
A group of clans

Age of Ignorance
Islamic term for pre-Islamic life, a translation of the word *Jahiliyyah*

Ka'ba
Literally 'cube'; a building in Mecca believed by Muslims to represent the presence of Allah

Polytheism
Worship of many (*poly*) gods (*theos*)

10.2 ORIGINS

Pre-Islamic Arabia: the cultural and historical context of the rise of Islam

Islam began in the Arabian Peninsula about 1400 years ago with its prophet Muhammad, who lived in **Mecca** and then **Medina**.

Before Islam, the Arabian Peninsula was inhabited by **Bedouin** (or nomadic) tribes as well as settled communities. The peninsula was home to a wide range of largely polytheistic religious faiths, and also Judaism, Christianity, **Zoroastrianism**. Complicating this picture, the peninsula was bordered by the Byzantine Empire in the north-west, the Sassanid Empire to the north-east and Yemenite rulers to the south.

The settlements that existed in the peninsula were engaged in pastoral, agricultural and trading activities. Trade was perhaps the most important of these and the camel trains of Arabia facilitated the transfer of goods from India and the far east to the countries around the Mediterranean. One major trading post of the peninsula was Mecca, Muhammad's birthplace.

The social and religious conditions of Arabia

The most important social network among peoples of the peninsula was their connection to their **clan**, family and **tribe**. There was no sense of a central national identity among the Arab people. A person's identity and security were based on their membership of their clan. If someone in the clan was wronged, it was the responsibility of other clan members to avenge that wrong. The peninsula intermittently broke out in blood feuds between these clans, as each group took vengeance for the wrongs they considered had been inflicted on their members. Pre-Islamic society is commonly referred to by Muslims as the **Age of Ignorance** or *Jahiliyyah*, meaning that Islam educated and liberated them. Women in this society were treated differently under different traditions held by various tribes. In some tribes, women had a low status because they were not permitted to participate in warfare; in others, however, they were able to become businesswomen of significant wealth. Muhammad's first wife, Khadijah, was an example of this. She operated camel trains for trade and profit.

The **Ka'ba** (in Arabic: cube) is Mecca's most sacred religious site. It is believed by Muslims to have been built much earlier by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael (centuries before Muhammad) and renovated from time to time. Muslims believe it was the first house of worship dedicated to the One God. By the time Muhammad was born, the Ka'ba was a central worshipping place for local clans and for traders passing through Mecca. It contained statues to the various gods and goddesses worshipped by different tribes in Arabia. That is, it was a **polytheistic** temple. Before Islam

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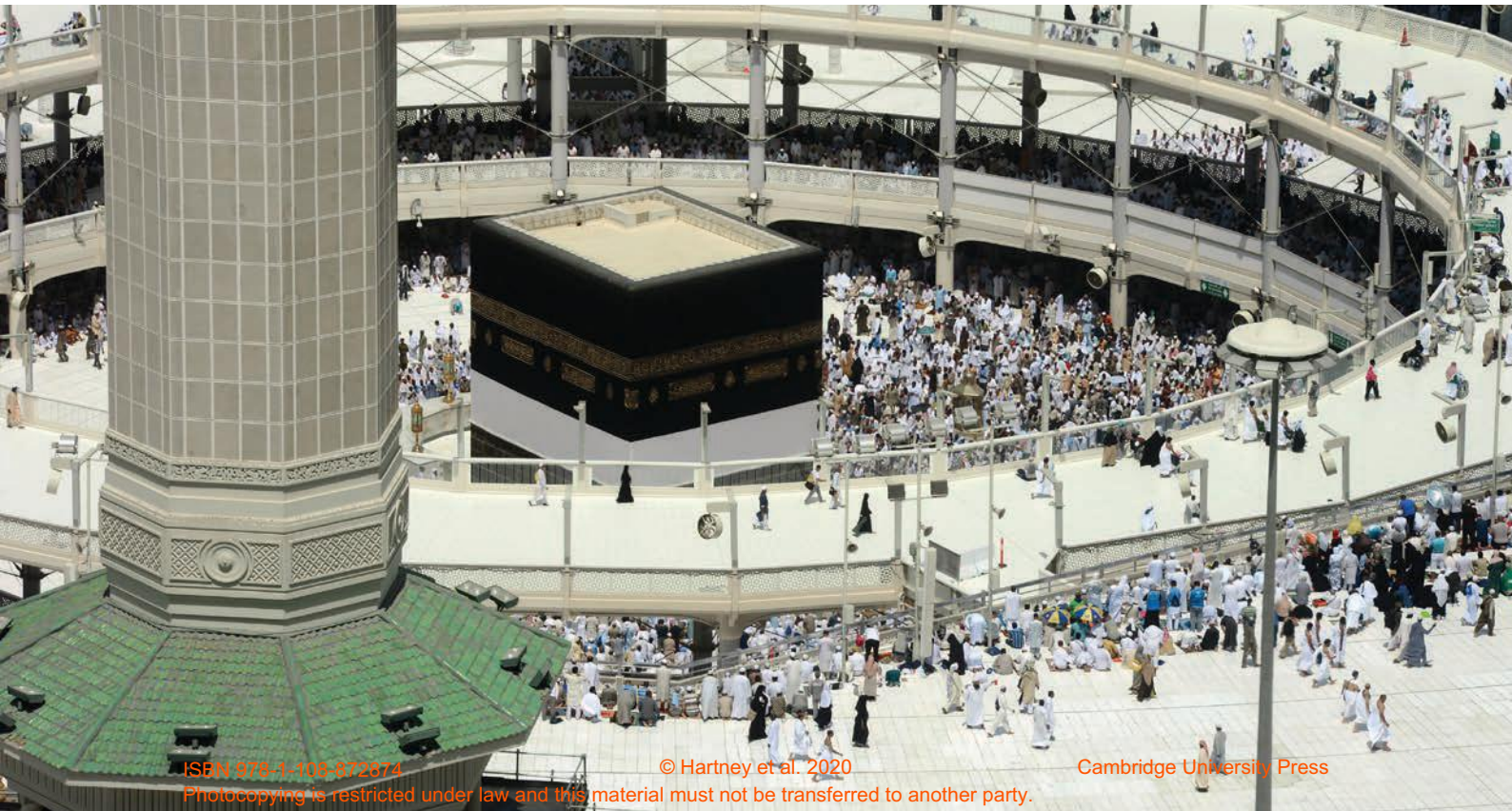
Figure 10.1 The Arabian Peninsula, showing the cities of Mecca and Medina

emerged, people in and around Mecca worshipped multiple gods and it is reported that there were 360 idols placed in or around the Ka'ba. Allah (God) was also worshipped by some of these Arabs, but only as the supreme transcendent god among a range of other earthly gods. The three primary gods, Lat, Manat and Uzza, were believed to be three daughters of Allah and were also very popular deities. Before the rise of Islam, the Ka'ba had been a pilgrimage site for generations, where nomadic tribes worshipped their gods.

Figure 10.2 The Ka'ba is Mecca's most sacred religious site



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10.3 THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Muhammad's life

Muhammad was born in or around the year 570 CE. He became the **prophet** of Islam. Muslims have counted many figures as prophets. They believe the first prophet was Adam (Qur'an 2:37) and they also consider the biblical prophets such as Abraham, Joseph and Moses to be prophets of Islam. They also accept Jesus as one of the most significant messengers of God (but not the son of God). There are 25 prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'an. All these figures are considered vital to the conveying of God's message to humanity, but Muhammad is special to Muslims because he is called the last of the prophets and the seal of the prophetic tradition.

Prophet
An inspired teacher, a guide sent by God; to deliver messages from heaven

Caravans
Company of travellers journeying together on camels

Angel
Comes from the Greek *angelos* and refers to a messenger from heaven

> We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in Books revealed to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our devotion.
>
> QUR'AN 3:84

The Qur'an, which means recitation, is a collection of messages revealed to Muhammad by God (Allah) via the agency of the Archangel Gabriel. Muhammad was charged with conveying this message to all humanity. Muhammad is seen as by Muslims as a normal human (albeit one of exceptional character and spiritual depth), and they see the Qur'an as the great sacred miracle of their faith. Muslims believe this book was revealed by God to perfect and complete the earlier revelations such as the Torah, which was revealed to Moses, and the Gospels (in Arabic: *Injil*), revealed to Jesus. They understand the Qur'an to be the highest and most authentic authority. Muhammad is thus set apart from other men in the Islam world because he was the instrument by which a new revelation from God was conveyed.

Muhammad was born in the town of Mecca into the Quraysh tribe. This was the main tribe in Mecca at that time and responsible for the upkeep of the Ka'ba. Muhammad's father died just before he was born. His mother died when he was six. Muhammad was cared for by his grandfather and later by his uncle, Abu Talib, who became Muhammad's protector in later life. As soon as he was old enough, Muhammad began to earn a living. He did not learn to read or write, which was not uncommon at the time. He gained a reputation very early in life for being scrupulously honest, and was given the nickname *al-amin* (meaning trustworthy) and often called upon to be a settler of disputes.

Like many of his fellow citizens of Mecca, Muhammad began his work as a shepherd and later as a trader on the **caravans** – these were camel trains that carried goods across Arabia. The owner of Muhammad's caravan was a wealthy widow named Khadijah. She was impressed by Muhammad's skills and honesty, and when he was 25 years of age she asked him to marry her. He agreed (Kadijah was about 40 years of age). While Khadijah was alive, Muhammad had no other wives. Their most significant child was Fatima, who went on to establish a lineage of the Prophet that plays an important part in the future of Islam.

It was Muhammad's habit to leave Mecca for reflection or meditation in the mountains nearby. In 610 CE, at the age of 40, it is believed that he had the experience of seeing an **angel** one day while he was contemplating in a cave. Many sacred texts speak of angels. They are thought to be made of light. Some are depicted as being sent by God to convey messages to certain individuals or prophets. Muslims believe this angel was the Archangel Gabriel. With his first words, the angel commanded Muhammad to read. This command was given three times and each time Muhammad replied by saying 'I do not know what to read'. Then the angel recited the first five verses to be revealed to Muhammad. Muhammad, who was frightened by the experience, rushed back home, told Khadijah what had happened, and was worried that he might be going mad. She supported him by suggesting that God would not forsake him as he was a person of good character and repute. For the next three years, Muhammad continued to receive more revelations and slowly began to teach these messages to people who were closest to him: his family and close friends. Muhammad preached that there was only one God (monotheism) and the importance of piety, prayer, good works and essential equality of all humans.

Muhammad began to teach the people of Mecca about the messages he was receiving. At first only a few people would listen. His core message was strictly monotheistic: there was only one god, Allah, and that God alone should be worshipped. The Meccans were polytheists, so leading figures of Mecca began to oppose him. They persecuted his followers when they could, and they made life very difficult for Muhammad. If Muhammad had not had the protection of his uncle and clan, he might have been killed. A number of his followers were persecuted and killed. After 12 years of teaching and preaching, and with the level of persecution increasing, Muhammad and his followers had to flee Mecca and seek protection elsewhere.

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When Muhammad began telling people about the revelations he had received, many criticised him for being a poet or a soothsayer. There are a number of verses from the Qur'an denying that Muhammad was a soothsayer; see 69:38–52.

Thankfully for him and Islam, there was a town about 450 kilometres north of Mecca that was eager to welcome him. Yathrib was a town with many problems. Tribes in the town fought incessantly with each other. There was also a sizeable Jewish community. People in Yathrib had heard of Muhammad, and his ability to make peace and arbitrate in disputes. They liked Muhammad's teachings of peace and asked him to come and to assist them in their disputes. Many accepted his teachings and became Muslims even before he arrived. Once an understanding was agreed upon with the Muslims of Yathrib, Muhammad asked his followers in Mecca to leave the town and migrate to Yathrib. Muhammad was last to leave, in 622 CE.

The escape from Mecca to Yathrib (which is now called Medina) was called the **Hijra** or migration. It is an important date. It was from this time that the Muslims shifted from being a small, persecuted group nestled in Mecca to a powerful religious force in Arabia. The year of the Hijra was later set as the beginning of the Muslim lunar calendar and the term A.H. (Anno Hijra) is sometimes used to signify the Muslim year in Western texts.

In Yathrib, Muhammad and his followers established the first community of Muslims. The name of the town was changed to Medina (short for *Madinat al-Nabiy*), which means city of the prophet. Muhammad lived in Medina as the leader of the Muslim community and the entire city population. With great care, he introduced laws that were fair and ensured stability in the city. Moreover, he carried out a social revolution in the town that would soon spread to the entire peninsula. Muhammad became not only a religious leader but an astute statesman and political leader.

Sometime around 619 CE, while still in Mecca, Khadijah died. Muhammad went on to marry a number of women; some of these were for love, while others secured his community by developing connections with other powerful tribes. Some of these marriages were also for the purpose of caring for those who did not have any means of support.

When Muhammad settled in Medina, his teaching spread and the number of his followers increased. The people of Mecca were unhappy that Muslims now had a safe refuge and were in a position to block the trade route to the north. Between the Muslims and their opponents in Mecca, a number of battles took place. Each time, Muhammad and the Medinans were able to repel the forces of Mecca. The first, and among the most important, was at Badr in 624 CE. Gradually the number of followers of Muhammad, as well as their power, increased and the tide turned. After 624 CE, several more battles took place but the Medinans usually got the better of the Meccans. A truce was negotiated in 628 CE. This permitted Muhammad and his followers to make a pilgrimage back to the Ka'ba. In 630 CE, after Meccans broke the treaty, Muhammad marched with his forces to Mecca but waited outside the city. The Meccans were worried they would be wiped out. However, Muhammad did not carry out a bloody revenge against them. He declared a general amnesty. His focus was the idols placed in the Ka'ba. Muhammad rode his camel to the Ka'ba, dismounted, and the idols were destroyed. From this point on, the Ka'ba would only be used to worship the One God, Allah. This worship would not use statues or idols. Most of the people of Mecca converted to Islam shortly after this event.

Hijra
The year Muhammad left Mecca (622 CE); this became the first year of the Muslim calendar

Although Muhammad had made his home in Medina, Mecca remained the holiest place in the Islamic faith. Not long before his death, the Prophet received a last series of messages or revelations from Allah through the Archangel Gabriel. These stressed that Allah's message to humanity had been completed and the Qur'an was the final message of Allah to humanity. Muhammad completed one last pilgrimage to Mecca before his death. This became known as the Farewell Pilgrimage. In 632 CE, he died at the age of 63. After Muhammad's death, Islam continued to spread from the peninsula and around the world.

Figure 10.3 The Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia

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Muhammad as the role model for Muslim life

How Muhammad became the prophet of Allah is well documented. Sections of the Qur'an, the Hadith (his sayings and actions, compiled after his death) and a number of biographies written after his death, all tell us about Muhammad. From these sources we get a view of a man who was honest in the extreme, caring and loving, and a very careful administrator of the early Muslim community. In these Islamic texts, Muhammad stands out as the model of ideal personhood for Muslims. Ultimately, he is renowned as a quintessential Muslim who was faithful to Allah, despite the struggles he faced. Thus, Muhammad becomes a model of life and submission to Allah for all Muslims.

EXERCISE 10.1

1 **Outline** the main features of society on the Arabian Peninsula at the time of Muhammad.
2 **Explain** the significance of the Ka'ba, before and after the time of Muhammad.
3 **Describe** the importance of Muhammad and his influence on the development of Islam.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.1

1 **Construct** a timeline of the life of Muhammad, indicating the key dates and events.
2 Research the time and person of Muhammad and write a paragraph about why you think Muhammad was able to achieve what he did.
3 Talk to a Muslim person and ask their opinion on Muhammad as the model for Muslim life.
4 There are mosques right across New South Wales and throughout the suburbs of Sydney. See if you can contact one and plan a visit. The busiest time of the week is the Friday midday prayer, so it is best to avoid visiting at this time.

10.4 ISLAM AFTER THE PROPHET

Caliph
Literally 'successor' or 'steward'; a person who makes religious and political decisions for the Muslim community

After the death of Muhammad, it was considered important to have people appointed as his political successors, to continue the spread of Islam and manage the new Muslim nation. The first four successors are called the Four Rightly Guided **Caliphs** *(al Khulafa' al Rashidin)*

The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs

For 30 years or so after the Prophet's death, Muslim community affairs were managed by Four Rightly Guided Caliphs:

- Abu Bakr (reigned 632–634 CE)
- Umar (or Omar) (634–644)
- Uthman (644–656)
- Ali (656–661).

The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs were companions of the Prophet and entrusted to be 'stewards' of the new faith of Islam. They were all elected by the Muslim community for their seniority as companions of the Prophet and their competence in leadership. They were all related to Muhammad by marriage and the last, Ali, was also Muhammad's cousin.

Spread of the community under Abu Bakr (632–634 CE)

The growth of Islam continued after Muhammad's death. Abu Bakr (573–634 CE) was one of Muhammad's closest friends, and as father to Muhammad's wife A'isha, he was also the Prophet's father-in-law. He was the first adult male follower of the Prophet and a close adviser. His election by the Muslim community was a signal that Islam would be led by the best men in the community rather than by blood relations from the Prophet's family alone. The election of Abu Bakr set a democratic precedent, but not everyone was happy. A significant section of the community wanted Ali to rule. Ali was both Muhammad's cousin and, through his marriage to the Prophet's daughter Fatima, his son-in-law. Some Muslims wanted someone of the bloodline of the Prophet to lead the community.

Abu Bakr compiled the Qur'an in a volume for the first time. He concentrated on defending the community at Medina from a number of surrounding tribes. These tribes had been Muslim, but some recanted their political allegiance and faith after Muhammad's death. Abu Bakr also sent an expedition, which had been planned by Muhammad, into Syria, making Damascus one of the first great urban centres to come under Muslim control. Umar, who would later be appointed as the next caliph, worked intimately with Abu Bakr in the management of Medina and the wider Islamic community.

Expansion under Umar (634–644 CE)

Abu Bakr died in 634 CE, having led the community for only two years. Umar was nominated by Abu Bakr to be his successor and the community elected him. He sent several expeditions to expand the borders

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Figure 10.4 The entry of Umar into Jerusalem, 638 CE. Umar was one of the most powerful and influential Muslim caliphs in history.

of the Muslim state. Under his caliphate, the Persian Empire and a large part of the Byzantine Empire fell to the Muslims, Jerusalem was captured and Egypt came under Muslim rule.

Umar was an organiser of exceptional abilities. He was credited with organising a standing army. He was an effective administrator of conquered territories and was influential in the development of financial and legal institutions including social services.

Umar was stabbed by a Persian slave in Medina, leading to his death. But just before his death he had to deal with the issue of succession. After much discussion, he nominated six leading companions of the Prophet and asked them to choose one of them as the new caliph within three days after his death. After much discussion and debate, they chose Uthman ibn Affan, another early convert to Islam, and a son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad.

Uthman (644–656 CE)

Uthman came from a powerful Meccan clan called the Umayyads. He encouraged the spread of Islam across northern Africa and into central Asia. Under Uthman, many grievances arose in the community. This was partly due to pressure on the community from its rapid expansion, and partly due to a number of Uthman's senior appointments. He upset many people with the appointment of members of his own Umayyad clan to governorships and other choice positions – something that the previous caliphs had tried to avoid. Towards the end of his rule, his opponents claimed that he indulged in **nepotism**. They worked hard to overthrow him by fomenting discontent within the community. Significant division occurred within the community and increasing opposition led to the murder of the caliph by rebels in 656 CE. Uthman established a committee of senior companions to produce an authoritative copy of the Qur'an codified in the Meccan dialect. Copies were sent to major Muslim cities as master copies. It is Uthman's version of the Qur'an that remains the authorised version in use today.

Nepotism
From the Latin word for nephew; unjustified promotion of one's relatives to positions of authority

Preparing the Qur'an

The caliphs collected the revelations Muhammad received via the Archangel Gabriel. These were both written out and memorised. People wrote them as personal passages, so there was no way of knowing if they were written correctly. During his lifetime, Muhammad asked some of his followers to write down many portions of the revelations, while other parts were committed to memory by many people, either completely or as large chucks of the text. Given that reading and writing were not very common in large parts of Arabia at the time, people often memorised important texts and this was as valid a system of recording as writing. This meant, however, that not all the revelations of the Prophet were collected in the

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Figure 10.5 The Qur'an, revealed by Allah to Muhammad, was standardised under the rule of Uthman

form of a written document (or in a book) before his death. Muslim tradition holds that it was during the time of Abu Bakr that the first collection of revelations in book form was made. This collection was later codified in the Meccan dialect and a standard text of the Qur'an was distributed throughout the Muslim caliphate when Uthman was in charge.

Division during the caliphate of Ali (656–661 CE)

The leaders of Medina, after the sudden death of Uthman, appointed Ali to the caliphate. But despite Ali's position as the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, more division in the Muslim community ensued. One of the decisions that enraged many Muslims was Ali's refusal to swiftly punish those who had killed Uthman.

Sunni
The majority expression of Islam who claim to follow the Qur'an and *sunna* (example) of the Prophet Muhammad

Shi'a
The second-largest Islamic group, Shi'a Muslims believe that Muhammad's descendants are best suited to lead the Muslim community

A number of key companions joined with A'isha to punish the killers of Uthman themselves. This soon turned into an opposition force against Ali. A'isha was now a widow of the Prophet. She was the daughter of Abu Bakr and an authority on Islamic law and the sayings of the Prophet. (See Chapter 11 for more details about A'isha.) This division led to a battle between Ali's forces and those of A'isha. A'isha's forces marched against Ali in the Battle of the Camel. This took place near Basra (in modern-day Iraq). Eventually Ali won this battle.

Other voices of dissent also arose, particularly among the Kharijites (who were initially supporters of Ali but deserted him because of a key decision he made regarding another opponent: Muawiyah, the Governor of Syria). The Kharijites believed strongly in both the need for the community to elect their leaders and, if that leader did not prove true to the tenets of Islam, that the community retained the right to depose him. Ali spent much time and effort trying to eradicate this group. While this was happening, Muawiyah, a kinsman of Uthman and the Governor of Syria, refused to accept Ali as caliph. Muawiyah expanded his control of the Muslim lands north of Arabia. He soon claimed to be caliph himself. When Ali was assassinated by a Kharijite in 661 CE, Muawiyah became the unopposed caliph. In more than 20 years of rule, Muawiyah slowly laid the foundation of the Umayyad caliphate as a monarchy.

The end of the elected caliphs

At the end of his life, Muawiyah (who ruled from 661 CE to 680 CE) was able to secure the caliphate for his son. In this way, the leadership of the Muslim world became a hereditary monarchy. The Umayyads ruled from Damascus, the new seat of Islamic power, until they were overthrown by the competing monarchy of the Abbasids, in 750 CE. By this time, Islam rule had spread to southern Europe, central Asia, to borders of China and India as well as to North Africa. Under the first four caliphs, Islam's expansion had been phenomenal. Under Ali's rule, however, a major split in the Islamic world began to emerge that would never be resolved. This was the division on the issue of leadership. In time, it coalesced as the **Sunni** (or mainstream) group of Muslims and those who were considered **Shi'a** or the party of Ali.

Sunni and Shi'a Islam

Sunni Islam

Sunni is a word that comes from *sunna*, the practices of the community at large or generally accepted practices of the Prophet and the early Muslims. This group (Sunnis) presents itself as the orthodox expression of Islam with its focus on the authority of the Qur'an, *sunna* and the community. It represents approximately 80 per cent of all Muslims today. Sunnis consider that there is nothing special or divine about their leaders – except that they have the necessary skills of governance and are educated in religious law so that they can competently lead a Muslim community.

Shi'a Islam

When the principal beliefs of Islam are examined, there is no great difference in practice to be seen between Sunni and Shi'a (or Shia) Islam. Shi'a, which means 'the party of Ali', are those Muslims who ascribe a central place to the caliph Ali, and the descendants of the Prophet through Ali's sons from Fatima, in the transmission of authority

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over the Islamic community. They believe that the early community should have appointed Ali, as a relative of the Prophet, to lead the community straight after the Prophet's death. Most Shi'a live in Iraq and Iran. Iran is the main centre for Shi'a activity. However, Shi'a are also found in most parts of the world.

The assassination of Ali is mourned in Shi'a Islam, as is the death of Ali's two sons Hussein and Hassan and a number of other early Shi'a imams (or leaders). In ritual observances, Shi'a differ in only a few areas; for example, the celebration on the 10th day of the lunar month of Muharram is the festival of remembrance or Ashura. This date commemorates the death of Hussein, son of Ali, at Karbala (680 CE). Shi'a Muslims gather at mosques and elsewhere and, if they can, at the shrine of Hussein in Karbala and openly mourn. It is a remembrance of intense sadness and regret.

Islam in Australia

Islam may have come to Australia as early as the 1400s, and certainly by the eighteenth century when Macassan fishermen visited the northern and western Australian coasts. More significant arrivals were the 'Ghans' (or Afghans), camel drivers who helped transport supplies through the outback. Following World War II, significant numbers of Muslims came from the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world, and Islam was firmly established as a religious tradition in Australia. See Chapters 2 and 3 on religion in Australia.

EXERCISE 10.2

1 **Describe** the development of Islam under the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs.
2 **Outline** what issues emerged under the leadership of each of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs and how they were resolved.
3 **Explain** the split between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, emphasising the how and why.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.2

1 Research some of the early conflicts of Islam. **Assess,** for example, why the 'Battle of the Camel' was so significant.
2 **Construct** an annotated timeline from the death of Muhammad to about 1000 CE, illustrating the development of Islam as a global religious tradition.
3 Islam is often depicted in the media as a violent religion. Debate this idea, drawing upon the life and example of Muhammad, the influence of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, the Crusades and modern examples. Beware of simplistic answers.
4 Look up online videos of Ashura festivals. **Identify** if the sadness of Shi'a Muslims is evident in the festival.
5 **Investigate** if there is a Shi'a mosque near you. There are a few in New South Wales but they are not as numerous as Sunni mosques.

10.5 PRINCIPAL BELIEFS

The articles of faith are known as the Aqida (or Aqidah), and they identify the essential beliefs of Islam. These essential beliefs include:

- the oneness of Allah [God] (*tawhid*)
- angels (*mala'ika*)
- revealed Books of Allah (*Kutubullah*)
- prophets (*rusul*)
- life after death (*al-akhira*)
- fate/predestination or divine knowledge and determination *(al-qadar)*.

Tawhid (or the unity of God/Allah)

The key **doctrine** and belief in Islam is the concept of monotheism. When Gabriel revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad, this one God was named Allah. Allah means 'the God' in Arabic. Allah is understood to be eternal, almighty and omnipotent and unlike any creation, and Muslims should worship only Allah. The *shahada* or basic Islamic confession of faith states: 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet'. This statement is the entry to the Islamic community. It is the phrase that a new Muslim declares in order to convert. It is also a constant chant on the lips of the faithful each day. The first part of the statement reflects the unity/oneness (or *tawhid*) of Allah.

Doctrine
A body of teachings that form the basis of a belief system

Allah cannot be represented in visual or symbolic form. Muslims do reflect, however, on the **99 names of Allah** given in the Qur'an and how they are manifested in the universe. Many of these names reflect his superlative characteristics, such as 'the most gracious', 'the most merciful', 'the forgiving', 'the thankful' and so on. They seek to describe God with attributes humans can understand.These names are also often used as a part of the decoration of a mosque.

99 names of Allah
The names used in the Qur'an to refer to Allah

Video

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Figure 10.6 Mosaic tile work with inscription 'Allah' in Arabic. The *shahada* states, 'There is no god but the God and Muhammad is his messenger'

Angels and *jinn*

Another feature of Muslim belief is the existence of angels and ***jinn***. In Islam, angels are beings created from light. They worship God and follow God's commands in the way God actively creates things and events in the universe. *Jinn*, on the other hand, are spirits and forces that can be good or malevolent.

Jinn
Spirits that can be good or malevolent

These creatures cannot be perceived by humans, but nevertheless exist and influence believers. Angels are the purest beings created by Allah, created from light, and submit to his will in everything. Qur'an 35:1 explains how angels do Allah's bidding and carry messages. The most famous example of this in the Muslim world is the way the Archangel Gabriel carried the Qur'an from Allah to Muhammad. The Qur'an also tells of angels who rip out the hearts of the wicked and gently draw out the souls of those good people who are dying (Qur'an 79:1–5). Angels do not have gender and do not eat or drink. They are created to worship God and to perform his tasks.

Jinn are mentioned in many suras (chapters of the Qur'an). They were created by smokeless fire before Adam. They seem to have bodies and are often addressed in the Qur'an collectively with humans.

Books of Allah

Muslims also believe in the scriptures from Allah from the beginning of humanity. Muslims believe Allah has revealed his truth through many scriptures including:

- the Scrolls of Abraham (now lost)
- the Torah of Moses
- the Psalms of David
- the Gospels of Jesus
- the Qur'an (as revealed to Muhammad).

There is a belief among many Muslims that much of the scriptures revealed before Muhammad have either been lost over time or distorted. The Qur'an, they believe, is now the most reliable book in the explication of Allah's word.

The Qur'an remains the primary and ultimate source of guidance for Muslims today. There are other levels of authority that amplify the Qur'an or cover life issues that it does not clearly address.

Rusul or prophets

Rusul means 'messengers' or 'prophets'. The idea that Allah has sent prophets to different societies at different times is central to Muslim belief. Muslim tradition holds that, over time, thousands of prophets have been sent to deliver religious messages to humanity. There are 25 mentioned in the Qur'an. According to the *shahada*, the confession of faith, Muhammad is a prophet of God but this does not suggest that he is the only prophet of God. Thus, other prophets such as Jesus and Moses are relevant to Muslim life, as long as it is recognised that, of all the prophets, Muhammad holds the distinct place of being the last, and of completing the messages sent by God. It is believed that prophets live sinless lives, thus the record of the life of Muhammad (the Hadith) is a significant guide to life.

When speaking or writing about the Prophet, Muslims often use the phrase 'peace be upon him' or the letters PBUH after the name of the Prophet as a mark of respect.

Al-akhira – life after death, heaven, hell, resurrection of the body and the day of judgement

The Qur'an mentions that, after life, each soul experiences an intermediate period (Qur'an 23:99–100), suspended between death and resurrection. When the resurrection (*qiyamah*) is called by Allah, sometime in the future, every human who has ever lived is brought to judgement before Allah. Souls are either punished for their sins or rewarded for their goodness. In this way, life is a test (Qur'an 67:2).

Jannah is the name given to paradise. It is mentioned in the Qur'an as a place of supreme joy (Qur'an 32:17). In Qur'an 52:20 it says that believers 'will recline on thrones arranged in ranks'.

The other realm where souls can go after judgement is *jahannam*, which is hell or hellfire. There is a debate among Muslims about whether hell is eternal and if evildoers remain there forever, or if is a place where punishment is exacted and the purified soul will be eventually released to heaven. The Qur'an (6:160) suggests that punishment only relates to the particular crime committed. Many argue that this suggests Allah would not keep a soul in hell indefinitely, but the more widely held belief is that disbelievers in God remain in hell forever.

Fate and predestination – divine knowledge and determination

Note: Fate and predestination are not endorsed terms by the majority opinion in both Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. They prefer the term 'divine knowledge and determination'.

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CONSIDER

Read this verse and consider your own interpretation: 'He that does good shall have ten times as much to his credit. He that does evil shall only be repaid according to his evil: no wrong shall be done to any of them' (Qur'an 6:160).

What do you think it means? Does it mean that people will be released from hell? Talk it through with other people.

According to Islamic thought, angels and other beings have submitted completely to the will of Allah and thus have no free will, but humans do. This is why, as the Qur'an and other texts state, there will be a judgement for humans at the end of time. This choice of free will for humans does not, however, supersede the knowledge of Allah, who knows what humans will choose. This balance between free will and the omniscience of Allah lies at the heart of an ongoing debate among Islamic scholars as to exactly how human free will is reconciled with the predetermination of an all-mighty, all-knowing deity. Thus, some Qur'anic verses seem to teach a fatalistic attitude to life. Others, however, seem to suggest otherwise. Everything that happens on Earth is believed to be known and acknowledged by Allah's will. Despite this, the majority opinion is that God's knowledge of human actions and choices does not force humans to make those choices. This has led Muslim philosophers to speculate on the ability of a human to have free will. Qur'an 7:188 emphasises the totality of Allah's will.

> Say … I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as Allah wills. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith.

Moreover, Qur'an 64:11 suggests that no disaster can strike without God's permission. Muslims may say to each other the Arabic phrase, '*Insha Allah*' which means, 'If it is God's will'. This invokes God's blessing but also acknowledges the foreknowledge and permissive will of Allah (see Qur'an 18:24). There are also examples of the emphasis of free will in the Qur'an. Muslims are keen to suggest that predestination is not the same as fatalism. It does not negate the freedom of people to choose actions. Thus, people are responsible for their choices.

EXERCISE 10.3

1 **Define** what *tawhid* means for Muslim belief and daily life.
2 **Describe** the Books of Allah and their importance in Islam.
3 **Recall** what Muslim people believe about angels and *jinn*.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.3

1 Search online for '99 names of Allah' to see a list and explanation of these names. You might note that the same English word is given in translation for several Arabic terms – this indicates nuances in Arabic that cannot be translated into English.
2 Research and write a paragraph answering the questions: 'How can a Muslim be certain they will go to paradise?' and 'What will paradise be like?'
3 Research and debate the following topic: '*Insha Allah*' – Islam is a religious tradition that just emphasises fatalism.

10.6 SACRED TEXTS AND WRITINGS

Islam is based on the revelations of Allah to Muhammad. The record of that revelation constitutes the Qur'an, the central Muslim text. Note that the word Qur'an is sometimes spelled Koran, especially in English publications. These are two ways of transliterating the same Arabic term.

The Qur'an

Muhammad received the Qur'an over a 22-year period. It was initially revealed to Muhammad by the Archangel Gabriel while Muhammad was meditating in a cave outside Mecca. It is taken by believers to be the sole miracle of the religion, because they believe that it was beyond Prophet Muhammad to author the book. Before the Qur'an appeared, the literature of Arabia focused almost solely on poetry. The Qur'an has very poetic sections, but it is also the first work of extended prose in Classical Arabic. This makes it a unique and remarkable stylistic composition for its time. In the chapters on Judaism and Christianity, we refer to significant academic work that has been done

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on the Jewish Torah and the Christian New Testament. This scholarly work illustrates how these texts were constructed, edited and re-edited by numerous authors over long periods of time. It is a scholarship that remains controversial because it points to the human construction of scriptures that many believers take to be inerrant and/or the direct word of God. Scholarly attention on the formation of the Qur'an as an earthly document has been less focused.

Jewish and Christian people are viewed by Muslims as Ahl al Kitab or 'people of the Book'; that is, people who worship the One God and possess revelations from God. Jewish and Christian people who lived under Muslim rule were usually extended a high level of tolerance and were allowed to practise their religions. This was especially the case when Muslims controlled parts of Spain between 711 and 1492. Jewish and Christian communities have lived among Muslims from the seventh century to the present day.

Hadith
Narrations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad

The Qur'an is arranged in 114 suras, or chapters. These are generally arranged from the longest at the front to the shortest at the back. Scholars have speculated about what order they were received in. There are suras where the call to belief in one god is paramount, which are believed to have been received while Muhammad was in Mecca. The revelations received at Medina are more focused on guiding the growing Islamic community; these revelations contain, for example, information about legal matters, social justice, prayers, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. In this way, the Qur'an reflects the early history of Islam and how the early Muslim community evolved. It is important to note that from a Muslim point of view, Muhammad is not the author of the Qur'an, but is only ever spoken about as a receiver and transmitter of it. The author of the Qur'an is, strictly speaking for Muslim people, God.

Figure 10.7 Depiction of the Archangel Gabriel revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad. Note that Muhammad's face is usually not shown in Islamic art.

While there have been previous revelations by God to other prophets, the Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be the final revelation of Allah to humanity. As mentioned, the Qur'an was compiled in its final form under the third caliph, Uthman, about 20 years after the Prophet's death. It was received by Muhammad in Classical Arabic and written down in Classical Arabic as well. For Muslim people, the Qur'an is called the Qur'an only when it is in Arabic. Translations into other languages are considered interpretations of the Qur'an.

Muslims around the world learn to recite the Qur'an in Classical Arabic. For centuries, learning the whole of this book was the first stage of a traditional Islamic education. Many Muslims, although they can recite the Qur'an in Arabic, do not understand what the text means.

This book must also be treated with respect. It is often wrapped to protect it. When placed in a bookcase, it is kept on the highest shelf. Muslims will touch it only if they are in a ritually clean state through ablution. It is read during special celebrations, such as the month of Ramadan when a portion is read every night during the fast. As the 'word of Allah', short passages must be read while in ritual prayer. The Qur'an remains the ultimate source and religious authority in Islam.

The Hadith

Very early on there were attempts to systematise and develop Islamic law – so that believers could ensure they were doing the right thing and could enter paradise. This code of behaviour is called Islamic law (or Shari'a Law). Its basic principles are provided in the Qur'an. But this message is supplemented by the collections, made by early Muslims, of things Muhammad did and said. These collections are referred to as **Hadith**. They cover topics such as his instructions regarding how to perform the daily prayers through to his judgements in criminal cases in the courts of Medina. Because Muhammad was a prophet, and thus he was guided by God and considered sinless by believers, his words and actions provide a model for the lives of all Muslims. Unlike the Qur'an, which was put together shortly after the death of the Prophet, it was at least 100 to 150 years before Muslims started putting together major Hadith collections. While the sayings of Muhammad were collected early and transmitted by the companions of the Prophet, the actual Hadith texts were put together much later. Many Hadith collectors put together their own individual collections, applying various methods of authentication, and the degree of

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authenticity and reliability of the collections varies. A rigorous system of studying the historical accuracy of the Hadith was developed by Muslims in the first two to three centuries of Islam. A strong lineage of a particular hadith must be traced back to sources at the time of Muhammad's life. There are Hadith collections that Sunni Muslims consider to be reliable, while the Shi'a have their own Hadith collections.

When an issue or problem arises that is not explicitly addressed in the Qur'an, Muslims will turn to the Hadith as the second most important religious source and authority in Islam.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is only one single text of the Qur'an. However, there are many Hadith collections. To find specific references to verses or particular issues, you can search online.

Extracts that demonstrate the principal beliefs

There are many extracts from the Qur'an that relate to the principal beliefs of Islam as well as moral and ethical behaviour.

Tawhid

Allah! There is no God but He – the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal.
QUR'AN 3:2

Angels

They celebrate His praises night and day, nor do they slacken.
QUR'AN 21:20

Books of Allah

This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah.
QUR'AN 10:37

Rusul (prophets)

We (Allah) sent into every nation a messenger saying 'Serve Allah and avoid false gods'.
QUR'AN 16:36

Al-Akhira (life after death)

He created death and life that He may try you according to which of you is best in works.
QUR'AN 67:2

Fate/Predestination

Know you not that Allah knows all that is in Heaven and on the earth.
QUR'AN 22:70

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith lay down correct behaviour for the ordering of Islamic society. The Qur'an calls believers to moderation and avoidance of violence and excess, and to be just, gentle in speech, forgiving and patient. Sura 49 lists examples of some ethical and moral judgements:

O Ye who believe! Put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Apostle; but fear Allah: for Allah is He Who hears and knows all things.
QUR'AN 49:1

If only they had patience until thou couldst come out to them, it would be best for them: but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.
QUR'AN 49:5

A Grace and Favour from Allah; and Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.
QUR'AN 49:8

The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two [contending] brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy.
QUR'AN 49:10

O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much [as possible]: for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it … But fear Allah: For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.
QUR'AN 49:12

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The core ethical teachings in this last verse pertain to acting with good intentions and encouraging socially acceptable behaviour. Similarly, matters such as the prohibition of consumption of alcohol are found in both the Qur'an and the Hadith:

> I heard 'Umar while he was on the pulpit of the Prophet saying, "Now then O people!
>
> The revelation about the prohibition of alcoholic drinks was revealed; and alcoholic drinks are extracted from five things: Grapes, dates, honey, wheat and barley. And the alcoholic drink is that which confuses and stupefies the mind.'"
>
> BUKHARI 7:69: 493

INVESTIGATE

Research websites that contain information relating to the sacred texts of Islam (the Qur'an and Hadith), IslamiCity and the International Islamic University Malaysia.

EXERCISE 10.4

1 **Recall** the role Muhammad played in the authorship and transmission of the Qur'an.
2 **Discuss** why the Qur'an is the essential book for Muslims.
3 **Explain** the relationship between the Qur'an and the collections of Hadith. Give some examples to support your answer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.4

1 **Explain** why the Qur'an is such an important authority in Islam.
2 **Investigate** how some Muslims may interpret sacred texts, such as the Qur'an and Hadith collections, and how this affects and informs their daily lives.
3 Find a copy of the Qur'an and look at how it is printed, how the suras are laid out and the verses numbered. **Describe** what this conveys to you.
4 Search online to find verses from the Qur'an that link to the key beliefs of Islam. Keep a summary of the relevant passages.

10.7 CORE ETHICAL TEACHINGS

Shari'a
The moral and legal code of Islam based on the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet, as well as other Islamic sources

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)
The scholarly interpretation and human understanding of Shari'a

Ulama
Scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law

Islamic law is related to a number of areas of life, including *'ibadat* (ritual regulations), *mu'amalat* (rules of social relations) and *imama* (theory of collective organisation). Under these groupings, the law deals with prayer, almsgiving and fasting, matters of marriage, divorce, slavery and the management of slaves, partnerships, debts, wills and other legal and social concerns. In some of these matters, non-Islamic laws and customs have been reconciled with Islamic religious principles. The final corpus of **Shari'a** (Islamic law) thus represents custom and tradition modified and supported by Qur'anic legal principles and ethical Islamic conviction.

Islamic jurisprudence

For 14 centuries, **Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)** has been an ongoing development. As Islam rapidly spread in the Middle East and beyond, a legal system was needed to maintain law, order and a harmonious society. Over time, many different schools of thought emerged in regards to the way Shari'a and jurisprudence should be interpreted and applied. As the Muslim world was large, independent schools of law have emerged with varying methodology. Taking into account local cultures, people and even climate conditions, combined with freedom in interpretive approaches, different schools have arisen. The foundations of Shari'a were the unambiguous commands and prohibitions found in the Qur'an and Hadith and the legal principles contained therein. When points of law arose on which the Qur'an and the Hadith offered no firm guidance, most ***ulama*** (scholars) turned to *qiyas*. This meant arguing by analogy and applying to the problem at hand a reasoning and a conclusion that had already been reached on a comparable issue. In this way, 'precedence' also forms a level of legal authority in Islam. As the years passed, the *ulama* increasingly came to agree on points of law, and the principle of *ijma*, or consensus of the community, also came into play to settle issues where there were

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multiple conclusions. One important Hadith says, 'My community will never agree upon an error'. So, if the community, as embodied in its legal experts, came to agree on a point, that agreement gained significant authority. Steadily, just about all legal and ethical cases were covered at great length and more and more consensus developed. From twelfth century onwards, the development of new ideas was discouraged, and the areas in which personal reasoning might be deployed was increasingly diminished. Shari'a was comprehensive. It embraced all human activities, defining the relations of men and women with God and with their fellows. It became the unifying legal code for a very large geographical from Spain to India, even though there were multiple empires ruling them.

The Qur'an as the principal religious authority

What is remarkable about a mosque and the religious community around it is its autonomy. Levels of authority in Islam do not depend on personal control by a religious leader, but by other means. When Muslims seek a way to deal with any issue in their lives, their first and greatest authority is always the Qur'an and traditional ways of interpreting it. Over the past 1400 years, numerous schools have developed with their own traditions of interpretation. One could argue that this need to derive rules about all human actions from the Qur'an would make it difficult for Muslims to know what their first response should be to more modern issues such as climate change. Although the Qur'an does not say anything directly about this modern concept, it has verses about how Allah gave the world in custodianship to humans and therefore humans are accountable to look after the planet. A theology and ethics of environmental protection can be developed.

The Hadith as the second religious authority

When he was not transmitting the words of Allah, Muhammad was a man who, like the rest of humanity, had to face the practicalities of daily life, and of guiding the early Islamic community in Medina. His words, deeds, what he liked and disliked, as remembered by the earliest Muslims, are preserved in the form of the Hadith. These are the second-most important authority for Muslims. Again, using the case of environmentalism, the Prophet said a great deal about the care of animals; for example, the need to look after trees and planting trees. These sayings can be used to define a religious response to ecological issues by Muslims.

Ijma

The proliferation of Hadith caused problems for the interpretation of Shari'a. ***Ijma*** is a process whereby authoritative Muslim jurists come to a consensus about a religious or ethical issue. Each scholar may consider which of the Hadith may be authentic sayings of Muhammad, and thus serve as a foundation of their legal ruling. This may cause multiple solutions to the same ethical issue. One of these solutions stands the test of time and is endorsed by other scholars. Hence, a consensus emerges over time. The process of *ijma* existed from early centuries, but it was first proposed as a key source in Shari'a by the jurist al'Shafi'i (767–820 CE). It should be noted that differing opinions can emerge and it may take some time for a consensus to truly become evident.

Ijma
Consensus of scholars

Qiyas
Analogy, reasoning and precedents

Halal
A term meaning permissible, often applied to food including meat; however, it has a wider meaning that suggests what is permissible under Islamic law and applies to many aspects of life and behaviour

Qiyas

Qiyas is the process of deductive analogy in which the teachings of the Hadith are compared and contrasted with those of the Qur'an and applied to decisions over time. For example, a Muslim may wish to know about cocaine use; although this drug is not mentioned in early Islamic texts, wine is. Wine (alcohol) is prohibited in Islam because it can cause intoxication and led to loss of self-control. Therefore based on analogy and reasoning that cocaine also causes intoxication, Muslim scholars have declared cocaine to be prohibited. Essentially *qiyas* includes the concept of precedents in decision-making only when there is a common rationale between two different cases.

Figure 10.8 *Ijma* is a process whereby authoritative Muslim jurists come to a consensus about a religious or ethical issue

The division of halal and haram

Halal is a term meaning permissible, or what is permissible under Islamic law. It is a term often applied to foods, but includes more than that. Halal food or food that is prepared following Islamic instructions can be consumed by Muslims. Halal has the wider meaning of actions that are permissible under Islamic law and applies to many aspects of life and behaviour.

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Haram
Forbidden under Islam

Haram is the opposite of halal. Haram means forbidden or prohibited. Again, in the narrow sense it refers to Islamic dietary laws. Certain things that are forbidden in Hebrew scripture for Jewish people are also forbidden for Muslims. This includes eating pig meat. For Muslims, consumption of alcohol (such as wine) is also haram. The term can be applied much more widely to anything that goes against Islamic law or norms. It is also applied to relationships and behaviour, or any aspects of life that is prohibited under Islamic law.

EXERCISE 10.5

1 **Describe** the sources of Muslim ethical teachings.
2 **Explain** how Muslim jurists interpret the Qur'an and Hadith using the processes of *ijma* and *qiyas*.
3 Recall the sources from which Islamic Shari'a law is derived.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.5

1 Research the differences between halal and haram and explain which aspects of life these terms apply to. Draw up a table that reflects these two concepts, with examples.
2 **Investigate** the controversy over halal certification of food.
3 Choose one example of Islamic ethical teaching. Conduct research and see what you can discover about it. Note any differences of opinion, if they exist, and **discuss** if a consensus emerged over time.
4 **Construct** a mind map or flow chart to illustrate how Muslims develop their ethical teachings.

10.8 EXPRESSION OF FAITH

The Five Pillars of Islam

Video

The Five Pillars of Islam (*Arkan al-islam*) account for the basic practices of a Muslim. The Five Pillars are essentially a system of ritual that calls Muslims to be constantly aware of their duty towards Allah and to fulfil the pillars in their lives. Some pillars are to be followed each day, some each year and some once in a lifetime.

Shahada

Shahada is the Islamic confession of faith. Its recitation signals commitment to Islam and allows one into the Muslim community or affirms one's membership of it.

Shahada
The first pillar of Islam, the statement of belief that 'There is no god but the God and Muhammad is his messenger'

Recited in Arabic, *shahada* translates as 'There is no god but the God and Muhammad is his messenger'. It is a commonly used phrase recited by Muslims each day in their prayers. The *shahada* is a declaration of monotheism and a statement of the uniqueness of Islam. It is believed that the *shahada* should be the first sound a baby hears and the last sound a dying person makes. Some believe that a dying person will enter paradise if the words of the *shahada* are their final words.

Figure 10.9 The *shahada* written in Arabic. Elaborate calligraphy is an important art in Islam.

Salat

The second pillar is about the performance of daily prayers, called *salat*. Muslims must pray five times each day. The times of prayer are from dawn to sunrise; from noon to mid-afternoon; from mid-afternoon to sunset; from sunset to an hour or so after sunset; and from an hour or so after sunset to just before dawn. Each prayer could be performed anytime within these periods of time. Exact times for prayers for each city are available on the internet.

To non-Muslims, this routine of prayer might seem difficult. But for Muslims, each prayer can be performed in a few minutes and does not constitute a burden. It is said that stopping at various points through the day not only helps them be better Muslims, but also has meditative benefits and lessens stress and puts the day in perspective. In total, the five prayers constitute about 40 minutes of every 24-hour period. Those who are ill or travelling can combine prayers, shorten them or perform them lightly or are exempt from performing *salat* if they are unable to do so.

To pray, a Muslim must face towards Mecca, in particular the Ka'ba. To find the direction of Mecca, a Muslim can buy a 'Mecca-finder'. This is like a compass, but points to Mecca instead of true north. Some prayer rugs have these built in, and there are mobile-phone apps that can also do this. In Sydney most Muslims turn towards the West when praying. With very rare exceptions, mosques and prayer rooms are oriented towards Mecca.

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Salat usually begins with a statement of intention (*Niyyat*)

1 *Takbir (Allahu akbar)* Hands raised to the ears, palms outwards, thumbs at lobes

2 *Qiyam* 1 Hands folded, right over left, over the lower chest, recite the first chapter of the Qur'an

3 *Ruku* Hands on knees, bowing from the waist

4 *Qiyam* 2 Hands by the side, standing upright

5 *Sajda* On the knees and head bowed to the ground (forehead touches the ground)

6 *Qu'ud* Rise to a kneeling position

7 *Sajda* As for 5

8 *Tashahhud* 1 In a kneeling position, turn to the left and to the right

9 *Tashahhud* 2 In a kneeling position, turn to the right and to the left, while a sacred benediction is said, a blessing upon the gathered Muslim community (even if there is no one else present)

Figure 10.10 *Salat*, or daily prayers, must be performed facing Mecca. These ritualised movements are done in cycles known as *rak'at*. Actions 1–7 make one *rak'ah*. The different daily prayers are made up of between two and four repetitions, before ending the prayer with steps 8 and 9.

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Prayers can be performed anywhere as long as the space is clean. Before they pray, Muslims must ritually wash themselves. This usually involves washing one's hands, face, arms and feet, and wiping one's hair in a prescribed manner. Prayer involves a number of movements, recitation of parts of the Qur'an and saying of certain prayers in cycles (called ***rak'at***). Movements include standing, bowing down, getting down on the knees and bowing the head to the ground.

Rak'ah **(plural** ***rak'at*****)**
A unit or cycle of Islamic prayer; the prescribed movements and words followed by Muslims during worship)

Circumambulate
To walk around something, usually as an act of worship

The importance of salat

Daily prayers are important on many levels. First, the movements in the prayer symbolise a believer's submission to God. The prayers also emphasise the believer's connection to God. They help structure the day and maintain their connection to God. The object of *salat* is to remember Allah. *Salat* enables Muslims to put their daily affairs behind them and enter the spiritual presence of God. Also important is the requirement for adult males to attend a mosque, particularly at noon on Fridays, and pray with the rest of the Muslim community. In this way the prayer compels the believer to become a part of the social life of the community.

Video

Ad'iyah or *Du'a* (often translated as prayer) are supplications. Unlike the daily prayers (*salat*), which are said in Classical Arabic, supplications can be said in the believer's own language, in any way they want and on any occasion. There are no particular rituals associated with these prayers. Muslims often extend their arms with palms facing the sky when they make *du'a*.

Zakat

The third pillar of Islam, *zakat*, is charity, and in particular, almsgiving. The meaning of the word also includes concepts such as growth or purification. Muslims must give to the poor and needy each year. It is set at a rate of 2.5 per cent of a Muslim's annual savings, if they have above a certain minimum threshold after they meet their own living needs. For example, a Muslim with $100 000 in the bank is required to give $2500 to the poor and needy. In different countries, *zakat* is managed differently. In some, the government collects *zakat* and distributes it. In other countries, there are organisations that manage the *zakat* funds. In some palces, individuals distribute their *zakat* themselves.

Zakat is a reminder that everything Muslims have is given to them by Allah and that they should not be attached to wealth and possessions. Almsgiving is a way to thank Allah as well as to support the less fortunate in the community.

Sawm

The fourth pillar of Islam is fasting. For one month each year, all Muslims (excluding women who are menstruating, breastfeeding or pregnant, as well as the very young, old, sick and travellers on long journeys) must not eat, drink or have sex between dawn and sunset. Fasting helps Muslims empathise with the poor and provides them with a chance to learn self-control and to resist bodily desires. It also develops and demonstrates an appreciation for the blessings of Allah The fasting month is called Ramadan. It is the holiest time of the year and fasting is an act of religious devotion. When the sun goes down, people break their fast and can eat. The Qur'an is read each evening in the mosques in additional congregational prayers.

As Islam follows a lunar calendar, the timing of the month of Ramadan changes each calendar year. Some years the daylight hours can be longer, or shorter, depending on the time of the calendar year.

Hajj

The fifth pillar of Islam is pilgrimage, Hajj. Hajj literally means 'to set out for a place'. Pilgrimage is a major practice of most religions, but in Islam it is central and essential. All Muslims who are physically able and have enough money are expected to travel to Mecca to perform the Hajj at least once in their lifetime.

During the Hajj, male pilgrims wear two pieces of white cloth, however rich or poor he is. This denotes equality. Females are allowed to wear their usual clothes. Once inside the Sacred Mosque at Mecca, the pilgrim **circumambulates** the Ka'ba seven times. Then, retracing the footsteps of Hagar, the wife of the prophet Abraham, the pilgrim walks between two hills, Safa and Marwah. The pilgrim then proceeds to Mina, 8 kilometres from Mecca, and camps overnight. The next day the pilgrim proceeds to Arafat and remains there all day in prayer, seeking forgiveness for sins committed. Muslims believe that if they sincerely repent, all their sins will be forgiven. The pilgrim then proceeds to Muzdalifah, collects pebbles, and uses these the next day, in Mina, to throw at three pillars representing Satan. There is also the opportunity to sacrifice an animal and

Figure 10.11 A stylised diagram representing the route of the Hajj

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have their own hair shaved or trimmed. The pilgrim stones the pillars before returning to Mecca for a final series of circumambulations. The pilgrim returns to Mina to 'stone the devil' on a total of three occasions. Pilgrims usually visit Medina to see the tomb of the Prophet and pray in the first mosque of the Prophet and visit other places significant in the history of Islam. Hajj is one of the significant practices that can be studied in the HSC course (see Chapter 11 where it is discussed in detail).

Islamic observances

Although not clearly marked in the Five Pillars, there are two significant festivals in the Muslim lunar year that are celebrated around the world. These are Eid al-Fitr and Eid-al Adha. Eid al-Fitr occurs immediately after the month of Ramadan. It is a time of happiness, sharing and celebration of the end of a significant spiritual test.

Eid al-Adha commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael, his son. In this dramatic story, an angel arrives at the last moment to instruct Abraham to sacrifice a ram instead (Qu'ran 2:196). In light of this story, after the Hajj or pilgrimage time in the Islamic calendar, some householders will slaughter a ram. Part of the meat is eaten as a feast; the rest is given away to family, neighbours and the needy.

The connection between the Five Pillars as submission to Allah

The Five Pillars of the faith demonstrate adherents' *islam* or submission to the will of God. The *shahada* attests to believers' commitment to a very pure ideal of monotheism – the worship of and connection with one God. The daily prayers reaffirm that every day is a gift from Allah and believers should keep their minds on him. Almsgiving stresses a wider commitment by believers to the world and those who live in poverty. Fasting demonstrates devotion to Allah by learning to overcome the basic needs of the body and the ego as a show of faith. Pilgrimage takes believers back to the momentous events that accompanied the birth of the Islamic faith. While these are individual actions and fulfil the spiritual needs of a believer, the Five Pillars also emphasise the significance of the Muslim community that exists across the whole world.

Mecca allows believers to experience the broad appeal of Islam. As they go on pilgrimage, people from all around the world and from all different races come together, evoking in each believer an idea of the Last Judgement – all people being equal before Allah.

Figure 10.12 Pilgrims pray for forgiveness at Mount Arafat while on the Hajj. Hajj is an expression of the solidarity of the Muslim community.

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EXERCISE 10.6

1 To become a Muslim, an adherent needs to affirm their belief through a public declaration of the *shahada*. **Explain** if it is enough to simply recite the *shahada*.
2 **Discuss** the importance of the Five Pillars of Islam in the life of a Muslim.
3 **Recall** how Muslim people pay their *zakat*.
4 During Ramadan, some Islamic communities will put on night markets where, once the sun is down and the fast is broken, traditional food is sold and a festival atmosphere erupts. The biggest of these takes place on Haldon Street in Lakemba and is very much worth a visit. Other Ramadan night markets might take place near you. See if you can find one to visit.
5 There are many accounts of people's experiences of Hajj. Perhaps one of the most remarkable is that of American civil rights activist Malcolm X. Read about his experience in the book *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.6

1 Research online what instructions are given in relation to the Hajj in the Qur'an or the Hadith.
2 There are many websites that show how prayer times are astronomically calculated. Search online using the term '*salat* times' and see what you can find.
3 Write a paragraph responding to the following statement: 'The Five Pillars of Islam ensure a life is lived as a life of submission'.

The sixth pillar

There is broad agreement that core Islamic practice at the personal level is the Five Pillars. The idea of the sixth pillar was proposed (and then rejected by the majority) in the early history of Islam by the Umayyads. However, a few Muslims would advocate that there is a sixth pillar of Islam, **jihad** which means struggle.

Jihad
Struggle or striving; related to the concept of effort, struggle or resistance; a religious duty

Jihad is a largely misunderstood term. Jihad is a reference to actions that further the cause of Allah, including missionary activity, donating money and curbing personal desires and inner conflicts. Muslims speak of a lesser and a greater jihad. The first relates to actions that may need to be taken to protect the Islamic community. This can include the confronting of evil and wrongdoing, and it is in this context that it may refer to fighting or the use of violence in warfare.

The greater jihad refers to the inner struggle to live good lives that all Muslims face in relation to Allah.

In recent years, the Western press has used jihad to refer to violent action in the name of Islam, and related it to motivation for terrorist attacks. This is a very simplistic attitude and a misunderstanding of the full complexity to which jihad refers.

There have been disagreements within the Muslim community about the role of warfare in jihad. Some, such as Sufis, emphasise greater jihad. Others, such as Sayyid Qutb, promote lesser jihad and believe it includes the overthrow of governments to enforce Shari'a law. The debate continues today in the Islamic community and among Muslim jurists.

EXERCISE 10.7

1 Using the information in this chapter, **define** 'Islam'.
2 **Describe** how Muslims are 'people of the Book' and how they relate to other 'peoples of the Book'.
3 **Explain** how Muslims in Australia express their faith in the twenty-first century.
4 Watch the short film *Before 1770*. How might such a film change your mind about Islam's connection with our society?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 10.7

1 Collect examples from the media of the way the word jihad is used and which jihad is being spoken about. **Analyse** the way it is discussed.
2 As a class, **discuss** the Ka'ba. When was it built? What are its features? Why is it significant? How is it important to Muslims?
3 Search online to gain a good understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam and their role in the life of a Muslim. Make comprehensive notes.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Pre-Islamic Arabia was populated by nomadic tribal societies as well as settled communities.
- The Ka'ba has been a centre of worship since before the emergence of Islam.
- Muhammad received revelations from Allah, the one true God for Muslims, and these revelations became the Qur'an.
- Muhammad was forced to leave Mecca in 622 CE and eventually invited to be the chief magistrate of the city of Al Yanthrib (later Medina).
- Mecca and Medina became the most sacred places of Islam.
- The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs each contributed to the development of the Muslim community and state.
- Islam split early into two major groups, the Sunnis (the community) and the Shi'a (the party of Ali), on the issue of leadership of the Muslim state.
- Key beliefs include *tawhid* (the unity of God), angels, the Books of Allah, *rusul* (prophets), *al-akhira* (life after death) and fate/predestination.
- The sacred texts include the Qur'an and the Hadith.
- The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad by Allah, through the Archangel Gabriel.
- Muslim ethics is guided by Shari'a.
- The Qur'an, the Hadith, *ijma* and *qiyas* are authoritative sources of law in determining Muslim ethics.
- The Five Pillars of Islam are *shahada*, *salat*, *zakat*, *sawm* and Hajj.
- The Five Pillars of Islam are rituals that remind Muslims of their duty and devotion to Allah.

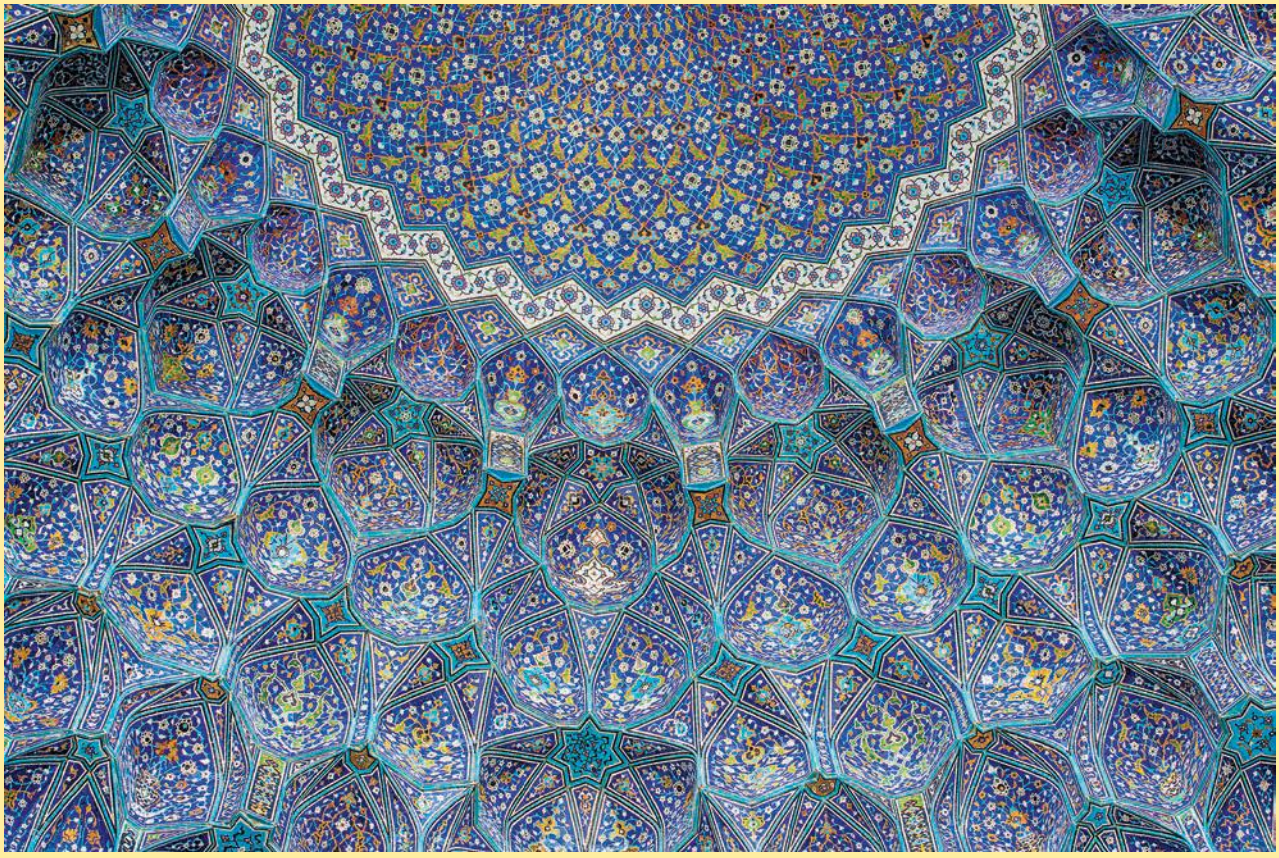

Figure 10.13 The ceiling and wall tilework at the Shah Mosque on Imam Square, Isfahan, Iran. The mosque is also known as Imam Mosque and Jaame' Abbasi Mosque.

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 Where is the Ka'ba located?
(A) Jerusalem
(B) Mecca
(C) Medina
(D) Damascus

2 Who revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad?
(A) Khadijah
(B) Angel Michael
(C) Archangel Gabriel
(D) Abu Bakr

3 Which of the following was one of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs?
(A) Moses
(B) A'isha bint Abu Bakr
(C) Abu Bakr
(D) Muhammad

4 What are the two variants (subgroups) of Islam?
(A) Sunni and Shi'a
(B) Sufi and Shari'a
(C) Qur'an and Hadith
(D) Khulafa and Rashidun

5 What are the two major sacred texts of Islam?
(A) Mala'ika and Umma
(B) Old Testament and New Testament
(C) Qur'an and Hadith
(D) Abu Bakr and Ali

6 What are used to help develop Shari'a?
(A) Gospels of Jesus
(B) Qur'an, *ijma* and *qiyas*
(C) Haram and halal
(D) Sura and Sunni

7 Which of the following is NOT one of the principal beliefs of Islam?
(A) *Tawhid* (unity of Allah)
(B) Angels and *jinn*
(C) Fate and predestination
(D) Al Aqsa and *salat*

8 What do halal and haram refer to?
(A) The Five Pillars of Islam
(B) Early Australian mosques
(C) What is permitted and forbidden
(D) A special form of calligraphy

9 The *shahada* is one of:
(A) The Five Pillars of Islam
(B) The early Australian mosques
(C) The countries where Islam spread quickly
(D) The types of Muslim fundamentalism

10 What is Hajj?
(A) Fasting during the month of Ramadan
(B) Violent jihad
(C) Giving money to the poor
(D) A pilgrimage to the city of Mecca

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Explain** the result of Muhammad's encounters with Gabriel.

2 **Describe** Muhammad as a model for Muslim life.

3 **Analyse** the importance of *salat* in the life of a Muslim.

4 **Discuss** the role of sacred writings in Islam.

5 **Outline** how Muslim people develop an understanding of correct ethical practice.

6 **Explain** the significance of the statement: 'There is no god but the God and Muhammad is his messenger'.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 **Outline** the historical setting of pre-Islamic Arabia and **evaluate** its influence on the early development of Islam.

2 'Shari'a governs every aspect of a Muslim's life'. **Discuss**.

3 **Describe** how a Muslim in modern Australia can express their faith by practising the Five Pillars of Islam, noting potential difficulties.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

This symbol refers to halal food that can be eaten by Muslims. **Explain** what halal and haram mean in a context greater than merely food, and how that is applied to modern life for a Muslim in Australia.

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ELEVEN

ISLAM: DEPTH STUDY

[YEAR 12 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

A true Muslim is like rain, wherever it falls, it will benefit.

HABIB UMAR BIN HAFIZ, CONTEMPORARY YEMENI SUFI ISLAMIC SCHOLAR

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss:

- the significance of A'isha, the favourite wife of Muhammad, in Islam:
  - the influence of A'isha on some of Muhammad's thinking
  - the influence of A'isha reflected in the Qur'an and Hadith
  - A'isha as a controversial woman in Islam.
- Sufism as an influential and significant school of thought in Islam:
  - Sufism reflecting a mystical emphasis in Islam
  - some significant and influential Sufi teachers.
- Islamic ethics as drawn from the Qur'an and Shari'a
- bioethics and the will of Allah
- environmental ethics and the responsibility of Muslims to be good stewards, caring for God's world
- sexual ethics and expression within a marital relationship
- *zina* (illegal sexual acts) and marriage as a contract
- the acceptance, or not, of homosexuality in Islam
- gender in Islam
- the significance of Friday prayers at the mosque
- the mosque as a community centre in Islam
- Friday prayers affirming the second pillar of Islam
- Friday prayers affirming the global community of Muslims
- Muslim funeral ceremonies and the significance of a life served in obedience to Allah
- the Hajj as one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter you will examine the life of a significant person or the rise and development of a significant idea in Islam. In the HSC examination, you may be asked to explain how this person/idea contributed to the growth of the Islamic faith and assess the impact of the idea or person on Islam itself. To do this effectively, you will need to know something of the controversies surrounding the chosen person or idea, their contributions to Islam in that era and their ongoing impact today. Some significant people and schools of thought will be discussed in this chapter of the print book. Many more examples and additional materials are available in the digital version.

You will also need to describe an Islamic ethical teaching in a particular area: sexual ethics, bioethical issues or environmental ethics. In this chapter, each ethical area will be briefly discussed. The HSC exam may also ask for an explanation of why the issue chosen is important to the Islamic faith.

Finally, you may need to describe a significant practice within Islam and show, first, how it highlights Islamic beliefs and, second, how it makes meaning for Muslims both individually and as a community. You will need to choose one of the following practices: Friday prayer at the mosque, a Muslim funeral ceremony or the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

Figure 11.1 People gathered against Islamophobia on the main square of Toulouse, France, on 27 October 2019. The rally also was to denounce the intolerance of the Muslim headscarf in public places.

11.2 SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

There are many significant people and schools of thought that have contributed to Islam and brought Islamic influence into the world.

Remember, the syllabus allows for another person or school of thought to be studied. The subject of your study may be your or your teacher's choice. Also remember that, as well as discussing the life and the contribution of the person or school of thought, you will need to analyse their impact on Islam. You should ensure your comments relate to Islam as a religious tradition, rather than to narrow political or national developments in the Islamic world.

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A'isha bint Abu Bakr and **Sufism** will be discussed in this chapter of the print book. Information on the other people and schools of thought is available in the digital version.

A'isha bint Abu Bakr

The name is sometimes transliterated from Arabic into English as Ayisha or Ayesha. A'isha was one of Muhammad's wives, and had a significant impact on the early development of Islam.

A'isha's life

A'isha was the daughter of Abu Bakr, one of the Prophet Muhammad's closest companions (that is, those people who followed the Prophet as Muslims in his lifetime). Believed by some to be born circa 615 CE, she died circa 678 CE. She was betrothed to the Prophet at a very early age: it has been thought that she was six to nine years old, but recent Muslim scholarship considering all reports and evidence at hand, puts her age around 17–19 years old. While her age is a source of controversy, the fact that A'isha was already engaged to marry someone else indicates that she was of accepted marrying age at the time.

Of the 11 or 12 wives that Muhammad took after his first wife's death, it is clear from sources that he loved A'isha the most. She was smart and inquisitive, learning Islam directly from Muhammad. After the death of the Prophet, A'isha supplied many biographical accounts of Muhammad, as well as many of his sayings regarding teachings of Islam that have been recorded in the Hadith.

She became involved in the politics of the newly formed Islamic community, particularly during the time of the last of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, Ali, against whom she led a revolt. This culminated in the battle of Basra (the Battle of the Camel) in 656 CE. A'isha and her followers lost this battle, and the victorious Ali returned her to Medina. Here A'isha continued her teaching activities and lived in relative seclusion until her death.

Contribution to the development and expression of Islam

It is said that A'isha was one of the earliest to convert to the new religion of Islam. Her father, Abu Bakr, perhaps the closest of all the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, was the first adult male convert and, as a result, A'isha was one of the first children to grow up in a Muslim family. Her marriage to Muhammad bound the Prophet and Abu Bakr closer in their common religious and political objectives.

Muhammad's wives

A'isha did not marry Muhammad until the last decade of his life. In his early years, at the age of 25, Muhammad married Khadijah, who was his only wife until her death in 619 CE. This marriage lasted 25 years and was a happy one. Considered the first convert to Islam, Khadijah gave her husband great support. Muhammad once said, 'She believed in me when I was rejected; when they called me a liar, she proclaimed me truthful; when I was poor she shared with me her wealth'. After Khadijah's death, Muhammad, from the age of 53 onwards, married a number of women for a variety of reasons – this practice is known as **polygamy**.

Once Muhammad had left Mecca in 622 CE and been welcomed into Medina as a prophet, rooms for him were built facing the mosque. Thus, the private area of Muhammad's house and the public area of the mosque were barely separate. It is suggested that somewhere between 622 CE and 624 CE, Muhammad formally consummated his marriage with A'isha. Once married and living with the Prophet, A'isha was extremely close to the centre of Muslim power.

Around 623–24 CE Muhammad married Hafsa, the young but widowed daughter of Umar (another companion who would become caliph after Abu Bakr). Hafsa and A'isha became good friends. These two wives, and their influential fathers, formed a key part of what later came to be known as **Sunni** Islam. Muhammad's fifth marriage, to Umm Salama in 626 CE, challenged this state of affairs. She tended to represent the interests of the household of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and the man who married Muhammad's daughter Fatima. The group around Ali and Fatima would develop into **Shi'a** Islam.

Polygamy
Having more than one spouse at one time

Sunni
The majority expression of Islam who claim to follow the Qur'an and *sunna* (example) of the Prophet Muhammad

Shi'a (or Shi'ite)
The second-largest Islamic group, Shi'a Muslims believe that Muhammad's descendants are best suited to lead the Muslim community

As it was customary in seventh century, marriages were used to draw kinship between tribes and remove animosities. Some of the Prophet's marriages served this purpose. He married Ummu Habiba who was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, the leader of Meccan opposition to Muhammad. After this marriage, Meccan opposition softened considerably. Some of his marriages were to older women or widowed women who had no one to care for them.

Although Muhammad continued to marry other women over the next seven years, he became increasingly attracted to A'isha's wit and vivacity. A'isha was an educated, wise and intelligent woman who embraced Islam and sought to live according to its principles throughout her life. Near the end of his life, when Muhammad fell sick, he began asking what day it was. His wives realised he wanted to know when it would be his turn to be with A'isha (for he visited his wives on a roster system). All his wives agreed in the end to let the Prophet spend his last days in A'isha's room, and he died in her arms. It is in her bedroom (which is now inside the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina) that he is buried. These events have impressed on Muslims the role that love plays in a marriage. A'isha's charming, forthright and vibrant nature formed an ideal to which many Muslim women aspire.

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Muhammad and A'isha were married for only nine or 10 years. Widows of the Prophet were not permitted to remarry. A'isha spent the rest of her life single, under the special designation of Mother of the Believers, although the title also applies to other wives of the Prophet. It was during the years after Muhammad's death that A'isha developed her own significant contribution to Islam.

The scandal of the slander

An example of how A'isha was the catalyst for Qur'anic revelation comes from early in her marriage and concerns the matter of 'the slander'. In the Islamic year 5 (627 CE), A'isha and Umm Salama accompanied the Prophet on his successful war campaign against the Banu Mustaliq. On the return march, A'isha strayed from the campsite.

Back at the camp, the man assigned to A'isha's care picked up her curtained litter and attached it to the camel. He thought that she was inside it and set off. Discovering that the caravan had gone without her, A'isha sat and waited for someone to come back and fetch her.

A little later, a young scout called Safwan ibn al-Mu'attal discovered A'isha, put her on his camel and returned her to Medina. This led to a great rumour spread by the old leadership in Medina, who saw an opportunity to harm the Prophet. Unsure of his wife's fidelity, Muhammad ceased having revelations from Allah. A'isha returned to her parents' house during this time. It seems that a rival faction in Medina made the most of the rumour to discredit the family of Muhammad. Even as a prophet, Muhammad still had to face political challenges. After seeking advice and questioning A'isha, Muhammad at last received a revelation now found in the Qur'an (24:11–13):

Hereditary
Passed down within a family

Umayyad dynasty
The first Muslim dynasty; ruled 661–750 CE

> Verily those who brought forth the slander [against A'isha] are a group among you …
>
> Why then, did not the believers, men and women, when you heard [the slander] think good of their own people and say: 'This is surely an obvious lie?
>
> Why did they not produce four witnesses? Since they [the slanderers] have not produced witnesses! Then with Allah they are liars!

In this way, A'isha's innocence was proclaimed. The reference here to four witnesses was subsequently used as a precedent by Muslim jurists in developing Shari'a. No adultery can be proved unless four witnesses can be found.

The Battle of the Camel

After the death of the Prophet, A'isha's father led the Muslim community for two years. When her father died (and was buried with the Prophet in A'isha's room), Umar ruled as caliph (634–44 CE). Umar was the father of A'isha's co-wife, Hafsa. During his reign, Muslim armies helped add new territories to the Muslim caliphate. This expansion led to large populations, either as Muslims or under Muslim rule, adding complexity and tension to the young community of believers.

These tensions came to a head during the reign of the third caliph, Uthman. He was from the Umayyad clan from Mecca. Many Muslims became critical of what appeared to be Uthman's nepotism, particularly in the second half of his rule. Uthman tried to calm these complainants, but it was too late. A group from Egypt invaded his house and Uthman was assassinated. At this point the people of Medina, with the support of the disenchanted followers of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, had Ali proclaimed as caliph. A'isha was away from Medina making the pilgrimage to Mecca. Once she heard of Uthman's death, she hurried to the Ka'ba and began speaking to the crowd, telling them to avenge the death of Uthman. A large army of volunteers gathered around her, and she led this army towards Basra. However, some of those who were at first enthusiastic left her group, while other men planned to use her army for their own political advantage. A'isha's army began to break into factions.

Outside Basra, A'isha's army met the army of the caliph, Ali. Fighting broke out. This is called the Battle of the Camel (656 CE) because A'isha entered the battle mounted on her camel. She became the rallying point for her army. Ali, seeing the viciousness of the fighting, had the camel cut down. This helped bring the battle to an end. Ali treated A'isha with respect and escorted her back to Medina. However, his victory was short-lived; after a five-year rule, Ali himself was assassinated by a rebel (Khariji) in 661 CE. Ali's son Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was elected as the next caliph. Hasan, however, abdicated to end the conflict and handed over the leadership to one of the opponents of Ali, Muawiya (a relative of Uthman and, at the time of Uthman's death, the Governor of Syria), who founded a **hereditary** caliphate in the power vacuum that ensued. This caliphate is referred to as the **Umayyad dynasty** and controlled the Muslim world until 750 CE.

A'isha returned to Medina where lived in relative seclusion, while developing a reputation for being learned in early Islamic law and traditions of the Prophet (Hadith). She narrated more than 2000 Hadith on what the Prophet Muhammad had done and said. Many Muslim scholars believe that without A'isha's transmission of such a large number of Hadith, many Islamic teachings on a range of issues would have been lost. As well as domestic concerns, A'isha recounted Muhammad's instructions on prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and other rituals. It has been suggested that one quarter of Shari'a law is based on A'isha's Hadith. Her knowledge of the Qur'an was extensive, and when questioned, A'isha could give the context for many of

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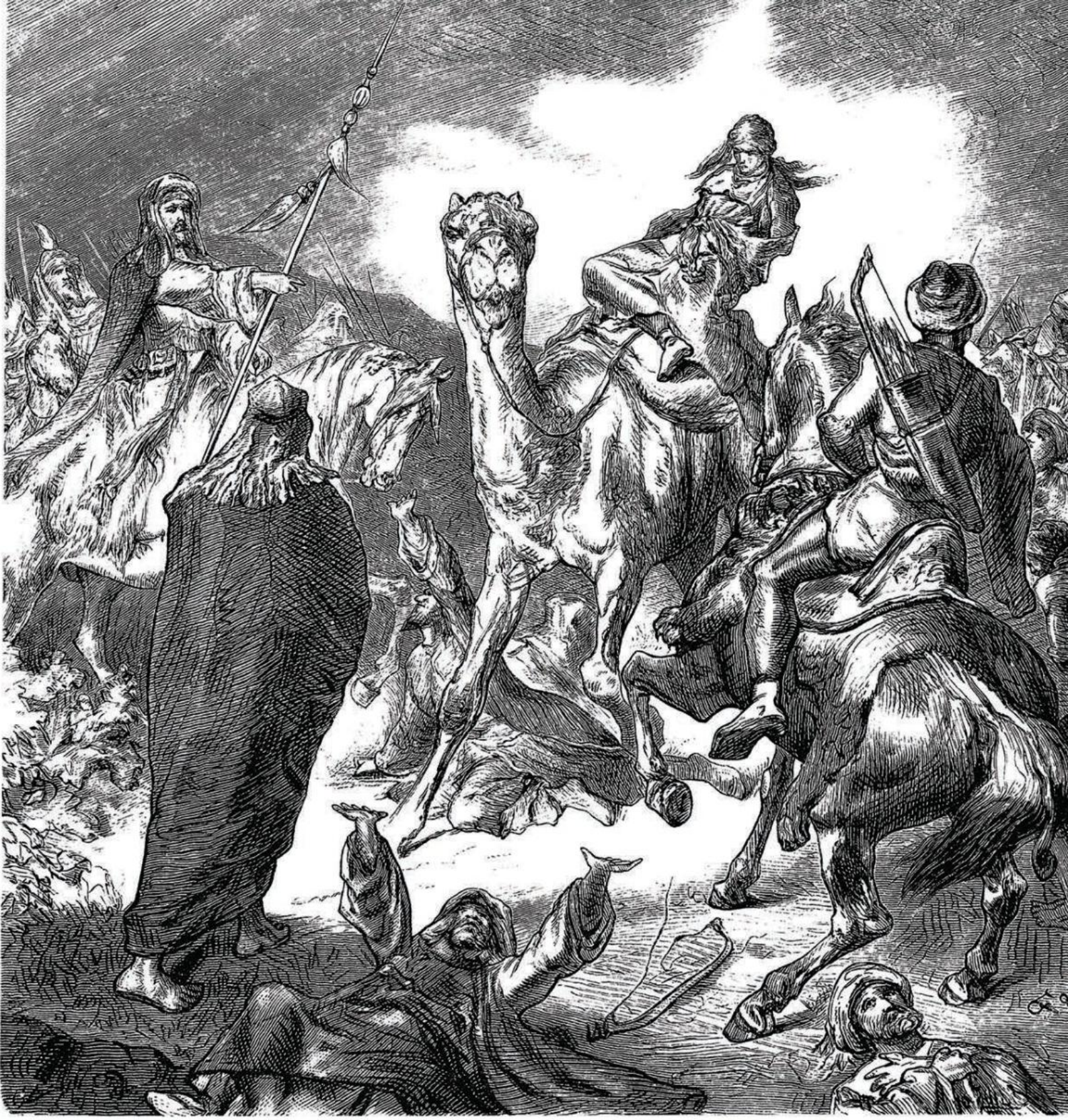

Figure 11.2 Illustration of A'isha being captured following the Battle of the Camel

the revelations. A'isha was a gifted orator and poet, and an expert in literature and medicine.

While not poor, A'isha lived an austere life, often giving away what she had to those in need. She regularly mended her clothes rather that replaced them and was generous with her time and knowledge. A'isha established schools for women and children as well as becoming a teacher to Muslim scholars – 88 of the important Muslim scholars studied under her instruction.

A'isha's move into politics, and her failure, lie at the heart of Islamic ideas about the place of women in public life. One Hadith of the Prophet seems to confirm this. It says, 'Those who place their affairs in the hands of women will never know prosperity'. This Hadith was collected by al-Bukhari (810–70 CE), one of the most famous Sunni collectors and verifiers of Hadith. Al-Bukhari wrote a chapter on A'isha's role in the formation of the Hadith, and Uthman used her as an advisor when compiling the standardised edition of the Qur'an.

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Some Muslim scholars, such as Muhammad Arafa (*The Rights of Women in Islam*, 1980), use A'isha's example to show that women should have no political role in Islam:

> It is true that A'isha fought [at the Battle of the Camel] … it must not be forgotten that this individual act by A'isha was denounced as an error by the greatest of the companions and condemned by other wives of the Prophet. And in any case, A'isha regretted her act. It is thus not acceptable to base claims on A'isha's experience, which was considered to be an act of ***bid'a*** [innovation].
>
> MUHAMMAD ARAFA, *THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ISLAM*, 1980

Bid'a
Innovation; a term used to refer to those who seek to bring new ideas and interpretations into Islam; generally has a negative connotation

Other scholars such as Fatima Mernissi (*The Veil and the Male Elite*, 1988) suggest that A'isha's role and many of the Hadith she supplied have been sidelined to allow for a stronger patriarchal tone to Islam.

Analysing A'isha's significance

A'isha provided Muslims with many examples of what the Prophet had done and said, and her Hadith have been quoted by Muslim scholars ever since. The Prophet was generally seen as a successful leader and as the transmitter of revelations from Allah (which all Muslims accept). A'isha's Hadith reminded the world that Muhammad was also a highly spiritual person and a kind and loving man to his family and others. Muhammad is regarded as the ideal man by many Muslims, a complete man, not just a public Muslim, and A'isha's Hadith show the faithful religious leader.

A'isha is given a special status in the Islamic world. For Muslims, she was privileged as a wife for several reasons:

1 She was the only virgin wife of the prophet.
2 Both her parents fled Mecca because they were persecuted for being Muslim.
3 Archangel Gabriel showed her likeness to Muhammad and told the Prophet to marry her.
4 In the affair of the slander, Allah declared her innocent.
5 She was tutored directly by the Prophet.
6 Muhammad had prayed in her company.
7 Muhammad received some of his revelations in her presence.
8 He died in her arms.
9 He was buried in her apartment, which later came to be part of the Prophet's mosque.

However, it is perhaps understandable that according to the Shi'a variant of Islam, she is not viewed in such a positive light, given that she attacked Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, in battle.

A'isha remains today one of the most prominent, controversial women in the history of Islam.

Contribution of A'isha to Islam

A'isha's contributions to Islam were considerable and covered a range of areas. Aisha's knowledge and learning were gifts to Muhammad and the Muslim community. She established schools in Islam and taught many important Muslim scholars. She demonstrated the importance of education for women, and advocated for the important role of women in Islam. Her role in incidents such as the scandal of the slander influenced the revelation of the Qur'an and laws to protect women. She was involved in the development of both the Qur'an and the Hadith, essential texts for all Muslims. As the favourite wife of Muhammad, she ensured that accurate and useful records of his life were recorded. She also recounted many personal incidents that reveal much of the life and character of the Prophet Muhammad.

Impact of A'isha

Many of the previous points discussed relate to the ongoing impact of A'isha on Islam. A'isha's conflict with Ali may have significantly contributed to the split between Sunni and Shi'a Islam, the effects of which continue to today. A'isha's scholarly opinions are still used as a guide for Muslim life. Her contribution to the Hadith is still of considerable significance. She influenced the way women are perceived in Islam, for better or worse. Modern women in Islam look to A'isha as an example of a prominent, educated and authoritative woman.

Islamic scholar Resit Haylamaz notes in his biography of A'isha that she was like a bridge between the time of the Prophet and the future of Islam.

EXERCISE 11.1

1 **Outline** the significance of A'isha as a wife of Muhammad.
2 **Describe** the contribution to Islam made by A'isha.
3 **Discuss** why A'isha has been viewed as a controversial person in the history of Islam.

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EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.1

1 A'isha had a significant effect on Muhammad, his life and his ideas. This may contradict the popular image of the place of women in Islam today. Research the role of women in Islam. Two contemporary examples of important women in Islam are Silma Ihram in Australia and Amina Wadud in the USA.
2 Use the internet to research the companions of the Prophet. **Construct** a table with relevant information. **Analyse** if A'isha fits as a 'companion'.
3 Debate the following topic: 'A'isha represents the ideal model for the Muslim woman'.

Sufism

Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam that began about a hundred years after the death of Muhammad. While both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims can be drawn to it, some Muslims do not view it favourably. Sufism is an attractive doctrine of divine love and devotion that has also appealed to many non-Muslims. Some believe its doctrine is so universal and based on human nature that one does not have to be Muslim to be Sufi; for example, groups of Christian Sufis exist. Sufism, however, has a long tradition within, and a close connection to, Islam. Sufi doctrine has been passed down from master to disciple for more than 1300 years, and its spirit can be encapsulated in a variety of texts, religious discussions, poetry, music and art.

Because Sufism has a master–disciple relationship at its core, many famous lineages of masters and disciples have developed over the centuries. Some of these relationships have developed into well-known orders of Sufism. It is the masters' job to encourage their disciples to engage more emotionally with God by moving the disciples along a path towards the realisation of the loving and devoted relationship they can have with God. The journey on this path is achieved through **self-effacement**, or the controlling of one's ***nafs*** (ego) and endowing it with virtues rather than vices and bad habits. Once disciples begin to realise the full emotional potential of loving God, they move into an **ecstatic state** where the world comes alive in a new way. Sufism has inspired some of the greatest poets, singers, musicians and dancers in the Islamic world.

At the personal level, Sufism has the ability to deepen a believer's faith profoundly and to do so through emotion. Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (discussed later in this section) is a good example of an early Sufi. Her attitude was to turn away from the mere asceticism of early spiritual masters, and encourage a path based on a deep love for God. As Sufism developed, the path of a Sufi disciple began to take on a specific structure. The new Sufi follows the path of a master, sometimes in small groups called *tariqas*. The path then leads through a number of stages or stations of increased emotional and spiritual awareness. The goal is a deeply loving relationship with God. The process of moving into this relationship is through self-effacement. One should do everything possible to rid the mind of the self. The manifestations of the ego – selfishness, self-obsession and inability to see the world from outside one's point of view — are identified by Sufis as *nafs*. The ideal for a Sufi is to control, purify and elevate the *nafs* to higher levels of being. This is done with the guidance of the Sufi master, who passes to the disciple the teachings and practices for purifying their selves. This might be one of the 99 names of Allah, special formulas of prayers, the ***shahada*** or a verses from the Qur'an. One recites phrases of remembrance to shut out selfish and earthly thoughts. In this way, a Sufi tries to dedicate their entire life to God. In response, God gives the Sufi a series of **insights** or emotional charges that occasionally come from the reciting of phrases. This recitation is called ***dhikr*** (or ***zikr***); it also involves the recitation of prayer and an increasing sense of devotion to Allah.

In Sufism, it is important to understand both the inner and outer meaning of the Qur'an. The idea that there is a secret meaning in the Qur'an is based on a much debated verse (3:7). Sufis take this verse to mean that every verse in the Qur'an has an inner or hidden (**esoteric**; in Arabic, *batin*) meaning and an outer (**exoteric**; *zahir*) meaning. Sufis suggest this verse also explains that the wise can access these inner meanings.

Self-effacement
Making oneself inconspicuous, through modesty or timidity

Nafs
The individual self, psyche, ego or soul

Ecstatic state
A state of blissful connection; achieved using bodily movement, chanting, meditation music and other inspirational activities

Shahada
The first pillar of Islam, the statement of belief that 'There is no god but the God and Muhammad is his messenger'

Insights
Understandings or revelations

***Dhikr* (or *zikr*)**
Ritual utterance of God's name or God's praise

Esoteric
Intended to be understood by few people; private (or inner) knowledge

Exoteric
Intended to be understood by the general public; public (or outer) knowledge

> It is He who has sent down on you this Book, in which there are verses explicit in meaning and content and decisive: they are the core of the Book, others being allegories. Those in whose hearts is swerving to pursue what is allegorical in it, seeking to cause dissension, and seeking

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to make it open to arbitrary interpretation, although none knows its interpretation save Allah. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it (in the entirety of the verses, both explicit and allegorical); as is from our Lord'; yet none derives admonition except the people of discernment.

QUR'AN 3:7

It is natural that poets, such as the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz, have been inspired to use beautifully evocative words to share their own experiences of being a Sufi.

There is a polish for everything that takes away rust: and the polish of the heart is the remembrance of God.

Relax the mind and learn to swim, said Shayk Ali-Al-Jamal, let go of your mind so that your soul, now out of its depths, may experience the spontaneous stirrings of intuition.

We are like lutes once held by God. Being away from his warm body fully explains this constant yearning.

Khirqa
Woollen robe associated with Sufis; can also refer to the initiation of a Sufi

Tasawwuf
An area of Islamic study focusing on spiritual development

Gnostic
From the Greek word *gnosis* meaning wisdom; Gnostic doctrines hold that the world and humanity are corrupt and only wisdom of secret matters allows humans to connect with the small spark of the divine within them

Neo-Platonic
A movement that developed the theories of the Greek philosopher Plato into a religious and mystical expression

Legalistic
Rigid adherence to the law

Literalist
A strict, exact approach to understanding religion and religious writing, leaving little room for interpretation

For Sufis, one of the most interesting points of Islamic history is the Night Journey or Night Ascension of the Prophet (Qur'an 17:1). On this night, Muhammad was reportedly transported from Mecca to Jerusalem and then vertically into the heavens to witness the innermost dimensions of the universe, including the afterlife. Much has been made of this reported journey in the Hadith and other Islamic works, especially in art such as the Persian miniatures. It is a journey that many Sufis like to meditate upon, hoping that they too will achieve a spiritual *mi'raj* or ecstatic rising up towards heaven.

Sufism's influence on Islam

It is likely that the term 'Sufi' comes from the Arabic word for 'wool'. This refers to the white woollen robes worn by Muslim wandering holy men. Over time their rough woollen garment (***khirqa***) came to be synonymous with those who dedicated themselves to mystical pursuits, and so they were given the name Sufi. It has been suggested that the increase in number of these wandering holy men may partly have been influenced by monks and priests who also wandered about serving their community. ***Tasawwuf*** (the spiritual development of a Muslim) could be linked to the same root word as Sufi. Sufi may also be an Arabic rendering of the Greek word *sophos* meaning 'wisdom'. If this is true, then Sufism links Islam with the **Gnostic** and **Neo-Platonic** traditions found around the Mediterranean. There may be connections also to the Hindu Bakhti tradition.

Whether this is the case or not, Sufism has been influenced by other traditions and, in turn, has influenced Jewish Kabbalah and Christian mysticism.

This openness to influence allows some to suggest that one need not be Muslim to be Sufi. The great Sufi poet, Rumi, called to people of all faiths to come and join him in the love of God whether they were Muslim or not. Traditions outside Islam say that Sufism connects with their own traditions of love to such an extent that it speaks more universally about the human condition than Islam alone. It is true that Sufi masters are venerated by people who are not Muslim. Hindus and Sikhs in India, for example, are just as likely as Muslims to visit some Sufi tombs.

For a Muslim, Sufism adds deeper meaning and emotion to the general requirements of Islam. For some people, Sufism is the most attractive side of the faith, and many outsiders first convert to Islam through their interest in Sufism. Yet Sufism is also a great challenge to Islam. Certain expressions of Sufism undermine the exoteric, ritual and legal side of the religion. Its practices can place lesser importance on doing acts, prayers, and the more obvious and public actions such as mosque attendance. Instead it puts more emphasis on meetings in small private groups, meditation and devotion, and one's emotional life. For its part, Sufism constantly struggles against those Muslims who seek to reduce Islam to a religion that is simply **legalistic** and **literalist**.

Over the centuries, Sufi orders have proved to be havens for both social misfits and daring thinkers. Many Sufis who entered orders have turned their backs on normal society and family life, often following a form of monasticism not usually encouraged in Islam. Additionally, there are other small signs of the difference with traditional forms of Islam. Much Sufi poetry and many song lyrics refer to the love of Allah as being as intoxicating as wine. Wine has thus become a significant symbol in Sufi poetry and thought, yet wine itself is forbidden in Islam.

Some great Sufis

In addition to the people mentioned here, see the digital version of this book for a discussion of Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), an extremely influential Sufi theologian and mystic.

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Figure 11.3 The whirling dervishes are a Sufi group in Islam. The whirling is a form of prayer, a remembrance of God.

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (717–801 CE)

Celebrated as one of the first great Sufis, Rabi'a gave Sufism definition with her overwhelming sense of love for God. She was considered to be eccentric and never married. The most famous story about her concerns a flaming torch and a bucket of water she was said to have carried through the town of Basra. To those who asked what she was doing, she replied:

> I want to douse the fires of hell and burn the rewards of paradise. They block the way to Allah. I don't want to worship Him from fear of punishment or for the promise of reward, but simply for the love of Allah itself.

Although Rabi'a is a significant figure to study in her own right, sadly there is little scholarship on her life.

Rumi (1207–1273 CE)

There is something profound in the way Sufis address God as their love. Rumi does this better than most.

Rumi's major theme was *tawhid* — or how he was unified with God. His ability to put into words the struggle of spiritual development and the growth of a personal relationship with God sets him apart as the greatest of poets. His six-volume poem, the *Masnavi-ye'* can be found in several English translations.

The Mevlevi Order of Sufis was founded by Rumi's followers after his death. This is one of the most well-known orders of Sufis, because of their spectacular whirling dervishes. Rumi was connected to this order because of his mystical friendship with Shams Tabrizi. As master and disciple, the two became inseparable.

The year 2007 was declared International Year of Rumi.

INVESTIGATE

Look up some of Rumi's poetry. Why is it controversial to some Muslims? Why is it attractive to people of other faiths? Note that two other significant Sufis, the philosopher Al-Ghazali and the poet Hafiz, are described in detail in the digital version of this book.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948–1997 CE)

Nusrat was an extraordinarily versatile Pakistani singer who specialised in *Qawwali* – Sufi devotional singing. Listen to his lyrics and see if you can discern how he takes phrases from Islamic prayers and passages from the Qur'an and turns these into ecstatic flights of vocal virtuosity.

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Figure 11.4 This illustration of the Prophet's night journey to heaven is a miniature painting from Persia (modern Iran).

The Qur'an and Sufism

There are passages in the Qur'an that seem to encourage a deep and mystical reading.

> And the human selfhood (nafs) and that (All-Wise One) Who has formed it to perfection; And Who has inspired it with the conscience of what is wrong and bad for it and what is right and good for it: He is indeed prosperous who has purified it. And he is indeed lost who has corrupted it.
>
> QUR'AN 91:1–10

Contribution of Sufism to Islam

Sufism has had a significant influence on the development of spirituality in Islam. Islam in its simplest form asks believers to do a number of things, and can seem little more than a series of mandated actions: prayers, pilgrimage, fasting. These requirements can turn into dry rules that are followed automatically unless special attention is given to spiritual experiences.

As Islam spread and covered large geographies and populations, one of the first great needs in Islam was for scholars and theologians to develop a legal code by which Muslims should live. This move also seemed to emphasise the rule-bound nature of Islam as both a religion and a system of governance. Other early scholars and mystics emerged to warn people to also focus on inner dimensions of worship and spiritual experience of the divine. This was the birth of Sufism.

Sufism not only introduced a tradition of mysticism into Islam, but also enriched the way Islam can be understood. Sufism allows Muslims to explore the emotional depths of their religious nature and to turn their faith into an intimate and personal act of devotion to God. Sufism allows Islam to appeal to many more dimensions of the human spirit. Drawing on features such as Muhammad's spiritual practices, Sufism has indicated there has always been a mystical element to Islam.

Sufism's impact on society

Sufism could be considered as the spiritual dimension of Islam. It develops the spiritual concepts of the Qur'an and the practices of Prophet Muhammad into a discipline with vast literature. Sufism spread throughout the Muslim world as a popular spiritual movement between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. Sufism's influence is profound, not only in the mystical parts of Islam, but also in its arts: music, painting, poetry and literature. Sufis established orders and houses, which welcomed pilgrims from all religious groups. Sufism continues to be responsible for attracting many non-Muslims to the Islamic faith today. Some of the most famous in the twentieth century have been the Frenchman Henry Corbin and the Russian mystic George Gurdjieff. The biographies of these men, which can be found on the internet, are fascinating.

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Figure 11.5 Sufism emphasises the mystical and spiritual aspects of Islam, often discovered in prayer

Sufism has allowed the expansion of the Islamic arts and Islamic civilisation, especially during the years when Islam seemed to stagnate.

Impact of Sufism on Islam

While Sufism was originally treated with wariness, it is the form of Islam that survived its period of stagnation, following the initial expansion of Islam, until the nineteenth century. Legalism sometimes tended to take over the expression of Islam and it was the Sufi mystics that presented an Islam that was spiritual, experiential and attractive to the changing world. It was Sufism that spread Islam through the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.

Sufism has encouraged Muslims to focus on a devotional Islam and self-improvement in a way that is still significant today. The emphasis on 'divine love' and 'spiritual closeness to God' in addition to law and jurisprudence is appealing to modern Westerners as well as those brought up in Islam. Arguably, Sufism is the school of Islam that is growing the fastest in the modern world.

INVESTIGATE

Investigate some of these other sources of information on Sufism:

- Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Heart of Sufism*, London, Shambhala, 1999
- Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* London, Allen & Unwin, 1975.

FURTHERMORE

It is important to note that not all Muslims agree with Sufi concepts. Some conservative Islamic scholars deride Sufism as a challenge rather than a complement to Islam. From your understanding of Islam, discuss why this might be the case.

Figure 11.6 An inspirational quote by Rumi

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EXERCISE 11.2

1 **Describe** Sufism as a school of thought, highlighting its main features.
2 **Outline** the life of a Sufi and the way the Sufi concepts are applied to life.
3 **Explain** the key principles of Sufism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.2

1 'Anyone can be a Sufi, no matter what their religious background'. **Discuss**.
2 Research and write a paragraph about how to become a Sufi
3 Research and **analyse** the influence of Sufism on Islam in Australia.
4 Find some Sufi poetry. **Assess** what it is about the poetry that seems specifically Sufi in comparison to other poetry you know.

Other people

The following people are discussed in the digital version of this book.

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (circa 555–619 CE) – first wife and supporter of Muhammad; the first convert to Islam

Fatima Al Zahra (circa 605–632 CE) – daughter of Muhammad and wife of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Fourth Rightly Guided Caliph; particularly significant in Shi'a Islam

Imam Malik (circa 711–795 CE) – one of the most respected scholars in Sunni Islam and founder of Maliki interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith collections in the Maliki *madhhab* (School of Jurisprudence)

Imam Abu Hanifa (699–767 CE) – founder of the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (717–801 CE) – female Sufi noted for her poetry and devotion; considered the founder of the doctrine of Divine Love in Islam

Imam al-Shafi'i (767–820 CE) – founder of the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence

Abu Ali Hussein ibn Sina (circa 980–1037 CE) – also known as Avicenna; Persian scholar expert in many fields, including philosophy and medicine

Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE) – Sufi theologian and mystic; his writings are considered among the greatest in Islam

Sayyid Maududi (1903–1979 CE) – Pakistani journalist, scholar and theologian; a Muslim revivalist leader and founder of one of the political Islamist movements of the twentieth century

Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966 CE) – key figure of the Muslim Brotherhood, who along with fellow members was persecuted by the Egyptian authorities and hanged; his writings in prison influenced a range of radical and anti-colonial expressions of Islam from the 1970s onwards

NOTE: The Islamic Research Academy of Australia has expressed concern about the study of Sayyid Qutb as a significant person. In today's political climate, because of his links to modern Islamic terrorism, they do not consider him to be a helpful choice. Other scholars would say Qutb is a very important voice in Islam's struggle to find itself a place in the colonial and postcolonial world.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792 CE) – established the school of Wahhabism, which is mainly concerned with eradicating religious influences in the Islamic world that cannot be traced to the earliest Islamic community; has become the guiding ideology of Saudi Arabia and has influenced many religious groups

11.3 ETHICS

Islamic ethics are closely related to the concept of *tawhid* – the oneness of Allah – and the belief in afterlife. In Islam, ethics relate to the aim of doing good things and avoiding bad and harmful things as guided by God in the Qur'an and by the example of Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that their actions will be judged by God in afterlife, hence they want to face God having done mostly good things in life. It is assumed in Islam that all human beings have a good moral inclination and, because of the greatness of Allah, people are expected to obey his commands contained in the Qur'an, and express their obedience in behaviour as well as belief. This inclination is known as a *fitrah*, a natural disposition towards belief in God and doing good things. This is not simply the ability to reason, but rather the capacity to recognise God and to understand the distinction between right and wrong; choosing to go against that inclination is doing wrong. *Zulm* is the term that is used to describe doing wrong against God, someone else or against oneself.

Muslims ground their ethical practices and principles in *tawhid*. Because of the greatness of Allah, human

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beings are expected to obey him and fulfil his purposes in life. This includes not only devotion to Allah, but also ethical behaviour towards others. There are several passages in the Qur'an that would support this concept, including Qur'an 2:177 and 4:36:

> Serve Allah and join not any partners with him; and do good – to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companions by your side, the wayfarer you meet, and what your right hands possess: for Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious.
> QUR'AN 4:36

There are some differences between Sunni and Shi'a ethics, mainly due to the weight given to, and different understanding of, the Hadith.

The discussion that follows examines three areas of ethics – bioethics, environmental ethics and sexual ethics.

Bioethics

Bioethics refers to a range of ethical issues that relate to human biology, healthcare and biological science. The importance of human life and the belief that only God can decide issues of life and death are key principles in an Islamic understanding of bioethics. Trust in God is also a central concept. Abortion is permitted in some cases. Contraception is generally allowed, although in the past it was discouraged as it suggested lack of trust in Allah. Artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) are only permitted within the marriage relationship; that is, there must be no suggestion of adultery or mixing of DNA from anyone other than those who are married. Euthanasia is generally not acceptable. Organ transplants are acceptable where the donor is dead, although there are some issues related to respect for the human body.

As its foundation for any discussion in this area, Islam holds to the overriding concept of the sanctity of human life and the fact that God is the only one who can decide issues of life and death because God is the one who gave humans life in the first place. This is linked to the concept of *tawhid*, the oneness, unity and authority of God. Allah is the one who is responsible for decisions about life and death. Muslims should submit to Allah's will. Islamic bioethics is motivated by submission to Allah and a combination of duties, rights and a call to virtue. Muslims are guided by the principles expressed in Shari'a law that are there to guard humans against harm and suffering and in turn ensure rights and dignity to all individuals. There is emphasis that people are treated with respect and compassion, with physical concerns not being the final consideration.

Muslim morality and ethics are governed by the overarching principle of obedience to Allah and the sanctity of life, as outlined in Islamic jurisprudence and the Qur'an. The Qur'an speaks of the value of life in a number of verses, including the following:

> Nor take life – which Allah has made sacred – except for a just cause.
> QUR'AN 17:33
>
> It is Allah who gives you life then gives you death; then he will gather you together for the day of judgement about which there is no doubt.
> QUR'AN 45:26

Islam has an emphasis on the value of human life. Abortion is generally condemned because life is in the hands of Allah. The Qur'an states:

> We [Allah] cause whom we will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do we bring you out as babies …
> QUR'AN 22:5

Some Muslims will allow abortion up until the 120th day of the pregnancy, when it is believed the soul enters the child; however abortion is generally considered wrong because once conception occurs, the child's right to live has the overarching priority. The general belief is that parents have the right to decide on having a child or not through contraception. In October 2000, the Australian Muslim Women's Association expressed the view that abortion is murder. They pointed out that God's name for his first revelation was 'the hanging embryo' (Sura 96).

Contraception is also discouraged because it interferes with the natural process of procreation. There is, however, a range of Muslim points of view on this subject. Some commentators, such as the twelfth-century scholar Al-Ghazali, suggested contraception is appropriate where there are concerns about the health of the mother or financial hardship, but not when performed to avoid the birth of a female child. Others consider the practice of contraception to be a sign of lack of trust in Allah – seeking to prevent pregnancy implies that the parents do not trust Allah to provide for the family. There is now a consensus on the general acceptability of contraception in Muslim societies, supported by prominent contemporary *ulama* (scholars).

For many Muslims, artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) are generally considered to be acceptable in cases where all the genetic material (egg and sperm) comes from the husband and wife. However, either can be seen as adultery if any of the genetic material comes from anyone other than the married partners.

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> Do not come near to adultery for it is shameful.
> QUR'AN 17:32

In most cases, gene manipulation would be condemned as trying to alter God's creation; however, organ transplants are acceptable in most circumstances. The issue of significance is whether the person donating the organs is actually dead or permission has clearly been given.

Euthanasia is not accepted in Islam. It is considered contrary to the role of Allah as the divine planner for human life. Muslims seek the patience of Allah to cope with the sufferings of life. They consider that suffering in disease will be compensation for sins and help the person purify. Firm trust in God and his divine purposes is the expectation for Muslims:

> O you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere … Be sure we shall test you with something of fear, and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits of your toil, but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere – who say, when afflicted with calamity: 'To Allah we belong, and to him is our return'.
> QUR'AN 2:153–156

Voluntary euthanasia is generally compared to suicide, by *qiyas* (analogical reasoning). Suicide is condemned in the Hadith:

> Whoever commits suicide with something will be punished with the same thing in the [hell] fire.
> BUKHARI 78:647

Islam is greatly concerned with providing quality palliative care for the dying and those experiencing painful diseases. While the sufferer's family is considered to be the primary source for that care, the Muslim community is also greatly involved.

The modern Muslim community reflects a diversity of views, caused by the variety of schools of jurisprudence, different sects, different cultural backgrounds of its members and different levels of religious observance.

The Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences, based in Kuwait, publishes a regular bulletin and holds conferences to discuss bioethical issues. Recent conferences have discussed organ transplants, assisted contraception and even issues such as testicular and ovarian grafts. Many Muslim communities look to their own recognised religious scholars for guidance. Similarly, majority Islamic societies such as Egypt have a state-funded religious office to issue rulings and help Muslim citizens make appropriate choices in their lives.

EXERCISE 11.3

1 **Explain** the importance of the concept of *tawhid* in determining Muslim bioethics.
2 **Describe** some of the issues related to bioethics and explain the areas of concern for Muslims.
3 **Discuss** the influences of modern technology in bioethics and how they impact on an understanding of Muslim bioethics.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.3

1 Write a paragraph on the importance of an understanding of marriage and adultery, and how they impact on Muslim bioethics.
2 Research one particular modern bioethical area and note the influences of the Qur'an, the Hadith, the *ijma* and *qiyas* in reaching a judgement (see also Chapter 10).
3 Debate the following topic: 'Modern Australian medical advances are incompatible with Muslim ideas and beliefs concerning bioethics'.

Environmental ethics

Video

Islamic beliefs are vital to the way environmental ethics have evolved and continue to evolve. The following three concepts are important in understanding Islamic environmental ethics:

- *tawhid* (unity) — the uniqueness of Allah and the integrity of his creation
- *khilafa* (stewardship) — respect and care for creation
- *akhira* (afterlife, when you will be held accountable for your actions) — Muslims are accountable for their use and abuse of creation.

To these, a fourth concept, *mizaan* (balance), is often added – living sustainably and avoiding the extreme of exploitation of the Earth's resources.

The Qur'an has many verses that speak about the created world, often in relation to daily life and practice. For

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example, animal slaughter must be humane, and washing before prayer must be done in a way that conserves water. Modern environmental initiatives seek to correct environmental damage in many parts of the world. There are aspects of Islamic worship that have environmental concerns as a part of their practice. Ramadan, the month of fasting, asks Muslims to meditate on how and why they consume food. It could be argued that land used for crop production, instead of animal production, would lead to a far more efficient use of the land.

Muslims have always sought ways to care for the environment. The general principle that guides Islam is the fact that the world is created by Allah and for the good of humankind. Human beings are made 'heirs to the earth' (Qur'an 6:165), which implies due care and responsibility in its use.

The submission of Islam to the will of Allah means that humankind should acknowledge Allah's ownership of creation, and seek to live as responsible stewards of Allah's created world. On the final judgement day, all human beings will need to give a reckoning of their actions. That accountability includes care for the world and the environment, and responsibility for maintaining the integrity and unity of creation, its flora and fauna, its wildlife, and natural environment.

The relevant words to understanding a Muslim view of environmentalism include *khilafa* (trusteeship) and *akhira* (the afterlife, when you will be held accountable for your actions). Muslims are accountable for maintaining the balance in creation. Environmental ethics in Islam are also linked to the concept of *tawhid* (unity). In this case it does not refer to the oneness of Allah, but the unity or integrity of Allah's creation. This is not to suggest that Allah is one with creation, but rather that creation as a whole reflects the uniqueness or oneness of Allah. Muslims must live in a way that sustainable, reflecting the perfect balance (*mizaan*) created by God.

Modern scholars suggest that the Qur'an speaks of a balance in nature that should be maintained. This comes from the assumption that the world belongs to Allah. This idea of balance in nature is important in maintaining the environment:

> And the firmament has he raised high, and he has set up the balance, in order that you may not transgress balance.
> QUR'AN 55:7–8

Muslims do not kill animals carelessly and have imposed rituals to ensure that when they do, it is as merciful as possible. While halal food laws apply to what Muslims may eat, they also require that animals be slaughtered mercifully. In Islam, the reason animals are slaughtered in a humane manner reflects the concern Allah has for his creation.

Figure 11.7 Ramadan is the month of fasting. During this time, Muslims often also consider how food could be produced in a sustainable way.

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When Muslims wash before prayer, they must do so in a way that conserves water.

It is not surprising that Islam has a keen sense of the fragility of the environment, given its origins in Arabia with its harsh geographical and climatic conditions. The world of Muhammad needed to be cared for carefully, and that care has continued through the history of Islam.

There is one particular significant passage from the Qur'an referenced by Muslim environmentalists:

> And the earth – we have spread it out and set thereon mountains standing firm and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth – to be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning to Allah.
>
> QUR'AN 50:7–8

Other are significant passages that speak of the need to care for the environment:

- Qur'an 7:31 – do not waste resources
- Qur'an 6:38 – interdependence of humans and animals
- Qur'an 2:28–29 – the earth created for human beings
- Qur'an 56:68–70 – water given by Allah
- Qur'an 30:30 – follow Allah's intentions for the world
- Bukhari's Hadith – 'Live in this world as if you were going to live forever'.

In Islam, the created world does not belong to human beings; it belongs to Allah and humans are to be guardians of the world. This concept of guardianship or stewardship is called *khilafa*. On the judgement day, humans will be called to account for how well this has been done. In practical terms, this means that water should be used wisely, animals only killed for food, and where a tree is cut down another should be planted to replace it.

Islam seeks to be practical in its worldview, and concern for the environment has been included in the development of Shari'a. As a result, fragile geographical zones are considered haram (forbidden) in Shari'a. These sites are protected by law and typically positioned to ensure access to parkland and nature, to restrict urban sprawl, and protect watercourses and bases. For instance, Peat fields in Sumatra, that are being burned to plant Palm Oil crops have recently been declared haram by Muslim Clerics in Indonesia. Similarly, actions that degrade the environment are considered haram, such as pollution of the air and water, and excessive water usage

In addition to these laws relating to the protection of land, a statement of legal rights for animals was developed as early as the thirteenth century by the Muslim jurist Izz ad-Din ibn 'Abd al-Salam. In addition to these historical developments, modern Shari'a continues to emphasise the importance of protecting the environment. For example, environmental initiatives seek to correct environmental damage in many parts of the world. Muslims have been actively working towards reversing the effects of environmental damage in areas such as Oman and the Sahara region of Africa.

Representatives of Islam were part of the Assisi Declaration, an interfaith meeting in 1986 at Assisi in Italy (home of the twelfth-century Christian St Francis of Assisi) to discuss issues of the environment. This included a Muslim declaration on religion and nature that stated the following:

> Allah's trustees are responsible for maintaining the unity of his creation, its flora, its fauna, its wildlife and natural environment … Unity cannot be had by setting one need against another or one end over another; it is maintained by balance and harmony.
>
> ASSISI DECLARATION

In 1995, another conference was held, at Ohito in Japan. It included religious leaders from nine religious traditions and discussed concerns about the environment. The 'Ohito Declaration on Religions, Land, and Conservation' was issued, giving guidelines for future action in caring for the environment. Muslim leaders were significantly involved in forming the declarations that came from that conference.

In 2015, an International Islamic Climate Change Symposium was held in Istanbul. Faith leaders, senior international development policymakers, academics and other experts issued the 'Islamic Declaration on Climate'. The Muslim leaders called on the people of all nations and their leaders to phase out greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible in order to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, and to commit themselves to 100 per cent renewable energy and/or a zero emissions strategy as early as possible. They specifically called on richer nations and oil-producing states to lead the way in phasing out their greenhouse gas emissions no later than the middle of the century.

Examples of environmental initiatives and concerns include animal rights, waste minimalisation and water conservation. They also include careful and considered use of resources and cultivation of land in a sustainable way. The Islamic Sciences and Research Academy, Australia (ISRA) is a member of the Faith Ecology Network and has assisted in the development of the Climate Change Action Kit published by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, an interfaith group. ISRA is involved in educational initiatives as well as hands-on activities. Other Australian Muslim organisations are also involved in environmental initiatives.

Other examples of Muslim initiatives in environmental ethics include the Malaysian company Waste2Wear, which is manufacturing 'green' hijab from recycled plastic bottles, and the Muslim publisher EMEL, which is publishing a series of journals entitled 'Eco Jihad'. There are a number of Muslim environmental organisations across the world, including Green Muslims, EcoMENA and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES).

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EXERCISE 11.4

1 List some of the references in the Qur'an that relate to the environment and **summarise** their teachings.
2 **Outline** the key concepts relating to environmental ethics in Islam.
3 **Explain** the concepts of *tawhid*, *khilafa* and *akhira*, with reference to how they relate to Muslim environmental ethics.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.4

1 Develop a table of environmental ethics in Islam, using the headings 'halal' and 'haram'. Note carefully which issues fit into which column, and which issues cross both.
2 Debate the following topic: 'Islam has an understanding of environmental issues because Muhammad lived in Arabia'.
3 Search the internet to discover how Islam is seeking to redress ecological damage in Muslim countries. Create an illustrated page **demonstrating** and **explaining** the initiatives that are being taken to address that damage, and what steps are being taken to conserve the area or areas you have investigated.

Sexual ethics

Sexual acts in Islam can be divided into lawful (halal) and unlawful (haram) activities. What differentiates halal acts from haram acts is determined first by the Qur'an and then by the Hadith collections and the Shari'a Law codes and their various schools of interpretation. In many countries with majority Muslim populations, some aspects of Western law have been incorporated. This is particularly true in countries that were once part of, or strongly influenced by, British or French colonial rule. A good way to gain a greater understanding of societal attitudes to issues such as premarital and extramarital sex is by examining the legal systems of Muslim states. Attitudes can differ significantly.

Figure 11.8 The ethics of premarital and extramarital sex across the Islamic world are interpreted in a number of different ways

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Premarital and extramarital sex

For a woman or a man, sex before marriage (premarital sex) falls into the category of fornication (in Arabic, *zina*). Under Islamic law, premarital and extramarital sex remain grave sins condemned in the Qur'an and the Shari'a code. Both are considered violations of the marriage contract and strict Islamic law allows punishment for both of these acts.

According to some interpretations of classic Islamic law, premarital sex is punishable by up to 100 lashes. The Qur'an states:

> The woman and the man guilty of illegal sexual intercourse, flog each of them with a hundred stripes [of the whip]. Let not pity withhold you in their case, in a punishment prescribed by Allah.
> QUR'AN 24:2

Adultery is considered an even more serious sin and is punishable by stoning.

> Do not go near to adultery. Surely it is a shameful deed and evil, opening roads [to other evils].
> QUR'AN 17:32

Marriage (***nikah***) is a legally binding contract in the Qur'an and is an important part of Shari'a as it determines how families function. A marriage must be publicly announced. Marriage is a confirmation of male and female togetherness in the wider context of the Islamic community.

Nikah
Complex term often translated as marriage, but has connotations of embracing and sex

To maintain the distinction between the home and the outside world, the Qur'an makes a number of things very clear. First, it outlines who can and cannot be defined as a family member. Passages such as Qur'an 4:23, explain in detail whom a man can and cannot marry. It also delineates the possible sexual relationships that can occur between a man and those women legally bound to him through marriage and/or who live in his family unit. This is made clear in Qur'an 23:

> 1–6: 1. Successful indeed are the believers …
>
> 5. … who guard their chastity [i.e. private parts from illegal sexual acts]
>
> 6. Except from their wives or [the slaves] that their right hands possess – for then they are free of blame.

These sentiments are repeated almost exactly in *Qur'an* 70:29–30, which emphasises that sexual relations within marriage is nothing to be embarrassed about and the couple can approach one another freely. The Qur'an allows multiple marriages for men, up to a maximum of four. Qur'an 4:3 reads: '… marry women of your choice, two or three, or four'.

Muslims contrast this verse with Qur'an 4:129, which explains how hard it is to be fair to each wife: 'You will never be able to do perfect justice between wives'.

Some argue that this verse countermands Qur'an 4:3 and men should only have one wife. Others suggest that Qur'an 4:3 only referred to the time of the Prophet when, because of battles, many women and their children were left without a husband and father. The ethics of premarital and extramarital sex across the Islamic world are interpreted in a number of different ways. Some countries, such as Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, have incorporated more literal interpretations of Qur'anic verses into their legal systems (and adhere to a strict interpretation of Shari'a). Others, such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, have taken far more liberal approaches incorporating a variety of legal traditions from other countries.

Muslim countries that maintain Shari'a law follow the Qur'an and other religious writings such as the Hadith and judgements by Islamic scholars. In relation to inappropriate sexual expression, punishment can be severe. In these countries, human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, do as much as they can to research and condemn these activities, which they consider serious abuses of human rights.

By contrast, there are many majority Muslim countries, such as Turkey, Morocco and Indonesia that have adopted more liberal approaches to the application of Shari'a. While these legal systems are informed by Shari'a, trials are open and decisions can be appealed. Penalties for crimes are often handed down in the form of fines and prison terms rather than corporal (physical) punishment. The influence of Islam can still be seen in the moral choices made by the population. For example, Turkey is predominantly a Muslim country but it has secular laws, many of which are quite liberal. Nevertheless, the Qur'an still exerts an influence. The Turkish marriage rate is high, and men and women generally marry much earlier than in Australia.

CONSIDER

In the Christian Bible, the apostle Paul gives a clear ruling that women should cover their heads in public, but Christians rarely follow his injunction. On the other hand, some Muslims would say the Qur'an issues no specific injunction about the wearing of a veil. Check the Qur'an and see if you can find specific references to the veiling of women. What about the Hadith? How are these issues interpreted and applied in Muslim societies? Are these religious expectations or cultural ones?

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INVESTIGATE

Investigate some sources of information on sexual attitudes. In the Qur'an, the following verses concern themselves in some way with *zina*: 4:19, 4:24, 23:1–6, 24:3–11, 24:23, 24:33, 25:68–70, 33:50, 60:12, 70:22–30. In the Hadith, see, for example, al-Tirmidhi Hadith 1091. See also Fatima Mernissi's book on the Hadith, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (1987).

In an extreme counter-example, Saudi Arabia operates under the full force of Shari'a which is interpreted very conservatively, although there has been some freedoms allowed since 2019. To enforce Islamic ethical laws there is a **Mutawwa'in**, or religious police force. This force can arrest men and women who are not related and are alone together. The US State Department's 2010 report on human rights abuses states that people were punished for fornication in Saudi Arabia.

There are a number of theories on how sexuality in the Muslim world is controlled. Fatima Mernissi (1987) examines Islam in the time of the Prophet. She claims that many citizens, scholars and judges invented or twisted a number of Hadith to increase the status of men far above what the Prophet or the Qur'an proposed. She focuses on accounts of the early life of Islam, when men and women interacted more in public life. This is not to say that punishment for premarital sex did not exist, but in Mernissi's account, the segregation of men and women was less strict than it is in many conservative Muslim societies today. Certainly, women such as Muhammad's wives Khadijah and A'isha were very prominent in the early expression of Islam.

Homosexuality

The following is from a 2016 article in *The Conversation* by Rusi Jaspal, a Professor of Psychology and Sexual Health at De Montfort University in Leicester. Please note that alternative spellings of Qur'an and the plural of hadith as Ahadith are used here.

> It is difficult to define the 'Islamic position' on homosexuality, as a monolithic phenomenon, simply because Islam is a very diverse faith group with some 1.6 billion followers on six continents. In most Muslim countries, homosexuality is illegal and in some countries, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, it is punishable by death. But in others, such as Jordan and Turkey, homosexuality is not considered a crime. Most Islamic scholars are in agreement that homosexuality is incompatible with Islamic theology. They tend to draw on the story of Lot in the Koran (also in the Old Testament) which recounts the destruction of the tribe of Lot allegedly due to their engagement in homosexual acts as 'evidence' for God's condemnation of homosexuality. Many scholars also cite the Ahadith (statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammed) that are condemnatory of homosexuality. Theological and legal condemnations of homosexuality can engender perceptions at a social level that homosexuality is wrong and that it should not be permitted.
>
> RUSI JASPAL, 'WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE GAY AND A MUSLIM', *THE CONVERSATION*, 28 JUNE 2016

Mutawwa'in
Muslim religious police

Liwat
Homosexual acts

Heterosexual marriage and the birth of children are central to Islamic life. Most men and women get married, even though some may also engage in homosexual acts outside of marriage. Homosexuality is characterised in the Muslim world as an illicit sex act between men (sodomy). Lesbian relationships in the Islamic world are harder to identify but they do exist. Some groups, such as Aswat (Palestinian Feminist Center for Gender and Sexual Freedoms) are emerging to represent Muslim lesbians (despite the fact that Aswat operates in Israel, which is outside of an Islamic legal system). In 1998, the Al-Fatiha Foundation was established to support gay and lesbian Muslims. It is based mainly in Western countries such as Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. In Western societies there are some communities that host 'rainbow' mosques. While these welcome Muslims of all different sexualities, they still operate with some secrecy.

Figure 11.9 A group of Muslim people from the LGBT community take part in the Pride in London festival

The Qur'an and the city of Sodom

The Qur'an is indirect in prescribing punishments for acts of homosexuality (***liwat***), but is clear on how it defines homosexual behaviour as deviant. In Qur'an 7:80, there is reference to the story of Lut (Lot), a figure from the Hebrew Bible. In Judaism it is not certain whether the city of Sodom has any connection with

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the sex act that it gave its name to, sodomy, but in the Qur'an the link is very clear.

Homosexuality in the Hadith

When the Qur'an speaks of homosexuality, it mainly does so in reference to the city of Sodom and its punishment by Allah. No punishments on individuals are prescribed by the Qur'an. Muslim scholars discovered sayings by the Prophet that interpreted the Sodom reference as a condemnation of homosexuality. In the Hadith collected by Tirmidhi, we read the Prophet saying, 'Kill the one who sodomises and the one who lets it be done to him'. In the collection of Hadith by Tabarani, lesbianism is equated to adultery. The punishment for adultery is stoning to death.

A number of legal traditions have developed over the centuries in Islam. Some of these are stricter than others, depending on how the Qur'an and the Hadith collections have been interpreted. Some schools of law in Islam have harsher penalties than others. The range of responses demonstrates the highly interpretive nature of the Qur'an on some issues. The Hadith collections are much less ambiguous. Some Muslims think that the execution of those found committing homosexual acts is the most appropriate punishment. In Iran, which has a constitution and legal code inspired by the Qur'an and Hadith, anyone convicted of engaging in a homosexual act will usually be sentenced to death, sometimes by hanging. In other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, whippings, imprisonment and executions are more common. In secular Turkey, there are no laws against homosexuality, but codes on public decency can be used to prosecute people committing homosexual acts, although in practice this is rare.

Because of social restrictions on the contact Muslim men and women have with each other, men are often in the company of men and women with women. As a result, in some Muslim societies men and women may engage in homosexual acts secretly. In some Muslim nations of North Africa and elsewhere, men, both married and looking to marry, may engage in sex with other men. The authorities in countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia often turn a blind eye to this sort of homosexual behaviour. These men continue to live their lives as good Muslims and good family members without realising that they could be considered to be homosexual.

In 2014, the Sultan of Brunei announced that stoning to death for homosexual acts would now take place in his small Islamic kingdom. The first phase of new laws, which covered crimes punishable by prison sentences and fines, was implemented in 2014. Brunei had delayed introducing the final two phases, which cover crimes punishable by amputation and stoning. However, in April 2019, the government released a statement on its website saying the Shari'a penal code would be fully implemented. The sultan also called for 'stronger' Islamic teachings. This caused international outrage. But when journalists went to Brunei and interviewed homosexuals there, they discovered that most gay and lesbian Bruneians were unconcerned that this would actually happen in any practical way.

Gender roles

Gender roles vary quite considerably in Muslim societies, often reflecting cultural norms. Muhammad supported the right of women to have an education, retain their own identity after marriage and to buy and sell property, all of which were quite liberal beliefs for his day. In some Muslim countries today, women have limited roles, while in others there is much more freedom. Few women take on the role of imams in a mosque, but many take positions of leadership and scholarship, which are more esteemed in the Muslim community. While there is considerable debate about the role of women as imams, there are women who do lead congregations, one example being Amina Wadud in the USA. Women are also particularly prominent in the Australian Muslim community as educators and community organisers, examples being Silma Ihram and Zuleyha Keskin.

The Qur'an suggests equality between men and women (Qur'an 4:124) but, in general, this is not reflected in the laws of many Muslim countries.

Figure 11.10 Thousands of people attended the annual Gay Pride Parade in Istanbul, Turkey, 28 June 2015

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The Qur'an does not specify gender roles. Qur'an 4:34, however, speaks of men having guardianship over women and this verse has often been interpreted to reinforce strict gender roles. Some Muslims seek to control women's sexuality and thus reinforce conservative traditional gender roles. While the Qur'an (24:30–31) speaks of the importance of modesty, the interpretation of those verses tends to reflect cultural traditions with modesty enforced in a variety of dress codes. Certainly, in some cultures, women have often been restricted to a role in the home and sometimes have limited access to the mosque.

In recent times, the Saudi Arabian government has loosened some of the restrictions of their male guardianship system, and has said that many of its strict laws are cultural rather than emanating from religion. While these changes point to some gender equality, there are still many restrictions that need to be addressed in order to regain the equality that seemed to exist in early Islam.

EXERCISE 11.5

1 **Outline** the main concepts that underlie Muslim sexual ethics.
2 **Describe** the importance of sexual fidelity in Islam.
3 **Discuss** the issue of homosexuality in Islam.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.5

1 Debate the following topic: 'Muslim sexual ethics reflect cultural backgrounds rather than the teachings of the Qur'an.'
2 Write a speech describing Islamic ethics as they relate to sexual ethics.
3 Research to find out about the major issues in Islamic sexual ethics. **Discuss** how they can be resolved.

11.4 SIGNIFICANT PRACTICES IN THE LIVES OF ADHERENTS

Muslims express their faith through the rites and rituals of Islam. These include regular personal devotion, public worship, and what are called **rites of passage** that mark the stages of life that people pass through. Three practices are discussed here. In each of these practices, Muslims affirm their belief in Allah and their continued submission to Him.

- Friday prayers at the mosque combine several aspects of Islam – the concept of *salat* (prayer), one of the Five Pillars of Islam, as expressed in the community meeting place, a mosque.
- Funerals are one of the rites of passage that are expressed in most religious traditions, but with some unique features in Islam.
- The Hajj, the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Mecca, is a uniquely Muslim ritual.

Friday prayers at the mosque

Describe the practice

Muslims are called to conduct prayers on Friday by the Qur'an:

> All you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday [the day of assembly], hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business [and traffic]: that is best for you if you but know!
>
> QUR'AN 62:9

The mosque is the centre of the Muslim community. The Arabic word for mosque is *masjid*, which means 'place of prostration', signifying the way Muslims pray. While prayer is also an individual act, it finds its greatest expression in the Friday prayers at the mosque, the communal celebration of the devotional life of a Muslim, a weekly lesson in the form of a sermon and collective worship of God.

Rite of passage
A ritual to mark the progression of an individual through various status stages in a community

Salat al-Jum'ah
Muslim Friday prayers held at the mosque, just after noon

Salat al-Jum'ah (or simply *Jum'ah*) is the name given to Friday prayers at the mosque. These are congregational prayers that are held each Friday just after noon. They can replace the second daily prayer (or zuhr — see the discussion of *salat* in Chapter 10). All Muslim males are expected to attend *Jum'ah*. Only those who are sick or have great difficulty in attending are excused from Friday prayers at the mosque. Women have the option of performing their daily prayers either privately or at the mosque.

Video

Beliefs

The *Jum'ah* is significant because it is the time set apart by God for all Muslims to meet, review their spiritual growth and affirm the Muslim community, and is an indicator of a Muslim's willingness to give God precedence over all other aspects of life and fulfil the commands of the Qur'an.

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Figure 11.11 Friday prayer in Imam Mosque in Isfahan, Iran

Khutba
The message at the mosque, delivered by the *khatib* (speaker)

Khatib
Speaker, who delivers the sermon in the mosque

Imam
Prayer leader

rak'ah **(plural *rak'at*)**
A unit or cycle of Islamic prayer; the prescribed movements and words followed by Muslims during worship)

Wudu'
Ritual washing of arms, face and feet before the daily prayers

Muezzin
The one who calls Muslims to prayer

Minaret
A tower at a mosque where traditionally the muezzin calls Muslims to prayer

The prayer used at Friday prayers is shorter than that normally used. A sermon (***khutba***) is usually delivered by the speaker (***khatib***). This is usually the **imam** (prayer leader). The sermon replaces the shortened parts of the normal *zuhr* and is usually a practical message on how to apply Muslim teaching to everyday life. In some cases, these sermons can have a political or communal role.

Friday prayers also affirm the importance of *salat*. Prayer is extremely important in the life of a Muslim. All Muslims are called to pray five times each day:

- at dawn (*fajr*)
- noon (*zuhr*)
- late afternoon (*asr*)
- after sunset (*maghrib*)
- at night (*isha*).

Life in the Muslim world revolves around these times of prayer. There are special rituals associated with prayer called ***rak'ah***. Each Muslim is required to perform ritual washing (***wudu'***) before prayer. This includes washing the hands and arms to the elbows, rinsing the mouth, nose and ears, wiping the hair, and washing the feet. Some purification rituals include washing the whole body and the hair. Where no water is available, washing can be done symbolically using clean earth, sand or stone. The purpose of washing is to signify inner spiritual purity and also to distinguish the time of prayer from the routines of daily life. It is not always possible for Muslims to make all these prayers in a mosque, so they do them where they can. These private times of prayer correspond to the formal public times.

INVESTIGATE

Visit a mosque in your area and talk to people involved in attending the mosque. Find out how important it is for Muslims to gather each week. What happens during a service?

The times of prayer are announced by a **muezzin** who calls people to prayer, often from a **minaret** at the mosque. These calls resound throughout the Islamic world and are a natural part of the daily routine in those countries. In Australia, municipal noise pollution ordinances generally prevent the call to prayer being made.

When they pray, Muslims may use a prayer mat and face Mecca, or more specifically the Ka'ba in Mecca. Muslims are required to dress modestly. Men should be covered at least from the navel to the knees, while for women, the whole body apart from the face, hands and feet is to be covered. The ritual actions used, *rak'ah*, along with the direction faced, *qibla*, signify the unity of Islam across the world. It is the common experience of all Muslims that prayer is undertaken at particular times, facing Mecca, and actions are

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common the world over. No matter where Muslims are in the world, they can share in prayer and be at one with those around them. Private prayers can be said at any time and are not necessarily associated with the ritual of *rak'ah*, although many Muslims do follow the same rituals. A distinct form of worship is *zikr*, remembrance of God, quite distinct from ritual prayer. Sometimes Muslims use prayer beads, called ***tasbih*** (or ***subha***). These comprise 99 beads are on a string like a necklace, and represent the 99 names of Allah. After every 33 beads, a larger bead allows a pause to say, 'Glory be to Allah, thanks be to Allah, Allah is great'. The beads are often finished with a tassel. *Zikr* beads are particularly popular among Sufi Muslims. Prayer is a vital part of the daily life of every Muslim. In many parts of the world, facilities have been built to cater for the needs of Muslims in prayer. It is not possible to be an observant Muslim and neglect prayer.

Tasbih (subha)
String of prayer beads comprising 99 beads, representing the 99 names of Allah

Significance for the individual

For the individual, Friday prayers in particular are the opportunity to take a break from busy lives and dedicate 30–60 minutes to meditation and worship. It is a time to be reminded to be clean before God and obedient, and a time for personal devotion. The *khutba* is a time of instruction in the faith and reflection.

Significance for the community

Friday prayers are when the Muslim community gathers in one particular place, strengthening beliefs and practice. Muslims can enjoy one another's company as a community, and offer support and encouragement to one another. All over the world, Muslims perform this same action, affirming their global community.

THE MOSQUE

Mosque is the name given to the religious meeting place in Islam, and it is the focal point for the Muslim community as well as a place of worship. The Arabic name is *masjid*, and sometimes in countries like Australia they are called Markaz Islami, which means Islamic centre. In Australia, community dinners, weddings, weekend schools and meetings of Muslim community organisations are among the events held in a mosque. But, of course, it is principally a place for worship.

The Friday sermon and prayer are attended by most Muslim men. It is compulsory for Muslim men and optional for Muslim women. The mosque is often an educational centre for the Muslim community and, in some places, it can even provide accommodation for travellers.

A mosque is usually furnished simply. The major features are:

- a prayer hall (*musalla*)
- an area where people wash before prayers (*wudu'*)
- a small niche (*mihrab*) in the wall indicating the direction of Mecca
- a raised pulpit (*minbar*)
- separate areas for men and women to pray
- sometimes separate offices or rooms for schooling and administration.

The mosque can include places to eat and sleep as well as educational facilities. Mosques do not feature statues or paintings; the main form of decorative art is calligraphy and geometric designs. The leader of a mosque is called an imam. He is an educated Muslim chosen by the community, usually for his knowledge of Islam.

Most mosques are open to visitors and welcome all who can respect Islam and follow guidelines that call for appropriate dress and behaviour in a religious building.

Figure 11.12 Adherents in a mosque in Honaine, Algeria

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EXERCISE 11.6

1 **Describe** Friday prayer at the mosque.
2 **Discuss** how this practice expresses the beliefs of Islam.
3 **Explain** how Friday prayer at the mosque is both an individual and a community event.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.6

1 Draw or make a model of a mosque, noting the major features.
2 Talk to a Muslim person and discuss any possible difficulty of participating in Muslim prayer in modern Australia.
3 Discuss the importance of Friday prayers with a Muslim adherent.

Funerals

Muslim funerals in practice

In Islam, death is not to be feared. Funerals are held as soon as possible after death, and burials are usually simple, and often attended by family, friends and members of the community. The body is buried on its right side, facing Mecca, and touching the ground. Simple graves and headstones are the norm.

While death is a painful and emotional time for any family, in Islam it also carries the hope of paradise and the bountiful mercy of Allah. It is the time for the Muslim who has died to experience eternal life and the peace, happiness and rewards it brings.

Funeral ceremonies can reflect the culture of the different traditions of the Muslims involved. For example, in many countries, funerals are not held at the mosque; in Australia they often are held on mosque grounds just in front of the mosque itself. In many countries, funerals are conducted in silence with few tears, but in Palestine or Iran they can be occasions of great noise and obvious grieving. Muslim graves are commonly very plain, but the Taj Mahal in India is one of the world's most elaborate Muslim funerary monuments.

Muslims believe that, as their first sound was of Allah, so too should be their last, at the time of their death. It is the wish of all Muslims to die saying the *shahada*: 'There is no god but the God and Muhammad is his messenger'. The family gathers to read the Qur'an and say prayers with the dying person.

Figure 11.13 Funeral ceremonies can reflect the culture of the different traditions of the Muslim people involved

Considerable respect is shown to the human body. When a person dies, their eyes are closed, their hands are laid across their chest in an attitude of worship and the body is covered with a clean sheet. It is believed the soul departs at the moment of death, and that the body should be treated with dignity.

The body is washed three times by members of the same sex (or their spouse) and is wrapped in plain sheets of cloth (called *kafn*). Sometimes these are the clothes worn by the deceased when they performed the Hajj. This is to show that everyone is equal. The hair, hands, feet, forehead and knees of the person are anointed with perfume. The head is turned to face Mecca. A short service is conducted, consisting mainly of prayers, with little ritual. The prayers at the funeral service are said standing rather than by prostration

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or bowing. Muslims draw comfort from the Qur'an at the time of death, referring to passages such as Qur'an 16:30–32, which speaks of the reward waiting for the righteous person:

> To the righteous it is said, 'What is it that your Lord has revealed?' They say, 'all that is good'. To those who do good, there is good in this world, and the home of the hereafter is even better and excellent indeed is the home of the righteous. Gardens of eternity which they will enter: beneath them flow pleasant rivers: they will have therein all they wish: thus does Allah reward the righteous – those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity, saying, 'Peace be on you: enter the garden, because of the good which you did'.

The funeral procession is usually conducted in silence. Usually men lower the dead person into the grave while everyone present throws a shovel of earth on the dead body. Women often do not attend the burial, but may be at the funeral prayer service. Because of the belief in the resurrection of the dead, bodies should be buried, not cremated. The body is buried on its right side, with the grave facing Mecca.

Tradition expects the body to have contact with the earth, and Australian law now allows Muslims to be buried without a coffin. As the grave is filled, passages from the Qur'an are recited. Qur'an 20:55 is read as the first three handfuls of dirt are thrown into the grave:

> From the earth did we create you, and into it shall we return you, and from it shall we bring you out once again.

The grave is covered with a simple mound of earth, and only a plain headstone is allowed. In some communities the graves are raised above ground, so that people do not walk on them. Money should not be spent on elaborate graves, but should rather be given to the poor.

In some Muslim cultures, seven days of mourning are held and the grave visited frequently, but grief should not be too obvious as it suggests a lack of faith in Allah's promise of an afterlife. Widows often observe an extended morning period of four months and ten days (called *idda*).

Beliefs

The funeral rite in Islam has two main purposes – to show respect and offer a collective prayer for the deceased, and to fulfil the necessary rituals to ensure they go to the afterlife. Funerals also give family and friends the opportunity to grieve and to show respect to the one who has died.

Figure 11.14 Gravestones in the village of Giriz, Azerbaijan

While the deceased person can no longer contribute to the world, there are three things, Muhammad noted, that continue after death:

- charity given during the life that continues to help others
- knowledge given that will benefit others
- a righteous child who will pray for their deceased parent.

The major focus at a funeral is that the soul of the deceased is now waiting for the judgement day. On that day God will judge each person according to their beliefs and actions during their life. The body will be resurrected on the judgement day, and so Muslims do not usually practise cremation.

Significance for the individual

For the individual, death is the time to meet God and face judgement. The actions and directions at death and the funeral prepare the deceased for that judgement.

For the family, death is a time to trust in God and to draw strength from God. It is a time to recognise one's own mortality and the need to continue the family line. It is a time to remember the good works that the deceased has performed and the importance of submitting to the will of Allah.

Significance for the community

For the community, a funeral is also a time to recognise the mortality of each person and the importance of caring for the bereaved. It is a communal celebration of the life of the deceased. The community thanks God for the life of the person and their contribution to the community. It is an acknowledgement that in death, adherents will face judgement

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EXERCISE 11.7

1 **Outline** the actions taken when a Muslim funeral is conducted.
2 **Demonstrate** the significance of the particular actions that are evident in the rituals associated with death and funerals in Islam.
3 **Explain** the reasons for simple funeral services and graves. How is a Muslim acknowledged and respected?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.7

1 **Examine** the burial practices of Islam and consider Australian laws and customs. What areas of potential difficulty are apparent? How do Muslims overcome these difficulties?
2 Research a Muslim funeral service. Write out the main elements of the service and note the beliefs that relate to the various aspects of the service.
3 Write a paragraph on the following: 'Muslim funerals remind the community of their own coming judgement'.

Hajj (pilgrimage)

Describe the practice

Video

The fifth pillar of Islam commands all Muslims, if they are able, to participate in a Hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca that includes a circumambulation of the Ka'ba. The Hajj presents opportunities for Muslims to:

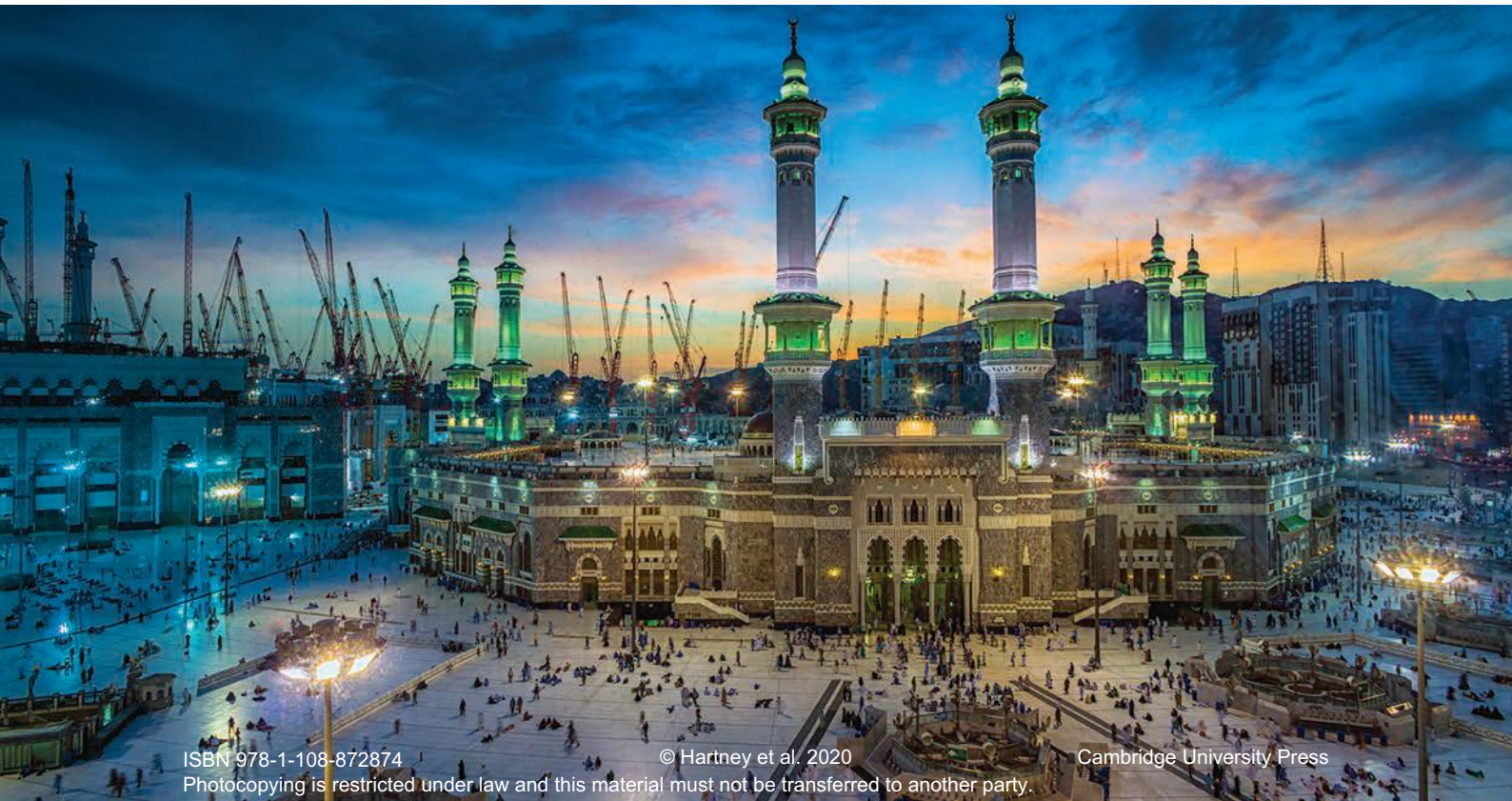
- express their devotion to God
- seek forgiveness for sins committed throughout life
- meet with other Muslims from around the world and
- together worship Allah
- fulfil one of the important obligations of Islam.

It is a chance to reflect on one's life and have one's sins forgiven; it presents new opportunities for Muslims to experience the togetherness of the Islamic community; it also gives a sense of what it will be like when Allah assembles all humanity for judgement on the last day. The Hajj re-enacts significant events and beliefs in Islam. The Hajj is a time for simplicity, self-renewal, re-dedication and generosity.

Muslims have several sacred places mostly relating to the story of Abraham, the life of Muhammad, the lives of other prophets and the significant leaders of Islam. The most sacred sites are the cities of Mecca and Medina in modern Saudi Arabia.

Mecca is the city of Muhammad's birth and where he spent much of his early life. Medina is the city that Muhammad and early followers fled to in order to escape religious persecution. Mecca and parts of Medina are now private cities – only Muslims are allowed to enter them. Mecca has as its central shrine the Ka'ba, the black covered cube that is traced back to the time before Islam's earliest beginnings. While the Ka'ba is believed to have been built by Abraham and his son Ishmael, some trace its origins to Adam, the first man. The Ka'ba is the

Figure 11.15 Al-Masjid al-Haram, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where the Ka'ba is located



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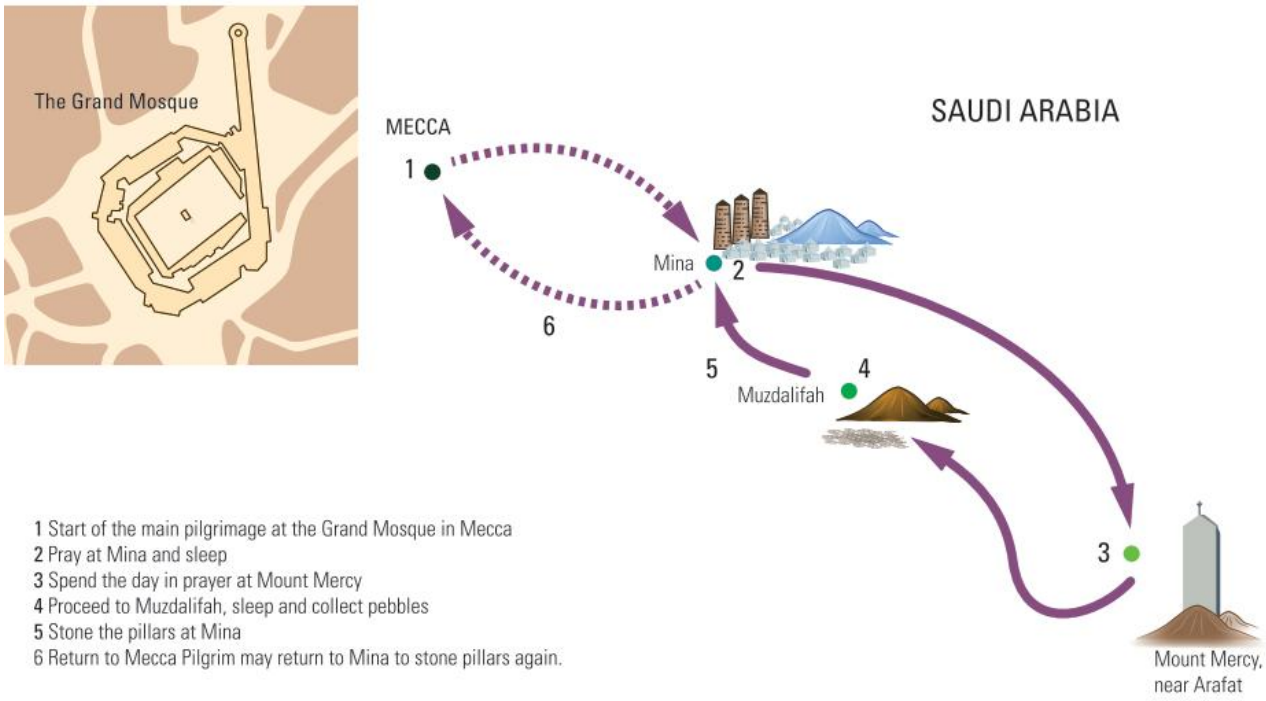

Figure 11.16 Description of the Hajj

focus of Muslim prayer; it is the shrine that Muslims face as they pray each day and represents the unity of God, *tawhid*, and the oneness of all believers.

The Qur'an has specific instructions for the Hajj, and a particular ritualised plan of pilgrimage is enacted. The Qur'an states Muslims should 'perform the visit and pilgrimage to Mecca for Allah' (Qur'an 2:196). Qur'an 2:196–203 and Qur'an 22:26–33 list extensive instructions for the Hajj. Muslims believe the Hajj was designed and commanded by God. Thus, every Muslim, male and female, will attempt to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives. The Hajj applies to both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. It is evident that some form of pilgrimage existed in pre-Islamic Arabia (for the Ka'ba was a major religious site before Muhammad), but its current meaning and purpose apply to all Muslims.

The Hajj should be performed at the beginning of the month *Dhul Hijjah*. Before a pilgrim sets out on the Hajj they should:

- redress all wrongs
- pay all debts
- plan enough money for their journey
- leave enough money behind for their family
- prepare to behave well while on the Hajj.

There are several steps, physical and spiritual, that should be taken on the Hajj. On arrival at Mecca, the pilgrim joins in the great pilgrimage of Abraham, following in his footsteps. Pilgrims re-enact much of the story of Abraham bringing Hagar and their son Ishmael to Arabia. Muslims believe that Hagar is Abraham's legitimate wife and Ishmael his legitimate heir. The centre of Mecca, and the pilgrimage, is the Ka'ba. The Ka'ba features strongly in the story of Muhammad and is said to contain a sacred rock, thought to have fallen from heaven, embedded in one of its corners. Circling the Ka'ba is one of the highlights of the Hajj.

As the pilgrims approach Mecca they may bathe and cut their hair. Men will put on a white robe, called an *ihram*, that consists of two pieces of cloth with no stitching. In this way all male pilgrims are dressed identically and are equal. Women may wear other appropriate clothes. While on the Hajj, pilgrims should not fight, argue or bother anyone. They should maintain an attitude of humility, prayer and devotion.

The rituals performed during the Hajj express central beliefs of Islam, and affirm the significance of the Muslim community.

Pilgrims are taken to Mecca by bus. They chant a special passage, pledging service to God. Many pilgrims will walk seven times around the Ka'ba in a counter-clockwise direction. This is known as a *tawaf*. If possible, the pilgrims kiss the black stone in the corner of the Ka'ba, or touch the Ka'ba. If not, it is sufficient to point at the stone.

Pilgrims then re-enact Hagar's search for water by running between two hills, Safa and Marwah, known as the *sa'y*. Today, for safety reasons, the pilgrims usually walk. Ishmael, Hagar's son, kicked the ground during this search and water sprang from the Well of Zamzam. The Well of Zamzam still exists in Mecca, and pilgrims drink its water. Time is spent in prayer, study and reflection.

Pilgrims then travel to the valley of Mina for the night, before another day's journey leads to the Plain of Arafat and Mount Arafat (the Mount of Mercy). Pilgrims pray on the plain, just below the Mount of Mercy, from midday to sunset. The Mount of Mercy is where Muhammad delivered his last sermon, so many pilgrims use the time for prayer and reflection.

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As part of the Hajj, pilgrims are required to spend the whole afternoon at Arafat in prayer. It is believed that past sins are forgiven as a result of this day of prayer. For many Muslims this leg of Hajj is the highlight, for not only did Muhammad say, 'Hajj is Arafat', but they continue the pilgrimage with their sins forgiven.

The pilgrims return to Mina, after stopping at Muzdalifah where they collect stones. At Mina the stones are thrown at three pillars that represent Satan (the devil). This is to represent Abraham's resistance of the temptation not to sacrifice Ishmael to God (in the Jewish and Christian traditions Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac).

Outside Mecca, animals are sacrificed to show how Allah provided an animal so Abraham did not have to sacrifice Ishmael. Most pilgrims are not personally involved in the sacrifice of the animals but buy a sacrifice voucher for the ritual to be performed on their behalf. The meat is used to feed the pilgrims or is sent to the poor in other countries.

The pilgrims may then circle the Ka'ba another seven times. They then return to Mina where they stay for two (or sometimes three) nights, and 'stone the devil' again each day. Then they return to Mecca for a final *tawaf*. The Hajj is now complete, although many pilgrims travel to Medina to visit the Mosque of the Prophet, where Muhammad is buried and other important events in the history of Islam took place.

Beliefs

While the Hajj can last up to 14 days, it can be completed in a minimum of five days. It is believed that on sincere completion of the Hajj, a pilgrim's past sins have been forgiven. Those who have completed the Hajj at some stage in their lives have the title Hajji (for men) or Hajja (for women) attached to their names. Hajj is an acknowledgement of *tawhid*, the oneness of Allah. It is an expression of belief in the Qur'an and an acknowledgement of the prophets, a link in remembering the events in the lives of Adam, Abraham, Ishmael and Muhammad. It is an act of worship and a reminder of the Muslim community; in particular of the gathering of humanity on the day of judgement.

Significance for the individual

The rite of the Hajj is a significant personal experience for Muslims, who use it to reaffirm their devotion to Allah and their own personal commitment to Islam. The preparation for Hajj demands significant

Figure 11.17 Performing *tawaf*, many pilgrims seek to touch the Ka'ba

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commitment from the pilgrim. While on Hajj, the pilgrim acknowledges the great people of faith and the prophets. It is believed that those who complete the Hajj can experience true purity. It is an act of obedience to Allah. Stoning the pillars is a personal commitment to the rejection of Satan's temptation. Performing the Hajj is, for many adherents, a completion of the Five Pillars of Islam.

The forgiveness of sins at Arafat and the personal peace it brings is a major goal for the individual.

Significance for the community

The Hajj reaffirms the importance of the Muslim community (*ummah*). The power of the shared experience, as well as the mending of relationships done before the *Hajj*, helps to achieve this.

Hajj is an opportunity to share the diversity within the Muslim community, sharing experiences and ideas, as well as learning from others and supporting Muslim organisations financially. It is an opportunity to perform charity (*sadaka*); in offering the sacrifice, the meat is distributed across the Muslim community.

Hajj is an acknowledgement of the Muslim community that transcends time, a common experience across the centuries. Dressing in *ihram* signifies the commonality and equality that exists in the *ummah*.

There are several other places that are considered sacred sites and are often visited at the time of the Hajj. Medina has a special place in the heart of Muslims because it was the first city to welcome Muhammad, his early followers and his new religious ideas. The Mosque of the Prophet, in Medina, contains Muhammad's grave and the graves of the first two caliphs. Consequently, Medina is a significant sacred city to Muslims. Other sacred sites include Jerusalem in modern Israel, where it is believed Muhammad ascended into heaven on his 'night journey'. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was built in Jerusalem to commemorate this event, and the Dome of the Rock (built in 691 CE, the earliest Muslim monument) covers the rock from which Muhammad ascended. Jerusalem is also a sacred city to Jewish and Christian people, and thus a potential source for conflict or interreligious dialogue.

In modern Iraq, the city of Karbala is also a sacred site, particularly to Shi'a Muslims. It is the burial place of Muhammad's grandson Hussein, the third Shi'a imam.

INVESTIGATE

You will find it helpful to watch the documentary *Hajj: The Journey of a Lifetime* (2001), the stories of several British Muslims who completed the Hajj. There are a number of other documentaries available that feature people who have performed the Hajj.

Figure 11.18 Muslim pilgrims pray at Mount Arafat at the climax of the Hajj pilgrimage

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EXERCISE 11.8

1 **Outline** the teachings of the Qur'an in relation to the Hajj (pilgrimage).
2 **Describe** the main features of the Hajj and what they represent for Muslims.
3 **Explain**, using examples, why the Hajj is both a significant act for the individual and the community.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.8

1 Draw an annotated map of the Hajj, noting significant places and actions.
2 Write a diary of the Hajj, reflecting on the significance and meaning of the pilgrimage. Draw out the significance for an individual Muslim on the pilgrimage and reflect on the significance for the community.
3 Talk to a Muslim who has been on the Hajj. Note the significance of the pilgrimage for the person. Include questions such as: What did they find most helpful or enjoyable? Why did they go? What may have disappointed them? Would they recommend it to other people? What lasting effect did it have on them?

Figure 11.19 More than 1.8 million Muslims visit the Ka'ba, also known as Masjid Ul Harem, every year

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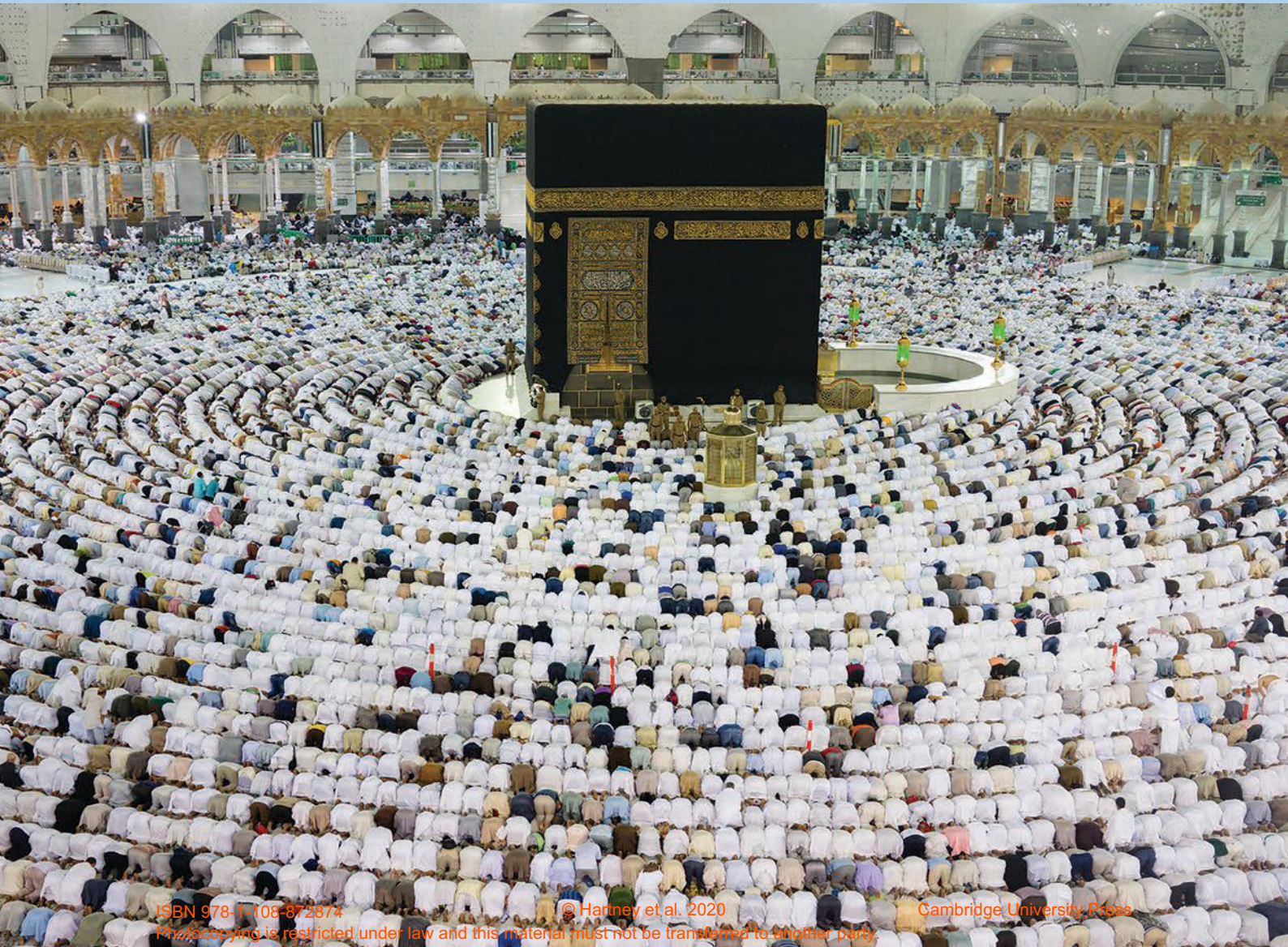
CHAPTER SUMMARY

- A'isha was Muhammad's favourite wife.
- A'isha influenced the development of Islam through being a teacher to many scholars and narrating many Hadith.
- Some of the Qur'an reveals this influence.
- A'isha is not well thought of by Shi'a Muslims due to her opposition to Ali, the fourth caliph.
- Sufism is an important Muslim school of thought and mysticism.
- Sufis emphasise an experiential and spiritual form of Islam.
- There are many significant Sufi individuals who have influenced Islam, such as Rabi'a and Al-Ghazali.
- Ethics are concerned with the objective of doing good and avoiding wrong as guided by the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad.
- Bioethics are to be practised in accordance with the objective of doing good, being careful not to do wrong to others and being accountable to God.
- Environmental ethics should demonstrate unity, trusteeship and accountability.
- Muslim environmental ethics are concerned about the wise use of the world and care of it.
- Sexual ethics include issues such as premarital sex, homosexuality and gender roles.
- Islam generally holds a view that is typified by loving relationships within the confines of marriage.
- Islam differs greatly in its views on the acceptability of certain relationships.
- Islam views marriage as a contractual arrangement from a legal perspective.
- Friday prayers at a mosque are an obligation for Muslim men, commanded by the Qur'an.
- Friday prayers include readings from the Qur'an as well as sermons.
- Friday prayers are both a communal and an individual action.
- At the time of death, Muslims look forward to meeting God and a blissful existence.
- Muslims should seek to leave behind charity that will continue to help others, beneficial knowledge and righteous children.
- The Hajj is a physical and spiritual journey to Mecca expected of all Muslims with the means to afford it.

Figure 11.20 Muslims praying at the Holy Mosque in Mecca



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HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer either a three-part, 15-mark question, or a one-part extended essay of 20 marks.

SECTION II

Marks

Question 3 – Islam (15 marks)

(a) **Outline** the contribution of ONE significant person or school of thought in Islam. **3**

(b) **Discuss** the significance of ONE of the following significant practices in the life of the Muslim community: **6**

- Friday prayer at the mosque
- Funeral ceremony
- The Hajj.

(c) **Explain** the ethical teachings in Islam for ONE of the following areas: **6**

- Bioethics
- Environmental ethics
- Sexual ethics.

SECTION III

Question 3 – Islam (20 marks)

Describe the contribution of ONE significant person or school of thought in Islam and **evaluate** the impact of the person or school of thought on Islam today. **20**

OR

With reference to the quotation below, and your understanding of Islam, **analyse** the importance of the Muslim community and its role in the life of an adherent. **20**

> The very first lesson that I learnt from the Qur'an was the message of unity and peace.
> YUSUF ISLAM

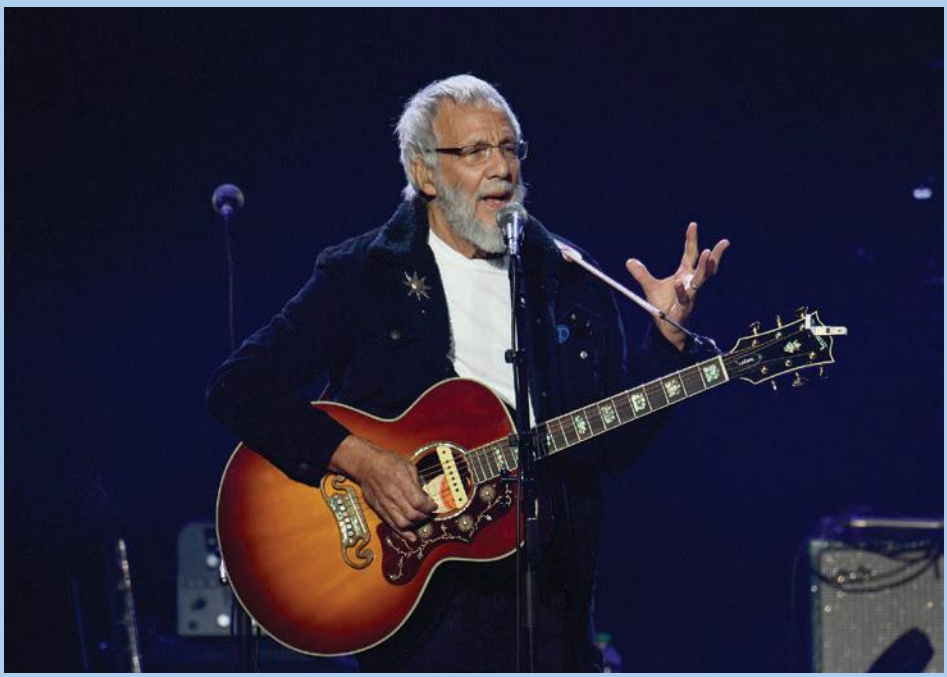

Figure 11.21 Yusuf (formally known as Cat Stevens) performs on stage during Music For The Marsden 2020 in London

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TWELVE

JUDAISM: THE BASIC FACTS

[YEAR 11 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land,
ye shall not do him wrong.

LEVITICUS 19:33

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the significance of Abraham and the major aspects of his life
- the meaning and importance of Covenant
- the story of the Exodus and the giving of the law at Sinai
- the rise of the different variants of Judaism
- the principal beliefs of Judaism:
  - the belief in one God
  - the concept of a divinely inspired moral law
  - the importance of Covenant.
- the importance of the sacred texts and writings of Judaism:
  - the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh)
  - the prophetic vision
  - the Talmud.
- sections of these sacred texts that highlight principal beliefs of Judaism
- the principal ethical teachings of Judaism:
  - the commandments of the Torah (the Five Books of Moses, the first part of the Tanakh)
  - social justice and *tikkun olam* (social responsibility)
  - the Book of Proverbs.
- the importance of ethical teachings to Jewish people
- the importance of *Shabbat.*

Note: *All extracts from the Hebrew Bible (translated into English) in this chapter are sourced from The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917.*

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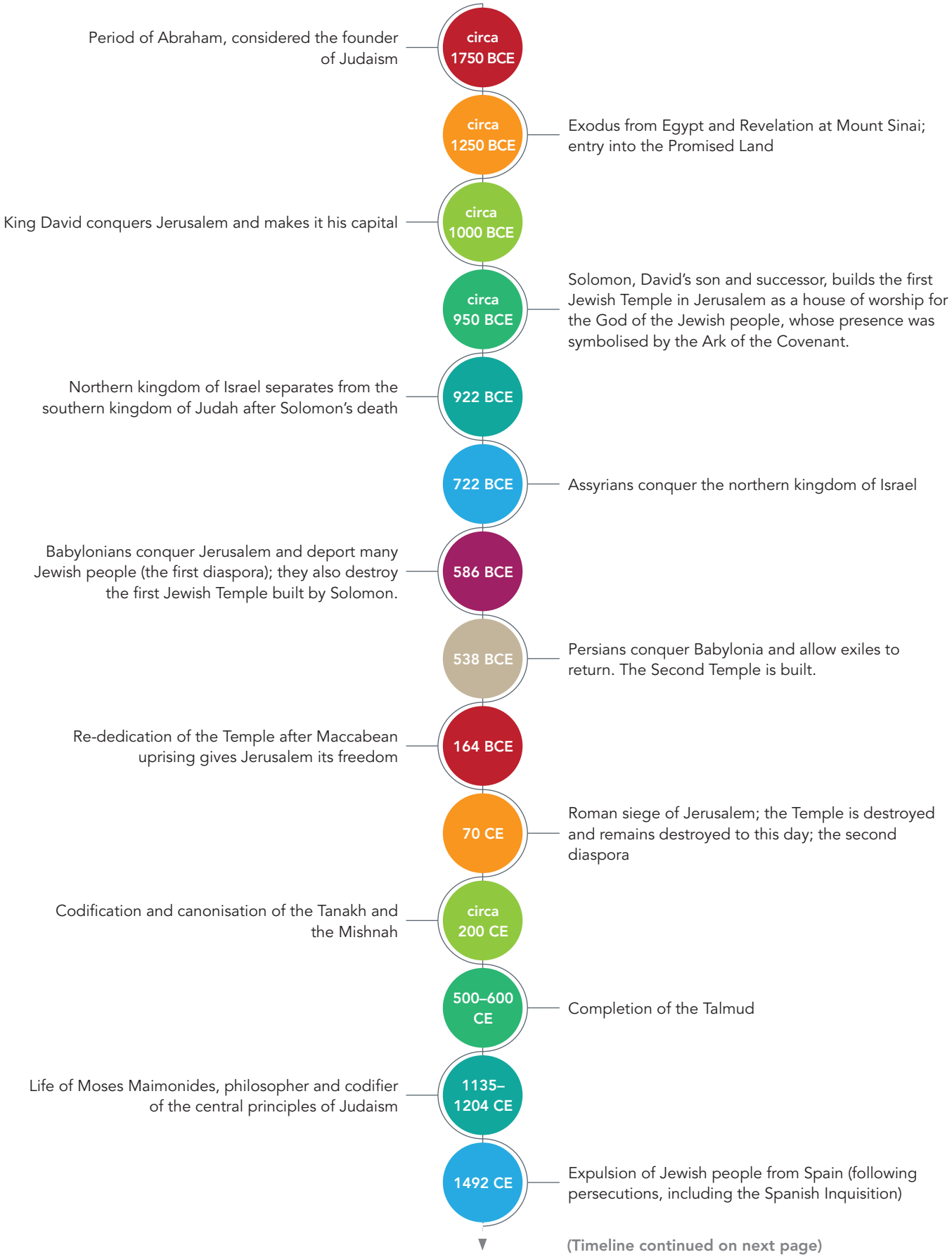

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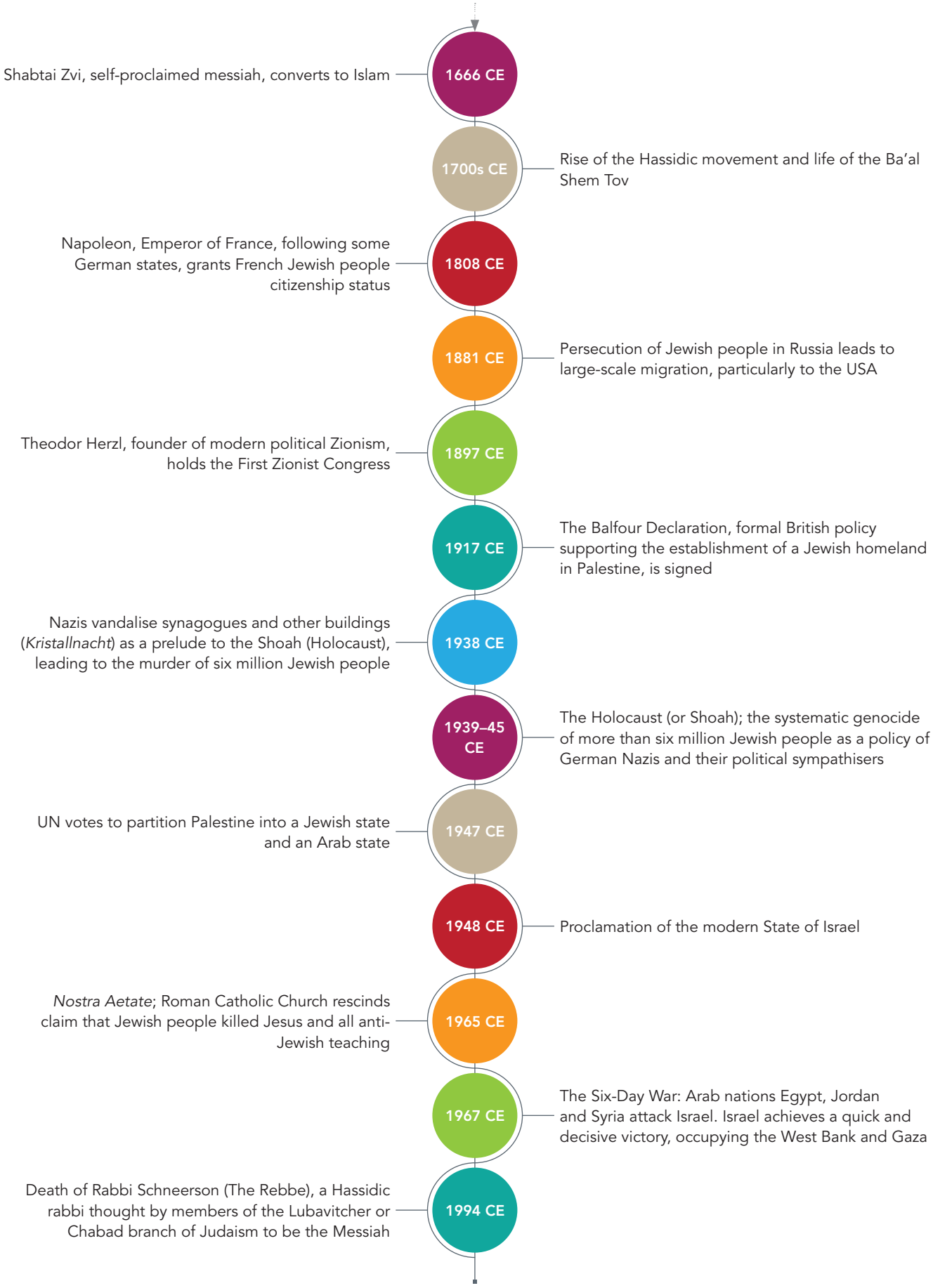

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

Judaism is a small religious tradition in numbers, but is significant in its influence on the world and its history, including the religious traditions of Christianity and Islam. The Hebrew Bible is largely retained as the Old Testament of the Christian Bible and is referred to extensively in the Qur'an. The belief in one God has also been retained in Christianity and Islam, and the ethics of Judaism have influenced the laws of modern Western society. Jewish people themselves have also been of considerable influence in the world's history. The creation of the modern State of Israel in 1948 was a significant achievement and the Jewish people have resettled their homeland in the years since, with about half of all Jewish people in the world, from communities as diverse as Ethiopia, Russia, Argentina and Australia, now living there. In Judaism, as in many other religious systems, it can be difficult to separate the religious, cultural and political structures. Israel is seen as a Jewish homeland and so being of the Jewish faith entitles one to apply for citizenship. This does not mean, however, that all citizens of Israel are Jewish people, or that Jewish people are all Israeli.

A commonly accepted symbol for Judaism is the Magen David or Star of David. The origins of the symbol are unknown and possibly very ancient. The Magen David appears on the flag of Israel.

INVESTIGATE

To learn more about Judaism, access websites such as Religious Tolerance (go to the 'Judaism' link from the World Religions tab) and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Figure 12.1 The Magen David (Star of David) appears on the flag of Israel

12.2 ORIGINS

Abraham and the Covenant

Abraham

The account of Abraham, the first **Hebrew**, begins with the words: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation' (Genesis 12:1–2). This command forms the beginning of the narrative of the Jewish people.

Hebrew
The tribes that later became the Jewish people, also called 'the Children of Israel' or the Israelites

Covenant
Brit in Hebrew; a promise or agreement between God and human beings; stronger than a 'contract', it involves an ongoing relationship between the parties

Many religious systems of the Near East, in Babylonia and Mesopotamia, maintained that time was cyclical. The Hebrews differed from their neighbours on this point, and their views of time and space are the key to ancient Israelite religion and Judaism. To the Hebrews, time was linear. Time was also sacred — the first time the word holy is used in the Torah is in connection with time. The idea of sacred space is the land promised by God. The acquisition of this land is through God's guidance over time.

The Hebrews were distinguished by their faith in one God and their confidence that the Covenant, or agreement between Jewish people and God, would be fulfilled. It is in the Hebrew Bible that the fulfilment of the covenant is demonstrated.

If the biblical chronology is accepted, Abram (whose name was later changed to Abraham) left Mesopotamia and travelled to Canaan around 1750 BCE. From his home in Ur in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), he travelled first to Haran in modern southern Turkey.

There he received the promises contained in the **Covenant**: of land, of many descendants and of status as a blessing to other peoples (Genesis 12:1–3). The Torah tells that at the age of 75 he took his extended family, including his wife Sarai (her name was later changed to Sarah), to settle in Canaan.

CONSIDER

You should be aware that all translations of the Hebrew Bible include elements of interpretation. This includes the various versions of the Old Testament. Christian Bibles are usually a second-level translation, having first been translated into Greek or Latin, whereas editions of the Tanakh are likely to be directly translated from the original Hebrew.

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Abraham was a wealthy man with servants and provisions. He was recognised as a tribal chief by the Canaanites and was involved in several battles, including the rescue of his nephew Lot from the city of Sodom. Abraham is described as embodying many characteristics that Jewish people should emulate: he is faithful to God, he argues with God when he perceives injustice in the world, and he is compassionate and hospitable.

According to the account, although Abraham was already very old, God promised that he would be the father of many descendants. He had a son, Ishmael, by his wife's maidservant, Hagar, when he was 86. His previously barren wife, Sarah, gave birth to Isaac when Abraham was 100. After the expulsion of Ishmael from his household, God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, which, in a dramatic demonstration of faith, Abraham prepared to do. When he had already raised his knife, God told him to sacrifice an animal instead. This story has become a foundational part of Judaism, providing the strongest possible demonstration that the God of the Jewish people abhors human sacrifice, but that he also asks us for faithfulness and obedience to His commands.

There are parallel stories to those associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (known as the Patriarchs) in other ancient cultures in the region. The Torah version, which is a single powerful and dramatic narrative, creates a national epic around which the descendants of Abraham developed their distinctiveness and formed their identity.

The Patriarchs also referred to God by many names. One of these is **YHWH** which is a transliteration of the Hebrew letters used to symbolise one of the most important names of God, and is considered unpronounceable. It is read as Adonai, meaning 'Lord'. Some scholars suggest that the use of these letters indicates that the source is not a Jewish source but a non-Jewish one. Another name is **El**, also used for the head of the gods of the Canaanites. The Canaanite tradition had much in common with the other civilisations in the area, such as the Babylonians and Mesopotamians. So the stories of the Patriarchs also suggest that a mixing of religious ideas may have taken place at this time.

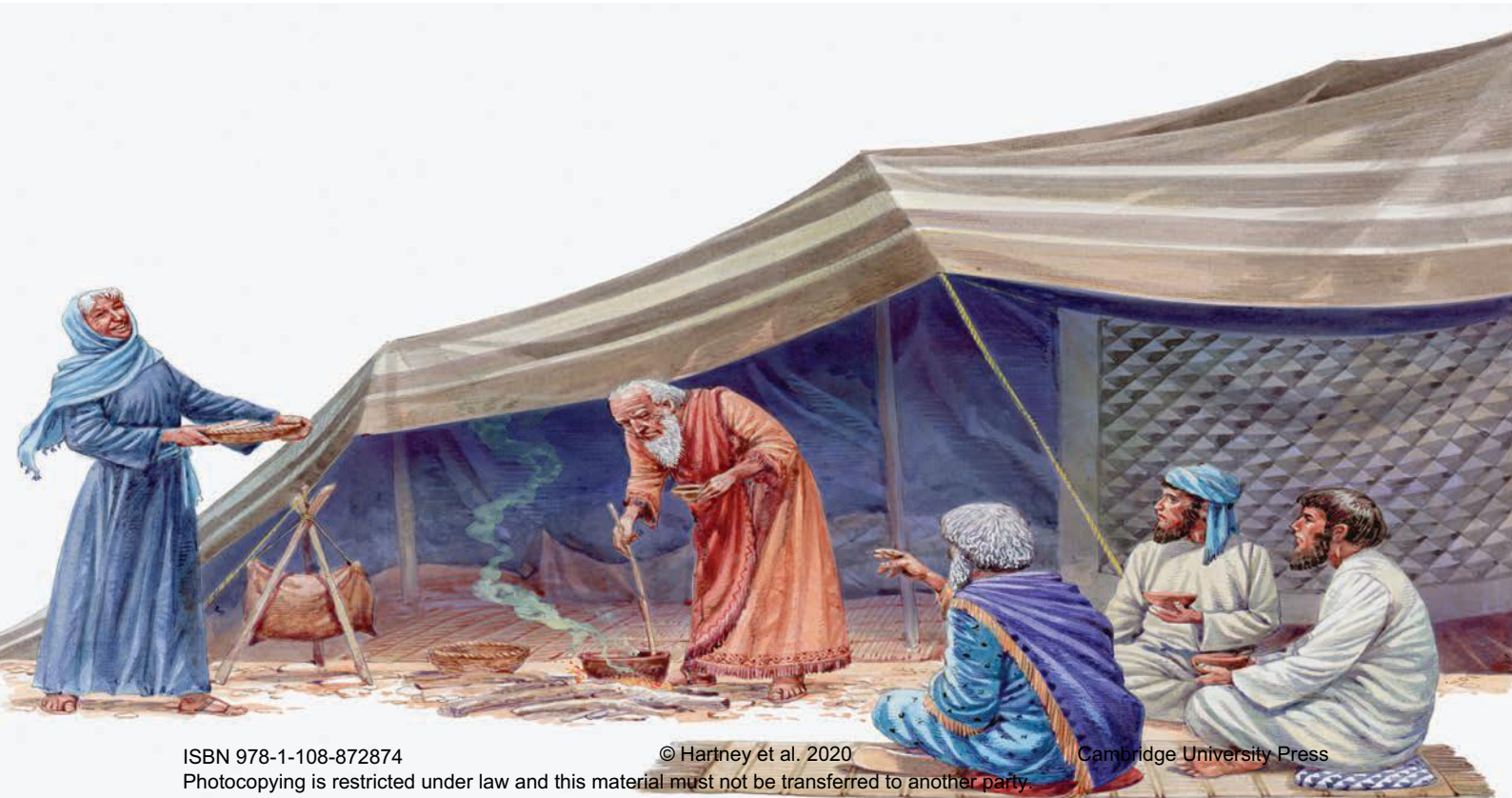
YHWH
The Tetragrammaton, the four letters that are the name of God revealed to Moses; not able to be pronounced, so read as Adonai meaning 'Lord' (or in some Christian sources read as Jehovah/Yahweh or LORD)

El
A Hebrew word meaning 'God', also used in other cultures from the Middle East

CONSIDER

God is a term that some Jewish people are reluctant to use. Some spell the word 'G-d'. The name of God (YHWH) is not pronounced. Some use the terms Elokim or Adonai (My Lord) or the euphemism 'HaShem' (The Name). These are used out of respect and reverence for God, based on the third of the Ten Commandments (by the Jewish counting), not to take the name of G-d in vain. Other names refer to different aspects of the one God; for example, El Elyon ('God Most High', Genesis 14:18 and following), El Shaddai ('God Almighty', Genesis 17:1ff), El Olam ('Everlasting God', Genesis 21:33), El Roi ('God of seeing', Genesis 16:13) and El Bethel ('God of Bethel', Genesis 31:13; 35:37).

Figure 12.2 Depiction of Sarah as the three visiting angels tell Abraham he will become a father



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The Covenant: a people, a land, a blessing

The Covenant begins with God's original promise to make a great nation of Abraham's family (Genesis 12). Genesis (15:9–21) outlines an ancient Covenant sealing ceremony. Abraham takes several animals, cuts them in half and separates the pieces. A torch representing God passes between the halves to complete the agreement.

> And He said unto him: 'Take Me a heifer of three years old, and a shegoat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other; but the birds divided he not.
>
> GENESIS 15:9 -10

Connected with the Covenant is the prediction that Abraham's descendants will be enslaved in Egypt in the future:

> And He said unto Abram: 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance.'
>
> GENESIS 15:13-14

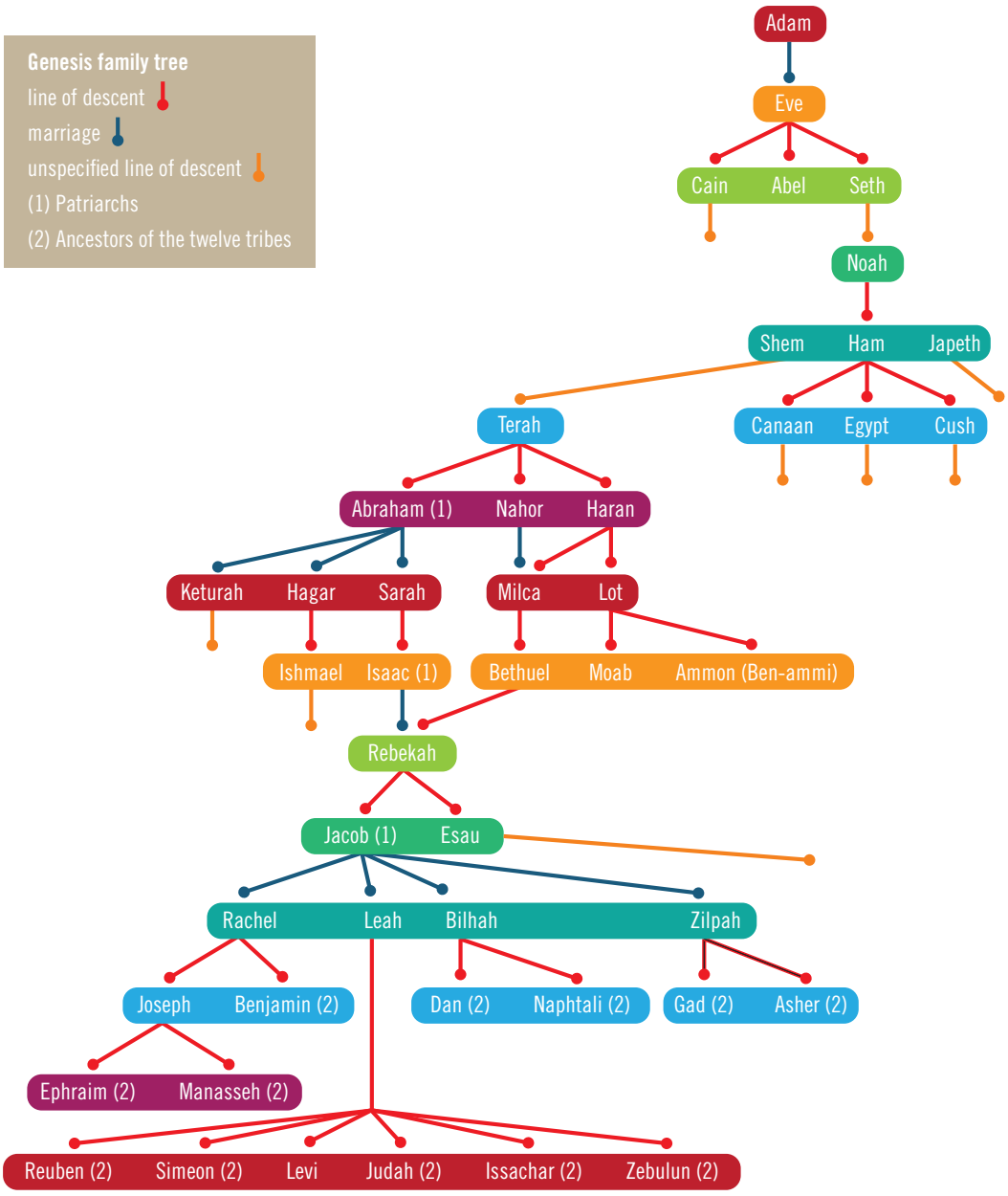

Figure 12.3 Mind map depicting the Jewish nation

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This Covenant ceremony reflects similar ceremonies found in the records of the Hittites, a group that lived nearby. The ultimate Covenantal ceremony and marker that persists in Jewish practice to this day is circumcision of male children. Abraham circumcised himself when he was 90 years old and made a commitment that Jewish boys would be circumcised at the age of eight days as a physical sign of their commitment to the Covenant (Genesis 17). Circumcision is the sign that the people would adhere to the Covenant.

Covenant: the people and the land, the importance of the Patriarchs in early Judaism

The Covenant was believed to have existed between God and the Hebrews from the time of the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (also named Israel) and Jacob's 12 sons. God promised land and protection for this great family **B'nei Yisrael** – the Children of Israel – and in return they had to honour and respect Him.

During a time of famine in the land of Israel, Jacob and his family migrated to Egypt, and were eventually enslaved there. But there remained a special connection between them, God and the land:

> And G-d heard their groaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And G-d saw the children of Israel, and G-d took cognizance of them.
>
> EXODUS 2:24-25

The Twelve Tribes

The story of Moses begins in Egypt. It is here that, according to the Torah narrative, the Children of Israel have been enslaved. The Twelve Tribes of Israel were named after Jacob's sons. Each tribe was known for its special contributions to the emerging nation, and when they returned to the land of Israel 40 years after their liberation from slavery, each was assigned a different area of the land, except for the tribe of Levi who served as priests in the Temple preparing offerings for God.

INVESTIGATE

As Judaism developed as a religious tradition it seems to have begun as a **henotheism**, the worship of one God above others, developing into monotheism. The influence of stories from other areas can be detected in the biblical accounts, such as the *Biography of Sargon*, the *Enuma Elish* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, all from ancient Mesopotamia. You can explore the similarities between these stories and the stories in the Tanakh.

The Jewish idea of God has developed over almost 4000 years of Jewish history. The Torah speaks often of God as the God of a group, clan or lineage. Often he is the 'God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob' (Exodus 3:6) or 'the God of my father' (Genesis 31:5). Occasionally he is 'the fear [kinsman] of Isaac' (Genesis 31:42, 53) or 'the mighty one [Bull] of Jacob' (Genesis 49:24).

This idea of the God of a localised group linked through kinship has developed into the idea of the one, universal God as Jewish people, Christians and Muslims understand it today: **monotheism**.

Some archaeologists have hypothesised that Abraham arrived from Mesopotamia with a specific god who was later fused with the sky-God of the pre-existing peoples of Canaan. It was after he settled in Canaan, with the influence of the local deity, El, that the Israelite God began to develop a supreme and universal form.

Moses, the Exodus and the Torah

The story of Exodus and the giving of the law

Moses is the pivotal character in the Jewish narrative, and its greatest prophet. He is also understood by Jewish people to be the leader who received the Torah from God inscribed on stone tablets. Until this time, the Covenant had been renewed with individuals in one family. With Moses, it was restated as a Covenant with the entire people.

B'nei Yisrael
The Children of Israel

Henotheism
Belief that one god is greater and is selected to worship, from among a number of gods

Monotheism
Worship of a single god

In Exodus 1, we are told that a new pharaoh of Egypt was concerned about the number of Jewish people in his kingdom. He decreed that they should be enslaved and that any Jewish male newborn should be killed. Moses, a baby at this time, was hidden by his mother in a small boat made of rushes and sealed with tar, which made its way downriver to the palace of the pharaoh, where the pharaoh's daughter found him and took him into her house. Moses was saved from the slaughter and brought up in the pharaoh's court. This meant that he learnt to read and write, and developed leadership, management and organisational skills that were to be important in his later role as leader of the Hebrew people.

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Figure 12.4 This bush at St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsular in Egypt is said by some to be the 'burning bush' where Moses met God and was commissioned to lead the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt

As an adult, Moses acted impulsively. He saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jewish slave and killed this taskmaster. Fearing the pharaoh's revenge, Moses fled into the desert and made contact with other Semitic tribespeople (Midianites) and married there. Guarding sheep one day, he was led away from the flock and encountered a burning bush, which was not consumed by the flames. He heard a voice, which Moses took to be that of the God of Abraham and the Patriarchs:

> Moreover He said: 'I am the God of thy 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 upon God. And the Lord said: 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their pains; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me; moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.
>
> EXODUS 3:6–9

Moses was ordered by God to seek the release from slavery of the Jewish people and lead them out of Egypt. When he returned to the Egyptian court, a battle of magic took place but despite Moses' superiority, the Egyptians refused to allow the Hebrews to leave. Ten plagues sent by God eventually convinced the pharaoh to release the Jewish people.

The last plague, the death of the firstborn Egyptian sons, convinced the pharaoh to let the Jewish people leave Egypt. Despite the plagues and his agreement, the pharaoh pursued them with his army. God enabled Moses to part the Red Sea and allow the Jewish people to pass through safely. When the pharaoh's army tried to pass, all the soldiers were drowned by the surging waters.

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During the journey to the Promised Land, Moses brought the people to the foot of the mountain of God, identified as Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Torah. The Torah contains the laws of the Covenant, including the **Ten Commandments** (or **Decalogue**). The Torah is a complex code that covers many areas of life, from ethical and moral imperatives, to dietary laws, ritual procedures and a complex set of religious principles that eventually emerged as Judaism. These are the laws to be kept by the Jewish people for the Covenant to remain valid.

The last four books of the Torah tell the story of the **Exodus**, the journey from Egypt to the land of Israel. The Exodus was not simply a journey; it was a pilgrimage and also the opportunity to develop a national identity.

Moses led the Jewish people for 40 years in the desert until they reached the Promised Land.

The **Pesach** (or **Passover**) Seder, a festival meal accompanied by a narrative and a re-enactment of the Exodus story, is one of the most significant rituals in the Jewish calendar, and represents the liberation and redemption of the people of Israel.

When Moses reached the land promised to them by God, Israel ceased to be a wandering clan and became a nation. (The Ten Commandments will be discussed in detail in Section 12.5 of this chapter.)

Ten Commandments (or **Decalogue**)
Key components of the law given to Moses

Exodus
Literally, 'departure'; it refers to the event where, led by Moses, the people of Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land

Pesach (or **Passover**)
Festival that celebrates the Exodus and the ideal of freedom

Figure 12.5 Jebal Musa (Mountain of Moses), traditionally believed to be Mount Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments

INVESTIGATE

Hollywood has made much of stories from the Hebrew Bible (or Tanakh), not all of them to be taken seriously. If you look closely enough, Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments* (1923) is more about race relations in America in the 1920s.

His remake of the same film in 1956 has a background heavily based in American fear during the Cold War. The animated musical *Prince of Egypt* (1998) is fun but hardly historical. Ridley Scott's *The Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) is another attempt at a biblical epic, including CGI effects, but fails to do justice to the biblical story. There are several movies, however, that may be more helpful in understanding Judaism in modern society. These include *The Chosen* (1981), *A Serious Man* (2009) and *Left Luggage* (1998), which are more serious films, while *The Hebrew Hammer* (2003) has become a modern cult comedy classic.

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EXERCISE 12.1

1 **Define** the term 'Covenant'.
2 **Outline** the life of Abraham, noting the key points and their significance.
3 **Describe** how the tribe of the Hebrews developed into the Children of Israel.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 12.1

1 Construct a timeline that traces the major events in the establishment of the people of Israel. Add to the timeline as you continue your study.
2 Find one story in the Hebrew Bible that describes some aspects of God. List the attributes of God within the story and how they are significant in developing an understanding of God.
3 Write a paragraph explaining why Moses is considered one of the greatest individuals in Jewish history and Judaism.

12.3 MODERN JUDAISM: ITS MAJOR DIVISIONS

The destruction of the two holy Jewish Temples in Jerusalem, the first by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and the second by the Romans in 70 CE, were watershed events in Jewish history. These events led to the dispersion of the Jewish people to all corners of the Earth (known as the **diaspora**) and a number of important and enduring geographical and cultural distinctions.

Diaspora
The Jewish community outside of Israel

Cultural groups

Mizrachim

Mizrachim is a term that means Easterners. The *Eidot HaMizrach* — Communities of the East — are those

Figure 12.6 This fragment from the Arch of Titus showing the triumphant procession of Roman soldiers carrying off spoils from the Temple of Jerusalem after it was destroyed in 70 CE. Items such as altar, silver trumpets and a golden seven-branched candelabrum were taken away.

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Figure 12.7 The Synagogue of El Transito in Toledo, Spain, home for many Sephardim people

Jewish people who either remained in the land of Israel or who were exiled to Babylonia, the Arabian Peninsula or to northern Africa. Jewish people stayed in these countries (including Iraq, Yemen, Iran, Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Libya and others) until 1948 when they were largely expelled from these Muslim lands and they returned to the land of Israel. Mizrachim people speak Hebrew and Arabic. Ashkenazim people often incorrectly refer to Mizrachim as 'Sephardim'.

Sephardim

Sepharad is the Hebrew word for Spain and **Sephardim** are the Jewish people who lived in Spain from the eighth century until their expulsion in 1492. They then moved to countries including Greece, Italy, Turkey, England, Holland and North Africa, where they joined existing Mizrachim communities. Sephardim people spoke Hebrew but in the past were more likely to talk to each other in Arabic or Ladino — a mixture of Hebrew, Spanish and local languages.

Ashkenazim

Originally the name of a people identified in Genesis 10:3, this term was applied to Jewish people living in Germany and regions to its north and east from the ninth century CE. After the **Crusades** (circa 1200 CE) they were united by Yiddish which, like Ladino for the Sephardim, is a language made up of words from other languages, in this case Hebrew and German. The **Ashkenazim** people were more inward-looking than the southern Jewish people around the Mediterranean. They developed a strong folk culture and treated the philosophy of the Sephardim with suspicion. In the nineteenth century, the Ashkenazim were the largest Jewish group in the world, making up nine and a half million of the eleven and a half million Jewish people.

In today's multicultural world, Mizrachim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim people live together in Israel and in Jewish communities outside Israel. They have intermarried, but their three distinct cultural heritages, including language, food and especially music, continue to evolve and enrich the Jewish world.

Stressing regional and historical variations, the Great Synagogue of Rome was opened in 1904 to replace five smaller synagogues in the ghetto of the city. It has a number of worshipping spaces within the building. The main synagogue is neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi, but follows rites established by the Jewish people who had left Judea

Sephardim
Jewish people whose families were expelled from Spain in 1492 and mainly joined communities around the Middle East and North Africa

Crusades
A series of attacks by European Christians to recapture the Holy Land, which was held by Islam, in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries CE

Ashkenazim
Jewish people originally from northern and eastern Europe

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centuries before the destruction of the Second Temple. Another worshipping space in the building is dedicated to the Sephardic communities in Rome.

Religious variants

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism is the traditional form (variant) of Judaism. Orthodox Jewish people believe that God gave Moses the whole Torah (written and oral) at Mount Sinai. Orthodox Judaism maintains that the written Torah has survived unchanged since then and is still authoritative today, although the oral Torah continues to evolve. In Orthodox Judaism, men and women sit separately for worship. Until a few years ago, only men were able to acquire the title **rabbi**. Now there are a few Orthodox women who have taken the title, although often those achieving the entitlement to the honorific, based on their level of learning, choose another term such as Rabba.

Rabbi
A community leader schooled in the intricacies of Jewish law and ritual; a rabbi often leads Jewish worship

Up to the nineteenth century, all Judaism was orthodox. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch coined the term orthodox to distinguish this traditional form of Judaism from the emerging Reform movement. The return to the Promised Land is a central tenet of Orthodox Judaism, although some minority groups believe that this should not occur until the arrival of the Messianic age. Since the Holocaust, mainstream Orthodox Jewish people have supported Zionism, the idea of Jewish self-determination. Orthodox Judaism is the most common form in Australian Judaism. Many Orthodox Jewish people do not like being labelled orthodox; they would rather just be called Jewish people as they consider their brand of Judaism to be the authentic experience of Judaism.

Progressive/Reform Judaism

Progressive Judaism was originally called Reform Judaism or (in Australia) Liberal Judaism. Its origins go back to nineteenth-century Germany and it was a result of modernism. European nations had denied citizenship rights to Jewish people before this time. A number of Jewish people took the view that this was because Judaism was seen as too 'foreign'.

They attempted to modernise Judaism to make it more compatible with contemporary Western European life. They built small synagogues where communities worshipped in shorter services and in their local language, instead of Hebrew. Some synagogues, which were renamed temples, permitted organ music and other features, which at that time were more common in Christian churches.

These reforms were also taken up in America, where the Jewish population was growing. Isaac Mayer Wise established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873, the Hebrew Union College in 1875 and the Central Conference of American Rabbis

Figure 12.8 An education conference of Orthodox Jewish leaders in New York to explain the importance of education according to Jewish values

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in 1889. These institutions established the means for Reform Judaism to continually update its practices. In Australia today, this movement is called Progressive Judaism. Just over 20 per cent of Australian Jewish people identify as Progressive.

Conservative Judaism

This variant of Judaism is more a reaction to Reform Judaism than to Orthodox Judaism and is not conservative in the strict sense of this word, but conservative in relation to Reform Judaism. While agreeing with the Progressives that the Torah is a human, rather than divine, creation, Conservatives believe firmly in the value of maintaining distinctive Jewish rituals and practices. They believe that Judaism has to adapt to the times and have taken on some reforms, such as men and women sitting together during worship, but rejected others.

INVESTIGATE

The following websites give a more detailed understanding of these different variants of Judaism:
- Jewish Virtual Library
- Union for Progressive Judaism Australia.

Unlike the early Reform movement, Conservative Judaism was quick to support Zionism; that is, the idea that Jewish people must have their own homeland and self-determination.

There are also other expressions of Judaism evident across the world. One of these, Hassidism, a subgroup of Orthodox Judaism, will be discussed in Chapter 13.

EXERCISE 12.2

1 **Outline** the unique features of Orthodox Judaism.
2 **Outline** the unique features of Progressive/Reform Judaism.
3 **Outline** the unique features of Conservative Judaism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 12.2

1 **Construct** a table highlighting the similarities and differences between Mizrachim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim under the following headings: geographical origin, language, food, distinctive practices.
2 Write a paragraph discussing the evolution of the different variants of Judaism, noting significant similarities and differences.
3 Develop a multimedia presentation outlining the origins of Judaism, with particular reference to the development of different expressions of the religious tradition.

12.4 PRINCIPAL BELIEFS

Belief in one God

The *Shema* is a declaration of faith that Jewish people proclaim twice a day. It is the very essence of the Jewish religion. The *Shema* consists of three passages of the Torah, beginning with Deuteronomy 6:4:

> Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

This is the great statement of Jewish monotheism.

The attributes of God

God in Hebrew scripture may be defined in at least three major ways:
- as the clan-God of Abraham and his descendants
- as the God of the Land of Israel, because the special relationship between the Jewish people and God, the Covenant, is inextricably linked to the Land
- as a universal God, the creator of the universe.

Today, Jewish people would reject all but the last definition, even while acknowledging that their ancestors may have only gradually recognised the attributes of the God they worshipped.

Omnipotent All powerful

Omnipresent All present

Omniscient All knowing

Jewish people are conscious of His **omnipotence** (all-powerfulness), **omnipresence** (being everywhere at all times), **omniscience** (knowing everything) and His ultimate justice. God is also identified, in contrast to many concepts of God in the ancient world. He is personal and interacts with the world and human beings (Genesis 1:26).

Judaism avoids any material representation of God. This reflects the notion that He is beyond material form, unlike the gods of old.

Divinely inspired moral law

Judaism's sacred texts contain its moral laws. Rabbinic tradition identifies 613 commandments in the Torah.

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Orthodox Jewish people believe these laws contained in the Torah were revealed by God to human beings and are thus 'divine', whereas non-Orthodox branches of Judaism believe the laws to be divinely inspired. Even Orthodox Judaism does not expect people to live according to every one of the 613 commandments, since not all apply to modern life. Some commandments do apply to everyone, Jewish and non-Jewish; these are called the **Noahide Laws** and are recorded in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 56). The Noahide Laws comprise:

Noahide Laws
The seven basic laws that apply to all people, not only Jewish people

Video

1. prohibition of idolatry
2. prohibition of murder
3. prohibition of theft
4. prohibition of sexual promiscuity — adultery and incest
5. prohibition of taking God's name lightly
6. prohibition of cruelty to animals
7. requirement to establish a legal system.

While these seven laws are considered to be binding on all people, some groups such as Christians accept the Ten Commandments as well, and consider the Noahide Laws a subset of them.

The eighth-century-BCE prophets were obsessed with the need to impose moral law on what they perceived to be a lawless and immoral society. One of the most significant statements comes from Micah:

> It hath been told thee, O man, what is good,
> And what the Lord doth require of thee:
> Only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.
> MICAH 6:8

Others have sought to summarise the moral law. A first-century-CE rabbi, Hillel, said:

> That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. This is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn.
> BABYLONIAN TALMUD SHABBAT 31A

The idea of the Covenant

The Covenant that was established at Mount Sinai is considered a renewal of the covenant between God and Abraham, and is part of the fulfilment of the original covenant. The Covenant is central to the expression of Judaism and the identity of the Jewish people. A Covenant is essentially a contract between two parties.

> And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people.
> LEVITICUS 26:12

The Covenant also indicated particular aspects of life to be expressed, such as dietary laws and ethical standards that were to confirm the special relationship between God and the Hebrew people.

EXERCISE 12.3

1. **Describe** beliefs about God developed in Judaism.
2. **Explain** the concept of a divinely inspired moral law, using examples.
3. **Outline** the importance of the Covenant for the Jewish people.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 12.3

1. **Discuss** the following topic: 'Judaism is a truly monotheistic religion'.
2. Research the concept of 'Covenant'. **Explain** its significance in Judaism and note how it has been used outside Judaism.
3. Write a paragraph about the concept of a universal law applying to all people, with particular reference to the idea of law in Judaism.

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12.5 SACRED TEXTS AND WRITINGS

There are a number of writings that can be considered sacred texts of Judaism. These include the Tanakh or the Hebrew Bible, interpretative texts such as the *Midrash*, Mishnah and Talmud, and later codes such as the Mishneh Torah written by Moses Maimonides. Here emphasis will be given to the Tanakh and the Talmud.

The Hebrew Bible — the Tanakh

Tanakh is the term used for the Hebrew Bible. The word Tanakh (*TaNaK*) is an acronym, a word formed from the first letters of the three sections:

- Torah (law) — the first five books of the Bible
- *Nevi'im* (prophets) — the writings of those called by God as his spokespeople
- *Ketuvim* (writings) — the collected writings comprising various genres of literature that were canonised in the second century CE.

You should note that there are several possible spellings of this word, including Tanakh, Tanach, Tanak or Tenach. Sometimes they are pronounced differently.

The Tanakh is predominately written in Hebrew (a small section is in Aramaic) and comprises 24 books. For Judaism, maintenance of the original Hebrew has great significance, not only for the sake of accuracy, but also because Hebrew is considered a divine language.

The tradition of interpretation is integral to a Jewish reading of the text. Rabbinic literature speaks of 70 faces of Torah, since it is believed that there are at least 70 valid interpretations of each word or phrase found therein.

Translation has been part of the interpretive process since the time of the Second Temple, and the first translations were into Aramaic, the spoken language of the Jewish people of the time.

These original Aramaic translations are the earliest Jewish commentaries on the Torah. A significant translation of the Tanakh into Greek, called the **Septuagint**, was made sometime between the third and first centuries BCE.

Jewish and Christian traditions maintain that the Hebrew Bible faithfully presents historical events, which were written in the order they happened, often soon after the events. For example, the Torah (sometimes called the Pentateuch, from the Greek 'five scrolls'), which covers the period from Genesis to Moses, is said to have been revealed by God to Moses himself.

During the nineteenth century, Christian theologians began discovering voices in the Tanakh in much the same way as they had done in the New Testament. By following styles of vocabulary, subject matter and word usage, they were able to identify a number of writers in Hebrew Scripture. This led to the development of the Documentary Hypothesis. This suggests that sections of the Hebrew Bible were possibly four or more independent texts that, at various times, were edited together to form the Tanakh. The main voices or writing styles include:

Figure 12.9 An edition of the Torah from 1750

1. the Yahwehist source — this writer refers to God mostly using the term YHWH, which some scholars speculate was written around 950 BCE in the Kingdom of Judah
2. the Elohist source written about 850 BCE
3. the Deuteronimist source, possibly composed around 600 BCE — a voice found mainly in the Book of Deuteronomy
4. the Priestly source composed around 500 BCE when Jewish people had already experienced exile in Babylon
5. a series of editors' voices that have been found at work joining the above sources into a more complete narrative.

Although this is mainly a hypothesis, it does explain why certain parts of the Tanakh have different emphases. It also opens the possibility that the Tanakh was not written from start to finish, but that sections such as Genesis (which borrows from Mesopotamian creation stories) were added later as the text developed. Although the Documentary Hypothesis was part of Christian biblical criticism, it is now accepted by many Jewish scholars but has no bearing on religious practice.

Septuagint
Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (often represented by the Roman number LXX)

The Prophetic Vision

It should be noted that the Prophetic Vision is a central aspect of the Core Ethical Teachings of the syllabus and should be examined in that part of the course as well as being a significant section of the Sacred Texts part of the syllabus.

Video

The second section of the Tanakh is *Nevi'im* (prophets), although prophesy was not restricted to characters mentioned in this section of the text. A prophet is defined as one who passes God's message on to the rest of the community. It is believed that prophets

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were called on by God to speak for Him and to call His people back to the Covenant, particularly in times when religious concerns were being forgotten, or crisis was brewing in the Judaic community. Prophesy was not a hereditary role, but was gifted to certain people. The role was to act as an intermediary between God and the Jewish people (and sometimes non-Jewish people; for example, the story of Jonah), to maintain the relationship and sustain their community with faith and wise counsel. Predicting the future was not their function.

Judaism accepts that there were prophets whose lives and teachings were not recorded in the scriptures. The scriptures record the wisdom of 55 prophets of Israel, seven of whom were women. This does not include thousands of prophets who are recorded to have lived at the time of Elijah, for example (see Kings 1), or prophets who were not Israelite, although Jewish people believe that they, too, existed.

There is evidence of Jewish wariness of false prophets. In Deuteronomy, a warning is given to those who might be tempted to give false messages to the people:

> I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, that shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.
>
> DEUTERONOMY 18:18–20

Some of the most important prophets of Israel include Abraham (Genesis 11–25), Sarah (Genesis 11–23), Isaac (Genesis 21–35), Jacob (Genesis 25–49), Moses (Exodus 2ff), Aaron (Exodus 4ff), Miriam (Exodus 12, 20), King David (1 Samuel 16–1, Kings 2:11) and King Solomon (1 Kings 1–11), as well as the later prophets from the eighth century BCE. Moses is regarded as the greatest of all prophets (Deuteronomy 18).

Halacha
Legal code of Judaism based on the teachings of the Torah and interpretations and applications by rabbinic authorities over the generations

The most significant aspect of a prophet's message was the maintenance and protection of the Covenant. During the last days before the exile, the prophets, such as Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah and many others, reminded the people of their breaking of the Covenant and their lack of social justice. The mistreatment of foreigners, widows and orphans was part of their message and a reminder that the people had forgotten the Covenant (see Isaiah 1:17–23, Jeremiah 22:3, Ezekiel 22:7, and Zechariah 7:10). It is through these prophets that the link with ethics is evident. As divinely inspired speakers for God, it is not surprising that many of their messages have been included in the Tanakh.

The Talmud

The Talmud is essentially a collection of discussions and comments by rabbis on the Tanakh, as well as laws, customs and ethics. It was completed between 500 and 600 CE.

The Talmud consists of two parts: Mishnah and Gemara. The Mishnah is an edited selection of rabbinic discourse that took place during the period of the Second Temple and was redacted (compiled and edited) by the year 200 CE. The Gemara is commentary on and extension of the Mishnah.

There are two versions of the Talmud: the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is considered the most authoritative. The Jerusalem Talmud, completed a little earlier, is written in an Aramaic dialect and probably came from the region around the Jewish intellectual centres of Tiberias, Sepphoris and Caesarea, in the north of modern Israel. There is much controversy about the dating of this Talmud, but it was probably written before 425 CE, when the emperor Theodosius took firmer control of religion across the Roman Empire.

The Babylonian Talmud has a less certain history. Tradition ascribes its beginnings to Jewish people in Babylon; however, it is thought that the text was then subject to more than 300 years of editing and reformation.

The Talmud is the key text that defines Judaism. It was written at the same time that Christianity was evolving and, due to the 'parting of the ways', did not become part of the Christian sacred texts. No Jewish law was developed without reference to the Talmud. It is the prism through which Jewish people read and understand the Torah and formed the basis for subsequent developments of **Halacha**.

Extracts that demonstrate principal beliefs

God the creator of the universe

The most famous passage of God creating the universe is found in Genesis 1:1–2:3. This gives an account of the seven days during which God created the world (Heaven and Earth, day and night, sea and land, vegetation, animals, man and woman). His ability to create the world is encapsulated in Genesis 1:31, 'And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good'.

There is a second account of God creating the universe that includes the story of the Garden of Eden (2:7ff) and how Eve is created by a rib from Adam's side. The two accounts are similar, but the second has more details on Adam and Eve.

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God is one

The concept of monotheism has been discussed. Some key beliefs and some references from the Tanakh illustrate various aspects of God, but the clear statement of the Torah is that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). It is widely acknowledged that Judaism was one of the first monotheistic religions. This is, to some extent, a generalisation. Certain cults, such as that of Akhenaten in Egypt, had begun to venerate a single god above all others. Early passages in the Tanakh suggest that the Jewish god may not be the only one in existence, but is the only one who should be worshipped (see Exodus 20:3). By Deuteronomy, the 'oneness' of God had been confirmed (see the *Shema* Deuteronomy 6:4).

In the Babylonian world, religions such as Zoroastrianism already had the structure that Judaism was to adapt — it had a duality of good and evil, represented by the God of Light and the God of Darkness.

Judaism has a single god who is the source of both good and evil. Satan is described as an 'accuser', and is not an independent powerful spirit (Job 2:3–6).

God the omnipotent

God's omnipotence, or all-powerfulness, is inferred from his creation of the world. It is also a central tenet of Judaism that the all-powerful God delivers justice to those who follow his rules and punishes those who disobey. An example is found in Exodus 14:26–31 where God's power parts the Red Sea; God is perceived as an all-knowing, all-powerful being.

The Covenant — the Ten Commandments (translation from Hebrew: 'the Ten Statements')

The Ten Commandments, known in Hebrew as *Aseret HaDibrot*, or the Ten Statements, appear twice in the Torah. These are understood to be the most succinct expression of the divinely inspired moral law. It is evident that these Ten Commandments constitute the basis for a system of ethical behaviour, and indeed for the legal framework of Western society. A summarised version of the Ten Commandments follows:

Figure 12.10 A replica of a segment from the 2000-year-old manuscript of the Ten Commandments taken from the biblical book of Deuteronomy

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make any graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

CONSIDER

There are two passages where the Ten Commandments are given in full (Exodus 20:2–14 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21). There are subtle differences between the versions, with Deuteronomy emphasising the name of God. The Exodus version is here in full.

1. I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
2. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.
4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

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5 Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
6 Thou shalt not murder.
7 Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8 Thou shalt not steal.
9 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

EXERCISE 12.4

1 **Identify** the Jewish sacred writings and comment on their importance.
2 **Outline** the composition of the Tanakh, noting how it was developed.
3 **Explain** the role of the Talmud in Judaism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 12.4

1 Write a paragraph about the development of the Talmud and explain its role as a sacred text.
2 **Construct** a table of key Jewish beliefs and link these to references from the sacred writings.
3 Prepare an outline for a 10-minute talk on the following: 'The Tanakh may be the inspired revelation of God or a human creation. Whatever its origins, it has provided guidance and inspiration for Jewish people throughout their history'.

12.6 CORE ETHICAL TEACHINGS

The ethical teachings of Judaism are based on the revelations of God as described in the sacred writings.

The Commandments of the Torah

It is generally accepted that there are 613 commandments (***mitzvot*** in Hebrew) in the Hebrew Bible, although there is some debate about which specific *mitzvot* make up the 613. Two of the greatest Jewish scholars, Maimonides and Nachmanides, debated whether it was, in fact, a commandment for a Jewish person to leave their home in order to live in Israel. In modern times it is not possible to obey all 613 commandments, since many of them apply only in the land of Israel and/or when a temple in Jerusalem is standing.

Mitzvot
Keeping the commandments of God

The 10 most famous commandments (the Ten Commandments or Statements) are divided between those concerning people's relationships with God and their relationships with each other. The first four or five commandments concern the human relationship with God, while the last five or six detail how humans should behave towards one another.

The remaining 603 commandments are rules for how Jewish people should live, and touch on every aspect of life. These commandments show that Judaism is a plan for every moment of life. The 603 commandments focus on issues such as what kings must do, how priests and rabbis must act, how one should farm, what one should wear, and ethical and dietary laws. These are some of the more interesting rules:

- Do not embarrass another (Leviticus 19:17).
- Do not bear a grudge (Leviticus 19:18).
- Do not mate with animals or different species (Leviticus 19:19).
- Do not wear clothes that are made from a mixture of wool and linen (Leviticus 19:19).
- Do not eat the fruit of a tree during its first three years (Leviticus 19:23).
- Do not cook a kid in the milk of its mother (Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:26, Deuteronomy 14:21).

The 613 commandments are of great importance to the Jewish people, providing a way that society can keep itself in order. Even those laws that cannot be practised today provide ethical standards and inspiration to build a better world. They ensure that people behave ethically towards each other. Most importantly, they

INVESTIGATE

Research the 613 Commandments online, or go straight to the source and read the Book of Leviticus. The anthropologist Mary Douglas wrote a fascinating theory of how the commandments of Leviticus relate to categorisation and order in the Jewish community through a schema of cleanliness and uncleanliness. Her book is called *Purity and Danger*.

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ensure that Jewish people remain mindful of God in every part of their day.

The Prophetic Vision

While the prophets were vital in revealing God's word to the Hebrew people, they frequently reminded the people that by forgetting the Covenant they were disobeying God. The importance of maintaining what would be called 'social justice' is evidence of correct ethical behaviour. Care for the powerless, honesty in business and avoidance of wealthy overindulgence were all aspects of life to be emulated by the people of God. The prophets suggested social justice was more important than ritual. This was especially a feature of those called the 'eighth-century prophets' who spoke during the eighth century BCE. These included Joel, Hosea, Amos and others. See Micah 6:8 (page 298) for a statement from the prophetic vision.

Tikkun olam

Tikkun olam is a central principal of the mystical strand of Judaism and, in modern times, has acquired a prominent place in all variants of Judaism. Literally it means 'repairing the world'. The complete Hebrew phrase upon which it is based means 'to repair the world under the sovereignty of God'. In the Talmud, it is used for the avoidance of negative social change. In some mystical forms of Judaism, such as Kabbalah, however, the concept is based on the belief that the cosmos God created was too unstable to contain his brilliance, and it shattered like glass. Adhering to the commandments contributes to the gradual healing of the cosmos. Thus, the pious Jewish individual is assisting God in the repair of His creation through their good deeds.

Some Jewish people understand *tikkun olam* as an attempt to right the wrongs of the world by behaving responsibly towards other people. 'Repairing the world' means improving the world's social relationships. For these people, *tikkun olam* is manifested through charity, supporting social-justice issues and behaving with compassion. Orthodox Jewish people believe that performing *mitzvot* is a form of *tikkun olam* and will hasten the coming of the Messianic age. Among non-Orthodox Jewish people, *tikkun olam* may be a political term used to refer to social justice. It is also a term applied to environmental ethics (see Chapter 13).

The Book of Proverbs

The *Ketuvim* section of the Tanakh is not used as a source of Halacha but does reflect Jewish values. An interesting example is the Book of Proverbs.

INVESTIGATE

To discover more about *tikkun olam*, source and access the online article by Jennifer Noparstak.

The Book of Proverbs is described in the first verse as having been written by Solomon, son of David and King of Israel. If so, the Book of Proverbs was written in the 900s BCE. However, it is possible that the book was written in the time of the Second Temple (516 BCE–70 CE) and is attributed to Solomon to laud his wisdom. It is an example of Wisdom Literature, a genre that reflects a Hellenistic influence on Jewish thought. This book is not a series of laws, but a series of short statements that encourage moral and upright behaviour. It is a collection of ethical instructions related to practical everyday living concerns.

Wisdom

In Proverbs 1:7 it says:

> The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; foolish ones scorn wisdom and discipline.

Here, wisdom is equated with reverence for the message of God. In the next few verses, Proverbs also encourages children to listen carefully to their mothers and fathers — this suggests that wisdom is also to be found in respect for the natural system of status and relationships.

Video

In Proverbs 2:6, wisdom is seen as something granted by God, and one knows wisdom from his statements, particularly through the Torah. If this book was written by Solomon to his son, as traditionally believed, it is in part a guide to be a good ruler.

Tikkun olam
Jewish concept of the repair of the world; the need for social justice

Proverbs 3:3 suggests that kindness and truth are always important. By upholding kindness and truth, an individual will find further good wisdom in 'the sight of God and man'.

Righteousness

Proverbs 9 suggests that wise and righteous men will only add to their learning. Proverbs 10:20 it states:

> The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.

Righteousness, the book suggests, leads to wealth and a long life, whereas the wicked will die from lacking an understanding heart.

Purity

Purity is discussed in the Book of Proverbs from the perspective of a man speaking to another man. Chapter 5 is concerned with the temptation of women and warns that being lured astray by women will lead to a bitter death. Similarly, chapters 7 and 11 advise men to keep away from female prostitutes and the wives of other men.

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Generosity of spirit

Several verses relate to a fool as one who is not generous in consideration of others, and people are encouraged to consider the needs of others (Proverbs 17:5, 13, 17; 19:17; 22:9).

Importance of principal ethical teachings in Jewish life

In any society, ethics are vital for the enduring success and peace of the community. Proverbs divides its message between the good actions required of a king and those required of a good Jewish person. At times, the concepts of king and good Jewish person are interchangeable. Kindness and loyalty within the community are the important aspects of the ethics of Judaism, and wisdom and right behaviour are celebrated. This is not knowledge for its own sake, but knowledge inspired by fear and reverence of God, wisdom that is focused on his words and the teachings of his prophets.

The goodwill towards others promoted by the ethical teachings of Judaism, as contained in the Torah, the prophetic vision, the idea of *tikkun olam* and the Book of Proverbs ensure a safe and protective Jewish community and a place in the world where common laws and ideals encourage close bonds between individuals.

EXERCISE 12.5

1 **Outline** the principal ethical teachings from the Torah and indicate how they relate to daily life.
2 **Outline** the principal ethical concepts contained in the prophetic writings.
3 **Explain** the concept of *tikkun olam* and how it relates to the ethical behaviour of Jewish adherents.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 12.5

1 Taking the role of a Jewish adherent, write a speech about the importance of Jewish ethical teachings in the life of a Jewish person.
2 Read the Book of Proverbs in the Hebrew Bible and construct a table identifying its teachings on wisdom, righteousness, purity and generosity of spirit. Identify the key concepts, passages and their relationship to ethical behaviour.
3 Find an example of a Jewish contribution to Australian life, noting the Jewish ethical teachings that might have influenced the motivation for that contribution.

12.7 OBSERVANCE

Shabbat

Video

Shabbat is described in rabbinic literature as one of the three Pillars of Judaism (the other two being *Kashrut* (dietary laws) and laws relating to family relationships). The first time the word holy is used in the Torah is when God creates the Sabbath day and sanctifies it to make it holy. The commandments to remember and observe Shabbat are found in the Ten Commandments. This indicates that on Shabbat, God's people should rest too, in imitation of their divine creator.

Shabbat
Literally means 'cease'; important ritual observance for Jewish people beginning at sunset on Friday night and concluding at nightfall on Saturday; represents the day God rested after he created the world, as recorded in Genesis

Kiddush
A prayer used to bless wine drunk at the Shabbat meal

The Sabbath day extends from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. Although there are some religious restrictions, it is primarily a day of relaxation, which is a gesture of respect to God, and also a gift from Him. It is a day to withdraw from the concerns of the normal weekday, a day of joy. While praying is an important activity on Shabbat, feasting and spending time with one's family are considered just as important. The family togetherness celebrated in the sharing of the Shabbat ritual is important and evidenced in other aspects of Jewish life.

There are elaborate rituals conducted on the Shabbat, especially the Shabbat meal in the home. In Judaism, the home is an important place of worship and often referred to as a 'small temple'. Shabbat is ushered in by the lighting of two candles, usually by the women of the house. At the beginning of the Friday night meal and again at Saturday lunch, ***Kiddush*** (sanctification) is recited over a cup of wine. Three festive meals are enjoyed in the 24 hours, featuring *challah* (traditional braided loaves of bread). Shabbat is characterised by pleasurable activities such as singing, eating and time with the family. Usually Jewish people attend the synagogue on Shabbat and many study the Torah.

Observing Shabbat allows time to remember and commemorate both the creation of the world and the Jewish people's freedom from slavery in Egypt. It is a

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Figure 12.11 Families gather on Friday night for Shabbat

time to refrain from work. Work (*melachah*) has a very specific meaning in Judaism, referring to creative tasks or exercising control over the environment. There are 39 defined categories of work.

Some Jewish people treat the injunction to refrain from work on this day with great seriousness. Some Jewish communities have negotiated with local councils to have traffic lights change automatically, enabling Jewish people to cross the road without pressing the pedestrian button.

Connecting an electric current could be considered work. For this reason, in Israel, many lifts and automatic doors operate automatically on the Shabbat. Any action pre-programmed into a machine before the Shabbat is not *melachah*, so ovens on timers and timed light switches that are set before sundown on Friday do not breach the injunction against work if they click on during Shabbat.

At the end of Shabbat, there is a ***havdalah*** (separation) ceremony featuring a plaited candle, wine and sweet-smelling spices, so that the pleasantness of Shabbat lingers into the work week.

Havdalah
Meaning differentiation; a ceremony to mark the end of the *Shabbat*

While Shabbat refers primarily to the seventh day of the week, there are also biblical references to the seventh year, when debts are cancelled (Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 31:10), and the Year of Jubilee, the 50th year, after seven times seven years (see Leviticus 25), which are considered extensions of the principles that underpin Shabbat.

EXERCISE 12.6

1 **Explain** why Shabbat is an important observance in Judaism.
2 **Describe** the way Jewish adherents celebrate Shabbat.
3 **Discuss** the ways that Jewish people avoid performing work on Shabbat.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 12.6

1 Ask a Jewish person how they observe Shabbat.
2 Research the Tanakh and determine if Shabbat has a deeper purpose than avoidance of work.
3 Read the sections on the seventh year and Year of Jubilee (see Leviticus 25). What impact would it have on society if those special years were actually observed? Discuss with other students in your class.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Abraham is considered the founder of Judaism.
- God established a Covenant with Abraham, later reaffirmed with Moses and the people of Israel.
- The Twelve Tribes of Israel became the nation of Israel.
- Moses is considered the greatest individual in Judaism.
- Moses led the people from slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land.
- Moses mediated the Covenant between God and Israel.
- Moses received the Torah, the law of Israel.
- The major cultural divisions of Judaism include Mizrachim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Religious divisions include Orthodox, Progressive/Reform and Conservative Judaism.
- Judaism believes in one God.
- Moral law is considered to be divinely inspired.
- The Covenant is an extremely important concept in Judaism.
- The Hebrew Scriptures include the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) and the Talmud.
- Ethical teachings of Judaism include the commandments of the Torah, the social justice of the prophets, the tikkun olam and the concept of the repair of the world, and several concepts in the Book of Proverbs.
- Shabbat is one of the three Pillars of Judaism.

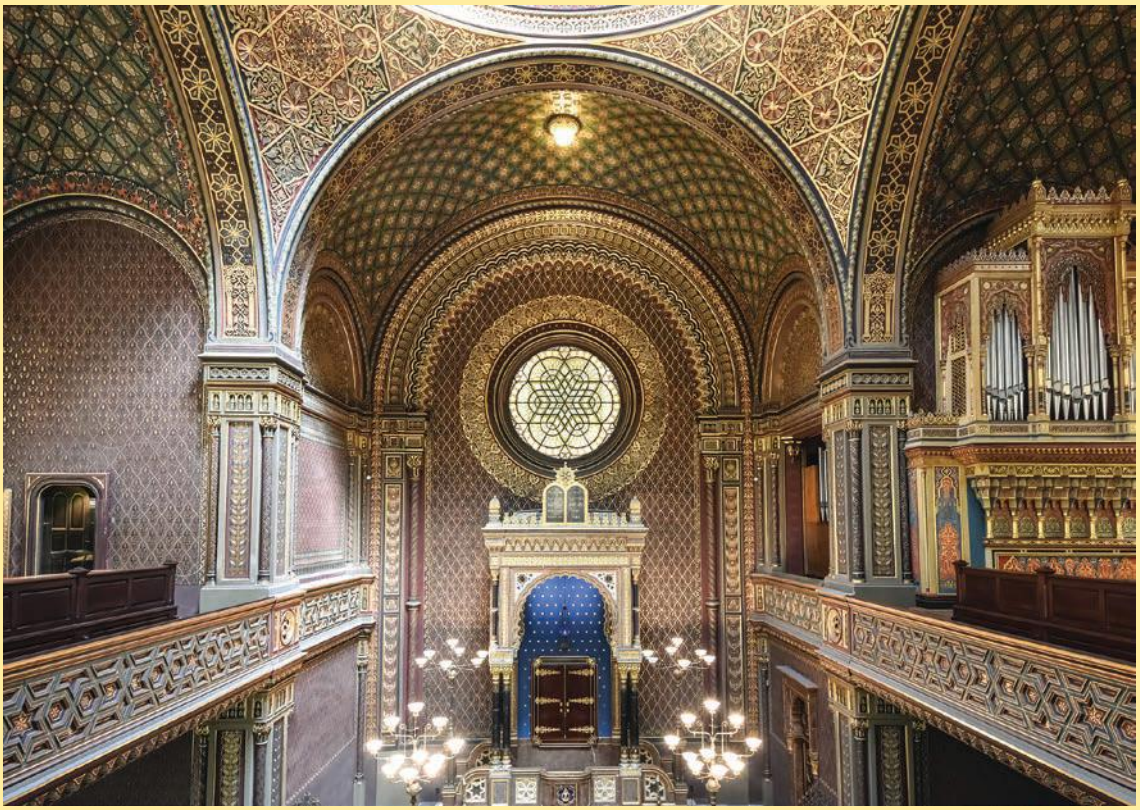

Figure 12.12 Interior details of the Spanish Synagogue of Prague in the Czech Republic. It is an UNESCO heritage site.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 What was the name of Abraham's wife?
(A) Rebecca
(B) Rachel
(C) Leah
(D) Sarah

2 What was one of the promises given to Abraham by God?
(A) Great wealth
(B) Land
(C) Status as an important leader in Egypt
(D) Seven years of plenty

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3 What name is given to the agreement between God and Abraham?
(A) The Exile
(B) The Exodus
(C) The Restoration
(D) The Covenant

4 What is the name of the celebration of the release from Egypt?
(A) The Holocaust
(B) Yom Kippur
(C) Passover or Pesach
(D) The Feast of Weeks

5 In which group is it common for women and men to sit separately in the synagogue?
(A) Conservative Judaism
(B) Orthodox Judaism
(C) Progressive/Reform Judaism
(D) Regressive Judaism

6 What is one of the attributes of God in Judaism?
(A) Creator of the universe
(B) Polytheism
(C) Part of the Trinity
(D) Noahide Laws

7 What name is sometimes given to the Hebrew Bible?
(A) The New Testament
(B) The Tanakh
(C) Yahweh
(D) The Books of Hezekiah

8 Where does Judaism draw some of its ethical teachings from?
(A) The New Testament
(B) The Book of Hezekiah
(C) The Book of Proverbs
(D) The Gospels

9 What does the ethical concept of *tikkun olam* refer to?
(A) Righteousness
(B) Repair of the world
(C) *Ketuvim*
(D) Amos

10 What would Jewish adherents do on Shabbat?
(A) Work
(B) Walk
(C) Rest
(D) Renovate

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 **Explain** the significant events in the life of Abraham.

2 **Describe** the Covenant, with particular reference to the role of Moses.

3 **Outline** the unique features of one school (variant) of Judaism.

4 **Discuss** one key belief of Judaism.

5 **Discuss** how the concept of *tikkun olam* has been interpreted and adapted as a basis for ethical behaviour.

6 **Describe** a typical Shabbat observance for a Jewish household.

EXTENDED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1 'And G-d heard their groaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Abraham'. **Discuss** the implications of this statement, particularly as it relates to the Covenant.

2 **Outline** the sources of Jewish ethics, noting the development of ideas through the Tanakh.

3 **Discuss** Shabbat with reference to the key beliefs of Judaism.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

Bondi has a high percentage of Jewish residents. Discuss how Judaism, an ancient religion steeped in tradition, is relevant to life in modern Australia.

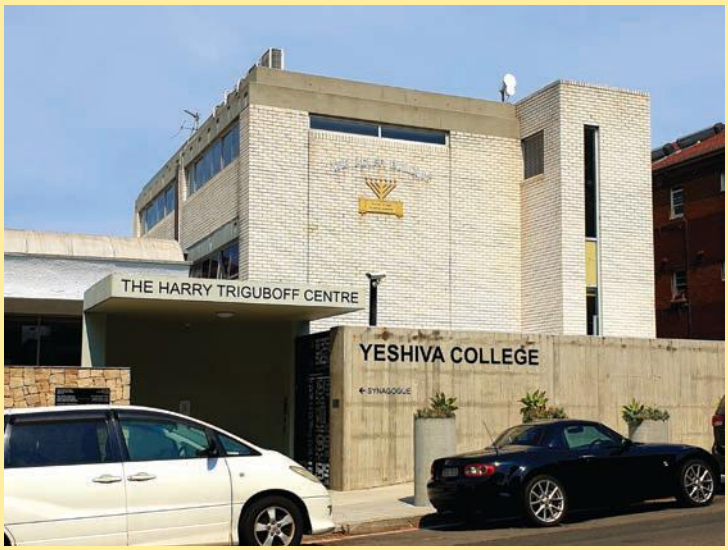

Figure 12.13 Yeshiva College (also known as the Harry O. Triguboff Centre) is a Hasidic Jewish synagogue, learning centre and library in Bondi

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THIRTEEN

JUDAISM: DEPTH STUDY

[YEAR 12 – 1 AND 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

The beauty of Judaism is that it demands we ask questions, especially of ourselves.

EDGAR BRONFMAN, SR, FORMER PRESIDENT WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS (1929–2013)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- Moses Maimonides, who lived in the twelfth century, is one of the most influential Jewish scholars of all time:
  - Moses Maimonides had a difficult early life but showed signs of great ability
  - Moses Maimonides' extensive writings continue to influence Judaism today.
- The Hassidim emerged in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century, led by the Ba'al Shem Tov:
  - The Ba'al Shem Tov emphasised a joyful, experiential spirituality in the face of dry, scholarly legalistic Judaism
  - Hassidism emerged as one of the most significant schools of thought in the modern era
  - The Hassidim are distinctive in their dress and practices.
- Jewish ethics emphasise the legal requirements of Judaism
- Bioethical issues are generally interpreted in a flexible manner but the decisions are governed by the commands of God and conscience
- Jewish environmental ethics relate to the idea of God's ownership of the world and are concerned about the repair of the world
- Sexual ethics are expressed within the context of a married relationship
- Judaism generally takes a conservative approach to expressions of homosexuality
- Judaism is a patriarchal religious tradition that had strong gender roles
- Jewish feminism is challenging traditional Jewish attitudes and practices
- Death and mourning are linked with extensive ritual
- Death and mourning are a natural part of life
- Marriage in Judaism includes significant ceremonial aspects and is governed by several regulations
- The synagogue has replaced the Temple as the place of worship
- The synagogue is also a meeting place and educational centre
- The synagogue has particular architectural features
- Synagogue services follow the liturgy of the *Siddur* and include readings from the Torah, prayers and blessings.

Note: *All extracts from the Hebrew Bible (translated into English) in this chapter are sourced from The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917*

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the life of a significant person or the rise and development of a significant idea in Judaism will be examined. In the HSC examination, you may be asked to explain how this person or school of thought contributed to the growth of Judaism and assess the impact of the idea or person on Judaism itself. To do this effectively, you will need to know about controversies relating to and contributions of the chosen person or school of thought.

You will also need to describe a Jewish ethical teaching in a particular area: sexual ethics, bioethical issues or environmental ethics. In this chapter, each ethical area will be briefly discussed. The HSC exam may also ask for an explanation of why the particular ethical teaching is important in Judaism.

You may need to describe a significant practice (ritual, worship, etc.) within Judaism and show, first, how it highlights Jewish beliefs and, second, how it creates meaning for Jewish people, both individually and as a community. In this chapter, death and mourning, marriage and synagogue services will be discussed.

Figure 13.1 The city of Jerusalem with the Western Wall and the flag of Israel, featuring the Magen David (Star of David)

13.2 SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

There are many significant people and schools of thought that have influenced Judaism and brought Jewish influences into the world. Those influences have had a great impact on the Western and Middle Eastern worlds.

Remember the syllabus allows for 'another person or school of thought' to be studied. Also remember that, as well as discussing the life and contribution of the person or school of thought, you will need to analyse their contribution to and impact on Judaism.

Moses Maimonides and **Hassidism** will be discussed in this chapter of the print book. Information on the other people and schools of thought is available in the digital version.

Moses Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon) or Rambam

Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204 CE) was one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of all time, who has influenced

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present-day Judaism as well as his own era. Moses Maimonides (also known as Rambam) is known as 'the second Moses' as a way of comparing his influence on Jewish life to that of Moses of the Jewish scriptures.

Moses Maimonides' life

Moses Maimonides was born in 1135 CE in Cordoba, Spain, as Moses the son of Maimon, a scholar of some significance. Maimon ensured Moses received instruction from a number of Arabic masters. When he was 13 years of age, his Jewish family was forced to wander Spain in a nomadic existence because the Muslim Almohades, from Africa, had invaded, promoting a new enthusiasm for Islam in Spain. In 1160, the family of Maimonides moved to Fez in northern Africa, initially trying to pass as Muslims. In this famous city of learning, Moses was quickly recognised as a scholar of some note, having begun his commentary on the Mishnah. He was a well-rounded scholar, having studied astronomy, law, religion and philosophy. On being identified as a Jewish person and thus being in danger of execution as a lapsed Muslim, Maimonides moved his family to Egypt in 1165. Here Maimonides helped his brother trade gems to make money. His brother's early death prompted Maimonides to study medicine, and he became private physician to the Egyptian ruler, Grand Vizier Al Qadi al Fadil, and then to the famous warrior against the European crusaders, Saladin. As one of the leading Jewish people of Egypt, Maimonides' skill was recognised in the Jewish community and he became the ***nagid***, leader of the Egyptian Jewish people (a post held by four generations of his family). He served as spokesman for the Jewish community with the Muslim authorities in Egypt.

Nagid
Hebrew term meaning 'prince' or 'leader'

Mishneh Torah
Code of Jewish law compiled by Moses Maimonides

Moreh Nevukhim
Guide for the Perplexed; a theological and philosophical work that discusses issues such as the existence and nature of God, God's knowledge and the nature of evil

Maimonides became acknowledged as a great intellectual of his time, his works ranging from the medical, including treatises on personal hygiene and proper eating habits, to the great theological works for which he is most remembered. Maimonides was influenced by Christian, Greek and Muslim philosophers, as well as his own Jewish background. He supported the views of Aristotle that, while there are limitations to knowing God's attributes directly, God's people have a duty, through reason, to comprehend the divine mind. God is rational and so can be understood rationally.

Between 1158 and 1190, Moses Maimonides wrote many works, including a commentary on the Mishnah, the *code* ***Mishneh Torah*** (published in 1180), and a great theological and philosophical work that discussed the nature of God, the ***Moreh Nevukhim*** (Guide for the Perplexed; published in 1190).

In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides codified the Oral Law in 14 volumes, arranged topically, that could be used by Jewish judges. It is a distillation of the Talmud into a simple code so that all Jewish people could understand the requirements of the law without lengthy study. It drew on ancient law as well as contemporary issues. As it was written in Hebrew, it was a clearly presented and accessible work and formed the basis for subsequent Jewish legal codes.

The *Moreh Nevukhim* (Guide for the Perplexed) was deliberately written in difficult language so that only scholars could understand it. It was controversial, dividing Judaism at the time, but has had a profound influence on the medieval world and on Judaism since. Maimonides also compiled a version of the 613 commandments of Judaism in his Book of Commandments.

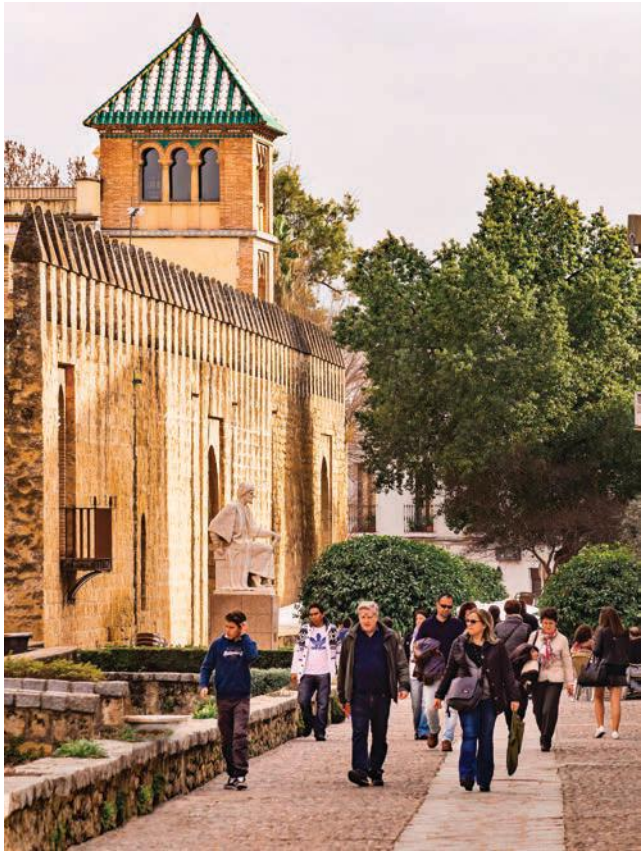

Figure 13.2 The town of Cordoba where Moses Maimonides was born .The walls that used to mark the boundaries of the Jewish quarter extended virtually to the Arab walls.

FURTHERMORE

There is a view that there is a conflict between faith and philosophy. Maimonides disputed that view. It was said of the *Moreh Nevukhim* (Guide for the Perplexed) that rabbis were afraid to let Jewish people read it because it was so long and complex that a person might read a section where Maimonides attacks religion using a rationalist approach but fall asleep before they read his counter-attack, and thus spend the night as a heretic!

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Maimonides died in 1204 and was buried at Tiberias in Israel. His grave still receives many visitors. Followers of Moses Maimonides often refer to him by his Hebrew name — Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (or Rambam).

Contribution to Judaism, its development and expression

Maimonides' Jewish writings are available today and his *Mishneh Torah* provided the basis for all subsequent codes of Jewish law. His philosophical *Treatise on Logic* has been published in many languages. He also wrote many medical texts that are still available, such as his works on poisons, haemorrhoids, asthma and temperaments. Maimonides' writing was so influential in the years that followed that Jewish scholarship for centuries was divided into supporters and opponents of his ideas. Many largely accepted his ideas but remained suspicious where they seemed to contradict religious tradition. His work was also used by Christian scholars, notably by Thomas Aquinas who often referred in his writings to Rabbi Moses. He was uniquely able to draw together the ideas of the Graeco-Roman world, the Muslim and Arab world, and the Jewish and Western world. It is said of him that: 'From Moses [of the Jewish Bible] to Moses [Maimonides], there is none like Moses'. Maimonides' work is still regarded by many as the greatest Jewish writing, aside from the Torah, ever written. It is clear that Moses Maimonides is one of the most significant contributors to the thought, law, expression and rituals of Judaism.

One of Maimonides' most important developments was his **Thirteen Precepts**. These are like a creed and are considered to be a statement of Orthodox Jewish belief. Moses Maimonides' Thirteen Precepts are:

1. God has created the world and rules it.
2. God is one and the only one.
3. God is spirit (incorporeal) and cannot be represented.
4. God was the first and will be the last.
5. Prayers should only be addressed to God.
6. The prophets' words are true.
7. Moses was the greatest of all prophets.
8. The Torah was revealed to Moses and is true.
9. The Torah cannot be changed.
10. God knows all human actions and thoughts.
11. God rewards those who keep the commandments and punishes those who do not.
12. The messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.

Analysing the impact of Maimonides on Judaism

Moses Maimonides is an extremely influential figure in Judaism. His impact and influence shape much of Jewish theology today. His discussion on the idea of the resurrection of the dead, for example, was radical at the time he wrote it and is a good example of the influence of Aristotle's philosophy. While his ideas were initially criticised, they have now been largely accepted as mainstream Jewish thought.

Moses Maimonides' Thirteen Precepts are now published in song form in the Jewish Prayer Book, the *Siddur*, used in private and public worship. His most important and lasting contribution was his codification of the *mitzvot* (commandments) in this *Book of Commandments*.

Thirteen Precepts
Moses Maimonides' principles of faith, which he believed every Jewish person should maintain

INVESTIGATE

Many of Moses Maimonides' works are complex and not easy to understand. For a discussion of his works, especially his philosophical writings, go to the article about him on the Jewish Encyclopedia website.

INVESTIGATE

Moses Maimonides' *Moreh Nevukhim* (Guide for the Perplexed) is available online. His other works are generally also available. Examine sections of this work and see if you can understand the controversy it created.

Table 13.1 Some of Maimonides' Jewish texts

Work	Date	Subject
Mishneh Torah	1168/1177	Comprehensive code of Jewish law
Commentary on the Mishnah	1180	Codification of Oral Law
Moreh Nevukhim (Guide for the Perplexed)	1190	A philosophical work drawing together Aristotelian philosophy and Jewish theology
Book of Commandments	1190s	Compilation of the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*)

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EXERCISE 13.1

1 **Outline** the life of Moses Maimonides, noting significant events in his life.
2 **Explain** the contribution of Moses Maimonides to Judaism of his day.
3 **Analyse** the ongoing impact of Moses Maimonides on Judaism today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.1

1 Write a paragraph discussing the significance of the major events in the life of Moses Maimonides
2 Debate the topic: 'From Moses [of the Jewish Bible] to Moses [Maimonides], there is none like Moses'.
3 Prepare a summary of one of Moses Maimonides' writings and explain its significance to Judaism.

Hassidism

In eighteenth-century Judaism, scholarship was greatly valued and Judaism had become, according to some, bound by law, tradition and intellectual debates. In Eastern Europe, because of poverty, the need for long hours of work and isolation, there was little chance of many ordinary Jewish people studying the Torah. Scholarship had become elitist and the Jewish people of these areas of Eastern Europe felt alienated. This provided fertile ground for the growth of Hassidism as a movement emphasising a personal piety, as compared to the emphasis on scholarship.

There are several terms that should be noted that are often interchangeable and show variations in spelling.

Hassidim
Pious ones

Hassidism is the name of the movement and the people are the **Hassidim**. It may also be called Hassidic Judaism and also Chassidism. The syllabus uses the term the Hassidim.

The history of the Hassidim

Hassidism began as a reaction to legalistic, intellectualised Judaism. The growth of Hassidic Judaism began with Israel Ben Eliezar, usually called the Ba'al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name), a prominent teacher and healer who taught and practised around 1730–60 CE. The Ba'al Shem Tov was born in the Ukraine, at Okup, about 1700 CE. He was greatly influenced by Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, on which he based his own brand of Judaism, a more experiential and less intellectual pursuit.

The Ba'al Shem Tov was a charismatic storyteller and healer, and it is difficult to distinguish reality from legend in discussion of his life. It has been suggested that he could predict the future. The Ba'al Shem Tov emphasised that all Jewish people are equal and study of the Torah is less important than purity of heart. Prayer and obedience to the commandments are more important than religious study. Thus, the poor and illiterate were empowered to discover a form of Judaism relevant to their lives. He encouraged living a full life and said that drinking, singing and dancing were ways of growing closer to God. His sayings were initially spread orally and later written down.

Among the ideas of the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Hassidic tradition, the following are emphasised:

- Hassidism is not a new movement, but ancient ideas are given new life.
- Being truly good is more important than scholarship.
- Joyfulness is found in everyday life.
- An individual's relationship with God is more important than strict observance of the law.
- Prayer is more important than study of the Torah.
- Giftedness is more important than scholarship.

At times there was an emphasis on ecstasy in worship, which was a reaction to the formalism of traditional Judaism. Hassidic worship was, and can still be, very loud and emotional.

Charismatic leadership, rather than intellectual leadership, became the norm in the Hassidic tradition. Other Jewish groups attacked Hassidism because they believed its teaching would undermine traditional Judaism.

DID YOU KNOW?

Charisma is a term often used in Studies of Religion. It comes from a Greek word meaning 'gift or talent from (the/a) divine source' and relates to people who seem to have a special gift, charm and ability to influence people or someone with special talents for leadership. The sociologist Max Weber in his book *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* discussed two types of charisma. The personal — where community leaders can influence others because of their innate charm and powers of persuasion – and the institutional — where the charismatic force of a person derives more from the office they hold. In this last instance the example of a Catholic pope is relevant; he derives his charisma from the position he holds. Many religious innovators, especially leaders of cults, hold no office, but merely by the power of their personality are able to attract followers for their cause.

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Figure 13.3 Mourners gather in a *yeshiva* (rabbinical school) for the funeral of a *rebbe*

The Ba'al Shem Tov died about 1760 and the movement continued to grow. Leadership was dispersed among many ***zaddikim*** (also spelt tzaddikim or tsaddikim) who were thought to be models of Jewish behaviour. They were charismatic leaders, rather than scholarly ones, and were believed to have obtained mystical union with God. They were seen as mediators between God and their followers and were expected to use their power for the good of the community. They were the focus of intense devotion by their followers.

Hassidism grew until there were several million followers in Eastern Europe in the 1930s, becoming the majority among Jewish people in Eastern Europe. During the **Holocaust** (**Shoah**) millions of the Hassidim were killed, but the surviving few moved to other countries, such as Israel, the USA and Australia, where they rebuilt their communities and are today a distinct and recognisable element of the Jewish community. The Hassidim are very much oriented to developing family life and this makes them one of the largest-growing sectors of the Jewish world. The leaders of the various Hassidic groups are called *rebbe*, from the Yiddish word for 'master' or 'teacher'.

CONSIDER

It now seems ironic that Hassidism began in reaction to traditional Judaism, yet many would identify Hassidic Judaism in the twenty-first century as the most traditional, conservative form of Judaism. Why do you think this has happened?

Contribution to the development and expression of Judaism

There was initially a negative reaction to the Hassidim, but eventually Judaism recognised that the Hassidim brought a renewed emphasis to important expressions of the faith: respect for the simple Jewish person, spirituality, ethics, compassion for others, and the belief that true religion was the same as joy.

Zaddik
Righteous man

Holocaust (**Shoah**)
The persecution and attempted genocide of the Jewish people during World War II

Hassidism spread to Western Europe, and then to the USA in the 1880s. Many Hassidic scholars stayed in Russia following the Soviet revolution in 1917, with the intention of preserving Judaism. The Hassidic movement has been very influential in modern Judaism. It may be described as 'mysticism for the masses'. It is the most 'missionary-minded' movement in Judaism, reaching out to other Jewish people by using technology, such as the internet, to seek followers.

There are multiple sects of Hassidism, each with its own line of *rebbes* and distinctive clothing. There are numerous lineages within the Hassidim. One of the most prominent is that of the Lubavitch or Chabad movement. It has its centre in Brooklyn, USA, and does an enormous amount of outreach accompanied by a very sophisticated web presence including specific apps for phones to help with prayer times and scripture downloads. The Chabad movement seeks to return non-practising Jewish people back to the obligations of Judaism, and their extensive outreach program is dedicated to this end.

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Figure 13.4 Hassidic Jews pray at the gravesite of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

The organisational zeal of a recent *rebbe*, Menachem M. Schneerson, helped the movement greatly in its growth. In his philosophy he placed a new emphasis on Messianism — or the expectation of a divinely anointed leader of the Jewish community. Some of his followers considered this *rebbe* to be the Messiah and they await his return from death. He died in 1994.

Analysing the impact of Hassidism

Hassidism emphasises several aspects of Jewish teaching:

- physical and spiritual revival; it seeks to help Jewish people rediscover their faith
- personal piety, beyond the letter of the law
- refinement of character, developing maturity, good habits and good manners
- experiential and practical Judaism; the legalism of Judaism and the mysticism of Kabbalah should both be made understandable.

Hassidic Judaism also emphasises a number of particular rituals, customs and practices:

- concentrated prayer, often lengthy and involving mental concentration
- daily immersion in a ritual bath to achieve spiritual cleanliness, especially during times of festivals and fasts
- distinctive dress, similar to that of nineteenth-century Eastern Europe; for the men this often includes black suits, no neck-tie, long silk robes and fur hats, which often have particular mystical significance or signify the particular *rebbe* to whom they are loyal; women usually cover their hair completely, often with wigs, and wear clothing that is considered 'modest'
- the sides of the face of men are not shaved and long sideburns or ringlets called *payot* are the custom
- many Hassidim speak Yiddish, a Jewish dialect from Europe, considering Hebrew a holy language not to be used in daily life
- some Hassidim have accepted Zionism and support the establishment of the state of Israel, while others believe that a Jewish state can only be established when the Messiah comes.

Many of these aspects are prevalent in Orthodox Judaism today. Hassidism is one of the fastest growing groups in Judaism and the distinctive dress and practices have had a significant impact on modern Judaism.

CONSIDER

The short Australian film *Jewboy* (2005) examines the struggle of a Jewish Hassidic young man to come to terms with his faith, his family and his community. Some suggest Hassidism has no place in twenty-first-century Australia. Does it? How difficult would it be to live a Hassidic life in modern Australia?

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Summary

Hassidic Judaism is one of the most recognisable forms of Judaism and is often mistakenly identified as the only stream in Orthodox Judaism. Hassidism has certainly brought new life into the Jewish religious tradition during the past 200 years. Its emphasis on personal piety was a significant influence but has now, in many ways, become a conserving force in modern Judaism rather than the radical influence it was at the beginning of its development.

EXERCISE 13.2

1 **Describe** the development of Hassidism, noting key people and reasons why it developed.
2 **Assess** why Hassidism is such an important development in Judaism.
3 **Analyse** the contribution of Hassidism to Judaism in Australia with particular reference to contemporary Australia.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.2

1 Conduct a media search on Australian Judaism. **Describe** links to Hassidism that you can discover in the Australian Jewish community and how those links influence modern Australian Judaism.
2 Construct a table outlining the differences between Hassidism and other variants of Judaism.
3 Look up the Lubavitch community on the internet. **Discuss** how it is an important modern movement in Judaism and how this is reflected in its use of modern technology.

Other people and schools of thought

The following people and schools of thought are discussed in the digital version of this book.

People

Deborah (circa eleventh century BCE) — judge and prophetess of Israel; she assumed leadership when Barak refused to lead the fight against the Philistines; a legendary charismatic leader who provides a model for female leadership

Isaiah (eighth century BCE) — influential prophet during the last days of the Kingdom of Judah; he warned of the destruction brought by the Assyrians and called people back to the Covenant.

Hillel (and Shamai) (110 BCE–10 CE) — Hillel was an important and moderate Jewish scholar who helped develop the Mishnah and Talmud; modern Rabbinic Judaism has been influenced by Hillel; Shamai was a Judean contemporary who was a more rigorous interpreter of the law

Beruriah (second century CE) — respected female scholar who emphasised the importance of context in the interpretation of texts; the only female legal authority in the Talmud

Rabbi Solomon Isaac (Rashi) (1040–1105 CE) — French scholar who wrote the most authoritative and widely used commentaries on the Talmud, Torah and Tanakh; associated with the 'Rashi Script', a style of written Hebrew

Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786 CE) — German Jewish philosopher who influenced the development of the Jewish Enlightenment; often called 'the third Moses'

Abraham Geiger (1810–1874 CE) — German Jewish scholar and rabbi who developed the ideas that became Reform (Progressive) Judaism

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook (Rav Kook) (1865–1935 CE) — Jewish thinker and statesman who was associated with the British Mandate for Palestine; a Talmud scholar and sociologist; an avid Zionist and sought reconciliation between religious and secular Jewish people.

Schools of thought

Kabbalah — a mystical form of Judaism with esoteric beliefs and practices; has had a popular revival in recent years with pop icons such as Madonna and Britney Spears taking an interest

Zionism — the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, based on the Jewish yearning to return to the biblical homeland; nineteenth-century Zionism, associated with Theodor Herzl, resulted in the re-establishment of a Jewish state in Israel in 1948

Jewish feminism — emphasises the rights of women in Judaism and challenges its patriarchal attitudes; emphasises the feminine aspects of God and the role of women in the Tanakh

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13.3 ETHICS

Introduction

The Jewish sacred text, the Torah, provides the basis for Judaism's ethical system as well as the beliefs and practices of its adherents. Judaism is a religion based on the historical memory of a divine revelation at Mount Sinai, and thus the commands and principles that were revealed are also considered divine in origin. Jewish people have a strong belief that they are in a Covenantal relationship with God, and the implication of that relationship is the requirement to live as God has intended, as communicated through the Torah. The essential basis of all Jewish ethics is the declaration that God is just and compassionate and that people in a Covenantal relationship with Him are to imitate and express these qualities.

Additional sources of ethical instruction can also be found in famous commentaries on the Torah/Tanakh. There is also a body of scholarship called Responsa. Especially in medieval and early modern Europe, Jewish people would write to famous rabbis asking their opinion on certain ethical problems. These letters have been collected and also help understand how to apply readings of Jewish law to specific circumstances where an ethical decision is required.

Jewish people are called to be in a good relationship with God and also with other people. In Judaism the term **Halacha** is used to refer to the way Jewish people are to live. Halacha (literally, 'pathway', usually translated as 'Jewish Law') provides the basis for an ethical and moral way of life and provides the principles by which Jewish people live. Halacha includes the commandments from the Tanakh and the writings of rabbis since. The commandments of the Decalogue, the obligations to God and to other people, are central to Jewish ethics. This is reflected in the covenant that exists between God and the Jewish people, and is to be reflected in the way Jewish people behave. Halacha is a refinement of the 613 commandments (***mitzvot***) that are contained in the Torah. The Halacha has been developed and expanded through the writings of rabbis over succeeding centuries, including Moses Maimonides (1135–1204 CE) in his *Mishneh Torah*. The most comprehensive and authoritative compilation of Halacha is the *Shulchan Aruch*, written by Joseph Karo in sixteenth-century Sefat (Safed). A number of attempts have been made to summarise the Commandments in more succinct forms. The Tanakh asks, 'It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, And what the LORD doth require of thee: Only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. (Micah 6:8).

Halacha
Legal code of Judaism based on the teachings of the Torah and interpretations and applications by rabbinic authorities over the generations

Mitzvot
Keeping the commandments of God

In interpreting the Commandments today, guidance is given by supplementary writings and the teaching of the rabbis. The application of ethics to particular areas is a major focus of Jewish study, teaching and practice.

Bioethics

Jewish ethics are centred on the idea of being godly; however, godliness can only be expressed through interactions on a human level. The highest ideal is to protect human life and saving a human life takes priority over any other commandment. The desire to reduce or eliminate human suffering is also considered important and will sometimes override the particular situation.

The Torah, believed to be divine law, provides the rationale for Jewish ethics, including bioethics. Yet this text is open to varied interpretations. While the Tanakh, the Mishnah and the Talmud are respected as sacred texts, great teachers such as Moses Maimonides and Rabbi Karo are considered their greatest interpreters and have contributed to the development of Jewish law.

Orthodox Judaism adheres more strictly to the text and traditional interpretations than Progressive/Reform Judaism. Even within the normally expected responses there are significant surprises. For example, while Orthodox Jewish people might be expected to be strict in opposing abortion, Rabbi Elezer Wallenberg — an ultra-orthodox judge in Jerusalem — was quite liberal in his attitudes, allowing abortion in cases of rape, adultery and for foetal abnormalities. Orthodox Judaism stresses the authority of God while in Progressive Judaism there is more emphasis on the role of conscience. This may be seen in different concepts of Halacha, or the way Jewish people are to live their lives.

Abortion, as the deliberate termination of a pregnancy by medical or surgical means, has long been an area of debate among Jewish people. The Sixth Commandment states, 'Thou shalt not murder' (Exodus 20:13) but a passage just a little further on (Exodus 21:22) could be interpreted as meaning that a foetus is not considered a murder victim.

Abortion is largely acceptable within mainstream Judaism, but debate remains about when the foetus becomes a human being. In general, the foetus is not considered a human being until birth, although some Jewish people believe that the foetus takes on human nature at 40 days after conception. Jewish law can even require an abortion when there is a threat to the life of the pregnant mother. Birth control and even abortion are generally acceptable but not promoted. Modern technology may reignite debate about when the foetus becomes a human being but Judaism, since rabbinic times, has been exposed to the argument that until 40 days, a foetus is 'mere water'.

Contraception is often a more controversial issue in Judaism than abortion, some methods specifically because of the condemnation of 'spilling the seed' (Genesis 38:6–10) and generally because of the positive commandment to 'be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1 and 2).

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Euthanasia, on the other hand, is almost universally condemned in Judaism. Killing a dying person (a *goses*) is murder. However, Jewish authorities also object to any attempts to unduly prolong life or to interfere with the natural process of dying. So-called 'passive' euthanasia is thus acceptable in some circumstances. Improving a patient's quality of life through palliative care is more significant to Jewish people, who understand that sickness and death are a natural part of life.

When the divine image (*tzelem elohim*) is affected by extreme suffering, some more liberal rabbis will allow a life to be terminated by removal of life support. 'Active' euthanasia is condemned and the option of patient-assisted euthanasia is considered to be suicide. Suicide is strongly condemned, despite there being no explicit prohibition in the Tanakh. The story of the death of King Saul (1 Samuel 31:3–6) is paradoxical (he fell on his sword) and is the subject of much conjecture. However, although euthanasia is generally condemned in Judaism, it is rare that a death via euthanasia is deemed to have been suicidal. There is no specific biblical injunction against suicide, yet it is usually considered a grave sin. Someone who is deemed to have died by suicide may be denied burial within the sanctified grounds of a cemetery. On the other hand, it is uncommon for any death to be ruled a suicide. Rabbis have traditionally been very lenient and considered that a person taking their own life could not have been of sound mind and therefore could not be considered guilty of voluntary suicide.

Artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) are generally acceptable, especially where the donors of the egg and sperm are husband and wife, but they may raise ethical questions. There might arise the question of the importance of the identity of the mother, as the Jewish identity is based on matrilineal descent. Where the egg and sperm are both from the natural parents, IVF is seen as a God-given opportunity to fulfil a commandment, but the use of donor sperm or egg is sometimes problematic. It is also important that both parents be alive at the time of conception — using frozen sperm or eggs to bring about a birth after the mother or father has died is not acceptable to all rabbinic authorities. However, most Halachists have embraced the development of technology to assist fertility.

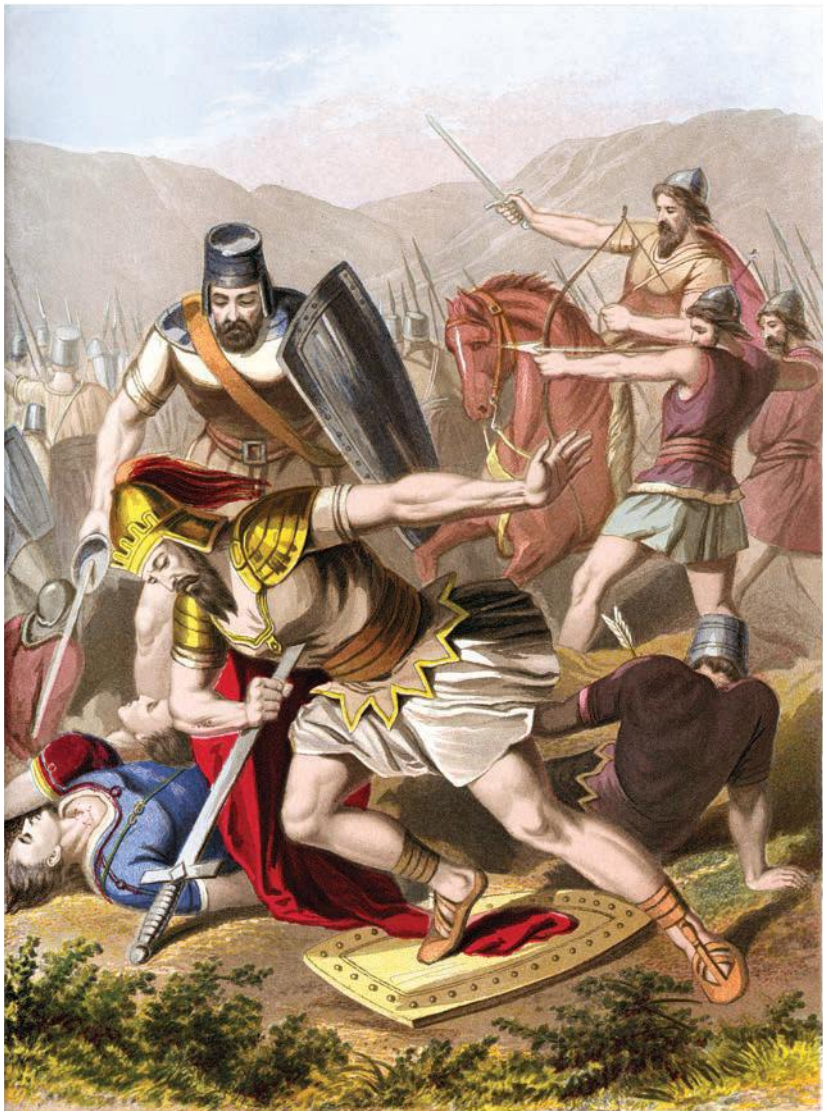

Figure 13.5 Depiction of the first king of Israel, King Saul, falling on his sword to avoid capture. There is debate in Judaism whether this was suicide or not.

Judaism generally has a fairly relaxed approach to gene technology and gene manipulation. Genetic testing is actually encouraged, as there are genetic diseases, such as Tay-Sachs disease, (a rare inherited disorder that progressively destroys nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord). that are common in Jewish communities and need to be eliminated. Genetic engineering, including cloning, is encouraged by most Jewish authorities. However, some object to the potential of substituting cloning for more natural means of reproduction.

Judaism acknowledges that ancient writings and discussion may not relate directly to modern issues and technology. Nevertheless, the chain of tradition cannot be ignored. It provides the base on which the law is developed. The modern experts can disagree even within the same schools of thought. For example, many rabbis will not consider a person dead until the heart stops beating, but the Chief Rabbinate of Israel accepts death as evidenced by brain death.

It is clear that a unique, single understanding of Jewish bioethics may no longer be attainable. Judaism itself has been characterised by a multiplicity of interpretations rather than just one understanding. Instead it is expressed by a variety of opinions in relation to changing technologies, issues and Jewish schools of thought.

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EXERCISE 13.3

1 **Outline** one Jewish response to 'beginning of life' issues.
2 **Discuss** the role of Jewish authorities in determining a response to bioethical issues.
3 **Explain** why 'beginning of life' issues are not as significant as 'end of life' issues in Judaism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.3

1 Write a paragraph on the relationship between Halacha and bioethics.
2 Contact a Jewish rabbi and ask for their views on one of the topics under the bioethics heading. **Discuss** why they might hold those views.
3 Access the Jewish Virtual Library and source two articles/papers on the same bioethical issue and **discuss** the differences or similarities.

Environmental ethics

Video

The Torah provides the rationale for Jewish environmental ethics. The world is God's creation and human beings are to be stewards or caretakers of it. Jewish people are commanded to care for the Earth, leading to debate about the relationships between God, the world He created and human beings. Thus, the main focus of Jewish environmental ethics is theocentric (God-centred). For Jewish people this role of caretaker means living in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way.

> And God blessed them; and God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth.'
>
> GENESIS 1:28

This is generally seen as involving a duty of care. Psalm 8 speaks of the wonder of the created world and the responsibility of human beings. The naming of the animals (Genesis 2:20) is not suggesting a power structure but rather, given the way the concept of 'naming' is used in the Tanakh, is developing a relationship. God is concerned about the created world and the people, creatures and everything placed upon the Earth. While human beings might be the pinnacle of God's creation, the whole Earth reflects the connectedness of God's creating work and the importance of the created world (see Psalms 104, Job 12:7–10).

This concern about creation is expressed in the concept of Shabbat and the Year of Jubilee. While it is not clear precisely how the *shmita* (seven-year cycle) and jubilee years were actually practised in ancient Israel, the concepts are clearly evident in modern Israel and certain principles are observed today. While the command to keep the Sabbath day is one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8–11), including rest for people and animals and the land, the implications are spelt out later. Essentially, on Shabbat a Jewish person is supposed to be in harmony with the natural environment and to neither create nor destroy. The Sabbath year and year of Jubilee are a chance for the earth itself to rest.

The Tanakh also refers frequently to the importance of caring for animals. See Proverbs 12:10, Deuteronomy 22:4, 10, Exodus 23:4, 5 and Leviticus 22:27, 28.

The Talmud states that 'a man may not sit down to his own meal until he has fed his animals' (Berakhot 4a). It is suggested that in the creation story, human beings were intended to be vegetarian (Genesis 1:29); they were later permitted to eat meat, but the slaughter of animals is to be done in a way that minimises pain and suffering. There are many references in the Tanakh, the *Midrash* and the Talmud to environmental issues. The command *Bal Tashchit* ('Thou shalt not destroy') is contained in Deuteronomy 20:19. This is a command to not destroy fruit trees during a siege, but in Jewish thought this has been extended to refer to any destruction without a specific purpose. Thus, the environment is protected and as an act of mercy, resources are to remain available to others.

The Torah also states in numerous places that a Sabbath year is to be held every seven years, and involves the forgiveness of debts and the release of slaves. The Year of Jubilee is celebrated every 50th year when the land is to be in total rest. It involves the restoration of property, release of slaves, forgiveness of debt and rest for the Earth. The impact of environmental ethics is clear in this and reaches further than simply the land itself.

The concept of *tikkun olam* ('the repairing of the world' — see Chapter 12) is important for environmental ethics as it is part of the restorative process. Environmental ethics is seen in Judaism as cooperation with God in the creative work of God. Even before the state of Israel was established in 1948, one of the first actions taken by the Zionist pioneers was the replanting of trees in the barren landscape. This can be interpreted as a literal attempt to repair the damaged environment, as well as the repair of social relationships and the restoration of social justice. Thus, in Judaism, the work of social justice is an extension of environmental ethics. In the Messianic

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Figure 13.6 Many Jewish environmental organisations support growing new plants in Israel. The Jewish National fund estimates it has planted 240 million trees in Israel.

Age the fulfilment of *tikkun olam*, the recreation of the world, seems to be part of a utopian vision. This is displayed in the keeping of the commandments but also in social justice, which incorporates care for the environment.

In 1986 a meeting of 250 religious leaders met at Assisi to discuss religious approaches to the environment. Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg authored 'The Jewish Declaration on Nature' as part of the Assisi Declaration. Part of that declaration was a story of two men in a rowboat, one of whom started to saw through the bottom of the boat, stating that it was his right to do so. The other noted there were implications for his actions. In dealing with the rowboat, one of whom started to saw through this world, Hertzberg noted:

> We are all passengers together in this same fragile and glorious world. Let us safeguard our rowboat — and let us row together.

There are many environmental organisations that have developed within Judaism. Some include the Jewish Ecological Coalition, an Australian Jewish organisation offering a range of resources, presentations and coordinating environmental initiatives; and the Jewish National Fund, which is very active in Australia, supporting Green Sunday and the Plant a Tree project in Israel. B'nai B'rith is active in Australia and New Zealand and joins environmental initiatives with other social justice advocacy initiatives.

EXERCISE 13.4

1. **Explain** how environmental ethics in Judaism are theocentric.
2. **Discuss** the Sabbath and Jubilee years and explain their relationship to environmental ethics.
3. What are the implications of *tikkun olam* for environmental ethics? Respond giving specific examples and drawing out implications.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.4

1. Look up the passages from the Tanakh mentioned in this section and **summarise** in your own words a Jewish environmental ethic, based on those sections from the sacred texts.
2. Debate the following topic: 'In Judaism, trees are more important than people'.
3. Research the websites and detail the environmental work of one of these Jewish organisations: the Jewish Ecological Coalition, the Jewish National Fund or B'nai B'rith.

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Sexual ethics

Sexual ethics are concerned with the behaviour of people in their interpersonal relationships. In Judaism, sexual relations should be expressed within the relationship of marriage, where they are to be a source of pleasure and fulfilment for both husband and wife. Codes of behaviour have been developed including family purity laws, known as *Taharat Ha-Mishpachah*, which include concepts of ***niddah*** and ***mikvah***. Sanctions are placed upon the practice of other expressions of sexuality.

Niddah
Menstruation

Mikvah
Ritual bath

Kidushin
Betrothal; a more serious arrangement than engagement by which a marriage is made holy

Get
A Jewish bill of divorce

Underlying Jewish sexual ethics in relation to expressions outside marriage is the important principle of showing respect to oneself and to others. In Judaism there are rules associated with modesty (*tzniut*), physical contact (*negiah*), menstruation (*niddah*) and seclusion with members of the opposite sex (*yichud*).

Premarital and extramarital sex

Although there are some scriptural exceptions to standard assumptions of Jewish marriage — for example, King Solomon's reported 700 wives and 300 concubines — marriage is regarded as the norm for a man and a woman. This is based on the original Creation story, in which Adam and Eve were created male and female to become 'one flesh'. Marriage is, therefore, a return to an ideal, where the male and female are reunited as one. In Judaism the family is the basic unit for the expression of faith, and some ceremonies, such as welcoming and sanctifying Shabbat, take place primarily in the home rather than the synagogue. In a marriage, the husband and wife are companions in a relationship designed for procreation and mutual comfort (Genesis 1:28, 2:18). Marriage is a symbol of the relationship between God and his people, as illustrated in the book of the prophet Hosea. The main purpose for marriage is companionship, and a sexual relationship is important in that companionship. Procreation is less important, but contraception is not encouraged, particularly in Orthodox Judaism, although Reform Judaism takes a more liberal approach.

The family is important because it is the transmitter of traditions, the place to obey commandments (including 'honour thy father and mother') and the primary place of religious observance. Marriage is ***kidushin***, literally, 'holiness'.

Celibacy is considered wrong — the reneging of an ideal. It is 'not good that the man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18). Historically, there has been a very limited expression of monasticism in Judaism. God told the Jewish people to 'be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1:28, Genesis 35:11). Sex is considered a normal expression of love and should take place within a marriage. Premarital and extramarital sex are not acceptable. Adultery is specifically mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14). Adultery, incest and homosexuality are prohibited by the Torah (Leviticus 18:6–23).

While marriage is the ideal, divorce is permitted in Judaism and a divorce document is called a ***get***. Different variants of Judaism have different procedures for divorce. The reference in Malachi 2:4 is used to show that divorce is a serious breach of a holy contract.

How ethics concerning premarital and extramarital sex are analysed by adherents

Many Jewish people find the rigour commanded in the Tanakh and the teachings of Judaism can be difficult to maintain in the contemporary world. Judaism considers the traditional family unit a necessity, while society increasingly consists, in part, of non-traditional families. The practice of premarital sex is not encouraged, yet many young Jewish people see it as an acceptable practice in the modern era. Nonetheless, Judaism persists in promoting the family as an ideal. Adultery and incest are condemned utterly. Prostitution is rejected. The family unit is considered the central social unit in Judaism, and any practice that undermines it is condemned.

Many modern Jewish people acknowledge that the difference in Jewish values and the values of modern life is an issue. Jewish people, like everyone else, are influenced by the prevailing culture of their place and time, so, in general, their attitudes and practices are more flexible than suggested by Orthodox Jewish doctrines and traditions.

Homosexuality

Traditional Judaism has prohibited homosexuality on the basis of several passages from the Torah, the most obvious being Leviticus 18:22: 'Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is abomination'. Similar injunctions are recorded in Leviticus 20:13. Some see the story of Sodom in Genesis 19 as a reference to homosexuality; but, even if this interpretation is accepted (and some see the story as a reference to nothing more than failure to provide hospitality), it is a condemnation of homosexual rape, rather than of consensual homosexual sex. The punishment for homosexual acts is capital punishment, according to Leviticus. However, proving such an act is difficult (two eyewitnesses are required), and there are no accounts of punishment for it even in biblical times, nor in Jewish history.

INVESTIGATE

What are the 'laws of family purity'? Search the internet or talk to a Jewish friend or rabbi, and discover what they are and how they are part of Jewish sexual ethics.

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Additionally, there are events in biblical stories that may hint at homosexual love. The most famous passage is in the books of Samuel where King David, the heroic king of Israel describes the love he had for Jonathan as 'wonderful was thy love to me, passing the love of women' (2 Samuel 1:26). This passage does not necessarily suggest that an act of homosexuality took place between David and Jonathan, but it does allude to a very powerful force of love between them, be it extremely deep friendship or platonic love.

Lesbianism is not mentioned directly in the Tanakh, but many rabbis interpret Leviticus 18:3 as a reference to it. There is one reference to lesbianism in the Talmud, and in Moses Maimonides' writing where it is prohibited, but not in terms as strong as the prohibition of male homosexuality. Reasons that homosexuality is unacceptable include the prohibition in the Tanakh and because procreation is not possible, in contravention to the command in Genesis 2:18. However procreation, while important, is never seen in Judaism as the sole reason for the sexual act. Homosexuality does, however, undermine the concept of the family and its role in Judaism.

Progressive and Conservative Jewish people are more likely to accept homosexuality, and even Orthodox Jewish people do not persecute homosexual people. Even the strictly Orthodox distinguish between homosexual acts and homosexual orientation. Most synagogues, including Orthodox ones, welcome homosexual individuals and couples into their communities.

How ethics concerning homosexuality are analysed by adherents

In contemporary Judaism, homosexuality is considered a matter of personal choice but is discouraged. Homosexual people are discouraged from practising their inclination. However, in December 2006, the legal body in Conservative Judaism in America voted to ordain gay rabbis and celebrate same-sex commitment ceremonies. This was a significant decision, as Conservative Jewish people usually uphold Jewish law and tradition.

In October 2007, Progressive Jewish rabbis in Australia also decided to support same-sex commitment ceremonies, following the lead of English Judaism. Dayenu is a Sydney-based organisation that exists to meet the needs of Jewish gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people, as well as their friends, families, partners and other supporters. It was established in 1999 and has a float in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney each year. Yet in most Jewish day-to-day practice and in Australian Judaism, opposition is maintained to the expression of homosexuality.

INVESTIGATE

Investigate Jewish attitudes to homosexuality. What is the most commonly held view in Australia today? Look at the opinions noted on the Dayenu website.

Figure 13.7 Revellers wave rainbow flags with the Star of David on them at Stockholm Pride Parade on Hantverkargatan, 2016

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Gender roles and discrimination

Gender roles in traditional Judaism are clearly defined. Fewer women than men are specifically mentioned in the Tanakh, although when women are mentioned, they are of considerable significance. The Matriarchs of Israel (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah) are respected and emulated. Deborah is mentioned as a judge, Huldah was a prophetess, and Ruth was a **Gentile** convert to Judaism who was the grandmother of King David. Several of David's wives are mentioned, and Esther became the queen of Persia and saved the Jewish people from destruction, an event remembered in the Feast of Purim. These women were able to fulfil leadership roles in Israel and perform religious functions. This was in contrast to the later attitude that women's main purpose is childbearing. There are several references to women in the rabbinic literature, but only one was a scholar — Beruriah (see the digital version of this book). As time passed women became restricted to household roles, with an emphasis on modest dress and restriction on public roles. There was, however, a developing emphasis on the feminine aspects of God through the influence of Kabbalah.

Gentile
Person who is not Jewish

Tallit
Prayer shawl

Tefillin
Leather box and straps

Minyan
Quorum of 10 Jewish people needed to form a synagogue

In modern Judaism, the role of women is interpreted differently by the different variants of Judaism. Orthodox Judaism exempts women from many of the commandments and the ultra-Orthodox community discourages women from serious engagement with Talmudic learning. (Since 1990 there has been a growth in Orthodox women's higher Jewish learning and in Israel today, thousands of Orthodox women are engaged in full-time learning.) Women are seated separately from men in Orthodox synagogues and used to be discouraged from leadership roles, and were previously not ordained as rabbis. Rules of modesty and purity are enforced, and women are not allowed to be witnesses in the rabbinic court for some matters. Women's *Tefillah* (prayer) groups have become an important feature of Orthodox Jewish life, although not in ultra-Orthodox circles.

Conservative Judaism was similar to Orthodox Judaism regarding the status of women until the 1970s. Since then there have been major changes, mostly on a case-by-case basis. Most Conservative synagogues today have mixed seating.

Progressive Judaism has taken a radically different position. Since the inception of the Progressive movement in the nineteenth century, women have been included with men in the synagogue. Women can participate in roles that were previously reserved for men, such as publicly reading the Torah, wearing the ***tallit*** and ***tefillin***, being part of the ***minyan***, serving as cantor and being ordained as rabbis. An important aspect related to gender in Judaism is that family generations are traced along the line of matrilineal descent; in other words, one must have a Jewish mother to be Jewish. Progressive Judaism has accepted the patrilineal line of descent, although this is still debated by some communities.

How gender roles and discrimination are analysed by adherents

With the rise of feminism, there is now much debate in all Jewish circles about gender and the rise of Jewish feminism is a feature of the debate. The male-dominated *minyan*, the limited acceptability of female witnesses, the female inability to initiate divorce and the male-only commandments are all issues. Since the 1970s, the Jewish feminist movement has sought to address these concerns. There has been significant opposition from many Orthodox rabbis, but the other variants are more amenable to change. Jewish feminists have sought to study aspects of Judaism widely, and there are significant Jewish feminists in all variants of Judaism. Women scholars include Blu Greenberg (Orthodox) and Judith Plaskow (Conservative). (See the section on Jewish feminism in the digital version of this book.)

INVESTIGATE

What are the gender issues that are the focus of Jewish feminists? Investigate and develop an understanding of the different points of view. What issues are significant for Australian Jewish people? What prominent women have emerged in Australian Judaism?

Figure 13.8 Members of the Nivcharot foundation, a Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish feminist group, chat during a work meeting in Kfar Saba, Israel, in November 2019. The group are breaking a taboo to launch an awareness campaign to counter violence against women within the Haredi communities.

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EXERCISE 13.5

1 **Outline** Jewish attitudes to premarital and extramarital sex and illustrate with references to the sacred texts.
2 **Discuss** Jewish attitudes to homosexuality and include examples.
3 **Analyse** Jewish attitudes to gender issues noting differences between the variants of Judaism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.5

1 **Examine** the teachings of the Tanakh on sexual ethics. **Discuss** how this relates to the modern expression of sexuality in Australia.
2 Construct a table detailing the attitudes to sexual ethics in Judaism with particular references to the different schools of Judaism.
3 Explore and write a paragraph on the different views within Judaism to one aspect of sexual ethics.

13.4 SIGNIFICANT PRACTICES IN THE LIVES OF ADHERENTS

The three practices relevant to Judaism to be examined for the HSC are death and mourning, marriage and synagogue services. Death and associated mourning practices show considerable respect for the person who has died, and are an expression of the Jewish emphasis on community. Marriage in Judaism is a unique ceremony and its features bear significant symbolism, as well as expressing the celebration of the community. The synagogue and its services are also expressions of the communal life of Judaism.

Death and mourning

Beliefs

In Judaism, death is regarded as a natural part of life. Efforts to prolong life unnecessarily are not encouraged, just as efforts to bring death quickly are condemned.

There are many complex rituals associated with death and mourning. Some of these rituals are associated with recognising the person who has died, while others relate to the grieving family left behind. Judaism refers to the sacred writings, as well as the rabbinic traditions and precedents, when determining practices relating to death and mourning.

To understand the Jewish approach to death, it is essential to refer to the Creation stories and how they have been interpreted. In Genesis 1, human beings are created in the image of God. In chapter 2, a more detailed description is given, whereby the body is formed from the dust of the earth and the soul from the breath of God. After death, the body returns to the dust from whence it came, and the soul returns to the Creator.

The first deaths (of Adam and Eve) were considered a result of humans separating themselves from God, a consequence that has been passed down through the centuries (Genesis 3:19). God remains with humans as the one who guides his people, even in times of death and suffering (Psalms 23:4 and 48:14). Death is a time of total dependence on God.

> And he said; Naked came I out of my mother's womb, And naked shall I return thither; The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.
> JOB 1:21

Judaism has a belief in the afterlife, where those who die will meet God and receive the appropriate reward for a life well lived, although there are multiple versions of that belief. Mourning is not a time of extensive grieving, but the associated rituals are to show respect for the dead person (*kavod ha-met*) and comfort those who still live (*nihum avelim*). The emphasis in Judaism is on life — even the ***kaddish*** (the mourner's prayer) does not use the word 'death'. The *kaddish* is in fact a prayer of praise to God.

Kaddish
Jewish liturgical mourner's prayer in Aramaic

While the Torah is silent on the matter, there are several passages in the latter sections of the Tanakh that mention *sheol*, the pit into which the body and the soul go immediately after death. *Sheol* is read as 'the grave', 'pit' and 'dust'. It is dimly sketched — what we know is that it is dark, shadowy, below the earth and a place of no return.

In some passages there is a faint hope of God saving people from *sheol*:

> But God will redeem my soul from the power of the nether-world; For He shall receive me. Selah
> PSALM 49:16

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How God will save people from *sheol* is not explained. The hope of salvation creates an environment for resurrection of the dead:

> Come, and let us return unto the Lord; For He hath torn, and He will heal us, He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us, on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence.
>
> HOSEA 6:1–2

Throughout the entire Tanakh, descriptions of the afterlife are not explicit. Saul does conjure up Samuel's spirit (Samuel 1:28), even though **necromancy** is forbidden (Deuteronomy 18:11). This indicates some continuing quality of the soul after the death of the body. Possibly through Greek influence after the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people from Israel, there later came to be an emphasis on the immortality of the soul.

Necromancy
Magical communication with the dead

A close reading of the words of the prophets led writers in the Rabbinic period (post 70 CE) to develop their ideas about the soul, the afterlife and a promised eventual redemption, possibly influenced by Persian ideas of an afterlife. For the rabbis, life on Earth was a 'waiting room' for eternal life and only through good works here could one guarantee happiness in the hereafter. The Talmud is replete with stories of great rabbis concerned about how they will be judged in 'The World to Come'.

However, as seen in the words of Ecclesiastes, some of the earlier attitude persisted:

> For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all return to dust.
>
> ECCLESIASTES 3:19-20

It was not until the medieval period, through the work of great Jewish philosophers, including Maimonides, that Judaism formulated firm views about the immortality of the soul.

Mourning in practice

Video

Early mourning rituals of Israel may have been similar to those of other religions in the area. Abraham sat and mourned after the death of his wife Sarah, and his first concern was to find a suitable burial place for her. (He purchased the Cave of the Machpela in Hebron for this purpose, which is still a holy site for all three Abrahamic faiths to this day.)

We know nothing about Jewish mourning rituals from the time of Joseph until the return of the Jewish people from Babylon in the sixth century BCE, when the forms still in place today had begun to develop.

The Jewish rituals associated with death and mourning reflect the Jewish reverence for the body as a sacred vessel for the soul — the body is shaped by God and the soul returns to Him after death. The mourning practices are extensive and clearly defined, marking particular stages.

It is generally prohibited to hasten the death of a person, even when it seems inevitable. When a person dies the eyes are closed, the body is laid out, candles are lit and someone stays with the body as a sign of respect, but one should not touch the body of a dead person. The dead body is considered similar to a damaged Torah scroll — no longer fit for use but deserving of reverence and respect. As the body is never left alone, a *shomer* (guard or keeper) stays with it until the time of burial.

The mourning family of the deceased observe a brief period between the death and burial known as *aninut*. The family is not required to work, pray, study the Torah or do anything to keep the commandments during this time, but simply focus on preparations for the burial. The family should be left alone to express their grief. In addition, mourners may tear their clothes as a sign of grief, usually before the funeral service begins. This is known as *keriah* and it symbolises the torn heart of the mourner. In Progressive Judaism, a torn ribbon is often worn instead of actually tearing the clothing.

Every Jewish community has a special organisation known as the Chevra Kadisha (Jewish Burial Society, literally 'Holy Fellowship') that is responsible for the preparation and burial of the body of the deceased. There is no distinction between people in the way that the body is treated. Everyone is the same in death.

Jewish people do not embalm a body, and consequently burial should take place as soon as possible after death, ideally within two days. Autopsies are discouraged. The body is washed and wrapped in a clean linen cloth and sometimes buried in a *tallit*.

Coffins are simple, often made of pine, and usually have holes drilled in them so the body can come into contact with the earth. The simplicity of the coffin underscores the fact that in death everyone is equal. Often a bag of dirt or sand from Israel is buried with the body. In Israel itself, the body is placed directly into the earth without a coffin. Coffins are never open for viewing, as exposing a body is considered disrespectful. Cremation is discouraged, particularly in Orthodox Judaism, because of the implications for the resurrection of the body, and because of the experiences of the Holocaust. Progressive Judaism does allow cremation.

As the burial happens as soon as possible after death, it is sometimes held on the same day the person died.

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Many Jewish people believe the soul is not set free until the body is buried. Burial services are usually held at a funeral home where prayers and blessings are said, acknowledging God's right to take the person's life. The psalms and prayers include the mourner's *kaddish*, the prayer known as *El Maleh Rakihamin* (the memorial prayer) and a eulogy. Psalm 23 is often used, as is Psalm 91, a psalm of God the protector. Honoured friends carry the coffin, and the procession stops seven times on the journey to the grave. This reminds the mourners of the futility of life, as the word *hevel*, meaning futility, is used seven times in the book of Ecclesiastes in the Tanakh.

After the burial takes place, the family shares a ritual meal of consolation prepared by a friend or neighbour.

The period known as *shiva* (from the Hebrew word for seven) begins after the burial and lasts for the next seven days. During this time, the family or mourners follow designated actions and prohibitions. They do not wear leather shoes, shave, cut hair, wear make-up, go to work, swim or have sexual relations. They sit on low stools and wear their torn clothes. Mirrors are covered and prayers are said. Each day the *kaddish* is said, and often friends and neighbours come to make up the 10 people required for the prayers (*minyan*). Today, many Jewish people observe a shortened period of *shiva*, sometimes only three days or finishing with the next Shabbat. Comforting the grieving family is an especially important religious duty.

The next period of grieving lasts until the 30th day after burial. It is known as *shloshim* (from the Hebrew word for 30). During those 30 days, the mourners do not shave or cut their hair, listen to music or attend celebrations.

People return to work and life resumes some normality. The next period, known as *avelut*, lasts for one year after the burial. The *kaddish* is recited every day for the first eleven months. The gravestone is also placed on the grave either after 30 days or on the first anniversary of the person's death.

On the anniversary of the death, several commemorative rituals take place, such as lighting a candle and reciting the *kaddish*, but the time of mourning is finished after the first 12 months. This marks the time of a new beginning.

When visiting a grave it is usual for those coming to leave small stones on the grave (a lasting piece of the earth) and to wash their hands as they exit the cemetery, to symbolise purification. On each anniversary of the death (according to the Jewish lunar calendar) a day of remembrance known as *yahrzeit* is observed, often with a visit to the grave. In Israel, it is considered to be an advantage to be buried on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, so that the dead there can greet the Messiah when he comes.

Figure 13.9 When visiting a grave, it is usual for those coming to leave small stones on the grave

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Death is a significant event for both the family, who mourn and show their trust in God, and for the Jewish community who support the family of the deceased. The role of the Chevra Kadisha is clear evidence of the community focus at the time of death. This is supported by the community in providing meals and comfort, and in the meeting of the *minyan* during *shiva* to say the *kaddish*.

Death in Judaism is an event that affects not just the individual, but the whole community. As a community it is a time to reaffirm faith in God and trust his provision and care. The rituals demonstrate these aspects of Jewish belief.

Significance for the individual

After a death, the family carries out the associated rituals — torn clothing, preparation of the body, *aninut, shiva, shloshim, avelut , yahrzeit*. This is in recognition of the person who has died and shows respect. The family hopes that their deceased family member meets God in the afterlife and avoids *sheol*.

Significance for the community

Chevra Kadisha, the burial society performs an important function, as the body of a dead person should not be touched. The mourning periods emphasise the importance of the role of the Jewish family and is a re-affirmation of a community's belief and trust in God. A communal celebration of life and an opportunity to show care for the family of the bereaved.

INVESTIGATE

If you wish to read more on Jewish death and mourning traditions, a good resource is Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, New York, Jonathan David Publishers, 2000.

EXERCISE 13.6

1 **Describe** the events, and in particular the rituals, associated with the death of a Jewish person.
2 **Discuss**, from your understanding, what is the most significant aspect of death and mourning in Judaism.
3 **Describe** the role of the Jewish community at the time of death and discuss its significance.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.6

1 Write a paragraph, including references to the sacred texts and beliefs, about how the rituals at the time of death and mourning express the beliefs of Judaism.
2 Debate the following topic: 'In Judaism, death is not a time of mourning, but a time of thankfulness'.
3 Research 'Jewish Burial Society' (Chevra Kadisha) on the internet. Note the services they provide and how they assist the Jewish community. How does that support the significance of death and mourning in the Jewish community?

Marriage

Beliefs

There is no actual instruction in the Tanakh about Jewish marriage. Marriage is a great celebration in Judaism, as a man is incomplete without a wife. While Genesis 2:24 is used as the ideal, most of the actual instruction is drawn from the Talmud. Occasional references in the Tanakh refer to Israel as the Bride of God (Isaiah 62:5, Jeremiah 2:32ff) and this is discussed in the Book of Hosea, an eighth-century-BCE prophet whose life is seen as an enacted parable of the unfaithful Israel. This is a metaphor developed in the Tanakh, suggesting the people of Israel were unfaithful as a bride could be unfaithful to her husband.

While there are many examples in the Tanakh of polygamous marriages, such as those of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the practice of **polygamy** was rejected in most of the Jewish world around 1000 CE, largely because of Christian pressure. It has not been encouraged since. Some Jewish communities, particularly those from the Muslim world such as the Yemenite community, were offended that this has come about from Christian pressure. There are a number of organisations and related websites calling for polygamy to be reintroduced as a valid option for Judaism. However, there is no reputable rabbinic authority supporting these calls.

Polygamy
Having more than one spouse at one time

Many Jewish people believe there is an ideal mate for a person to marry. This is called a *bashert*, a word meaning 'destiny' or 'fate'. Generally it is accepted that the marriage partner is (by definition) one's *bashert*. Some Jewish people seek to help this process by engaging the services of a *shadchan* (matchmaker). Sometimes a rabbi performs this task, but in many cultures, especially in years past, professional *shadchanim* (plural) were employed by families to ensure a successful match for marriage.

There are three ways, according to the Mishnah (Kiddushin 1:1), that a couple may indicate they are married. They are by money, by contract and by sexual intercourse.

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Money is not given to purchase a wife as a slave or piece of property, but the exchange of money indicates a willingness to give and a willingness to receive, a reference to the person rather than the actual money. The Mishnah suggests that a copper coin of insignificant value, called a *perutah*, was sufficient. In today's society, this giving of money is expressed in the giving of a wedding ring in front of two witnesses. The ring must be owned by the husband and it must be freely given as a gift. Usually it is expected that the wife knows the value of the ring so there can be no deception. In modern Judaism, especially Progressive Judaism, the wife can give a ring to the husband, but this is less common in Orthodox Judaism.

A marriage contract, known as a ***ketubah***, is drawn up between the two people. The *ketubah* is a popular part of the marriage process and most Jewish couples use it today.

The traditional *ketubah* spells out several matters related to the obligations of the husband to his wife, including support for their children and provision for his wife in the event of the husband's death or divorce. Today (prior to marriage), a woman might also obtain a prenuptial agreement, to ensure that the husband will agree to end the marriage if his wife wants a divorce. Often the *ketubot* (plural) are physically very elaborate works of calligraphy and are displayed during the wedding ceremony.

Sexual intercourse is the third way of acquiring a wife. In other words, if two unmarried people sleep together they may be considered married to one another. This has always been discouraged in Jewish society, but in many modern contexts cohabitation occurs between a Jewish man and woman.

There are two stages to a Jewish wedding. *Kiddushin* refers to what is often called betrothal. It is more binding than the concept of engagement, and is essentially an agreement to marry with a specification of the terms and process involved. While the marriage has not yet taken place, the couple are considered committed to each other and their personal status is thought to have changed. This refers, in modern practice, to the drawing up of the *ketubah*. In the past there may have been a long period of time between the *kiddushin* and the actual marriage, known as ***nisuin***. Today, it is common for both these stages to take place together.

Ketubah
Jewish marriage contract with terms and conditions, similar to modern prenuptial agreement

Nisuin
Formal marriage

Nisuin refers to the process of marriage itself, the legal process where a couple declare they are married and they accept each other as partners. The couple themselves actually conduct the marriage, with the rabbi as adviser (and performing a legal role as celebrant in a legal function), while two of the guests are the witnesses to the marriage. The husband and wife go home and begin a new family unit to complete the *nisuin*.

Figure 13.10 A traditional Jewish wedding includes the signing of the *ketubah*, the marriage agreement

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Describe the practice

The wedding ceremony itself is a combination of cultural, religious, legal and personal features. Typically the couple will not see each other for some time, up to a week, before the ceremony. The bride and groom often fast on the wedding day until the ceremony.

Celebrations may be held in the synagogue, home or a public venue.

The marriage service itself generally consists of the following components, though there may be some variation in the order and number of steps, but most should be present in some form:

- The bride is veiled, as Rebecca was veiled before Isaac. The groom lifts the veil in a ceremony known as *bedecken*, to confirm that he is marrying the right woman (unlike Jacob, who married Leah when he was presented with the wrong sister!).
- The groom stands under a chuppah (a canopy). The bride approaches the groom and circles him.
- The bride and groom stand under the *chuppah* together, symbolic of their living together. The *chuppah* represents the covering of God, and many Orthodox Jewish people prefer to hold the marriage service outdoors, under the open sky. Sometimes the roof of the synagogue can be opened for weddings. The *chuppah* also symbolises the new home for the couple when they are married.
- Two blessings are recited over some wine, one blessing the wine and another regarding commandments relating to marriage.
- The groom places the ring on the bride's finger, with the declaration: 'You are consecrated to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel'.
- The *ketubah* is read aloud.
- Seven blessings (*sheva brakhot*) are recited under the *chuppah* in the presence of a *minyan* (10 adult Jewish people). The seven blessings include the following statements about God: who has created everything for his glory, who made man, who made man in his image, who brings Zion joy with children, who brings joy to the bride and groom, who created joy and gladness — a prayer is said for the wine (the seventh blessing) and the bride and groom then drink it.
- The groom smashes a glass under his foot, as a symbol of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- The bride and groom spend some quiet time together in a private room.
- A celebratory meal is held, usually the reception, followed by a repetition of the *sheva brakhot*.

It is expected that the married couple will enjoy a happy life together of marital harmony. Children are considered a blessing. Divorce is permitted, although a woman is not able to initiate divorce proceedings, which is one of the most contentious issues in the Jewish world today. A divorce document is known as a *get*. Civil marriages are not allowed in Israel, and the strict religious laws applied to these marriages in Israel have led to a call for greater flexibility.

Figure 13.11 At a Jewish wedding, the groom smashes a glass underfoot to remember the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

Marriage is so important that it is rare for a Jewish person to choose a life of celibacy and it is discouraged, particularly for men. The Talmud suggests that a person without a wife is not a complete person and that their life is without vibrancy, joy and peace.

Marriage is for companionship, love and intimacy (Genesis 2:18 and 22–25). Procreation is just one purpose of marriage, but it is considered a wonderful gift to have children.

Marriage is also governed by strict laws relating to purity and these are followed closely in Orthodox Judaism. These laws are very complex and are related to ritual impurity when women are menstruating. There are regulations relating to physical contact and the need for ritual cleansing, as well as regulations that relate to modesty, physical contact and being alone with strangers.

There is also a list of prohibited relationships in the Torah. These are people who cannot marry, and any children are considered illegitimate (*manzerim*). Orthodox Judaism generally refuses to accept intermarriage of Jewish people with non-Jewish people, but this is more accepted in Progressive Judaism.

Marriage has an obvious impact on the life of the couple who are married. It reflects their sense of commitment to each other, and commitment to God and their faith. For the community, it is also a reminder of the marriage vows each have made, and the vow of faithfulness to God. Jewish society regards marriage and the family unit as the foundation of society and,

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because of the opportunity for teaching children, the primary way to continue the faith.

Significance for the individual

Marriage for the individuals is the beginning of a new family for companionship, love, intimacy and procreation. It is a sign of their commitment to their partner and to God. It fulfils the expectation of finding the ideal mate and bringing children into the world.

Significance for the community

For the community, marriage serves as a reminder of the vows made by other couples. Marriage is symbolic of the Jewish community's faithfulness to God (a type of marriage). It operates as the foundation and future of Jewish society and, through children, the continuance of the Jewish faith.

EXERCISE 13.7

1 **Describe** the role and importance of the *ketubah* in Jewish marriage.
2 **Outline** a Jewish marriage service and its rituals, **discussing** the significance of each ritual.
3 **Explain** the symbolism of Jewish marriage as an expression of Jewish beliefs.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.7

1 Marriage is a public community event in Judaism. **Explain** the aspects that are specifically relevant to the individuals involved and those aspects which are community-oriented.
2 Look at some examples of *ketubot* online. Design a Jewish marriage certificate (*ketubah*) expressing the principles of Jewish marriage in both words and with illustrations.
3 Research the story of the life of the prophet Hosea and read the Book of Hosea from the Tanakh. Explain what that has to say about marriage, and how it is a reflection of the relationship between God and his people. How do modern Jewish people seek to ensure the tragedy of that story is not expressed in modern marriage?

Synagogue services

Beliefs

Synagogue is a Greek word that means 'meeting place'. Many Jewish people will use the Yiddish word *shul*; the Hebrew term *beit k'nesset* is less commonly used outside Israel. Synagogues have long been meeting places for Jewish people for prayer, study and gathering as a community. Synagogues probably began as

Synagogue
Jewish place of worship

Figure 13.12 Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. When the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed (70 CE), the synagogue became the focus for the spiritual life of Judaism.

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places of worship during the time of the Babylonian exile, as the Jewish people were no longer able to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. As the Jewish people returned from exile, synagogues remained community centres and places of teaching even when the Temple was rebuilt. Many Jewish people remained in other countries (the diaspora) and synagogues became the centres of worship for those Jewish people as well. Many synagogues from the Second Temple period have been uncovered by archaeologists; some in the north of Israel have ornate mosaic floors.

At the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, synagogues became centres for Jewish public worship across the world as the Jewish people experienced a second diaspora.

Over the past 2000 years, the synagogue has remained the focus of Jewish life. It was originally a place to study the Torah and its design still conveys that purpose. Worship at the synagogue is now an important aspect of Jewish observances and prayer. The synagogue has varied roles:

- a house of prayer (*Beit Tefilah*) — where the daily and Shabbat services are held for people to learn and worship
- a house of study (*Beit Midrash*) — where often a school is established, or where the Torah is studied
- a house of gathering and meeting (*Beit K'nesset*) — where Jewish people can meet for a variety of events, and feel safe and secure.

Describe the practice

Inside the synagogue

A synagogue has significant architectural features that indicate aspects of Jewish worship. At the end of the building, in the direction of Jerusalem, there is an elaborate compartment called the **ark** where the Torah scrolls are kept. The congregation faces the ark, which is the holiest part of the synagogue, a reminder of the Holy of Holies from the Jerusalem Temple. The ***ner tamid***, an 'eternal' light, hangs in front of the ark. A reading desk, to hold the scrolls when they are read, usually stands near the ark or in the centre of the synagogue on a platform called a ***bimah***.

Ark
A special cabinet where Torah scrolls are kept

Ner tamid
A light that represents the eternal flame that was continually burned in the Temple in Jerusalem

Bimah
Raised platform

Menorah
Seven-branched candlestick

Synagogues do not have any images, statues or icons, and especially no representations of God, as this would contravene the Ten Commandments. Representations of the Ten Commandments are often placed near the ark as well as the **menorah** and, occasionally, there are religious motifs or depictions of lions (the symbol for the tribe of Judah, the origin of the terms Jew and Judaism). The synagogue is treated with respect and kept clean and neat.

One of the key elements of worship in the synagogue service is the reading of the Torah. The Torah scrolls are made of a special parchment, written with a special quill and covered with ornate velvet or silk fabric in the Ashkenazi tradition, or enclosed in an ornate metal (usually silver) case in the Sephardi tradition. The ornate covering of these scrolls is a reminder of the ornate robes that used to be worn by priests in the Temple.

Usually a sermon is preached, based on the section of the Torah read and often including an explanation or commentary on the law. During services men wear a *yarmulke* (or *kippah*, skull cap), *tallit* (prayer shawl) and, in the weekday morning only, *tefillin*, the last in fulfilment of the command in Exodus 13:9. However, the *tefillin* are not worn on Shabbat. In Progressive Judaism, women may also be allowed to wear these. The *yarmulke* is a form of head covering worn by Jewish men in a synagogue or at worship as a reminder that there is a God above. Many Jewish men wear the *yarmulke* all the time. The *tallit* is the prayer shawl referred to in Numbers 15:37 and Deuteronomy 22:12. The *tefillin* are black leather boxes that contain verses of the Torah, including the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4–9), and are wrapped by leather straps on the forehead and upper arm in obedience to the instruction in Deuteronomy 6:8.

Synagogue services

The synagogue service has its primary emphasis on the gathering of the people. The home is an equally valid place of worship, but it is the synagogue that gathers the whole Jewish community together.

There are three synagogue services each day during the week, with a fourth on Shabbat and on special festival occasions. While there is some variation in the order and content of these services, the reading of the Torah takes the primary place on Mondays, Thursdays and Shabbat, supported by prayer and the Psalms. (Psalms are sung during the service, taken from the book of the same name in the Tanakh.) Orthodox Jewish people are more traditional in the conduct of synagogue services, while the services of Conservative and Progressive Judaism are more innovative.

The service can only begin when there is a *minyan* (10 Jewish people; in the Orthodox world, 10 men) present. Each person follows the service in a *Siddur*, a prayer book, as the rabbi, cantor or a member of the congregation leads the service. The service begins with a blessing that Jewish people say each

INVESTIGATE

Visit a synagogue and talk to a Jewish person about the services. Ask him or her to explain the significance of the services to them and the role of the synagogue in their life.

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morning, an expression of thanks. This is followed with a list of blessings thanking God for the Torah, for sight, for clothing and for the provision of needs. The *Shema* is said and the congregation then stands to say the *Amidah*, the prayer of 18 blessings that contains prayers of praise, requests and thanksgiving. The Torah scroll is then taken from the ark to the *bimah* and a portion read. It is a privilege to be asked to read from the Torah and in Orthodox synagogues only men are asked to do so. A special passage from another part of the Tanakh, called the *haftarah*, is also read. Several more blessings are said and often the Torah scroll is taken through the synagogue and returned to the ark. A sermon usually follows. Synagogue services also include singing, prayers and blessings. There are many variations of the Shabbat liturgy, especially between the Jewish variants. The emphasis in Jewish worship is *avodah sh'belev* (worship of the heart), and the services can continue for several hours.

Many Jewish people walk to the synagogue on Shabbat and other holidays, if they are close enough, to avoid breaking the prohibition to work (see Chapter 12).

In Orthodox services, no musical instrument is played and a cantor leads the congregation in the prayers and singing. In Orthodox Judaism, the men are seated in the area of the synagogue closest to the *bimah* while the women sit separately. In Progressive Judaism there is no such distinction. Progressive Judaism also allows women to read the Torah and become rabbis. There are some innovative Orthodox communities that are giving women a greater role in synagogue services.

Significance for the individual

The individual participates in synagogue services to learn, to worship and express personal faith. It is a learning opportunity to develop a godly life.The service is an expression of one's Jewish life and is a time to focus on the worship of God

Significance for the community

The Jewish community gathers in worship and in community. Synagogues can be a place of education and meeting as well as worship. Synagogue is a central part of Jewish community life, signified in the prayers, which are said using 'we' rather than 'I'.

Figure 13.13 The New Synagogue (Neue Synagoge) was built in 1866 to seat 3200 people, the largest Jewish place of worship in Berlin, Germany. Today the building houses the Centrum Judaicum foundation which opened in 1995, an institution for the preservation of Jewish memory and tradition, and a community congregation centre for study and teaching. Only one prayer room remains in use today, with mixed seating in the Reformed Judaism tradition.

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EXERCISE 13.8

1 **Describe** the synagogue and synagogue services.
2 **Outline** the beliefs about the synagogue service for Judaism.
3 **Describe** how the synagogue service is significant for the individual Jewish person and the Jewish community.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13.8

1 Draw a plan of a synagogue, labelling its features and explaining their significance.
2 **Discuss** the significance of synagogue services and the way they link with the idea of Shabbat (see Section 12.7 in Chapter 12)?
3 Prepare a graphic presentation, such as a PowerPoint or similar, highlighting the features and elements of a synagogue service and the importance of the various aspects.

Figure 13.14 Bet Nissim Synagogue is a synagogue built in 1840s in Kuzguncuk, Istanbul, Turkey

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Moses Maimonides was a respected scholar, doctor and theologian.
- Maimonides' writings were influential in the development of Jewish thought.
- Maimonides' writings continue to influence modern Judaism.
- The Hassidim were a group that emerged in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century.
- The Hassidim respect experience over scholarship.
- The Hassidic movement was a radical form of Judaism that has now become the most conservative.
- Australian Judaism is greatly influenced by Hassidism.
- Bioethics in Judaism is affected by concerns about the role of God and the practical implications for Jewish society.
- Environmental ethics in Judaism reveal the significance of the world as God's creation.
- Jewish sexual ethics reflect the ancient patriarchal origins of the religious tradition.
- Jewish sexual ethics need to conform to the commands of the Torah and the traditions of the religion.
- Judaism does not generally accept homosexuality.
- Judaism is struggling to come to terms with modern expressions of sexuality.
- Death and mourning rituals in Judaism are quite extensive and show respect for the dead person and the mourning family.
- Marriage is a ritualised practice that is important to the Jewish faith.
- Synagogues are community, educational and religious centres.
- Synagogues have particular features that are significant.
- Synagogue worship is the highlight of the Jewish Shabbat.
- Synagogue services have many prayers, blessings and readings from the Tanakh.
- Synagogue worship reflects the worship of the heart.

Figure 13.15 The nine-branched Hanukkah candelabra commemorates the biblical story of the expulsion of Judas Maccabaeus from the Temple of Jerusalem. Maccabaeus and his followers searched for oil for their menorah but only found enough for a single day. As a miracle, that little amount of oil burned for eight days until a new supply could be found. This special type of menorah includes a candle for each day the oil burned and an extra 'servant' candle to light these other candles with.

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HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer either a three-part, 15-mark question, or a one-part extended essay of 20 marks. That is, EITHER a question from Section II OR a question from Section III.

SECTION II

Marks

Question 5 — Judaism (15 marks)

(a) **Outline** the contribution to Judaism made by ONE significant person or school of thought other than Abraham or Moses. **4**

(b) **Discuss** the impact of ONE significant individual or school of thought, other than Abraham or Moses, on Judaism. **5**

(c) **Explain** the importance of Jewish ethical teachings in ONE of the following areas: **6**

- Bioethics
- Environmental ethics
- Sexual ethics.

SECTION III

Question 5 — Judaism (20 marks)

Evaluate the significance of ONE Jewish practice for the individual and/or the Jewish community. The practice discussed must be drawn from the following: **20**

- Death and mourning
- Marriage
- Synagogue services.

OR

> I am not an American citizen of Jewish faith, I am a Jew. I have been an American for sixty-three years, but I have been a Jew for 4000 years.
> STEPHEN WISE

With reference to the quotation, and from your understanding of Judaism, **analyse** the aspects of Judaism that are significant to the Jewish community. **20**

Figure 13.16 Reading the Torah is an important part of many Jewish ceremonies

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FOURTEEN

RELIGIONS OF ANCIENT ORIGIN

[YEAR 11 – 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

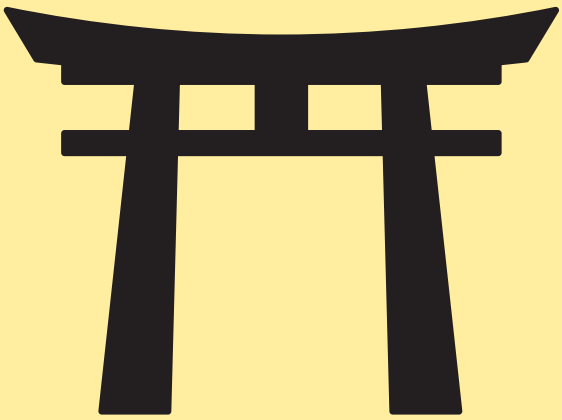
Does progress mean that we dissolve our ancient myths? If we forget our legends, I fear that we shall close an important door to the imagination.

JAMES CHRISTENSEN, AMERICAN ARTIST (1942–2017)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the concept of religions of ancient origin
- aspects of animism and primal religion
- the following three religions of ancient origin in detail:
  - Taoism in China
  - Shinto in Japan
  - Nordic (Scandinavian) religion in northern Europe.



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14.1 THE NATURE OF THREE RELIGIONS OF ANCIENT ORIGIN

The syllabus requires you to study two religions of ancient origin and lists several. The religions listed include Aztec or Inca or Mayan, Celtic, Nordic, Shinto and Taoism. There is also a final statement that gives a great deal of flexibility: 'an indigenous religion from outside Australia'. The syllabus specifically excludes the five major world religions that are included in the Religious Traditions studies and, from the statement above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritualities. Three religions of ancient origin are discussed here, and reference is made to others.

You are to focus on the response of these ancient religious traditions to the major questions of life, and the aspects of the religion that relate to its expression in society. These questions and aspects relate to:

- the origins of the universe
- principal beliefs
- supernatural powers and deities
- rituals
- influence in society
- the human search for meaning.

NOTE: These questions and aspects are not always relevant to all ancient religions.

Ancient or indigenous religions generally can be considered animistic (sometimes called tribal or primal religions). Some ancient religions may emphasise particular aspects and not all the aspects mentioned in the syllabus. As well as those listed here, ancient religions could include the religions of Egypt, early Rome and Greece, native North American religions, Polynesian religions, Zulu and other African religions as well as a range of tribal religions throughout the world. Animistic religions usually have several features that can also be identified in these ancient religions, including:

- belief in spiritual forces behind natural phenomena
- oral rather than written stories or texts
- reverence for ancestors
- shamans, or religious spokespeople, who have special powers or abilities
- dreams, visions or experiences of the spirits, often, but not always, through a shaman
- rituals, often offerings and sacrifices, to appease or invoke the spirits or complete a contract with the divine
- strong social systems that are held together by often very sophisticated myths.

Animism
The belief that spirits inhabit all objects and have influence on people and natural events

CONSIDER

Many features of religions of ancient origin are very similar to the characteristics of religion discussed in Chapter 1. Yet '**animism**' and 'primal religion' are terms often used to suggest that something better has arrived and superseded older traditions with other, newer traditions. Is this fair? Are all religions simply a development of religions of ancient origin? Is monotheism the 'highest' form of religion? Is atheism the successor to religion?

Figure 14.1 Re-enactment of a Zulu death ritual

Figure 14.2 A temple from the Mayan civilisation in Chichen Itza, Mexico

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14.2 RELIGION 1: TAOISM

TIMELINE

circa 500 BCE
Religious philosopher Lao Tzu/Lao Zi was said to have lived in this period. Taoist sources suggest he was the author of the *Tao Te Ching/Dao De Jing*, a fundamental text for Taoism. Evidence only confirms this book's existence in the 300s BCE.

circa 300 BCE
Chuang Tzu/Zhuang Zi wrote his work, known only as the *Chuang Tzu*, one of the funniest and most thought-provoking books ever written in China

221 BCE
Chin Shi Huang De (Great Emperor Chin) unifies China and its writing system. He also practised Taoist alchemy – the cause of his death.

circa 200 CE
Taoism develops as the major religion at the Imperial Court

300–400 CE
Early Buddhism is understood as a branch of Neo-Taoism

618–907 CE
Tang Dynasty makes Taoism the first official religion of China

1368 CE
Foundation of Ming Dynasty in China. Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are recognised as the three great religious teachings of China.

1644 CE
Qing Dynasty is established by the (foreign) Manchurians; their power is based on upholding Chinese tradition. The dynasty fails to control European colonial incursion into China; the nation descends into chaos.

1912 CE
Chinese Republic is established under Dr Sun Yat Sen. Taoism is in a depleted state

1949 CE
Establishment of (Communist) People's Republic of China. Religious groups, such as Taoism, must hand over control to the government, go underground or go offshore. Much Taoist activity today is based in Taiwan.

FURTHERMORE

There are at least two systems of representing Chinese words in English. One method, invented by English speakers, is called Wade-Giles – it gives the Chinese word (shown here) as 'Tao'; this system is the most well known in the West. The Chinese invented a similar system, Pinyin, which is not as well-known but better organised, and transliterates this word as 'Dao'. The spelling the word takes in English can be different; the word in Chinese is the same.

The nature of Taoism

Video

Taoism (pronounced and alternatively spelled 'Daoism') is one of China's three traditional religions, the other two being Confucianism (more a philosophy than a religion) and, although originally from India, Buddhism. The Chinese people have no problem following all three faith systems at once. Taoism is the religion most closely connected to Chinese folk religion and the worship of natural features in China, such as sacred mountains. Taoism started, however, with a series of provocative philosophical texts, before developing into a more religious, mystical and superstitious system.

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Figure 14.3 Yin/yang symbol in Qingyang Gong Taoist temple in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China

The origins of the universe

Chapter 42 of Taoism's most famous book, the ***Tao Te Ching***, says:

> The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures carry on their backs the yin and embrace in their arms the yang and are the blending of the generative forces of the two.

The *Tao* ('way'), the natural course of existence, or the flow of tradition, is said to be the origin of all things. In the *Tao Te Ching* (or *The Way and Its Power*), the Way is also referred to as the 'nameless mother'. From this nameless and mysterious point of origin, the forces of yin and yang manifest. *Yang* is an ancient Chinese term referring to the southern or sunny side of a mountain; by extension it represents upward movement, dryness and warmth. *Yin* is the ancient Chinese term for the balancing opposite. It represents cold, damp and downward movement. Overall, yang is associated with the active masculine, while yin represents the passive feminine. The land, life, genders and the parts of the human body can all be divided into yin/yang oppositions.

Tao Te Ching
Chinese classic text fundamental to Taoist philosophy

In Taoism, this feminine principle of passivity forms a basic paradox. This paradox suggests that the greatest strength lies in passivity, and water is often used to demonstrate this. Water gives way when one steps into it, and seems totally passive, but when it flows through the land – following the way, or the lowest points – it is strong enough to carve canyons. Thus, water is a very apt metaphor for the *Tao*. Its power is best explained in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. This manual of battle techniques (which scholars believe was written somewhere between 476 and 221 BCE) shows how remaining hidden and passive, and spontaneously attacking the enemy when they least expect it, holds true to Taoist principals and can be a very effective way of fighting.

Taoism also draws on Chinese myths of creation, such as the myth of Pan Ku, where the primordial world was shaped like an egg. It was hatched some 18 000 years later. The lighter, pure substances (called yang) became the sky; the heavier, impure became the Earth (yin). The giant Pan Ku was also born and with the help of four creatures, the Earth became what it is today. When Pan Ku died, his breath became the wind, his eyes became the sun and moon, his sweat became the rain and human beings came from the fleas living in his body.

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Principal beliefs

Taoism as a philosophy

Early Taoism supported a turning away from cultivation and education, and often acted as a counterbalance to the restrictions of Confucianism. Confucianism is a philosophical and religious system that promotes education, tight family control by the chief male and traditional imperial power structures. The *Tao Te Ching*, which is in part an instruction manual for emperors (and also a work of comedy and mysticism), constantly advises inaction. Tradition tells us that it was written by a wise old soul called Lao Tzu. This name means 'Old Master' so it may be that this author never existed and that this book is a collection of sayings put together over many centuries. The *Tao Te Ching* advises the ruler that the best way to eradicate criminals is to get rid of laws, the best way to rule is to keep people stupid and well fed, and the best way to travel is to 'let your wheels move only along old ruts'.

Chuang Tzu, Taoism's other great early philosopher, also offerd advice to rulers, but in addition, his work, work, known only as the *Chuang Tzu*, attempts to explain the way of the *Tao*. It is summed up sometimes as a cook who knows the *Tao* of the meat – where the fat, gristle and bone was – will always carve it up perfectly. The *Chuang Tzu* also promotes uselessness and spontaneity. The concept of *wu wei* is very important here – it can be is a state of inaction that leaves one ready to respond spontaneously at the best time.

Chuang Tzu constantly delighted in the paradoxes of life. He had a famous dream in which he was a butterfly. When he woke, he could not decide whether he was Chuang Tzu who had dreamt of being a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming that he was Chuang Tzu.

An official from the emperor of China once visited a famous Taoist. The official went into his house and found the Taoist naked. 'This is no way to receive guests!' the official shouted in horror. 'Where are your trousers?' The Taoist replied that the world was like his trousers; his house was like his underpants. He then asked the official to get out of his underpants! This sort of comedy reveals a disdain for officialdom by Taoists.

Taoism as a religion

From its early philosophical and anti-Confucian base, Taoism developed into a religion. The principal belief of Taoism in this form was not in action and spontaneity but in increasing the longevity of the adherent. A number of Taoist texts such as the *Book of the Yellow Emperor's Court* focused on health and longevity. In religious Taoism, eternal life was the quest.

Alchemy or the mixing of transformative potions became part of its secret tradition. We do not know if they found the elixir of life, but Taoists did invent gunpowder and other very useful chemicals. Additionally, it was believed that immortality could be discovered by appealing to other deities and immortals who had already discovered the secret of eternal life. Today, Taoism is closely related to meditation, longevity and following

Alchemy
Early form of scientific experimentation and philosophical investigations, particularly involving chemistry, metallurgy and mysticism

Figure 14.4 The Taoist Temple in Cebu, Philippines

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the *Tao*, the natural way of life. Taoists believe that by practising rituals, it is possible for people to become deities. The harmony with nature, suggested by the yin and yang is an aim of Tao life, the Way.

Supernatural powers and deities

There is often confusion between local, folk and Taoist deities in China. The most famous Taoist deities are the Eight Immortals. According to Taoist writings, this group, keep to themselves the secret of immortality. They disguise themselves and regularly appear in people's lives to trick them, especially if these people are being unethical. Shopkeepers and traders who adjust their scales in their own favour, and corrupt scholars and officials, usually find themselves being tricked by these Immortals. We might say that the Eight Immortals of China are superhero-like figures who protect the average person and the just, while punishing the amoral and the corrupt. They also represent the ultimate development of a follower of the Tao in a religious sense, as figures who are just and live forever.

There is a number of other deities that form the pantheon of the gods in Taoism. The first of these is the Jade Emperor (Yu-huang), the ruler of heaven and earth who dispenses justice. Other gods represent different qualities and attributes. These include the Three Officials who record good and evil deeds, and reward or punish each. The Three Pure Ones teach and show benevolence.

These deities are called upon by different ceremonies relating to particular needs and concerns.

Rituals

Taoist rituals take two main forms. The first is intimately connected with the brewing of alchemical potions and the quest for personal immortality. These personal rituals are aimed at inverting the normal processes of the body, in the hope that the ageing process will be reversed. These rituals can include strict dietary proscriptions, such as not eating grain, or meditation and breathing techniques. One of these is called 'breathing to one's feet', in which one tries to draw *ch'i* essence as deeply through the lungs and into the body as possible. *Ch'i* originally meant 'steam', 'cloud' or 'mist' and is understood by the Chinese as the air that separates the maleness of the sky from the femaleness of Earth. Through Taoist rituals, *ch'i* can be turned into spiritual energy that can transform the body and lead to immortality. This ensures the flow of the yin and yang are in balance. Thus a focus on breathing practice in Taoism is very important. Kristopher Schipper's well-researched book, *The Taoist Body*, explains the bodily/immortal dimensions of Taoism very well. Many of these ideas form the basis of traditional Chinese medicine.

The second ritual form in Taoism relates to the spacing out of the wider cosmos. Taoists comprehend their body as an internal landscape with rivers, mountains, fields and deities watching over aspects of this landscape. Praying to these deities and performing

Figure 14.5 Taoist priests make sacrifices to the Kitchen God during the festival of Xiao Nian

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rituals can change the structure of this internal landscape. Through the hope of sympathetic magic, Taoists also perform intricate ritual dances that trace out models of the cosmos in Taoist temples, mountain caves and so on. Religious Taoism can thus be understood as an imagining of microcosms within the body and macrocosms in ritual spaces, which can help make transformations that lead to the immortality of the participants.

Taoists have a strong interest in talismans, magic and witchcraft and the spiritual services offered by priests. There are also prayers to the Taoist deities, meditations and chanting of prayers and texts. The Taoist priests regulate these complex rituals where the laity have little role. These rituals can also include the priests chanting, dancing and playing wind and percussion instruments. Offerings are dedicated and rituals are performed to restore peace and prosperity to the community and order in the universe.

Influence in society

Taoism was a counterbalance to the strict and conservative nature of China's other great religion, Confucianism. Through its alchemical practices, Taoism also aided in the development of chemical innovations and Chinese medicine. From Taoism, for example, came not only the invention of gunpowder, but also the process of acupuncture. Taoism accustomed the Chinese to breathing and meditation practices that were further developed by Buddhism. Buddhism may not have become popular in China without Taoism, for Buddhism was initially considered by the Chinese as a school of Taoism. Later, when Buddhism established itself as a Chinese religion in its own right, Taoism gave Chinese Buddhism its own unique flavour. The rise of Chan Buddhism (known as Zen Buddhism when it spread to Japan) was strongly influenced by Taoist attitudes.

With its emphasis on naturalness, rather than education, Taoism also inspired some of the greatest works of art and poetry in China: the poetry of Li Bo and the poetry and landscape painting of Wang Wei. In these works of art the artists tried to leave behind their own mind and summon something of the *Tao* itself. The *Tao Te Ching*'s emphasis on spontaneity added a living dimension to Chinese society, whereas Confucianism focused on the conservative traditions of China and in particular the strict emphasis on education.

By seeking to bring the balance into the community, that is the 'Tao', adherents can control their emotions and the inner world will be freed from the misdirection of the senses and emotions. Thus, an ordered society is the outcome, not by seeking to control nature, but by embracing it. As an result, environmentalism is a major concern in Taoism.

FURTHERMORE

There are a few Taoist centres in Sydney; the main one is in Redfern. These centres specifically promote Taoist teachings and should not be confused with older Chinese temples (Glebe and Alexandria), which are linked more closely to general Chinese folk-religion practices and have been in Sydney since the late nineteenth century.

The human search for meaning

From 1000 CE, Taoism aided in the Chinese understanding of a heavenly emperor in a heavenly court. Reaching this heaven, however, was not an ultimate aim in Taoism. The focus remained on immortality. Human life was explained as a quest to live forever. At first, this quest was pursued through crude, chemical means, and later by more metaphorical understandings of what immortality could comprise. Despite the rise of religious Taoism, philosophical Taoism continued to inspire those Chinese fascinated by paradox in life. As a **philosophy**, Taoism illustrates the absurdities of life and the paradoxes inherent in attempting to define reality. In either case, following 'The Way' provided the Chinese with an alternative vision of life outside the strict traditionalism of Confucianism.

Philosophy
The study of the general principles of knowledge

The human search for meaning in Taoism is reflected in the quest to do what comes naturally – cleansing negativity, accepting the way things are, and appreciating the way the world is. In Taoism there is no search for an afterlife, rather a journey to meaning in this life.

EXERCISE 14.1

1 **Describe** the relationship between philosophical Taoism and religious Taoism.
2 **Outline** the main concerns of adherents to Taoism.
3 **Describe** a Taoist ritual and discuss its significance for aspects of a Taoist's life.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 14.1

1 Debate the following topic: 'Taoism is a philosophy, not a religion.'
2 Research Taoism and explain how it influences the lives of individual adherents.
3 Research alchemy and discuss its place in Taoism. Has alchemy provided the desired outcomes?

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14.3 RELIGION 2: SHINTO

TIMELINE

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The nature of Shinto

Japan has long been influenced by China. Confucianism and Buddhism both came to Japan through its contact with China. Shinto, however, is Japan's own indigenous religion. Shinto means 'way of the Kami' and *kami* is a term for god or spirit. Shinto is based on the worship of the *kami*, who are spirits involved in the development and maintenance of Japan. *Kami* created the islands of the nation and pervade the land at every level. Every region has its own *kami* and they are recognised in certain parts of the landscape. *Yama-no-kami* are mountain deities, *tano-kami* are field deities, and *umi-no-kami* are sea deities. Until recently, the Emperor of Japan, his ancestors and outstanding Japanese heroes were all considered as being *kami* rather than human.

The origins of the universe

The two ancient texts of Japan, *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Things – 712 CE) and *Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan – 720 CE) contain a clear origin tale. The primordial man and woman, Izanagi-no-Mikoto and his wife and sister Izanami-no-Mikoto, are associated with the creation of Japan. Coming down from heaven, they gave birth to the Japanese islands and to certain *kami*, the most important of whom was Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun. Her grandson, Ninigi-no-Mikoto, married the *kami* of Mount Fuji and their great-grandson, Jimmu, became the first emperor of Japan. In this way, the Japanese imperial family are understood to be descendants of the sun goddess.

Video

Figure 14.6 Statues of the three deities of the sacred mountains: Mount Haguro, Mount Gassan and Mount Yudon

Principal beliefs

Shinto does not have a single founder or any sacred texts. Outside of mythology, Shinto has few beliefs. One example could be highlighted in the following way. When Izanagi and Izanami meet it is Izanami, the woman, who speaks first. This proves unacceptable to Izanagi and the couple separate and then meet again. This time Izanagi speaks first. This part of the myth suggests that women in Japanese life should follow a man before acting, but one comes to this conclusion by interpreting the myth – Shinto has no written doctrine on relations between the sexes.

Similarly, another dimension to the creation myth explains Japanese attitudes to death and cleanliness. When Izanami gives birth to the *kami* of fire, Kagi-Tsuchi, she is burnt and dies. Izanagi then proceeds to seek his sister-wife in the land of the dead – *Yomi-no-Kuni*. In the underworld, a filthy, lightless realm, he finds her. Wanting to return to life with her husband-brother, Izanami goes to speak with the overlord of hell. As she takes too long in returning, Izanagi goes looking for her. This time he finds her rotting with worms festering within her. He flees from the realm of Yomi and bathes in the salt waters of the oceans to clean himself of death. This part of the myth reveals how the Japanese explain the pollution of death. Salt and washing are used in Japanese rituals to cleanse houses and spaces to ensure their purity from the chaos of uncontrollable events such as death.

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Figure 14.7 *Temizuya*, a water tank for purification at the Ueno Toshogu Shinto shrine

INVESTIGATE

Research online and read more of this creation story involving Izanagi and Izanami in the *Ancient History Encyclopedia*.

There are no absolutes in Shinto. Human beings are inherently good, and evil is caused by evil spirits. Shinto shrines are places of worship but also the homes of the *kami*. Shinto beliefs are expressed in terms such as nature, harmony and balance. Rather than theology and creeds, Shinto beliefs can be spoken of as sensibilities – aspects such as sincerity, virtue and purity (thus the emphasis on purity rituals).

Supernatural powers and deities

In Shinto, it is the *kami* that are the deities. These deities can be benevolent or malevolent, kind or wrathful. They are spirit beings and are not visible. There are many different kinds of *kami* and they do not stay at their places of worship, but often move around. The *kami* are required to perform a duty associated with the place they inhabit.

Shinto can be described as a form of animism. The whole environment is seen as being alive with spirits. A mountain such as Mount Fuji can have a powerful and impressive *kami* associated with it. Similarly, the sun and other important phenomena, such as fire, can have powerful *kami*. Small things such as sheets of paper and bolts of silk can also have *kami*. The Japanese art of kimono (robe) folding and the paper-folding art of origami are based on the principle that the *kami* of these items could be disturbed through cutting, so folding becomes necessary. Another way of thinking of supernatural powers in Japan is the idea of a thing having a presence or being able to inspire awe; these feelings are connected to the spirit of the *kami*.

Rituals

In Shinto, rituals can be examined from a household, local and national level:

- *Jinja Shinto* takes place at shrines and is domestic and local.
- *Minzoku Shinto* relates to folk religion in Japan.
- *Koshitsu Shinto* is practised at a national level and relates to the emperor and his family.

Homes contain a Shinto shrine called a *kamidana*, and at this level Shinto can be seen as the way a family worships their ancestors. The shrine is often in the form of a mirror covered by a door. A mirror was one of the possessions of Ninigi-no-Mikoto, given to him by his grandmother, the goddess of the sun. Major rituals are done at the home altar on Shogatsu or Japanese New Year. At this time it is believed that Toshigami, the year god, visits every home.

Local shrines are where regional *kami* are worshipped. This allows local communities and other groups to affirm their togetherness in the presence of their local *kami*.

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INVESTIGATE

The anime films of Hayao Miyazaki are world-famous. In many of his works the nature of Japan as a *kami*-laden land are promoted. Many of Miyazaki's popular films deal with issues offending a balance between the human, natural and *kami* worlds and so have powerful environmental messages. Watch *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Spirited Away* (2001).

Shinto shrines are accessed through a ***torii*** (or ***tori***), a special gate that separates the shrine from the world outside. At a national level, shrines dedicated to the imperial family help Japan celebrate its unity as a nation.

The most important of these is the Inner Shrine, Naikū, of the Ise Grand Shrine. This building, which is pulled down and rebuilt on the empty lot next to it every 20 years, is dedicated to the sun goddess, Amaterasu. The most important ritual carried out here is the Kanname festival, where the first crops harvested every year are dedicated to the sun goddess.

Influence in society

Shinto pervades Japanese life at every level. Worshipping all creation as part of a larger whole is a feature of Shinto. Its influence is not directed immediately at making people act ethically but to understanding that they live in a world full of powerful forces that they must appease and remember; it has mythologies, but no scriptures with prescriptions on how to live. It is a religion that is very good at inspiring people in the home to follow the examples of their ancestors. At a local level, Shinto is very good at using festivals to reaffirm society. Shinto also plays a strong role in reminding people to be aware of their environment and their place in society.

At a national level, Shinto has had varying degrees of influence. From the 700s CE, Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China and Korea. Buddhism, with its scripture and philosophy, came to be very influential in the lives of the Japanese. Often at funerals, Shinto and Buddhist rites were carried out simultaneously, and this is still the case today. For many centuries, Buddhism pushed Shinto into the background.

***Torii* (or *tori*)**
A gate of two columns and two beams that separates the sacred area of the shrine from the ordinary world outside

This all changed with the Meiji Restoration. In 1867–69, a new power balance placed a new focus on the importance of the emperor. With this came an increase in Shinto's influence in society and a rejection of Buddhism. As Japan modernised and industrialised, worship of the emperor as a great *kami* led to a massive increase in national fervour and military action. In this period, Japan built a significant empire by invading Taiwan, China and Korea. Eventually Japan, inspired by the national *kami*, joined World War II in 1941 by bombing the US Navy in Hawaii. They invaded the nations of South-East Asia and even bombed parts of Australia. Shinto had become a state religion that helped justify the war.

When the war ended and Japan was defeated in 1945, Shinto had lost most of its prestige. Today, Shinto

Figure 14.8 Shinto pervades Japanese life, especially on important occasions. Pictured is a procession during a traditional Japanese wedding ceremony in the yard of a Shinto shrine.

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has returned to its pre-Meiji status as the general indigenous religion of Japan. Worship of the *kami* does not prevent Japanese people from being Buddhist or from studying Confucianism. However, Shinto has shaped Japanese culture and traditional way of life.

The human search for meaning

The search for meaning in Shinto is reflected in the culture and life of Japan. For the individual it is related to living life to the full, appeasing the forces that would bring negativity and seeking to live a life of good actions. This includes living at peace with others and living in harmony with the world. Life is not governed by moral codes, divine commandments, rules and regulations, rather life is lived according to one's own guiding principles. Meaning is not found in seeking a heavenly reward or avoiding an unpleasant afterlife, but in living this life in the best way.

Shinto provides meaning by placing its followers within a world full of spirits who, if worshipped correctly, can turn away the evil forces of the world. Shinto connects the people of Japan closely with their country at every level. It also provides them with a way of reflecting on the talents of their ancestors. Shinto justifies the structure and order of Japanese society.

EXERCISE 14.2

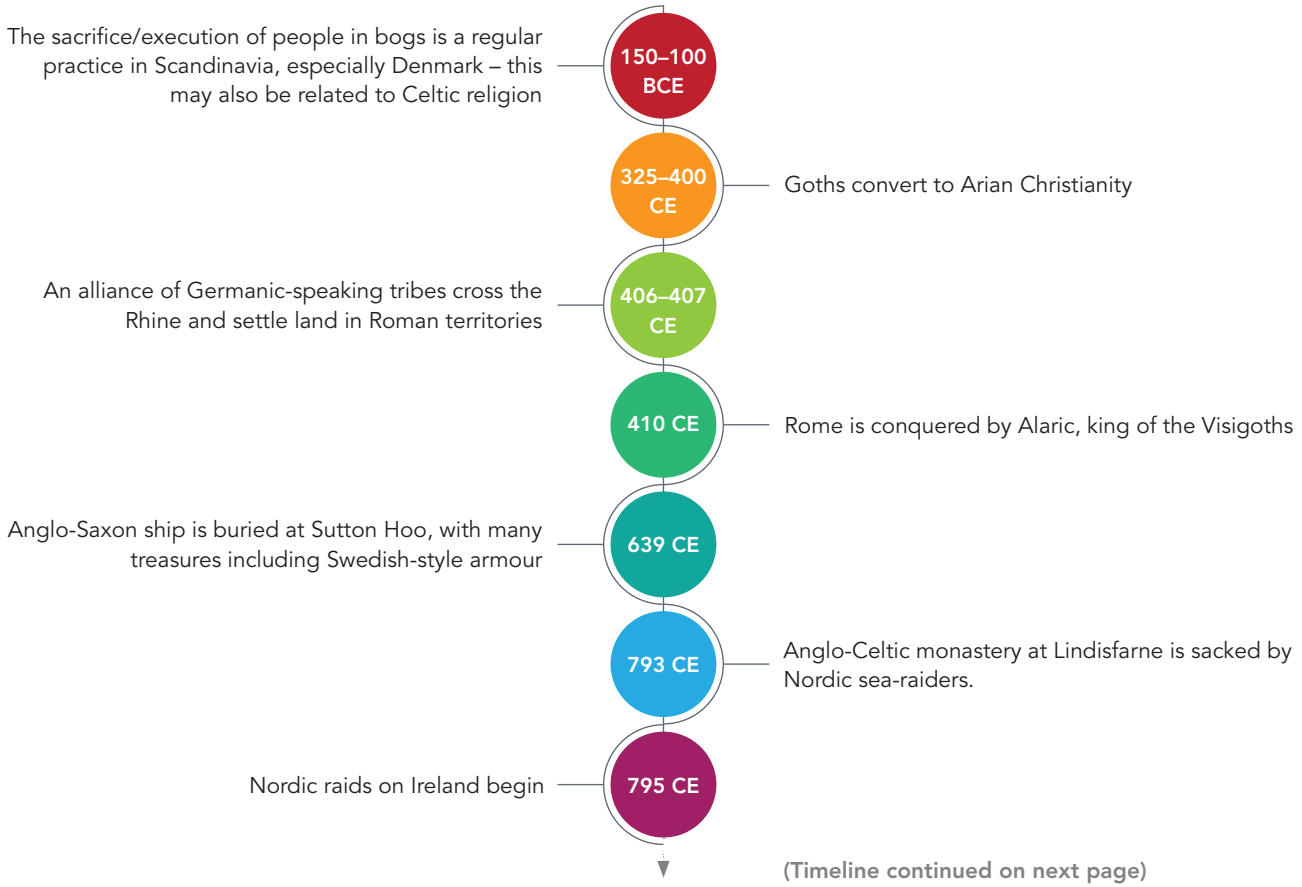
1 **Describe** the teachings of Shinto regarding the creation of the world.
2 **Describe** the rituals of Shinto, noting the significance for household, local and national levels.
3 **Explain** the main purpose of Shinto rituals for the individual and the community.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 14.2

1 Debate the following topic: 'Shinto is simply a form of animism or a development of Buddhism'.
2 Write a paragraph about the influence of Shinto in the life and culture of Japan, illustrating with specific examples.
3 Research Shinto on the internet. Is Shinto simply an ancient religion or is it a religion that is still an important part of Japanese society today?

14.4 RELIGION 3: NORDIC

TIMELINE



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The nature of Nordic religion

Nordic or Scandinavian religions are still very much part of today's world. The names of Nordic deities name the days of our week: Tiuw – Tuesday, Woden – Wednesday, Thor – Thursday, Frigg – Friday. Recent religions, such as wicca and paganism, claim to have some connection to those gods of Europe who existed before Europeans converted to the Middle Eastern religion of Christianity. These pre-Christian deities are mainly from the Nordic religion. Some similarities with Celtic religion can also be seen.

Nordic religion also formed the backbone of Viking culture. As this seafaring society travelled in their boats as far as North America, Sicily and Russia, their name drove fear into the hearts of the inhabitants of these lands as they raped and pillaged. Many Scandinavians settled down in England, Scotland and Ireland, creating cities such as York and Dublin. More recently, a number of comics, movies and novels in the fantasy genre have relied heavily on the heroic tales and brave exploits of the gods and heroes of Nordic mythology.

The origins of the universe

The Nordic creation myth begins with Ginnungagap, a magical void between the two realms of Niflheim (the realm of ice to the north) and Muspelheim (the realm of fire to the south). The rivers of Niflheim and the fires of Muspelheim flowed into the gap and solidified. This resulted in the birth of the ice giant Ymir and the Audhumla, the primordial cow, who existed to give milk for Ymir's sustenance. Ymir slept, and from his sweat were born three other giants, two male and one female. Audhumla licked away at the ice of Niflheim and revealed the frozen Buri, bringing him to life. Buri's son Bor produced three sons, Odin, Vili and Ve. They decided to war with the ice giants, who had multiplied, and they killed Ymir. Ymir's blood caused flooding, which drowned the other ice giants. The sons of Bor threw Ymir's body into Ginnungagap and created Midgard (the human realm), Asgard (the realm of the gods) and Hel (the realm of the dead) from Ymir's corpse. These realms are arranged in levels connected by various magical pathways around the universal tree, Yggdrasil. Later they used an ash tree to create the first man and an elm tree to create the first woman.

The theme of Nordic creation stories is the bringing of order out of chaos. Gods and giants are vital to the creation of the world. Certainly, the central feature of the stories is the role of conflict. This is reflected in the life of the Nordic peoples.

Principal beliefs

Nordic beliefs are an amalgam of indigenous pre-Christian beliefs and the beliefs of the Scandinavians, and are probably also related to a much older Indo-European religion – thus there are numerous parallels in both Nordic and Hindu creation myths. Because of the tribal structure of the Germanic and Scandinavian people who shared this religion, there is no one doctrine or set of beliefs. The religion was transmitted orally until the Christian period, and so there is little evidence for the original forms of Nordic beliefs and

Figure 14.9 Engraving of Yggdrasil. Yggdrasil is an immense tree that is central to Norse cosmology.

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folklore. It is difficult to tell what the original beliefs were and what Christian interpretations are.

In works such as the *Prose Edda*, *Poetic Edda* and the Icelandic sagas, strong ideas of clan honour, righteous revenge and respect for the gods demonstrate a solid foundation for the Nordic religion in its social aspects, even though they were written down by bards who had by then converted to Christianity.

Nordic religion is polytheistic. The many and varied gods battle for control and power. There are limited beliefs regarding the afterlife, although to die in battle won the honour of being escorted to the 'hall of the slain'. Beliefs include respect for the gods and the upholding of the tribal honour. Revenge for wrongs is a personal responsibility.

Differences in beliefs between tribes tend to involve less important aspects of the religion, while the essential beliefs and religious standing of the Nordic peoples are more universal.

Another widespread belief is that of the fall of the Nordic gods to another species living in the shade of Yggdrasil. This is called *Ragnarök*, in German *Götterdämmerung* (note Richard Wagner's famous opera based on this story) or 'Twilight of the Gods'. It is believed that in the future, chaos will overturn order and those who maintained order, both divine and mortal, will be destroyed. This return to the chaos represented in the creation myth by Ginnungagap does not represent an ending of the world however, but a renewal, since it is believed that another, more enlightened order would be established after a period of chaos.

There is also the Nordic belief in the afterlife. It is believed that warriors who die bravely in battle are escorted to Valhalla, the Hall of the Slain. This noble death is the end that most German and Scandinavian men would have desired in the past, since it ensured not only respect among the living, but also a place of honour among the dead. Death is not to be feared but welcomed. The alternative afterlife is found in Hel, the realm of the dead. Hel is also, confusingly, the name of the goddess of the dead. It is said that disease entered the world when she was born, and all those who die of illness, old age or criminal punishment are sent into her hands.

Supernatural powers and deities

Nordic gods have become quite familiar to Western society through the popularity of television shows such as *The Vikings* and the portrayal of the various comic book characters such as Thor and Loki, especially in the Marvel movies. Some of the powers and deities have been mentioned in the text already; however, the important Nordic deities are presented in Table 14.1, with their significance and powers noted.

Figure 14.10 Twelfth-century Swedish tapestry depicting the Norse gods Odin, Thor and Freya

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Table 14.1 The major Nordic gods, their powers and symbols. Where there is a dash it means there is no known example for that category.

Name	Significance	Special powers	Common variations on names	Symbol
Odin	God of wisdom, war, the hunt and magic. He was also known for his association with the runes (the letters of the alphabet used for magic and divination).	He assisted in the shaping of the world. He was also famous for surrendering one of his eyes for a sip from the Well of Knowledge. His name was often invoked for occult purposes.	Woden, Wotan	Raven
Freya	Goddess of fertility, love and beauty. As the mother of the Valkyries and wife to Odin, she received some of the slain warriors into her halls, and was known as a goddess of death, prophecy and magic.	She was called upon to ensure the fruitfulness of the fields and was also invoked by warriors.	Freyja, Gefn, Vanadis. There is some speculation that Freya and Frigg (the goddess of marriage) are different aspects of the same goddess.	Cat (her chariot is drawn by two cats)
Loki	God/Giant of fire. He was known most commonly as the trickster god who, despite being a blood brother of Odin, was destined to play a role in the destruction of the gods and their divine order.	Loki's cunning was often called upon by people needing to solve complex problems. While he was an ambivalent character with regards to the gods, he was often portrayed as friendly to humans. He could take the shape of any animal, and change his gender at will.	Loge, Loke	—
Thor	God of thunder. He was the protector of Asgard and Midgard.	Thor possessed a war hammer that magically returned to the thrower when it had found its target, and had the power to throw lightning bolts. He also possessed a belt that gave him immense strength.	Porr, Punor, Donar	Goat (his chariot was drawn by two goats, which could be slain and eaten if necessary, but would regenerate and draw the chariot again when Thor had finished his meal)
The Valkyries	Minor deities, the daughters of Odin and Freya who chose and escorted the bravest slain warriors from the battlefield to Valhalla.	The Valkyries are capable of bestowing victory upon one side in human battles and also decide who among the warriors will die.	—	—

Rituals

The rituals of the Nordic peoples are rarely described in contemporary sources and have been pieced together from other sources, such as archaeological evidence. One outstanding ritual that is recorded by several contemporary authors, most notably Ibn-Fadlan, was the ritual sacrifice of a slave girl at the funeral of her master. Ibn-Fadlan was a tenth-century-CE Arab diplomat travelling in the direction of Kiev, a city in Russia that Vikings had founded. It is believed that this was a fairly widespread ritual, by which the woman who was sacrificed would become the handmaiden of the dead man in the afterlife. Adam of Bremen records the ritual sacrifice of slaves once every nine years at Uppsala. Modern archaeologists believe that the Tollund man discovered in a bog in Denmark was sacrificed in a similar ritual, possibly connected with the god Odin, who was said to have hanged himself from Yggdrasil in order to gain knowledge about death.

It seems that human sacrifice was practised by the Nordic people. There is no evidence of priests or shamans, rather the rituals seem to have been conducted by the tribal leaders; although there are references to *gothi*, there is uncertainty about who they were and what their role was. Sacrifices were made to the gods but there is no evidence of buildings or ritual structures. There are a number of references to communal meals where there may have been dancing, music and singing. There may have been ancestor worship as a feature of Nordic rituals and mention is made of runes.

Influence in society

Nordic religions seemed to be a martial religion for a martial race. The Norse were obsessed with war and victory. The great tree at the centre of the world enabled

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them to speak of lower realms of infamy and higher realms of reward and glory. The highest realm for humans was Valhalla – the resting place of noble warriors. As access to this realm was through glory in battle, the Scandinavian peoples were encouraged to support war. Thus, aspects of the religion emphasised Viking talent for travel and raiding. This propensity to raid led the Vikings to set up successful rule not only over their own lands of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, but also in England, Ireland and through the river systems of Russia in Moscow, Kiev and even Sicily. Prompted by their love of travel, the Vikings were also able to settle new lands to the west, Greenland and Iceland, and even in North America. The religion, promoting the quest for glory as it did, encouraged the Norse to travel as far as they could. Their quest for knowledge, like Odin's, was worth the threat of death.

The human search for meaning

We know from writings and gravesites that much emphasis was placed on the rituals of burial in Nordic religion. In these societies, human meaning occurred at two levels. At the first level a man or woman needed to protect the good standing of their name. In stories such as *Njal's Saga*, based on the Viking settlement in Iceland, people tried to protect their reputations, just as the gods fought to do so. When an insult, imagined or real, was directed at someone, it was their duty to avenge the insult. This meant that in *Njal's Saga*, retributive killing was a common element of Nordic life. To die leaving a good name was more important than to keep living. At a higher level, Nordic religion explained how, if one did die for glory, one could get access to the heavens where one would be welcomed for dying in a good way.

The search for meaning, for the Norse, meant a balance between competing aspects of life – war and peace, life and death, tradition and exploration, agriculture and wandering and the present and the afterlife. To die with a good name was more important than a shallow life.

The great hope was in the honour of being welcomed into Valhalla, where honour awaited the warrior. That was the escape from the difficult life on Earth.

EXERCISE 14.3

1 **Describe** the creation of the world according to Nordic mythology.
2 **Explain** the complex role of the gods in Nordic religion, illustrating with specific examples.
3 **Describe** one significant ritual of Nordic religion.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 14.3

1 Debate the following topic: 'Nordic religion has influenced European society and its influence is still obvious today'.
2 Research the essential Nordic concepts and beliefs. **Discuss** how they relate to Celtic and Hindu belief systems and if they are related as religions.
3 **Explain** how Nordic beliefs influenced their need for conquest, and how that was evident in the life of the Norse.

14.5 CONCLUSION

Religions of ancient origin reveal much about the way human beings think and how they seek to relate to the supernatural aspects of life. The supernatural has been influential since the beginnings of the human race, as humankind has searched for the significance and meaning of human existence. All religious traditions have elements in common with the most ancient of religions (compare the information in Chapter 1 on the nature of religion and beliefs). Indeed, even modern expressions of the basic religions bear great similarities to these ancient religions (compare the information in Chapter 16 on new religious expressions). When researching ancient civilisations, the role of religion is considered an important aspect of that research. Understanding religions of ancient origin helps to understand the religious inclinations that seem to define human beings.

INVESTIGATE

If you wish to choose another religion of ancient origin from those discussed here, the syllabus allows you to do so. It would be wise to discuss your choice with your teacher first. Ensure you cover the areas that are highlighted in the syllabus (and in this chapter). Remember to check with your teacher to ensure it is not one of the excluded options and that it truly is a religion of ancient origins.

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Figure 14.11 Wooden fortune-telling plaques at Shinto Sakurai Shrine, Fukuoka, Japan

EXERCISE 14.4

1 Select another religion of ancient origin and **outline** the principal beliefs of the religion.
2 **Describe** the roles of the supernatural entities in a religion you have studied.
3 **Identify** the rituals of a religion you have studied.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 14.4

1 Choose TWO religions of ancient origin, and construct a table using the headings throughout the text to **clarify** the main features of each religion, **identifying** the major aspects.
2 Research a story from a religion you have studied and draw out aspects of the story that relate to the sacred spaces and the beliefs of that religion.
3 Prepare a 10-minute speech about one of your religions of ancient origin. Take the role of an adherent in that religion and **explain** how the religion provides a response to the search for meaning for the adherents of that religion.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The syllabus requirements for this section of the course were discussed.
- Features of animism and primal religion were highlighted.
- Three religions of ancient origin were discussed:
  - Taoism
  - Shinto
  - Nordic religion
- For each of these religions the following aspects were discussed:
  - the origins of the universe
  - principal beliefs
  - supernatural powers and deities
  - rituals
  - influence in society
  - the human search for meaning.
- Other options for study have been highlighted.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Multiple-choice, short-answer and extended-response questions are not included as there is such a variety of options in this topic. This section of the course, that is, religions of ancient origin, would be the ideal place for a student-based research task such as an interest study project.

RESPONSE TO STIMULUS QUESTION

Those who followed religions of ancient origin often worshipped nature spirits or engaged in practices that are not fully understood. Explain how the followers of ancient religions sought to draw meaning and significance from their natural surroundings or those practices. Choose ONE religion of ancient origin and explain specifically how its adherents sought meaning and significance from the world around them.

Figure 14.12 Freya, goddess of fertility and love, in her chariot drawn by two cats

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FIFTEEN

RELIGION AND PEACE

[YEAR 12 – 2 UNIT (22 HOURS)]

Now I think one of the reasons why religion developed in the way that it did over the centuries was precisely to curb this murderous bent that we have as human beings.

KAREN ARMSTRONG, BRITISH AUTHOR AND COMMENTATOR OF COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter, the understanding of the concept of peace in five religions will be investigated – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. You should choose TWO religions to study in detail.

The Five Religions

Buddhism

- Buddhism seeks to end suffering at a personal and global level
- The *Dhammapada* states, 'Hatreds do not cease in this world by hating, but by love' (1.5) and 'Cease to do evil. Learn to do good' (17.3)
- How to account for massive warfare in, and from, traditional Buddhist countries
- Peace begins with personal transformation, the seeking of enlightenment
- Peace as a central concept in the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five and Ten Precepts
- World peace can be achieved through the efforts of people seeking peace;that is, through inner peace.

Christianity

- The Christian understanding of peace
- How the understanding of peace is informed through significant sacred writings – the New Testament
- The principal teachings about peace in Christianity
- How Christianity guides the individual in achieving inner peace
- How Christianity contributes to world peace
- The notion of a just war and pacifism.

Hinduism

- The Hindu understanding of peace
- How the understanding of peace is informed through significant sacred writings – the *Bhagavad Gita*
- The principal teachings about peace in Hinduism
- How Hinduism guides the individual in achieving inner peace
- How Hinduism contributes to world peace.

Islam

- The Muslim understanding of peace
- How the understanding of peace is informed through significant sacred writings – the Qur'an and its references to regular warfare
- The principal teachings about peace in Islam
- How Islam guides the individual in achieving inner peace
- How Islam contributes to world peace.

Judaism

- Shalom, the daily greeting, means 'peace' – an expression of the hope to achieve peace
- The Hebrew Bible has many examples of war, often conducted in the name of God (see Joshua 1:1–9)
- Commands to seek peace include Proverbs 25:21 and Psalms 34:15
- Distinction between *milchemet mitzvah* (obligatory war) and *milchemet reshut* (optional war)
- Diplomacy as the first step in achieving peace, and war as the last resort
- The Shoah's (Holocaust) profound effect on modern Jewish attitudes to peace.

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that a strong tension exists in religious practice in relation to peace. Religions lead their followers to peace, but do not always see it practised by the adherents. They suggest ways of acting ethically to secure a peaceful world and inner peace; a peace where the individual mind is calm and the community functions peacefully. But religions seem, at the same time, to be promoters of violence. This is especially so when members of the religion or the religion itself are in danger. Religions also promote a value system that can place idealised other-worlds (heaven, for example) much higher than the Earth itself. Christianity, Hinduism and Islam all promote peace; however, they all also allow the need for violence in certain circumstances. It is necessary to understand how religious adherents become violent in order to see how important religion's message of peace is.

Religion has been used as the justification for many wars and acts of violence. There is a tendency for religious people to deny that their religion has any connection to violence and to believe that it is only 'bad' Christians, Muslims or Hindus who use their religion as an instrument for violence. The Catholic theologian Hans Kung said, 'Religion often is misused for purely power political goals, including war'. To deny a connection between religion, politics, war and violence is at one level to take a very simple view of life, while at another level, to excuse religions of their violent dimensions is to seriously misread history.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that religion brings inner peace. As Nobel Prize–winning scientist Alexis Carrel noted, 'Religion brings to man an inner strength, spiritual light and ineffable peace'. The question is, how can religions influence our future so that the peaceful sides of their doctrines prevail? Moreover, a more profound question is, would the banning of war and violence in all ways make the world a better place? Or is it the case that war and violence are sometimes acceptable in a world where injustice and oppression still exist? Or, alternatively, how violent would our world really be if there was no religion?'

There are two contradictory ideas that underlie the study of religion and peace. One is the idea of warfare, the human desire to fight with others, especially in the sophisticated arena of international warfare. Often, this has been carried out in the name of religion. Yet there has also been a desire to seek inner peace, especially in the face of conflict or inner turmoil, again often sought through religion. The official teaching of most religious traditions is to encourage peace on Earth. The desire for peace is one of the identifiable teachings of all religious traditions and peace is the aim of most truly religious people.

Figure 15.1 A woman holds an AR-15 rifle during a ceremony at the World Peace and Unification Sanctuary in Newfoundland, Pennsylvania. The controversial church believes the AR-15 symbolises the 'rod of iron' in the biblical book of Revelation, and has encouraged couples to bring the weapons to a 'commitment ceremony'.

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Peace

Peace is a difficult concept to define. Peace includes the lack of war, but it is more than simply the absence of war and conflict. Peace also refers to inner peace and the lack of personal conflict within oneself and one's community. Each religious tradition has its own perspective and understanding of peace. *Shalom* in Judaism means peace, but is also a term of greeting. The word *islam* in the Muslim faith is connected with the word *salm*, which has the root meaning of peace, and also the language root *slm*, which means submission (that is, submission to God's will).

'Peace' will be used in two ways in this chapter. It refers to absence of war but, more than that, to the absence of preparation for war – the tranquillity of the social order. Peace will also be used to refer to inner peace within the soul or mind of a person. This is often typified as quietness of heart, the absence of a troubled mind, or an understanding of the mind or heart of God.

In the HSC examination, you may be required to answer a question in relation to TWO religious traditions, so you must study two religious traditions and their teachings about peace.

15.2 BUDDHISM AND PEACE

> Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace.
> THE BUDDHA

Buddhism is often represented as the religious tradition that most evidently seeks peace at all levels of society and existence. Certainly, as noted in the Four Noble Truths, the primary purpose of Buddhists is to overcome suffering (*dukkha*). The Four Noble Truths suggest that the elimination of suffering is the way of achieving true inner peace. This attainment of inner peace ultimately contributes to the realisation of world peace. The ethical guidelines of the Five Precepts also clearly show the desire to live lives that bring inner peace but also peace to others sentient beings.

Following the Noble Eightfold Path is the means to achieving the cessation of suffering, and the emphasis on thinking, speaking and acting the right way are means of maintaining peace with others. This relates to the Buddhist teaching about karma. Maintaining peaceful relationships with others leads ultimately to nirvana. The ultimate aim of Buddhists in achieving nirvana is the desire to cease all suffering and thus totally achieve peace, a peace that is beyond human existence.

Buddhism affirms the sacredness of all sentient life so peace is not simply a human desire, but rather the aim of all life. This is especially evident in the Five Precepts, the basis for all ethical behaviour. The Five Precepts call on Buddhists to protect life and to moderate their own lives. Thus, Buddhism seeks to end suffering at a personal and global level.

The Buddhist understanding of peace

In Buddhism, peace is focused on the achievement of inner peace and the consequential influence on the world.

The concept of karma is central to an understanding of peace in Buddhism. The idea of cause and effect contained in karma has implications for both the individual and their behaviour to others. It determines one's rebirth in this world and has a cumulative effect on the achievement of nirvana. While the ultimate cause of suffering in Buddhism is ignorance, it is failure to understand oneself that is the basis of all ignorance and leads to the selfishness of desire, which is the cause of suffering or anguish. This is the war within oneself, so often expressed in conflict with others.

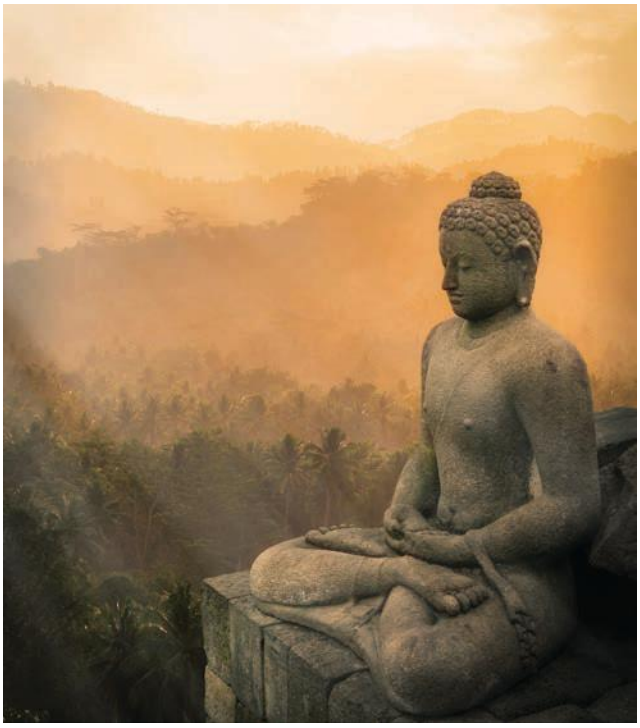

Figure 15.2 The Buddha meditated to find enlightenment and inner peace. Many Buddhists attempt to follow in his path.

In Buddhism, the ultimate expression of peace is the achievement of nirvana: freedom from the cycle of rebirth (samsara). In achieving nirvana, one truly finds peace. This is the state of the realisation of *anatta* (impermanence), the true understanding of *anicca* (the absence of the individual self).

Ahimsa, essentially the first of the Five or Ten Precepts, is a central ethical concept in both Buddhism and

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Hinduism. *Ahimsa* can be translated as non-violence and is expounded in the Five Precepts – the call to act non-violently in all aspects of life. This means care for oneself, a life of moderation, free from deceit, lying and overindulgence, and also for others in avoiding harming other sentient beings.

Buddhism draws a distinction between the concepts of inner peace and world peace. It is primarily concerned with the inner spiritual life of the individual. The concept of dharma then brings that peace to the larger issue of world peace. What is peace in Buddhism? It is ultimately the achievement of nirvana, achieved through the fulfilment of dharma and the spiritual exercises and devotion that lead to inner peace.

So peace in Buddhism is primarily peace within oneself (the absence of desire), that is inner peace, which results in peace with others, and thus with the whole world. This is expressed through a variety of ways including compassion for others, care for the environment, vegetarianism and in actively seeking peace within oneself.

How the understanding of peace is informed through sacred writings

Of the sacred texts of Buddhism, two are highlighted in the syllabus as sources for teachings on peace in Buddhism. They are the *Sutta Pitaka* and the *Dhammapada*.

The *Sutta Pitaka* is the second of the three texts that make up the Tripitaka, or Pali Canon. (The first of the Tripitaka is the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the third is the *Abhidharma Piṭaka* The *Sutta Pitaka* is made up of more than 10 000 *suttas* (teachings) that have been attributed to the Buddha or his close companions. There are five collections of *suttas* that vary in length from short sayings to longer discourses.

Within the last of the five collections of the *Sutta Pitaka*, the *Khuddaka Nikaya*, there is a collection of 423 verses that relate to ethics, known as the *Dhammapada*, categorised in 26 chapters that relate to aspects of life. The *Dhammapada* verses are attributed to the Buddha. It is one of the best known of the Buddhist sacred writings.

These are some quotations and references from the *Dhammapada* that relate to peace:

Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is only appeased by love. This is an eternal law.

DHAMMAPADA 5

Just as a deep lake is clear and still, even so, on hearing the teachings and realising them, the wise become exceedingly peaceful.

DHAMMAPADA 82

Victory breeds hatred, for the defeated live in pain. Happily live the peaceful, giving up victory and defeat.

DHAMMAPADA 201

There is no fire like lust, no crime like hate. There is no ill like the body, no bliss higher than peace.

DHAMMAPADA 202

Because he has discarded evil, he is called a Brahmana; because he lives in peace, he is called a Samana [One who works for a higher purpose].

DHAMMAPADA 388

NOTE: BRAHMANA AND SAMANA REFER TO 'HOLY PEOPLE'.

Whoever tries to seek happiness through hurting others, cannot find happiness.

DHAMMAPADA 131

Cultivate the very path of peace. Nirvana has been expounded by the Auspicious One.

DHAMMAPADA 285

INVESTIGATE

Access a translation of the *Dhammapada* online. You will find many more verses related to peace in the *Dhammapada*. Read the text and note other significant references. Select several verses, with their references, and apply them to a Buddhist understanding of peace.

The principal teachings about peace in Buddhism

Inner peace is the ultimate aim of every Buddhist and is achieved through a number of practices including, most notably, those that lead to the cessation of desire. Peace begins with personal transformation, the seeking of enlightenment. Peace is a central concept in the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five and Ten Precepts (see Chapter 4 for explanations of these concepts).

Some key teachings (drawn from the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts) that relate to peace in Buddhism include:

- right thought
- right speaking
- right action
- right mindfulness
- right concentration (meditation)
- abstaining from killing living things
- abstaining from taking what is not given.

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Figure 15.3 While Buddhism seeks peace, there has always been conflict. This scene at Angkor Wat in Cambodia depicts the war against the Cham from Vietnam.

The concept of karma underlies the ideas associated with life in general and the concept of peace in particular. This is not fatalism in Buddhism, but rather a concept of personal responsibility. People can choose to develop right mindfulness, and thus strive for peace, or to remain in ignorance.

Ignorance is considered the cause of conflict and lack of peace at both an individual and world level. It is ignorance that is the basis for desire and greed and also hatred and conflict.

It is this ignorance that blinds people to the idea of impermanence. At an individual level, this is evident in prejudice, greed and inner conflict.

The Buddha taught that this ignorance is overcome by insight. Insight can be gained through processes such as meditation and following the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhism sees world peace as the result of individual peace.

CONSIDER

Civil rights activist A.J. Muste stated: 'There is no path to peace; peace is the path'. How does this reflect the teachings of Buddhism?

How Buddhism guides the individual in achieving inner peace

As suggested through this section, the spiritual exercises and devotion related to Buddhist life can lead to inner peace. Participation in *puja* (offerings), following the Noble Eightfold Path, developing skilfulness, meditation and the practice of yoga are all ways of achieving inner peace.

Inner peace is the central aim of every Buddhist's existence, and most Buddhist practices are means of developing this inner peace through the attainment of insight and the abolition of ignorance. By striving to achieve nirvana, Buddhists practise inner peace by following the middle way (the Noble Eightfold Path).

When examining the Buddhist devotional practice home *puja*, it is clear that it is not primarily 'worship'. It is, rather, a time and place for focused concentration and meditation. Meditation is one method that many Buddhists use to develop right mindfulness and thus a correct attitude to peace. As the *Dhammapada* states:

> To cease from all evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind: this is the advice of all Buddhas.
>
> *DHAMMAPADA* 183

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To do this, Buddhists practise meditation as a means of developing right thoughts and concentration, and to train the mind to achieve knowledge and inner peace.

There are many forms of meditation practised by Buddhists (possibly more than 50 different meditative practices) to achieve the purification of one's mind. The major techniques and outcomes include:

- *anapanasati* – concentration on breathing to bring insight
- *vipassana* – insight through understanding reality
- *samatha* – calmness brought by detachment from the world
- *mettabhavana* – practicing loving kindness and compassion
- *karmasthana* – the place in the mind where one works on spiritual development.

There are many different forms of meditation and they use many aids to assist the practice, often reflecting that particular variant or school of Buddhism. One example is that practised in Zen Buddhism (see additional persons and schools of thought for Buddhism). The aim of these forms of meditation is to achieve a state of peace and thus nirvana.

Other significant people who are offer examples of striving for inner peace include the XIV Dalai Lama (see Chapter 5) and Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh, who is acknowledged as a respected writer, scholar and leader. He has conducted many mindfulness retreats across the world and has written a number of books to aid adherents. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967.

How Buddhism contributes to world peace

World peace can be achieved through the efforts of people seeking peace. Their understanding and practice can influence others.

King Asoka (see Chapter 5) is a significant example of one who sought to live in a way that contributed to world peace. Living in India in the third century BCE, Asoka turned from a life of violence when he became king in north India, having been greatly influenced by Buddhist monks. He ruled his kingdom based on Buddhist principles.

Modern Buddhists, such as the XIV Dalai Lama (see chapter 5), considered a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, seek to proclaim peace. The Dalai Lama has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and is a well-known advocate for peace on the world stage. During his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, the XIV Dalai Lama said:

> True happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion and elimination of ignorance, selfishness and greed.
>
> XIV DALAI LAMA

His teachings and comments are readily available online. Other Buddhist people and organisations that promote peace:

- Thích Nhất Hạnh, is a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk and his Community of Mindful Living. He has been described as a human link with a prophetic past as well as a present-day soft-spoken advocate of peace. He has contributed to world peace as well as being an excellent example of one who strives for inner peace.
- Aung San Suu Kyi is a Burmese political leader who has endured political oppression and house arrest, been denied her political leadership by the military junta, but has retained a serene, peaceful opposition in Myanmar (Burma). She has received many international accolades for her stand. However in recent times she has been condemned for not preventing the violence against the Rohingya people.
- The Buddhist Peace Fellowship was established in 1978 as a grassroots movement. It is largely a Western Buddhist group and has called for an end to war in Iraq, as well as promoting social justice across the world. It has recently celebrated 40 years of tireless work for peace. They offer retreats, run conferences and courses, as well as organising protests and lobbying governments to work towards peace.
- World Peace Buddhists is a group associated with Soka Gakkai International, seeking to promote peace, culture and education, focusing on the teachings of Nichiren, a thirteenth-century Buddhist reformer. It seeks to empower individuals towards positive social global change.
- The World Council of Religions for Peace includes Buddhism, one of the religious traditions that is part of its interfaith organisational promotion of peace, religious cooperation and dialogue.
- Many individual Buddhists and Buddhist temples, such as the Nan Tien Temple near Wollongong, are involved in promoting peace in the community and run workshops and retreats designed to promote both individual and world peace. Nan Tien now has a university that offers a range of courses to interested students, many of them focused on peace studies.
- The Buddhist Council of NSW provides resources to promote peace in the community. The particularly involve volunteers in their projects and work towards social justice.

It is evident that one of the main ways Buddhist groups work towards world peace is believing that the combined efforts of those seeking inner peace will have an impact on the wider community. Thus, the importance of the Buddhist Sangha. Buddhism promotes the idea that working for social justice is one of the main ways of bringing world peace.

Check the websites of these organisation, and other similar groups, to keep updated with recent work and initiatives to use as examples of Buddhist endeavours to promote world peace.

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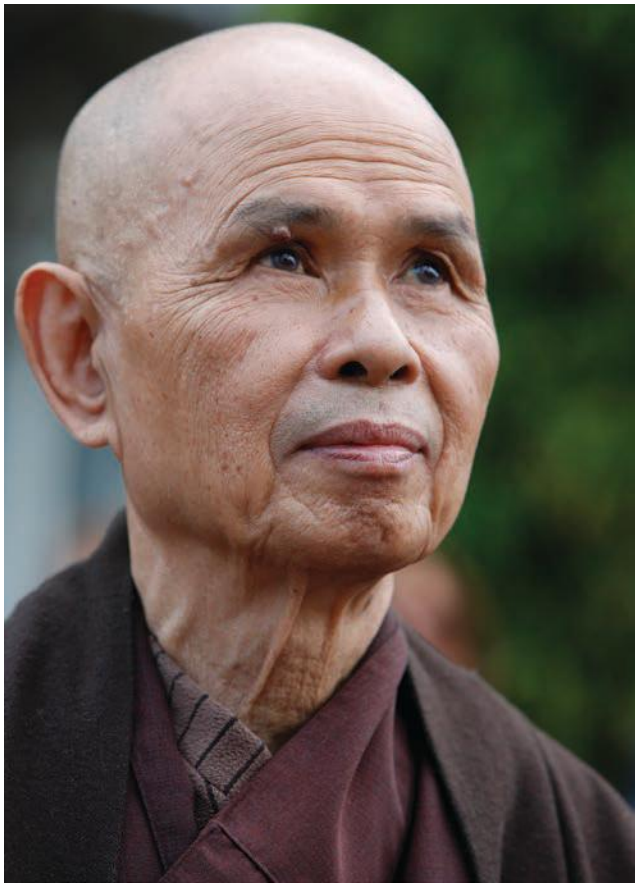

Figure 15.4 Buddhist master Thích Nhất Hạnh – a noted example of one who seeks inner peace but also advocates for world peace

Examples of Buddhist violence

In recent years, some focus has been placed on the expressions of violence in Buddhist countries. In Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks have been involved in civil unrest and protests against the governments of their countries, and have even taken up arms to fight. On occasions, Buddhists have been involved in self-immolation (setting themselves on fire) to protest, often leading to death.

In 2007, protests against the government of Myanmar were supported by Buddhist monks. As a result, it was called the Saffron Revolution (after the colour of the monks' robes): a peaceful protest, it was met with a violent response by the military regime. Earlier that year, Thai monks protested against the government in Thailand. In Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks have been accused of promoting violence against the Tamil population of that country.

There is an ongoing incompatibility between the teachings of the religious tradition and the actions of some of its adherents. This is found in all religious traditions. In Buddhism, adherents seek to find the lesser path of evil and explore other ways of promoting peace.

INVESTIGATE

How do Buddhists reconcile their involvement in violent conflict with the teachings of Buddha? Search the internet and see what you can discover.

EXERCISE 15.1

1 Detail the contribution of sacred texts to a Buddhist understanding of peace.
2 **Outline** the principal teachings about peace in Buddhism.
3 **Describe** a Buddhist understanding of inner peace and world peace. How do they relate to each other?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 15.1

1 Debate the following topic: 'Modern Buddhists have failed to understand the Buddha's teachings about peace'.
2 Prepare a 10-minute talk on the Buddhist understanding of inner peace. Be prepared to illustrate your talk with references to the Buddhist sacred writings as well as examples from Buddhist adherents.
3 Search the internet for various Buddhist organisations and movements. **Discuss** if they encourage, or discourage, world peace. Use examples from their websites.

15.3 CHRISTIANITY AND PEACE

Christianity has sought to present itself as a religious tradition that champions peace. Its language often reflects the desire for peace. A salutation between the priest and the congregation in many Christian services is 'Peace be with you' and the reply is 'And also with you'. Christians see Jesus as the prince of peace. Yet a superficial examination of human history can identify many wars fought in the name of Christianity. In Europe, many wars for the past thousand years have been between Christians, blessed by their churches. Often this was part of the colonisation of the 'new world' during the fifteenth century and the following years. The Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries; the conflict in Northern Ireland between Catholics and

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Protestants; and the ongoing liberation struggles in Uganda conducted by the Lord's Resistance Army are further examples of religious groups claiming to have 'God' on their 'side'. The section on religion in Australia pre-1945 (see Chapter 2) in this book also examines the role religion played in events surrounding Australia's involvement in World War I.

The Christian understanding of peace

Within Christianity, both aspects of peace are important – world peace and inner peace. Over the years, however, there have been differing interpretations and emphases. Christians draw from the teaching of the Bible and interpretations of it by the Church, as well as the views of Christian theologians, to develop a more complex understanding of peace.

How the understanding of peace is informed through sacred writings

The Bible is the sacred text used by Christians to formulate their doctrines, their ideas of peace and their theology of war. This is supplemented by the reflections of other theologians and the decisions of Church councils. The Bible is made up of the Old Testament (a translation of the Hebrew Bible) and the New Testament (used to understand the life and teachings of Jesus and the early Church). The New Testament is the designated text for this topic in the syllabus.

Old Testament background

While Christians emphasise the importance of the New Testament, they also regard the Hebrew Bible as part of their scriptures. For a more detailed explanation of Old Testament teachings on peace, see the section on Judaism and peace later in this chapter. However, some observations are appropriate here:

- The Old Testament has many stories of war and conflict, often commanded by God or done in his name (see Joshua 1:1–9, 8:1–2, 10:32).
- Israel experienced many attacks and great suffering, often by nations who were considered under the authority and control of God (2 Kings 24:1–4; 2 Chronicles 36:17).
- God sought peace for his people, but that depended on their obedience to him (Jeremiah 14:19; Isaiah 32:17).
- Peace will be possible under the reign of the Messiah, the 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:2–7).

The New Testament

The Christian New Testament sees Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people, the promised deliverer of peace to God's people. Thus the title Prince of Peace is applied to Jesus, as well as other significant titles given to the Messiah that are mentioned in the Old Testament.

The ultimate expression of peace in the New Testament is the peace that is achieved in the relationship between

INVESTIGATE

It seems strange that the cross, an instrument of cruelty, torture and execution, has become the recognised symbol for Christianity. Research and discover why such a controversial object has become the religious symbol for the Christian faith that has been carried into battle since Constantine in 312 CE.

God and human beings in the forgiveness of sins. Thus peace is ultimately a reference to the death of Jesus, the most significant work of Christ (see Romans 5:1–11) that leads to reconciliation (peace) with God. This is the ultimate expression of 'inner peace', peace with God. The inference here is that the peace of Jesus will come to all who follow him. The idea of peace for those who do not follow Jesus is left unmentioned.

It is from that forgiveness of all sins, won by Jesus on the cross, that Christians can achieve peace, and then spread that peace to others. In reconciliation with God, Christians find the ultimate expression of inner peace. Peace is both a command to follow and a gift given by God (John 14:27). Peace is one of the 'fruits of the spirit' that are to be displayed in Christian lives (Galatians 5:22). In the New Testament, peace is a personal quality to be developed and shown in relationships with others.

In the Gospels, peace is a recurrent theme in the teachings of Jesus. Major references include the Beatitude: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are the children of God' (Matthew 5:9). Jesus developed this in what is possibly the most radical thing he said: he told his followers to 'love your enemies' (Matthew 5:38–45). He also linked the idea of peace with universal love:

> A new commandment I give unto you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
> JOHN 13:34

Jesus suggested that there was real danger in resorting to violence. In the context of his arrest, when Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus healed the wound (Luke 22:51) and stated, 'Those who live by the sword will die by the sword' (Matthew 26:52), which is taken by many Christians as a prohibition for the use of weapons. Jesus recognised that his disciples would face difficulties and persecution, and left them with his peace, which would empower and guide his followers in the years ahead (John 14:27–31). This peace is different from the commonly understood human concept of peace. Jesus' idea of peace is developed further in the New Testament where, for example, in Philippians 4:7 it is the basis for relationships and called 'peace beyond understanding'.

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Figure 15.5 Conflict in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants has led to some violent events. On 4 December 1971, a bomb from the British army exploded at McGurk's Bar and killed 15 people.

Christians are to live at peace with everyone (Hebrews 12:14), particularly in the Christian community (Ephesians 4:3), and this idea is expressed in Paul's greeting as he begins his letters: 'May God our father give you grace and peace' (Colossians 1:2; see also 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; and 1 Thessalonians 1:1). Jesus and the early Christians encountered Roman soldiers but, except on one significant occasion, did not condemn or try to dissuade them from being soldiers. Jesus also advised his followers to follow the laws and pay the taxes of the Romans: 'Give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar' (Matthew 22:21). After Jesus' crucifixion, Paul suggested that Christians should accept Roman authority and should pray for the civil authorities (Romans 13:1–7).

Often religious traditions encourage both peace and speak of violence at the same time. Jesus had a **militant** message as well. Jesus did not carry a weapon, but he advised his followers to sell their cloaks and buy swords (Luke 22:36). Jesus also caused social disruption by violently driving merchants from the Temple (Luke 19:45–48; Mark 11:15–17). It was probably this act of social disobedience that led to his arrest and execution by the Romans. Jesus recognised that his words would bring conflict, even turning family member against family member: 'I did not come to bring peace, but a sword' (Matthew 10:34). He also spoke of the fact that Christians would face persecution as his followers (Matthew 5:11).

Militant
Combative, aggressive

The New Testament draws on the same holistic understanding of peace to be found in the Jewish scriptures, and the first Christians were themselves Jewish people who relied on their Jewish understandings and scriptures to interpret their lived experience of Jesus as the Christ. There were moves towards inwardness, but not exclusively so. The idea of inner peace owes itself to later interpreters (Augustine and other patristic fathers, Martin Luther and later Protestant thinkers) reclaiming the New Testament writings and seeing peace (and other concepts) from this more inwardly focused perspective.

While there are many references in the Old Testament to war and warfare, most New Testament references come back to the idea of inner conflict. Christian teachings on war have developed through theological study, Greek philosophy and the application of biblical principles to everyday life and issues.

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FURTHERMORE

As pointed out in Chapter 6, although it was the Romans who executed Jesus, Christians were quick to blame his execution on the Jewish people. This was not denied by the Vatican until the twentieth century. This has led to a long and violent tradition in Western Christianity of the persecution and murder of Jewish people. The theological bias against the beliefs of Jewish people is known as anti-Judaism. Theories of race, which were then directed against Jewish people, led to anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, the two are inextricably linked, since the denigration of the beliefs (and the people) led to their dehumanisation. It must also be acknowledged that crusades and pogroms continued against Jewish people in Christian communities and lands leading to their murder, forced conversion or suppression of human rights.

Why do you think this happened?

The principal teachings about peace in Christianity

In addition to the information relating to the understanding of peace from the Christian sacred texts listed on the previous page, there are several key additional teachings that have been developed by Christians. These include the concepts of just war and pacifism.

St Augustine's doctrine for just war

By the fifth century CE, the Roman Empire had become mostly Christian. At that time, however, forces from northern Europe began attacking Italy and the fall of Rome was close at hand. Against this background St Augustine, one of the great thinkers of the early Catholic Church, came up with the idea of the morally just war, in his substantial and influential work *Civitas Dei* (The City of God). Augustine divided his theory into *Jus ad Bellum* (The Right to Go to War) and *Jus in Bello* (Correct Behaviour while at War). Augustine's ideas became known as the 'just war' theory.

Taking a practical approach, St Augustine suggested that certain conditions must be met before a war is started. It must have a justifiable cause, that is, it cannot be aggressive – for more land or power – but must right a serious injustice. In fact, the grounds for a war have to be obvious to all. War must be carried out by a legitimate government, not just any rebellious group. The right intention must be held throughout the war; that is, all efforts must be directed at correcting the injustice that caused the war. A war should only be started if the killing of people is not futile and there will be a clear outcome. Finally, war should only be entered into as the last resort.

There are three main directives as to how war should be waged by Christians. It should be directed against those who caused the wrong – that is, a government or an army – and not against civilians. The use of force should be in relation to the wrong caused and, finally, the minimum amount of force needed to win should be used. Many would argue that just war has not been experienced since the mid-twentieth century.

CONSIDER

Try to think of a recent war where forces that were predominantly Christian adhered to the principles of St Augustine's just war. Some have suggested that modern warfare cannot ever be 'just war'. Do you think St Augustine was being too optimistic? What rules of war would you institute? Is it similar to international covenants on war such as the Geneva Convention? Is it possible to have a 'just war'?

Christian pacifism: the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Video

Prior to the fourth century CE, Christians could not join the Roman army. Once Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, under Constantine, they could. Some people, however, wanted to remain pacifists as the early Christian were. St Augustine devised his theory to mediate between the message of Jesus (in many respects a pacifist approach) and the practical need to defend the Roman Empire (which was turning Christian and seriously under threat from forces to the north). His theory of the just war was only haphazardly applied by the Christians who came after him, but there are other interpretations of Jesus' message for peace.

From the 1500s, many Protestant Christian groups emerged. One of these was the Society of Friends, founded by George Fox in 1648 in the light of the protracted English Civil War.

This group underlines its approach to personal peace in its worship. Quiet contemplation is the basis of its ritual. Friends mainly sit in quiet groups waiting for the inner light of Jesus to move them. Some members may

Figure 15.6 Society of Friends meeting house at Jordans, Buckinghamshire, England

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INVESTIGATE

See if you can you find a Quaker meeting house near you. Most congregations organise open days for visitors, so why not visit them, speak with them and discover what their attitude to peace is? Also, have a look at some Quaker websites.

occasionally shudder or quake in these peaceful meetings, which is one possible reason for them becoming known as Quakers. Another story behind the name is that Fox told a magistrate to tremble (quake) at the name of God. This group has no priests and manages its organisation through the consensus of members. The peace of worship transfers to the Quaker attitude to war. Quakers hold to a Testimony to Peace and refuse to participate in war.

Quakers have refused to fight and have sometimes been imprisoned by governments for refusing military service. Many Quakers have also died on battlefields when they have served in conflict situations, working in non-combatant positions. In World War I, many Quakers lost their lives serving as ambulance drivers and medical officers. Quakers worked tirelessly throughout the twentieth century to promote non-violent means of conflict resolution. In 1947, two charity organisations through which the Quakers operate were awarded the Nobel Peace prize.

How Christianity guides the individual in achieving inner peace

Inner peace is one aspect of the larger goal of peace within the teachings of the Christian churches. World peace comes from the desire of individuals to be at peace with God and each other. As suggested above, reconciliation with God is the way to achieve inner peace. Adherents then can help maintain and develop that inner peace through the practice of prayer and meditation. Following the example of Jesus Christ, living a life of service and faithfulness to God also helps maintain this inner peace. It is the example of Jesus that motivates and guides Christians in achieving and developing inner peace.

Ecumenism
Movement within Christian churches towards unity among different Christian denominations

Interfaith dialogue
Move to greater cooperation and harmony among different religious traditions

The New Testament links the idea of peace with others with the inner battle that human beings face (James 4:1–3). Relationships with other people are said to be linked with individual relationships with God. The Two Great Commandments make this clear:

> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength and Love your neighbour as yourself.
>
> MARK 12:30–31

Inner peace is peace with God, and that is expressed in relationships with others and ultimately in world peace.

Christians use a variety of means to achieve and maintain inner peace. Some of these are conducted by ordinary Christians, such as prayer and meditation; others seek retreats and monasticism as special forms of achieving God's peace. There are other examples of those who seek inner peace that also serve as models for Christian adherents. These include St Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King Jr, Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day.

In Christianity, the quest for social justice and inner peace are not mutually exclusive – they are part of one goal, a holistic, relational idea of peace: peace with God, peace with one's neighbour, peace with oneself. The image of the 'kingdom/reign of God' is one such relational/holistic image.

How Christianity contributes to world peace

Christians aim to express their inner peace in their attitudes to the world. Christians are part of a spiritual kingdom that is expressed in peace (Romans 14:17); the command to Christians is to live at peace with others (Hebrews 12:14).

The Christian concept of peace has been interpreted in many different ways over time. It has included the early Christians who accepted the persecution of the Roman Empire, the aggression of the Christian state–sponsored religious wars of the Middle Ages, the chaplains of the armed forces in the world wars and the pacifism of the Quakers.

One significant way Christians help develop world peace is to try to right the wrongs of human society. This is through the development and advocacy of social justice and can be done on an **ecumenical** basis or at a denominational level, while still others are involved in **interfaith dialogue**. Some are formal groups; others are informal working relationships:

- Pax Christi (Catholic) is an international organisation with an Australian chapter. Its work is varied and includes lobbying world governments, releasing statements on issues of peace and social justice, publications and grass roots initiatives towards peace.
- UnitingJustice Australia is an organisation of the Uniting Church of Australia. It seeks to pursue 'national matters of social and economic justice, human rights, peace and the environment'. They issue statements and publications, organise conferences and are involved in action to support efforts of peace.
- Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) 'are committed to working for equality and peace and believe firmly in religious tolerance'. They believe pacifism is not just avoiding conflict, rather it is an active process of removing situations where violence and war may occur. They were involved in beginning the Christian Peacemaker Teams (now an independent organisation). Christian Peacemaker Teams send teams into conflict settings to promote peace. They support 'spiritually-centered peace-

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making, creative public witness, nonviolent direct action, and protection of human rights'.
- Australian Student Christian Movement is an organisation of tertiary students who seek to promote peace. It is committed to dialogue, ecumenism, social justice and peace. It has a long history of supporting students' efforts for peace in Australia.
- National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) is the body that represents most churches in Australia. It has a variety of ecumenical initiatives to promote peace, including making national statements on issues, lobbying governments and supporting peace initiatives at a national and local level. These include initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as well as international relief.
- Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission was begun by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne as an interfaith initiative, to promote harmony in Australia and to work cooperatively with other religious groups. Other similar initiatives include Affinity Intercultural Foundation, Religions for Peace Australia, Islamic Sciences Research Academy, Jewish Christian Muslim Association and the Regional Interfaith Network.

You can check the websites of these organisations, and other similar groups, to keep updated with recent work and initiatives to use as examples of Christian endeavours to promote world peace.

EXERCISE 15.2

1 **Outline** the New Testament's comments about peace, noting the development and application of the key concepts.
2 **Explain** the principal teachings about peace in Christianity, noting different understandings of the teachings.
3 **Describe** a Christian understanding of inner peace and how that applies to world peace.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 15.2

1 Interview a Christian minister or an active Christian adherent and **discuss** their understanding of peace. Note the reasons why they hold their point of view.
2 Prepare a 10-minute talk on the Christian understanding of inner peace and how that is linked to the sacred texts.
3 Visit the websites of the Christian organisations that are involved in promoting world peace. Detail their rationale and their contributions and **assess** their effectiveness.

15.4 HINDUISM AND PEACE

Hinduism can be perceived as a religious tradition that affirms peace, such as that portrayed in the non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi and the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The Epics, such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, depict war and reflect on war while discussing its consequences However, peace and harmony are core to Hindu philosophy. The idea of peace in Hinduism is not just limited to the outer world. Hinduism teaches the importance of inner peace as well, and arguably this very idea is the origin of yoga as meditation. Another major feature in the Hindu understanding of peace is that it teaches to be peaceful to all humankind and even beyond to the whole universe, including earth, sky, flora and fauna (*Yajurveda* 36:17).

The stories of the gods often involve conflict between them for supremacy. Images or statues of some Hindu deities may lead to misunderstanding about Hinduism in relation to peace. For example, Maa Kali (Mother Kali) can be shown holding an ancient weapon in one of her many hands. However, such images or statues are poetic depictions of a multi-faceted role or personality of that particular deity. Each of the hands in the image symbolically shows a quality or role: lotus for wisdom, conch shell for piousness, or a weapon for protection of righteousness and peace. But there are stories of Kali expressing violence and rage and some of her devotees have expressed devotion through acts of violence, such as the *thuggee* cult.

The Hindu understanding of peace

In the Hindu **varna** system, the Kshatriyas (warrior class) are dedicated to the protection of society. The *Bhagavad Gita* advocates four methods of persuasion for the the fulfilment of their duty: *Sama* (gentle persuasion), *Daana* (giving gifts, negotiation, bribery), *Bheda* (creating division) and *Danda* (sanctions, punishment, using force). This suggests that, in the face of evil and injustice, Hinduism allows for the use of force. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna urges Arjuna to fulfil his dharma related to his varna (a Kshatriya), through engaging in the battle recorded in the *Mahabharata*.

Varna
Concept commonly known as caste; the four varna form the basis of Hindu society

In Hinduism the ultimate expression of social peace is harmony, cooperation and contentment. Individual

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Figure 15.7 A scene from the *Mahabharata*: Arjuna slaying an enemy

peace is achieved through **moksha** – liberation from desire, craving, attachment – all of which contribute to one's suffering here and now. In achieving moksha, freedom from **samsara**, one truly finds peace.

Moksha (or Mukti)
Release from the cycle of rebirth; reunification of the atman with Brahman, or the separation of consciousness from matter

Samsara
Cycle of rebirth, or reincarnation

Ahimsa
Non-violence

Ten Commitments
Ten actions that have been developed to express Hindu ethical behaviour

Peace in Hinduism has the connotation of balance, order, harmony, reciprocation and universal well-being, internal and external. Internal peace is a state of mind attained by meditation, yoga, etc. Hindus generally aim to achieve the state of one who is dedicated to the welfare of all sentient beings (*loka-sangraha*). Krishna repeatedly says in the *Bhagavad Gita* that all one's actions should be dedicated to the welfare of others. Hinduism also contains the doctrine of ***ahimsa*** or non-violence to all aspects of the world. This doctrine is most cherished and promoted by members of the Jain religion, but as Mahatma Gandhi's use of the term shows, it is essential in Hindu thinking also, as the first of the **Ten Commitments**.

Yet, Hinduism recognises the natural state of violence that is inherent in existence itself. Even the *trimurti*, by their very nature, embody a natural balance – Brahma strives to keep creating, Lord Vishnu tries to preserve everything that Brahma creates and Lord Shiva completes by transforming everything that is created – again illustrating the inherent cyclical nature of all existence, a cycle of destruction and creation. Additionally, Kali is a particularly fearsome goddess who is often identified with killing demons, and she personifies the principle of time and change. Kali is often depicted wearing a garland of skulls, representing all the egos we assume, and a skirt of human hands, representing all the happiness projects we engage in. She is armed with a sword, which represents wisdom, and a noose, symbolic of all the attachments that bind us to the cycle of births and deaths, and she drinks the blood of the demon Raktabija who represents the endless multiplication of our desires. However, this can be perceived as violence personified and has been interpreted as such by some of her devotees.

Mahatma Gandhi is well known as an advocate of non-violence and sought to live according to the principle of *ahimsa*. Gandhi suggested that peace, as non-violence, could be interpreted as a form of struggle. He also interpreted the *Mahabharata* as an anti-war epic; by the end of the book almost all of the major characters have been killed, and Gandhi saw this as an argument for the futility of war, the price of the folly of revenge and violence.

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INVESTIGATE

Hinduism seems to emphasise peace, especially inner peace. Investigate the Hindu goddess Kali. How does she represent the natural violent tendencies inherent in humans? How does Hinduism define the path to peace, internal and external?

Figure 15.8 Image of Goddess Kali stepping on her consort Shiva's body as he protects the Earth from her wild dance

Hinduism draws a distinction between the concepts of inner peace and world peace. It is primarily concerned with the inner spiritual life of the individual and the **atman**. The concept of dharma brings the idea of peace to the issue of world peace. What is peace in Hinduism? It is ultimately the achievement of moksha – freedom from suffering, through the fulfilment of dharma and spiritual exercises and devotion that lead to inner peace.

How the understanding of peace is informed through sacred writings

The Hindu sacred writings contain many accounts of warfare, particularly the great Hindu Epics. The *Ramayana* climaxes with the war between Lord Rama and Ravana to rescue Sita. The *Mahabharata* is essentially the story of the conflict between cousins the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Pandavas' cause was just, and Lord Krishna took their side and ensured their victory, yet the victory proves ultimately empty when the Kauravas ascend to heaven. One of the most recognised Hindu writing is the *Bhagavad Gita*, a section of the *Mahabharata*. It consists of the conversation between the Lord Krishna and Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, on the eve of the great battle. It reminds humanity about the importance of discharging one's duty without expectation or anxiety about its consequences, delivered in the form of a lecture to Arjuna by Lord Krishna. For Arjuna, his duty as a warrior is to engage in the battle and fulfil his dharma. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the sacred text indicated in the syllabus for Hinduism.

The *Bhagavad Gita*

The conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna recorded in the *Bhagavad Gita* also contains much about peace – both inner peace and world peace. This relates to the context of the conversation, the impending battle that Arjuna wishes to avoid. The following sections are interpretations of several passages that refer to the issue of war and peace (translated by Dr Ramanada Prasad; there are many different translations that differ markedly):

- A just expression of violence can, in fact, be a way to achieve peace (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:37–38).
- Arjuna, treat happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, wining and defeat alike and perform your duty. (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:38).
- Arjuna suggests that war can be avoided and that his enemies are so overcome with greed and evil they cannot escape their own destruction (*Bhagavad Gita* 1:37–39).
- Lord Krishna says the evil people are already dead, and Arjuna is simply his instrument (*Bhagavad Gita* 11:33).
- As a member of the Kshatriya varna, it is Arjuna's duty to engage in battle, it is his dharma (*Bhagavad Gita* 18:43 and other passages).
- Inner peace is probably the major theme developed in the *Bhagavad Gita* and there are many passages that relate to it; for example, there are extensive sections in the *Bhagavad Gita* 2:55–71, a discussion of desire, pleasure and passion. It concludes with 'The man who forsakes all desires and abandons all pride of possessions and of self reaches the goal of peace supreme' (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:71).
- The cause of conflict, as suggested in the previous verses, is desire and anger (*Bhagavad Gita* 3:37).
- Wisdom and knowledge are also ways of achieving inner peace (*Bhagavad Gita* 4:38–39).
- Peace is knowing God (*Bhagavad Gita* 5:29).
- Chapter 8 contains an extensive discussion of seeking peace in Brahman. This is the ultimate expression of inner peace. The chapter concludes

Atman
The Hindu self, similar to the concept of the individual soul

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with the suggestion that a far greater reward is attained by the yogi who knows the truth of light and darkness: he attains everlasting peace. (*Bhagavad Gita* 8:28).

- Everlasting peace is gained by total devotion, when atman is incorporated into Brahman: 'When he knows me in truth he merges with Me'. (*Bhagavad Gita* 18:55, and see 11:55).

As can be seen there are extensive comments in the *Bhagavad Gita* relating to peace. You should find the *Bhagavad Gita* to be quite accessible and should take the time to read and analyse the teachings on peace contained within its text. Copies are readily available online or in print.

Other writings

The *Mahabharata* also notes that the reason human beings are at war, and not peace, is because they are 'slaves to lust and greed' Brahma sends a goddess to destroy human beings but, rather than perpetuate such violence, she asks that humans be allowed to kill each other

The *Rig-Veda's* collection of inspired hymns and mantras were used to invoke courage, happiness, health, peace, prosperity, success and wisdom. The *Artharva Veda* calls for peace to reign: 'May not the din of frequent battle carnage arise, may the arrow not fly when the day of Indra has arrived!' (*Artharva Veda* 7.52.2).

The principal teachings about peace in Hinduism

Inner peace is the ultimate aim of every Hindu and is achieved through a number of ways, including devotion to the gods, meditation and prayer, following one's dharma and practising the virtues of life as expressed in the Ten Commitments. Yoga is one of Hinduism's practical tools to inner peace followed by Hindu adherents. Yoga has become very popular in the West, though many practitioners are limited to seeing it as a mere exercise for the physical and emotional self.

As Hindus develop inner peace, this flows into their relationships with others. This is part of the dharma of everyday life. But peace is ultimately achieved when they experience release from the cycle of rebirth, known as moksha.

World peace will ultimately be achieved when the cycle of existence draws to an end. The tenth avatar of Lord Vishnu is Kalki, who will come at the end of *Kali Yuga* (the time of darkness, often identified with the present era) to usher in an era of peace and prosperity.

How Hinduism guides the individual in achieving inner peace

Hindus believe there are Four Aims of life – dharma (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (enjoyment) and moksha (release from earthly existence). The spiritual exercises and devotion related to Hindu life can lead to inner peace. Devotion to the gods, the fulfilling of dharma, striving to achieve the Four Aims of life and the practice of yoga are all ways of achieving inner peace. Inner peace is the central aim of every Hindu's existence and most Hindu practices are ways of helping to develop this. The six great enemies of peace are *kama* (self-centred desire), *krodha* (anger), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (arrogance or hubris), *lobha* (selfishness) and *matsarya* (malicious envy). The spiritual life is one of a constant battle against these afflictive emotions.

INVESTIGATE

Read the section in Chapter 9 of the textbook on Mahatma Gandhi. Supplement that with additional research on Gandhi. Note down his contribution to peace and discuss why he was so influential.

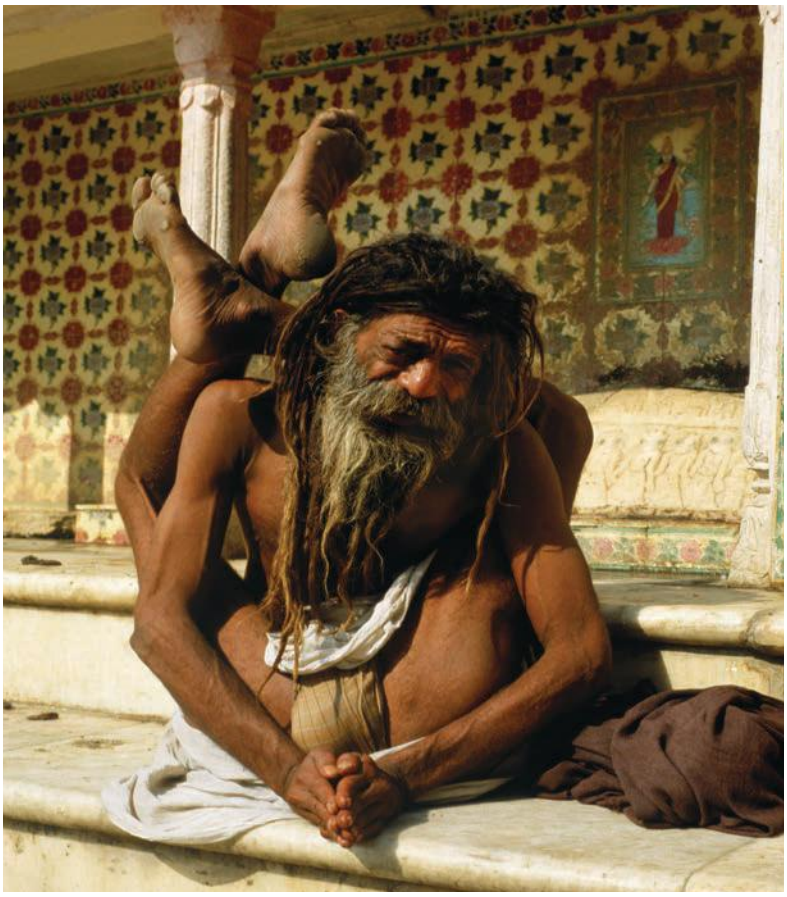

Figure 15.9 A Hindu holy man practising yoga

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Figure 15.10 The promotion of peace includes the provision of food for the needy – provided by many Hindu temples and organisatons

How Hinduism contributes to world peace

Hinduism has been involved in seeking world peace through a number of organisations, often in dialogue with other faiths. The white stripe in the centre of the Indian flag symbolises peace. In Australia, groups such as the Hindu Council of Australia and the Hindu Heritage Society seek to develop understanding of Hinduism and peaceful relationships with others. The Hindu Council of Australia is training chaplains to work in hospitals, workshops on yoga and meditation, and social welfare and social justice activities. The Hindu Heritage Society promotes *seva* (selfless service); that is, promoting peace and harmony.

The mantras from the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *Shikshavalli* 1.11.2 include '*atithidevo bhava*' (revere the guest as God), and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam Maho Upanishad* 6:71 preaches 'the whole world is one family'. Following these, Hindus have traditionally provided refuge and shelter to persecuted people including Jewish people, Zoroastrians, Syrian Christians and Tibetan Buddhists. Provisions of food and shelter for the needy is one way of promoting practical expressions of peace.

Gandhi

Hinduism made one of the greatest contributions to the understanding of world peace through one person, Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi, who taught and practised the doctrines of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and ***satyagraha*** (non-violent resistance).

Satyagraha
Literally holding on to or grasping at the truth; sometimes referred to as soul force or truth force

Mahatma Gandhi and his followers had a significant role to play in the establishment of modern India. They saw their nation, once free of British colonial control, as an unaligned nation during the Cold War. That is, India had no wish to side with either the United States and its allies or the Soviet bloc. Certainly Gandhi is a significant example of one individual who had a huge impact on the world in his attempts to bring peace. He was largely successful in achieving Indian independence through peaceful civil disobedience and quelling the violence at the partitioning of India and Pakistan. He was greatly grieved when the partition between India and Pakistan took place in 1947. That partitioning has led to ongoing conflict between the two countries that continues today. See Chapter 9 for a detailed discussion on the work of Gandhi. He provided a model and inspiration for others such as Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela.

EXERCISE 15.3

1 Detail the *Bhagavad Gita*'s comments about peace, **summarising** them under headings that relate to the different aspects of peace.
2 Develop the principal teachings about peace in Hinduism and illustrate with more detailed information and examples.
3 **Discuss** the Hindu understanding of inner peace and how it relates to world peace.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 15.3

1 **Discuss** the concept of religious acceptance given by Hinduism and how it is different from religious tolerance.
2 Prepare a 10-minute talk on the Hindu understanding of inner peace, with references to the Hindu sacred writings.
3 Search online for Hindu organisations and modern Hindu movements. **Discuss**, using examples, how they encourage, or discourage, movements towards world peace.

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15.5 ISLAM AND PEACE

Islam began with the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad. There was considerable initial resistance to the message that Muhammad brought. In the seventh century CE, when Muhammad began to spread the message of Islam, there were many warring tribal groups and clans in the Arabian Peninsula. Bedouin society at that time emphasised loyalty to the clan and revenge killing was frequent. Two of the largest empires near Arabia at the time, the Byzantines and the Persian Sassanians, were also in constant wars for domination of the Middle East. It is not surprising, then, to learn that Islam's beginnings were surrounded by stories of warfare and violence. Muhammad had to fight to survive personally, fight for the survival of his message and lead his large community of believers whose survival was at stake. Yet, Islam sought to live at peace with all who accepted the message of this new faith.

The early centuries of Islam are stories of expansion, often involving political intrigue and warfare. By the end of the first century after Islam began, it had spread through the Middle East into Northern Africa and Spain in the west, and through Persia towards India in the east. Many conquered peoples converted to Islam, although this was not a requirement, and the majority remained in their older faiths. The Qur'an speaks directly against forced conversions, such as the following verses:

> Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.
> QUR'AN 16:125
>
> Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error.
> QUR'AN 2:256
>
> Will you compel mankind, against their will, to believe?
> QUR'AN 10:99

The conversions to Islam took centuries. As Islam spread into southern Europe, the Europeans and the Christian faith felt threatened and the early relationship between Christianity and Islam was tarnished by violence. This was particularly evident in the eleventh century when the **Crusades** were conducted to win the Holy Land for Christianity. While early Crusades did achieve some success, they soon became more of a political and economic movement than a truly religious war, intended to disguise problems in European society and Church. The Crusades have affected relationships between Christians and Muslims for the past millennium and remind religious adherents of less tolerant times.

Crusades
A series of attacks by European Christians to recapture the Holy Land, which was at that time held by Islam, in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries CE

Islam is often depicted in the popular media as a religious tradition bent on conquest, but that is a misunderstanding of its desire for humanity to believe in God and lead ethical lives through the guidance of revelation expressed in the Qur'an. In this way it resembles many other religious traditions that seek converts in the belief that they are the true faith. Muhammad is an example of the merciful nature of Islam. While he endured the violence and opposition of others, he sought to show mercy. When he won victory over Mecca, only four people were killed and a general amnesty was declared to the people of Mecca who persecuted him and his followers for nearly 20 years. It is said by Muslim historians that in Muhammad's 23 years of struggle, fewer than 200 people were killed during all the wars in which he was involved, and many of those wars were conducted in self-defence.

The Muslim understanding of peace

In Islam, peace is only possible when the individual achieves inner peace and spiritual contentment (Qur'an 89:27-30), which is the result of true 'Islam'; that is, letting oneself be transformed for the better through submission to Allah (Qur'an 5:15–16). This impacts on relationships with others: first, the family, and then the community and finally, peace within society (Qur'an 30:21). Islam teaches that the justice that results from such peace and obedience to Islamic law will then result in world peace. The breakdown of nationalistic boundaries, economic injustice and racial divisions will mean there is no need for war. The final achievement of peace will be the attainment of paradise, 'the home of peace' (Qur'an 10:25).

How the understanding of peace is informed through sacred writings

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith contain references to peace and are designated as the sacred texts in the syllabus. As both are considered the sacred writings of Islam and revelations of the guidance of Allah (Qur'an) and the example and teachings of Muhammad (Hadith), the references contained within them are considered to be significant. Yet, some passages have been misinterpreted by those who wish to use violence as a means of political struggle and use the influence of Islam as a means of revenge against the West. The Arabic words for war are *harb* and *qital*. War is spoken of 36 times in the Qur'an while peace is mentioned 67 times. The Qur'an is clear that Allah is peace; it is one of his 99 names: 'Allah is the … source of peace and perfection' (Qur'an 59:23).

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The Qur'an

Many references to peace in the Qur'an refer to the concept of inner peace, which in Islam is the state of contentment resulting from the belief and spiritual closeness to Allah. Some passages have been mentioned previously, but there are other relevant passages:

- The greeting to men of faith is 'Peace' (Qur'an 7:46, 10:10).
- If an enemy inclines to peace, so should Muslims (Qur'an 8:61).
- Tranquillity (peace) is given by Allah (Qur'an 48:4, 18, 26).
- Inner contentment is a result of being pleased with Allah (Qur'an 89:27-28).

The concept of greater jihad or inner struggle (striving) is central to developing inner peace:

> Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might … They are the people who will achieve salvation.
> QUR'AN 9:20

This passage from the chapter Al Hajj is a reminder that the Hajj itself is a means of striving to achieve inner peace:

CONSIDER

What images come to mind when the word jihad is mentioned? They are often images of violence and terrorism. Jihad has a greater definition than this. Read as widely as you can to develop an understanding of greater and lesser jihad and their meanings. Discuss the importance of a true understanding of jihad.

> Strive in his cause as you ought to strive, with sincerity and under discipline.
> QUR'AN 22:78
>
> And those who strive in our cause – we will certainly guide them into our paths: for truly Allah is with those who do right.
> QUR'AN 29:69

World peace is addressed in several passages in the Qur'an, some of which may seem to advocate war. There is a lengthy section that begins with the command: 'Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you …' (Qur'an 2:190).

This passage has often been used to demonstrate that Islam is a violent religion. However, this passage clearly had a particular context in mind, which was the attack on the Prophet Muhammad by the people of Mecca.

Figure 15.11 Muslims pray under a peace banner. The Ahmadiyya Islamic Community believes in love for all, hatred for none.

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Even with this knowledge, there are clear limits on the violence mentioned (Qur'an 2:190) and the reminder that Allah is forgiving and merciful (Qur'an 2:192).

The Qur'an suggests that war should be a last resort (see Qur'an 2:109 and 4:77). When Muslims were forced from their homes and had to migrate as asylum seekers to Medina, they were still attacked by Meccans, so Allah gave permission for them to fight to defend themselves (see Qur'an 22:39–41). War must be conducted only when there is a righteous cause and intention, and it then becomes an obligation to defend religious freedom (Qur'an 22:39–41), for self-defence (Qur'an 2:190) and in defending those who cannot defend themselves (Qur'an 4:75). When warfare is ended, treaties are to be respected (Qur'an 16:91–92).

Passages from the Hadith include the following:

> Hate your enemy mildly; he may become your friend one day.
>
> The most excellent jihad is to speak the truth in the face of a tyrant.

When Muhammad returned from one of his military campaigns, he said:

> We have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad – the struggle of the individual with his own self.

The principal teachings about peace in Islam

As noted in the introduction, the word *islam* is linked to the root words *salm* (peace) and *slm* (submission). Thus peace is the result of submitting to the guidance of Allah so that one can transform to be a better person.

Jihad

The term **jihad** has become well known in the media and is often applied to the violence perpetuated by Muslims in terrorist attacks on the West. Jihad is thus interpreted by many in the West as 'holy war', which is actually a Christian concept from the time of the Crusades. However, applying this concept to Islam is a generalisation that does not faithfully describe the meaning and concepts of jihad. Jihad has been used by terrorist groups to claim religious legitimacy for their cause and it has also been misunderstood by the West, thus confusing acts of terrorism with jihad. The word jihad actually means 'striving' and is related to the concept of effort. It refers to the effort made by each Muslim in striving to serve Allah through devotion, self-sacrifice and ability, and through their love and compassion for others. The Qur'an differentiates between greater jihad (personal striving) and lesser jihad (use of military action).

Jihad
Struggle or striving; related to the concept of effort, struggle or resistance; a religious duty

As salamu alaykum
Arabic greeting that means 'Peace be upon you'

Greater jihad is the struggle against the lower desires and passions of the individual, the avoidance of selfishness, and obedience to the commands of Allah. Greater jihad then refers to personal peace. Lesser jihad refers to the act of fighting to defend one's homeland and nation that could be under attack, and thus refers to a striving for world peace.

It is important to remember that peace in Islam is more than simply the absence of war, and jihad is only one aspect of war and peace. Peace is the natural order of things and life. The word for peace is contained in the traditional Muslim greeting, ***As salamu alaykum***, which means 'Peace be upon you'.

How Islam guides the individual in achieving inner peace

The Muslim struggle for inner peace, greater jihad, has been described. Personal peace should be developed by believing in God, following guidance of God expressed in the Qur'an and adorning the model character of the Prophet Muhammad. When a person attains inner peace, this will be reflected in their relationships with their family, community and society as a whole. Muslims believe that this will lead to happiness in this world and the next when peace is achieved in the realisation of a place in paradise after the day of judgement.

It is achieved by participation in the greater jihad, overcoming the obstacles to peace. Sufi Muslims may also practice meditation.

The Five Pillars, when applied to the life of a Muslim, are also a means of improving oneself, getting spiritually close to God and developing inner peace. Acknowledgement of the *shahada* prayer, almsgiving, fasting and the Hajj lead to inner peace but also are a step to promoting world peace.

How Islam contributes to world peace

Islam, as it developed, became aware that it needed peaceful relationships with other nations. This began when the first of the four caliphs, Abu Bakr, established rules for war that drew from teachings in the Qur'an, but developed them into principles and laws that related to practical applications. These rules covered many aspects of war and sought to protect civilians, those who had sought monasticism, the environment and the bodies of the dead.

CONSIDER

Islam is often depicted in the media as a violent religious tradition. Consider why it has come to be depicted this way. Ask the question: What evidence is there that many of the acts done in the name of Islam are, in fact, done in the name of Islam? Is Islam a religion of peace?

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Many Muslim organisations seek to contribute to peaceful coexistence and actively promote an image of a religious tradition concerned about peace. This has been particularly important in the light of popular media implications that Islam promotes violence. Some of this takes the form of interfaith dialogue, while other organisations are specifically Muslim:

- Muslim Peace Fellowship quotes 'Let there be no compulsion in religion'. Founded in the USA it seeks to promote 'the theory and practice of Islamic non-violence'. It does so through various campaigns and interfaith initiatives. Check their website for current initiatives.
- World Assembly of Muslim Youth supports youth initiatives.
- Islamic Council of NSW seeks to support the Muslim community in NSW, especially through humanitarian efforts and promoting peace in the wider community.
- Affinity Intercultural Foundation promotes public events, conferences and initiatives that bring people together. Affinity works closely with ISRA.
- Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) works closely with schools and educational organisations, such as Charles Sturt University. It is also involved in community programs, and interfaith groups in promoting peace initiatives. Check their website for current initiatives.

EXERCISE 15.4

1 List verses from the Qur'an about peace.
2 **Outline** the principal teachings about peace in Islam, noting the concepts of greater and lesser jihad.
3 **Discuss** the relationship between the understandings of inner peace and world peace in Islam.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 15.4

1 Visit a mosque and talk to a Muslim leader. **Discuss** their understanding of peace and how it relates to the everyday life of a Muslim adherent.
2 Compile a scrapbook of media reports of Muslim terrorism. Prepare a summary of the current controversy about Muslim terrorists. **Discuss** how the reports relate to an understanding of Islam and a Muslim understanding of peace.
3 Visit the websites of several of the Muslim organisations that are involved in promoting world peace. Detail their contributions and assess their effectiveness.

15.6 JUDAISM AND PEACE

> Great is peace since all other blessings are included in it.
> VAYIKRAH RABBAH 9 (MIDRASH ON THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS)

The traditional Jewish greeting is *Shalom*. *Shalom* means peace and is an expression of the hope to achieve peace. It also implies completeness and wellness as it comes from the root S–L–M, which indicates completion or wholeness, and is related to the name of the most important city of Israel, Jerusalem (Ir Shalem – City of Peace).

However, a brief examination of the history of the Jewish people soon reveals that peace is a hope rather than necessarily a reality. The Hebrew people faced adversity from their earliest days. They forged their identity after the release from slavery in Egypt, battled in war to win their homeland, and faced generations of invasion and occupation before being driven from their homeland in several exiles and dispersions. Following the rise of Christianity and Islam, the Jewish people faced persecution and anti-Semitism, culminating in the events of the Holocaust. Following the establishment of the modern state of Israel, the Jewish people have faced attack across their borders, terrorist threats and conflict with their neighbours. Yet, despite this, Judaism is a religion that seeks peace, and desires peace within each individual and with all people.

The understanding of peace in Judaism

Judaism believes all humanity is called to live righteous, and thus peaceful, lives. That is part of the Noahide Covenant (the covenant God made with Noah following the flood described in Genesis 6–8 (see Chapter 12). The Noahide Covenant and Noahide Laws include the commands not to murder, not to steal, and to ensure justice is done. There are seven laws that are

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CONSIDER

Develop a timeline of the people of Israel from their beginnings. How much of that has been impacted by war and violence? How might these events have influenced the development of a Jewish understanding of peace?

considered the pillars of human civilisation. While the covenant established at Mount Sinai relates to the Hebrew people, the Noahide Covenant is relevant to all humanity.

Within Judaism, both aspects of peace are important – world peace and inner peace. Over the years, however, differing interpretations and emphases have arisen. It would seem that the way to truly find inner peace is by 'knowing God'.

How the understanding of peace is informed through sacred writings

The sacred text indicated in the syllabus for developing an understanding of peace in Judaism is stated as 'the Prophetic vision of peace on Earth'. There is no single sacred text by that name. Rather the statement refers particularly to the various aspects of the Hebrew Bible that draw from the greatest of the prophets, Moses, and thus the Torah (the Law), through to the prophets whose writings are recorded in the Nevi'im (Prophets) and implicitly the Ketuvim (writings) as well. These are the Jewish scriptures, the Tanakh.

The Tanakh is a record of God's dealings with His people, the Jewish people, and it is a record of the ongoing struggle to re-establish peace with God and peace within his creation, from the time of creation (Genesis 1–2). The destruction of that peace is recorded in Genesis 3, which notes that relationships between God and humanity have been affected as well as those between people and even the physical world. Peace comes from the restored relationships with God and between people.

The Tanakh and the 'prophetic vision of peace on Earth'

The Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, speaks of the history of God's dealings with his chosen people, the people of Israel. These are some of references to this:

- The final two books of the Torah (Numbers and Deuteronomy) include battles to gain control of the biblical land of Israel. It should be noted that the offer of peace was made to residents of the towns before warfare was undertaken (Deuteronomy 20:10). It is important to note that even in the context of warfare there are clear instructions to preserve trees and provide for the care of the land (see sections in Chapter 13 on environmental ethics).

Figure 15.12 A symbol for peace, the dove with an olive branch, is from the story of the flood in the Book of Genesis. It signifies the safety of dry land and the establishment of the Noahide Covenant with humanity.

- The Aaronic blessing is a call for God to grant his peace to the people of Israel (Numbers 6:26).
- The Tanakh has many stories of war and conflict, often commanded by God or done in his name (Joshua 1:1–9, 8:1–2, 10:32).
- Israel experienced many attacks and great suffering, often by nations who were considered under the authority and control of God (2 Kings 24: 1–4, 2 Chronicles 36:17).
- There are many passages praising peace, including Proverbs 25:21 and Psalm 34:15.

This message of peace is developed further when the prophetic vision is examined more closely in the writings of the prophets. These are some references to this:

- God sought a peaceful life for his people, but that depended on their obedience to him (Jeremiah 14:19, Isaiah 32:17).
- Peace will be possible under the reign of the Messiah, the 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:2–7).
- The vision of the peaceful Messianic kingdom includes peace through all creation, expressed in the imagery of the 'wolf also shall dwell with the lamb … and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together'. Peace will reign because 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord' (Isaiah 11:1–9).
- Peace is gained by trusting in God (Isaiah 26:3).
- The powerful image of beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks are contained in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3–4.
- The way to peace, the way to true worship of God, is expressed by social justice, in the words of Micah who speaks of justice, kindness and walking with God (Micah 6:6–8).
- Some would take these ideas further and argue that to be truly peaceful, one should practise vegetarianism (Isaiah 66:3a).

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CONSIDER

Drawing from the Tanakh, describe as clearly as possible the prophetic vision of peace on Earth. Compare that with the reality of life on Earth. What needs to change for that peace to come about?

- In the prophetic vision, peace is clearly linked to the concept of social justice.

Several other aspects are also developed and expanded in the Talmud and other writings:

- Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace (Rabbi Hillel, Pirkei Avot 1:12).
- The whole of the Torah is for the promoting of peace (Gittin 59b).

There is a school of thought that interprets Jewish scriptures metaphorically and says that the historical struggles against other nations are really struggles for inner peace, but the idea of world peace underlies many of the developed concepts drawn from the teachings of the Hebrew Bible. The Tanakh conveys the message that God determines history, and that the cause of so of the much conflict that the Israelites faced was because they did not 'know' God (Isaiah 1:2–4). A nation that knows God finds paths to peace and is able to avoid conflict.

The principal teachings about peace in Judaism

There is a variety of views in Judaism about Jewish teachings on peace.

- Some in Judaism believe that peace will only be achieved when the Messiah comes.
- Some believe it can be achieved with the development of 'inner peace'.
- Some believe it will never be achieved, and that it is the fate of the Jewish people to suffer.
- Some believe that it is a primary religious obligation to work for peace.

However, most would agree that the idea of striving for world peace should be maintained. For many, this is expressed in the requirement to 'be holy; for I the Lord your G-d am holy' (Leviticus 19:2). This is affirmed in the command to love your neighbour as yourself (Leviticus 19:18).

The concept of *shalom* is more than just a greeting. It is the practice of peace in daily life. This has ethical implications for Jewish people in their relationships with both other Jewish people and Gentiles (non-Jewish people). This concept of social justice is discussed in many of the books of the prophets in the Tanakh. The Jewish people were called to show care for those outside the Covenant, as they remembered how they had been treated in Egypt and how God had saved them (see Deuteronomy 15–16). There are frequent references to 'orphans, widows and aliens' who were to be protected and cared for in the nation of Israel. The emphasis is on showing care for the powerless. This is more important to God than just following rituals. (Micah 6:6-8)

In Judaism, peace is sought through daily action – in the rituals of Judaism and in the relationships with people, seeking justice and showing consideration for all people.

How Judaism guides the individual in achieving inner peace

In Judaism, much of one's striving for inner peace is achieved through the individual practices and observances of the laws and responsibilities of daily life as a Jewish person.

Part of this is developed in the idea of Halacha, where Jewish people are called to be in good relationships with God and with others. This ethical and moral way of life includes obeying the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) contained in the Torah. Obeying these commands leads to a peaceful life and an inner peace in one's relationship with God. This can include ethical behaviour towards others as well as keeping the Shabbat and the other significant Jewish festivals, such as Pesach and Yom Kippur, as ways of expressing, learning and developing relationships with God and with other people (see Chapter 12 for details about Sabbath observance).

Much of the 'wisdom literature' has a focus on developing inner peace, especially the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (see Proverbs 3:13–17, 4:1–7 and Ecclesiastes 12).

An important aspect of inner peace involves the knowledge of God. The people of Israel were often called to 'remember' God and His dealings with the people of Israel. This was often accompanied by a call to show compassion to others and to recommit to the covenant relationship with God (see Psalm 105). One form of developing this knowledge of God is through prayer and meditation as well as study.

The practice of more mystical forms of personal piety has been especially associated with Kabbalah, a more mystical form of Judaism. Today, meditation on the sacred texts is a practice of the Hassidic community and other pious Jewish people who draw on Kabbalistic practices. The people of Israel are called to know God (Psalm 46:10), and that knowledge is to be revealed in its most complete form with the coming of the Messiah (Jeremiah 31:31–34) and the ultimate kingdom of peace (see Isaiah chapter 60, noting verse 16). Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hassidism, emphasised the importance of prayer, obedience and even ecstasy in worshipping God. Exercising these practices would draw adherents closer to God and to finding peace (see Chapter 13).

Inner peace is peace with God, but it is also expressed in relationships with others. This inner peace comes through observance of the commandments, and the

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associated celebrations, and through the development of the knowledge of God. Ultimately, true peace should be expressed in the desire for world peace.

How Judaism contributes to world peace

In Judaism, with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, world peace will become a reality. However, while waiting for that event, Jewish people have been actively involved in working for peace in the world in other ways.

The emphasis on social justice has already been mentioned and is seen as the clear vision of the writing prophets and their message to the people of Israel thousands of years ago. It is the Jewish concept of the 'repair of the world' (*tikkun olam*). While this is often seen as a reference to social justice and certainly involves obedience to the commandments (*mitzvot*), it is also seen by many as a way of hastening the coming of the Messianic age.

While much has been made of the exhortations to war within the pages of the Tanakh, Judaism seeks to be mainly concerned with the pursuit of peace. There is considerable debate within Judaism about the actions of the modern state of Israel, some deploring any religious involvement in warfare and others seeing the protection of Israel as part of God's will. Jewish people acknowledge the need, at times, for warfare, and the establishment and the ongoing security of the state of Israel has seen the nation of Israel involved in several wars. Judaism contains the concept of *milchemet mitzvah*, an obligatory war. While all scholars agree that this describes the wars the nation fought for the conquest of the land, as narrated in the Tanakh, some also include wars fought for the peace of the modern state of Israel. The key idea is that the conflict fulfils a law or commandment.

There is also the concept of *milchemet reshut*, the optional war, which refers to war conducted to expand borders. Some would see the case of modern Israel expanding to ensure its security as an example of this. There is considerable debate about the legitimacy and conduct of *milchemet reshut*. However, Judaism teaches that diplomacy is the first step in achieving peace, and war is the last resort (see Deuteronomy 20:10–20 for guidelines on conducting war). Jewish people, in general, wish to only fight to defend themselves.

It is important to note there is a wide divergence of opinion within Judaism, including attitudes in relation to the modern state of Israel. The vast majority of Jewish groups are extremely supportive of the state and believe it is their divine inheritance, while a small minority of religious Jewish people are opposed to the state and believe it is a form of apostasy to have a

Figure 15.13 Through prayer and devotion, Jewish adherents can find inner peace. The Western Wall is the holiest place where Jews are permitted to pray.

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Jewish state prior to the arrival of the Messiah. There is also considerable disagreement between religious and secular Jewish people within Israel regarding its character as a 'Jewish' state.

There are a number of organisations within Judaism and those that work in partnership with Jewish groups that try to promote peace in the world:

- Oz VeShalom is a Jewish organisation that seeks to promote peace, and maintains a Zionist approach to the Land of Israel. It is committed to the progress of peace.
- Peace Now is another Israeli group with a peace agenda. It is particularly concerned with the injustice of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.
- Jewish Peace Fellowship is an international group established in 1941, which seeks to renounce war and violence and supports social justice, peace and reconciliation. It has a number of publications and supports efforts for non-violence. It states it stands for non-violence and the Jewish tradition of peace and justice.
- Several regional groups, especially in the USA, seek to promote peace. One example is Jewish Voice for Peace in San Francisco.
- Richard Silverstein, a Seattle-based blogger, publishes essays focusing on Israeli-Arab conflict.
- The World Council of Religions for Peace, formed in 1970, includes Judaism as part of its interfaith organisational promotion of peace, religious cooperation and dialogue.
- The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies seeks to promote peace, particularly through interfaith dialogue, such as Social Harmony projects. It also holds an annual commemoration of the Holocaust.
- Women Wage Peace is a grassroots movement with tens of thousands of members from the right, center and left of the political spectrum. It includes religious and secular people pressing for a binding non-violent agreement between Israel and Palestine.

The Shoah (Holocaust)

The Shoah has had a profound effect on modern Jewish attitudes to peace. The aftermath of the genocide of six million Jewish people by the Nazis during World War II led to the call 'never again', whereby Jewish people insist that never again will they be so vulnerable and undefended. The Shoah represents a significant experience of collective suffering that has been instrumental in developing Jewish identity in the modern world and influences attitudes to peace.

Figure 15.14 Gates to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, Poland. More than a million prisoners died in Auschwitz, about 90 per cent of whom were Jewish.

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The horror of the events of the Shoah has been recorded in places such as the Sydney Jewish Museum, and similar places across the world, with the underlying message that such an event should never happen again. Several striking monuments have been erected to help convey the same message.

The Shoah message has continued to be conveyed through the stories of survivors and been presented in many films, written works and other forms. These events have been significant in helping to form the collective consciousness of the Jewish people today and have, in the opinion of many, strengthened the resolve to ensure the future of the Jewish people as well as the desire to bring peace to the world.

INVESTIGATE

Watch a film that deals with the issues of the Shoah. There are many, including several Oscar-winning films: *Schindler's List* (1993), *The Pianist* (2002) or *The Reader* (2008). *Life is Beautiful* (1997) is another good, but very different, option.

Explain why the Holocaust has been so influential in the development of the modern Jewish community.

EXERCISE 15.5

1 Detail the teachings of 'the prophetic vision of peace'.
2 **Outline** the principal teachings about peace in Judaism.
3 **Describe** the understanding of inner peace and world peace in Judaism.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 15.5

1 Visit the Sydney Jewish Museum, if possible, or read widely on the subject, and **explain** how the Shoah has influenced the understanding of peace in Judaism.
2 Prepare a 10-minute talk on the Jewish understanding of inner peace, supporting your talk with examples from Judaism.
3 Check the websites of Jewish organisations that are involved in promoting world peace. Detail their contributions and assess their effectiveness. What emphasis do you notice as you examine the sites?

Figure 15.15 Peace is important in all world religions

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Religion speaks of peace but is often associated with violence.
- Peace includes the concepts of inner peace and world peace.
- Peace is an important issue in all world religions.
- In Buddhism, peace is related to the fulfilment of the Four Noble Truths.
- Peace is achieved in Buddhism through meditation.
- In Buddhism, the first of the Five Precepts, *ahimsa*, is especially important.
- Inner peace is the primary emphasis of Buddhism.
- In Buddhism,world peace is the collective efforts of those seeking inner peace.
- Many Buddhist groups promote the desire to live at peace with others.
- Christianity is a religious tradition that champions peace.
- The Bible speaks often of peace.
- The New Testament has a great emphasis on peace: 'Blessed are the peacemakers'.
- In Christianity, peace with God is demonstrated in inner peace and that leads to world peace.
- In the face of violence, St Augustine developed a concept of 'just war'.
- Some Christians, such as Quakers, are pacifists.
- Many Christian groups promote world peace.
- Non-violence is a theme that underlies Hindu teaching.
- The *Bhagavad Gita* contains many references to peace.
- Hinduism has a great emphasis on inner peace.
- Mahatma Gandhi was a significant person who promoted peace in Hinduism.
- The Qur'an contains many passages that speak of peace and others of war.
- The concept of jihad includes 'greater jihad', the struggle with oneself, and 'lesser jihad', sometimes expressed in warfare.
- Islam seeks peaceful relationships with other faiths and world peace.
- In Judaism, living in fulfilment of the Covenant is a life of peace.
- In Judaism, peace is loving mercy, seeking justice and walking humbly with God.
- Jewish suffering, especially in the Shoah (Holocaust), has influenced Jewish attitudes to peace.
- In Judaism, deeds of loving kindness show peace.
- Many Jewish organisations seek peace and speak out against war and injustice.
- Religion has been blamed for much violence in the world, but also has had a moderating influence in different times and places.

HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer one 20-mark extended-response question.

SECTION IV – RELIGION AND PEACE

Marks

Question 1 (20 marks)

Explain how ONE religious tradition contributes to an understanding of both inner peace and world peace. **20**

OR

> Many of us saw religion as harmless nonsense. Beliefs might lack all supporting evidence but, we thought, if people needed a crutch for consolation, where's the harm? September 11th changed all that.
> RICHARD DAWKINS

With reference to the quotation and sacred texts, evaluate the response of TWO religious traditions to an understanding of world peace. **20**

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SIXTEEN

RELIGION AND NON-RELIGION

[YEAR 12 – 2 UNIT (16 HOURS)]

Is man merely a mistake of God's? Or God merely a mistake of man?

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, GERMAN PHILOSOPHER (1844–1900)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the following key topics:

- the religious dimension in human history: animism, polytheism and monotheism
- the place of the religious dimension to provide:
  - meaning and purpose for the individual
  - social cohesion
  - social transformation.
- global distribution of five major religious traditions, with statistical data
- new religious expressions, looking at reasons and influences:
  - search for personal fulfilment
  - seeking ethical guidelines
  - clarifying relationships with society
  - rise of materialism
  - scientific progress
  - growth of ecological awareness
  - disenchantment with traditional religions.
- non-religious worldviews:
  - atheism
  - agnosticism
  - rational humanism
  - scientific humanism.
- the difference between religious and non-religious worldviews:
  - concept of the transcendent
  - human person
  - social responsibility.

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16.1 INTRODUCTION

Religion has always been part of human civilisation, but there are people who reject a religious worldview or approach to life. This is done on numerous grounds. It is important at various historical periods to distinguish between hatred of superstition, promotion of rationality, the discounting of human emotions regarding the spiritual, and the outright criticism of religion as part of the denial of gods and heavens, and thus religion. In recent years, for example, there have been attempts to promote a non-religious worldview by people such as the biologist Richard Dawkins, a well-known atheist, often considered evangelistic in his zeal. The search for meaning through non-religious systems of belief will be considered here, first by consideration of the religious dimension to human history, then an examination of new religious expressions, and finally a consideration of non-religious worldviews.

16.2 THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION IN HUMAN HISTORY

The expression of the religious dimension in human history

Religion has always formed a complex aspect of human history. The task of expressing its place is more difficult than merely identifying monotheistic, polytheistic and animistic systems. The first difficulty is that despite religion being present in most societies, the actual word 'religion' is only used by some, and in particular ways. 'Religion' derives from Latin and was originally used by the **Roman Empire** to describe several separate faiths coming together to form one system. This word can be difficult to translate, especially in non-Western societies. This is mainly because, historically speaking, the religious, social and political aspects of life were so connected that it became impossible to separate religion from the general worldview of societies. Even in Western societies it is difficult to cleanly separate culture, politics and religion.

The Romans developed the concept of incorporating belief in divine beings into religion, with these beings having the ability to inspire awe, reverence and fear, and to influence people to behave in a moral way. These particular Western ideals became significant in the development of what has been called 'the Protestant work ethic' and related rationalistic religious expressions. However, believing that religion can act as an internal motivation for people is often inappropriate in other religious settings. The sociologist Emile Durkheim proposed that religion works to promote social cohesion, manifesting in the customs, totems and laws that help the general operation of society. It is evident religious ideas have been present in human society for millennia. 'Religion' had been so integrated with society and culture that for a long time not been considered a separate concept, simply a part of daily life and ritual. See Chapter 1 for discussion of many aspects of the information needed for this section.

Animism

Animism is the idea that nature reveals the divine, or gods. That is, all of life is linked to the spirit world. Thus, spirits inhabit trees, rocks and water, and events such as earthquakes, famine and drought are evidence of the gods' anger. One of the main practices of animism is to appease the spirits so they will stop bringing calamity and bring good things such as rain, abundant crops and a prosperous community.

Durkheim based a lot of his studies on Indigenous societies. In these communities, the idea of the 'sacred', 'religious' or 'mystical' is hard to separate from the working of society as a whole. The spiritual may be connected through different personalities of spirits to many parts of society. Animism relates to this, believing all of the environment is in some way animated by spirits. Japanese Shinto (see Chapter 14) is often spoken of as animistic because trees, groves, mountains, the sun, the moon and even the emperor are all understood as deities. Modern pagan religions also believe that aspects of the universe are represented by gods and goddesses. Aboriginal peoples' spirituality could be considere danimistic in that the Dreaming is everything and the ancestor spirits inhabit all creation.

Roman Empire
At the time of Jesus, the empire controlled all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea including Judea and Jerusalem; the Romans spoke Latin, but the Greek language was as important as Latin and had become the common language of the Empire

Animism
The belief that spirits inhabit all objects and have influence on people and natural events

Figure 16.1 An African elder performing animistic rites

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Polytheism

Polytheism means 'many gods' and polytheists are those who worship many gods. The religions of the Romans and ancient Greeks were polytheistic, as are most early religions, including many described as animism. The Greeks and Romans recognised Zeus/Jupiter (Greece/Rome) as the father of the gods, and worshipped many other gods as well.

Polytheism
Worship of many (*poly*) gods (*theos*)

Classical Age
The ages of the Greek (circa 400–300 BCE) and Roman (to 300 CE) empires

Pantheon
A set of all the gods in a religious tradition

Henotheism
Belief that one god, from among a number of gods, is greatest and is selected to be worshipped

Monotheism
Worship of a single god

Superstition
Fear of the unknown or acting according to some unknown spiritual force or prejudice

Trinity
The concept of one god in three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

In the **Classical Age** many spirits, gods and goddesses were recognised. Their **pantheon** (official family of gods) had 12 gods and goddesses in it; some of the major gods include (by the Greek/Roman names): Zeus/Jupiter (the sky father), Aphrodite/Venus (love), Poseidon/Neptune (the sea), Dionysus/ Bacchus (wine, theatre and frenzy), Hermes/Mercury (messenger of the gods), Ares/ Mars (war) and Apollo (the creative arts). Hinduism could be considered a form of polytheism, but many Hindus describe their religion as a **henotheism**. That is, although many gods exist, only one needs to be worshipped. (Some would even suggest it is a form of monotheism.) This term was popularised by the student and teacher of religion Max Müller (1823–1900). Some forms of monotheism may be considered a complex form of henotheism.

Some have suggested that polytheism is a personification of the gods of animism, and thus a more advanced view of religion, moving from sense of impersonal forces to a concept of a deity that human beings can relate to on a personal level. Thus, the idea of one personal God would suggest that a more advanced form of religion is monotheism. Some might argue that an even more advanced understanding of the role of religion in the life of human beings would be atheism, claiming that advanced humanity has no need for religion at all.

Monotheism

Monotheism is the worship of one god or, more specifically, a religious system where only one god is said to exist. Usually that god is understood as the creator of the universe. Until recently, Western scholars considered that monotheism was the only valid religious form, and polytheisms and animistic systems were nothing more than systems of **superstition**.

Perhaps the greatest influence on monotheism was from Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism developed in Persia (Iran) from the teachings of Zarathushtra, who probably lived about 2000 BCE. Some people believe that Zoroastrianism influenced the formation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This Persian faith was a dualism with a beneficent (good) god (Ahura Mazda) and a malignant (evil) god (Angra Mainyu), but recommended the worship of only one of these.

Generally Judaism, Christianity and Islam are understood as monotheisms, but this may not be completely the case, as it could be argued by some that they are more complex than that. Judaism is usually described as the first monotheistic religion. There was a short period when Muslim people were allowed to worship the three daughters of Allah, who were goddesses in their own right, but the 'satanic verses' that permitted this were revoked. Christians believe their religion is monotheistic, but this is complicated by the doctrine of the **Trinity**, which attributes godhood to God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit, which are separate but are also one God. This, for Christians, is a holy mystery, but for others it muddies Christianity's claim to being pure monotheism. As mentioned within this chapter, many Hindus would claim that they too worship only one God but expressed in many different forms.

FURTHERMORE

The three religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are always described as monotheistic. Investigate the suggestion that they may represent related concepts that are not completely monotheistic.

The significance of the religious dimension in human history

Religion has had a significant impact on the lives of human beings and human history. As well as affecting individuals, there has been a strong cultural and social dimension to religious expression and experience. This can mean that religion is both a radical and a conservative element in society, bringing change (social transformation) and also maintaining the status quo (social cohesion).

Meaning and purpose for the individual

Religion has been defined as:

> A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations … by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.
>
> CLIFFORD GEERTZ, *RELIGION AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM*, 1966

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Figure 16.2 The Faravahar, the most common symbol of Zoroastrianism

Religion is a set of assumptions that enables social cohesion but also has an impact on the life of the individual. In Rome, for example, a god such as Jupiter Optimus Maximus could be said to represent Rome itself. State rituals often celebrated this god through communal sacrifice. This did not mean that the ancient Romans had no personal religion. They may also have worshipped other gods or goddesses in the official pantheon, made requests of them and hoped to be favoured by them. Additionally, from around 200 BCE a number of more personalised religions began to develop. These were usually secretive and allowed the individual to gain secret knowledge about such things as the afterlife and how to access the more pleasant realms of that world. When Christianity arrived in Rome, it appealed to some Romans on a very personal level. Eventually, however, the God of the Christians, Jesus, replaced Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Throughout this period, people also had recourse to astrology, magic, fortune tellers and other more personal forms of connecting with the **metaphysical** and the mystical.

Metaphysics
A branch of philosophy that centres on the ultimate nature of reality

Although religion is often concerned with group cohesion rather than personal religious expression, from the 1800s personal fulfilment was increasingly emphasised. Religion came to be seen as personal. William James (a nineteenth-century psychologist and philosopher) defined religion as:

> The feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.
>
> WILLIAM JAMES

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Religion does have an effect on religious people's lives, either at an intellectual level (the big questions about the meaning of life), an emotional level (reassurance and comfort in times of upheaval and trouble) or an ethical level as an influence on their behaviour (obedience to the commandments of God and showing love for others).

In recent times, Western society has emphasised the individual. Religion has responded to this in various ways. For example, evangelical Christianity has stressed the idea of personal salvation. Other Christians emphasise the need for compassion and welfare relief, such as the Salvation Army.

Segregation
Any system where racial groups are kept apart from each other

Religion also provides meaning and purpose through helping provide a sense of identity, education, role models, social welfare, and ethical and moral support.

Social cohesion

Religion is not only concerned about the life of the individual, but is an important factor in social cohesion. Durkheim suggested:

> [Religion is] a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them … [Religion is] the self-validation of a society by means of myth and ritual.
>
> EMILE DURKHEIM, *THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE*, 1912

Religion can be a very conservative influence on society. Religious ideas are intended to maintain order in society. The family unit can be seen as a religious institution to preserve this basic foundation of human society. Religion can provide the impetus for communal action, as in the Muslim Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. Social cohesion can also be demonstrated in community celebrations such as the Christian Christmas or the Hindu Diwali. The legal system of many countries is based on religious beliefs; Australian law is often based on a Judeo-Christian ethic.

Experiences of disaster are also times when religious rituals can provide cohesion, such as ecumenical or interfaith services for victims of the Bali bombings (2002) or the remembrance of the September 11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York.

Sometimes religious cohesion is demonstrated in attempts to use religion to stop people from breaking away from society, such as the condemnation of new religious movements, or to support controversial actions, such as prayer support for the armed forces in times of war. Social cohesion is also provided by religion in offering stability in a changing world, reinforcing values and customs, and providing social welfare and continuity in times of trouble.

Social transformation

Religion can also transform society. Religions are, in the main, conservative systems that uphold tradition. In times of crisis, however, they can be adapted to provide structure for movements of radical change. In the 1800s, for example, the Christian Bible was used by white American Christians to justify slavery. Despite the American Civil War (1861–65) being fought on the issue of slavery, the status of black Americans had remained low. America operated under a system of **segregation** in the Southern states. White and black people kept to their own areas; they were seated in separate areas in buses, trains and restaurants. This was the case even after black Americans had served and sometimes died for their country in both world wars. However, Christians, such as William Wilberforce (1759–1833) in England, also used the Bible to oppose slavery and because of their Christian faith sought successfully to make slavery illegal. In the USA, segregation continued for at least 100 years after the Civil War.

On 1 December 1955, Rosa Parks, a black American woman, refused to give up her seat for a white person on a bus, and a new stage in the Civil Rights Movement began. Her act of civil disobedience was similar to Mahatma Gandhi's campaigns against the British in India earlier in the century. No violence was promoted but, following her example, black American people across the nation began to ignore rules of segregation. Martin Luther King Jr used his Christian ethics and training as a minister to lead this new movement for black people's rights. He was able to use his church to gather support from people across America. He emphasised those parts of the Bible that justify the brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity, rather than those that support slavery, to seek change. King was one of those rare people, influenced by Gandhi, who was able to use a conservative religious system to bring about radical change.

The life of Martin Luther King Jr and the development of his message from a Christian perspective stand in marked contrast to the career of Malcolm X. Originally Malcolm Little, Malcolm X became involved in a new religious movement called the Nation of Islam. While purportedly Muslim, it was not really an Islamic organisation. It claimed that white people were genetically inferior to black people and the movement sought to separate black people from the rest of United States culture. The *Autobiography of Malcolm X* is a very profound examination of racism in America and of Malcolm X's journey from his new religious movement to conversion to standard Islam before his assassination in 1965.

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Figure 16.3 Historic marker for the Montgomery Bus Boycott in downtown Montgomery. It marks the place where Rosa Parks boarded the bus on 1 December 1955. The boycott marked the beginning of the modern civil rights movement.

People of different religious beliefs have sought to transform society in Australia and throughout the world through activity in social justice, social welfare, education and political action. In Australia, religious leaders have been at the forefront in seeking to address the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Religions have also spearheaded campaigns to support public morality. This last case has not always been appreciated in the Australian community, where moral campaigners have sometimes earned the **pejorative** nickname 'wowsers'.

Pejorative
Term of criticism or deprecation

Religion can challenge society to reconsider its values and the way it treats people. It can provide criticism of injustice, reinterpret ideas, bring social change and maintain the rights of those often overlooked and neglected.

16.3 GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE MAJOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Religion, as a part of human expression, exists in some form in every part of the world. Animism, as the earliest expression of religious thought, underlies every religious expression through its emphasis on the spirit world. The spread of religious traditions reflects the movement of peoples; for example, the movement of Christianity across the world during the colonial period (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries). Some, such as Hinduism, have remained in the same area, around the Indian subcontinent. Others, such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, have spread through the evangelical work of King Asoka and the popularisation of Mahayana Buddhism, or the conquests of early Islam, or the colonising efforts of Christian Europe. The map in Figure 16.4 charts the distribution of the major religious traditions across the modern world.

Charting the global distribution of major religious traditions can be difficult. Many countries do not include relevant questions relating to religion on their census. Governments can be prevented from collecting this information by a state's constitution or because people do not want a government to collect information on religion so they do not answer those questions. The question about religion on the Australian census is

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optional. Until the late 1980s, Eastern Europe, Russia and China had atheist governments, and because this was the official position on religion for communist countries, this meant citizens in these countries were not considered adherents of a religious tradition. After the breakdown of some of these communist system in the 1990s, many of these countries experienced religious revivals.

Yet, their populations were not all atheist before, and they are not suddenly religious now. One of the major difficulties with 'official' statistics is that they can be misleading. See, for example, the pie chart in Figure 16.5, which indicates the number of adherents of the major world religions, expressed as percentages. Judaism and Sikhism are both significant and influential religious traditions, the former being the source of both Christianity and Islam and consequently studied as a major religious tradition, yet together they make up less than 1 per cent of the world's population. Buddhism is indicated to be about 7 per cent of the world population. This is only possible if the 1.3 billion people in China are considered to be atheist, the official government policy. This is unlikely. If China is largely Buddhist, as may actually be the case, Buddhism numbers could in fact be larger than Islam. Nonetheless, the information contained in the map, chart and table in this section does give an 'official' indication of the religious groups in the world.

Compare the pie chart with Table 16.1. This gives context to the information in the pie chart when looking at categories, distribution and breakdown of the information. In this chapter, global trends and figures are discussed. Current Australian details are discussed in Chapter 3.

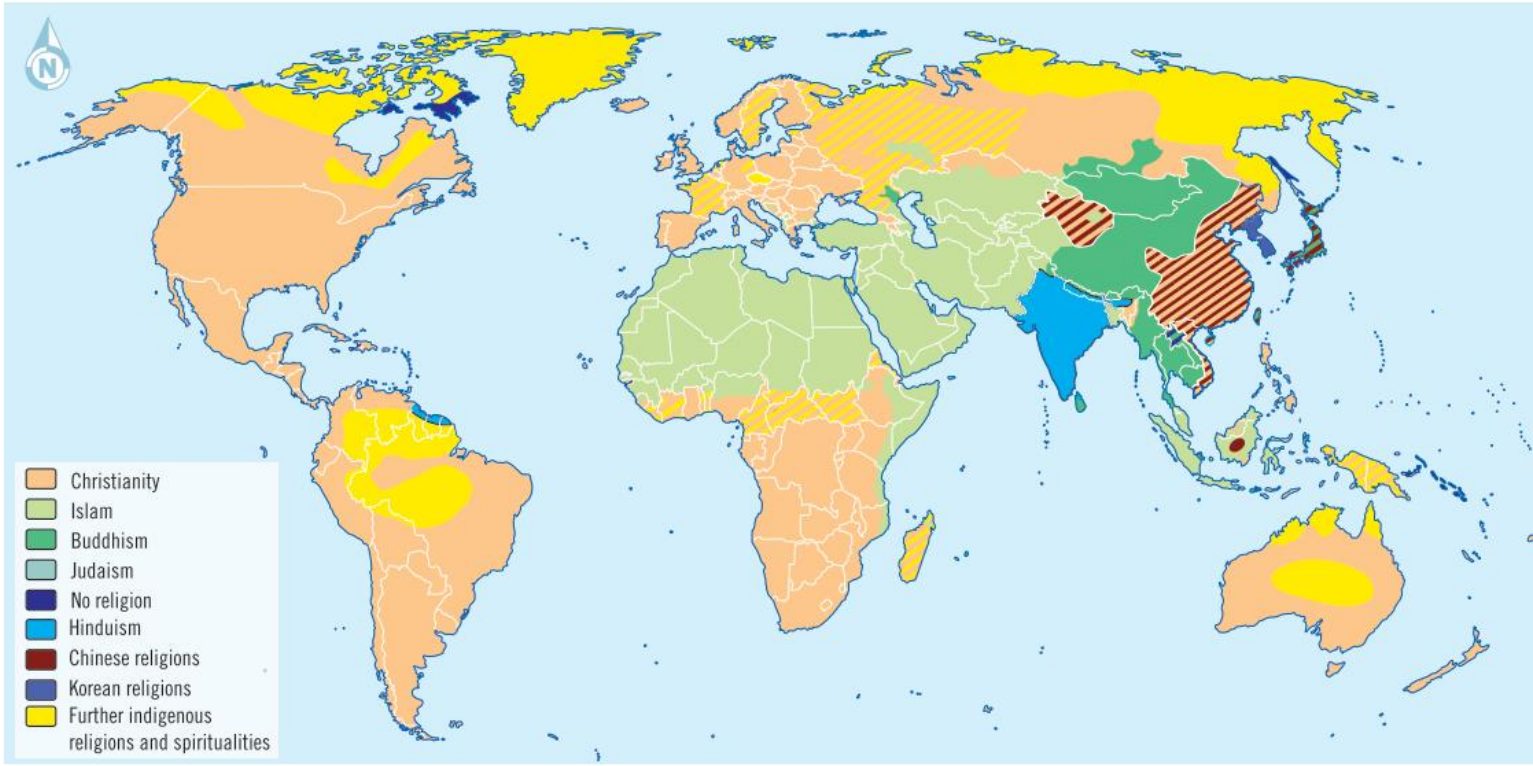
Table 16.1 Population of the regions of the world

Continent	Population
Asia	4 216 000 000
Africa	1 072 000 000
The Americas (North and South)	942 000 000
Europe	740 000 000
Oceania	37 000 000

INVESTIGATE

Research online and see what figures you can find to give you a general understanding of the distribution of religions across the world. Think carefully about why these religions are found where they are. What factors have influenced their distribution?

Figure 16.4 The distribution of major religions across the world (please note that this is just a rough representation of the majority religion or spirituality in different world areas)



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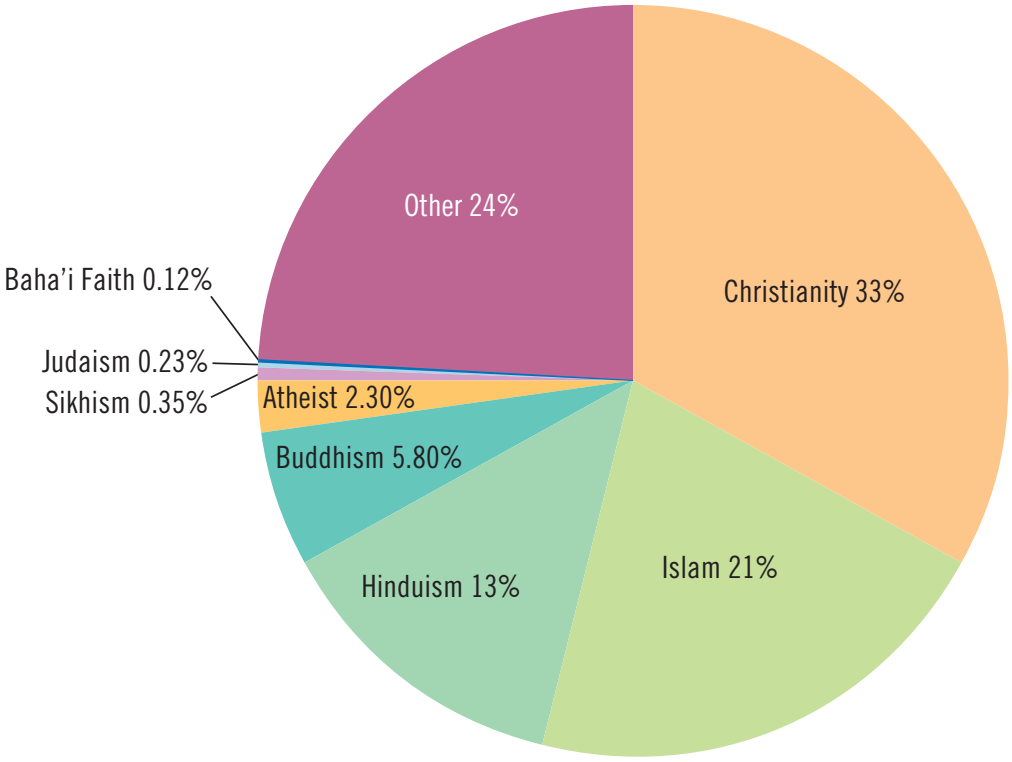

Figure 16.5 Adherents of the major world religions

Source: WolframAlpha Knowledgebase, 2014

EXERCISE 16.1

1 Name three religious traditions: one that could be that could be identified as animistic, another as polytheistic and another as monotheistic.
2 **Explain** how religion can provide purpose and meaning for individuals.
3 **Describe** how the distribution of world religions reflects human history.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 16.1

1 **Investigate** how religion has provided social cohesion for a community, using examples.
2 Plan a debate on the following topic: 'Religion resists change in society'. Use the information in this section for both the affirmative and the negative.
3 Research the distribution of religious traditions across the world, with special reference to the Australian experience.

16.4 NEW RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

There are a number of terms for trying to identify the change over time of religious movements. Old religions and new religions can be compared. Some religions break away from others, and definitions of religion can be open or closed. One of the fastest-growing religious movements in the world, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (known as the Mormons), refers to itself as Christian. It uses its own scripture (the Book of Mormon) in addition to traditional Christian scriptures, and many Christians would not call them Christian, even though members of this religion itself believe themselves to be Christian. Many people refer to new religious movements as **cults**, which is as fringe groups that does not have the status or respectability that the word religion implies. The word 'cult' is usually used as a pejorative term and the term 'new religious movement' is preferred.

Cult
An extreme religious group that is often considered dangerous, but is also used as a term of disdain for many valid new religious movements

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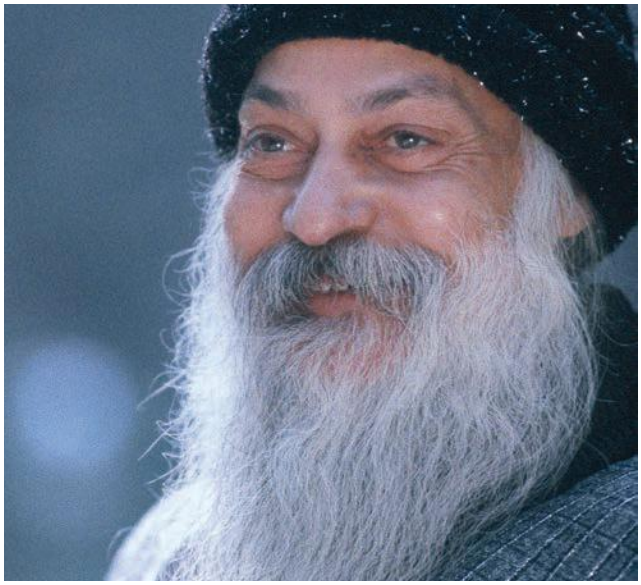

Figure 16.6 Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh founded a new religious movement, the Rajneesh, often called the 'orange people'. It was at its peak from 1970 to 1985, tapping into the sense of spirituality prompted by the New Age movement.

The rise of new religious expressions and spiritualities

As societies change, people have to adapt to new ways of thinking. In adapting to change, they may find that their religious system does not meet their expectations and thus they convert to another faith. If enough people convert, then the old religious tradition ceases to exist, or a new faith is developed with the old one still fighting for survival. As old religious traditions become less relevant to the times, new religions will come into existence. Some of these arise because of splits in older traditions, or because a leader appears and forms a new religion. All religions that are traditional today were once new religious movements. Buddhism and Islam were once despised for being new and innovative. Christianity was initially attacked as a group with strange rituals such as incest and cannibalism (a misunderstanding of the Christian ideas of 'brothers and sisters in Christ' and Holy Communion).

Sect
A subgroup of a religious tradition, usually emphasising a particular aspect that makes it different from other groups of the same tradition

Theosophy
Spiritualist group founded in the late nineteenth century, following Hindu and Buddhist teachings

Scientology
A religious group begun by L. Ron Hubbard in the 1950s

In a similar way, new religions today are often attacked as cults. Many of these groups make people fearful simply because people don't understand them. A few of these groups are genuinely dangerous, and so it is important to differentiate between those groups that are dangerous (that is, cults), those groups that are **sects**, and those that are genuine new expressions of religious belief. Sometimes, that determination can only be done by watching the new religion carefully and seeking to understand its goals and operations.

Social crises often drive the rise of new religious expression. War, defeat and colonialism have all played parts in the formation of new religions. Just as Christianity was partly a reaction to Rome's thrust into Judea, and Buddhism a reaction to changes in Indian society, new religions such as **theosophy** and **Scientology** have grown as a result of wars, and from the increased connection between the West and the East during the twentieth century.

During the 1960s and 1970s, growing dissatisfaction with traditional religions in light of the global arms race, the possibility of nuclear war and the horrors of the Vietnam War drove many young Americans, Europeans and Australians to join new religions. This was known as the Age of Aquarius, an age that its followers declared saw the birth of a new understanding of spirituality and universal love. Many of these religions became

CONSIDER

Many new religions are referred to as cults and thus dismissed as dangerous. Should all religions that are new be discriminated against in this way? Can you identify groups that were originally called cults but are now identified as respectable religious groups? What are the features of new religions? How different are they from old religions?

FURTHERMORE

If you ask people who were alive in the 1970s to name a cult, they may mention Jonestown to you. Jonestown was not a new religion, but a community established in the South American nation of Guyana by the Reverend Jim Jones, a Christian minister from the United States. Jones was mentally unstable and eventually died by poison, with around 900 others, in a mass suicide of his followers in 1978. Other recent religious disasters include around 100 dead in Waco in 1993, a group that broke away from the Christian-based Seventh Day Adventists. Up to 600 people died in Uganda in 2001, part of a group called The Restoration of the Ten Commandments, a breakaway group from the Catholic Church. Monitor the media over the next few weeks and see whether any controversial religious groups are reported. Conduct some research and decide if they could be dangerous to their followers. Groups such as the Baha'i Faith are an attempt to express common religious concepts in a new and different way.

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Figure 16.7 Anne Hamilton-Byrne (centre) founded The Family, a new religious expression in Australia that was a mixture of Christianity and Hinduism. Hamilton-Byrne taught that she was a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. She died in 2019.

INVESTIGATE

Theosophy was established in the late 1800s when Western societies were becoming increasingly interested in spiritualism and Eastern religions. Scientology, on the other hand, began in the 1950s out of a self-help book called *Dianetics* by L. Ron Hubbard, a journalist and science-fiction writer. One could argue that, as with theosophy, a similar motivation of linking Eastern and Western ideas helped Scientology to grow, as this religion recognises Eastern ideas such as reincarnation. Find out how the rise of these new religious expressions reflected the concerns of their times.

what is now called the **New Age movement**. The basis of this movement is the fluidity of religious ideas and a wariness of old-style religious institutions. Many 'new agers' would say they focus more on spirituality than religion, but what do they mean by this? Is there really a difference between spirituality and religion?

Traditional religious traditions have also felt the rise of new spiritualities, such as in the growth of the **Pentecostal** churches. Beginning in the early twentieth century, these groups emphasise the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Chapter 6). Pentecostal churches do away with traditional practices such as parish churches, traditional liturgy, organ music and robed clergy. Instead, they opt for large regional churches, flexible and contemporary services with modern music, and a relaxed style of leadership with specialised ministry leaders. They aim to reach young people and their approach emphasises enthusiastic worship, often accompanied by raised hands, healing, repetitive choruses and **speaking in tongues** or prophecy. They have grown significantly through denominational switching, and their entertaining approach to worship has been very successful in the Australian context (see Chapter 3 for additional comments on Pentecostalism).

New Age movement
Promotes and develops individual spirituality rather than (institutionalised) religion; New Age can include astrologers, yoga practitioners, séance attendees, shamans, neo-pagans and a whole range of other religious practitioners

Pentecostal
Movement within Christianity that places emphasis on the possibility of direct contact with the Holy Spirit

Speaking in tongues
Speaking in the 'language of the Holy Spirit', a mark of the Pentecostal movement

INVESTIGATE

Access the Centre for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR) website. This is a comprehensive resource for studying new religious movements. See what you can learn about some of the new spiritualities mentioned in this chapter, or others that may be of interest to you. You will discover there are many new religious movements you can choose from.

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RASTAFARI

Exodus
Literally, 'departure'; it refers to the event where, led by Moses, the people of Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land

Redemption
Concept of salvation

Zion
Referring specifically to Jerusalem, taken to refer to any holy or ideal place

Rastafarian
Member of a Jamaican religious movement that believes in black supremacy and the back-to-Africa movement

When Jamaican musician Bob Marley burst onto the world music scene in the 1970s, few people realised that he was a prophet of a new religion. Most thought he was simply introducing the world to a new style of music, reggae. His songs included numerous religious terms such as **Exodus**, **redemption** and **Zion**.

Marley was a member of the **Rastafarian** religion that has its origins in the writings of Marcus Garvey. A Jamaican nationalist, Marcus Garvey (l887–1940) taught that people descended from African slaves (particularly those in the United States) should return to Africa. He was considered by many to be a religious prophet and said: 'Look to Africa, for there a king will be crowned'. When the Ethiopian Ras (meaning 'duke') Tafari Makonnen (from which the name Rastafari comes) was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1930, many saw this as a fulfilment of that prophecy. Garvey himself became a Catholic and is celebrated as a national hero of Jamaica.

Haile Selassie I was the emperor of Ethiopia, the only independent state in Africa at that time, and a member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. At his coronation he took the title of 'King of Kings, Lord of Lords and Conquering Lion of Judah'. He is considered the Messiah in Rastafarian teaching. Haile Selassie never officially endorsed that idea, or the Rastafarian faith, but on a visit to Jamaica in 1966 he was greeted by 200 000 Jamaicans as a Messianic figure. His language took the tone of a spiritual leader and his aspirations for Africa were similar to those of the Rastafarians. His death in 1975 was not accepted by Rastafarians, who believe he is still alive. Rastafarians believe they should return to their spiritual homeland of Ethiopia.

Rastafarians have a complex set of beliefs. They believe the African people are descendants of the tribes of Israel (Zion) and that white people are the Babylon of the Bible, the evil influence in the world. Many Rastafarians live by the dietary laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy and are vegetarians or vegans (their dietary laws are called *Ital*). They believe that *Jah* (a shortened form of Jehovah – the name for God) blessed the herbs of the field, and thus smoking cannabis is a sacrament. Some courts have agreed with this, essentially decriminalising the use of this drug for those in the religion. They do not wish to cut the hair or body, so they grow dreadlocks and spurn tattoos. In their language they use unique Rastafarian expressions. Rastafarians also emphasise the colours red, for the blood of the martyrs; green, for the vegetation of Africa; gold, for the wealth of Africa; and black, for the black people. These colours are also found on the Ethiopian flag and are often used in the clothes Rastafarians wear.

Rastafarians have their own sense of social cohesion, believing they belong to a good black society opposed to an evil white world. They have developed their own ethical responsibility to each other, often referring to 'I and I' rather than 'we' to emphasise that responsibility. They seek redemption in the land of Africa where they will rule a new society.

Rastafarians do not have a structured organisation and many seek simple lifestyles. They do meet for ethical and religious discussions and conduct services, often using elements from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. At their gatherings, Nyabinghi music is played, and this has emerged, in popular terms, as reggae music. Bob Marley became one of the best-known proponents of reggae until his death in 1981. Listening carefully to his music and lyrics, in songs such as 'Exodus' and 'Redemption Song', will reveal the religious basis to his music.

Figure 16.8 Crowds of Rastafarians await the arrival of Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, in Kingston, Jamaica. He is considered the Messiah in Rastafarian teaching.

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NEW AGE RELIGIONS

During the 1960s and 1970s there were significant changes in Western society. Cheap travel and global communications meant people were becoming aware of the world as a whole, and differences between people were being understood in more personal terms. In the 1960s, British rock band the Beatles visited the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India and Western people became more aware of Eastern mysticism and other religious traditions. The musical show *Hair* told of the coming of the Age of Aquarius, and traditional Christian churches were being rejected by the baby boomers in their search for freedom from institutionalised religion and for personal fulfilment.

This was when New Age religions began to develop. They include a mix of very old ideas, such as astrology, wicca, Hinduism, Buddhism and paganism, and new developing ideas such as the human potential movement, holistic medicine and environmentalism.

New Agers use no sacred texts and have little organisational structure.

New Age spiritualities include concepts such as karma, reincarnation, universalism, pantheism and ecological responsibility. Practices involve a variety of religious influences and include channelling (contacting 'spirit guides'), astrology, meditation, ambient music, using crystals for healing and 'pop' psychology.

Many moved to New Age spiritualities because of lack of personal fulfilment in traditional churches or perceived failings of traditional churches, such as sexism and child abuse. Some see the New Age movement as an opportunity to explore new spiritualities along with old ideas, ranging from traditional Eastern religions, to animistic Native American religious ideas, to wicca and astrology. Emphasis on the individual and the search for personal fulfilment fit with the trend towards postmodernism and the rejection of external authority and the absolutes of traditional religions.

Universalism is the doctrine of the New Age movement (all religions are the same path to God or reincarnation) and to be in harmony with nature is the dawn of the New Age, a new society where evil will be eradicated and everyone will be happy. As those in the New Age movement come to have a greater influence on society, they expect that a New Age will come when war, disease and poverty will end and discrimination will be eradicated.

New Age practitioners in Australia range from the hippy communities of Nimbin to business executives in the Sydney CBD, both those who rejected the materialism of the consumer society, and those who embraced the human potential movement with the wealth practitioners could achieve. While it was treated with some suspicion when it first emerged, the New Age movement has been very influential in Western society (it is, after all, a Western movement) and has influenced the traditional churches including, for example, the growth of Pentecostalism with its emphasis on prosperity doctrine and reaction against the mainstream institutional churches.

It is the New Age Movement that has been responsible for many accepted practices and concepts in modern society, such holistic medicine, environmentalism, meditation and yoga. Some of these are now being embraced by traditional religions.

The search for personal fulfilment

New religions are attractive to people who seek personal fulfilment but cannot find that fulfilment in more traditional forms of religious expression. New religions are often led by charismatic leaders. Sociologist Max Weber spoke of a distinction between charismatic and bureaucratic leadership. Bureaucratic leadership is leadership through established positions, such as the pope and imams. Charismatic leadership, however, comes into existence outside of bureaucracies; the charismatic leader seems naturally gifted and able to solve problems immediately, without the machinery of large institutions.

Charismatic leaders, such as A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (the founder of the Hare Krishnas), are able to build large movements from their attractive personalities and leadership skills, and help people to find an immediate sense of meaning in their lives. Charismatic leaders often have an enthusiasm that is harder to find in older, more structured religious traditions. Charismatic leadership, however, can be unstable, and occasionally leads to disaster; for example, the aforementioned Reverend Jim Jones, and David Koresh, who led new religious groups that met violent ends including the deaths of their followers.

Sometimes people are not even aware that they are being introduced to a new religion. The charismatic Bob Marley was accepted as a fine musician and rock star before many people realised he was promoting a new religion, Rastafari.

New religions are often able to respond quickly, and adapt to pressing social issues, while more traditional religions are generally bound by rules and procedures that often take considerable time to result in decisions.

During the twentieth century, new religions attracted high levels of participation from women. Groups such as theosophy and Caodaism are noteworthy because of the access they afford women to leadership positions. Caodaism began in 1926 in Vietnam as a religion blending global religious ideas into a single structure (syncretistic). Its leadership developed with hierarchies of both men and women. There is a Caodai Temple in Wiley Park, NSW. This contrasts with the Christian

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churches, such as the Catholic Church and some sections of the Anglican Church and Lutheran Church, which still only ordain men to the priesthood. Traditional churches are slow to accept change and can be seen as hostile to issues that are current concerns in the community.

Many of the new spiritualities also emphasise contemporary social issues long forgotten by the traditional religions, such as ecological awareness and social justice.

Seeking ethical guidelines

In upholding tradition, older religions are seen by contemporary spiritual seekers as unable to adapt to new ethical positions. This was especially the case in the second half of the twentieth century. In the West, older religions supported governments that were involved in two major world wars and, from 1945, a terrifying race to accumulate weapons. Other issues also emerged, such as the growth of alternative lifestyles, the breakdown of traditional concepts of marriage and family, homosexuality, social awareness and the rejection of traditional organisational structures. Small groups of people tried to find a new understanding of spirituality that did not include traditional religion.

Wicca
The religious tradition of modern witchcraft

Eco-spirituality
Spirituality that links with concern for the environment

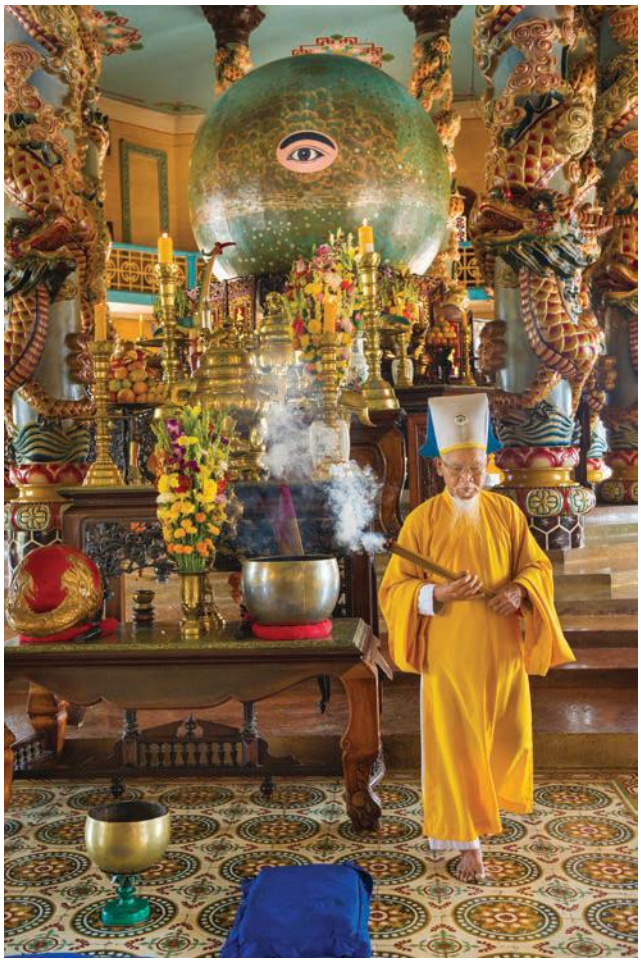

Figure 16.9 Cao Dai Thanh That temple, Vietnam. Note the Divine Eye symbol of Caodaism. Caodaism began in 1926 in Vietnam as a blending of global religious ideas into a single structure.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Englishman Gerald Gardner claimed to possess knowledge of ancient European paganism and witchcraft. Although this was untrue, Gardner started a new interest in religions that had existed in places such as Britain before the arrival of Christianity. This new spirituality was without an official church or priests, and gave a great deal of freedom to those who practised it. This witchcraft/paganism (now called **wicca**) sought spirituality from the land and nature. It sought a return to the ancient solstice rituals and pagan rituals such as Easter, which had been Christianised. In these and in their pagan deities, wiccans sought a spirituality that was in tune with the planet and nature and influenced the rise of New Age religion.

A new ethics based on respect rather than exploitation of the planet was built out of these post-war movements. The Christian God was seen as male, warlike and all-dominating, and pagans built their ethical system with gods and goddesses who upheld respect for the planet, feminine values and care for other humans. Paganism and the later New Age movement gave rise to other movements such as **eco-spirituality**. Care for the planet and its people were more important than following a list of rules and regulations. Traditional religions were seen as rules-based and unable to respond to perceived needs, often allied to those who were seen as exploiting the environment.

The relationship of new religions with society

New religious movements offer the chance to escape mainstream religious society. Groups such as the Hare Krishnas (more correctly, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness) encourage communal living away from the complexities of modern-day life. Sometimes these groups seek a total break with society, leading to accusations of being cults. But this movement away from society is not always complete. The followers of Hare Krishna can become deeply engaged in charity work, running kitchens that provide free meals for those who can't afford food. People who participate in new spiritualities that evolved out of the Age of Aquarius/New Age movement often seek to effect changes in their own lives that will help change the planet. This includes working in jobs focused on the care of people and the environment, joining charity groups, being involved in organic food cooperatives and refusing to engage in activities that encourage unnecessary consumption of products and resources.

These groups are often seen as more supportive of new members and less judgemental. Many who have felt disenfranchised by mainstream religious traditions find the acceptance and support offered by new religious expressions to be of great comfort.

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Figure 16.10 A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, spiritual teacher and founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, commonly known as the Hare Krishnas

Influences on the growth of new spiritualities

A number of factors outside individual human experience have been influential on the growth of new spiritualities and religious expressions. These include changes in society as a result of development at a more global level. Responses to these influences can be both positive and negative.

The rise of materialism

During the twentieth century, the economies of the West evolved to an extremely sophisticated level. The consumption of goods and services is often no longer a means to a better life, but the goal of life itself. Individuals often define themselves less by how they are connected to the community, and more by what they own. This is the rise of **consumerism**. In a vicious cycle, one sacrifices family and community time in order to be at work, thus earning more money, and trying to find satisfaction in the purchase of more goods.

David Lyon, in his book *Jesus in Disneyland*, suggests that people legitimise their identities, on a religious level, through the purchase and consumption of religious ideas. It can be argued that some Western Buddhists are Buddhist not because they go to temples, but because they buy Buddhist statues and books on Buddhism that they don't necessarily read. New religious movements can thrive by opposing this system of consumption, or joining with it. The Church of Scientology, with its expensive self-improvement courses, is often cited as one example of the latter. Non-consumerist new religions, such as the Hare Krishnas, emphasise self-sufficiency and the rejection of obsessive consumption.

Scientific progress

Professor Eric Sharpe (founding Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney) outlined what he cheekily called his 'aspirin theory' of religion: that religion exists, in part, to make life comfortable and healthy, particularly in societies where advanced technology does not exist to provide health and comfort with the flick of a switch or the swallowing of a pill! In this way, Professor Sharpe suggested, the more science explains the operation of the world, the less likely people are to need magical and religious explanations for how the world works.

But science and technology can also cause great anxiety. Recent developments in the mapping of the human genome suggest that scientists are beginning to understand the essential nature of humanity and may be able to control it through genetic modification. It is not only old religions that suggest this is something to be wary of. New religions and spiritualities also show concern about the unchecked progress of science and technology. People in new religions often look to developing self-sufficiency to avoid being dependent on technology.

In some ways, the advance of scientific progress has created more interest in religious aspects of life, particularly when science cannot provide all the answers that it is expected to. Some people feel that science does not provide for the mystery that is so necessary in life, although many scientists dispute this. The rise of holistic medicine and popular psychology, particularly the human potential movement, are examples where people, especially those influenced by the New Age movement, are choosing not to accept scientific progress. In the minds of some, science and religion are both important ways of understanding the world and are not necessarily incompatible.

Growth of ecological awareness

The New Age movement has championed the cause of environmentalism. There have been Christian ecologists throughout history, such as St Francis of Assisi and Hildegard of Bingen, but the Church has been often identified with big business and so is one of the institutions that have exploited the environment. While Christians emphasise the command to 'have dominion over the world' (Genesis 1:28), this is sometimes seen as an excuse to abuse it.

Consumerism
Preoccupation with the accumulation of consumer goods

New spiritualities emphasise the need for environmental care, and this perspective is seen in the Greens political party and lobby groups such as Greenpeace. New Agers are often actively involved in seeking green alternatives to fossil-fuel energy (such as wind and solar power), chemical-free agriculture (such as permaculture and organic farming) and other areas ranging from architecture to biodiesel fuels. The growth of the ecological movement has only gradually been taken up by traditional religious traditions.

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CONSIDER

Does religion exist just to make people feel better (the 'aspirin theory')? How do people use religion in this way? Does that invalidate religion? Why or why not?

New religious expressions have responded much more quickly. Environmental care is seen as a spiritual experience.

Disenchantment with traditional religious practice and guidance

In recent years it has become obvious that many Australians are choosing to leave the traditional Christian churches. In the 2016 census, nearly one-third of all Australians declared they have no religion. Other religions grew in numbers and new spiritualities such as Pentecostalism also experienced significant growth.

Christianity declined from 71 per cent in 1996 to 52.1 per cent in 2016, and this was reflected in the more traditional denominations of Christianity. There are a number of reasons for this. First, there is a general decline in people identifying with organisations, including everything from the churches to service organisations, such as Rotary, to other groups such as the Scouts and the Country Women's Association. People are also less inclined to accept membership of a religious tradition simply because they were raised in one or their parents belong to it. Mainstream religion has also become less important because of materialism, consumerism and other commitments, such as sport, at the same time church services are usually held. The decline of Sunday schools and youth groups reflects the sense that it is no longer popular to be involved with a church. Other perceived problems such as sexism, hypocrisy and child abuse have led to disenchantment with traditional churches. The new spiritualities are not seen as having the structures that reinforce these problems.

In seeking to identify with a religion, loyalty has been replaced by a desire for people to feel they gain something from their religion, that is, personal fulfilment. With the rise of individualism in modern society and the decline in group memberships, coupled with a perception of a church that is out of touch with modern society at best, or morally corrupt at worst, the sense of disenchantment with traditional religions is growing. For many people, the new religious expressions are much more attractive for those seeking spiritual fulfilment.

EXERCISE 16.2

1 List two new spiritualities and **explain** how they are different from traditional religious expressions.
2 **Outline** reasons for the growth of new religious expressions.
3 **Explain** how disenchantment with traditional religious expressions has influenced the development of new religious expressions.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 16.2

1 Visit a bookshop and write down the examples of the books in the spirituality/religion section. How many deal with traditional religions and how many reflect the rise of new religious expressions?
2 Note media articles or TV programs that show the rise of new religious expressions. Try to determine the implications of those articles and programs. Are they positive or negative? What reasons and influences are evident in these reports?
3 Reread Section 1.2 on the characteristics of religion. Try to design your own new religion. How would it reflect those characteristics, and how would it address the issues raised in this section?

16.5 NON-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS

Worldview
An ideological means of understanding the world and its people

Atheism
Doctrine that there is no evidence for the existence of God; that gods and spirits do not exist; from the Greek *a* (against/no) and *theos*(god); an atheist is a person who holds that view

Search for personal fulfilment through non-religious practices

Religion is becoming a less important part of society and it is no longer unusual for people not to have a religious **worldview**. In recent years the number of people who have no religion has been increasing in Australia. In the 2016 Australian census, 30.1 per cent said they had no religious affiliation, or secular or other spiritual beliefs. Several terms are used to describe the varieties of non-religious perspectives.

Atheism

Atheism is based on the statement that the existence of gods is unproven. The term 'atheist' is derived from the Greek language – *a* (a negation), *theos* (God). People often make a conscious, considered decision not to

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believe in God or sometimes, through circumstance, have lost their belief. Atheism is different from agnosticism, which will be discussed next.

Well-known atheists include environmentalist David Suzuki, comedians Wil Anderson and Ricky Gervais, actor Jodie Foster, singer Björk, and scientists Peter Singer and Richard Dawkins.

Perhaps the first sign in Western civilisation of an atheistic worldview emerged with the Greek philosopher Epicurus (circa 340–270 BCE). His writings were celebrated by the Roman poet Lucretius (circa 100–55 BCE). These two writers suggested that, although gods may exist, they play no part in human affairs.

Lucretius sought to explain all phenomena through human reason alone, and gave a range of arguments for why the soul does not exist and why death should not be feared. The idea of living one's life with a focus on how we can make our lives and those of others as good as possible came to be known as **humanism**. Although Lucretius was not, strictly speaking, an atheist (because he supposed that gods existed), he believed that one should live an atheistic life, one that does not take the will of the gods into consideration.

In Eastern societies, philosophers have often held atheistic views. Early Buddhist texts, written in India, show that the Buddha argued against Indians who did not believe in God or gods 2500 years ago. But the Buddha himself was probably more of an agnostic; there may be gods but they are not needed to achieve enlightenment. It is possible to be a Buddhist and not believe in gods. Similarly, China has had a long history of atheism branching from the teachings of Confucius.

Some people suggest that atheism is, in itself, a faith system; just as one believes in God, then one can believe in the non-existence of God. One counter-argument to this view is that all unproven propositions, including religious propositions, cannot be supported. Another counter is the fact that the unprovability of a religious or any other proposition does not automatically mean that either possibility is equally likely.

INVESTIGATE

George H. Smith is the author of books such as *Atheism: The Case Against God* and *Why Atheism?* Look up reviews on the internet, and you will find some interesting debates by both those who love and those who loathe the ideas presented in these texts. Make note of the things that are said and form your own opinion. Are his arguments convincing? Why or why not?

Agnosticism

Agnosticism is more of a concept than a philosophy or religious perspective. The term agnostic is derived from the Greek language – a (a negation), *gnosis* (knowledge). Agnosticism reflects the idea that suggests the person does not believe, nor do they disbelieve, in the existence of any god. It does not have the definite rejection of the concept of god that defines atheism. Rather, agnostics generally believe that should god be proven to exist, they would be willing to change their minds. However, the relevance of god to day-to-day life is questioned.

Humanism
Philosophy of life that emphasises the importance of human beings

Agnosticism
Doctrine that it is impossible to know whether God, gods or spirits exist

Agnosticism is a term created by Thomas Henry Huxley (T.H. Huxley) Huxley in 1869. Huxley was an ardent promoter of Darwin's evolutionary theories and was nicknamed 'Darwin's bulldog'. He believed that his rejection of all spiritual knowledge was consistent with modern scientific progress. Huxley described how he came up with the term 'agnostic' as follows:

> 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. The one thing in which most of these good people were agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure that they had attained a certain 'gnosis' – had more or less successfully solved the problem of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble. And, with Hume and Kant on my side, I could not think myself presumptuous in holding fast by that opinion.
>
> T.H. HUXLEY

Figure 16.11 Thomas Huxley is pictured here with other leading scientists of the nineteenth century. This photo was commissioned to celebrate Huxley becoming director of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The scientists here (from left to right) are Michael Faraday, Huxley, Charles Wheatstone, David Brewster and John Tyndall.

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Figure 16.12 Statue of Confucius, an early humanist philosopher

Humanism

Video

Humanism is a general term that refers to the philosophy of life that emphasises the human spirit and the dignity of human beings.

Not all forms of humanism are non-religious and they are usually further defined with an adjective such as literary humanism, secular humanism, rational humanism or scientific humanism.

While humanism, as such, is a relatively modern concept, it has existed for many centuries. It has been linked with Greek philosophy and may have ancient roots in China. The East has never really followed the idea of a single, all-powerful deity.

There are various religions and philosophies that focus on the question of how to run a society so as to achieve the greatest possible good for its members. This is the goal of rational humanism, and elements of it can be found in philosophical Taoism, aspects of Buddhist philosophy and, most importantly, Confucianism.

Confucius was the greatest of Chinese philosophers, and lived during a period of turmoil in China between 551 BCE and 479 BCE. His system of good government is recorded in a series of questions and answers called the *Analects*. In Book 11, he is asked by a disciple about heaven and the gods; the dialogue goes thus:

> Chi-Lu asked how the spirits of the dead and the gods should be served.
>
> The Master said, 'You are not even able to serve man. How can you serve the spirits?'
>
> 'May I ask about death?'
>
> [Confucius replied] 'You do not even understand life. How can you understand death?'
>
> CONFUCIUS, *ANALECTS*, 11.12

Confucius neither accepted nor denied the realm of the gods and spirits. He suggested that they are irrelevant to ensuring the good operation of society. In the *Analects*, he demonstrates how the Chinese concept of *ren* or 'loving kindness' should be the guiding element of a good society. The wise and educated should use *ren* to make society complete. *Ren* does not come from, or depend upon, a deity. It is simply the best way to run a society as proved by ancient sages and as adapted to present circumstances.

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From the 1500s, the Jesuits, a Catholic order, began sending reports of their travels in China back to Europe, and Europeans became very excited by the humanistic nature of Chinese thinking. Confucius' ideas were mixed with the teachings of Europeans who had been investigating Classical humanism. Leading thinkers of the Age of Reason, such as Voltaire (1694–1778), celebrated both Confucius' open attitude and the humanistic attitude of Europeans inspired by the humanism of Greece and Rome. Voltaire was the most outstanding figure of what is called the European Enlightenment, a period that experienced a decrease in religious fanaticism and superstition, and an increase in rationalism, humanism and atheism.

Rational humanism

Rational humanism is often identified with secular humanism; it refers to those who emphasise human reason in providing answers to the questions of life. Rational humanists emphasise the importance of rational human thought and reasoning in all aspects of life, including belief and behaviour. Rational humanists are not necessarily non-religious, but they do say that the concept of God and religion is only acceptable if it has been achieved by human reasoning. Rational humanists live good moral lives, not because of a belief in God and religious standards of behaviour, but because of their respect for human life and dignity. This is suggested in the 'Ten commandments of rational humanism' that can be found online.

The positive aspirations and behaviour of individuals are then encouraged because of the importance of human beings, doing good to others is the obvious way to show respect, and, rationally and reasonably, it is the best way to behave.

Scientific humanism

While rational humanism emphasises the priority of reason over revelation (the province of religion), scientific rationalism emphasises that reality can be discovered through scientific research and experimentation. This has become known as scientific humanism. Julian Huxley suggested that it is futile to seek answers to questions about the meaning of life that include terms such as cause or creation or ultimate or reality, which are usually the focus of religion. Rather, he suggested that people should use a scientific-based philosophy as an approach to life.

Scientific rationalism/humanism believes that reality is what can be touched, measured or numbered, and that things that cannot be seen, such as emotion, beauty and thought, should not be regarded as knowledge or truth.

Carl Sagan (1934–1996), one of the modern proponents of scientific rationalism, did accept the possibility of spirituality, comparing it with breath, which he accepted as 'matter'. He stated:

> Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality … The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a profound disservice to both.
>
> CARL SAGAN

As science explores new fields, care must be taken that ethical considerations are not overridden by the possibilities of scientific endeavour.

Scientific humanism sees the ethical behaviour of individuals as the result of proven patterns of behaviour over time rather than some religiously motivated behaviour. It has been shown, through experimentation and experience, that to be an ethical person is best for the individual and for the human race.

CONSIDER

Some say science is the new religion. It does, at times, claim similar authority. But how do we know that science is valid? What happens when science disagrees? Investigate a controversial subject such as climate change and research scientific methodology. Do scientists line up on both sides of the argument? Can science be manipulated? Do the arguments for rejecting religion also apply to science? Is science also a matter of faith?

Figure 16.13 Carl Sagan, astronomer and scientific humanist

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16.6 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS

In the West, the biggest distinction between religious and non-religious worldviews arises from the belief (or lack thereof) in the **transcendent**. This concept can be explained as a spiritual realm, a realm for ancestors, heaven, and imaginary and ideal space, or an emotion of an unworldly presence. People with religious beliefs often hope to reach this realm either through meditation, prayer, magical journeys, ritual dreams or else upon their death. It is in the transcendent that 'God' can be found. Through religion, access from everyday life into the transcendental realm is expressed through agreed-upon gates, which filter both who can access the non-human realm and when. Many humanists suggest that undue focus on accessing the transcendent means religious people ignore the concerns of the world. The religious, however, fear that, without the promise of heaven and the fear of hell, humanity will have no incentive to behave morally. Table 16.2 illustrates the response of several religious and non-religious worldviews to several aspects of life.

Transcendence
Existence above or apart from the material world

Human beings have an underlying worldview, a construct that helps them to understand life. For many, this reflects their religious background and their own religious belief. For others this is a rejection of a religious perspective in favour of the search for truth, primarily through science and philosophy.

Chapter 1 of this book discussed the nature of religion and beliefs, and that provides a good background to understanding the worldview of both those who are religious and those who are non-religious. However, as Table 16.2 shows with the

INVESTIGATE

Choose another religious and non-religious worldview that are not listed in Table 16.2. Compare them under the same headings as are listed in the table.

Table 16.2 The response of religious and non-religious belief systems to several aspects of life

Belief system	Concept of transcendence	The human person	Social responsibility
Christianity (religion)	God/Jesus manifests through his church to offer either an earthly paradise at his second coming, or access to heaven at the end of time. God is a being who transcends human experience, but has entered humanity through the person of Jesus Christ.	The human should remain the humble creation and servant of God in the hope of accessing the kingdom of God/heaven. Humanity has 'fallen' and needs salvation. Yet humanity is considered the high point of creation and God's intervention in the world is to save humankind.	Responsibility to family, the Church and other Christians take priority. Christians express concern for members of other religions and the planet more generally, although Christians are called to be God's influence in the world: 'God's people in God's world'.
Humanism (non-religion)	A certain transcendence may exist within the human, and encourages the improvement of the world. The rationale, however, is for the good of humanity. God is irrelevant.	The human being is an agent of reason and thought who can improve ther own existence and the existence of others. The responsibility of people is to ensure the welfare of humankind.	Responsibility is to improve society. The emphasis is on providing for other human beings to improve their quality of life.
Atheism (non-religion)	There is no transcendent being.	Human beings have a purpose only in this life, to live a life of personal and social fulfilment and satisfaction for this existence only.	Social responsibility is part of caring for other people and this world. Good people do good to others.
Buddhism (religion)	Everything is Buddha-nature, and enlightenment allows one to perceive this. The transcendent is actually immanent, dwelling in the person.	The human is a manifestation of the self-deception of the senses. As an illusion, life is a gate to another life, or nirvana. Everything is impermanent.	Charity in general, and the need to encourage all to realise the truth of Buddhist teachings. It is a means of generating karma and to help others on their path to enlightenment.

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discussion of only a few religious and non-religious belief systems, people's beliefs are reflected in their understanding of the transcendent, the importance of the person and the responsibility people have to others. These, highlighted in the syllabus, are just a few areas that could be discussed in examining the difference between religious and non-religious worldviews.

EXERCISE 16.3

1 Detail the fundamental features of agnosticism and atheism.
2 **Outline** the views of rational humanism and explain how if is different from scientific humanism.
3 **Discuss** how atheism, agnosticism or humanism direct the behaviour and aspirations of people.

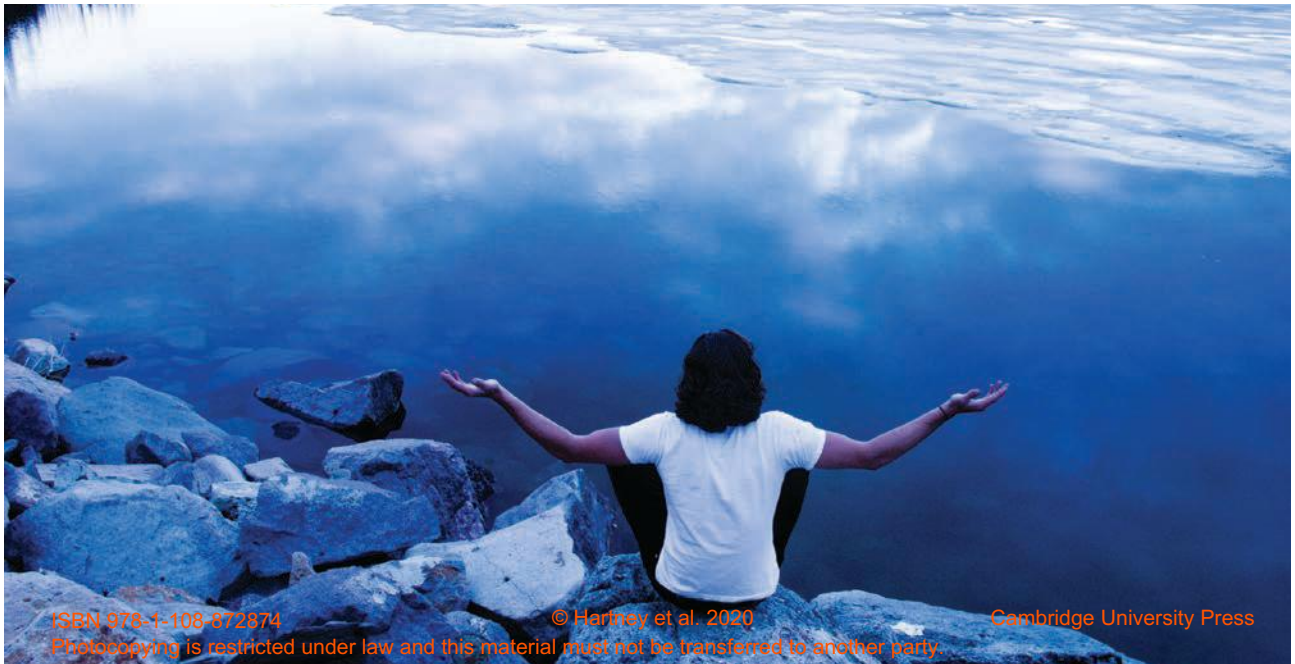
EXTENSION ACTIVITY 16.3

1 Debate the following topic: 'Non-religious worldviews are simply different expressions of what could be called a "religious" worldview'.
2 **Investigate** the differences between atheism, agnosticism and humanism in relation to a particular aspect of life. How do the differences or similarities influence people's lives?
3 Write three paragraphs comparing the response of one religious and one non-religious worldview to the human person, social responsibility and the concept of the transcendent.

16.7 CONCLUSION

It could be argued that religion Is universal, that it challenges people's motivation and profoundly influences history at every level. Others would say there is no need for a religious worldview, especially in this modern age. The word 'religion', however, is a culturally framed term. We could ask, 'Is religion a separate entity from culture?' It is important to understand the interactions between religion and culture, between life and belief, and between religious and non-religious worldviews. Professor Sharpe of Sydney University recommended that understanding of various historical ages comes not simply through history books (secondary sources), but through biographies and personal accounts left to us (primary sources). Only in such personal works can one acquire a deep understanding of the times (and the beliefs of the times) and their effects on the personal lives of men and women. History is, after all, the collective summation of our personal thoughts and public actions. Biographies also tend to be more interesting to read. The worldviews of people are revealed in beliefs and theories, but also in the words and actions of people at various times and places in human history. See if you can find some personal confessions of religious men and women, and also of atheists. What are their ultimate interests and concerns? What are yours? As you continue to read and study, you will discover the keys to understanding religion and how it relates to life.

Figure 16.14 Take time to reflect and explore what is right for you



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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The religious dimension is a complex but important idea in human history.
- Animism is the belief that spirits are an integral part of nature.
- Polytheism is the belief in many gods.
- Monotheism is the belief in one God.
- Religion provides meaning and purpose for many human beings.
- Religion maintains the status quo, keeping society together (social cohesion).
- Religion can also bring radical and dynamic change to society (social transformation).
- The five major religions are represented in all regions of the world, reflecting the history of the world.
- New religious expressions have difficulty being accepted in society.
- Social crisis is significant in the rise of new religious expressions.
- The New Age movement, the Rastafarians and Pentecostalism are examples of new religious expressions.
- Charismatic leadership, innovation and justice are ways of seeking personal fulfilment.
- New ethical issues influence new religious expressions.
- New religious expressions need to clarify their relationship with society.
- Influences on new religious expressions include scientific progress, increase in materialism, ecological awareness and discontent with traditional religions.
- Several non-religious worldviews are significant.
- Atheism is disbelief in God.
- Agnosticism is a belief in the unknowability or irrelevance of God.
- Humanism has many expressions, of which two are rational humanism (the belief in reason) and scientific humanism (the belief in science).
- The difference between religious and non-religious worldviews is evident in their understanding of the concepts of the transcendent.

Figure 16.15 Erasmus was a sixteenth-century theologian and humanist scholar

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HSC EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the HSC examination, students will be required to answer 10 multiple-choice questions (1 mark each) and one short-answer question (5 marks).

SECTION I – MULTIPLE-CHOICE

QUESTIONS (10 MARKS)

Marks

1 What is the term for the belief in many gods? **1**
- **(A)** Polytheism
- **(B)** Animism
- **(C)** Monotheism
- **(D)** Transcendence

2 Which of the following religious traditions is thought to be monotheistic? **1**
- **(A)** Hinduism
- **(B)** Islam
- **(C)** Buddhism
- **(D)** Tribal religion

3 'Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi both used religious principles to effect radical change in their societies.' What is this an example of? **1**
- **(A)** Social cohesion
- **(B)** Social transformation
- **(C)** Atheism
- **(D)** Agnosticism

4 Which of the following religious traditions has the most limited global distribution? **1**
- **(A)** Islam
- **(B)** Hinduism
- **(C)** Buddhism
- **(D)** Christianity

5 Traditional churches in Australia have declined from 71 per cent in 1966 to 52 per cent in 2016. What is one significant cause for this? **1**
- **(A)** Disenchantment with traditional religious practice
- **(B)** Pentecostalism
- **(C)** Evangelism
- **(D)** Social cohesion

6 How has scientific progress influenced the rise of new religious traditions? **1**
- **(A)** It has explained away religious experience
- **(B)** It shows people do not need God
- **(C)** It suggests religion may not have all the answers to life's questions
- **(D)** It has discovered the 'God gene'

7 Simon believes that God does not exist. Joanne believes that God may exist but it is not significant to her. Which of the following statements is correct? **1**
- **(A)** Simon is an atheist, Joanne is a humanist.
- **(B)** Simon is a theist, Joanne is agnostic.
- **(C)** Simon is an atheist, Joanne is an agnostic.
- **(D)** Joanne and Simon are both rational humanists.

8 What do adherents of scientific humanism believe in? **1**
- **(A)** The importance of research and experimentation
- **(B)** The delusions of the human mind
- **(C)** The importance of rational human thought
- **(D)** Revelation from God

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9 What do non-religious worldviews emphasise? **1**
- **(A)** The role of God in creation
- **(B)** The revelation of God's will in sacred texts
- **(C)** The idea of social irresponsibility
- **(D)** The idea that people are important because of themselves

10 What influences the rise of new religious expressions? **1**
- **(A)** The need to clarify the big questions of life
- **(B)** Responsibility for other people
- **(C)** Atheism and agnosticism
- **(D)** The rise of materialism

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION (5 MARKS)

Explain, using examples, how the distribution of religious traditions across the world reflects the major events of human history. **5**

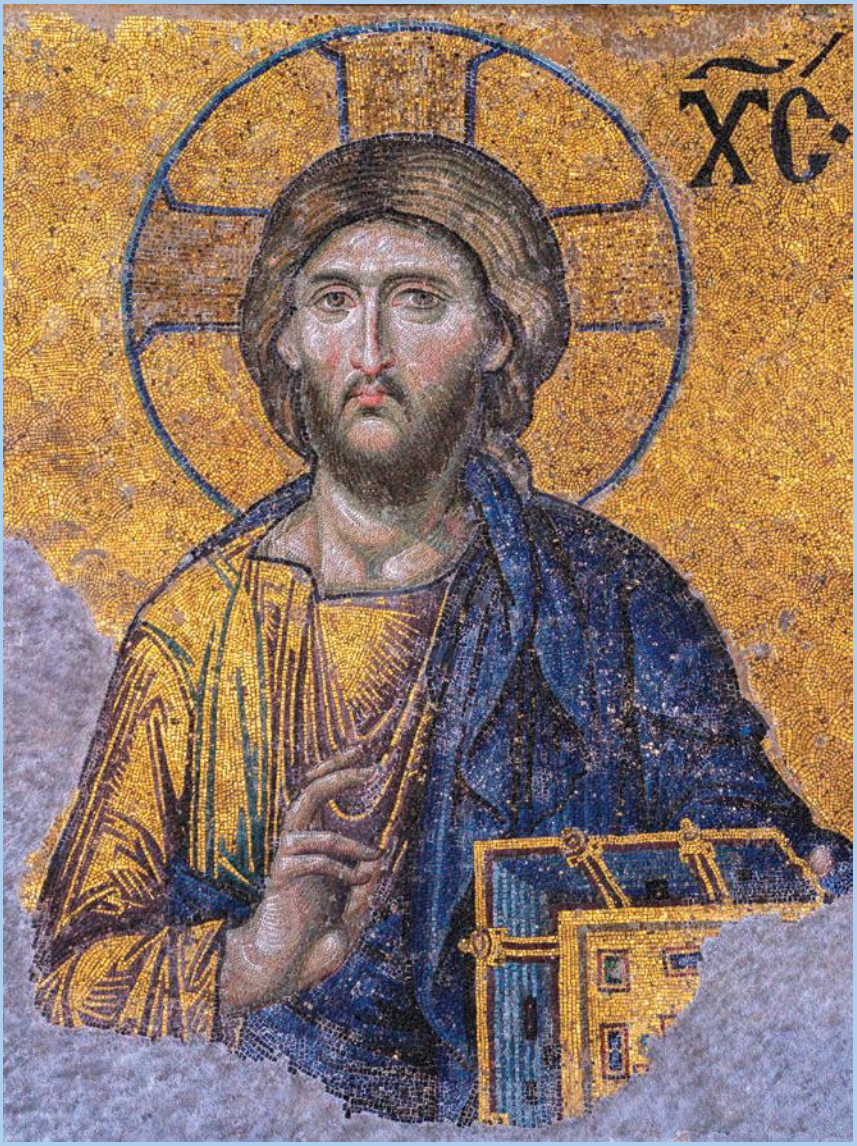

Figure 16.16 This mosaic wall depicting Jesus Christ is found inside Hagia Sophia, situated in the Old City of Istanbul, which is in Turkey. Hagia Sophia was established by the Roman Empire as the first Christian cathedral in 537 AD, then was briefly converted by the Fourth Crusaders to a Roman Catholic cathedral in 1204, then became an Ottoman mosque in 1453, before finally it was secularised and opened as museum in 1935.

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Glossary

95 Theses Pamphlet written by Martin Luther against the selling of papal indulgences

99 Names of Allah The names used in the Qur'an to refer to Allah

Abomination State of disgust and hatred; abhorrence, detestation, loathing

Adharma Opposite of dharma: all that is bad, wrong, wicked

Adherent Person who supports, identifies with or gives allegiance to a religious tradition

Advaita Literally 'not two', an expression of Vedanta Hinduism

Age of Ignorance Islamic term for pre-Islamic life, a translation of the word *Jahiliyyah*

Agnosticism Doctrine that it is impossible to know whether God, gods or spirits exist

Ahimsa Non-violence

Alb A white linen robe with close sleeves worn by an officiating priest

Alchemy Early form of scientific experimentation and philosophical investigations, particularly involving chemistry, metallurgy and mysticism

Amrita Special drink of the gods, the nectar of immortality

Anatta The absence of self or soul

Anchoress An anchorite (male) or anchoress (female) is one who gives themselves over to total seclusion

Androgynous Reflecting both male and female characteristics; either a mix of, or neither, masculine and feminine

Angel Comes from the Greek *angelos* and refers to a messenger from heaven

Anglicare National network of care and social justice agencies of the Anglican Church in Australia

Anicca Impermanence

Animism The belief that spirits inhabit all objects and have influence on people and natural events

Anti-Semitism The strong dislike or cruel and unfair treatment of Jewish people

Apostasy The act of giving up your religious beliefs and leaving a religion (can also be used in relation to politics)

Apostle Follower whom Jesus chose and trained for a mission of healing and preaching

Apostolic Succession The unbroken handing on of authority and belief from the time of the Apostles

Arati The ritual usually done at the end of *puja*; lamps burning ghee are waved before the images of the gods and a visual connection between devotee and deity is established; a sensual and symbolic gesture to highlight the desire for enlightenment and the overcoming of ignorance

Arhat One who has achieved the final goal of Buddhist practice, the attainment of nirvana; an enlightened and saintly person

Archetype A model upon which subsequent behaviour and attitudes can be based

Ark A special cabinet where Torah scrolls are kept

Aryans An early European people who are thought to have invaded India several thousand years ago

Asexual A person who has no sexual feelings or desires

As salamu alaykum Arabic greeting that means 'Peace be upon you'

Ascetic Someone who practises severe self-discipline and possibly retires into solitude in order to achieve liberation

Ashkenazim Jewish people originally from northern and eastern Europe

Atheism Doctrine that there is no evidence for the existence of God; that gods and spirits do not exist; from the Greek *a* (against/no) and *theos* (god); an atheist is a person who holds that view

Atman The Hindu self, similar to the concept of the individual soul

Avatar Form or manifestation of the Hindu gods, especially Lord Vishnu

B'nei Yisrael The Children of Israel

Bali A demon who was subjugated by Lord Vishnu in his manifestation as Vamana

Baptism A religious act of purification by water that allows recipients membership of Christianity

Baptist A denomination of Christianity that rejects infant baptism, believing that followers should choose to be Christian of their own accord

Bardo An intermediate plane of existence or period, which in Buddhism translates as the semi-conscious state of the time between death and rebirth

Bardo Thodol A text that guides a person through the experience of death until rebirth; also known as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*

Beatification A declaration by the pope that a soul is blessed in heaven; it is a stage towards the canonisation or sanctification of a person's soul

Bedouin Arab desert nomad

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Bhakti movement Devotional movement in Hinduism

Bid'a Innovation; a term used to refer to those who seek to bring new ideas and interpretations into Islam; generally has a negative connotation

Bimah Raised platform

Bisexual A person who is attracted to both sexes

Bishop An authority figure of the Christian clergy

Bodhisattva One who has achieved enlightenment but forgoes *nirvana* to help others achieve enlightenment

Brahman The 'ultimate' or 'transcendent' principle, the underlying consciousness that pervades the universe; sometimes expressed as the concept of the ultimate god, sometimes called the great world soul or the supreme soul

Brahmin One of the four castes in India – the priestly class

Buddha 'Enlightened one', usually applied to Siddhartha Gautama as 'the Buddha' but there are numerous Buddhas in this tradition

Caliph Literally 'successor' or 'steward'; a person who makes religious and political decisions for the Muslim community

Canonisation The process whereby a person is declared a saint in the Roman Catholic Church

Caravans Company of travellers journeying together on camels

Cardinal A senior figure of the Roman Catholic Church

Cathars From a Greek word meaning pure ones – a group of Christian Gnostics, dedicated to charity and poverty whose practices were significantly different from the Catholic Church

Catholic Christian denomination of the Roman Catholic Church. When in lowercase, it refers to the whole Christian Church, or alternatively as universal, inclusive or broad-minded

Celibate Living a life of sexual abstinence

Chan A series of Buddhist schools in China focusing on meditation – they advocate self-contemplation and wisdom in striving towards awakening

Chasuble A sleeveless outer vestment worn by the celebrant at Mass

Christ Greek word used for the Jewish term 'Messiah', the anointed one

Christos A Greek term meaning 'anointed one'

Church of England The official established church in England

circumambulate To walk around something, usually as an act of worship

clan A small group of families

Classical Age The ages of the Greek (circa 400 – BCE) and Roman (to 300 CE) empires

Communion Literally, 'fellowship'; has become applied to the sacrament of Holy Communion

Confucianism The religious/philosophical system based on the teaching of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE)

Conscription A legal act by a government to force its citizens to enlist in the defence forces, mainly with the objective of sending them to war

Consumerism Preoccupation with the accumulation of consumer goods

Contextualisation The context of the expression; for example, expressing a religious tradition in a way that can be easily identified with its cultural context

Coolie An unskilled labourer, used in a derogatory way by the British in the colonial era

Corroboree An Aboriginal ceremony, usually in the form of a dance

cosmos The universe viewed as an ordered system

Council of Nicaea The first council of the Christian Church; also produced the Nicene Creed, the Christian statement of faith; after this council, Christianity became closely associated with the state in the Roman Empire

Covenant '*Brit*' in Hebrew; a promise or agreement between God and human beings; stronger than a 'contract', it involves an ongoing relationship between the parties

Creed A statement of religious belief, often summarising the major concepts of that religion

Crusades A series of attacks by European Christians to recapture the Holy Land, which was held by Islam, in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries CE

Cult An extreme religious group that is often considered dangerous, but is also used as a term of disdain for many valid new religious movements

Dalit Meaning the oppressed, someone who has no varna; traditionally regarded as 'untouchable', although this term is no longer officially used; term was introduced by the social reformer Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century; in the past it was linked to *jati*, used to refer to occupational groups of a lower status

Darsan To be in the presence of a deity, to see and be seen by that deity

Decalogue Literally, 'ten words'; a translation of the Hebrew term used to refer to the Ten Commandments

Deity A god or goddess

Denomination An organised subgroup of the Christian church

Dharma (sanskrit); ***dhamma*** (Pali) Right way of living, righteousness; fulfilling your purpose

Dharma Wheel Eight-spoked wheel representing the Noble Eightfold Path, the way of life for Buddhists

Dhikr (or zikr) Ritual utterance of God's name or God's praise

Dhyana A Sanskrit term for meditation; one of the stages in yoga

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Diaspora The Jewish community outside Israel

Disciple Follower of a leader or teacher

Doctrine A body of teachings that form the basis of a belief system

Dowry Goods or money that a bride's family brings to her husband on the marriage

Dreaming, the The belief system of the Australian Aboriginal peoples

Dukkha Basic element of the human condition, translated as 'suffering' or 'distress' or 'anguish'

Eco-spirituality Spirituality that links with concern for the environment

Ecotheology A theology that relates to the care of the environment

Ecstatic state A state of blissful connection; achieved using bodily movement, chanting, meditation music and other inspirational activities

Ecumenism Movement within Christian churches towards unity among different Christian denominations

El A Hebrew word meaning 'God', also used in other cultures from the Near East

Epistles Letters, a term used in the Bible, from the Greek word for letter or message

Esoteric Intended to be understood by few people; private (or inner) knowledge

Essenes A separatist religious group in Israel in the first century CE

Eucharist The consecrated elements of the Lord's supper; the communion

Eunuch Castrated male

Evangelical From the Greek word euangelion meaning 'gospel' or 'good news', after the eighteenth century CE, it refers to a Protestant movement that believes one's soul can be saved only by having faith in the atoning death of Jesus

Exodus Literally, 'departure'; it refers to the event where, led by Moses, the people of Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land

Exoteric Intended to be understood by the general public; public (or outer) knowledge

Experiential Relating to experience

Feminist theology A movement to look at religious teachings, particularly within Judaism and Christianity, from a feminist perspective

Filioque clause Literally, 'and 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'

Fornicators Men and women who have sex outside of marriage

Genocide Planned extermination of a national or racial group

Gentile Person who is not Jewish

Get A Jewish bill of divorce

Gnostic From the Greek word *gnosis* meaning wisdom; Gnostic doctrines hold that the world and humanity are corrupt and only wisdom of secret matters allows humans to connect with the small spark of the divine within them

Gongan (or ***koan***) Question-and-answer riddles that challenge thinking and can lead to enlightenment

Good Friday The Friday before Easter that commemorates the day Jesus died

Gospels The story of Jesus' life and teachings; the first four books of the New Testament

Great Schism The split between the Western and the Eastern churches in the eleventh century CE

Guide for the Perplexed A theological and philosophical work that discusses issues such as the existence and nature of God, God's knowledge and the nature of evil

Hadith Narrations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad

Halacha Legal code of Judaism based on the teachings of the Torah and interpretations and applications by rabbinic authorities over the generations

Halal A term meaning permissible, often applied to food including meat; however, it has a wider meaning that suggests what is permissible under Islamic law and applies to many aspects of life and behaviour

Haram Forbidden under Islam

Harijans Children of God; this term applies to the Dalits who were also called 'untouchables'; some find the term Harijan to be condescending and prefer the term Dalit

Hassidim Pious ones

Havdalah Meaning 'differentiation'; a ceremony to mark the end of Shabbat

Hebrew The tribes that later became the Jewish people, also called 'the Children of Israel' or the Israelites

Hellenise To make something Greek or bring it within the sphere of Greek culture

Henotheism Belief that one god, from among a number of gods, is greatest and is selected to be worshipped

Hereditary Passed down within a family

Heterosexual sex Sex between a man and a woman

Hijra The year Muhammad left Mecca (622 CE); this became the first year of the Muslim calendar

Holocaust (**Shoah**) The persecution and attempted genocide of the Jewish people during World War II

Homa giving offerings to a sacred fire, usually on the floor

Homogenous Having a common origin

Homosexuality A person who is attracted to other people of the same gender

Humanism Philosophy of life that emphasises the importance of human beings

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Icons Stylised pictorial representations of saints, biblical characters or stories, used as aids to worship in the Orthodox churches

Idolater A worshipper of idols (an idolater breaks the Second Commandment not to worship graven images)

Ijma Consensus of scholars

Imam Prayer leader

Immaculate Conception The doctrine that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was free from sin from the conception of Jesus

Immanence The idea that gods or spiritual forces pervade the universe and are present in every aspect of life, as compared with the idea of transcendence

Indentured labour Work under a fixed-term contract with repressive conditions, often involving bringing a person to a country for a certain period of time to do a certain job

Indulgence In Roman Catholicism, a pardon from the expectation of punishment in Purgatory after the sinner has been absolved

Insights Understanding or revelations

Interfaith dialogue Move to greater cooperation and harmony among different religious traditions

Intersex A person with attributes of both sexes

Islamic jurisprudence (***fiqh***) The scholarly interpretation and human understanding of Shari'a

Jain Follower of Jainism, a non-theistic religion founded in India in the fifth century BCE by Jina Mahavira

Jataka Tales of the Buddha in his former existences; they are Buddhist parables

Jati Term used to describe hereditary occupational groups in India; some interpret it to mean sub-caste

Jerusalem Capital city of Israel; was also the capital city of Judea

Jewish Name given to the people of Israel after their exile in Babylon; the survivors were mainly from the tribe of Judah

Jihad Struggle or striving; related to the concept of effort, struggle or resistance; a religious duty

Jinn Spirits that can be good or malevolent

Judea Part of a mountainous area (now divided between Israel and Palestine) that Jewish people believed had been promised to them by God

Juxtaposition Thoughts or images of two things not normally considered together

Ka'ba Literally 'cube'; a building in Mecca believed by Muslims to represent the presence of Allah

Kaddish Jewish liturgical mourner's prayer in Aramaic

Kama Sutra An ancient Sanskrit text giving instruction on the art of lovemaking

Karma The effects of one's actions in life, be they good or bad; the natural consequences of actions

Ketubah Jewish marriage contract with terms and conditions, similar to modern prenuptial agreement

Khatib Speaker, who delivers the sermon in the mosque

Khirqa Woollen robe associated with Sufis; can also refer to the initiation of a Sufi

Khutba The message at the mosque, delivered by the *khatib* (speaker)

Kiddush A prayer used to bless wine drunk at the Shabbat meal

Kidushin Betrothal; a more serious arrangement than engagement by which a marriage is made holy

Kinship Family relationships that exist between people, and the rights and obligations associated with those relationships

Koan (or ***gongan***) Question-and-answer riddles that challenge thinking and can lead to enlightenment

Kshatriya (**Ksatriya**) One of the four castes in India – traditionally, the ruling or military class

kumbha A pot that is symbolic of the womb

Last Supper The final meal Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion

Legalistic Rigid adherence to the law

Lesbian A female homosexual

Lingam A symbol associated with Shiva in Hinduism; often considered a manifestation of the deity, a column of light or a phallic symbol

Literalist A strict, exact approach to understanding religion and religious writing, with little room for interpretation

Liturgy A collection of rituals forming public worship

Liwat Homosexual acts

Lutiyya A term that relates to lesbianism

Magistra Latin word for a female teacher

Mahatma A title given to people of outstanding character and spirituality, meaning 'great soul'

Mala String of prayer beads, usually made up of 108 beads

Mandala Symbolic representation of the cosmos, often drawn as an aid to meditation

Martyr To put someone to death who will not give up their religion, views or beliefs; it comes from the Greek word, *martys*, meaning 'witness'

Mecca (Sometimes **Makka** or **Makkah**) City in modern Saudi Arabia where Muhammad lived and received his first revelations; spiritual centre of the Muslim world and focus of the Hajj

Medina (**Madinat al-Nabiy**) 'City of the prophet' (also sometimes Madina or Madinah), a few hundred kilometres north of Mecca; the Prophet Muhammad migrated there in 622 CE

Meditation The practice of regulating and training the mind

Menorah Seven-branched candlestick

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Messiah The promised deliverer of the Jewish nation

Metaphysics A branch of philosophy that centres on the ultimate nature of reality

Middle way The middle way of Buddhism avoids the extremes of indulgence and asceticism; it is the ideal life for a Buddhist

Mikvah Ritual bath

Militant Combative, aggressive

Minaret A tower at a mosque where traditionally the muezzin calls Muslims to prayer

Minyan Quorum of 10 Jewish people needed to form a synagogue

Miracle Manifestation of the sacred or holy to produce an effect or result that seems contrary to the laws of nature

Mishneh Torah Code of Jewish law compiled by Moses Maimonides

Misogyny Hatred of women

Missionary A person who works to convert others to their religious faith, often in a place where that religion is not widely practised

Mitzvot Keeping the commandments of God

Moieties Skin name subsections in many Aboriginal communities

Moksha (or **mukti**) Release from the cycle of rebirth; reunification of the atman with Brahman, or the separation of consciousness from matter

Monasteries Places where monks and nuns live

Monastic life Spiritual recluse as monks and nuns

Monism The view that everything (including religion) is one; there are no divisions

Monogamy Having one romantic partner at any one time

Monotheism Worship of a single god

Muezzin The one who calls Muslims to prayer

Multiculturalism Policy that recognises cultural diversity within an overall cultural structure rather than expecting a nation to only reflect one particular cultural position

Murti An image in which the divine spirit is shown

Mutawwa'in Muslim religious police

Mysticism The process of developing a profound connection with an ultimate reality, be it heaven, God, a deity or something else

Myth A spiritual or religious idea expressed in human terms

Nafs The individual self, psyche, ego or soul

Nagid Hebrew term meaning 'prince' or 'leader'

Necromancy Magical communication with the dead

Neo-Platonic A movement that developed the theories of the Greek philosopher Plato into a religious and mystical expression

Nepotism Undue encouragement or support of one's relations (often in an employment or political sense)

Ner tamid A light that represents the eternal flame that was continually burned in the Temple in Jerusalem

New Age movement Promotes and develops individual spirituality rather than (institutionalised) religion; New Age can include astrologers, yoga practitioners, séance attendees, shamans, neo-pagans and a whole range of other religious practitioners

Niddah Menstruation

Nikah Complex term often translated as marriage, but has connotations of embracing and sex

Nirvana State of no suffering, desire or sense of self, resulting from enlightenment; the extinction of desire (*dukkha*)

Nisuin Formal marriage

Noahide Laws The seven basic laws that apply to all people, not only Jewish people

Noble Eightfold Path The Fourth Noble Truth, the middle way, the way of life for Buddhists

Nominalism Referring to those who take the name of a religion, but do not necessarily practise that religion, usually for the political and social benefits that accrue

Non-conformists Those who do not conform to the state religion; in the case of England, the Church of England is the state religion

Om According to some, the sound with which creation began; the symbol for Hinduism and a common symbol used in most eastern religions which originated in India

Omnipotent All powerful

Omnipresent All present

Omniscient All knowing

Orthodox Literally meaning 'keeping to the correct teachings of the Church'; has come to refer to the Eastern Church

Paganism A system of beliefs that encompasses a wide range of practices and outlooks; some pagan movements look to many gods and goddesses to explain natural phenomena; others are more animistic

Pali Canon Buddhist sacred text, otherwise called the Tripitaka; Pali is the language in which it is written

Palliative care Palliative care is medical care that relieves pain, symptoms and stress experienced by patients who, in most cases, are dying

Panentheism A belief system in which the divine extends to all parts of the universe and beyond it

Pantheism The idea that God is in everything and the natural world

Pantheon A set of all the gods in a religious tradition

Parable A short story containing a religious lesson

Parinirvana The Buddha's achievement of nirvana, in its final form, the day of his death

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Parthenogenesis A divine being born from a virgin without sexual intercourse

Patriarchal/patriarchy From the Greek and Latin *pater* (father); refers to a system in which men hold the power in a society or in reference to the fathers of religious traditions

Pauline Christianity 'Pauline' is a term used critically to suggest that Paul and his followers unduly corrupted the message of Jesus or at least reinterpreted Jesus' message from a Greek perspective

Pedagogical Relating to the science of teaching

Pejorative Term of criticism or deprecation

Penal Relating to punishment

Pentecostalism Movement within Christianity that places emphasis on the possibility of direct contact with the Holy Spirit

Persecutor Someone who oppresses or punishes others for following a particular faith

Pesach (or **Passover**) Festival that celebrates the Exodus and the ideal of freedom

Pharisees A religious sect that was active in Jesus' day

Philosophy The study of the general principles of knowledge

Pilgrimage A journey of an adherent to a place of significance in their religion

Plagiarise Copy someone's ideas or writing without acknowledgement

Polyandry A wife having many husbands

Polygamy Having more than one spouse at one time

Polygyny A husband having many wives

Polytheism Worship of many (*poly*) gods (*theos*)

Pope Head of the Roman Catholic Church

Prajna Sanskrit word meaning 'wisdom'

Presbyterian State Church of Scotland and others that follow a Presbyterian form of church government, governed by elders (or presbyters)

Priest Someone who performs religious rites and makes sacrificial offerings

Primary source A document or other material that comes directly from a person or place of interest

Procreation Bringing into being, creating life

Prophet An inspired teacher, a guide sent by God; to deliver messages from heaven

Proselytising Encouraging converts from one religion to another

Protestant Churches that split from the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century in protest at the Church's teachings

Puja Making offerings: rituals that may be carried out at a public temple or in the home, developing positive energy

Puranas A body of Hindu sacred writings that mainly tells legends about the Hindu gods

Purgatory The intermediate state between death and heaven, according to Roman Catholic theology

Purity Freedom from evil or guilt

Q From the German *Quelle* meaning 'source'; Q is believed to be an early collection of Jesus' sayings and is apparently used by Matthew and Luke in the common words of their Gospels

Qiyas Analogy, reasoning and precedents

Queer Those who do not identify with either a heteronormative identity or a specific homosexual identity

Rabbi A community leader schooled in the intricacies of Jewish law and ritual; a rabbi often leads Jewish worship

Rak'ah (plural ***rak'at***) A unit or cycle of Islamic prayer; the prescribed movements and words followed by Muslims during worship)

Rastafarian Member of a Jamaican religious movement that believes in black supremacy and the back-to-Africa movement

Redemption Concept of salvation

Reincarnation The concept of rebirth in physical form to the Earth

Religious Relating to religion; a set of common beliefs held by a group of people which may include a system of prayers and religious laws

Resurrection A person coming back to life

Rite of passage A ritual to mark the progression of an individual through various status stages in a community

Roman Empire At the time of Jesus, the empire controlled all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea including Judea and Jerusalem; the Romans spoke Latin, but the Greek language was as important as Latin and had become the common language of the Empire

Rta The divine pattern in nature, the universal presence that governs nature, human ethics, conduct and justice

Sacrament A religious ceremony that celebrates an outward sign of an inner spiritual grace

Sadducees A high-status religious group of Jesus' day

Sadhu An ascetic solely devoted to achieving liberation (moksha) through meditation

Salat al-Jum'ah Muslim Friday prayers held at the mosque, just after noon

Salvation Christians believe Jesus died to save people from the punishment of sin

Samatha A meditation technique that aims to increase the voluntary attention span

Samsara Cycle of rebirth or reincarnation

Samskara A series of rituals that serve as rites of passage and mark the various stages of human life and often signify entry to a particular ashrama

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Sangha The community of Buddhists, including the monastic community and the broader Buddhist community (usually refers to the monastic community when spelt with an upper case 'S' while a lower case 's' refers to the more general community of Buddhist adherents)

Sannyasi One who renounces life and dedicates themselves to strictly spiritual pursuits

Sanskrit Ancient language of India used in liturgy and other aspects of life

Sati Where a widow throws herself onto her husband's funeral pyre

Satori Japanese word for enlightenment

Satyagraha Literally holding on to or grasping at the truth; sometimes referred to as soul force or truth force

Scientology A religious group begun by L. Ron Hubbard in the 1950s

Sect A subgroup of a religious tradition, usually emphasising a particular aspect that makes it different from other groups of the same tradition

Sectarianism Excessive devotion to a particular sect or religious faith

Segregation Any system where racial groups are kept apart from each other

Self-effacement Making oneself inconspicuous, through modesty or timidity

Sephardim Jewish people whose families were expelled from Spain in 1492 and mainly joined communities around the Middle East and North Africa

Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (often represented by the Roman number LXX)

Sermon on the Mount A moral discourse from Jesus where he unveiled his theology and philosophy to an assembled crowd

Sexual morality Conforming to particular rules of conduct; often, chastity

Shabbat Literally means cease; important ritual observance for Jewish people beginning at sunset on Friday night and concluding at nightfall on Saturday; represents the day God rested after he created the world, as recorded in Genesis

Shahada The first pillar of Islam, the statement of belief that 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet'

Shari'a The moral and legal code of Islam based on the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet, as well as other Islamic sources

Shi'a (or **Shi'ite**) The second-largest Islamic group, Shi'a Muslims believe that Muhammad's descendants are best suited to lead the Muslim community

Shiva One of the three chief Hindu divinities, known also as 'the Destroyer', he is the most significant deity in the Shaivite system of deities; related to many other gods and goddesses

Shramana Wandering teacher, monk or philosopher

Sin An act considered a transgression of divine law, an offence against God

Sodomy Another term for homosexual practices; from a particular interpretation of the story of Sodom

Speaking in tongues Speaking in the 'language of the Holy Spirit', a mark of the Pentecostal movement

Stolen Generations Term applied to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia taken from their families and raised to be assimilated into the white community

Stupa A burial mound or monument that usually has a relic contained within

Sunni The majority expression of Islam who claim to follow the Qur'an and *sunna* (example) of the Prophet Muhammad

Superstition Fear of the unknown or acting according to some unknown spiritual force or prejudice

Surplice A loose-fitting broad-sleeved white vestment, usually of linen, worn by certain members of the clergy and choristers

Sutras Sacred texts containing the words of the Buddha

Symbiotic Referring to an interaction or interdependent relationship

Symbology The study of symbols

Synagogue Jewish place of worship

Syncretism Process of new religious systems developing out of the combination of two or more prevailing religions

Synoptic Gospels Literally, 'seen together'; the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which share many common features

Tallit Prayer shawl

Tanakh Acronym for the Hebrew Bible that is made up of the Teachings (Torah T), the writings from the Period of Prophecy (Nevi'im N) and the writings from the remaining books (Ketuvim K)

Tao Te Ching Chinese classic text fundamental to Taoist philosophy

Taoism Major Chinese religion/philosophy, founded about 600 BCE; also known as Daoism

Tasawwuf An area of Islamic study focusing on spiritual development

Tasbih (subha) String of prayer beads comprising 99 beads, representing the 99 names of Allah

Tefillin Leather box and straps

Temple, the The temple built in Jerusalem

Temple *puja* Making offerings in a temple; part of the ritual of Buddhists, often reflecting the particular cultural background of the adherents

Ten Commandments (or **Decalogue**) Key components of the law given to Moses

Ten Commitments Ten actions that have been developed to express Hindu ethical behaviour

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Terra nullius Literally 'land belonging to no one'; the doctrine that Australia was owned by no one, and thus open to European settlement

Textual Relating to a text

Theology The study of the nature of God and religious doctrine – usually with an emphasis on Christianity

Theosophy Spiritualist group founded in the late nineteenth century, following Hindu and Buddhist teachings

Thirteen Precepts Moses Maimonides' principles of faith, which he believed every Jewish person should maintain

Tikkun olam Jewish concept of the repair of the world; the need for social justice

Tithe A tenth part of some amount, specifically as a donation to a church

Torah First five books of the Hebrew Bible

Torii (or ***tori***) A gate of two columns and two beams that separates the sacred area of the shrine from the ordinary world outside

Totem Object, such as an animal, plant or particular landmark, through which an Australian Indigenous person is linked to the ancestral being responsible for his or her existence

Transcendence An existence above or apart from the material world

Transgender A person whose identity does not conform to the gender they were assigned at birth

Transubstantiation In the Eucharist, the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ

Tribe A group of clans

Trimurti The three Hindu gods, Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Shiva, who make up the Hindu godhead, Brahman

Trinity The concept of one God in three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

Tripitaka Literally 'three baskets'; this is the Buddhist sacred text; sometimes called the Pali Canon

Ulama Scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law

Umayyad dynasty The first Muslim dynasty; ruled 661–750 CE

Varna Concept commonly known as caste; the four varna form the basis of Hindu society

Vedanta 'The end of the Veda', thought by some to be the highest teaching of the Vedas (*veda* means 'knowledge'), the ancient Sanskrit scriptures of India

Vedas The earliest sacred writings of Hinduism, first as oral traditions then written

Vedism The early religious system of India that developed into Hinduism

Vipassana Meaning 'insight'; one of the most ancient meditation techniques

Vishnu, Lord The supreme god for Vaishnavas, and one manifestation of Brahman (the great world soul) in other traditions of Hinduism; Lord Vishnu is considered the 'preserver' of life; other gods are explained as being manifestations, or avatars of Lord Vishnu – the god Krishna is one of these

Wesak (or **Vesak**) Celebration of significant events in the life of the Buddha

West, The Western civilisation refers to cultures of European origin

Wicca The religious tradition of modern witchcraft

Worldview An ideological means of understanding the world and its people

Wowser Australian term referring to a puritanical fanatic or spoilsport

Wudu' Ritual washing of arms, face and feet before the daily prayers

YHWH The Tetragrammaton, the four letters that are the name of God revealed to Moses; not able to be pronounced, so read as 'Adonai' meaning 'Lord' (or in some Christian sources read as Jehovah/Yahweh or LORD)

Yoga Any of various systems of discipline in the Hindu philosophical system concerned with achieving union of the mind and body with the universal spirit, or attaining a state of consciousness only aware of its own nature

Yoni A vaginal symbol often represented together a lingam

Zaddik Righteous man

Zazen Experiential meditation

Zen The Japanese rendering of the Chinese term '*chan*"

Zion Referring specifically to Jerusalem, taken to refer to any holy or ideal place

Zoroastrianism A religion based on the idea that there is a continuous fight between a god who represents good and a god who represents evil

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Answers to multiple-choice questions

CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND BELIEFS

1 D
2 B
3 D
4 B
5 A
6 D
7 A
8 C
9 D
10 B

CHAPTER 2: RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA PRE-1945

1 C
2 B
3 A
4 C
5 D
6 D
7 A
8 B
9 B
10 A

CHAPTER 3: RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA POST-1945

1 C
2 B
3 A
4 A
5 C
6 D
7 B
8 A
9 B
10 B

CHAPTER 4: BUDDHISM: THE BASIC FACTS

1 B
2 C
3 B
4 A
5 B
6 B
7 C
8 A
9 A
10 A

CHAPTER 6: CHRISTIANITY: THE BASIC FACTS

1 B
2 A
3 B
4 B
5 A
6 A
7 D
8 B
9 D
10 C

CHAPTER 8: HINDUISM: THE BASIC FACTS

1 A
2 B
3 D
4 D
5 A
6 B
7 B
8 C
9 B
10 C

CHAPTER 10: ISLAM: THE BASIC FACTS

1 B
2 C
3 C
4 A
5 C
6 B
7 D
8 C
9 A
10 D

CHAPTER 12: JUDAISM: THE BASIC FACTS

1 D
2 B
3 D
4 C
5 B
6 A
7 B
8 C
9 B
10 C

CHAPTER 16: RELIGION AND NON-RELIGION

1 A
2 B
3 B
4 B
5 A
6 C
7 C
8 A
9 D
10 D

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5A.2 Further significant people and schools of thought

For context, you should read Chapter 5 in the print textbook before commencing this digital section.

Interestingly, except for Emperor Asoka (who as a king remained open to the sorts of Buddhist teachings he tolerated in his kingdom) and Sister Dhammadinna (regarding whom there are few resources), all of the people and schools of thought listed in the Depth Study section are linked to the Mahayana tradition. It is imperative to emphasise the general characteristics of the Mahayana tradition to understand the people and schools of thought listed in the syllabus. An overview of Mahayana tradition is included in Chapter 4 of the print book, with a more detailed examination later in this digital section.

The print textbook discusses **King Asoka** and the **XIV Dalai Lama**.

Nagarjuna (circa 150–250 CE)

Life and ideas

Nagarjuna was originally learned in the Vedas; that is, he was a Hindu from the southern area of India. It is not known exactly when he lived, but references in letters to a king who ruled about 170 CE link the idea that Nagarjuna flourished around this time as well. It is not known why he converted to Buddhism from Hinduism.

When he became a Buddhist, he concentrated on Mahayana texts, possibly because this kind of Buddhism was causing some very exciting debates at this time on the nature of existence. *Nyaya* – a Hindu logical system that allowed one to prove existence and certify truth – was also developing at this time. Buddhists, on the other hand, were arguing that reality could be broken down into atoms and that these atoms formed different substances that made up the essence of reality. Nagarjuna, a man who understood both Hindu and Buddhist thought, wondered if he could develop a system that included these two ideals.

Figure 5A.1 Angkor Wat, Cambodia. Originally built as a Hindu temple dedicated to Vishnu, it was gradually converted into a Buddhist temple. Nagarjuna seems to have followed a similar journey.

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Nagarjuna strongly developed the idea of *sunya*. *Sunya* can be translated as 'nothingness' or 'emptiness'. This related to the unstable nature of individual existence. This concept was also linked to the newly invented concept of the zero, and Nagarjuna was able to slowly unpick all the philosophical proof of existence to that stage, armed with this concept of 'emptiness'. This concept was to have profound meaning in the later development of Chan/Zen Buddhism.

Contribution to Buddhism

Nagarjuna's major work is called the *Basic Verses on the Middle Way* (Mulamadhyamakakarika). He also added to this the *Seventy Verses on Emptiness* (Shunyatasaptati) and the *Sixty Verses on Reasoning* (Yuktisastika). In these texts, Nagarjuna essentially developed a method for doubting. This reflected an attitude of the original Buddha, who refused to answer questions about God, the soul or the nature of nirvana, except for some basic generalities. The Buddha was more interested in fixing the problem of human suffering. Similarly, Nagarjuna sought to dispel assumptions about life that may be accepted as part of tradition, but might not necessarily be provable.

Under Nagarjuna's system of denial, a discussion would go like this:

> Question: Is there a god?
>
> Nagarjuna: A god does not exist nor fail to exist, existence does not have nor not have a god, nor neither not have nor have no god.

(Which gives rise to the classic joke; how many Madhyamika Buddhists does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: Three – one to change it, one to not change it, and one to neither change it nor not change it.)

This perfect system of negation refers back to the Buddha's original point: one need not take a position on something one cannot possibly know anything about. In this way, Nagarjuna philosophically strengthened the sceptical position of numerous Buddhists. His doctrines allowed Buddhists to argue effectively against Hindu Brahman priests (Hindu hereditary priests) who were developing numerous arguments for the existence of gods.

Impact on Buddhism

Nagarjuna was one of the most significant early philosophers and thinkers, particularly in the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism. Nagarjuna created a bridge between Hinduism and Buddhism, due to his broad knowledge of Hindu principles and unique worldview, and his extensive writings furthered the development of Buddhist thought. His concept of *sunyata* or emptiness, and ideas about the ultimate reality (*paramārtha satya*) and the conventional or superficial reality (*saṃvṛtisatya*; known as the doctrine of the two truths), greatly influenced Buddhist philosophy.

Almost all Mahayana schools of Buddhism would count Nagarjuna as their founder, especially in terms of his philosophical ideas. His written works are still available today and continue to contribute to Buddhist theories and debates.

Summary

Nagarjuna is the most famous thinker in the early intellectual development of the Buddhist tradition. Along with Vasubandhu and Guru Rinpoche, he is sometimes called 'the second Buddha'. Nagarjuna is famous for his development of Madhyamika, or middle-way thinking, which declares a non-commitment to solid statements about existence through a series of careful negations.

Vasubandhu (fourth century CE)

Due to the interest shown by the Chinese in Buddhism during this period, many books originally written in India are now only available in Chinese. The *Posou Pandoufa Shijuan* (History of Master Vasubandhu) is a Chinese text compiled about 100 years after Vasubandhu's death. It shows us that Vasubandhu wrote commentaries on numerous sutras (Buddhist texts). He also wrote poetry and complex philosophical works. He was a man of vast intelligence and he applied his insights and his compassion to developing Buddhism in uncountable ways.

Life and ideas

Vasubandhu was born in an area close to today's Pakistan in the north-west of India. His father was possibly a Brahman. His eldest brother joined a Buddhist monastery and Vasubandhu followed him. As he developed as a Buddhist thinker, he came into contact with many schools of thinking, such as the Gupta kingdoms that came to dominate Indian life (circa 300–500 CE). They patronised philosophy and encouraged debates between Buddhists, Hindus and other religious groups in India. Vasubandhu was

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Nagarjuna see the following:

- David J. Kalapuhana, *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way) translated as *The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1986.
- Cristian Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nagarjuna*, Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag, 1987.
- L. Jamspal and Peter Della Santina, *Pratityasamutpadahrdayakarika* (The Constituents of Dependent Arising), translated in *Journal of the Department of Buddhist Studies*, Delhi, University of Delhi, 1974.

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supported by at least two Gupta kings later in his life. India at this time was alive with discussion on the nature of life, and Buddhists were making significant contributions to this discussion.

Part of Vasubandhu's early success came when he met a group called the Vaibhashika school. The followers of this school tried to reject all that was not said directly by the Buddha. They were seeking to purify Buddhism of many of the traditions that had developed after Buddha's death. Vasubandhu gave talks on Buddhism during the day and then condensed each talk at night into a verse summary.

These verses were then distributed as the *Abhidharmakosha*. This was Vasubandhu's explanation of the entire Buddhist system. In it he analysed more than 70 sutras with the aim of explaining how to reach *bodhi*, or truth. In fact, he pulled apart all possible grounds for experience as he saw them. He wrote of Buddhism and the mind, the emotions, the senses, mental disturbances, impermanence, spatiality, cosmology, practices of meditation, theories of perception, karma, rebirth and so on. It was a comprehensive system on existence and it brought him much fame. Once he had completed this work, however, Vasubandhu was left unsatisfied by the doctrinal approach of the Vaibhashika school and wrote a treatise against its theories.

At this point Vasubandhu extensively travelled through India, upholding Theravada doctrine. His brother, also a monk but of the Mahayana school, worried that Vasubandhu would use his exceptional intellect to attack Mahayana doctrine. So he pretended to be sick and lured Vasubandhu to him. He and his fellow monks then bombarded Vasubandhu with Mahayana doctrines. After intense study, Vasubandhu quickly became an expert on the Mahayana tradition and began touring and explaining this form of Buddhism. He made commentaries on a vast range of Mahayana texts.

Vasubandhu was soon supported by kings and entered into a series of important debates, all of which he won. He was given large amounts of money for his excellence in thinking and he put this money into the building of monasteries. In line with Mahayana practice, one of these buildings was for Buddhist nuns.

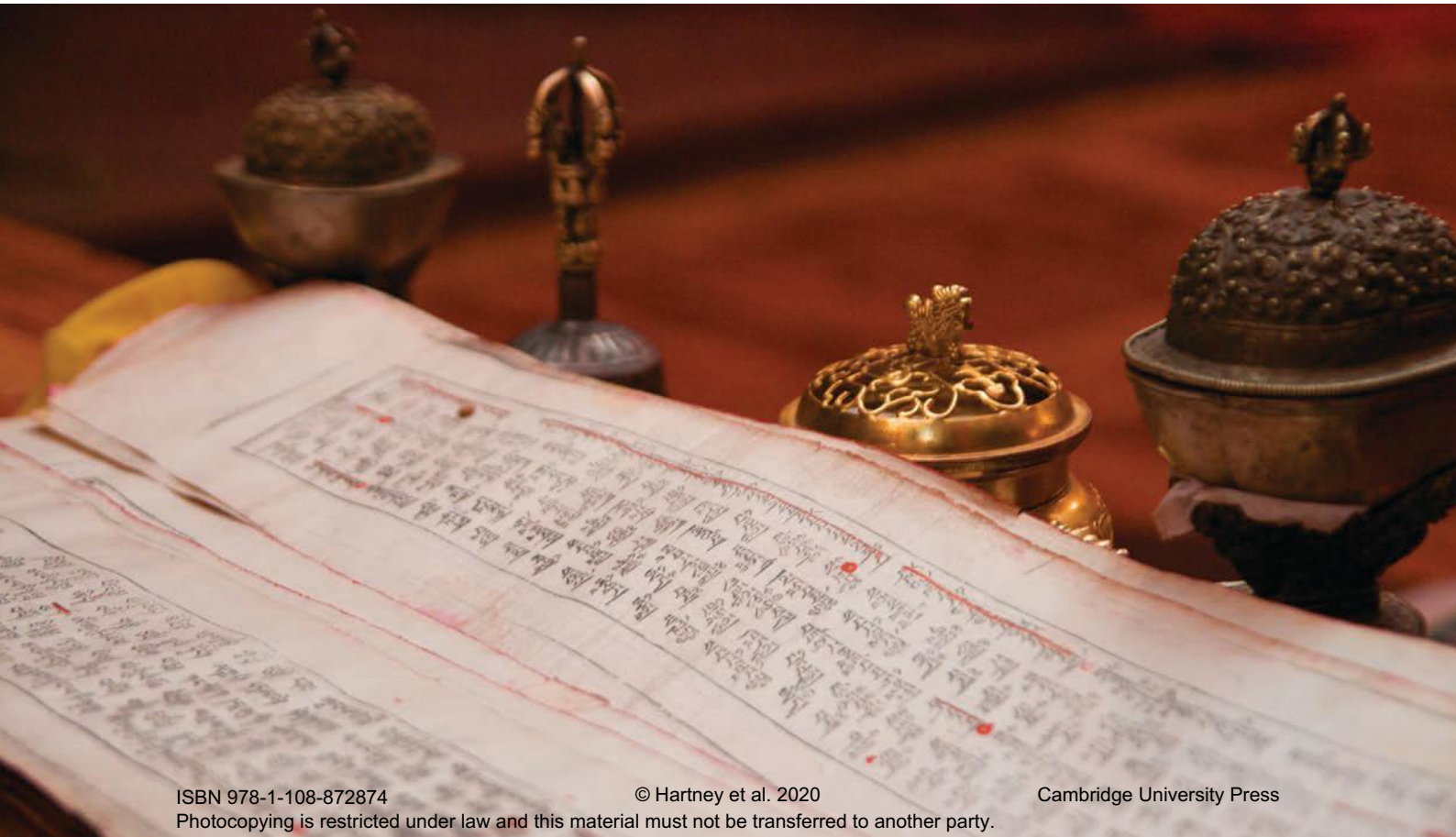
Contribution to Buddhism

There are about 47 works by this thinker in existence today. Most of them survive only in Chinese translation. His original and largest work, the *Abhidharmakosha*, has been read constantly as a very important Buddhist work, particularly in Northern Indian Buddhism. It is also famous in Tibet.

One controversy that raged during Vasubandhu's life was the Buddhist speculation that each moment is only created by its immediate predecessor – meaning that existence is only a series of moments. Vasubandhu felt this did not explain much of life. He argued that the essence of previous experience was stored subliminally, and its memory was triggered by a new experience that may be similar. Such arguments may seem highly philosophical, but they allowed Buddhists to triumph over other religious thinkers at the time and increase the prestige of Buddhism.

It is supposed that towards the end of his life, Vasubandhu worked on texts such as the *Vimshatika* (The Twenty Verses) in which he refuted arguments

Figure 5A.2 Vasubandhu studied many Buddhist sacred texts



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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Vasubandhu see the following:

- Steven Anacker, *Seven works of Vasubandhu*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.
- James Duerlinger, *Indian Buddhist Theories of Person: Vasubandhu's Refutation of the Theory of a Self*, London, Routledge Curzon, 2003.
- Thomas Kochumuttom, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1982. There is an English translation in the collection of Buddhist works called *T'uong Pao*, first published in 1904.

The Chinese commentator Xuanzang (600–664 CE) also wrote of Vasubandhu's life in the *Xiyuji*.

Vasubandhu's journey to the West in order to collect Buddhist scriptures is most famously recounted in the Japanese television series *Monkey*.

The internet abounds in references to these texts (and there are many fan sites of the television show too!)

against Yogacara doctrine. In particular he showed that realists (who exist in time and space) were deluded. Things seem also to exist in dreams, and yet they do not. This dream argument increased the prestige of Yogacara doctrine. This is a doctrine that teaches one must work through meditation towards the goal of seeing existence as it really is – tied into a unity of Buddha nature.

Vasubandhu's work entitled (in Chinese) the *Fo Xing Lun* (Explanation of Buddha Nature) had a very strong influence on the development of East Asian Buddhism.

Impact on Buddhism

Vasubandhu (like other great thinkers in Buddhism) is sometimes given the title 'the second Buddha' because of his application of sophisticated thinking to Buddhist doctrine. His thinking raised the prestige of Buddhism in India, and possibly contributed to its spread among intellectuals in China and Tibet. Vasubandhu's ideas still influence contemporary Buddhist philosophies, as modern scholars continue to discuss and debate his views.

Summary

Vasubandhu was an extremely important figure in the development of the Mahayana tradition in India. He also helped to establish the Yogacara school within Mahayana. Vasubandhu was originally a leading scholar of the Theravadan tradition. His change to Mahayana practices was vitally important for this movement.

Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) (circa seventh to eighth century CE)

Life and ideas

Guru Rinpoche means 'Precious Master'. This title, while given to other people as well, is generally associated with Padmasambhava (often called Guru Rinpoche, although there are several people called Guru Rinpoche in Buddhism). Padmasambhava lived around 640 to 840 CE (or possibly a century later). Padmasambhava, like Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, has also been called 'the second Buddha' and is considered the most important teacher of the *siddha* tradition of Buddhism. The *siddha* tradition is an emphasis within tantric Buddhism, from Tibet, where practitioners aim to develop miraculous powers through intense meditation, usually over several lifetimes. The term 'tantric Buddhism' is sometimes used interchangeably with Vajrayana Buddhism. While they are not strictly the same, tantric Buddhism (sometimes called Nyingma) is one of the oldest forms of Vajrayana Buddhism. Tantric Buddhism involves secret mantras and practices handed down from teacher to disciple. It generally includes mystic practices and retains animistic features, such as the importance of spirits.

Padmasambhava is associated with this Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism. Following a perceived attack by demons in Tibet, Padmasambhava was brought from northern India to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen, where he 'bound' the local deities on his journey through Tibet. This journey is the recorded aspect of his life that influences Buddhists today in the way spirit beings are perceived and treated, the way they are visualised, and Buddhist practices in relation to these beings.

Most of what is known of Padmasambhava is drawn from a work known as the *Rinchen Terdzo* written by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye in the nineteenth century. These stories are legends, and separating reality from legend is difficult. There are many legends told in this collection where the power of Padmasambhava is evident.

It is believed that Padmasambhava was 'incarnated' as an eight-year-old child in a lotus flower, floating in Lake Dhanakosha (in modern Pakistan). He was married to the king's daughter in recognition of his special nature. As mentioned, Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet to overcome the spirits who opposed Buddhism. While there he was given the king's wife, Yeshe Tsogyl, as a consort, and the three became recognised Buddhist practitioners.

In Tibet, Padmasambhava founded a monastery at Samye Gompa, initiated monks and introduced the concept of tantric Buddhism, where negative forces are not eliminated but used to help develop enlightenment.

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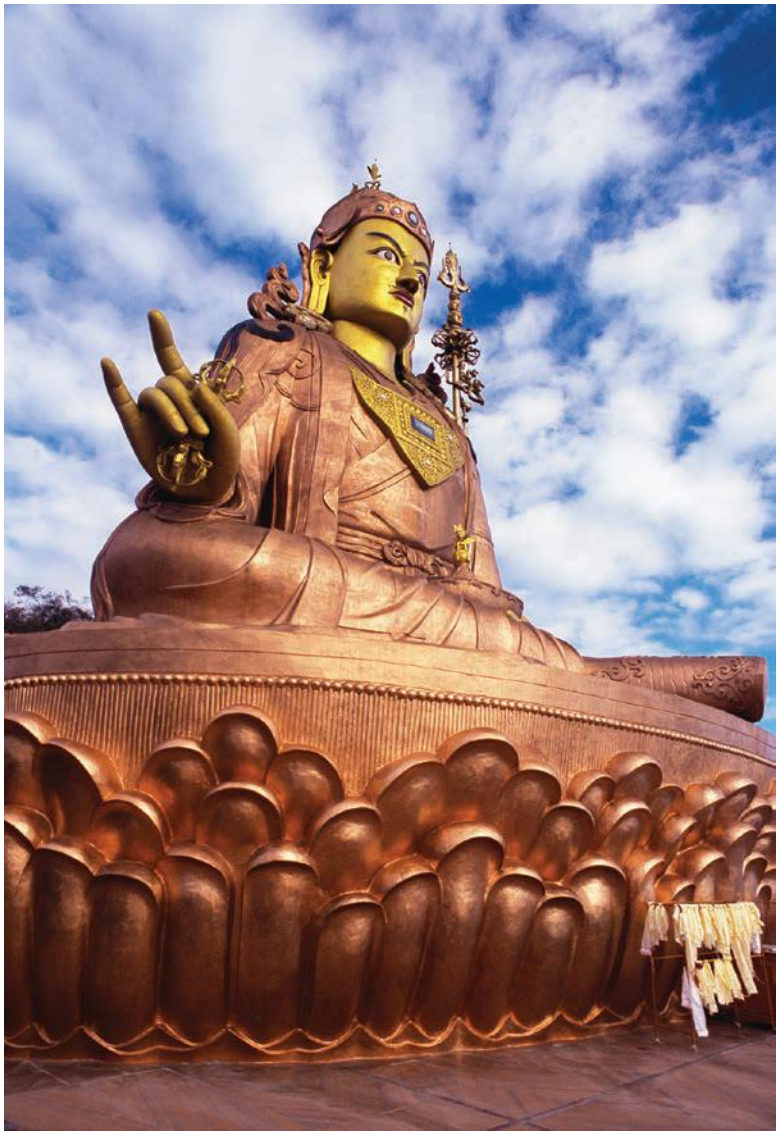

Figure 5A.3 Statue of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) in Sikkim, India

Contribution to Buddhism

Several significant aspects of Padmasambhava's life and teaching emerge from the legends:

- He had the ability to memorise and understand esoteric texts, which helped to establish his reputation as a scholar and teacher.
- He overcame the local deities, transforming them into protective spirits, which revealed his power.
- He hid several treasures to be found by later seekers of the truth. They were hidden in lakes, fields, forests and caves. It is believed the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* was one of these treasures.
- He is believed to have built the famous Taktshang monastery in Bhutan. The legend that relates to this story tells that Padmasambhava transformed Yeshe Tsogyl into a flying tigress so he could fly to the cliff wall. His body left an imprint in a nearby cave.

Padmasambhava is depicted in eight forms, or manifestations, that represent various aspects of his being, including comforter, saviour, teacher, bringer of happiness and wrathful judge.

Among the writings of Padmasambhava, the *Vajra Guru* mantra is particularly significant. Tibetan Buddhists also say a seven-line prayer to Padmasambhava, which is believed to contain important sacred teachings.

Buddhists, particularly in Bhutan, retell the life of Padmasambhava through the year, recounting the '12 deeds' of Guru Rinpoche that refer to significant events in his life.

Impact on Buddhism

Padmasambhava is said to have helped, through his teachings and guidance, millions of people attain enlightenment or ' some attainment'.

As his life drew to an end, Padmasambhava left handprints and footprints for his disciples. He then disappeared and (it is said) assumed the form of a king, living in a mystical form ready to return with Buddha Maitreya, a future form of the Buddha who will complete enlightenment for the world.

Summary

Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) lived around the seventh and eighth centuries CE. He was a Buddhist teacher, often called the 'second Buddha', whose life is associated with great legends and miraculous events. He is credited with the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet and is considered a great Buddhist master and a practitioner of tantric Buddhism. Padmasambhava is closely associated with the establishment of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Padmasambhava see the following:

- Herbert Guenther, *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, Leiden, EJ Brill, 1996.
- Ngawang Zangpo, *Guru Rinpoche: His Life and Times*, New York, Snow Lion, 2002.

Sister Dhammadinna (1881–1967 CE)

Life and ideas

There is barely any detail available on the life of Sister Dhammadinna, who had a significant impact on the growth of Buddhism in Australia. Sister Dhammadinna, it is believed, lived from 1881 to 1967. She was born in the USA and not much is known of her early life (a series

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of 'legends' have grown about those years). She was ordained a Buddhist nun in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), and lived there for about 30 years at her Forest Hermitage. Her life there seemed to be that of a reclusive 'forest dwelling' nun, rather than a teacher – a contrast to her role in Australia.

Buddhism may have been one of the earliest religious traditions to arrive in Australia, through the possible exploration of the continent by Chinese sailors of the Ming Dynasty during the fifteenth century. Artefacts discovered in northern Australia may support this idea, though it remains controversial. During the 1850s, Chinese people came to the goldfields and built joss houses, which included Buddhist shrines. Sri Lankans built a Buddhist temple on Thursday Island in Australia's north. Many Sri Lankans were involved in the pearling industry.

However, following the end of the gold rush, and particularly with the introduction of the White Australia policy (the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*), many of the remaining Chinese and Sri Lankans left. In 1915, several German-born Buddhist monks were interned in Australia during World War I, including the Venerable Nyanatiloka (a famous former violinist Anton Gueth), who was a significant pioneer of Buddhism in the West. After World War II, Australia's first female solicitor, Marie Byles, became a Buddhist and wrote several books and articles about Buddhism.

In 1952 (or perhaps 1951), Sister Dhammadinna visited Australia, the first recorded visit of a Buddhist nun. She arrived in Sydney with little money and the address of Marie Byles, who welcomed Sister Dhammadinna and offered her accommodation. Marie Byles was an austere Buddhist and the accommodation given to Sister Dhammadinna was a retreat house called the 'Hut of Happy Omen'. It was an unlined, open wooden hut with no bed and few furnishings. Byles gave Sister Dhammadinna several blankets, but she was expected to sleep on the floor. As she was 70 years of age and partially crippled, needing a back brace, this proved an unsatisfactory arrangement.

Sister Dhammadinna was then offered accommodation in a Bellevue Hill unit by Leo Berkeley (who later became the first president of the Buddhist Society of NSW). The unit had shared facilities and Sister Dhammadinna, a strict vegetarian, was critical of those who insisted on 'incinerating a corpse', as they cooked their Sunday roast.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Sister Dhammadinna, see the following:

- Enid Adam and Philip Hughes, *The Buddhists in Australia*, Canberra, AGPS, 1996.
- Paul Croucher, *Buddhism in Australia 1848 to 1998*, Sydney, NSW University Press, 1999.

Search the internet under 'Sister Dhammadinna'. There are several articles written by Graeme Lyall, in particular, that are significant.

Sister Dhammadinna's visa expired in 1953 and, despite urgent requests from her supporters, the federal government refused an extension. Sister Dhammadinna left Australia and spent the next five years in Hawaii. She visited Australia again briefly in 1957, but then returned to Hawaii where she died in 1968.

Contribution to Buddhism

Sister Dhammadinna conducted classes, talks and meditation in Sydney. Her contribution to Australian Buddhism is significant, particularly in New South Wales. Sister Dhammadinna was careful not to accept everyone who approached her for instruction. The classes held about 20 people and she chose eight people, whom she called 'my Buddhists', for further instruction. On the day of Wesak (29 May) in 1953, those eight declared the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts, and were thus formally Buddhists.

The eight students of Sister Dhammadinna, along with other interested people, formed the Buddhist Society of NSW in 1953. The Society's first secretary, Graeme Lyall, has written extensively on the early days of the Society and the visit of Sister Dhammadinna. Others such as Natasha Jackson, a significant Australian Buddhist from the 1950s to the 1970s, were greatly influenced by Sister Dhammadinna, and that influence probably exceeded her brief but significant visit to Australia. Sister Dhammadinna was conspicuous in her Buddhist robes and created a great deal of interest in a largely Christian Australia. She certainly raised the profile of Buddhism in Sydney society as an appropriate religious tradition for Westerners (particularly women), leading to an acceptance that was only evident many years later.

Impact on Buddhism

Sister Dhammadinna seemed to be 'the right person at the right time'. Her teaching and development of Australian Buddhist leaders may not have led directly to the establishment of the Buddhist Society of NSW, but there is no doubt that her influence was pivotal to its inception. Sister Dhammadinna was an adherent of Theravada Buddhism, and her influence meant that Buddhism in New South Wales was largely Theravadan until the influx of South-East Asians following the end of the Vietnam War in the 1970s. In Australia, Sister Dhammadinna is a person of great significance. Her assistance in founding Buddhism in Australia ensured the development of Buddhism as a significant religious tradition in Australia.

Summary

Sister Dhammadinna is significant because of her contribution to the establishment of Buddhism as a religious tradition in Australia. In a relatively brief visit to Australia in the 1950s, Sister Dhammadinna's work included the instruction of important Australian Buddhist leaders and ultimately the foundation of the Buddhist Society of NSW.

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Figure 5A.4 Buddhist monks give a blessing at Bondi Beach in Sydney. Sister Dhammadinna was influential in the establishment of Buddhism in Australia as a result of her visit in 1952–53.

Chen Yen (born 1937 CE)

Life and ideas

Chin-yun (later Chen Yen) was born in 1937 in Taiwan. Her mother became very ill when Chin-yun was 15 and she prayed that her own life might be shortened by 12 years if her mother recovered. Her mother did recover after her prayers to the Bodhisattva Quan Yin. Her father died when she was 23, and these events led Chin-yun to search to overcome suffering. After seeing two Buddhist nuns, she chose a monastic life and began a life of meditation.

When ordained as a nun, Chin-yun took the name by which she is now known, Chen Yen (or Cheng Yen). On one occasion she visited a hospital and noticed blood spilled on the floor by a poor indigenous Taiwanese woman who could not afford medical treatment. She was later visited by Christian nuns, who confronted her with the fact that Buddhists did not build schools and hospitals as the Christians did. Chen Yen took this as a challenge she would meet and began with simple efforts, such as making baby shoes and saving small amounts of money.

Contribution to Buddhism

In 1966, when Chen Yen was 29 years old, she established Compassion Relief Tzu Chi as a relief organisation to help the poor, aged and needy. Initially it worked in Taiwan, but over the years has expanded to offer relief throughout Asia and across the world.

Compassion Relief Tzu Chi has opened a hospital in Hualien, Taiwan, that never refuses to treat a patient. Chen Yen regularly visits the sick in the hospital. A kindergarten, primary and middle school, a college of technology and a university have been established by Chen Yen, and a bone marrow bank was established in 1993.

Chen Yen's efforts have developed Buddhist practices of providing essential relief and welfare for those in need.

Figure 5A.5 Members of the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation pack boxes of blankets for relief efforts, following an earthquake in China in 2008

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Impact on Buddhism

Chen Yen is a significant figure in modern Buddhism in seeking to alleviate suffering in the world. She lives humbly, focusing on relieving the sufferings of others. Chen Yen now has a daily broadcast on Taiwanese television. Compassion Relief Tzu Chi has been involved in providing relief in recent disaster situations such as the South Asia Tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in the USA in 2005 and the Chinese earthquake in 2008, as well as in New Zealand following the 2011 Christchurch earthquake.

Chen Yen is often identified as the person who, in modern times, turned Buddhism from a religion of introspection into a religious tradition that is concerned about others. She has ensured Buddhism is seen as an agent of healing, concern and compassion on the world stage.

Summary

Chen Yen is a Taiwanese Buddhist nun who responded to criticism by Christians that Buddhists lacked compassion towards those who suffer. Through her own experiences, and in establishing Compassion Relief Tzu Chi, Chen Yen has shown a considered, Buddhist response to suffering in the world.

INVESTIGATE

You will find information about Chen Yen and her work at the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi website.

Tenzin Palmo (born 1943 CE)

Tenzin Palmo was born in London in 1943 and became Buddhist as a teenager. When she turned 20 she left Britain for India to develop her religious commitment. Her work within the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism has been significant. She has laboured not only to strengthen her own faith, but to re-establish pathways through which women can be actively involved in Buddhism in India and Tibet.

See additional information on Tenzin Palmo in the Case Study in Chapter 5 of the print textbook.

EXERCISE 5A.1

Choose ONE of the significant people discussed and complete the following exercises and activities.

1. **Outline** the life of one significant person.
2. **Explain** the contribution of that significant person to Buddhism.
3. **Analyse** the impact of that significant person on the Buddhism of their day and their ongoing impact today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5A.1

1. Create an annotated timeline of the significant person you have chosen, noting significant events in their life.
2. Research and **analyse** the impact of the significant person on modern Buddhism, with particular reference to Australia.
3. Debate the following topic: 'Without (the significant person) there would be no Buddhism today'.

Mahayana Buddhism

It is estimated that there are 100 million Theravadan Buddhists in the world, and possibly up to a billion Mahayana Buddhists. The Theravadan tradition (literally 'way of the elders') is considered to be the original strain of Buddhism. It therefore claims to be more traditional, and more in keeping with the teachings of the Buddha. Its concentration on monastic life, however, is seen as limiting the Buddha's message.

Mahayana (literally 'big or great vehicle') Buddhism developed in India as a breakaway movement in the centuries after the Buddha's death. It also strongly respects the Buddha's teachings, but adapts and changes more flexibly to local influences. Its transition throughout East Asia has made this sort of Buddhism far more popular. The schools of thought known as Soto Zen, Pure Land Buddhism and Won Buddhism (discussed in the following sections) show how radically Mahayana Buddhism has been able to develop.

Ideas

The Mahayana tradition of Buddhism is a wide collection of various schools. General folk Buddhism in East Asia, and most Buddhist practices in Korea, Vietnam and Tibet, are also of this tradition. Mahayana also includes the well-known school of Chan Buddhism, developed in China from 500 CE, and known as Zen in Japan. It is a school of 'sudden enlightenment'; that is, the apprentice Buddhist hopes to awake to a sudden realisation of 'Buddha nature', the realisation that all that exists is joined vitally into a great oneness.

Another form of Mahayana is Pure Land Buddhism. This kind of Buddhism is extremely popular in China. A Pure Land is a paradise watched over by an enlightened being, usually the Buddha Amitaba. The goal of a Pure Land Buddhist is to pray to Amitaba in the hope that, after death and rebirth, they will end up in this paradise, where there are no worldly influences to distract anyone from becoming a Buddha. If you like, it is a short cut to Buddhahood!

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Some schools of Pure Land suggest that all someone has to do is say 'Amitaba' once in their life to go to this paradise. This form of highly simplified worship (chanting 'Amitaba') is an incredibly popular way of being Buddhist. Although Pure Land and Chan seem very different, their practices are combined in many traditions in East Asia. Also part of the Mahayana Pure Land tradition is Won Buddhism, which developed and is generally identified as the main school of Buddhism in Korea.

The key aspects of Mahayana Buddhism include the understanding that all people can achieve enlightenment, rather than the more restricted view of Theravada Buddhism that suggests enlightenment can only be achieved after years of meditation and discipline, usually restricted to monks.

Another key aspect of Mahayana Buddhism is the concept of the Bodhisattva, or one who has followed a path to achieve enlightenment but has delayed their own nirvana in order to help others obtain enlightenment. The Buddha himself is an example of a Bodhisattva. Thus, Mahayana could be seen as a less self-oriented form of Buddhism, as the role of an adherent is not only to achieve their own enlightenment but to assist others.

Contribution to Buddhism

Mahayana began in India. It developed from a breakaway movement within the early Buddhist community, generally accepted as one of the outcomes of the Second Buddhist Council. Mahayana Buddhists changed monastic rules, adapted texts and rejected some changes that had been made in the First Council of Buddhists held soon after the original Buddha died. After these early changes, Mahayana developed over time into two general groups.

One of these is the Madhyamika school of Buddhism. Read the earlier section on Nagarjuna to understand this school more precisely. This school keeps to a middle way between self and non-self – a controversy that erupted early in Buddhist history.

The other main group is the Yogacara camp. (See earlier discussion on Vasubandhu.) This school suggests that rigorous meditation (yoga) is the most effective method for coming close to the truth of existence. Before a Buddhist adherent can reach this stage, Yogacara Buddhists say, they must pass through the 10 stages along the path to becoming a Bodhisattva – one who has achieved enlightenment.

Over time, Buddhism ceased to be a major religious tradition in India. It was driven out for numerous reasons, but traditional Indian religions helped push Buddhists from the country around 800 CE, and the Buddha became identified as an avatar of the Hindu god Lord Vishnu, thus Buddhism was absorbed into Hinduism. Some Buddhists migrated out of India as a result, such as to Sri Lanka; from there, Buddhist thinking and practice were spread to Thailand, Myanmar (Burma) and Laos. These Buddhists were strongly Theravadan.

Figure 5A.6 Mahayana Buddhism has spread through East Asia. This is a bas-relief panel from the ninth-century Mahayana Buddhist temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, known as Borobudur. The approximately 2672 panels form one of the most comprehensive Buddhist narratives in the world, many depicting scenes of daily life in eighth-century Java.

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The Theravadan tradition did not spread more widely, however, possibly due to its traditional inflexibility.

Early Mahayana Buddhists were able to take their form of the religion to Tibet, Vietnam and China. It began to develop in these regions from 100 CE onwards. As it adapted, Mahayana Buddhism became more and more popular, growing into the largest variant of Buddhism.

Impact on Buddhism

By the time of the Tang Dynasty in China (from 640 CE), Buddhism had been adopted as a major court religion. It passed into Korea and from there into Japan. It was very successful, particularly because Madhyamika thinking had numerous elements in common with Taoism, a religion already established in China.

Mahayana is the largest form of Buddhism today. Its popularity has increased in Western countries, particularly during the past two centuries, due to exposure via a number of factors including education, globalisation and immigration, and its relative adaptability to Western culture. It also has a number of subgroups, such as Vajrayana Buddhism (Tibetan).

You can find additional information on the development of Mahayana Buddhism and its main principles and practices in Chapter 4.

Figure 5A.7 Bronze statue of Amida Buddha, Okinawa, Japan. Note the 'boundless light' rays emanating from the Buddha.

Pure Land Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism is a popular devotional denomination of Mahayana Buddhism in China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan, centring on reverence for the Buddha Amitaba (also known as Amida in Japan). This is a celestial form of the Buddha often known as 'infinite light'. (Note the shift from the human Buddha of Theravada Buddhism to the god-like divine Buddha of Mahayana Buddhism.)

Ideas

According to the Pure Land Sutras, thought to have been composed in India in the first century BCE, Amida vowed to save all sentient beings by letting them be reborn in his domain: the 'western paradise'. This was a pure land that gave its inhabitants easy entry into nirvana. If a person invokes the name of Amida, and has complete faith in his grace and the force of his vow, they will gain salvation. It was believed that at the time of death, Amida and his followers would appear to the faithful and take them to his paradise.

Shakyamuni Buddha spoke about a Buddha named Amitaba, or 'boundless light' (also known as Amitayus, or 'boundless life') who presides over a Buddha realm of rebirth, known as *Sukhavati*, in which there are no obstacles to obtaining final enlightenment. This Pure Land (also known as the 'realm of bliss') came from the built-up merit of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, who became the Buddha Amitaba after practising for eons.

Dharmakara swore that when he attained Buddhahood, he would preside over a realm that included the best attributes of all the other Buddha realms. His teacher, the Buddha Lokesvararaja, revealed these realms to him.

Contribution to Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism is known as the Path of Serene Trust. The Sanskrit term is '*prasada*', which can be broadly translated as 'faith' or 'grace'. It means that one is confident that the vow made by Buddhas to lead

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everyone to enlightenment (the Bodhisattva Vow) has been, or will be, fulfilled. In other words, one has serene trust and confidence in the wisdom and power of the Buddhas.

Keeping a Buddha in mind at all times, and praising the virtue of a Buddha, has been a part of Buddhism since the earliest days. The very act of taking refuge in the Buddha means trusting in the Buddha as an honoured teacher. In an early Buddhist text, the *Pratyutpanna sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha describes *Pratyutpanna samadhi*, a practice in which one can see the Buddhas of the Ten Directions face to face.

Impact on Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism looks to rebirth into the realm of bliss. This can be viewed as literal rebirth into *Sukhavati*. But it can also be seen as experiencing the direct realisation of the purified mind, in which a person becomes one with the limitless wisdom and kindness that are the notable features of Buddha Amitaba. Pure Land Buddhism is based on the following: 'Faith Aspiration, or the vow for rebirth Samadhi, or single-minded effort aimed at Buddha remembrance'.

In Sanskrit this is *Buddhanusmrti*, which means 'to stay mindful of the Buddha'. Since the beginning of Pure Land Buddhism, this has been a central practice. The Chinese *Nien-Fo* also refers to reciting the name of the Buddha, among other activities.

In both Japan and China, the movement gained momentum from the idea of the 'end of the Dharma', which divided the growth of Buddhist teaching into three ages – the true, the counterfeit and the decaying. In the present (the final, degenerate age), people cannot attain enlightenment by the original means of austerity, self-effort and greater knowledge; they need to rely completely on faith.

In China, there were devotees of Amida from the end of the third century CE. The sect was officially founded by Hui-Yuan, its first patriarch, in 402 CE. Later masters spread the faith among the masses, sometimes using evangelistic methods of contrasting the torments of hell with the bliss of the 'western paradise'.

Soto Zen

Soto Zen is the largest of the three schools of Zen Buddhism. **Zen** is a Japanese word derived from **Chan**, the Chinese equivalent, which comes from the Indian term ***dhyana*** meaning 'meditation'. The other main Zen schools in Japanese Buddhism are Rinzai and Obaku. Zen/Chan Buddhism is Buddhism as expressed in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese contexts. Soto Zen is also a popular expression of Buddhism in the Western world. Much of the literature regarding Soto Zen is relevant to all schools of Zen Buddhism.

It is one of the most fascinating aspects of Buddhism, especially for Westerners. A group of variant schools of the popular Mahayana Buddhism, it is playful and relies on paradoxes and confusions to inspire awakenings to truth in the mind. Soto Zen developed in China as Chan Buddhism sometime during the sixth century CE and transformed into a formal aspect of Buddhism some years later with its own monasteries, patriarchs and monks.

One interesting aspect of Soto Zen is its stated rejection of texts and its focus on meditation (yet it does have many texts). In this it seems just as inspired by Taoism as by Buddhism. Soto Zen Buddhists believe that enlightenment is possible at all times and for everyone. One does not need to be a monk or dedicate one's life to a monastery in order to become enlightened. The idea of 'sudden enlightenment' is important, although gradual enlightenment is also spoken of. Chan Buddhism was accepted into Japanese culture, where it became Zen, a philosophy used to explain Japanese ideas of beauty and action. Zen encapsulated the Japanese principles behind numerous martial art practices, painting, gardening, archery, tea making and theatre. Ultimately, Zen, including Soto Zen, remained a 'way of doing', despite an increasingly sophisticated philosophy having developed behind it.

Zen
The Japanese rendering of the Chinese term '*chan*'

Chan
A series of Buddhist schools in China focusing on meditation – they advocate self-contemplation and wisdom in striving towards awakening

Dhyana
A Sanskrit term for meditation; one of the stages in yoga

INVESTIGATE

Zen Buddhism often features significant truths in poems or riddles (known as *koans*; for example, 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?'). The following is a famous example of an exchange of poems. What do they mean?

Shen Hui (a monk):

Our body is a bodhi tree

Our mind a mirror

We must polish and clean every day

To let no dust settle.

Hui Neng (sixth patriarch of Chan/Zen) replies:

Yet there is no bodhi tree

There is no mirror at all

In fact no object ever existed

So where can dust alight?

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FURTHERMORE

Soto Zen Buddhism seeks to find the spiritual way of doing many activities, not only those thought of as religious.

Figure 5A.8 *Kyudo* is Zen archery.

Figure 5A.9 *Chado* is 'the way of tea'.

Figure 5A.10 The *ens* character, created using a circular brushstroke in Japanese calligraphy. It represents the state of mind at the moment of enlightenment and symbolises absolute strength, elegance, the universe and the pure void or being empty of distractions.

Figure 5A.11 Zen style includes minimalism and juxtaposition. Ryogin-an is a Buddhist sub-temple that was originally the residence of the third abbot of Tofuku-ji. The most prominent features of this sub-temple are its three dry gardens, one of which is pictured here.

History

In the fifth and sixth centuries, a series of persecutions against Buddhism took place in China. Ancient Chinese chronicles record that 'millions' of Buddhist monks and nuns were made to return to lay life, and many temples and scriptures were destroyed. However, Buddhism such as Chan did not need temples or scriptures, and relied on meditation practice alone, so it was able to survive and grow. Soto Zen grew out of the practices of meditation masters attached to these temples.

Sometime after these persecutions, the story of Bodhidharma began to be told. He is known as the first Chan patriarch.

It is said that Bodhidharma based his teachings on an Indian Buddhist text called the *Lankavatara Sutra*, which emphasises self-enlightenment beyond words and thoughts, and the recognition that the objects of the world are merely manifestations of the mind.

The most famous patriarch of this lineage was the sixth, Hui Neng (638–713 CE). He was an illiterate peasant who understood better than anyone else at the monastery the essential Chan/Zen understanding of selfhood. He carried on the lineage of the patriarchs in the south, having fled from those Chan/Zen monasteries in the north that looked down upon his low birth. The history of the sixth patriarch stresses, yet again, Soto Zen Buddhism's celebration of personal insight and experience, rather than birth or learning. Hui Neng is famous because all surviving Chan/Zen schools regard him as their philosophical ancestor.

Around 1227, Dogen Zenji, who had studied in China seeking a more authentic form of Buddhism, returned

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Figure 5A.12 Bodhidharma was a Buddhist mystical figure from India or Central Asia who he made his way to China. He is thought to have lived around the sixth century CE.

to Japan with *koans* and other texts. He emphasised the practice of *zazen,* a type of meditation. Dogen founded several temples where Buddhists practised rituals that could be traced back to the Indian tradition of Buddhism. Dogen is recognised as the founder of Soto Zen in Japan.

In Soto Zen, the authority of texts, particularly those attributed to Dogen, is important. It is also important to ensure the Dharma is transmitted from master to disciple. Additionally, the role of funerals is historically significant in Soto Zen, and most adherents will visit a temple for funerals while a relatively small number would see a Soto Zen priest for personal concerns.

Soto Zen is a form of Buddhism that is less dependent on doctrine, and more reliant on meditation and personal experience. While acknowledging traditional Buddhist sacred texts, it has created its own texts over the generations. ***Zazen*** (sitting Zen) has become the distinctive practice in Soto Zen. Soto Zen adherents just sit, upright, aware of breathing, fully alert and present. The sense of being present, with intensity, is the essence of *zazen*. This is a state of mind that applies to all areas of life – eating, drinking tea, archery, gardening and so on. The practice of *koan* (discussed in more detail later in this text) is an exercise where the *koan* or puzzle can be 'seen', an expression of religious sensibility. It is used during mediation to help unravel truths about themselves and the wider world.

The emphasis on the role of a teacher in Soto Zen is a reflection of the role of the Buddha. The teacher is an ordinary person but at the same time one who is spiritually adept. This paradox is important because the combination of spiritual specialness and ordinariness is also present in the disciple (every Soto Zen adherent).

Contribution to Buddhism

When Chan/Zen began to appear, China had already experienced centuries of Buddhist development. Much Buddhist activity was focused on bringing Buddhist texts from India and translating them. Many of these texts were important, but their huge numbers were daunting for anyone who wanted to understand Buddhism. Soto Zen succeeded in this environment because it made Buddhism accessible to everyone, not only scholars and the literate.

Buddhism became acceptable to all people through the Soto Zen doctrine of *zazen*. This puts the focus in a person's spiritual growth on their own experiences of finding their inner nature rather than on complex meditation practices or sophisticated philosophical texts.

Zazen
Experiential meditation

Satori
Japanese word for enlightenment

Meditation and other Soto Zen practices can lead to ***satori***. This is a Japanese word for 'enlightenment'; that is, realisation of the inherent truth in the Buddha's teachings about existence. In Soto Zen

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such enlightenment can come suddenly, like a lightning strike. It can only come from personal experience. It is described as a feeling of 'infinite space'. To approach *satori*, Soto Zen practitioners will often suggest startling or paradoxical activities.

Zazen can include meditation where a Buddhist master walks behind those meditating with a large stick. He either slaps the stick violently against the floor or (without pain but with great shock) against the back of someone meditating. Paradox can be introduced in the form of a short poem or *koan*.

Koan **(or *gongan*)** Question-and-answer riddles that challenge thinking and can lead to enlightenment

Juxtaposition Thoughts or images of two things not normally considered together

Confucianism The religious/philosophical system based on the teaching of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE)

Koans are dialogues between Soto Zen masters and their disciples or other people interested in Soto Zen. The point of a *koan* is to be, at some level, a poetically nonsensical, paradoxical, contradictory set of ideas, or to contain a **juxtaposition**. *Koans* are vitally important for making *satori* accessible to all. Two examples are given here.

Zhaozhou (Chinese) / Joshu (Japanese) (778–897 CE) was a famous Chinese Chan Master. One day a troubled monk approached him, intending to ask the master for guidance, and at that moment a dog walked by. The monk asked Joshu, 'Has that dog a Buddha-nature or not?' The monk had barely completed his question when Joshu screamed out 'MU!' ['NO!']

Nansen saw the monks of the eastern and western halls [of a monastery] fighting over a cat. He seized the cat and told the monks: 'If any of you say a good word, you can save the cat'. No one answered. So Nansen boldly cut the cat into two pieces. That evening Joshu returned and Nansen told him about this. Joshu removed his sandals and, placing them on his head, walked out. Nansen said: 'If you had been there, you could have saved the cat'.

These tales not only have an abrupt logic, they also introduce an element of unpredictability to Buddhism. For example, interpretations of the 'dog koan' vary, but normally do not take the 'no' literally. Koans inject craziness and humour into Buddhism and make it more human and accessible.

INVESTIGATE

To develop a greater understanding of these practices, research more about *zazen*, *satori* and *koans* on the internet.

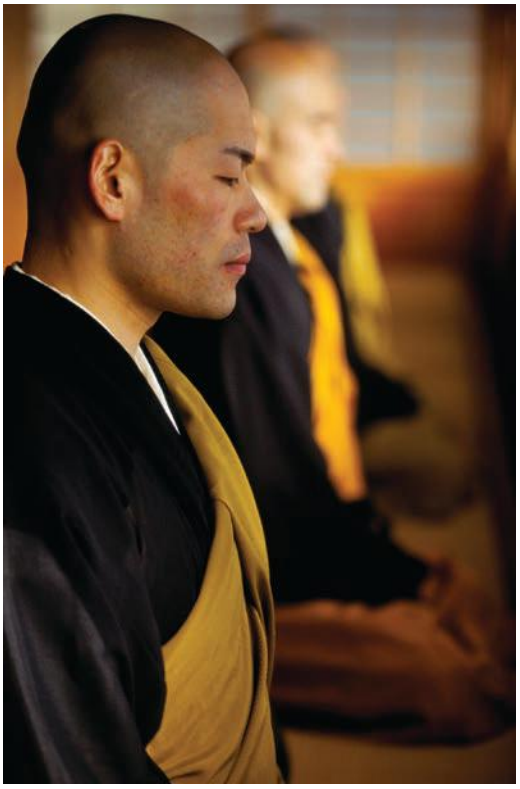

Figure 5A.13 Soto Zen monks meditate at the Seiryu-ji Temple in Hikone City, Japan. Sitting Zen (*zazen)* is at the heart of Buddhist practice in Japan.

Impact on Buddhism

Before Chan/Zen, China already had a long tradition of meditation and tranquillity that was derived from its own religion of Taoism. The followers of this religion were eager to play with paradoxes and confuse their doctrines, because they thought that truth was ultimately unspeakable. When Chan/Zen began to appear, many believed it to be a development of the ideas of Taoism in the form of Buddhism. This was not surprising, as during the 300s CE Buddhism had increased in popularity in China by being considered a branch of Taoism. Chan/Zen increased acceptance of Buddhism in China by making it more like Taoism in many respects. Buddhism was also made more acceptable to other Chinese ideas such as those contained in **Confucianism**.

Chan/Zen enabled Buddhism to be open to age-old Chinese philosophical ideals and social assumptions. Once Buddhism had combined with Chinese concepts, it was in turn able to influence the other religions of China: Confucianism and Taoism. It was this form of Buddhism that was then taken to Japan as Soto Zen.

INVESTIGATE

What was Taoism's influence on Chan/Zen? Read Taoism's central text, the *Tao Te Ching* – it is a short book. How is paradox used in this text to better understand society and individual experience?

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Chan/Zen was a strongly egalitarian system of Buddhism. This was especially the case with Soto Zen in Japan, which gained widespread support.

Because Buddhists of the Chan school were dealing in ideas that seemed to be Chinese, Chan was able to influence Buddhism as it developed in China. Later, Soto Zen was able to shape Buddhism in Japan.

Soto Zen was vital to the development of artistic and martial practices, particularly in Japan. It also helped to develop a particular sense of beauty in Japan. More recently, Soto Zen's celebration of simplicity and its focus on the experiences of the mind have made Soto Zen Buddhism increasingly popular in the West. Soto Zen's appeal through meditation experiences will no doubt continue throughout the world.

When Dogen returned from China, he formed a school of Zen named Soto which is, today, far larger than the Rinzai school established by his Japanese mentor.

Soto Zen became popular because it followed through with the essential Zen attitude of not distinguishing between people and focusing on the authenticity of experience, rather than the authority of monastic structures or scriptures. This was revealed most clearly in its attitude to funerals. By allowing laypeople to be ordained as monks and nuns after their deaths, Soto Zen Buddhists were able to bury everyone using rituals that had previously been kept only for monks and nuns.

FURTHERMORE

Soto Zen seeks to find the spirituality in the ordinary events of life. One of the surprisingly biggest-selling books of the 1970s was *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Robert Pirsig, London, William Morrow, 1974), an obvious play on the title of Herrigel's book. It has been described as 'the most widely read philosophy book, ever!' It is as much about ideals of quality as it is about Zen but … why not read it yourself?

D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966) was central to explaining Zen Buddhism to the West. His books were hungrily devoured, and Soto Zen Buddhism made a significant impact on Westerners in Europe and Asia seeking spirituality radically unlike the Western monotheisms. Soto Zen was also a way of explaining the sense of beauty and the sense of tranquillity that East Asian religion and philosophy seemed to embody. Books explaining the arts of Japan often touched on Soto Zen. Perhaps the most famous is Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* (first published in English in 1953 with a foreword by D.T. Suzuki). In this book, Herrigel turns Western expectations on their head. For Westerners, the point of archery is to hit a target; Soto Zen archery, however, aims to find a connection with the cosmos that allows one to unthinkingly release the arrow. Archery thus becomes a form of meditation.

Figure 15A.14 Eiheiji Temple, headquarters of Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, in Fukui, Japan

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Summary

The Buddhism that was alive in China in the 400s CE focused on text translation, monastery building, increasing the *sangha* and elevating its prestige. Monks and nuns were seen as a race apart, and Buddhism seemed inaccessible to everyday people.

Chan/Zen changed all that. First, it made Buddhism more East Asian by incorporating concepts of Taoism, thus putting Buddhism into a framework that Chinese people, and later Japanese people, could better understand. Second, it turned Buddhism's emphasis away from elite pursuits such as monastery building, writing and translating scriptures, and gave the authority for being a good Buddhist to those who had experience, rather than knowledge. This was a **contextualised** Buddhism, not only in terms of the Chinese/Japanese context, but also in the context of the lives of ordinary East Asian people.

Contextualised
The context of the expression; for example, expressing a religious tradition in a way that can be easily identified with its cultural context

Chan/Zen Buddhism restored the relevance of Buddhism to the lives of the individual and the community. In danger of becoming the province of the elite, it once again became the practice of the ordinary, everyday human being. This was especially evident in the expression of Soto Zen Buddhism.

Won Buddhism

Established by Soe-tae San in 1924, Won Buddhism is a modernisation and simplification of Buddhism. Reacting to events in the twentieth century, early Won Buddhists removed much of the complex ritual, obscure texts and superstition that had marked Buddhism in Korea for many centuries. Rather they sought a simplicity that could be expressed by all adherents.

Ideas

The founder of Won Buddhism, Soe-tae San, was born the son of a peasant on 5 May 1891 in Chunnam Province, Korea. At the time of his birth, Korea was slowly forgetting its feudal origins and modernising. For much of the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese invaders occupied this nation.

Following the standard course of a Buddhist disciple, Soe-tae San dedicated himself to the religion and became enlightened. Rather than join a traditional path of Buddhism he set out on his own, developing his own tradition in response to Korea's move into the modern world. In 1924 he established Won Buddhism with nine disciples.

The movement kept to a solidly peasant-oriented base. Soe-tae San's approach was to remove many of the rituals of respect that laypeople had been required to pay to monks. He allowed monks in his movement to marry. He wrote new scriptures and had old ones translated into simple, modern Korean. Moreover, by carrying out land reclamation works with his followers, he was able to create enough land to establish a large community. Although he died in 1943 after 20-odd years of mission work, he had created a new and adapted Buddhism that appealed to thousands of Koreans.

Figure 5A.15 Buddha statue in the Bongeunsa Temple in the heart of the Gangnam business district of Seoul, the capital city of South Korea.

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Won Buddhism emerged as a contemporary form of Buddhism that could adapt and be expressed in a modern industrialised and commercial society.

Contribution to Buddhism

At the heart of its ritual, Won Buddhism contains references to Amitaba Buddha, making it a part of the Mahayana Pure Land tradition. The religion, however, also attempts to be inclusive of Chan/Zen doctrines. This dual accommodation of Pure Land and Chan is not uncommon in East Asia.

Rituals are extremely simple. Instead of focusing on a Buddha statue, those who meditate may focus on the symbol of a white circle on a black background. This central symbol also highlights the simplicity of this expression of Buddhism.

The yin-yang symbol that appears on the South Korean flag has also been identified as expressing this simplicity. The symbol suggests complementary, rather than opposing, forces.

Most importantly, Soe-tae San encouraged his followers to be strongly committed to charitable works in the community. Following this plan, numerous community buildings have been erected, particularly educational facilities.

Impact on Buddhism

Won Buddhism has spread to many other countries where Koreans have migrated such as the United States and Australia. In this global form, the religion also recognises the need for religions to be seen as having a common purpose on Earth. In other words, Won Buddhists believe that all religions have the same goal. On account of this central tenet, Won Buddhism encourages interfaith dialogue in the hope of overcoming war and general dissent. This theme of globalisation and world harmony was developed by numerous religions in the twentieth century. Won Buddhism is thus certainly affected by the times in which it developed and aims to influence religious thinkers across the world.

Won Buddhism is a modern form of Buddhism that seeks to adapt and enable practice in contemporary society.

Humanistic Buddhism

Humanistic Buddhism is a term that applies to an expression of Buddhism that emerged in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. It probably emerged as a reaction to the deification of the Buddha and the emphasis on 'gods' or spirit beings that had become popular in Chinese Buddhism.

The Buddhist monk, Taixu, is credited with developing this school of Buddhism with its emphasis on those seeking to live Buddhist lives, as opposed to the emphasis on deification of ancestors and the duties owed to them.

Over time, several schools of Humanistic Buddhism emerged. One of the most significant is Fo Guang Shan, which emerged in the 1960s led by Master Hsing Yun. The Nan Tien Temple, near Wollongong, is a temple of Fo Guang Shan.

The Nan Tien Temple suggests that the principles of Humanistic Buddhism reflect the integration of Buddhist beliefs and practices into the everyday lives of adherents, and promote the Buddha as an example of this. They highlight six core concepts that make up Humanistic Buddhism:

- humanism
- altruism
- spiritual practices as part of everyday life
- joyfulness
- timeliness
- universality of saving all beings.

The emphasis in Humanistic Buddhism is not escaping from the world (nirvana) but caring for it. Humanistic Buddhism also emphasises gender equality. The Nan Tien Temple, for example, is run by a female monastic community. It is a beautiful temple that has become a major tourist attraction in the Wollongong region. It offers tours, accommodation, retreats and workshops as well as a place for *puja*. It recently established the Nan Tien Institute, offering university-level courses.

If you wish to explore Humanistic Buddhism as a school of thought, or Master Hsing Yun as a significant person, you should visit the Nan Tien Temple website for current information and details

EXERCISE 5A.2

Choose ONE of the schools of thought discussed above and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the teachings of a Buddhist school of thought.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that school of thought to Buddhism.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that school of thought on the Buddhism of that era, and its ongoing impact today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 5A.2

1 Choose a particular area or aspect of life. Explain how the particular school of Buddhism you have chosen will affect that area or aspect of life.
2 Research and **analyse** the influence of the school of thought on modern Buddhism in general, with particular reference to Australia.
3 Debate the following topic: '[The school of thought] only has relevance or significance to the particular culture in which it developed'.

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7A.2 Further significant people and schools of thought

For context, you should read Chapter 7 in the print textbook before commencing this digital section.

There are many people and schools of thought that could be examined in Christianity. The people and schools of thought discussed here include those mentioned in the syllabus. You should be careful if selecting another person or school of thought and should also be careful in their selection from within this list as the significance varies greatly.

The print textbook discusses two significant people: **Paul of Tarsus**, considered one of the founders of Christianity, and **Pope St John XXIII**.

St Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179 CE)

In the medieval period of Western Europe, the Catholic Church underwent a series of upheavals and challenges. One of the most prominent was the promotion of Classical (Greek and Roman) learning (long neglected in Europe) from the intellectual circles of Muslim lands in North Africa and the Muslim kingdom in Spain. These ideas caused an intellectual revolution in centres such as Paris, where an academic group known as the Scholastics brought much new thinking. Against this background, religious figures such as St Hildegard of Bingen inspired a reinvigoration of religious thinking and mysticism as a reaction to these more intellectual movements.

Figure 7A.1 St Hildegard of Bingen receiving the Light from Heaven, circa 1151 CE (vellum)

St Hildegard's life

St Hildegard was born in Böckelheim, Germany, in 1098 CE. She was the tenth child of a noble family. The usual custom was to dedicate the tenth child to the Church as a **tithe**. From the age of eight, St Hildegard was cared for by a woman called Jutta, an aristocrat who had dedicated her life to religious contemplation as an **anchoress**. Even before this time, St Hildegard had started having visions of what she thought were heavenly realms. She confessed these to Jutta and also, later, to a monk called Volmar who helped her write them down. The small group of nuns overseen by Jutta slowly grew. When Jutta died in 1136 CE, St Hildegard was appointed their superior or ***magistra***. Numbers continued to grow and St Hildegard moved her community to a site near Bingen.

Tithe
A tenth part of some amount, specifically as a donation to a church

Anchoress
An anchorite (male) or anchoress (female) is one who gives themselves over to total seclusion

Magistra
Latin word for a female teacher

Beatification
A declaration by the pope that a soul is blessed in heaven; it is a stage towards the canonisation or sanctification of a person's soul

St Hildegard stayed quiet about her visions until 1141 CE when she felt the voice of God tell her to write down what she saw. This was the beginning of St Hildegard's career as a public figure. Once her visions were published and known through her letters and books, St Hildegard became famous. Christians from all over Europe travelled to see her, or wrote letters asking about religious matters, the future, where they could find hidden treasure, and all sorts of things. St Hildegard published several books of her visions, encyclopedias of medicine and compendiums of music she had composed for her convent. She was also a fervent critic of Church corruption. Towards the end of her life, she was asked to go on a number of speaking tours. This was unusual for a woman in medieval Europe. St Hildegard died in Bingen in 1179 CE and was **beatified**. St Hildegard is an unusual case in that

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Figure 7A.2 Interior of the Abbey of St Hildegard at Hessen, Germany

many have regarded her as a saint, and some popes have referred to her with that title. However, the canonisation process was never completed until Pope Benedict XVI formally declared her a saint on 10 May 2012, and a Doctor of the Church on 7 October 2012. St Hildegard's feast day is celebrated on 17 September (the day she is said to have died).

DID YOU KNOW?

Anchoresses and anchorites take vows, receive the last rites (for those about to die) and sometimes are also given a mock funeral. Then they are walled into a cell; these cells are usually set into the walls of a church so they can participate in Mass, but are kept from a normal, secular life.

Contribution to Christianity

At a time when philosophy and reason were being renewed in Europe, St Hildegard reinvigorated the **mystical** tradition in Christianity. Her writings were believed to illustrate that anyone dedicated to a **monastic life** and **celibacy** could have a personal mystical connection with God. St Hildegard was a great believer in chastity as the first step on the road to this connection with God. For Christians who followed her visions, she brought the reality of heaven much closer.

While St Hildegard lived, changes were coming in Europe. Scholars, mainly working in Paris, had discovered Arabic teachings on logic and rediscovered Greek and Roman teachings on reason and learning. Thinkers such as Peter Abelard were starting to rationalise religion and the nature of God. St Hildegard's mysticism provided an alternative to Abelard's rational teachings. She emphasised emotion as part of the Christian faith.

Also during this period, other religions in Europe were starting to grow. In the south of France and also in Germany, Albigensians or **Cathars** were becoming popular and posed a threat to the Catholic Church. This group dedicated their lives to the poor but refused to accept the authority of the pope. As a result of this and other significant differences from the practices of the Catholic Church, they were branded as heretics.

Towards the end of her life, St Hildegard, now famous for being touched by the visions of God, was very useful to the Church. She was taken on speaking tours throughout Germany where she urged people not to join the Cathars.

Owing to her speeches and the work of many other Catholics, including military raids (especially the Albigensian Crusade of 1208 CE), the Cathars were eventually exterminated.

St Hildegard, although she spent her life mainly in seclusion, grew to be an influential woman mainly because of her writings and the growing number of people in Europe able to read these writings.

Mysticism
The process of developing a profound connection with an ultimate reality, be it heaven, God, a deity or something else

Monastic life
Spiritual recluse as monks and nuns

Celibate
Living a life of sexual abstinence

Cathars
From a Greek word meaning 'pure ones' – a group of Christian Gnostics, dedicated to charity and poverty whose practices were significantly different from the Catholic Church

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Both everyday Christians and the Church hierarchy used her visions for their own purposes. St Hildegard's letters tell us about that influence. At the upper levels of the Church hierarchy, St Bernard of Clairvaux, the leading Catholic of his day, encouraged St Hildegard by publicising her visions and passing her letters to Pope Eugenius III. These actions helped spread her fame. Likewise, monks, priests and ordinary Christians wrote to her, asking her advice. St Hildegard's words served as a beacon of stability in a Europe that was undergoing intellectual and psychological changes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Peter Abelard was not only a significant thinker, but also involved in a great but tragic love affair with Heloise. Their story is told in a series of letters, and Abelard and Heloise are celebrated as two of the great lovers of medieval Christian Europe.

Impact on Christianity

Both in medieval times and now, St Hildegard's life demonstrates that women can have a prominent and powerful place in religious life. Today the image of St Hildegard influences women both within and outside the Catholic Church. Her meditative music is much loved, especially by those in the New Age movement.

St Hildegard helped to develop a whole language of mystical thought that extended the ways Christians felt connected to God. She spoke of God's love as a vigour that renewed both life and nature. She spoke of the 'sacred sound', implying that music was central to the matrix of the cosmos. St Hildegard used all kinds of evocative and poetic terms to deepen her own and other Christians' understanding of the emotional depth of their own faith, as shown in the following extract:

> The soul reveals her capabilities according to the capabilities of the body, so that in childhood she brings forth simplicity, in youth strength, and in the fullness of age, when all the veins of the human being are full, she brings forth her greatest strength in wisdom. In the same way a tree in its first growth brings forth tender shoots, goes on then to bear fruit and finally ripens that fruit to the fullness of utility.
>
> ST HILDEGARD, FROM SCIVIAS I, 4

It is this delight in the ambiguity of language, the poetry of her visions and the sweet and contemplative drone of her music that spreads her fame today. Members of the New Age movement appreciate her music and her understanding of the healing dimensions of nature. For Catholics, New Agers, feminists and music lovers, St Hildegard will continue to have a strong influence.

INVESTIGATE

Check the following books and internet sites for more about St Hildegard. *Hildegard von Bingen, Selected Writings* (edited by Mark Atherton) in the Penguin series is an easily available introduction to St Hildegard's writings and thought. See also Catherine M. Mooney's *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters* (1999). For some useful links to St Hildegard, refer to the St Hildegard of Bingen website.

Today, feminist religious writers use St Hildegard to demonstrate the power and influence women have had in the Church and the religious life of Europe, even in the medieval period where male voices dominated. To do this, they often play down the way St Hildegard was used by men in the Church to champion their conservative views. St Hildegard certainly represents a strong female voice in the Church during her time, but she said nothing to threaten the men who ran the Church, nor did she threaten the view that women were inferior to men.

Summary

St Hildegard has had an enduring influence on women in the life of the Catholic Church. She was taken seriously by many prestigious churchmen such as St Bernard of Clairvaux and Pope Eugenius III. She deepened the mystical lives of Christians through her visions, writing and music, and continues to do so today. St Hildegard became famous as a Church figure who could be appealed to for spiritual guidance. She was believed to be a prophetess and was able to re-inspire faith during times of uncertainty in Europe. St Hildegard is often seen as an early role model for women in Christianity and her impact has been revived by the New Age movement.

INVESTIGATE

Many people, especially those associated with the New Age movement, have drawn on St Hildegard as inspiration in aspects of life such as herbal medicine, music and meditation. Look up St Hildegard on the internet and try to find out why this is the case.

Martin Luther (1483–1546 CE)

Life and ideas

Martin Luther was a key reformer of the Christian church – in fact, the Reformation is considered to have been started by Luther. Luther was born in Eislebin, Germany. He studied law, then theology, and was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1507. He experienced a dramatic conversion during a thunderstorm, afraid he was facing death. He was appointed to the University of Wittenberg and in 1512 became Professor of Biblical Studies. Luther had

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long held a view of a wrathful God and feared God's judgement. While reading the New Testament letter to the Romans, Luther came to believe that salvation was a matter of faith, not works, church traditions or payment, which led to a crisis of conscience. Luther had been influenced by the Greek and Latin translations of the New Testament by Desiderius Erasmus, a Dutch Catholic scholar, whose translations of the sacred texts raised questions about traditional Catholic interpretations of the scriptures.

Luther's study of the Bible led him to reject the traditional teachings and practices of the Church, particularly the sale of indulgences (where a person could buy their way out of purgatory, the intermediate state between death and heaven). Luther came to believe that salvation could be gained by faith alone. This was the doctrine of 'justification by grace through faith', drawn from the writings of St Paul, which became the cornerstone of the Reformation that was to come.

In 1517, Luther nailed to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral his 95 Theses, which were matters for debate. His intention was to begin discussion on the issues in the Church he saw as contrary to the Bible. This was an accepted practice and a means of beginning debate. It is unlikely that Martin Luther wanted to lead a revolution that would result in a split in the Christian church.

Figure 7A.3 Depiction of Martin Luther nailing his 95 Theses on to the door of the castle church, Wittenburg, Germany

Luther also became caught up in the political machinations of his day, and soon became involved in a power struggle that was not only theological but political. He was supported by Prince Frederick of Saxony, who wanted to assert his own power against the Italian-dominated Church and the pope in Rome. Luther proved to be a convenient weapon of Frederick's.

Luther was summoned to Rome by Pope Leo X and took part in a famous debate where he denied the infallibility of the pope and the Church Councils. Luther also took part in a famous debate called the Diet of Worms, held at the city of Worms. He was called there, charged with heresy and offered the chance to recant.

He was excommunicated from the Church in 1521 and his life was threatened. By being excommunicated, Luther was considered to be outside the Church and thus unable to be 'saved'. Luther was protected by the German princes, hidden for several years in Wartburg Castle, and was supported in his return to teaching. He eventually married a former nun, Katherine von Bora, and they had five children.

Contribution to Christianity

Luther translated the New Testament into German, one of the most significant early works in the German language. Previously the Bible was only available in Latin. The recent invention of the printing press enabled his ideas to be spread through Europe, a particularly significant innovation that provided major impetus to the Reformation. In 1530, Lutheran beliefs were outlined in the Augsburg Confession, drawn up by a colleague of Luther, Philip Melanchthon. By the time Luther died in 1546, the Lutheran Church was established in Germany and Scandinavia and his ideas and actions had begun the Reformation.

Among Luther's more significant theological ideas and teachings were:

- *sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura* (grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone) – Luther's key beliefs that are considered the catch-cry of the Reformation
- the doctrine of justification by grace through faith
- the Bible is the final authority in all things
- the Bible should be available in the language of the people
- priesthood of all believers, which means all people can approach God directly
- two sacraments only, baptism and Holy Communion (not seven as the Catholic Church taught).

Impact on Christianity

The Reformation led to further splits in the Church across Europe and the beginning of the Protestant Church. Luther's ideas influenced people such as Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich and John Calvin in Geneva, who became leaders of the Reformation. The Lutheran Church is still the largest Protestant Church today, with about 80 million followers. Many modern churches consider themselves Protestant churches, including the Uniting Church of Australia.

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INVESTIGATE

Ronald H. Bainton's *Here I Stand* (1991) is a classic biography of Martin Luther first published in 1950. There are many other books relating to Luther available, including *The Bondage of the Will* by Martin Luther, first published in 1525. It is easily available and is a good example of Luther's theology.

There have also been many movies made of Luther's life. A good example is the 2003 movie *Luther*, starring Joseph Fiennes, where Luther is presented as a tortured soul, an idea that seems to bear some resemblance to reality.

Martin Luther had a very significant influence on the Christian church. The Reformation was one of the most important events in the history of the Church, and the unity of the Western Church was never recovered. The Catholic Church responded with the Catholic Reformation (or Counter-Reformation) that reviewed the teachings of the Church and, as a result, either reaffirmed or corrected practices and teaching.

The Lutheran Church is an influential Christian church in Europe, and the theology of Luther and the Reformation is considered the important Christian theology of the Protestant Church today. Luther is also considered a significant contributor to the development of the German language through his translation of the Bible and other written works.

Summary

In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther began the Reformation, one of the most significant events in the history of the Church. Luther's actions and theology have influenced modern Christianity in the formation of the Protestant variant of Christianity. His influence has continued through to the modern church.

Catherine Booth (1829–1890 CE)

Life and ideas

Catherine Booth was born Catherine Mumford in Derbyshire, England, on 17 January 1829. She was brought up in a strongly Christian home and had a sincere faith from an early age. It is reported that she had read the Bible eight times by the age of 12. She was a sickly child and developed curvature of the spine when 14 years old, and tuberculosis four years later. While she was ill she developed a keen social conscience and wrote a number of articles against drinking alcohol. She also joined the Temperance Society (which opposed the abuse of alcohol) and the Band of Hope, a children's group opposed to alcohol and committed to Christ-like living. Catherine was greatly concerned about social problems and social justice issues in England, often caused by limited employment and poor working conditions, and made worse through difficult living conditions.

Figure 7A.4 Engraving of the co-founder of the Salvation Army, Catherine Booth

In 1852, Catherine met William Booth, a Methodist minister who shared her views on social justice and reform and concern for the poor in English society. She had developed a strong feminist attitude that was not initially shared by William. They argued about the role of women in the church; William begrudgingly accepted the idea of Catherine preaching, but said he 'would not like it'. William's views reflected the attitude generally held by Christians at that time: that women should take a submissive role in the church and keep silent during church services. William Booth and Catherine Mumford married on 16 June 1855 at Stockwell Green Congregational Church.

Despite her attitude and her involvement in speaking at children's meetings, Catherine did not preach until 1860. When she did, William was so impressed that he immediately changed his view on women preachers. Catherine was also involved in speaking in homes and helping people give up alcohol. In 1864, William and Catherine began the Christian Mission in London's East End. It became known as the Salvation Army in 1878.

Catherine was a frequent preacher at the meetings of the Salvation Army and on London's docklands. She and William often preached in the open air and raised considerable hostility from other churches. Lord Shaftesbury, a well-known social reformer, politician and Christian leader, went as far as describing William Booth as the Anti-Christ.

William and Catherine had eight children, all of whom were involved in the Salvation Army. Two, William Bramwell and Evangeline, was the generals of the Salvation Army. Ballington Booth was the Commander of the Salvation Army in Australia from 1883 to 1885.

Catherine Booth was diagnosed with cancer in 1888, and died in her husband's arms on 4 October 1890 at the age of 61. She is buried with William in London.

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Contribution to Christianity

One of the complaints from other Christians was that the Salvation Army allowed women to have equal status and rights as men. However, the Anglican Archbishop of York recognised that the Salvation Army was ministering to people that the Church of England was unable to reach. Catherine was involved in speaking against wealthy people who ignored the squalid living conditions of the poor, exploited them in the workplace or forced women into prostitution. With the emphasis on equal status for women and the outreach to the poor, Catherine Booth and the Salvation Army were at the forefront of making Christianity a relevant religious tradition to many people in the England of that time.

The Salvation Army developed into a quasi-military organisation in name only. It had military ranks, and both William and Catherine were generals. Catherine is often called the 'mother of the Army'. She was involved in designing the Salvation Army flag and bonnets for the women. The uniforms were developed to overcome the reluctance of people to attend church in their ragged clothing, providing an alternative without social stigma and embarrassment.

William and Catherine were particularly concerned about the issue of sweated labour – women and children working long hours for little pay in poor conditions. One particular issue was the making of matches. In England, matches were made from yellow phosphorus, which caused a disease known as Phossy Jaw (necrosis of the bone). The manufacturers claimed it was too expensive to change to the safer red phosphorus. The Salvation Army opened its own factory, using the safer material and paying the workers double the wages of the commercial manufacturers. Eventually this led to changes across the industry.

Impact on Christianity

Catherine Booth was exceptional, a woman before her time. As a strong feminist and an active social reformer, she was responsible for much of the mission and work of the Salvation Army. She was involved in developing the Army's beliefs and practices, and that influence has lasted down the years. Her support for women preachers has translated into a wide acceptance of female leadership within the Salvation Army, and her campaigns to overcome social injustice have been models for Christians, male and female, in the years since. The Salvation Army is one of the world's foremost charitable organisations as well as an effective Christian church. While William Booth is often recognised as the founder of the Salvation Army, it is clear the work was a joint effort that included a significant contribution from Catherine Booth. The Salvation Army continues its work today across the world, including Australia, where the Red Shield appeal is a significant annual event.

Figure 7A.5 The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services, food distribution, is part of the charity work of the Salvation Army

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It is widely recognised as an important part of the Christian church, reaching out to people in need, providing a range of welfare services and ministering to a section of the population who often have little to do with the traditional church.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Catherine Booth see the following:

- Roger Joseph Green, *Catherine Booth*, Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1996.
- Roy Hattersley, *Blood and Fire*, London, Little, Brown Book Group, 1999.

Summary

Catherine Mumford Booth was a feminist Christian woman of the nineteenth century who was concerned about the role of women in the church and the plight of the poor. As a social reformer she created the Salvation Army with her husband, William Booth. The Salvation Army continues to work with the disadvantaged today.

Billy Graham (1918–2018 CE)

Life and ideas

Billy Graham (born William Franklin Graham, Jr) is one of the most recognisable Christians of the twentieth century. Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the USA on 7 November 1918, he was the son of a dairy farmer and was raised in the Presbyterian Church. Billy (as he preferred to be known) was converted at a Baptist revival meeting in 1934, led by Mordecai Ham, but was considered unsuitable to be accepted into the church youth group.

Graham attended Bob Jones College (a conservative religious college) after finishing high school, but found it too rigid and legalistic and left after one semester. Bob Jones commented he could expect to be a 'poor country Baptist preacher somewhere out in the sticks'. Graham transferred to the Florida Bible Institute, gaining a Bachelor of Theology, and he practised his preaching to the birds, alligators and tree stumps on an island in the Hillsborough River.

In 1943, Graham graduated with a degree in anthropology from Wheaton College in Illinois. He was greatly influenced by his Bible school teacher, Henrietta Mears, who helped him believe the Bible is the infallible word of God, a concept that has motivated much of his ministry. While at Wheaton, Graham met and married Ruth Bell, a daughter of missionaries who worked in China. They married in 1943, soon after graduation, and had five children. Ruth died in 2007.

In 1944, Graham took over a failing radio program in Chicago called 'Songs in the Night'. This was his first move into the mass media, and he recruited longtime associate George Beverly Shea as director of his radio ministry. Shea became a significant singer on Graham's later crusades. Graham contracted mumps in 1945, which derailed his plans to be an army chaplain. On his recovery, he co-founded the youth ministry Youth for Christ, then conducted a series of circus-tent revival meetings in Los Angeles in 1949. It was here that Billy Graham became known as an **evangelist** – one who preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ and calls for a commitment to follow him.

evangelical
From the Greek word euangelion meaning 'gospel' or 'good news', after the eighteenth century CE, it refers to a Protestant movement that believes one's soul can be saved only by having faith in the atoning death of Jesus

Billy Graham (and twentieth-century American Christianity) was greatly influenced by the theological 'school of thought' evangelicalism, which emphasises the need for personal conversion, the authority of the Bible, the centrality of the cross of Jesus and personal activism.

The 'crusades', as Graham called them, were a tremendous success and he became a national figure, helped largely by positive reports that were provided by media mogul William Randolph Hearst. It is reported that, for some unknown reason, though possibly due to Graham's patriotism and youth appeal, Hearst advised his newspaper editors to 'puff Graham' (that is, to give him good publicity) during his crusades. Billy Graham soon became a national identity, a reality that followed him for most of his life.

He became a dominant figure in Christianity, across the world, during the mid- to late twentieth century. His contributions and impact helped shape modern Christianity.

In later years, Billy Graham suffered from Parkinson's disease and had prostate cancer. He appeared in public at special events, such as the Festival of Hope in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. He appointed his son Franklin Graham as his successor at Billy Graham Ministries. Billy Graham died at the age of 99 on 21 February 2018.

Contribution to Christianity

Graham founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 and it moved into several areas of outreach including radio, television, newspaper, magazine and film production. He established the long-running Christian magazine *Christianity Today* and became a noted media personality. Graham also wrote nearly 30 books, including bestsellers such as *Angels: God's Secret Agents*, *Answers to Life's Problems* and his autobiography, *Just as I Am*. He was one of the first Christian leaders who focused on the contribution of the media to Christianity.

Graham conducted 'crusades' across America and in other parts of the world, including London, New York City and (in 1959) Australia. His crusades grew into an international ministry that saw him return to Australia in 1968 and 1982. Some of the current and recent Christian leaders in Australian Protestant Christianity were influenced by Billy Graham. In 1959, Billy Graham insisted that churches work together for the crusades. This was a feature of his work and ecumenism was promoted greatly through these efforts. Many homes in Australia were also recipients of his publications.

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Figure 7A.6 Billy Graham (right) speaking with President John F. Kennedy at a prayer breakfast (early 1960s)

He conducted the largest crusade in Seoul, South Korea, with one million people attending one meeting. He spoke behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War and also in China and North Korea. Graham conducted his last official crusade in New York City in 2005.

It is estimated that Billy Graham spoke to more than 200 million people in almost 200 countries at crusades, and many more through his various media ministries. Graham was instrumental in providing training for other evangelists, and in providing a forum for discussion and research. One of the most significant was the Lausanne Conference of Evangelism, held in 1974, which attracted evangelists from all over the world. These conferences are now held regularly.

Impact on Christianity

Billy Graham was a controversial figure. He was criticised for calling people to make an emotional commitment to Christ, rather than a considered decision. He opposed segregation during the 1960s, and refused to speak to segregated audiences in the USA and in South Africa during the apartheid era. On one occasion he helped bail Martin Luther King from jail, and invited King to join him on his 1957 crusade in New York.

Graham refused to join Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority group, and although a member of the Democratic Party in the USA, he supported politicians from both the Republicans and Democrats. He befriended most American presidents since Harry Truman, and his friendship with Richard Nixon was of particular concern to many critics. Graham spoke out against Communism and in support of the Cold War policy of the US government. However, he stated that his belief was that politics is secondary to the need to preach the Gospel.

Graham was also criticised by his own church, the Southern Baptist Convention, for his apparent support of infant baptism. He was always careful to avoid criticism about money, a common complaint against evangelists. He and his associates produced a manifesto that addressed several issues of potential concern including money, sexual allegations, criticism of churches and excessive publicity. Graham was also reported as making anti-Semitic comments, but was careful to avoid proselytising Jewish people. In his later years, Graham suggested that people of other religious traditions might be 'in Heaven', comments that angered many conservative Christians in America.

Graham was from the evangelical school of Christianity. He always preached the need for personal conversion – the repentance of sins and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as an individual's personal saviour. He held to the inerrancy of the Bible as the infallible word of God. Graham was a significant figure in twentieth-century Christianity and was included in *TIME Magazine*'s 'Heroes and Icons of the 20th Century'. His influence was particularly felt in Australia. Some Christian leaders in Australia were converted at a Billy Graham crusade. It was estimated that 30 per cent of Australia's population attended the 1959 crusades, and the crusades also had the effect of helping ecumenism and inter-church cooperation in Australia.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Billy Graham see Billy Graham, *Just as I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997 and 2007. Numerous other books written by, or about Billy Graham, are available.

Clips from Billy Graham crusades can be viewed on YouTube. This is a good way to understand his approach to Christianity. His media publications, such as *Christianity Today*, are also available.

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Summary

Billy Graham was one of the most influential Christians of the twentieth century and became widely known as an evangelist. His evangelistic crusades resulted in the conversion of many people. Graham developed many innovative methods of spreading the gospel using the mass media. He was a powerful figure in the USA and maintained considerable respect across the world. His impact in Australia was felt for many years after his visits.

Dennis Bennett (1917–1991 CE)

Life and ideas

Dennis Bennett was an American Episcopal (Anglican) priest who created a great deal of interest when, on 3 April 1960, he announced he had been 'baptised with the Holy Spirit'.

Bennett was born in the USA on 28 October 1917 and trained as an Episcopal priest. His experience of receiving the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' is recorded in his book *Nine o'Clock in the Morning*. His announcement led some to call for his resignation, saying his experience was inconsistent with Anglicanism and more in keeping with Pentecostalism. His announcement received a great deal of media attention, including articles in *TIME* and *Newsweek*, and rather than force the issue or become part of a media circus, Bennett resigned as a priest.

Bennett found support in the Bishop of Olympia, Bishop William Fisher Lewis, and went to Seattle where he was appointed rector (priest in charge) of St Luke's Church. At this stage, Dennis was married with three children. In 1963 his wife Erica died, and he married his second wife, Rita, three years later. Rita supported Dennis in his ministry of writing and speaking as his fame spread in Christian circles. Bennett remained at St Luke's for 21 years, until 1981, when he left to begin the Christian Revival Association (he had also founded the Episcopal Renewal Ministries in 1973).

Dennis Bennett died on 1 November 1991. At his funeral service, Reverend Dick O'Driscoll noted that people all over the world, from Africa to Switzerland, from England to the USA, had been inspired and influenced by his words and work.

Contribution to Christianity

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is recorded in the New Testament book of Acts (chapter 2). The experience became the distinguishing mark of the Pentecostal churches that emerged in the early twentieth century. Those who shared the experience usually left their own churches to join a Pentecostal church. Bennett sought to remain in his own denomination, and many who shared similar experiences also wished to remain in order to bring new life to the traditional churches. The term 'charismatic' was coined for them. Charismatic is derived from the Greek word *charisma* which means 'gift', a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Figure 7A.7 Dennis Bennett's ideas were similar to those of Pentecostal churches, with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and spontaneous worship

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This desire to remain in the churches was met with some suspicion from the mainstream denominations, who were concerned about the emphasis on experiences of the Holy Spirit, and the Pentecostals, who considered the main churches beyond saving. The charismatic renewal had some issues to deal with. Many believed that people who had shared such an experience needed to join charismatic churches and feared services dominated by 'speaking in tongues', one of the identified gifts of the Holy Spirit. Others believed that the traditional features of the Episcopal Church, such as the *Prayer Book* and formal liturgy, needed to be removed, and that the organ needed to be jettisoned and replaced with guitars and chorus singing. In practice, few of these things happened in Dennis Bennett's church, but a sense of fellowship did develop and attendance increased.

Impact on Christianity

Dennis Bennett noted that the New Testament records several occasions when Christian converts received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He also noted that the 1928 edition of the *Anglican Prayer Book* describes the provision for the 'laying on of hands … [to receive] the strengthening gifts of the Holy Spirit'. He saw his experience as consistent with this and with other Anglican statements, such as the 1938 report 'Doctrine in the Church of England' which speaks of 'receiving the Spirit'. The Anglican Confirmation Service calls for the reading of Acts 8:14–17, a passage that refers to Christians receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Traditionally, Protestant Christians believe that a second blessing is unnecessary, as Christians receive the Holy Spirit at conversion. This has led to some criticism of the charismatic movement.

Bennett was concerned that the charismatic renewal would simply be seen as a program that could be applied to the church, similar to the Oxford movement of the 1800s in England, or the Cursillo movement (a modern renewal movement in the Roman Catholic Church). He believed it was not just an option for Christians to choose, but rather an essential empowering necessity for all Christians. He was also concerned with the watering down of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements by a third wave that denied the necessity for baptism of the Holy Spirit. He believed that the charismatic renewal was essential for the future life of the church, redefining its role from a teaching or preaching institution to that of a gifted community.

While Dennis Bennett is not a well-known leader outside the charismatic movement, he was able to combine his experience of the Holy Spirit with a considered theological defence of the charismatic renewal movement. The charismatic movement within mainstream Christianity has declined in recent years, to be replaced by the Pentecostal churches; for example, separate denominations such as the Hillsong churches.

Summary

Dennis Bennett was an Episcopal priest in the USA who received the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' in 1960. He saw this experience as essential for the renewal of the church, and worked extensively to ensure that those who shared a similar experience stayed within the church and sought that renewal. Bennett found support for his position in the teachings of the Anglican Church, and is acknowledged as a significant theological thinker in the charismatic movement.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Dennis Bennett see the following:

- Dennis Bennett, *Nine o'Clock in the Morning*, New Jersey, Logos, 1970.
- Dennis and Rita Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and You*, New Jersey, Logos, 1971.

Sarah (Sara) Maitland (born 1950)

Life and ideas

Sarah Maitland is an English author, academic and feminist theologian. Born in 1950, she came from a large family. For a time she was married to a Church of England minister, but now lives alone. Maitland left the Church of England in 1993 and became a Roman Catholic. She has lived in London and Scotland, and now lives in County Durham.

Maitland has become well known as a novelist but she also describes herself as an amateur theologian. This gives her the chance to consider the nature of God through her non-fiction as well as her fiction writing. Although she sees herself primarily as a novelist, she also writes short stories and has written several theological works, her most popular being *A Big-Enough God* (1994). In this work she discusses the incorporeality of God and thus his/her non-gendered nature. In this work she refers to the deity as `She' as a way of challenging the usual expectation that God is an old, bearded man living in the sky. Her first novel, the award-winning *Daughter of Jerusalem* (1978), established her reputation as an author and interwove a modern tale with reflections upon female characters in the Bible.

Maitland is currently working as a lecturer in creative writing at Lancaster University, and has mentored emerging African writers. She describes her writing as 'fairy tales for adults'. At one stage she worked with the film director Stanley Kubrick on a screenplay, which was never completed; however, some of their ideas appeared in the Steven Spielberg film *Artificial Intelligence: AI*.

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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Sarah Maitland see the following:

- Sara Maitland, *A Big-Enough God: Artful Theology*, London, Mowbray, 1994.
- Sara Maitland, *Daughter of Jerusalem*, London, Blond and Briggs, 1978.
- Sara Maitland, *Three Times Table*, London, Virago, 1991.
- Sara Maitland, *Gossip from the Forest*, London, Granta, 2012.

Impact and contribution to Christianity

In her theological writing, Sarah Maitland seeks to bring the message of Christ further into the modern world. Impacted by radical challenges to life in the West during the 1970s, she is a feminist and is also clearly supportive of homosexual and other personal identities. With training in science and philosophy, she seeks to draw together science and religion to produce an idea of God that is immeasurably complex and creative. This comes through in her work *A Big-Enough God* – where she suggests the wonder of the universe that is revealed in modern science should also be used to show how sophisticated is the God who created the complex world that feeds this science. In her book *Three Times Table* (1990), she draws together religious, scientific and mythical language to show that God can be known in many realms of life. She seeks a God who is big enough to stand up to a feminist critique. Her God can be described as wild, even dangerous. She finds theological discourse that sees God as nothing more than a `mechanical saviour doll' to be troubling. For Maitland, God cannot be a machine of salvation that merely tabulates sins and prayers, and then dispenses salvation accordingly. Rather God is a vital, complex, and amazing source of life and wonder. There is much theological intent in many of her short stories and novels. Maitland writes convincingly from the perspective of female characters in the Bible. In her novel *Daughter of Jerusalem*, she weaves a modern story with telling reflections of female Biblical figures — asking readers to question the standard reception of the biblical narrative which, so often, is male-focused.

Summary

Sarah Maitland is an English author and feminist theologian. She has published several works of fiction as well as several theological works. She seeks to understand a God that is bigger than that often depicted by the Christian churches.

EXERCISE 7A.1

Choose ONE of the significant people discussed and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the life of ONE significant person.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that significant person to Christianity through its history.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that significant person on the Christianity of today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7A.1

1 Create an annotated timeline of the significant person you have chosen, noting significant events in their life.
2 Research and **analyse** the impact of the significant person on Christianity, with particular reference to Australia.
3 Write a paragraph on the following topic: 'How has [the significant person] shaped Christianity today?'

Liberation theology

Ideas

Liberation theology developed during the latter half of the twentieth century and is a movement primarily involving the Catholic Church in Latin America. It had its roots in the work of evangelists and missionaries who often challenged the role and presence of the Church in Latin America. During the era of colonisation, the indigenous people of South and Central America were largely mistreated or disenfranchised. Early Christian leaders sometimes colluded on this, but many others questioned the Church's role in developing and maintaining injustice in relation to the poor and indigenous inhabitants of Central and South America. In fact, many considered the Church had so identified with the rich that they neglected the poor.

During the 1950s, as Latin American countries developed their economies, the poor people of those countries often became dependent on the richer nations, and there was a rise of military dictatorships, rampant capitalism and political repression. There was a growing sense of inequality and often the Church was perceived as being allied with the powerful. Influenced by a growing sense of social justice, questioning began. During the 1960s, many priests and theologians began to consider the impact of Christian theology on social structures, particularly in the light of the growing numbers of poor in these countries, and Church organisations began to bring improvements to their living conditions. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) gave encouragement to these growing views, as there was an opportunity to bring changes to the Church's theology and practices.

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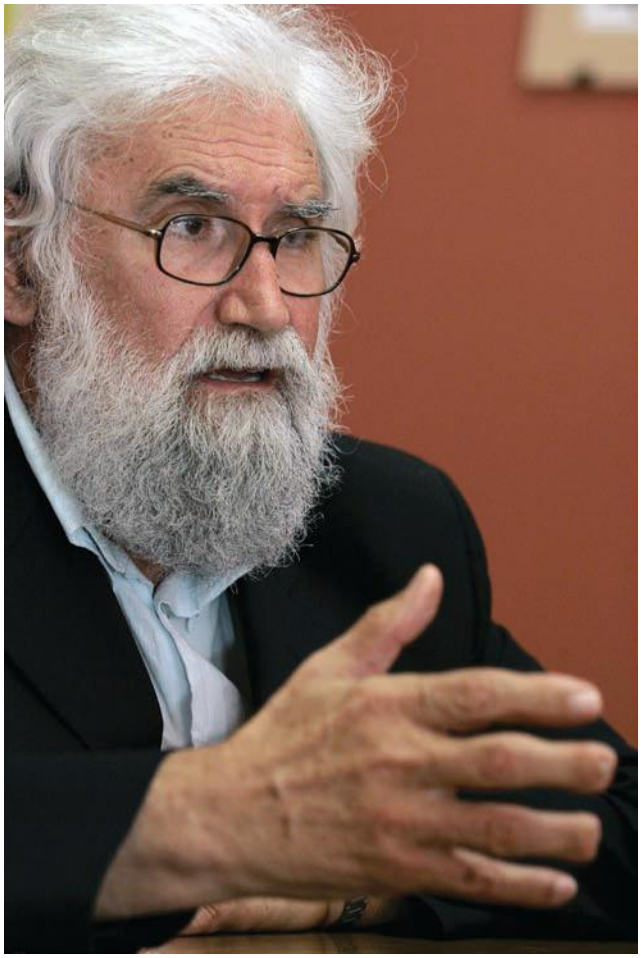

Figure 7A.8 Brazil's leading advocate of liberation theology, Franciscan father Leonardo Boff in 2007

In the view of liberation theologians, the work of Jesus Christ was to be interpreted not only in terms of a saviour of individuals but as a liberator of the oppressed. Liberation theologians noted that Jesus was born in poverty, lived as a refugee, had no home and was even buried in a borrowed tomb. He identified with the poor and the Christian Gospel was seen to be a message for the poor. His introduction to his ministry, called the Nazareth Manifesto (Luke 4:16–21), was interpreted as a social statement about the poor and the outcast.

It was apparent that many of the liberation theologians were influenced by Marxism (a social, political, and economic theory based on the ideas of Karl Marx, who imagined a society where the methods of production would be owned and controlled by all its members). Some argued it was simply a restatement of New Testament Christian communalism. This perception of a Marxist influence has been the greatest criticism of liberation theology by those both within and outside the Church. Salvation was also seen in terms of individual self-actualisation. Many of these theologians drew on the New Testament Gospel of Luke, where Jesus is seen as the friend of the oppressed and outcasts in his actions as well as his teachings:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives …
>
> LUKE 4:18

In the 1970s, the works of several liberation theologians were published and came to the attention of the wider Church. Examples included Gustavo Gutierrez's *Teologia de la liberacion* (Peru) and the writings of Leonardo Boff in the articles *Jesus Cristo Libertador* (Brazil). This led to the development of a formal theological position. Asian and African theologians have also picked up many of the ideals of liberation theology and applied them to their churches and communities.

Liberation theologians are deeply concerned with the complicity that exists between capitalistic structures and the profit motive, and certain aspects, attitudes and movements within the Church. They are concerned not only with heavenly salvation, but with the ways in which the Gospels can inspire and effect social justice in this world. They argue that God is to be found in the suffering of the poor and in the course of human history. Sin is not just a theological concept but defined in terms of man's inhumanity to man.

The Church, according to liberation theology, should be actively involved in changing the structures of society, not just in preaching and teaching. It should take a progressive stance in the face of conservative governments and hierarchical structures, and be concerned about social change and justice, equality for the poor, abuse of human rights and other institutional and attitudinal oppression. The Gospel of Christ is not just about personal salvation on an individual level, but the impetus for a change in society, its structure and inequalities, and a desire to lift the status of the poor. Liberation theology has drawn on the works of black theologians and feminist theology, and in turn influenced those movements.

Contribution to Christianity

During the 1970s, in tune with the developing social trends in the world, a series of conferences and papers led to the development of liberation theology as a formal movement. By the late 1970s, the Catholic Church had issued a series of statements recognising the positive aspects of liberation theology, but criticising other aspects such as the support for revolution and Marxism.

Over time the Catholic Church has objected to liberation theology's use of Marxist ideas, its support of revolutionary movements and criticism of the Church. Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI expressed their opposition to liberation theology, and in 1980, Archbishop St Oscar Romero of San Salvador clashed with John Paul II while on a visit to Europe. St Oscar Romero was assassinated on 24 March 1980, while celebrating Mass in a chapel near his cathedral.

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Pope Francis, himself Latin American (Argentinian of Italian descent), strongly advanced the cause of Oscar Romero's beatification and canonisation. Romero was beatified in 2014 and canonised in 2018. This has been interpreted as Pope Francis' endorsement of liberation theology in contrast to his predecessors.

While the Catholic Church has sought to suppress liberation theology, the ideas have been developed further by Protestant theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann and Alistair McIntosh, and by Catholic theologians outside of Latin America such as Hans Küng and Henri Nouwen.

Impact on Christianity

Liberation theology aims to see a society where there are no differences between rich and poor, and where the people are involved in the decisions of the Church. Liberation theologians are committed to social action as well as personal conversion. They believe this is part of Christ's ministry to the world, which is reflected in the statements of several liberation theologians:

> A theology of the Church in the world should be complemented by a theology of the world in the Church.
> GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

> When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.
> DOM HEDDER CAMARA OF BRAZIL

Liberation theology has enjoyed some favour in recent years, but may not achieve the wider acceptance it had in the 1970s. However, it has been an influential movement that has suggested that the Christian gospel cannot be limited to the needs of the individual, but should effect change in society as well. The division between the sacred and the secular cannot be maintained. Liberation theology asserts that the Church has too often allied itself with the rich and powerful, and attacks this as being inconsistent with the Jesus of the New Testament. It gives voice to the poor and its influence is evident in many Christian people and organisations – Catholic, Protestant and ecumenical. One example is the Sojourners organisation, a group that looks to challenge traditional Christianity in maintaining political and power structures.

The election of Pope Francis, from Latin America, has prompted some to consider that he may be sympathetic to the liberation school of thought. He has lifted the suspension of Miguel D'Escoto, a liberation theologian priest suspended by Pope John Paul II. There have been some signs that the movement may be more acceptable in the Catholic Church under Francis' papacy.

Figure 7A.9 In 2013, Pope Francis (born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, in Argentina) was elected as the successor to Pope Benedict XVI. There have been signs that liberation theology may be more acceptable in the Catholic Church under Francis' papacy.

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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on liberation theology, see the following:

- Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1987.
- Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (revised ed.), Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1998.

FURTHERMORE

Two movies that relate to liberation theology are *The Mission* (1986), starring Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons, set in the early days of South American colonisation, and *Romero* (1989), starring Raul Julia, which chronicles the life of St Oscar Romero, his developing ideas and his assassination. The character of St Oscar Romero, and his assassination, appear briefly in the Oliver Stone movie *Salvador* (1986).

Summary

Emerging in the 1970s, liberation theology was a Marxism-influenced movement that challenged the relationship between the Catholic Church and political power groups in Latin America. Drawing from the Gospel of St Luke, liberation theologians saw the Jesus of the New Testament as a supporter of the poor rather than the rich. A theology developed that challenged the Catholic Church and sought liberation for the oppressed in Latin America.

Initially criticised by the Catholic hierarchy, liberation theology nonetheless found support among Catholic theologians and grassroots Catholic movements, as well as inspiring many other Christians across the world. Pope Francis, himself a Latin American familiar with liberation theology's original context, seems to be moving the Catholic hierarchy towards a more positive appreciation of liberation theology.

Feminist theology

Ideas

Christianity has developed, historically, as a patriarchal religious tradition. The first disciples were men, as were the early Church leaders. Over the centuries this position has become entrenched. In many ways this reflected a particular interpretation of Christian theology, the monastic traditions of Christianity and a particular interpretation of the Bible. Eve was seen as the one who led her husband astray, and thus sin entered the world (2 Corinthians 11:3). St Paul wrote:

> Women should remain silent in the church. They are not allowed to speak.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34

Certainly, in the translation of the Bible into English, the male pronoun was used in reference to God, and Jesus is definitely a man.

Women were refused ordination and many Christian leaders had a poor view of women. They were often seen as temptresses who would lead men astray in their faith, and as having little value. Martin Luther said, 'women are on Earth to bear children'. Even the twentieth-century theologian Karl Barth has been quoted as saying 'women are ontologically inferior to men'.

However, many women have been noted as significant people in the history of Christianity, including St Hildegard of Bingen in the twelfth century; Catherine Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army; and contemporary feminist Sarah Maitland.

Women emerged as Christian leaders with the growing missionary movement of the colonial period. It was not acceptable to send women to teach 'ignorant savages' even if they were not allowed to teach men in the West. In order to do this, women were given theological training and developed their own approaches to understanding Christianity.

During the rise of women's suffrage, many early leaders of this movement, such as Annie Besant and Susan B. Anthony, were committed Christian women. There was agitation within the movement to allow women to be more involved in leadership in the Church, but this had little effect and eventually died down. It is probable that the Church hierarchy allowed these women to be vocal to achieve their goals of temperance and prohibition, but not to use that voice within the Church.

It was not until the 1960s that feminist theology really began to develop. It grew alongside similar movements such as the civil rights movement and liberation theology, where the rights of those often oppressed were supported.

Figure 7A.10 The Right Reverend Kay Goldsworthy with the Most Reverend Roger Herft Archbishop of Perth at the consecration service for her ordination as Australia's first female Anglican bishop at St George's Cathedral on 22 May 2008 in Perth, Australia. Archdeacon Goldsworthy was one of the first women to be ordained as a priest within the Anglican Church, in 1992.

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The Church maintained patriarchy in two major ways. Women were not able to be ordained as priests, especially in the mainline churches such as the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches. The other issue of concern was the use of male-dominated language in the Bible and liturgy of the Church.

It should be noted that the issue of the ordination of women was not a problem for many other churches. Pentecostalism had accepted women leaders since its beginnings in the early 1900s. Many non-conformist churches ordained women, and Catherine Booth was accepted as a preacher and founder of her organisation, the Salvation Army, from the 1860s. The Uniting Church in Australia has ordained women to be ministers since its inception and, as mentioned previously, Pentecostal churches have had women as pastors for many years.

It was a long struggle for women to be ordained in the Anglican Church. The Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) is an Australian example of the feminist movement at work within that denomination in Australia. Patricia Brennan and Patricia Hayward are two significant Australian feminist leaders from the MOW. Women were ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in Australia in the 1990s; however, the Anglican Sydney Diocese does not recognise women priests, and in recent years there has been a strong move against the leadership of women in the Sydney church. The first female bishop, Kay Goldsworthy, was consecrated in Australia in 2008. The Catholic Church and Orthodox churches do not ordain women to the priesthood.

Contribution to Christianity

As feminist theologians studied the Bible, they noted that only a particular interpretation had been encouraged by the Church. Paul used the second creation story (Genesis 2) in his letters, but the first creation story (Genesis 1) suggests equality between men and women. They discovered that many references to women as leaders and positive role models, such as Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Mary and Martha, had been omitted from the lectionary in use in many churches.

They also rediscovered the Gospel of Luke, as did the liberation theologians, in which Jesus is seen as ministering to the outcasts of society. In this Gospel, Jesus is a friend of women and accepts them as his disciples. Luke tells the story of Mary, Jesus' mother, and of Mary and Martha, two of Jesus' closest friends. It is Luke who describes the women as the first witnesses to the resurrection. In short, Jesus is considered a proto-feminist who challenged the patriarchy of his day. Thus, say feminist theologians, the Church should rediscover this Jesus.

Figure 7A.11 A group of feminist theologians from Protestant and Catholic Churches believed many versions of the bible encouraged the subjugation of women. They joined together to create *A Women's Bible*.

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Even Paul, often considered a **misogynist**, describes significant women such as Prisca/Priscilla, a teacher (see Acts 18:18–28 and Romans 16:3) and Phoebe, a deacon (Acts 16:1). Paul also spoke of equality in the church:

> There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.
> GALATIANS 3:28

Feminists argue that, just as the Church broke down the issue of slavery, so it should break down the issue of patriarchy. The Church should recognise that there are feminine allusions to God in the Bible that have been ignored, and therefore the Church should aim to be as gender neutral as possible in its use of language.

Impact on Christianity

Feminist theologians, such as Catholic Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, have urged Christians to question their approach to interpreting the Bible. Schüssler Fiorenza coined the term 'hermeneutics of suspicion' to suggest that the Bible has, in the past, been interpreted from a position of male dominance. She encouraged women, and other oppressed groups, to challenge the decisions of the patriarchal Church.

Some recent progress has been made. In Australia, 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.

Women probably comprise more than 60 per cent of church attendees. Feminist theology seeks to enfranchise these women in a way they have not been before. There has been some reaction to Christian feminism in recent years, particularly among Pentecostal and fundamentalist Christians who seek to reaffirm the feminine role of women in the home as wives and mothers. Many of these Christians are uncomfortable with the ideas of radical feminists of the 1960s, and the push for more liberal attitudes on reproductive issues such as birth control and abortion, as well as free expression of sexuality.

misogyny
A hatred of women

In many Churches, women have significant leadership roles, and in modern Christianity there are clear efforts to strive for equality and gender neutrality. This includes efforts among women in the Catholic Church. See the Council for Australian Catholic Women (CACW) for an Australian example.

Feminist theology has had a significant influence on Christianity, and it is unlikely that the churches will return to their historical patriarchy. While many women feel frustration in a slowly changing patriarchal Church, change is gradually taking place.

Summary

Feminist theology is a reaction to the male domination in Christian churches. While examples of Christian feminists can be seen through the history of the Church, feminist theology as a movement grew during the 1960s. Reaction to patriarchy, a male-dominated priesthood and gender-specific language have been the battlegrounds, and feminist theology has influenced slow but significant changes in Christianity, and will continue to bring significant changes to Church life and leadership.

INVESTIGATE

Examine some writings of specific feminist theologians.

- Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford, Malden, 1998
- Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2001
- Sara Maitland, *A Big-Enough God: Artful Theology*, London, Mowbray, 1994

EXERCISE 7A.2

Choose ONE of the schools of thought discussed above and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the teachings of ONE Christian school of thought.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that school of thought to Christianity.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that school of thought on the Christianity of that era.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 7A.2

1 Note the main people associated with one of the schools of thought. **Describe** the role and contribution of TWO of the main people associated with the school of thought.
2 Note those who have opposed the chosen school of thought. **Describe** the main reasons why they opposed that school of thought, and the interaction between them and the supporters of that school of thought.
3 Choose a particular area or issue where the impact of that school of thought is clearly notable and **evaluate** the contribution of that school of thought to that area or issue.

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9A.2 Further significant people and schools of thought

For context, you should read Chapter 9 in the print textbook before commencing this digital section.

Do note that the dates provided in this chapter, especially the early dates, are generally accepted but not necessarily accurate. Early Hindu dating is not as accurate as historians might like, as there are few written records that can be used to pinpoint events. You should be aware that the dates could vary by as much as several hundred years.

You may often find considerable difficulties with the spelling of names and terms in Hinduism. The transliteration from Sanskrit to English can often be slightly different so you should ensure the meaning of the terms used are explained and that you try to maintain some accuracy and consistency in your use of terms and names even if there may be some variation in the way they are spelled.

varna
Concept commonly known as caste; the four varna form the basis of Hindu society

You should also ensure the significance of the person discussed, for Hinduism as a religious tradition, is clearly demonstrated. Emphasis should be given to their contribution to and impact on Hinduism, in their lifetime and now.

The print textbook discusses two significant people, **Adi Shankara** and **Mohandas Gandhi**.

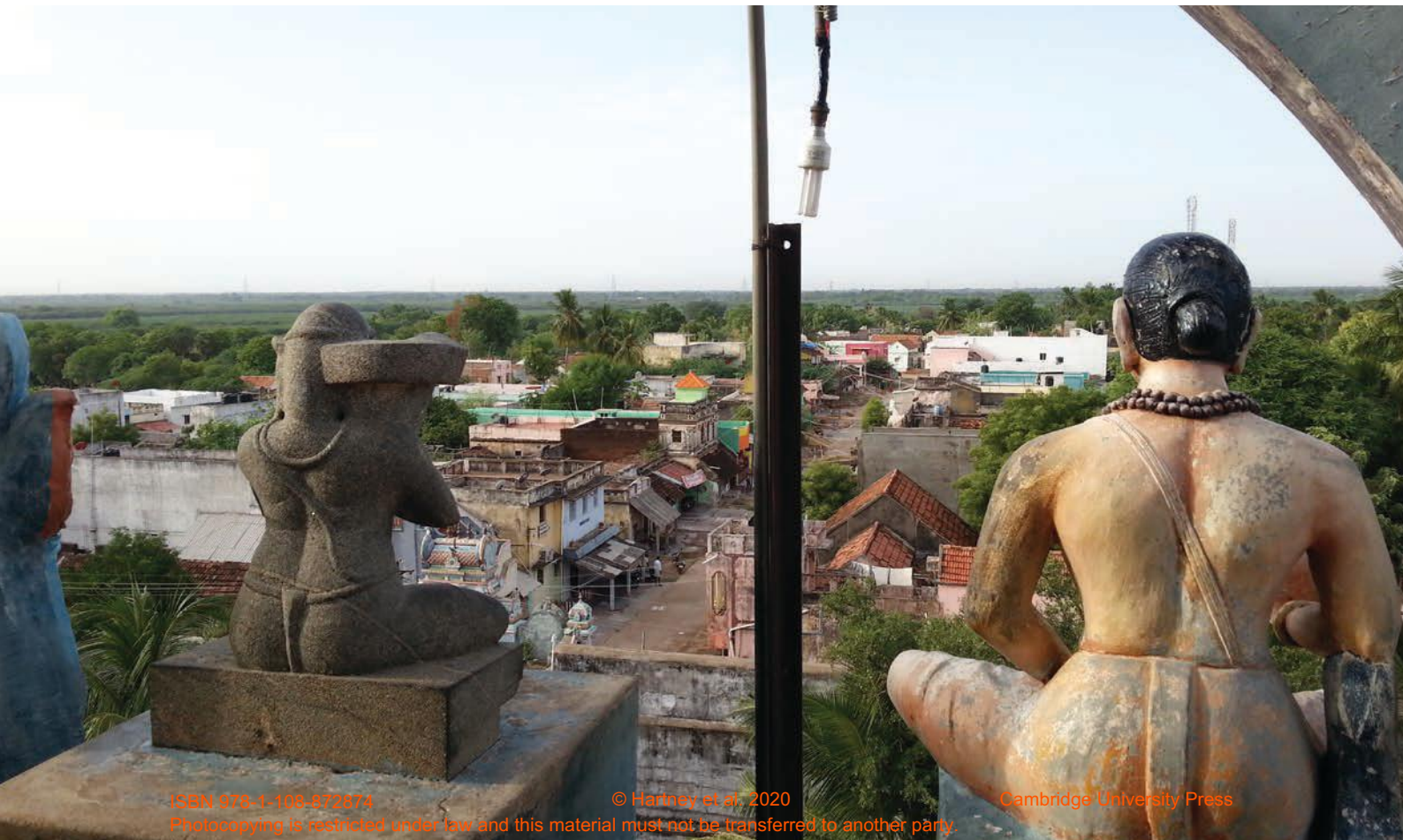
Ramanuja (circa 1017–1137 CE)

Life and ideas

Ramanuja, also known as Ramanujacharya, was born in Tamil Nadu, in the village of Perumbudur near the modern Indian city of Chennai, in about 1017 CE. His death is suggested to be 1137 CE, which means (if this dating is accepted) that he lived for 120 years. Other sources suggest he lived from 1077 to 1157 CE. Most of the dating issues relate to the identification of the Chola King, Kulottunga, who persecuted the Vaishnavas and exiled Ramanuja for 12 years, although there is some debate about the persecutions. Ramanuja was a Vaishnava, a worshipper of Lord Vishnu, and refused to acknowledge Shiva as the supreme lord.

Ramanuja was born Ilaya Perumal. His parents were apparently devout Hindus and Ramanuja demonstrated a great intellect, combined with a relaxed attitude to **varna** (caste). Ramanuja seems to have come from the

Figure 9A.1 Statue of Ramanuja explaining the Mantra *'Om Namo Narayanaya'*. The mantra acknowledges the divine in the individual.



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Brahmin varna, but he was happy to accept the piety and the friendship of Kancipurna, a man from the lowest varna (the Shudra).

Ramanuja invited Kancipurna to dinner, intending to serve him himself. Ramanuja was delayed and Ramanuja's wife served the guest. Because Kancipurana was a Shudra, Ramanuja's wife washed herself after serving him because she had been in contact with someone of a lower varna. Ramanuja was so incensed by this, and other similar incidents, that he abandoned his wife and his life as a householder and became a *sannyasi* (ascetic).

So many legends have arisen about the life of Ramanuja that it is hard to determine historical accuracy. Several significant events and movements were occurring at the time Ramanuja lived. The influences that led to Shankara developing his concept of *advaita* (non-dualism) were growing and this was accompanied by the rise of the Vedanta school of thought (see below). At this time there was a growth of Hinduism that may have been considered a revival of thought and devotion. This was partly prompted by the fear of a Buddhist or Jain resurgence, and resulted in a growth of the Bhakti movement that lasted from the seventh century for several hundred years, and it is still a popular school of thought today. Ramanuja developed his philosophy in this context and it is not surprising he was influenced by, and reacted to, Shankara's teaching, just as Madhva (see the next significant person) reacted to both Shankara and Ramanuja.

Information about Ramanuja's life and teaching is drawn from several works written in Sanskrit and Tamil. One of the most significant is the *Splendour of the Succession of Teachers* (also known as the Six Thousand) written in a Tamil dialect. Another source is a Sanskrit poem, the *Acts of Divine Sages*.

Ramanuja came under the influence of the teacher Yadavaprakasha, a popular scholar who was influenced by Shankara. Yadavaprakasha was impressed by Ramanuja and his skills but was concerned about his emphasis on *bhakti* (devotion). They often argued, and finally Yadavaprakasha decided to kill his disciple (some versions say it was fellow disciples who planned the act to please their master).

Ramanuja escaped and, on the advice of his Shudra friend Kancipurna, he went to see the great master Yamunacharya, who had planned to appoint Ramanuja as his successor. Yamunacharya died shortly before Ramanuja arrived, but legend says that Ramanuja saw the body and noted that three fingers were curled, so he vowed to take on three tasks:

- teach the doctrine of surrender to God to achieve moksha (the cessation of the cycle of samsara)
- write a commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*
- perpetuate the name of the sages Parasara and Sathakopa.

When Ramanuja made these vows, it is reported that the three curled fingers straightened.

Ramanuja then became a follower of one of Yamunacharya's disciples, Mahapurna. It appears that Mahapurna was of a lower varna, and this may have contributed to Ramanuja's becoming a *sannyasi*.

Ramanuja became a wandering ascetic and travelled through many areas. On his journeys he standardised the liturgy at many Lord Vishnu temples and wrote his books. He was considered a threat to the Shaivite Chola kings and was exiled for 12 years to Melukote.

Ramanuja was often called to intercede in disputes. One of these was the debate about the identity of an image in the Titupathi hills, whether it was Shiva or Lord Vishnu. Ramanuja suggested they leave the emblems of both gods at the foot of the image. The doors were locked and in the morning the image was wearing the emblems of Lord Vishnu. It has been a Vaishnava temple ever since.

Contribution to Hinduism

Ramanuja seems to have written nine books, collectively called the *Navartanas*. They include his commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* in fulfilment of his vows, several philosophical works, several summaries of the Vedanta, a guide to daily living for Vaishnavas and a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Ramanuja's body was allegedly preserved and is on display at a temple in Srirangam in Tamil Nadu. The body is covered with wax, sandalwood paste and saffron, and is dressed in the clothes he wore when he was alive. Adherents say that a close examination will reveal Ramanuja's nails peeping through the covering, and that to view the body is to experience *darshan* (a vision of the divine).

Impact on Hinduism

The most significant aspect of Ramanuja's teaching is his development of the concept of *vishishta advaita*, which can be roughly translated as 'almost, but not quite two' – qualified non-duality. This doctrine was developed in reaction to Shankara's *advaita* (non-duality or oneness) and stresses a combination of the 'oneness of God' (*advaita*) with the 'attributes of God' (*vishesha*).

Ramanuja argued that there is a distinction between various aspects of life, and thus a distinction between atman and Brahman, refuting Shankara's argument for *advaita*.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Ramanuja, see C.J. Bartley, *The Theology of Ramanuja: Realism and Religion*, London, Routledge Curzon, 2002.

You can search online for extracts and texts written by Ramanuja. His commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* is still popular.

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Figure 9A.2 The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Tamil Nadu, in which Ramanuja's body is allegedly preserved

Souls (atman) can experience unity, but not union, with God (Brahman). The identity of the individual is not lost. Thus, to Ramanuja, devotion was more significant than an intellectual approach (such as Shankara's), and ritual, religious duty and social duties were more important. As Hindu thought developed, Madhva (see the next section) came to disagree with both Shankara and Ramanuja.

Ramanuja's commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras* are still considered significant works. His emphasis on the concept of *bhakti* (devotion) continues in Hinduism today, as does his emphasis on surrender to God to achieve moksha (release from samsara – the cycle of rebirth).

Summary

Ramanuja was an important Vaishnava scholar who developed the doctrine of *vishishta advaita*, a modification of Shankara's *advaita*. His relaxed attitude to varna, and conflicts with his wife, led to him becoming a *sannyasi*. He stressed the devotional over intellectual in Hinduism, and has had a strong influence on today's Hinduism.

Madhva (circa 1199–1278 CE)

Sri Madhvacharya (known as Madhva) is the third influential Vedanta philosopher, after Shankara and Ramanuja. He developed the concept of *tattvavada* (or *dvaita* – 'dualism', sometimes spelled *tattva vada*) as opposed to Shankara's concept of *advaita* ('oneness or monism') and Ramanuja's *vishishta advaita* ('qualified monism' or 'almost but not quite two').

Life and ideas

Madhva was born around the beginning of the thirteenth century CE (probably 1199 CE to 1278 CE, though estimated dates vary). He was born near Udupi in South India and was a Brahmin by varna. He was named Vasudeva at birth.

As a young boy of 11 (although some say it was much later, when he was 25) he sought initiation into monastic Hinduism as a *sannyasi*. He was a talented boy who was able to successfully argue against scholars in his childhood. As a youth he was successful in sport and physical activities. He was given the nickname 'Bhima' after the strong hero of the *Mahabharata*, an aspect of his life that developed further significance later.

He was appointed head of the Vedanta school at 11 or 12 years of age and given the name Ananda-tirtha. The name Madhva was chosen by Ananda-tirtha when he wrote his book; he drew the name from the Vedas and claimed they were speaking about him. It is the name by which he is commonly known today.

While still a teenager (or possibly in his mid-20s) Madhva began a tour of South India and as he went, he taught his doctrine of dualism, known as *tattvavada* or *dvaita*. He was vocal in attacking superstition and was criticised by other scholars who thought his views to be unorthodox. He was known as a miracle worker and considered to have supernatural powers.

After writing a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, Madhva travelled to the north of India on a pilgrimage to Badri, visiting the Ganges River on the way. He returned and wrote a commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*.

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His reputation spread and his views on dualism began to be accepted by other scholars. He also wrote commentaries on the *Upanishads* and several books on singing, including on the *Rig Veda*. He installed a statue of Krishna in the temple at Udupi, and there is a story that tells of its miraculous recovery from the sea. He again travelled to Badri, where he impressed the local Muslim rulers. His musical expertise was acknowledged by other writers of his time.

On the way back to Udupi, there was a curious incident where Madhva unearthed the mace of Bhima, one of the heroes of the *Mahabharata*, and reburied it. He was soon perceived by believers to be a reincarnation of Bhima (see earlier comments about his nickname).

When Madhva returned to Udupi he became engaged in a series of debates, as many still opposed his views. In his 70s he installed his brother into the monastic order and drew together a group of disciples. In 1278 CE, around the age of 79, Madhva travelled north again to Badri, and was not seen again.

Contribution to Hinduism

Madhva's ideas led to a flurry of writing as many other commentators either supported or denied his ideas. Several books were written by his disciples who further developed his ideas. His doctrine of *tattvavada* (*dvaita*) was such an inspiration that the Bhakti devotional movement used his writings for many centuries.

Madhva argued that there was a fundamental difference between the individual self (atman) and the ultimate world soul (Brahman). There is the independent reality (Brahman) and dependent reality, living beings (*jivas*) and lifeless objects (*jada*).

This difference implies that there cannot be 'oneness'. This fundamental distinction between Brahman and everything else means, according to Madhva, that the doctrine of dualism (*dvaita*) is correct.

This perception of difference, which is ordinarily seen in real life, was called *tattvavada* ('the realist viewpoint'). Thus, for Madhva, Shankara's doctrine of *advaita* (oneness) could not be maintained, as the Vedas teach the essential difference between atman and Brahman. Similarly, Ramanuja's doctrine of *vishishta advaita* (qualified monism) was not acceptable, because Brahman's supremacy should not be compromised by identification with atman.

To Madhva, Brahman was Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu was supreme and not to be compromised by any notion approaching monism. Madhva emphasised the validity of experience as a means of knowledge, and that the sacred writings should be read with the acknowledgement of everyday experience. The Vedas, argued Madhva, cannot teach the non-distinction between atman and Brahman because this contradicts experience. Madhva's arguments are influential in matching experience of life with the intellectual pursuit of Hindu philosophy.

Figure 9A.3 Sculpture of Madhva

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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Madhva, see the following:

- Madhva, *The Brahmasutras*, Mumbai, Archish Publishers, 2005.
- B.N.L. Sharma, *Philosophy of Madhvacarya*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1986.

Madhva's theology was a significant influence on later Hindu scholars. He taught that all avatars of Lord Vishnu are equal and identical, in contrast to those who taught Krishna was the highest form of Lord Vishnu. He was also a significant influence on the Bhakti movement.

Impact on Hinduism

Madhva's *dvaita* Vedanta is recognised as one of the three schools of Vedanta and has been developed further by other Hindu scholars such as Jayatirtha (fourteenth century) and Vyasaraya (sixteenth century).

Vedanta is a significant school of Hinduism, popular today. It has influenced the modern Bhakti movement. Madhva's doctrine of *dvaita* is a popular theological teaching in modern Hinduism.

Madhva also founded eight monasteries that have increased to 24 today. As well as following the teachings and practices of Madhva, these institutions provide food to pilgrims and the poor.

Summary

Madhva, a Brahmin *sannyasi*, developed the concept of *dvaita*, or dualism. He emphasised devotion, particularly to Lord Vishnu. The importance of devotion in Hinduism, rather than intellectual Hinduism, has had a strong influence on modern expressions of Hinduism.

Figure 9A.4 Mira Bai was a noted composer of Hindu songs and poetry. Pictured is a sculpture of Mira Bai in Loutolim in India.

Mirabai (Mira Bai; circa 1498–1547 CE)

Life and ideas

Mira Bai was born in the village of Kudki in Rajasthan. As her family were devotees of Lord Vishnu, she belonged to the Vaishnava variant of Hinduism. She lived in India from approximately 1498 to 1547 CE (though some suggest 50 years later). This was before British colonisation and at a time when the Mughals were establishing their power base in India. Her family was devoted to Lord Vishnu. Mira Bai became a recognised and almost fanatical devotee of Krishna (one of Lord Vishnu's avatars). As a child, she spent hours washing and dressing his image.

Mira Bai's mother died early, and her father was a soldier. She was raised by her grandparents. At 18, it was arranged for Mira Bai to marry a prince by the name of Bhorjraj (or Rana Kumbha). She refused to perform *puja* (worship) to his family's deity, Durga (a goddess often linked to Shiva). She also refused to consummate her marriage. Mira Bai was so devoted to praising and singing hymns to the god Krishna that her husband became jealous and tried to kill her. His many attempts at murder became a dramatic part of the Mira Bai story and subsequent legends based on her life.

There are many fanciful stories about Mira Bai, often speaking of false accusations made against her and plots to get rid of her or of her ecstatic devotion to Krishna. One story tells of a wandering ascetic who had to return to Mira Bai's house and leave a statue of Krishna so that she would resume eating and drinking. It is said that, when asked on one occasion who she would marry, she pointed to a statue of Krishna and said, 'There he is!'

Mira Bai preferred to spend her time with holy men, gurus and devotees of Krishna. Her husband, Bhorjraj,

Figure 9A.5 Mirabai Temple at Chittorgarh Fort near the Gambheri River in Chittorgarh

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was killed in battle three years into their marriage, but Mira Bai refused to perform *sati*. She claimed she was really married to Krishna.

Mira Bai was a musician and hymnist, a prolific composer of poetry and hymns, especially *bhajanand kirtan* (devotional hymns and poetry often used in worship). She was recognised as one of the great poet composers of Hinduism, with many coming to hear her devotional and inspirational songs. She spent very little time with her husband and his family, preferring to spend her days at temples with other Krishna worshippers.

After her father's death (in about 1530 CE), Mira Bai began a wandering life. She returned to her hometown and worshipped in a temple at Chaterbhuj. This temple is still associated with her today. She eventually travelled to Dwarka (now Gujarat) on the coast of the Arabian Sea, where Krishna is supposed to have spent the end of his life on earth.

Some adherents claim that Mira Bai did not die, but that in 1547 CE she merged completely with a statue of Krishna, disappearing into the statue and leaving her sari wrapped around it.

Contribution to Hinduism

Mira Bai made an outstanding contribution to the Bhakti devotional movement, which has followers not just in the major Hindu variants but also among worshippers of local deities. She overcame the constraints of a traditional Hindu wife to achieve the spiritual goals she longed for.

Mira Bai has a significant presence in the body of *bhakti* poetry available to Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Bhakti devotees. She wrote poems and hymns with honesty and insight, and in a form that uneducated people could remember and recite, hence her enduring popularity. She used to refer to Krishna as 'my dark lord', a phrase that is often found in her poetry.

Here are two of Mira Bai's poems that reflect her intensity and her passion. Note the references to 'my dark lord':

I am crazy with pain, And no one understands it. Only the wounded knows the pain of the wounded. Saving the fire in his heart. Only the jeweller knows the values of the gem, not the one who lost it. O Lord, Mira's pain will only go when my dark Lord is the healer.

Hurry to my bed, covered in fresh flowers; my body smells so sweet, ready for you. I am your slave, spending life after life, making love with you only – Mira's love-lord who never dies. 'My dark Lord! Give me just one glimpse' This is all she prays.

Impact on Hinduism

Mira Bai has become recognised as one of the most significant poets and devotional writers in Hinduism. Her influence on the Bhakti movement is particularly significant. She is considered the perfect devotee and an example to follow. Her fierce determination to worship Krishna, and to stand above gossip, ridicule and obstacles, are examples for all devotees. It has been said of Mira Bai that she taught the world the way to love God.

Mira Bai is now seen as an example of a devotee who, despite opposition and persecution, persisted in her devotion to Krishna and her need for freedom to do so. Her writings, poems and hymns are still popular in Hinduism today.

Summary

Mira Bai was a devotee of Krishna who experienced a strong devotion to her 'dark lord'. She wrote songs and poetry that have contributed significantly to the Bhakti devotional movement.

Ram Mohan Roy (1774–1833 CE)

Life and ideas

Ram Mohan Roy was born in Radhanagore, Bengal, in 1774 (his actual date of birth is disputed). His family was unusual in that his father was a Vaishnavite and his mother a Shaivite, at a time when this was considered to be an unsuitable 'mixed marriage'.

Figure 9A.6 Statue of Ram Mohan Roy, outside Bristol Cathedral, England

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Roy studied several languages at the local village school, then went to Benares to learn the Hindu scriptures and Sanskrit. It is thought that his mother encouraged this, as he had been learning Arabic and had begun reading the Qur'an. At Benares, however, he began studying Buddhism. At one stage he went missing for some time and was found by his family with local Buddhists. They took him back to look after the family property and he stayed there until 1795.

From 1795 Roy worked as an agent for Christian missionaries. He was a pandit, that is, a scholar who was an expert in Indian law, Sanskrit, religion, and philosophy. Pandits were employed by the British to explain Indian life, religion and culture. He also published journals in several languages.

Apostasy
The act of giving up your religious beliefs and leaving a religion (can also be used in relation to politics)

Roy met the Christian missionary William Carey, who is considered the founder of the modern missionary movement. Carey wanted to convert the Indian people to Christianity and realised that pandits might be able to help him in his quest. Carey also met the Sanskrit scholar Vidyabagish, who introduced Carey to Roy. Carey, Vidyabagish and Roy created a text called *The Book of Great Liberation*, which was a syncretistic work that related the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit to the God Brahman. It was a very influential work in early colonial India before it was treated with suspicion, especially by the English. It was seen as a judicial work, rather than a religious text.

Roy then went to Calcutta, became a moneylender to poor British clients, and learnt Greek and Latin. In 1803 he became a writer for the East India Company, before resigning in 1815 after allegations of corruption. He was reunited with William Carey and began to gradually denounce most of the religions he had adopted. He especially attacked his own Brahmin varna in Bengal and their practices including *sati*. He also attacked polygamy, child marriage, dowries and idolatry. During this time in 1816, Roy seems to have been one of the first to use the term 'Hindoo' in reference to the Indian religion.

Contribution to Hinduism

Ram Mohan Roy's religious views and opinions became less important as his concern for social reform grew, although they grew together as he saw the relationship between the two become clear. These were social reforms that would influence the development of a modern India.

His most obvious campaign was against the practice of *sati*. He had seen his brother's widow forced to commit *sati* in 1812 and had been appalled. With several other Bengali Brahmins, he established the Brahmo Samaj in 1828 as a religious and social reform movement. It was through this body that he fought *sati*. He also demanded property rights for women and fought against social evils in general. Roy also opposed the practice of child marriage.

Roy believed that education was a way of achieving social reform and established several colleges. He introduced Western education into Indian education and is considered an important figure in the Bengal Resistance.

Roy was essentially a monotheist, explaining his interest in Islam, Christianity and syncretistic beliefs. He wanted to rid India of idolatry and rituals that he considered meaningless. His family was not supportive of his efforts though, and his mother launched several lawsuits that accused him of **apostasy**. Much of this seemed to be inspired by a desire to ensure he did not inherit family property, but Roy had become independently wealthy by this time.

In 1831, Ram Mohan Roy travelled to England in support of the abolition of *sati*. He died of meningitis in England on 27 September 1833 and is buried there.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Ram Mohan Roy, see S.C. Crawford, *Ram Mohan Roy: Social, Religious and Political Reform in 19th Century India*, Harrisburg, Paragon House, 1987.

Impact on Hinduism

Ram Mohan Roy has been called the maker of modern India, largely due to his concern about Indian social issues. While he was a scholar of note, his efforts were not in developing Hindu theology or commentaries on the Hindu scriptures. Rather, his writings attacked many of the practices and traditions that had developed in India. While he is remembered as a scholar, it is his advocacy of the interests of the oppressed that have earned him his greatness. His efforts have influenced Hinduism in that a number of practices common in Hindu society, such as *sati*, polygamy and child marriage, are no longer officially part of modern Hinduism. Thus it could be argued that Roy's greatest impact has been on Indian society, rather than Hinduism as a religious tradition, but these two things, in his day, were very closely linked and continue to be so.

His belief in the 'one supreme God' (Brahman) has influenced the rise of a monotheistic form of Hinduism. He also influenced the personal expression of Hinduism, with less emphasis on ritual and liturgical practices.

Summary

Ram Mohan Roy lived during the British colonisation of India. He developed a reputation as a linguist and explored new ideas and religions. He developed a keen interest in the need for social reform and was influential in outlawing practices such as *sati*.

Ramakrishna (1836–1886 CE)

Life and ideas

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was born Gadadhar Chattopadhyay on 18 February 1836 in the village of Kamatpukur in West Bengal, near Calcutta.

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Figure 9A.7 Ramakrishna, 1885. The picture on the left is Sarada Devi, his wife.

Figure 9A.8 Hanuman, the monkey king, one of the heroes of the *Ramayana*

He was named Gadadhar because his father had a vision that the god Lord Vishnu, in the guise of the god Gadadhara, would be born into his family. His family were poor but devout Brahmins. As Gadadhar grew up he was popular but showed little interest in school. All through his life, he was either illiterate or semi-literate.

Ramakrishna loved nature and soon showed an interest in religious matters. He listened to travelling monks and *sannyasis* as they debated spiritual matters. As his family became poorer, Gadadhar had the opportunity to serve in a temple for Kali that had been founded by Rani Rashmoni, a wealthy woman from Calcutta, from an agrarian *jati*.

At first Ramakrishna was an assistant to his brother, Ramkumar, and decorated the *murti* (image) of Kali. Soon he became the priest of the temple but began to question if the *murti* was simply a piece of stone or a living goddess. He began to experience a strong emotional reaction to the *murti*, and on one occasion attempted to kill himself, but stopped when he had a vision of waves of light coming from the statue. He desperately sought more spiritual experiences and soon became famous as a devout man.

Ramakrishna was initiated into the *advaita* school of Vedanta by a monk named Totapuri. When Totapuri left, Ramakrishna went into a state of total contemplation for six months. Ramakrishna allegedly took on the form of Hanuman, the monkey king, when performing *bhakti*, even supposedly growing a tail and living on fruits and nuts. He also engaged in a practice known as *madhurabhava*, where he dressed as a woman and imitated female behaviour to embody the feeling that the goddess Radha had for Krishna. This led to a vision where his body merged with that of Krishna's. This is an expression of *bhakti*.

Ramakrishna's family feared he was being driven mad by his spiritual experiences, so they persuaded him to marry. Ramakrishna agreed and indicated whom he wanted to marry – a girl named Sarada from a nearby village. He was 23 years old, and Sarada was only five, but because of his belief in celibacy, the marriage was never consummated. They also originally lived apart.

Ramakrishna was visited in 1861 by a female guru named Yogeshwari, who taught him 64 tantric *sadhanas* (spiritual practices). Sarada heard of the strange practices of Ramakrishna and when she was 16, she travelled to the temple to protect him from Yogeshwari. Sarada became Ramakrishna's first disciple; she was recognised as Sarada Devi (Saradadevi) and was worshipped by Ramakrishna as 'the divine mother'. They lived together as husband and wife, but, because of Ramakrishna's ascetic practices, they did not consummate their marriage.

Ramakrishna developed an interest in Islam and Christianity, and he believed that he had merged with

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both Muhammad and Jesus. He saw all religions as paths to the one God. By 1870, Ramakrishna had established his reputation as a mystic and attracted a large following of disciples, especially from the Bengali middle classes. Many prominent people from Calcutta visited him and this enhanced his reputation even further.

In 1885 he developed throat cancer, and his health deteriorated; he died on 16 August 1886. He left a group of disciples devoted to carrying on his work, the most significant being Swami Vivekananda, known as the man who introduced Hinduism to the West. Vivekananda spoke at the World Parliament of Religions meeting in Chicago in 1893, and sparked international interest in Hinduism and Ramakrishna in particular. Ramakrishna's wife, Sarada Devi, became a significant person in Hinduism in her own right, a noted saint and mystic.

Contribution to Hinduism

Some significant concepts come from Ramakrishna's teachings and experiences. He taught the oneness of existence, the unity of God and the equality of all religions. He believed in a harmony of religions, that they lead to the same goal, despite their differences. Ramakrishna noted that God reveals himself in all places and times and is not just the privilege of a select group of people.

He also taught that the cause of bondage in human life is 'women and gold'. There are varying interpretations of what he meant by this, but it does seem that Ramakrishna had issues with women. Some say Ramakrishna was just an ascetic who avoided women for the sake of spiritual devotion. Others suggest he had a deep pathological fear of women, especially as sexual beings. This may have been caused by psychological damage he suffered in his abusive childhood, although this is speculation. This is also a possible explanation for his worship of his wife, Sarada Devi, as a deity. In considering her in this light, he would not have to see her as a sexual being, but this has not diminished his religious influence.

As suggested earlier, Ramakrishna had serious questions about the role of the images (*murti*) of the gods. He strongly affirmed the presence of the gods in their images.

While bearing the name of two avatars of Lord Vishnu (Rama and Krishna), Ramakrishna was a Shaivite who revered Shiva as the Supreme Being but embraced the breadth of Hinduism, worshiping Krishna as well. He also worshipped Kali (Shiva's consort, thus a Shakta as well) and believed 'wherever there is a human being, there is Shiva'.

Impact on Hinduism

Like many of the significant people in this chapter, Ramakrishna revitalised and renewed Hinduism for his times. He attacked the ritualism and superstition of Hinduism and helped it meet the challenges of Islam and Christianity, as well as modern science and secularism. He was also significant in his indirect support of Indian nationalism.

Among those strongly influenced by Ramakrishna were Aldous Huxley, Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas Gandhi.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Ramakrishna, see the following:

- Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1980.
- F. Max Muller, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, Murine Press, 2007

His disciple, Vivekananda, was also a significant person, who brought Hinduism to the attention of the modern Western world. Sri Vivekananda built a temple at Calcutta in 1938 to reflect the inclusive nature of Ramakrishna's approach to religion. It is the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math (monastery). The Ramakrishna Society has an office in Sydney.

Summary

Ramakrishna was an ecstatic devotee of Shiva. He developed a reputation as a mystic and became a respected teacher. His wife, Sarada Devi, also became a significant guru. He taught the oneness of existence, and of religion. Some recent writers have expressed concern at his unusual attitude to women.

Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902 CE)

Life and ideas

Swami Vivekananda was born Narendranath Datta in Calcutta during the Makar Sanjtanti festival. His family was a well-educated traditional family. From an early

Figure 9A.9 Statue of Swami Vivekananda in Mumbai, India

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age, Narendranath was interested in spirituality and would meditate before the images of several gods. He was interested in the wandering monks and ascetics he would see.

While at school he was an avid reader, including the Hindu sacred texts. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1884 and learnt the Sanskrit scriptures and studied other literature from Bengal.

Narendranath was considered a prodigy, a very talented scholar, with a great memory. In 1880 he came under the influence of Ramakrishna, joining a group known as Nava Vidhan, worshipping God as a mother, and also other religious and social groups such as the Freemasons and the Band of Hope (which discouraged young people from using alcohol and drugs). He was also influenced by Western esoteric religious thought and philosophy.

Narendranath met with Ramakrishna in 1881 and was invited by him to visit Dakshineswar. Initially Narendranath was not impressed by this encounter, but when his father died in 1884, and the family was bankrupt, he gradually came to accept Ramakrishna as his teacher (guru) and he became a renunciate. Narendranath had asked several religious leaders the question, 'Have you seen God?' He was dissatisfied with the answers until he asked Ramakrishna the same question. Ramakrishna responded, 'Yes I have. I see God as clearly as I see you, only in a much deeper sense'. So impressed was Narendranath with this answer that it prompted him to join Ramakrishna. Soon, Ramakrishna developed throat cancer and over the next two years Narendranath joined his monastic order. Eventually he was appointed the leader of the order by Ramakrishna before he died in 1886.

The Ramakrishna Math (monastery) was established at Baranagar. Here, devotees practised yoga and other Hindu disciplines. Narendranath took the name Swami Vivekananda in 1887. Over the next five years, Vivekananda travelled through India as a *sannyasi* teaching and learning as he went. In 1893 he travelled to the USA where the Parliament of World Religions was taking place in Chicago. After some initial difficulties (he had no official credentials), he was invited to attend and gave a brief speech as a representative of India and Hinduism. He attracted a great deal of attention and impressed many with his oratory skills. He soon became one of the better known figures at the Parliament. He was invited to tour America and the United Kingdom.

Vivekananda began to establish Vedanta Centres across the USA and other Western countries. He published the book *Raja Yoga*, which marked the beginning of modern Western yoga. He converted and initiated several Americans, and established the Shanti Asrama in the Californian mountains and the publishing company Vedanta Press.

Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 where he affirmed the rich spiritual heritage of India and Hinduism, while challenging the caste system, poverty and the rule of the British. He founded the Ramakrishna

Figure 9A.10 *Vivekananda puja* celebrated by Swami Veetamohananda at the Ramakrishna Vedantic center, Gretz, France

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Search for speeches of Vivekananda available on YouTube, including his 1893 speech to the Parliament of World Religions. (NOTE: Some have questioned if these speeches are actual recordings of his voice.)

Mission to promote social services in India in 1897, as well as other monasteries.

Vivekananda returned to the West in 1899, travelling to England and the USA before he went to Paris, France, to speak at the Congress of Religions in 1900. He returned to India as his health was deteriorating. He died there in 1902.

Contribution to Hinduism

Vivekananda promoted Shankara's *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy. He linked moral behaviour with the mind. He linked holiness and purity with unselfishness and faith. Success could be linked to focused thought and action. His numerous written works are drawn largely from his speeches, and his *Raja Yoga* was a most influential book. Vivekananda also influenced Indian society over his lifetime and in the years since.

Impact on Hinduism

Vivekananda can be credited with a revival of Vedanta. He linked the ideas with the growing spirituality of esoteric traditions such as Theosophy and Transcendentalism. He is largely responsible for the acceptance of Hinduism as a religious tradition in the West. Vivekananda influenced a number of Hindu and non-Hindu figures, such as Mohandas Gandhi, and was an inspiration to the current Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, as well as to Indonesia's first president, Sukarno. In 2010 he was quoted in a speech by US President Barak Obama.

The Ramakrishna Mission founded the Vedanta Centre at Ermington in Sydney. There are similar Vedanta groups in other states of Australia.

EXERCISE 9A.1

Choose ONE of the significant people discussed above and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the life of one significant person.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that significant person to Hinduism.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that significant person on the Hinduism of their day and on Hinduism today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9A.1

1 Create an annotated timeline of the significant person you have chosen, noting significant events in their life.
2 Research and **analyse** the impact of the significant person on Hinduism. Make particular reference to the Australian context.
3 Find some examples of the writings or teachings of the particular significant person. With reference to a section of writing or aspect of teaching, **explain** the particular contribution of that person.

The Bhakti movement

Ideas

The Bhakti movement refers to the devotional trend in Hinduism that focused on the worship of particular gods and goddesses. It probably originally emerged from South India and spread north. It was at its peak from about 800 CE to 1700 CE and continues as an important variant of Hinduism today. The Bhakti movement derives its name from the Sanskrit word *bhaj*, which means 'devotion or intense attachment to God'. It is often called the Bhakti devotional movement.

The focus of this movement, on particular gods and goddesses, transcends the ritual liturgies and formal worship of the Brahmin priests. Rather it is a more personal devotion expressed in prayer, sacrifice and personal commitment. It transcends the concepts of varna (caste) and gender, focusing on individual expressions of love and devotion.

There are suggestions of the concept of *bhakti* in the Vedas, especially in the *Upanishads*, but it is in the Epics that the concept of devotion is most fully developed. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* spell out the nature of the ultimate reality and the relationship between the devotee and that Reality – through loyalty and devotion, such as the devotion of a brother for a brother or a wife to her husband. This is made explicit in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. It is especially obvious in verses 9:26, 18:65 but many other passages also reflect the idea.

The development of the Bhakti movement is linked to the early Hindu saints who were devotional mystics. There are 63 *nayanars* (devotees to Shiva) and 12 *alvars* (devotees of Lord Vishnu). Many of these lived between the fifth and eighth centuries and wrote moving, ecstatic poetry and hymns. The Alvars lived in the seventh to twelfth centuries. *Bhakti* focuses on

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particular individual deities and thus the Epic (*smrti*) texts become the more significant sacred texts – works such as the *Ramayana* and the story of Rama and Sita, or the *Bhagavad Gita* and the stories of Krishna, or the various *Puranas* and the stories of the gods. These stories of individual gods and goddesses offer the ability to develop the personal connection and devotion that is the basis of the Bhakti movement. It should be noted that several of the *Upanishads* also emphasise devotion.

The Bhakti movement grew quickly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and gradually spread north, particularly during the time of Muslim colonisation (from the twelfth century). The poetry and ideas of the Bhakti movement came from those who worshipped Shiva (*nayanars*) and Lord Vishnu (*alvars*) who would sing praises to their gods as they travelled. Beginning with Tamil origins, there are a number of Tamil texts that became popular, such as the *Tirumurai*. A number of significant groups and people are associated with the Bhakti movement. The teachings of Madhva, for example, were supported and spread by the Bhakti movement, Mira Bai is a noted devotee and proponent of *bhakti*, and the modern Hare Krishna movement is an expression of *bhakti*.

One feature of the movement was the use of vernacular, or local, languages, rather than Sanskrit. In the south, *bhakti* devotion used the Dravidian languages Kannada and Tamil to develop its literature. Here, devotion was focused on Shiva and Lord Vishnu. In the north it tended to emphasise the avatars of Lord Vishnu, especially Rama and Krishna. Generally, the different Bhakti groups coexisted peacefully, although there are some examples of hostility. In the north, as it spread, the Bhakti movement developed its own group of mystics, of whom Mira Bai is an example.

As the Bhakti movement grew, it emphasised the role of devotion in worship, instituting elaborate and expressive rituals of devotion. Some believe the Bhakti movement arose because of the challenges of the introduction of Islam into India. However, it seems clear that the Bhakti movement was evident in India long before the arrival of Islam. Bhakti in turn influenced other religions. In time these devotional influences crossed into the other religious traditions that developed or were present in India during this period, including the Qawalli in mosques (devotional music in Islam) and the Gurbani in Gurudwaras (compositions and songs in Sikhism).

Among those who have influenced the rise of the Bhakti movement are Madhva and Mira Bai as well as the Vedanta school of Hinduism.

Perhaps the greatest influence of the Bhakti movement was the move from a ritualised Hinduism based on the authority of the Brahmin priests, to the individualised devotion to a particular deity. Spiritual devotion, accompanied by singing, chanting, offerings and emotion were emphasised over the more intellectual study and ritualised worship of the institutional Hinduism.

Contribution to Hinduism

The Bhakti movement stressed several aspects of Hinduism. It was, in many respects, monotheistic, encouraging devotion to just one of the major deities considered the greatest incarnation of Brahman; usually Lord Vishnu or Shiva, or one of their related gods or goddesses, such as Rama, Krishna, Devi, Kali, Ganesha or Murugan. Hinduism moved, under its influence, from formal ritual to that expressed in a loving devotional response (which may be expressed in ritual).

There was an emphasis on the fact that anyone could worship God with devotion, so the concept of varna (caste) was diminished. In traditional Hinduism, by contrast, it had been considered impossible for Shudras to read the sacred writings. Rather than the studying of philosophy and theology, simple devotion became more important. The Bhakti movement disregarded the Brahminic rituals, which were considered unnecessary, in favour of local devotional rituals.

Practices include chanting the name of the devotee's chosen deity and the reading of devotional literature. While ritual was important and offerings freely given, the Bhakti movement went beyond ritual, and even cold theology, to emphasise faith and trust in God.

Not surprisingly, the Bhakti movement emphasises the role of *bhakti yoga* in daily life. Temple worship is encouraged and includes the singing of hymns and dancing. These activities can be ecstatic and involve the 'slaves of the gods', women who serve in the temple.

For some Hindus, however, the Bhakti movement has resulted in the lessening of the value of ritual, and formal *puja* has been enhanced by personal devotion.

Impact on Hinduism

With the growth of the Bhakti movement there was a renewed enthusiasm for worship and devotion to God. The older traditional schools, such as Vedanta and Shaiva Siddhanta, continued to flourish and develop alongside the Bhakti movement. There was also a great development in songs, music and poetry that added not only to the texts of the Bhakti movement, but which also made significant contributions to the corpus of Hindu scripture, and Indian literature.

Significant people associated with the Bhakti movement include Ramananda (a disciple of Ramanuja) who lived in the fifteenth century. He taught that Rama was the supreme Lord, and developed his teachings using local languages in preference to Sanskrit. Chanting the name of Rama was the way of devotion for him. Madhva thought Lord Vishnu was God. He developed his idea of *dvaita* (dualism), acknowledging the difference between atman and Brahman.

For people in Australia and other Western countries, the most obvious example of the Bhakti movement is expressed in the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), better known as the Hare Krishnas. ISKCON teaches the ideas of Chaitanya

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Figure 9A.11 Offerings to the gods, Bali, Indonesia

Mahaprabhu (1486–1534 CE) who synthesised elements of dualism and monism. ISKCON was founded by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in the 1960s to spread the practice of *bhakti yoga*.

Modern Hindus use devotion in their worship, including prayers, offerings, chanting and hymns (*bhajans*) and through their way of life.

Summary

The Bhakti devotional movement developed to show devotion to particular gods in Hinduism. It sometimes used the local languages of the people, minimised the role of varna and emphasised the role of devotion over ritual and intellectual pursuits. It is evident in Western countries in the Hare Krishna movement.

Purva Mimamsa

Ideas

Purva Mimamsa is an orthodox school of Hindu philosophy that developed as a form of enquiry into the nature of dharma (also dharma duty, the right way of living). Purva Mimamsa means 'prior investigation', as compared with Uttara Mimamsa, 'later or higher investigation' (Uttara Mimamsa is better known as Vedanta). The ideas of *purva* and *uttara* are primarily a reference to the different parts of the Veda. Chronological priority is not the main emphasis. Both schools of thought developed in the last few centuries BCE. Purva Mimamsa focuses on the earlier part of the Vedic texts, while Vedanta focuses on the *Upanishads*.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on the Bhakti movement, see Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2002.

Purva Mimamsa emphasises the study of dharma by close examination and analysis of the sections of the Vedas containing mantras and describing ritual procedures. It seeks to promote study and ritual and to avoid asceticism and mysticism. It is essentially an intellectual pursuit, and is concerned with the study of language (philology) and the philosophy of language, but also with preserving ritual. The basic assumption is that the Vedas are infallible, as they have a divine author, and are eternally abiding and authoritative. It is also assumed that dharma cannot be achieved simply by reason or by observation, but it can be revealed through the Vedas and sustained through ritual practice.

Purva Mimamsa developed in reaction to the growing school of Vedanta and its mysticism and as a response to anti-ritualists, and to the development of Buddhism and its asceticism. It grew in popularity through the first millennium CE and became a dominant expression of

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Hinduism. Today, however, Vedanta has grown more dominant.

One of the most influential teachers in Purva Mimamsa was Jaimini, who is believed to have lived around the second century BCE and wrote a text known as the *Mimamsa Sutra*. His 12 chapters are divided into 2500 aphorisms (memorable statements), which are very hard to understand. Jaimini accepted the fact that the 'word', the Vedas, is the only source of knowledge. The Vedas, according to Jaimini, are 'self-revealed'; they are intrinsically valid and known to be true. Many commentaries were written on this text, but most have been lost over time. This was the first major text for the school, and many other teachers developed their own writings. One significant work is by Vedanta Desika, whose text *Sesvara Mimamsa* attempted to unite the views of Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta.

Dharma, according to Purva Mimamsa, can be translated into English as 'duty, morality or virtue'. It was related to the correct performance of Vedic rituals and the performance of the right actions (karma). The emphasis on the Vedas as primary sources has led to Purva Mimamsa being seen as almost atheistic (that is, the text becomes more important than the gods), although it is theistic in the general sense. No other scriptures are accepted, and the concept of belief is secondary to the practices and intellectual approach of its method. Purva Mimamsa also emphasises the role of *jnana yoga*, the quest for and discipline of knowledge.

Contribution to Hinduism

Purva Mimamsa is dualistic; it accepts the reality of the individual soul (atman) as well as Brahman (the great world soul, essentially 'the God'), but only as revealed through the Vedas. The major emphasis in Purva Mimamsa is in the relationship of the deities to ritual. Atman is essentially the equivalent of 'consciousness'. It also accepts the reality of the world (the reality of objects), the concept of karma and the need for moksha – the cessation of the cycle of samsara, the disappearance of all dharma and adharma. Moksha can be achieved by the observance of regular daily duties (*nitya karmas*) and by observing duties related to special occasions (*naimittika karmas*). It should be noted that the concept of dualism in many schools of Hinduism is primarily between 'self' (consciousness) and 'matter' (ordinary existence).

Impact on Hinduism

The main effect of the Purva Mimamsa school of thought was to establish the Vedas as the primary texts of Hinduism, and to affirm their legitimacy and eternal origins. The school of Purva Mimamsa has been overshadowed in recent years by the renewed emphasis on Vedanta. While few people follow Purva Mimamsa by itself, its influence is evident in the life of all Hindus, especially ritual, ceremonies and religious law, all influenced by the school and guided by the written texts. Modern scholars are generally trained in a range of Hindu philosophies.

Summary

Purva Mimamsa developed in the second century BCE with an emphasis on the Vedas as sacred texts. It has a strong emphasis on the integrity of the Vedas as primary sources of God's revelation. It encourages intellectual pursuits and develops key Hindu doctrines and ritual practices in preference to mysticism and asceticism. Its influence has declined today.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Purva Mimamsa, see M.L. Sandal, *Mimamsa Sutras of Jaimini*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.

Vedanta

Ideas

Vedanta started as the alternative school of thought to Purva Mimamsa, known as Uttara Mimamsa.

Vedanta probably began around the second century BCE. The major difference in early emphasis is that while Purva Mimamsa focuses on the first part of the Vedas, Uttara Mimamsa focuses on the end or the latter section of the Vedas, the *Upanishads*. Vedanta means 'the end of the Veda'. It's primary reference is to the structure of the Vedic texts, where the *Upanishads* come at the end. It has taken a secondary meaning to some that it refers to the 'end' of, or ultimate, knowledge

The *Upanishads* were originally known as the 'end of the Vedas' (or Vedanta) but over time this term came to be applied to the philosophical school that sought to interpret the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* are the philosophical and theological interpretation of the Vedas. Vedanta also regards the *Bhagavad Gita* as an Upanishadic text and uses it in its schools.

Vedanta emphasises the attainment of self-realisation, an understanding and identification with Brahman, the ultimate reality. The teachings of Vedanta stress that the aim of each adherent is to transcend the self to discover and actualise unity with Brahman.

Brahman is absolute, and the incarnations of God are manifestations of the one divine. Human destiny is governed by the laws of cause and effect (karma). There are many ways to achieve union with Brahman, and this is the ultimate aim of all beings. To achieve this requires self-discipline, effort (including the practice of yoga) and good karma. Rather than just 'knowing' more about God, Vedanta requires exercises such as meditation, self-discipline and trying to make a connection with God. Rituals are only useful if they help achieve that.

The earliest text for Vedanta is the *Vedanta Sutra*, most commonly known as the *Brahma Sutra*, written by Badarayana around the fifth century CE (although the date is tentative). The writings of the Vedanta school are philosophical works that can be interpreted differently, thus creating a variety of schools, each producing its own commentaries and emphasising

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Figure 9A.12 In Hinduism, *sadhu* is a common term for a mystic, an ascetic, practitioner of yoga (yogi) and/or a wandering monk. The *sadhu* is solely dedicated to achieving the fourth and final Hindu goal of life, moksha (liberation), through meditation and contemplation of Brahman, although *sadhus* are quite a diverse group.

different elements. Each emphasise the importance of the *Upanishads*, which themselves are open to a variety of interpretations. The *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutra* and the *Bhagavad Gita* are considered the three major texts of Vedanta, together called the Triple Canon of Vedanta (*Prasthana Traya*).

Among those who are associated with Vedanta and who have differing interpretations are Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. Thus, the schools of *advaita* (Shankara), *vishishta advaita* (Ramanuja) and *dvaita* (Madhva) are examples of significant schools in Vedanta.

The most prominent modern school of Vedanta is that promoted by Swami Vivekananda (who founded the Ramakrishna Mission), the disciple of Ramakrishna. Vivekananda stressed a form of *advaita* that recognised both a personal and absolute reality, the removal of poverty and a concept of universalism. He saw a significant place for *bhakti*, focusing on a particular form before the realisation of the ultimate reality.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Vedanta, see the following:

- Vireswarananda, *Brahma Sutras*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1982.
- P. Vrajaprana, *Vedanta: A Simple Introduction*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1999.

Contribution to Hinduism

Vedanta's main focus is on achieving unification with Brahman. This is primarily achieved by doing good and developing good karma. Along with this is the acceptance that life is illusory. The ultimate reality is that the atman will seek reunification. Seeking fulfilment in the material things of the world is chasing an illusion. This is also supported by the concept that truth is universal. Thus, the differences that people experience are part of the illusion of this world. Fear and the competitive nature of different religions are nothing to be concerned about; rather, people should seek the ultimate, eternal reality.

Impact on Hinduism

Vedanta is a strong and influential school of Hinduism in today's society and is probably the dominant school in modern Hinduism. The key ideas expressed in modern Hindu thought can be seen to have developed from Vedanta.

Vedanta has been influenced by many significant scholars and holy men and women. It is associated with people such as Swami Vivekananda and much of his influence is reflected in the impact of Vedanta.

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Summary

Vedanta is an ancient school that seeks to bring people to unification with the ultimate reality, Brahman. It is deeply philosophical and encourages Hindus to practise rituals that will achieve moksha.

Shaiva Siddhanta

Ideas

Shaiva Siddhanta is one of the oldest schools of Hinduism but is still an active form. It is especially prevalent among Australian Hindus, particularly those of a Tamil background. Shaiva Siddhanta has millions of devotees, and its main focus is on the worship of Shiva. Shaiva Siddhanta is evident in many Hindu places of worship where there is an emphasis on Shiva as the primary deity. Basic Shaiva Siddhanta theology involves the three categories of *pati-pasu-pasa*:

- *pati* – the lord (Shiva) – 'the master of the herd'
- *pasu* – the souls in a cycle of rebirth – 'the cattle of the herd'
- *pasa* – the bond, the material influences that keep the cycle of samsara going – 'the tether'.

Shaiva Siddhanta suggests a dualism where the ultimate and ideal goal of a being is to become an enlightened soul through the graciousness of Lord Shiva.

It has been suggested that the first known Shaiva Siddhanta teacher was Maharishi Nandinatha of Kashmir, who lived around 250 BCE. Only 26 Sanskrit verses survive of his writings, and he seemed to be monistic in his approach. Most scholars, however, would date its beginnings much later. The scholar Rishi Tirumular (who lived about the tenth century CE) wrote a Tamil version of the teachings of 28 Shaiva teachers. His work is called the *Tirumantiram* (sacred incantation); it was very influential and is still read by many people today. It is the 10th text in the 12-volume work known as the *Tirumurai*, the sacred text of Tamil Shaivism.

Shaiva Siddhanta grew in South India, where it was a form of the Bhakti movement. It soon spread into central and then northern India, mainly through the efforts of monastic Hindus who opened monasteries and spread the teachings of Shaiva Siddhanta with a missionary zeal. It was enthusiastically received and grew until the arrival of Islam, which pushed Shaiva Siddhanta back to the south.

Contribution to Hinduism

Shaiva Siddhanta promotes a form of monotheism where Shiva is presented as the divine. He is worshipped above all other gods. Shiva is immanent as well as transcendent, both the creator of the world and the one who absorbs creation, both cause and effect in the world. The way to achieve liberation is through a combination of several factors:

- moral, virtuous living
- individual and temple worship
- yoga
- developing knowledge.

Figure 9A.13 Praying in front of a statue of Lord Shiva in Haridwar, India

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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Shaiva Siddhanta, see H.W. Schomerus, *Saiva Siddhanta: An Indian School of Mystical Thought*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000.

The teacher Aghorasiva, who lived in the twelfth century CE, sought to combine several strands of Shaiva Siddhanta. He preserved the Sanskrit rituals that have continued to this day. A further development came from the teacher Meykander, in the thirteenth century, who stressed that Shiva was not the material cause of the world, souls or God.

Impact on Hinduism

Today, Shaiva Siddhanta is a strong representation of Hinduism throughout the world. It is popular in Australia and in other Western countries, as well as in the south of India and Sri Lanka.

Shaiva Siddhanta is particularly strong among Tamil-speaking people across the world today, including in Australia in the Sri Lankan and southern Indian communities.

The Saiva Siddhanta Church is located in Hawaii and some see this form of Hinduism, which emphasises monism, as an attempt to reconcile Hinduism with the other monotheistic world religions.

Summary

Shaiva Siddhanta has its roots in an older school of Hinduism that is still one of the most popular. It began with the concept that Shiva was the supreme world soul, and that the aim of every Hindu is reunification, or similitude, with Shiva. It was spread by enthusiastic followers and continues to be significant in Australian Hinduism.

Balinese Hinduism

One of the most familiar forms of Hinduism to many Australians is Balinese Hinduism, as practised on the Indonesian island of Bali. Bali is a popular destination for Australian tourists, who come across its expression every day while on the Island. Its ceremonies, dances and rituals are freely available for tourists to see or participate in.

Ideas

The Indonesian archipelago was Hindu until the expansion of Islam in about the thirteenth century. While most of Indonesia converted to Islam, Bali remained (and continues to remain) essentially Hindu. The Hinduism expressed on the island incorporates elements of Buddhism and many animistic elements to create a very different, but recognisable, form of Hinduism.

About 93 per cent of Balinese are Hindu, and the belief system is deeply intertwined with daily life in Bali. Buddhist heroes, ancestor spirits and agricultural deities are worshipped, as well as Hindu gods. Balinese Hinduism is a blend of mythology, theology, animism, magic and ancestor worship. Everything in nature possesses its own power, so inanimate objects such as a *kris* dagger, a *barong* costume or a house can be home to a good or evil spirit. Even the architecture of Bali, which features a split gate, is designed to be a barrier to the entry of evil spirits. These represent animist influences.

As part of their faith, Balinese Hindus perfect the art of self-control to guard against spirit possession, so Balinese are often highly regarded for their gracefulness. In contrast, the trance dances, where possession is invited, are wild and exuberant. Dances reflect the stories of Hinduism, such as the *Ramayana*, but are influenced by an understanding of the power of the local animistic spirits.

Balinese Hinduism retains many significant factors that are identifiable as Hindu. It includes worship of the three main Hindu gods, Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Shiva, although their supreme deity is named Sanghyang Widhi Wasa rather than the concept of Brahman. They retain a caste system, temple and home *puja*, and practise cremation, which is often a tourist attraction. Sanskrit is used by the priests in their liturgical chants.

Contribution to Hinduism

Balinese Hinduism places emphasis on the knowledge of the Hindu Epics, often adapted to suit the Balinese tastes. The *Ramayana* is a popular story, with great emphasis placed on the role of Hanuman, the monkey king. They also developed knowledge of Hindu theology and philosophy, especially the *pendeta* (educated priests equivalent to Brahmins in Indian Hinduism).

The primary worship of Shiva (called Siwa), often depicted as the sun, suggests a Shaiva variant predominates, although considerable emphasis is given to Krishna and the avatars of Lord Vishnu. Balinese Hinduism is sometimes called *Agama Tirtha* (religion of the holy water) because of the emphasis on water, which is so much a part of the daily life of the Balinese with their agricultural economy and way of life, particularly in the elaborate cleansing and rice-growing rituals.

Worship is extremely significant in Bali, with daily offerings placed in home shrines as well as frequent temple visits. Religious festivals are a central part of life for the Balinese and whole villages will grind to a halt to prepare and participate in them.

The day-to-day life associated with agriculture is more closely identified with animism, with an emphasis on appeasing the spirits that control the fields and elements. Temples exist in almost every village, field and home compound, and *puja* is conducted each day. Balinese temples are open compounds, which are carefully designed to reflect religious ideas. The most sacred part of a Balinese temple is an empty throne, where the gods are invited to descend for the duration of festivals.

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Figure 9A.14 Ganesha, the elephant-headed god is popular in Bali

There are significant rituals followed in Balinese Hindu life, most associated with cleansing by using water, fire and ash. At a time of a death, a fire (cremation) is used to purify a soul, and the ashes are placed in the sea or river. Some rituals (of which there are many) must be held on specific dates; others are more for community celebrations and rites of passage, such as tooth filing and cockfights.

One significant festival is Nyepi Day (Balinese New Year), a day of silence and specific ritual. Numerous public festivals are held, and the religious aspect of life is an essential part of the life of most Balinese. Even the cremation ceremony becomes a celebration, and all present are invited to share the festival. It can be a celebratory religious tradition that includes much joy and enthusiasm.

Balinese Hinduism retains some interesting practices, such as tooth filing as an adolescent rite of passage, as well as elaborate dances and drama for the telling of the sacred stories, particularly those based on the Hindu Epics and traditional legends. There are also elaborate ceremonies associated with birth, such as acknowledging the 'four companions' that are part of a person's life and are present at birth.

The Hindu Epics are celebrated in Balinese dance, drama and in the Wayang Kulit (shadow puppet) plays. Tourists often see elaborate processions down Balinese streets as frequent rituals are performed. The emphasis on worship and ritual as an important part of daily life has coined an expression often given to Bali, 'the island of the gods'.

Impact on Hinduism

Balinese Hinduism is a particular local adaption of traditional Hinduism, both recognisable and distinct. Balinese Hinduism, as has been suggested, is integrated into the life of most Balinese and impacts on virtually every waking moment for a Balinese person, through daily rituals and community festivals.

However, Balinese Hinduism has little significance outside of the island of Bali. For example, the epic volume, *The Hindus: An Alternative History* by Wendy Doniger (2009) does not mention Balinese Hinduism at all in its 750 pages (nor do other forms of diaspora Hinduism get mentioned).

Few tourists develop an understanding of Balinese Hinduism and its place in daily life. Non-Hindu Balinese have often found great difficulty functioning in Balinese society, and have had to develop communities that are associated with their own religious traditions, such as the Catholic village of Palasari and the Protestant village of Blimingsari.

Summary

Balinese Hinduism is a blend of Hinduism, Buddhism and animism, and has become indistinguishable from Balinese culture. Its emphasis on ritual and celebration makes it an attractive and interesting religious school of thought. Tourists who visit Bali often see examples of its expression in their travels.

INVESTIGATE

If you who wish to study this particular form in more detail, you should read the two-volume work by F.B. Eiseman entitled *Bali: Sekala and Niskala*, published in 1990 by Periplus Editions, Singapore. Also worthwhile is Miguel Covarrubias, *Island of Bali*, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1972.

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EXERCISE 9A.2

Choose ONE of the schools of thought discussed above and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the major teachings of a Hindu school of thought.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that school of thought to Hinduism.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that school of thought on the Hinduism of that era and the ongoing influence of that school of thought today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 9A.2

1 **Examine** the sacred texts that are especially relevant to a particular school of thought. **Explain** the significance of that text and how it is relevant to that school of thought.
2 Research and **analyse** the impact of the particular school of thought on modern Hinduism in general. How is it relevant to Hindus in Australia?
3 Develop a learning tool (such as an acrostic, mnemonic, mind map) that will help you to remember and **analyse** the contribution of the school of thought to Hinduism.

Figure 9A.15 Pura Ulun Danu Bratan Temple, Bali

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11A.2 Further significant people and schools of thought

For context, you should read Chapter 11 in the print textbook before commencing this digital section.

Significant people and schools of thought range from those who were present at the beginning of this religious tradition to those who have influenced its modern expressions. You should be careful to avoid generalisations and avoid the bias of popular sensational media stereotypes.

The print textbook discusses the significant person of **A'isha** and the school of thought **Sufism**.

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (circa 555–619 CE)

Life and ideas

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid was born about 555 CE, the daughter of Khuwaylid ibn Asad. She became the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad and the first convert to Islam. Her father was a businessman, and on his death left his wealth and business to his daughter. She was considered a person of strong and reputable character, even before she met Muhammad, as demonstrated by her generosity to people in need and her provision for her extended family. She was married and widowed twice before she met Muhammad, and showed no desire to marry again. She had several sons, of whom little is known.

Khadijah was a model of a successful businesswoman – independent in her own right.

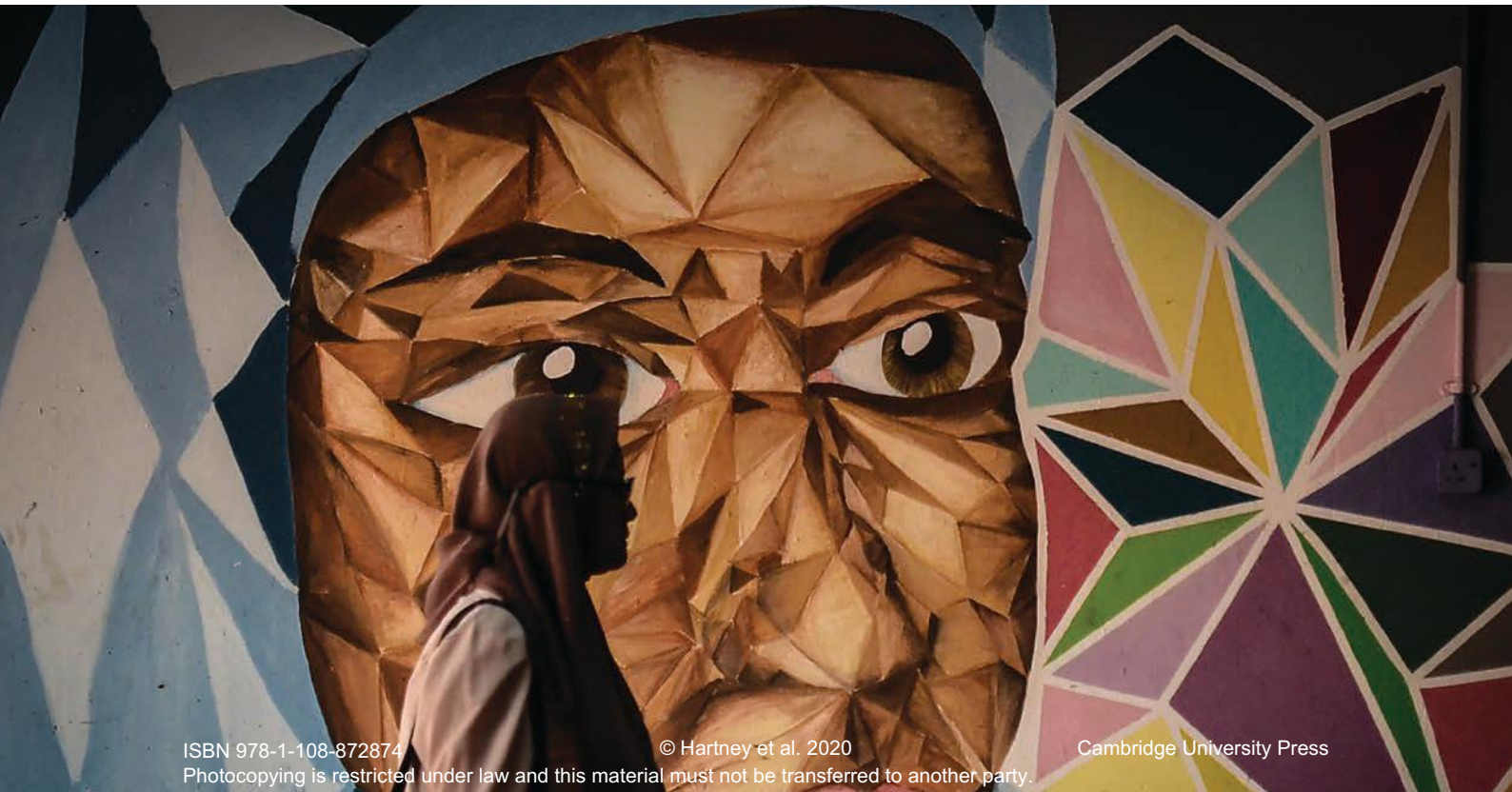
When seeking an agent to manage her trade caravan to Syria, it was suggested that the young Muhammad would be a good choice. He had already built a reputation as an honest and truthful man. With an adviser from Khadijah's business as companion, Muhammad proved to be a great success and over the next few years was entrusted with several other caravans.

Impressed by Muhammad's qualities, Khadijah reconsidered her decision not to marry and she proposed to Muhammad, despite the fact that she was 15 years older than him. Khadijah was around 40 years of age and Muhammad was 25. Muhammad and Khadijah had several sons (who died in infancy) and four daughters, although Shi'a Islam emphasise the importance of one daughter (Fatima) with Muhammad. Khadijah supported Muhammad's work financially as well as with encouragement. They were happily married for 25 years, the remaining years of Khadijah's life. Muhammad did not take another wife until after her death.

Contribution to Islam

Muhammad often went to the mountains to pray, but on his return one day Khadijah noticed he was shaken and disturbed. He asked her to cover him. He looked traumatised and thought he was going mad. She took Muhammad to an elder uncle (who was a Christian) and

Figure 11A.1 A mural at Siti Khadijah Market in Islamic City, Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The market is named after Muhammad's first wife, Khadijah.



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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, see the following:

- Nicholas Awde, *Women in Islam*, New York, Hippocrene Books, 2005.
- Mahmood Ghadanfar, *Great Women of Islam*, Houston, Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2001.

he confirmed Muhammad was a prophet similar to the biblical tradition. When Muhammad received his first prophecy, Khadijah encouraged him to put aside his doubts, and accept his message and his role as prophet. Khadijah is an example of a supportive, encouraging and believing wife. At times when no one would accept Muhammad's message and he was opposed by others, Khadijah continued her support and comfort. Khadijah is considered the first convert to Islam.

Impact on Islam

Khadijah died in 619 CE, in her mid-60s, and is buried in Mecca. She is considered a role model for Muslim women – a righteous woman, a loving wife, a devout Muslim and a selfless person. As the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad and the first convert to Islam, she is recognised by Muslims to be a person of great significance, a model for all Muslims. She is recognised as an independent woman, with her own business interests. She was a woman of faith who readily accepted the teachings of Islam and implemented them in her own life. Prophet Muhammad often expressed his love for her after her death and acknowledged that she supported him when he needed it most and when few offered support. Muslims see the marriage between Muhammad and Khadijah as an ideal marriage.

Khadijah is primarily a model for women in Islam, encouraging of her husband, supportive, loyal and fully submitted to the will of Allah. Prophet Muhammad's lineage continued with their only surviving daughter, Fatima.

Summary

As the first wife of Muhammad and the first believer in Islam, Kadijah is held up as a model to all Muslims, especially women. She encouraged and believed Muhammad and supported him through their married life.

Fatima Al Zahra (circa 605–632 CE)

Life and ideas

Fatima bint Muhammad was born in 605 CE in Mecca to the Prophet Muhammad and his first wife, Khadijah. According to Shi'a Muslims, Fatima was their only child to survive to adulthood. Any descendants of Muhammad are thus descendants of Fatima, according to Shi'a beliefs. There is debate about her actual birth date, with some suggesting she may have been born a few years earlier or up to 10 years later. Fatima is generally known as Fatima Al Zahra, the title Al Zahra meaning 'the shining one'.

Fatima was close to her father. She witnessed and supported Muhammad during his time of opposition in Mecca. Her closeness to her father earned her a distinct place in the Hadith. When her mother died, possibly when Fatima was just seven or eight, she was overcome with grief. When Muhammad died, Fatima remained in a state of grief until her own death, only five months later.

After Muhammad's death, Fatima was involved in several conflicts with Abu Bakr, the first of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs and successor to Muhammad. She approached Abu Bakr to give her a piece of land at Fadak, promised to her by her father. Abu Bakr refused, saying that prophets do not leave behind inheritance and that the property belonged to the state; it should be used for charity. Fatima, according to Shi'a sources, refused to talk to Abu Bakr again. Sunni sources say they reconciled.

When Fatima reached her teenage years, she received marriage proposals from Abu Bakr and Umar, two of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, which she refused. When Ali ibn Abu Talib, who was a cousin of Muhammad, proposed, she accepted. They lived for several years in extreme poverty. One incident that illustrates this is when Ali had to sell a shield to pay for the wedding. He sold it to Uthman (one of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs), who returned the shield as a wedding present.

Ali and Fatima were married about 623 CE and were together for 10 years until Fatima's death. Ali did not take a second wife while Fatima was alive. There are reported incidents of unhappiness in their marriage, and Muhammad often helped resolve the difficulties.

It is believed that Fatima died in 632 CE. Muhammed predicted that she would be the first member of the family to die after his death. Her death may be related to an invasion of her house by Umar, although Sunni Muslims would dispute that (see below). It is not clear where she is buried, as the burial was conducted in secret by Ali.

Figure 11A.2 Shi'a supporters celebrate to remember the day when Shi'a Muslims believe Prophet Muhammed designated Ali ibn Abu Talib, his cousin and son-in-law, as his successor.

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Contribution to Islam

Fatima provided considerable support for Muhammad in Mecca. She was known to follow the Prophet and defend him when he was insulted. In one instance, it is said that a group of pagans threw intestines at him. He remained prostrate near Ka'ba until Fatima came and removed them from his back.

When she asked Muhammad for a servant to help with the household chores, he advised her to recite prayers instead, and she concurred that it was a greater gift. Her marriage with Ali is seen as an ideal marriage.

Ali and Fatima had two sons (Hasan and Hussein), two daughters and possibly a stillborn child (Muhsin). Shi'a tradition says she miscarried when her house was attacked by Abu Bakr and Umar, while Sunni Muslims say the child was simply stillborn or died of natural causes. This gives a hint of the different interpretations that exist about the life of Fatima, Ali and their family. These differences of opinion emerge in the conflict between Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims (see Chapter 10).

Impact on Islam

Fatima is depicted in Muslim history as a loyal wife and daughter, a devout Muslim and an example to other women. She tended the wounds of the combatants after battles, and supported other wives and widows. She is considered a perfect role model for Muslim women, and a fighter for justice and against oppression. In Shi'a Islam she is especially revered as 'mother of the Imams'. She is depicted as 'the eternal weeper' and 'judge of the hereafter'. Her eternal weeping is because of the death of her two sons, Hasan and Hussein. Shi'a Muslims believe that on the day of judgement, Fatima will be involved in the process as a reward for her suffering during her life.

It is likely there are several references to Fatima in the Qur'an, although she is not named. In Qur'an 33:33, the phrase 'people of the house' includes Muhammad, Ali, Fatima and their two sons:

> Surely Allah wishes to remove all abomination from you, O people of the house, and purify you with a great purification.
> QUR'AN 33:33

In Qur'an 3:61, Fatima is a witness to the events, which include a response to some Christians. In reference to Qur'an 3:42, Fatima is considered one of the outstanding women of all time.

Summary

Fatima al-Zahra, generally just known as Fatima, was the daughter of Muhammad and his first wife, Khadijah. She was one of the early converts to Islam and a supporter of her father. She married Ali ibn Abu Talib, Muhammad's cousin and the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and had four children by him. She was a fierce supporter of her husband and this proved to be significant in the way she is perceived in Islam. She is a heroine according to Shi'a Islam.

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For further reading on Fatima Al Zahra, see the following:

- Nicholas Awde, *Women in Islam*, New York, Hippocrene Books, 2005.
- Mahmood Ghadanfar, *Great Women of Islam*, Houston, Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2001.

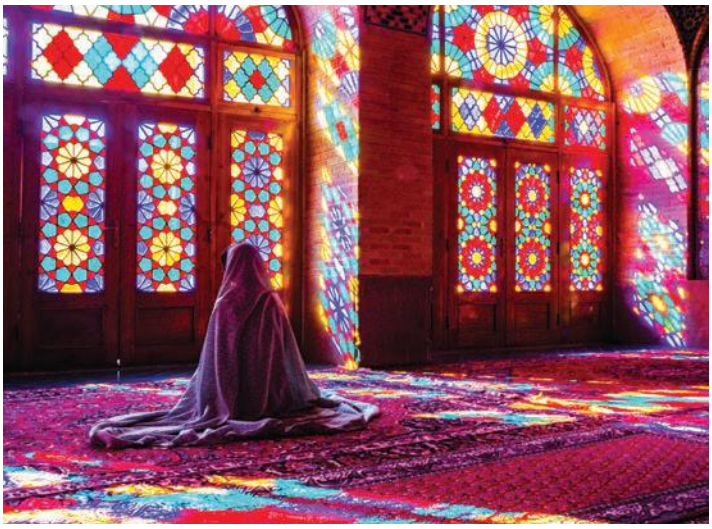

Figure 11A.3 A woman prays in the Nasir-al Molk Mosque, Iran

Imam Malik (circa 711–795 CE)

Life and ideas

Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn 'Amr al-Asbahi (better known as Imam Malik) was born in Medina around 711 CE. His family had come to Medina from Yemen after converting to Islam. Imam Malik encountered those who knew Muhammad and he was thus called a *tabi'i*, 'one who met a companion of the Prophet'.

Imam Malik began his career as a seller of fabric. As a teenager he memorised the Qur'an and may have sought education under the significant scholars of his day, some of whom had been companions of the Prophet. He was extremely careful in his learning and emphasised the Hadith above the opinions of scholars, recognising that human beings could make mistakes.

Imam Malik was a scholar who developed a thesis on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). This led to the development of Shari'a (Islamic law). He was part of the 'golden chain of narrators', which meant a direct link to the Prophet: Imam Malik narrated from Nafi', who narrated from ibn Umar, who narrated from Muhammad. Thus his judgements and verdicts were significant because of the direct link to Muhammad.

Imam Malik died in 795 CE, having gained a reputation as one of the greatest scholars in the Muslim world and having established the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence.

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Contribution to Islam

Imam Malik developed several features of his jurisprudence that are significant:

- He was hesitant to pass judgement when there were companions of the Prophet and other important scholars involved. If his judgements would create a precedent, he acknowledged the importance of the statement 'I do not know' when not completely sure.
- Malik stressed the importance of the Hadith as the second most important basis of theology and of his legal judgements. Thus the example and words of Muhammad are of great authority.
- He was reluctant to be innovative in his beliefs or in passing *bidah* (judgements that are not included in Qur'an and *sunna* of Muhammad).
- Malik was opposed to theological rhetoric or speculative scholastic theology (called *kalam*). He felt these would cause division and cause doubts in people's mind.
- He stressed the Sunni acceptance of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Malik wrote *Al-Muwatta* ('the approved'), the first major work on *fiqh* (the theory or philosophy of Islamic law). In this work he sought to write a survey of all law, justice, ritual practice and conduct in Medina that reflected the *sunna* (the practice of the Prophet). Some consider it the most authentic collection of the traditions of the Prophet. This was not a simple task; he started with more than 10 000 Hadith and reduced them down to around 2000, and up to 15 versions of this work were produced. The fact that Imam Malik sought to codify the law was significant, as it created a precedent for judgements and decisions that would follow.

As his reputation grew, Malik attracted scholars from all over the Islamic world, and his students included Imam Hanifa and Imam Shafi'i (discussed later), founders of the two most important schools of Islamic jurisprudence. As a result of his work, several schools (*madhhab*) of Islamic jurisprudence developed. Of the four schools, one bears his name – the Maliki school – while two others were formed by his students and named after them: the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools. Imam Malik's classes were characterised by discipline, serenity and respect.

Malik was also an outspoken scholar, which caused him difficulty at times. He struggled to financially support his studies, on one occasion selling the beams from his house to pay his fees. He spoke out against the ruling authorities in Medina, which resulted in him being given 70 lashes as punishment. He was untroubled by violence; he once continued to pray in a mosque when it was invaded by sword-wielding soldiers.

Impact on Islam

Imam Malik is considered one of the greatest scholars in the Muslim world. His establishment of the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence is extremely important. It is one of the four schools that has lasted the test of time. His reputation has stood ever since. He is truly the father of Islamic jurisprudence. His works are still influential today, practised mainly in North Africa and also present in Egypt, Sudan, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

For someone who opposed the concept of innovation, Imam Malik's work on law and Hadith was in fact the first of its kind and opened the way for other significant works to be developed further, including by his students.

Summary

Imam Malik is one of the most respected scholars in Sunni Islam. He is the founder of the Malaki Madhab, an important school of Islamic jurisprudence that is still followed today. Imam Malik influenced other great scholars, including Imam Hanifa and Imam Shafi.

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For further reading on Imam Malik, see Imam Malik, *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik Ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*, Crediton, Southgate Publishers, 1992.

Imam Abu Hanifa (699–767 CE)

Life and ideas

Nu'man bin Thabit bin Zuta bin Mahah is better known as Imam Abu Hanifa. Imam Abu Hanifa was born in Kufa, Iraq, in 699 CE. His popular name, Abu Hanifa, is actually a title that means 'pure believer in Allah'. He was not an Arab, but was of Persian origins (modern-day Iran). He was a *tabi'i*, someone who knew people who had known Muhammad. Little is known about Abu Hanifa or his life, but the following version is generally accepted.

Abu Hanifa followed the family tradition as a businessman. He established a silk-weaving business, where he was recognised as honest and fair. He also developed an interest in learning. One day, while running an errand for his mother, Abu Hanifa was passing the home of as-Sha'bi, a well-known scholar in Kufa. Mistaking Abu Hanifa for a student, the scholar asked him whose classes he attended. When he revealed he was not a student, he was encouraged by as-Sha'bi to 'sit in the company of learned men'. Abu Hanifa then began to learn and his intelligence soon became obvious. He was thought to be about 20 years old.

It seems Abu Hanifa learnt from many people, with some stories suggesting he had 4000 teachers. He was taught by some of the companions of the Prophet and by Imam Malik. He travelled to Mecca when it was a great centre for Islamic scholarship.

Imam Abu Hanifa was one of the first to really analyse and categorise Islamic law in a systematic way. He established what has become the current way of developing judgements, using deductive reasoning as well as the Qur'an, Hadith and precedents.

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In 763 CE, Abu Hanifa was offered the post of chief judge of the state. He refused, choosing to remain independent. Following a verbal clash with the Monarch al-Mansur he was thrown into jail in Baghdad, where he continued to teach and his popularity as a teacher increased. He was tortured, and some suggest he was poisoned. He died in jail in 767 CE. More than 50 000 people attended his funeral.

Contribution to Islam

Abu Hanifa was one of the first Sunni theologians who engaged in theological debates. He later focused on law and quickly became an authority in the field. He was also one of the first to analyse Islamic jurisprudence. He divided it into subjects, distinguished the issues that were of concern, and determined criteria for making the deductive reasoning known as *qiyas* in Islamic jurisprudence – a systematic approach.

Abu Hanifa gained a reputation as a man of great character and piety, as well as having an extraordinary mind. He would recite the entire Qur'an in his prayers.

Abu Hanifa established a school at Kufa that became an important school of theology and law, where he lectured in Islamic law. His most significant work is *Kitaab-ul-Aathar*, which was actually compiled by two of his students.

Impact on Islam

Abu Hanifa founded the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, which emphasises the use of *ra'y*, or analytic legal opinions. His emphasis on *qiyas* is one of the important contributions to the understanding and development of Shari'a. The Hanafi school is still often referred to in Islamic jurisprudence in the Balkans, Turkey, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent including Pakistan and Bangladesh, and parts of the Middle East.

Abu Hanafi can claim to be the father of the modern systemised approach to developing fatwas (a ruling on Islamic law by a respected authority in Islam) in the application of Shari'a to everyday actions and events.

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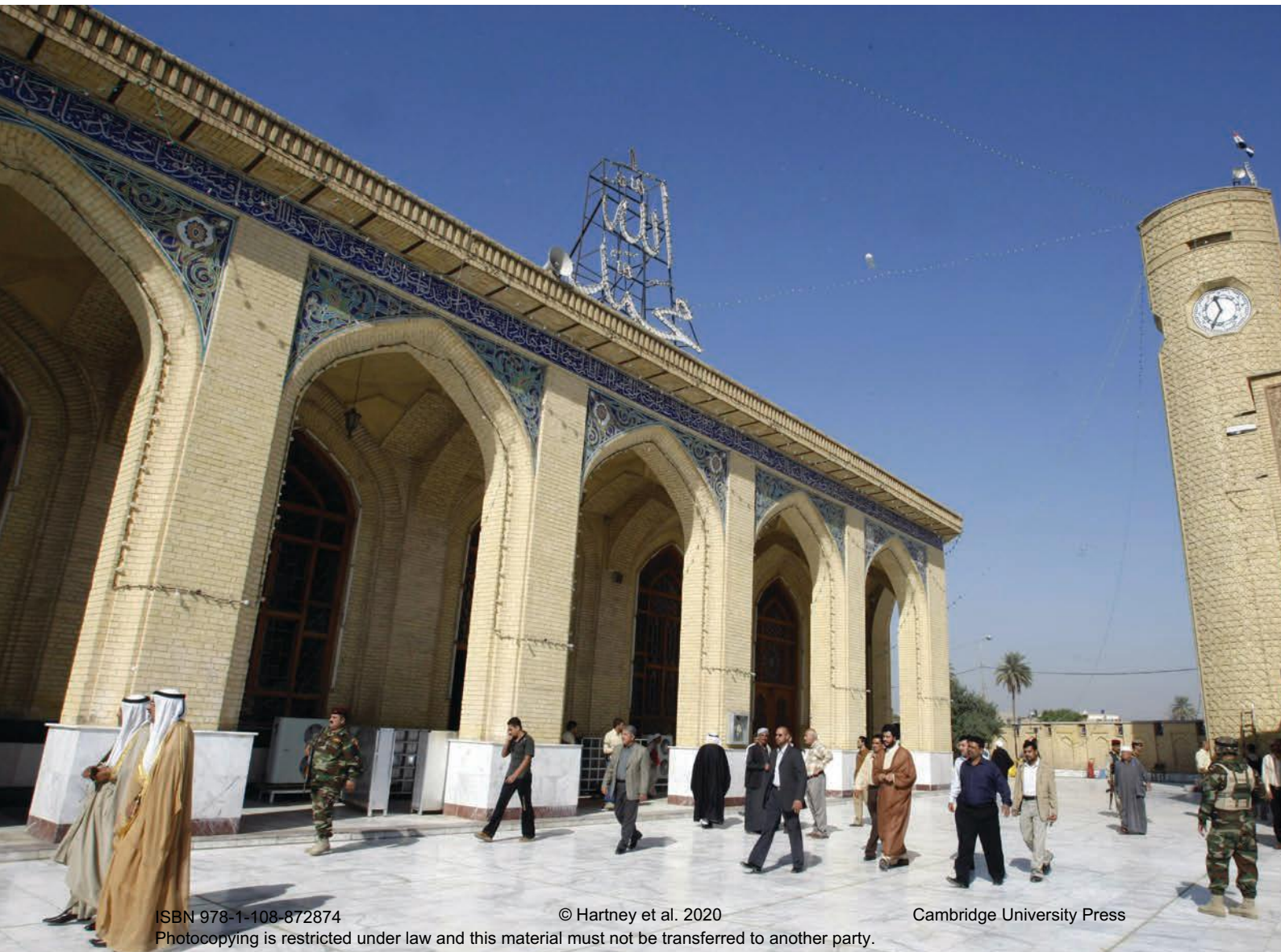
For further reading on Abu Hanifa, see Ahmad Maghnisawi, *Imam Abu Hanifa's Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar Explained*, Santa Barbara, White Thread Press, 2007.

Figure 11A.4 Abu Hanifa mosque in Baghdad, Iraq



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Summary

Abu Hanifa was a Persian Muslim who developed a systematic approach to Islamic jurisprudence. He developed the Hanafi school of jurisprudence and was noted as a man of great piety. When he died in jail, he was mourned by thousands of Muslims.

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (717–801 CE)

Life and ideas

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (also known as Rabi'a of Basra) lived in Basra, which is now Iraq. The name Rabi'a means fourth and she was the fourth daughter in her family.

Rabi'a was orphaned when she was young. She was sold as a slave, but was allegedly freed when her master awoke to find her standing in prayer and surrounded by a bright light.

Rabi'a was a devout child who fasted during the day and spent the night in prayer. She is believed to have never received teaching from any spiritual master or religious instructor; she developed her own spirituality. On one occasion, while on the Hajj, she prayed for a donkey that had died. The donkey revived and she continued her journey. She had great trust in Allah, and when visiting the mosque in Mecca felt no reverence for it, stating:

> It is the Lord of the house whom I need; what have I to do with the house?

Rabi'a is one of the Sufi tradition's most famous representatives (see 'Sufism' in Section 11.2 of the print textbook). She is considered to be one of the founders of a spiritual path focused on divine love, the central theme of Sufism. Her choice of celibacy is unusual in Islam, where marriage is highly recommended and regarded as a model way of life by the Prophet Muhammad. She received many offers of marriage, but responded:

> I am not interested … in having my attention distracted from Allah even for a split second.

Rabi'a travelled to Jerusalem, where she lived for seven years until her death. She is believed to have been in her 80s when she died. She often said that joining Allah in death was nothing special as 'my beloved is always with me'. Her tomb is near the Christian Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

Contribution to Islam

Rabi'a became a spiritual teacher in Sufism and many men, as well as women, came to seek her advice and became her friends and followers. Rabi'a brought a strong asceticism to Sufism that included the rejection of all pleasures, both good and bad, out of passionate love for Allah. She would pray all night, sleep briefly before dawn and rise again at dawn. Having renounced the world, she also took a vow of poverty. The only possessions she had were a reed mat, a broken jug and a brick for a pillow.

Her cultivation of mysticism transcended gender. Stories of Rabi'a and her teachings and miracles have been handed down since her time. She is one of the few women in Islam considered to be major figure in religious history and is considered a *wali* (a Sufi saint).

Rabi'a taught that repentance was a gift from Allah, and held out more hope for paradise than many other ascetics. She saw love for Allah as the primary motivation for worship, rather than fear. This is expressed in one of her most famous prayers:

> My Lord, if I worship you from fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship you from hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise. But if I worship you for your own sake, then do not withhold me from your everlasting beauty.

Rabi'a's most obvious contribution to Islam is her mystic expression of Islam, reflected in personal piety and her devotion, and as seen in Sufism.

Impact on Islam

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya is a model of devotion to Allah. Her motivation, love for Allah, is considered to be the best motivation for devotion. While considered a Sufi saint, she is also an unusual model for Muslims because of her ascetic lifestyle and her celibacy. Rabi'a called for people to love Allah without thought of reward or fear of punishment, but rather because he is Allah, naturally loved and worshiped.

Rabi'a became a symbol and role model for Muslim women, especially in the present world where Muslim women seek representation among the religious scholarship of Islam.

Summary

Rabi'a lived in the eighth century CE. She was an enslaved girl who evidenced significant spirituality. As a founder of 'divine love' in Sufism, she is considered a saint. She emphasised the importance of love, rather than fear or reward, in worshipping Allah. If you wish to study Rabi'a, you should also be familiar with the section on Sufism in the print textbook.

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For further reading on Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, see W. Sakkakini, N. Safwat and D. Lessing, *First Among Sufis: The Life and Thought of Rabia al-Adawiyya, the Woman Saint of Basra*, London, Octagon Press, 1982.

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Figure 11A.5 Protesters hold placards showing the Rabi'a sign while taking part in a rally in Ankara, Turkey, to protest against mass killings in Syria and Egypt. The sign was first used at Rabia Square, Cairo, in 2013.

Imam al-Shafi'i (767–820 CE)

Life and ideas

Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, better known as Imam al-Shafi'i, was born in Gaza in Palestine from the same tribe as Muhammad the Prophet, the Quraysh. Despite this significant connection, he grew up in poverty. Few details are available about his life, and much of what we know comes from legends.

It seems that Al-Shafi'i went to Mecca when he was about 10 years of age, and studied there under Imam Malik for nine years. Stories suggest that his studies included not just the law but also poetry and prose from Bedouin tribes, as well as archery.

When Imam Malik died, Al-Shafi'i joined the public service, but soon left. He travelled to Baghdad and Yemen, where he worked as a judge, establishing a reputation as an honest and just person who sometimes came into conflict with his superiors and the authorities. At one time he had to withstand a charge of planning a revolution, but was shown to be innocent. In Baghdad he opened his own school where he developed his ideas, influenced by both Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik.

Al-Shafi'i developed most of his ideas and wrote most extensively in the last five years of his life, when he had finally settled in Egypt. He was known as an eloquent speaker and a clever debater. He died in Egypt in 820 CE at the age of 54.

Contribution to Islam

Al-Shafi'i soon moved from the ideas of others to develop his own approach to Islamic jurisprudence. He opposed both the Hanafi school's over-reliance on analysis and reason and the Maliki school's reliance on tradition. Al-Shafi'i came to the conclusion that tradition was the right basis for legal decisions, but only if that tradition was based on the authentic *sunna* of the Prophet. He produced his own version of the Hadith collection, based on his own analysis of the reports attributed to Muhammad's life and words. A consequence of Al-Shafi'i's emphasis on authentic Hadith as a source of law was an increase in authenticated collections of Hadith. The six canonical Hadith collections were produced after Shafi'i.

Building on the work of Abu Hanafi and Imam Malik, Al-Shafi'i'most significant work is entitled *Al-Risala*, in which he examines the sources of jurisprudence. He outlined what is the now the accepted approach to Islamic jurisprudence, the significance of the four sources – the Qur'an, the *sunna*, *qiyas* (precedence) and *ijma* (consensus of the scholars).

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For further reading on Imam al-Shafi'i, see the following:

- Al-Shafi, *Al-Shafi's Risala: Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993.
- Malise Ruthven, *Islam in the World (3rd edn)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Al-Shafi'i made several significant achievements in his approach to learning and Islamic jurisprudence:

- He established the legitimacy of the *sunna* (the teachings and example of Muhammad) as the second most important source in Islamic law after a time of confusion by the people.
- He was committed to relying on evidence, especially in authenticating Hadith.
- He established a clear methodology of Islamic law and jurisprudence by writing *Al-Risala*. All other schools of law followed suit by writing their own methodologies. So, in a way, Al-Shafi'i established the discipline of principles of Islamic jurisprudence.
- He drew the distinction between analogy (or precedence) and the application of scholarly discretion. He defined the boundaries of analogy in Islamic law.

Impact on Islam

Al-Shafi'i founded the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence, which has been highly influential in modern Islam. His approach to Islamic jurisprudence is generally the approach used in Islam today. Among those influenced by Al-Shafi'i are Al-Ghazali and the modern Malaysian political leader Anwar Ibrahim. The Shafi'i school is followed in many parts of the world including Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt and Yemen.

Summary

Imam al-Shafi'i was an influential scholar who developed the approach to Islamic jurisprudence generally used in modern Islam. He studied under Imam Malik, but was critical of various aspects of both the Maliki and Hanafi schools of jurisprudence, while accepting and developing others. His writings and ideas are still of significance today.

Abu Ali Hussein ibn Sina (circa 980–1037 CE)

Life and ideas

Abu Ali Hussein ibn Sina is known in the West by his Latinised name, Avicenna. Ibn Sina was born in Persia (now Iran) about 980 CE. His father was a respected scholar, who had his son educated at Bukhara in what is now modern Uzbekistan (north of Afghanistan).

Ibn Sina proved to be a brilliant student with great intelligence and memory. A child prodigy, he had memorised the Qur'an by age 10, had overtaken his teachers at 14 and claimed there was nothing he had not learnt by 18. As a teenager he read Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which he had difficulty understanding. To assist in his reading he began studying medicine at 16, and by the age of 18 he was a qualified doctor.

Figure 11A.6 Portrait of Abu Ali Hussein ibn Sina

Ibn Sina was appointed physician to the emir and helped him recover from a dangerous illness. In gratitude, the emir allowed ibn Sina access to the royal library of the Samanids, an extensive collection of literature.

When he was 22, his father died. He travelled to Urgench, a city west of Bukhara, where he spent a few years wandering and writing, seeking a patron who would support his efforts. He settled at Rai, in what is now Tehran, and wrote extensively, working on one of his greatest works, the *Canon of Medicine*.

Ibn Sina travelled on to Hamadan, where he became vizier (high-ranking political minster or adviser). This was a time of great conflict in the region, and for a while he was locked up in a fortress. He was released in 1024, escaped the city and fled to Isfahan. He was welcomed by its Prince, Ja'far 'Ala Addaula, and spent the next decade in his service, continuing to study and write.

Ibn Sina was struck down with a severe illness while travelling with the prince, and deteriorated rapidly. He refused to slow the pace of his life, welcoming death. He died in June 1037 at the age of 58.

Ibn Sina is considered one of the most brilliant minds of Islam, producing more than 450 works on a range of subjects. Roughly 250 have survived; around 150 works are on philosophy and about 40 are on medicine. He is considered to be the one of the pioneers of modern medicine and his *Book of Healing*, a philosophical and scientific encyclopaedia, is one of his most famous works.

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For further reading on Abu Hussein ibn Sina, see Avicenna, *The Canon of Medicine*, Chicago, Kazi Publications, 1999.

His *Canon of Medicine* was used as a medical text until the nineteenth century. Comprising 14 volumes, the *Canon* is an outstanding work, especially for one written in the eleventh century. In it, Ibn Sina introduces concepts such as evidence-based medicine, clinical trials, quarantine, microorganisms, hygiene and pharmacology. It was translated into several languages including Latin and Hebrew.

Ibn Sina also pioneered psychology, psychophysiology and several schools of psychiatry. He wrote on astronomy and debunked astrology. His works on chemistry included the technique of steam distillation, as well as arguments against alchemy (the idea of transforming one thing into another, such as lead into gold). He wrote on geology and physics, developed an air thermometer and discussed the notion of the speed of light. He developed and explained the basic concepts of mechanics and engineering.

His work on philosophy was greatly respected, and by the twelfth century, Ibn Sina philosophy became the leading school of Islamic philosophy. He also contributed to the debate on metaphysics. He distinguished between essence and existence, and his form of logic was considered an alternative to Aristotelian logic. He also discussed the philosophy of science, emphasising the scientific method of enquiry.

Contribution to Islam

In his writings on theology, Ibn Sina sought to prove the existence of God and the world scientifically, using reason and logic. He tried to reconcile Islamic theology with rational philosophy. He argued for the existence of the soul, suggesting it had a substance.

It is significant to note that almost half of his works are written in verse, so he was also a skilled poet.

Impact on Islam

Ibn Sina is recognised as one of the great minds of history by both Western and Islamic scholars. His ideas and writings have been used until relatively recently in medicine, as well as other areas such as physics. He is a national hero of Iran, and a crater on the moon is named after him. Ibn Sina contributed greatly to a philosophical approach to Islam and is considered one of the great Muslim thinkers, and one of the first major Muslim philosophers.

Summary

Abu Hussein ibn Sina was a brilliant eleventh-century Muslim scholar, philosopher and scientist. His written works, especially on medicine, have been influential across the world and were university texts for centuries after his death. He is regarded as one of the greatest Muslim scholars of all time.

Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE)

Life and ideas

Abn Hamid al-Ghazali is recognised as one of the pivotal philosophers, theologians and mystics of Islam. He is closely linked with Sufism.

Born in Persia, Abn Hamid al-Ghazali (known usually as Al-Ghazali) became head of the Nizamia Institute in Baghdad in 1091 CE, one of Islam's greatest seats of learning of the time. He taught Islamic jurisprudence at the institute, and was involved in countering heresy. He experienced a spiritual crisis after four years and left the institute, wandering in Syria and Palestine for two years and then going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He returned to Tus, his hometown, and developed his Sufi ideas, teaching and writing until his death.

Al-Ghazali reacted against the prevailing view that philosophical and reasoned discussion, as opposed to revelation, were undermining Islam. He drew on Greek philosophical thought and showed it was consistent with Islam. He admired and used the work of Ibn Sina. He was also critical of philosophy where it could not withstand the tests of reason. He saw the importance of revelatory truth and maintained the importance of the Qur'an, refusing to consider philosophy superior to the Qur'an.

He sought to develop an Islamic form of philosophy, and found 'truth' in the ecstatic state of *fana'* of Sufism. (*Fana'* is an ecstatic state where the self is annihilated and the attributes of Allah are personally achieved.) He turned to Sufism (discussed in section 11.2 of the print textbook) and rejected the legalistic ritualism of the Islam of his day.

At the age of 38, in 1095 CE, that rejection of Islamic legalism was formalised when Al-Ghazali renounced his academic post and became a Sufi mystic, leading a contemplative life for 10 years. In 1106 he returned to the Nizamia Institute in Baghdad to defend his teachings. He later returned to Tus where he died in 1111 CE.

Contribution to Islam

Al-Ghazali wrote several major books that were important in developing Islamic ideas and thought. One of them was *The Revival of the Spiritual Sciences*, a four-volume work that drew together theology, law and spirituality.

Al-Ghazali suggested that revelation was superior to reason in the subjects of the beginning of the universe, God's knowledge of all things and the resurrection of the body after death. He believed the way to achieve knowledge of Allah is by an immediate experience of Allah, thus the importance of mysticism. He also argued that Sufism was the best way of expressing Islam. Before his death he returned to his academic life for a short period.

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Figure 11A.7 The entrance to the Al-Ghazali theology institute of the Grand Mosque of Paris

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Al-Ghazali, see Mohamed Abu Bakr A. Al-Musleh, *Al-Ghazali: The Islamic Reformer*, The Other Press, 2012. Also watch the movie *Al-Ghazali: the Alchemist of Happiness* (2007).

Al-Ghazali discussed a wide range of issues, such as:

- the relationship between Allah's omnipotence and human responsibility
- the justice of Allah
- the relationship between reason and revelation
- the mystical vision of Allah
- the soul in Islamic philosophy
- cosmology.

Impact on Islam

Al-Ghazali is considered an innovative pioneer, able to combine faith, reason and mysticism in his ideas, and able to express those ideas clearly. His way of thinking means his work is very accessible to the modern Western mind and his works continue to be popular today. He has earned the title *mujaddid* (renewer of Islam). His emphasis on mystical Sufism was significant especially with his background as a scholar in Islam. Sufism has developed as a significant school of thought in Islam largely because of Al-Ghazali's contribution.

Al-Ghazali has also had a significant impact on the wider world. His works on religious philosophy in Islam influenced Christian and secular philosophers such as Dante Alighieri, St Thomas Aquinas and David Hume.

Summary

Al-Ghazali was a Sufi master who lived in the eleventh century CE. As a scholar and philosopher he developed an Islamic philosophy. He wrote a number of significant works, but stressed that the revelation from Allah was superior to human reason. He emphasised the place of mysticism. If you wish to study Al-Ghazali, you should also be familiar with the section on Sufism in Chapter 11 of the print textbook.

Sayyid Maududi (1903–1979 CE)

Life and ideas

Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi was born in Hyderabad, India, on 25 September 1903. He was the third son of a lawyer father who was a devout Muslim and began his son's education at home. Maududi's ancestors include some notable Sufi leaders. He continued his education at high school and university, but was forced to leave university because of the death of his father.

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Figure 11A.8 The flag of Pakistan. Sayyid Mududi wanted Pakistan to become a truly Islamic state.

Sayyid Maududi became a journalist at age 15 and a newspaper editor at the age of 17. He moved to Delhi to become editor of the newspaper *Muslim* in 1921, then became editor of *Al-Jam'iyat* in 1925. Both of these were official papers of the Muslim scholars' organisation *Jam'iyat-i Ulama'i Hand*.

In 1920, Sayyid Maududi joined the Khilafat Movement, a Muslim organisation that opposed British rule in India. Muslims were encouraged to move to the nearest Muslim country, which was Afghanistan. He also began his first major work, *al-Jihad fi al-Islam*, a scholarly work on Islamic war and peace. Published in 1930, this book was the start of Maududi's prolific writing career, eventually publishing more than 120 books and 1000 articles. In 1933 he became editor of the monthly *Tarjuman al-Qur'an* and this became the vehicle for his writings.

In 1940, Maududi formed the religious political movement *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JI). JI was a movement to promote Islamic values and practices and to support the establishment of an Islamic state in India, and later in Pakistan, after the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. Maududi moved to Pakistan to lead by example. He was frequently arrested and jailed because of his criticism of the Pakistani government. In 1953, he was sentenced to death, but public pressure forced the government to commute and later annul his sentence.

Between 1956 and 1974, he travelled widely, lecturing in many Muslim countries as well as in London, New York and Toronto. He served on several international bodies and was involved in the establishment of the Islamic University in Medina.

Sayyid Maududi was forced to go to America for treatment of a kidney ailment in April 1979. This, together with heart problems, led to his death on 22 September 1979. He was buried in his home in Lahore after a funeral conducted in Buffalo, USA.

Contribution to Islam

Maududi sought to develop Islamic solutions to world problems, and his writings revealed that he was a sound and perceptive scholar. His fresh approach led to a wide acceptance of his ideas, which in turn led to his founding of the academic research centre Darul-Islam to produce high-quality works and further develop Islamic thinking.

His major work was the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an into his native language of Urdu in six volumes. This work took 30 years to complete and is entitled *The Meaning of the Qur'an*. It has been translated into many languages and includes explanations of the verses and contexts for the passages. Maududi developed a strong reputation as a scholar of Qur'anic exegesis (explanation of texts), ethics, social studies and Islamic revival.

Several features of Maududi's teachings are significant and reveal his beliefs on the role of Islam in the world:

- Maududi saw Muslims not just as the people who pledged allegiance to Allah, but also 'the universe' that submits to the laws of Allah.
- He believed Shari'a was essential to Muslim society.
- Maududi believed Islam required the establishment of an Islamic state, a 'theo-democracy' that included three principles: *tawhid* – the unity of God, *risala* – prophecy and *khilafa* – a caliphate where all people should become model human beings as described by the Qur'an.
- He believed **jihad** was a legitimate form of struggle against colonial rule and could be used to establish an Islamic state.
- Maududi believed the rights of non-Muslims should be restricted.

Jihad
Struggle or striving; related to the concept of effort, struggle or resistance; a religious duty

Impact on Islam

Sayyid Maududi was an extremely influential scholar in Islam. His translation and interpretation of the Qur'an has been used across the world, and his work in Pakistan has been important in the establishment of that nation and its Islamic character. His research and innovative ventures promoted Islam and Muslim causes across the world.

The movement he established and inspired, *Jamaat-e-Islami*, has become a transnational revivalist movement that still has large followings in many Muslim countries.

Some have interpreted Maududi's words as encouragement for extremist struggle against non-Muslim states.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Sayyid Maududi, see the following:

- Abul Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an* (6 volumes), Pakistan, Islamic Publications, 2002.
- Sayyed Nasr, *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revolution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

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Summary

Sayyid Maududi was an influential Muslim scholar in India and Pakistan during the twentieth century. He produced many books and articles and grappled with the implications of an Islamic state. His ideas have empowered others to try to bring that about.

Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966 CE)

NOTE: The Islamic Research Academy of Australia has expressed concern about the study of Sayyid Qutb as a significant person. In today's political climate, because of his links to modern Islamic terrorism, they do not consider him to be a helpful choice. Other scholars would say Qutb is a very important voice in Islam's struggle to find itself a place in the colonial and postcolonial world.

Life and ideas

Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian Muslim who has had a significant impact on the lives of many modern Muslims in Arab countries. Born in 1906 in Musha, Egypt, he was involved in the modern revival of Islam and was influential in its expression today. He grew up in an Egypt that was involved in World Wars I and II and was developing its own national identity. Sayyid Qutb wanted that identity to be clearly Muslim.

Figure 11A.9 Sayyid Qutb behind bars in Cairo in 1966. He was executed later that year. Sayyid Qutb was an important theoretician of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

There are several important stages to Sayyid Qutb's life that shaped his beliefs and practices. He had an initial interest in the ways of the West. As a young man, Qutb developed a great knowledge of the Qur'an beginning with formal religious education in 1920. Between 1929 and 1933 he received a Western education in Cairo.

Qutb felt despair at the inadequacies of secularisation and modernism. After World War II and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, Qutb became disillusioned with the West. This coincided with an educational trip to the USA from 1948 to 1950 to study for a masters degree. There he criticised what he perceived to be the country's materialism and lack of spirituality, as well as its overt racism. While in the US, he published his first major work, *Social Justice in Islam*.

Sayyid Qutb returned to his Islamic roots with a revolutionary zeal. In 1953 he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, an organisation that opposed Zionism and the Western influence in Egypt. He sought to ban alcohol and opposed the British presence in Egypt.

In 1952, the Egyptian monarchy was overthrown by the army led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, who became president. Qutb, as well as many others, expected the new government to be an Islamic government. At first the government enjoyed the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, but the Brotherhood was disappointed by the failure of the new government to ban alcohol or institute other expected reforms. In 1954, after a failed attempt to assassinate President Nassar, many in the Muslim Brotherhood, including Sayyid Qutb, were arrested and imprisoned.

While in jail, Qutb called for a total transformation of Islam, not just reform. He wrote several works while in prison, including *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, a commentary on the Qur'an, and the controversial and widely published *Signposts on the Road*, which promoted the transformation of Islamic society. He called for jihad to struggle against all things opposed to Islam, a jihad that was a means to the rebirth of Islam, not just a defensive fight. Jihad was seen by Qutb as a physical battle against those who opposed Islam, rather than the inner (greater) struggle of the spirit. He declared that ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*), which included anything opposed to Islam, should be eradicated.

Sayyid Qutb rejected the Egyptian government as illegitimate. He was released from jail for eight months in 1964, but as he became more radical in his social and political views, he was soon arrested again. Following a show trial, he was hanged on 29 August 1966, along with six other members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Contribution to Islam

Sayyid Qutb wrote a number of works supporting Islamic views that were alternatives

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to a range of Western ideals such as communism, capitalism, secularism and nationalism. He called for:

- the unification of Islamic organisations and aspirations
- reform of civil law in accordance with Shari'a
- social justice inspired by Islam as opposed to Western models.

His commentary on the Qur'an has been very influential and is considered the most significant commentary of the twentieth century. He further developed Maududi's modern concept of the Islamic state and rejected the legitimacy of a secular state (a government that legislates its own behaviour). He applied the concept of *Jahiliyyah* (a term that referred to pre-Islamic ignorance) to modern Islamic societies that, by his own definition, had turned away from Islamic law and values due to the influence of European colonisation and imperialism.

Impact on Islam

Sayyid Qutb's impact on global politics has increased since his death. His writings influenced the African American Muslims movement as well as the revolutionaries who overthrew the Shah of Iran in 1979. His ideas also influenced the rise of what has been called fundamentalist Islam throughout the world. One of his admirers was Ayman Zawahiri, a mentor to Osama bin Laden who was the founder of Al-Qaeda and linked to numerous terrorist acts, including the destruction of the US World Trade Center in 2001.

Qutb was influential in proclaiming the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood was elected president of Egypt in 2012 but was forced to resign after protests the following year. In December 2013, Egyptian Prime Minister Hazem Al Beblawi declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation.

Sayyid Qutb is held to be a martyr for Islam, unjustly executed by an oppressive political regime, and subsequently became a symbol to many modern Muslims who also claim to struggle against oppressive governments and foreign invaders. For others, he is considered an example of how not to deal with Muslim extremism. Had Qutb been treated more justly, and his complaints against the West been given due consideration, an alternative path to the future involving Islam may have proved to be more beneficial and less threatening.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Sayyid Qutb, see the following:

- Albert Bergesen, *The Sayyid Qutb Reader*, Oxford, Routledge, 2007.
- Gilles Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, London, Saqi Books, 2005.
- Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, India, Kitab Bhavan, 2000.
- Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, India, Islamic Book Service, 2006.
- Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, New York, Islamic Publications International, 2000.

Summary

Sayyid Qutb was a twentieth-century Egyptian who was concerned by the failings of the West in Egypt and much of the Muslim world. He sought to rediscover a pure Islam and to apply its principles to Muslim society. He became what is generally identified as a revolutionary of fundamentalist Islam, and has influenced some modern Muslim activists.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792 CE)

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a Muslim theologian living in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula. He established the school of Wahhabism, which is mainly concerned with eradicating those religious influences in the Islamic world that cannot be strictly traced to the early life of the community.

Al-Wahhab was born in central Arabia and grew up in an area that had produced Sunni jurists who were of the Hanbali school of law. According to his brother, he did not complete his initial training. As he developed his theology of Islam, however, he became increasingly disturbed by the number of religious practices carried out by Muslims that, to him, seemed against the particular spirit of the religion as it first developed. The most obvious of these was the custom of Muslims visiting and praying at the tombs of outstanding religious leaders and holy men and women of the past. In many instances, these holy people were called saints. By approaching these tombs, the hopeful would pray to God and hope for the intercession of saints. During his life, many of al-Wahhab's fellow jurists across the Islamic world felt that this practice was religiously justifiable; al-Wahhab did not. He did not dispute that saints could exist, but he feared that the practice of appealing to them was not only an innovation in Islam but could also be seen as a form of polytheism and idolatry. *Bid'ah* (innovation) has usually been seen as a heresy in Islam – one of the criticisms of A'isha, Muhammad's wife, by Shi'a Islam is that she was guilty of *bid'ah*. Al-Wahhab was deeply concerned that seeking the intercession, through prayer, of a holy figure other than Allah meant that a human figure was being placed on the same level as, or before, the consideration of Allah. Idolatry is considered one of the worst transgressions in the Qur'an for it challenges the singularity and omnipresence of Allah (*tawhid*).

Where al-Wahhab grew up, education was limited. He did learn the Qur'an by heart and developed an understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and theology from the Hanbali school. While still a young man, al-Wahhab completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, where he became disturbed at the teachings he heard. He then stayed in Medina for many years, perfecting his theological outlook and developing his plans to purify Islam of unjustified practices. He worked closely with his mentor, Muhammad Hayya Al-Sindhi, to develop his ideas. These were later written out in a small text called *Kitab al-Tawid* (Book on the Unity of God). Al-Wahhab's

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ideas were not accepted by all; even his father (who was a judge of Hanbali law) and brother rejected his teachings as did many notable Sunni scholars. Al-Wahhab travelled outside the Arabian Peninsula, notably to Basra in Iraq, to develop his ideas further.

After his time in Basra, al-Wahhab sought out a leader in Arabia who would put his process of religious purification into practice. One ruler, Uthman ibn Mu'ammar, allowed al-Wahhab to destroy graves that were attracting visitors. Al-Wahhab also got the chance to chop down a row of trees that locals considered sacred. It seems that an alliance between the two was formed: al-Wahhad supported Mu'ammar's political ambitions and Mu'ammar supported al-Wahhad's religious ideas. Al-Wahhab became more renowned in Arabia because of these incidents and attracted many followers. But because of these actions there was soon political pressure on Mu'ammar to expel al-Wahhab from his territory.

Al-Wahhab next made a connection with the tribal leader Muhammad bin Saud, and was allowed to settle in Saud's territory in 1744. The two men worked together, bin Saud as local leader and al-Wahhab as his religious advisor. Together they planned to bring back 'true' Islam to the Arabian Peninsula. The two did much to entrench the power of the Saudi clan and al-Wahhabist ideology; the Saud family shared political and military matters and al-Wahhab the religious. This partnership became foundational to the rise of modern-day Saudi Arabia. Developing from this time, the Saudi Government has been eager to ensure that all the Muslims in their territories focus on the oneness of God. This has even included, at times, destroying buildings, tombs and houses that might steal attention away from the basics of the religion – such as dwellings where the Prophet himself may have lived. Some of these destructions allegedly also killed civilians.

Al-Wahhab's six children founded Muslim schools that have dominated Saudi Islam over the years, sharing power and prestige with the Saudi royal family.

Al-Wahhab believed that simply stating a belief in Islam was not enough to make one a true Muslim. A true follower of Islam had to ensure that there was no association of any other being with Allah (called *shirk*). He believed that those who acknowledged the Muslim saints were idolators and apostates. Those who follow al-Wahhab's ideas are called Wahhabists. In modern times, his followers have become part of a larger ideology, called the Salafists.

Contribution to Islam

Al-Wahhab sought to eradicate religious practices in Islam that developed after the early life of the Islamic community. He was particularly eager to remove any practices that challenged *tawhid,* or the oneness of Allah, including any thoughts or practices that may have brought innovation into Islam or anything that may lead to polytheism – such as the worship of saints.

In this direction he was a founding influence on the rise of the Salafi movement. This is a broad movement that started with Wahhabism and expanded in the Arab world towards the end of the nineteenth century. 'Salaf' refers to the first three generations of followers from the advent of Islam.

Salafi thought, which includes but is not limited to Wahhabism, depicts Islam as being most pure in the years during and immediately after the life of the Prophet.

Impact on Islam

During the medieval period, the Islamic world had been one of the leading civilizations on earth. The Black Plague, attacks from Mongols and crusading Christians,

Figure 11A.10 The state mosque of Qatar, formally named Sheikh Muhammad Ibn al-Wahhab Mosque, the largest place of worship in Qatar. There is some irony that the one who opposed so strongly the tombs and memorials of the saints now has his own memorial.

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together with changes in trade routes challenged this supremacy. The Ottoman Empire still dominated the Muslim world in those times too. It was rather the spread of Sufism to the masses by the influence of Al-Ghazali that was the main issue. The sophisticated concepts in Sufism were not well understood by uneducated masses, leading to some non-Islamic practices, which drew criticism from Ibn Taypiyya, a medieval Muslim theologian, and later al-Wahhab.

The increasing power of Western Europe eventually saw many Islamic lands in North Africa and the Middle East colonised and subjected to foreign control. At a theological level, this fall is sometimes explained through the idea that Islam has been corrupted by a range of influences that has taken it away from its true purpose. Salafists and Wahhabists claim that if Islam returns to the spirit of its earliest years, not only will adherents have a better chance of salvation, but there could be a return to the power and might that Islam possessed in the years when it exploded out of the Arabian Peninsula and took over vast areas.

In this way, Wahhabism has had a very powerful influence on movements that seek to purify Islamic practices. Modern Arabia, with its focus on placing women under the guardianship of men and tight control of morality through the use of religious police, is a good example of Wahhabist impact.

During the twentieth century, Wahhabism has been exported out of Arabia and has had a significant impact on theological thinking in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Groups such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Islamic State have used its thinking to fight against Modernist influences and Western colonialism. At a less radical level, many Muslims have looked to various Salafist movements to refocus on their faith and its central tenant of *tawhid*, the oneness of God.

Summary

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was an Islamic jurist and theologian who lived from 1703 to 1792 in the Arabian Peninsula.

He was influenced by theologians in Medina such as Muhammad Hayya Al-Sindhi and developed his approach to the purification of Islam in the short book *Kitab al-Tawhid*.

He worked to ensure that the *tawhid* or oneness of Allah was not compromised by worshipping of saints and visiting their tombs. This purification inspired a more general movement in Islam to set distinct boundaries between Islamic communities and the modern West. This broader movement is called the Salafist movement.

Wahhabism has become the guiding ideology of Saudi Arabia and has influenced many religious groups including the Taliban, Islamic State and Al-Qaeda.

INVESTIGATE

Wahhabism could be called a revivalist or even fundamentalist movement – but these terms were originally used to describe Christian movements. Research online and find out more about how modernity has inspired the rise of such movements in many different religious traditions.

CONSIDER

Wahhabism (and Salafism) *can* be seen as controversial, and some Islamic reviewers might view their inclusion as provocative – some decades ago they were more fringe in Islam, and Wahhabist thinking is, to a significant extent, behind the 9/11 attacks – but these ideas are now increasingly mainstream and important in the study of Islam and understanding how it is reacting to modernity. What can you discover about the growing influence of Wahhabism?

EXERCISE 11A.1

Choose ONE of the significant people discussed above and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the life of one significant person.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that significant person to Islam.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that significant person on the Islam of their day and their ongoing influence in Islam today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11A.1

1 Create an annotated timeline of the significant person you have chosen, noting significant events in their life.
2 Research and **analyse** the impact of the significant person on Islam, noting areas of conflict and controversy.
3 Debate the following topic: Islam would not be relevant in today's world without the contribution of [the significant person].

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13A.2 Further significant people and schools of thought

For context, you should read Chapter 13 in the print textbook before commencing this digital section.

The significant people of Judaism are drawn from the biblical narrative as well as more contemporary expressions of Judaism. The following people and schools of thought are discussed in addition to those in the print book where **Moses Maimonides** and the **Hassidim** are discussed.

Deborah (circa eleventh century BCE)

In the early pages of the Tanakh there are several women who are identified as significant characters. One of the first is the judge Deborah, identified in Judges 4 and 5.

Life and ideas

Deborah lived around 1100 BCE, at the time that the Hebrew people had settled in the Land of Israel. This brought them into close contact with the Canaanites, who, the Bible relates, were already there. Canaanite worship involved polytheistic animistic fertility rituals that were in stark contrast with the developing monotheism of the Hebrew tribes.

As the Hebrew people sought to establish themselves in the land they believed God had promised to them, they had to endure attacks from the Canaanites who were defending what they considered their own territory. Several people, called judges, were raised up by God to defend the Hebrew people and to settle disputes within those tribes. These people included Othniel, Ehud, Samson, Gideon and Deborah. These judges performed several functions. They acted as civil and military leaders, and were often considered charismatic, in the sense that they were gifted by God to perform their role.

Deborah is regarded as one of seven prophetesses who are mentioned in rabbinic literature. Her story is told in Judges 4 (a prose version) and 5 (a poetic version). Chapter 5 contains 'The Song of Deborah', which is a very ancient poem, one of the earliest writings that the Bible preserves. Deborah is described as a judge and a prophetess, a spokesperson for God. She was involved in several roles – a political leader, a warrior, a settler of disputes, a spokesperson for God and a decision maker.

She was married and her husband's name was Lappidoth (meaning 'torches', which may be a reference

Figure 13A.1 As a Judge of Israel, Deborah led a successful counter-attack against the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan and his military commander Sisera

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to Deborah's fiery nature). Jewish tradition suggests that Barak, the other main character in the Deborah story, was actually Deborah's husband.

Deborah was told by God to tell a man named Barak that he was to raise an army to fight the Canaanite commander, Sisera. Barak proved to be a timid man, and only agreed to follow God's orders if Deborah would go with him. Deborah agreed, but said he would not get credit for the coming victory; it would go to a woman instead. When the battle took place, Sisera escaped defeat by hiding in the tent of a woman named Jael. While he was asleep, Jael drove a tent peg through his head and killed him. The Hebrew tribes then experienced a peaceful 40 years.

Contribution to Judaism

The story of Deborah can be read as a veiled criticism of male leadership, particularly of Barak, where that leadership is not trusting in God. Barak refused to take leadership when it was offered to him. It is interesting to note that the song in chapter 5, while praising Jael, does not criticise Barak, although it does acknowledge Deborah's leadership. The song is credited to both Barak and Deborah. The poem in chapter 5 is considered a very early version of the story, and could have come from a book called *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* that is mentioned in Numbers 21:14. It seems to be a very early example of Hebrew poetry. Certainly the story of Deborah reveals a woman who trusts God at a difficult time in the history of the Hebrew people. This is contrasted with the lack of faith of Barak. It is also a story of a woman who asserts significant leadership among the Hebrew people.

Impact on Judaism

Deborah is seen as a figure of authority, trust and inspired leadership. She is seen as one of a number of significant women, including the midwives of Egypt (Exodus 1:15–19), Ruth (Book of Ruth) and Esther (Book of Esther), who showed faith and trust in God in trying circumstances and were vindicated as a result of that faith. They were models for Jewish women in their era and in the many years since.

Deborah referred to herself as 'a mother in Israel' (see Judges 5:7). Other Jewish writings suggest she lost her prophetic powers because she showed pride in regarding herself as such. (Pes. 66b).

Summary

Deborah was a charismatic woman, a prophetess and judge. At a crucial time during the establishment of the nation of Israel, she was the catalyst for a significant victory over the Canaanites. Deborah is a model for women to trust God.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Deborah, see Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

Isaiah (eighth century BCE)

Isaiah, whose name means 'salvation is from God', was one of the prophets in the eighth century BCE who challenged the rulers and people of Israel when under siege, before their exile to Babylon. Isaiah is the main character in the book from the Hebrew Bible that bears his name, and is traditionally regarded as its author.

Life and ideas

Isaiah was the son of Amoz, and was married; his wife is identified only as a prophetess. Nothing is known of her, and it is unclear if she actually carried out a prophetic role, or bore the title simply because she was married to a prophet. Isaiah had two sons whose names were symbolic – Shear-jashub, which means 'a remnant will return', and Maher-shalal-hash- baz, which means 'to speed the spoil he hurries the prey'.

Rabbinic literature says Isaiah was a descendent of Judah and Tamar, and he prophesied in Judah, the southern kingdom of the divided nation of Israel, during the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, probably beginning around 740 BCE. He may have performed his ministry for about 45 years, during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.

Isaiah was probably from an aristocratic background, as he seemed to have had fairly easy access to the kings of Judah. The Talmud says Isaiah's father was the brother of King Amaziah (Megillah 15a). Isaiah experienced a dramatic call to be a prophet (told in Isaiah 6) that gave him an exalted vision of God, the ruler of the world.

Isaiah spoke during unsettling years when Israel, the northern kingdom of the divided nation of Israel (the south being the Kingdom of Judah), was captured by the Assyrians. It is possible that Isaiah witnessed the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III. Isaiah advised the kings during these years, and told them to not resist the Assyrians but to accept them as the tool of God in disciplining Israel. Judah should trust in God and turn back to him. This message was in contrast to the false prophets who argued for resistance.

When King Hezekiah began religious reforms he was supported by Isaiah, but when Hezekiah sought alliances with Egypt and Babylon against Assyria, Isaiah was highly critical of the king. However, when Assyria sought to besiege Jerusalem under Sennacherib, Isaiah urged Hezekiah to resist and spoke of the judgement of God on the Assyrians.

The last prophetic appearance of Isaiah is dated around 701 BCE. Thus he prophesied from around 740 to 700 BCE. Isaiah probably lived into the reign of Manasseh and, while there is no specific information contained in the Bible, tradition suggests he was martyred under that king, possibly by being sawn in half, sometime after 687 BCE.

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Figure 13A.2 A part of the 2000-year-old Isaiah Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947

Contribution to Judaism

Isaiah has strongly contributed to the beliefs of Judaism. The Book of Isaiah affirms God's greatness, his role as judge and also his mercy and compassion.

Isaiah's message is contained in the Book of Isaiah in the Tanakh, in 66 chapters. Isaiah's call to be a prophet, recorded in chapter 6, is a vision of God's holiness, a word he uses to describe God more than 30 times (more than in all the rest of the books of the Tanakh combined). His message was a message of hope and trust in God, and universalist in its scope, offering a call to all nations to come to God (2:2–3).

The prophetic messages contained within the Book of Isaiah speak of God as the ruler of the whole world, controlling all nations. It contains judgements against various nations (chapters 9–23) including Judah (chapters 28–31); for example, by worshipping other gods, by breaking the covenant, and by acts of injustice they will bring God's judgement on themselves (chapters 28–29). There is hope for the people of God, and there are many promises of a Messiah who will bring in the Messianic kingdom (chapters 34–44).

The second major section, beginning at Isaiah 40, has been called 'the Book of Comfort', when Isaiah speaks of the promise of deliverance for God's people. Isaiah says the Babylonians will be overthrown by the Persian king, Cyrus, and Israel will be returned to their homeland.

One feature of the Book of Isaiah is the four 'servant songs' about a leader who is abused and yet leads the nations. Judaism sees these songs as a reference to the Jewish people. The book concludes with a message of hope for a righteous ruler who will rule the whole Earth. Isaiah's imagery of the Messianic kingdom at the end of time is hauntingly beautiful (see 2:2–4 and 65:25).

The book of Isaiah is concerned with social justice as much as worship. Ethical behaviour cannot be divorced from worship. God refuses to accept worship from those who are treating others unjustly. Idolatry is a theme discussed in the Book of Isaiah; the people are like an unfaithful wife. Several great themes are evident in Isaiah – God is the ruler of the whole world and cannot be defeated; God will establish his rule on earth, which will feature just rule and a time of peace.

Impact on Judaism

The Book of Isaiah has been the cause of debate among biblical scholars from several religious traditions. Many have suggested that there were two or three authors. However, most accept that it is meant to be treated as a complete literary unit, and that arguments about different authors do little to detract from its major themes and message.

Among the scrolls discovered at Qumran, often called the Dead Sea Scrolls, there were several copies of the Book of Isaiah, including a complete scroll of the whole book, the only book from the Tanakh to have been completely preserved.

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Isaiah was a prophet who brought hope to a nation that was almost totally destroyed. He warned of the consequences of forgetting God and the Covenant, and of treating people unjustly. He painted a picture of a God who would rule the world and restore his people. His book has encouraged troubled and suffering people, especially the Jewish nation, since they were recorded.

Summary

Isaiah was an eighth-century-BCE prophet who spoke in a difficult political climate. He urged the kings and people of Israel to trust in God, not empires. He challenged injustice and spoke of the coming Babylonian exile, but also of the safe return of the people and the coming rule of God.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Isaiah, see the following:

- Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: Old Testament Library*, Louisville, John Knox Press, 2001. You should be aware that this commentary, and many others on Isaiah, is written from a Christian rather than a Jewish perspective. While this book is recommended by Jewish scholars, it should be read from the Jewish perspective, rather than Christian.
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

Hillel (and Shamai) (110 BCE–10 CE)

Hillel is usually discussed together with Shamai as they represent two different approaches to Jewish law at the same time, in the same setting.

Life and ideas

Hillel the Elder lived in Jerusalem from approximately 110 BCE to 10 CE. He was a contemporary to King Herod the Great, and much of his thinking and teaching is reflected in the teachings of the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, who was born while Hillel was alive. Hillel is regarded as one of the most significant and important figures in Jewish history and in the development of Jewish thought.

Hillel was born in Babylon, supposedly descended from the Jewish tribe of Benjamin (on his father's side) and King David (on his mother's). Of his family, only his brother Shebna is named. Hillel studied the Torah while working as a woodcutter and then went to Jerusalem to study the Hebrew Bible in 70 BCE, when he was about 40 years old.

As a poor man, he went through considerable difficulty before being accepted into the schools of Jerusalem. His experiences are recounted in the Talmud (Yoma 35b) to show that poverty should not be an obstacle to studying the Torah.

Hillel is recorded in the Jewish writings, including the Talmud, as a man of kindness, gentleness and concern for humanity. The writers of the Talmud generally agree with the rulings of Hillel, as compared with his contemporary, Shamai.

Eventually, because of his wisdom, he had an enormous following with thousands of students and became president of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish court). His only official title recorded is *Ha Zaken* (the Elder).

Hillel died about 10 CE; he had lived for more than 100 years, and was a highly regarded member of the Jewish community in Judea. It was said of him: 'let a man be always humble and patient like Hillel, and not passionate like Shamai'. His grandson, Gamaliel, is mentioned in the Christian New Testament as the teacher of St Paul (Acts 22:3).

Contribution to Judaism

Hundreds of rulings by Hillel are recorded, as well as some of his astute sayings. He made a ruling that ensured the payment of debt even though the Sabbath year called for their cancellation. His ruling was to ensure the concept of 'repair of the world' (see the print textbook Chapter 12, regarding the concept of *tikkun olam*). Another ruling relates to the sale of houses. So Hillel was concerned about the application of the beliefs of Judaism to the practical concerns of daily life.

Hillel is also noted for several sayings. One was given when a Gentile (non-Jew) asked him to summarise the Jewish religion 'while standing on one foot'. Hillel replied:

> What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow: this is the whole Law; the rest is explanation; go and learn.
>
> SHAB. 31A

Hillel taught people to care for themselves to enable them to care for others, particularly for members of the Jewish community. He was not an exclusivist, however. He was keen to 'bring men to the Law' and to proselytise. He taught the importance of study of the Torah and he taught reliance on God and a love of peace. However, he was also keen to challenge the restrictive teachings of his contemporary Shamai.

Shamai was a Jewish rabbi who lived from 50 BCE to 30 CE. He was the vice-president of the Sanhedrin under Hillel, and became president after Hillel's death.

The disciples of Hillel are often contrasted with those of Shamai. Their disagreement and controversies covered many areas of Jewish law. Hillel was considered more gentle and flexible in his interpretations of the law, while Shamai was more rigid. Examples of their disagreements are illustrated as follows:

- Hillel believed anyone who wanted to should study the Torah; Shamai wanted students from 'good families'.
- Hillel welcomed converts to Judaism; Shamai was more restrictive.

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- Hillel allowed divorce; Shamai wanted severe restrictions on divorce.
- Hillel said *mezuzzot* (parchments inscribed with the *Shema* and attached in a case to the doorposts of Jewish houses) should be vertical on door frames; Shamai argued that they should be placed horizontally.
- They disagreed even on the procedure of lighting candles over eight nights during Hanukkah.

Over 300 differing opinions between these two people are recorded in the Talmud. It is generally believed that in the present age, the rulings of Hillel will hold sway, but in the age of the Messiah, the rulings of Shamai will prevail. This is because they are believed to be too difficult for people today, but will be possible in a more perfect world.

Impact on Judaism

Hillel was a significant Jewish leader and scholar at a time when the land of Israel was occupied by the Roman Empire. His rulings and decisions sought to reach out further to the community than the Judaism of Shamai. He is noted as the one who embodied the moral and religious teachings of Judaism, and the one who restored the art of biblical exposition. The 'seven rules of Hillel' were the basis for Rabbi Ishmael's 'thirteen rules' in the systematic development of the exposition of the Hebrew Bible, and the development of Halacha (Jewish law) from the Torah. Hillel articulated many of the ethical principles that developed into Jewish ethics as we know them today. His approach to Judaism is reflected by many modern scholars today.

Hillel was not a miracle worker and there are few legends associated with his life. He is simply remembered as a great teacher who practised what he preached: humility, kindness and the fear of God.

Figure 13A.3 The tomb of Hillel, along with many of his disciples, in a cave in Meron, Israel. Shamai's tomb is on the hill facing opposite.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Hillel and Shamai, see the following:

- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.
- James Michener, *The Source*, New York, Penguin Random House, 1965. This contains short stories that are an excellent background to understanding Judaism. The story entitled 'Level VII – the Law', while set after the time of Hillel, gives a good understanding of the debate that Hillel and Shamai were engaged in.

Summary

Rabbi Hillel was a significant Jewish scholar of the first century BCE. He developed a more flexible interpretation of Jewish law, which has influenced Jewish thinking today. He lived by the principles he taught and is remembered in contrast to the school of Shamai, a fellow scholar who preached much stricter interpretations of the law and often disagreed with Hillel's views and interpretation.

Beruriah (second century CE)

Life and ideas

Beruriah lived in the second century CE and is noted as a sage in the Talmud – a scholar who was worthy of note, highly unusual for a woman at the time. Her opinions were considered to reveal a great breadth of knowledge, and she once taught the rabbis 300 pieces of Jewish law in one day (Pes. 62b). She was married to the scholar Rabbi Meir and they lived in the Land of Israel, which had been renamed 'Palestine' by the Romans.

Beruriah had a tragic life. Her father, Rabbi Hananiah Ben Teradion, was one of the Ten Martyrs killed by the Romans for teaching the Torah. Her brother was killed by thieves, her sister was forced into prostitution, her two sons died on a Shabbat afternoon and Beruriah may have committed suicide.

Beruriah was very involved in discussions of Jewish law (Halacha) and challenged others in debate, often

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earning the praise of other rabbis. She was known for her sharp mind, revealed in her quick wit and her often caustic jibes at scholars and scribes. She was seen as a compassionate person, and her opinions came to be respected above other scholars. She warned against making quick judgements and demanded a passage should be examined in its context before any interpretation was made, an important basis of modern biblical scholarship. She is quoted as saying 'Look to the end of the verse' – that is, examine it in its context. Beruriah soon became greatly respected by biblical scholars.

Beruriah had a great inner strength and this was evidenced in the tragic death of her two sons. They died one Sabbath afternoon, and Beruriah was concerned not to disturb her husband's observance of Shabbat. She asked him, after Shabbat had ended, if she should return a deposit that was left with her for safe keeping that the owner was now wanting to claim. 'Can there be any question about the return of property to its owner?' replied her husband. 'I did not care to let it go out of my possession without your knowledge', replied Beruriah. She then led him into the room in which the bodies of their two sons were lying on the bed. When she pulled back the cover, Rabbi Meir was devastated. Beruriah reminded him of his answer to her question about the return of a treasure entrusted to one for safe keeping, adding the verse from Job: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'. Her husband quoted the verse 'A woman of valour who can find? For her price is far above rubies' (Proverbs 31:10), praising Beruriah as living up to the almost impossible ideals in the Book of Proverbs.

On one occasion, Beruriah was so upset by her husband praying for the death of a neighbour that she taught him to pray for the repentance of the wicked, not their doom. She did so by explaining Psalm 104:35. This story is quoted in the *Midrash* on Psalm 118.

There are various legends relating to Beruriah's death. One such legend, which is partially alluded to in the Talmud, seeks to explain her death. She had criticised a statement that women were light-headed. Her husband, to prove her wrong, sent one of his disciples to attempt to seduce her. The student succeeded and Beruriah was so ashamed that she committed suicide. Rabbi Meir was so distressed that he exiled himself from Palestine to Babylon. Another story says that Beruriah and Rabbi Meir had to flee after the Romans executed her father and sold her mother as a slave and her sister as a prostitute. The details are not clear.

Contribution to Judaism

Beruriah contributed greatly to the understanding of exegesis. She developed the approach that a verse in scripture should be examined in its context. Her interpretations of the Tanakh are greatly respected and her role as a scholar admired. Beruriah showed considerable respect for Jewish law and practice but urged kindness and consideration be displayed rather than just legalism. Beruriah is worthy of note because of the status given to her as a sage in the Talmud.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Beruriah, see the following:

- Dalia Hoshen, *Beruria the Tannait: A Theological Reading of a Female Mishnaic Scholar*, Lanham, University Press of America, 2007.
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

Impact on Judaism

Whatever the facts of Beruriah's life, it is clear that she is a model for Jewish women in withstanding tragedy, and also as a scholar who succeeded despite her gender in difficult times. She stressed important issues that relate to biblical scholarship and had a reputation as a scholar of note and significant reputation. The fact that she is quoted in the Talmud is of great significance. She is held up as an example by Jewish feminists of a woman who succeeded in being recognised within Judaism.

Summary

Beruriah is a noted female sage of the Talmud. Her life was tragic and resulted in her possible suicide. Her opinions were considered to be very significant, and her stress on the context of a passage is an important principle of biblical interpretation. She was a significant woman in a time when women were overlooked.

Rabbi Solomon Isaac (Rashi) (1040–1105 CE)

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzaki (Isaac) is better known by the name Rashi (an acronym using the letters from RAbbi SHlomo Isaac).

Life and ideas

Rashi was born on 22 February 1040 CE in Troyes in northern France. He was an only child who was taught the Torah by his father when he was five years old. His father continued to be his teacher until he died while Rashi was still a youth. Rashi married at 17 and went to learn in the rabbinical school (*yeshiva*) in Worms, Germany. After his teacher died he went to study in Mainz. He was taught by some of the most important scholars of his day, and he developed a good understanding of the oral traditions of the Talmud and the forms of argument and logic contained in the holy books.

A number of legends have arisen regarding the birth and early life of Rashi, including that his birth was foretold by the prophet Elijah, who visited his parents and returned for his circumcision. There is also a story of a precious gem that his father threw away rather than let it be used for an idolatrous purpose.

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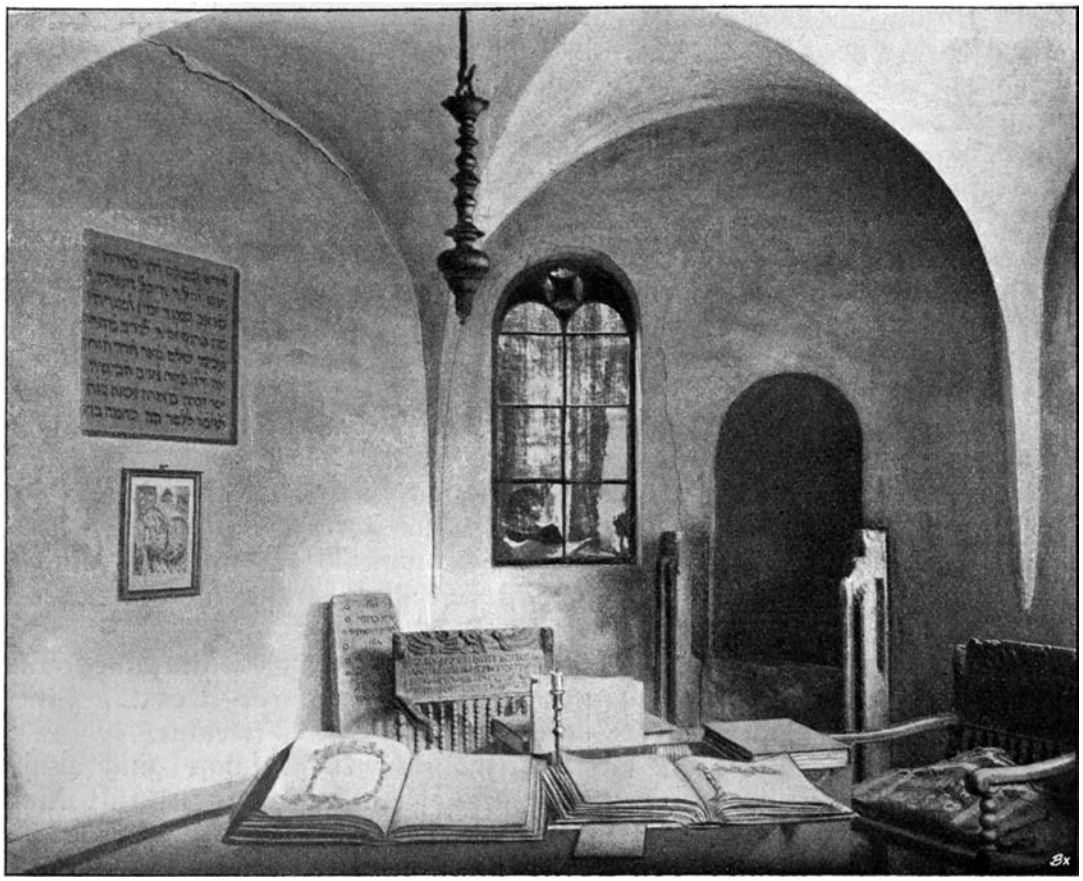

Figure 13A.4 Rashi's Beth Hamidrash (prayer house) in Worms, Germany

Rashi returned to Troyes at age 25 and joined the rabbinical court there, assuming leadership after the death of the head of the court. His mother also died around this time. In 1070 he founded his own *yeshiva* and attracted many disciples. It is probable that Rashi also worked as a winemaker to help support his family. He developed a reputation as a fine scholar and attracted students and disciples.

In 1096, the first of the Christian Crusades (called the People's Crusade) moved through the Lorraine region of France and killed about 12 000 Jewish people. Rashi wrote several *selichot* (mournful poems) about the tragedy, some of which are still recited in Jewish services of remembrance such as Rosh Hashanah. He also composed the cursing poem 'Titnem Leherpa'. Rashi went to Worms to help rebuild the Jewish community and the destroyed synagogue.

> Make them a mockery, a curse, a disgrace.
>
> Heap upon them a furious wrath and hateful vengeance;
>
> Cast fear and panic upon them; send angels of destruction against them.
>
> and cut them down to the last man.
>
> 'TITNEM LEHERPA' – CURSING THOSE WHO KILLED THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Rashi had three daughters, who were all scholars and took on many religious practices that are obligatory for men but optional for women, including wearing *tefillin* every morning. All three married rabbinical scholars. Rashi's sons-in-law and grandsons continued his work and wrote commentaries on his commentaries, often disagreeing with him. The writers of these studies are called Tosafists. In Talmuds published today, Rashi's commentaries are included on every page and the comments from the Tosafists also surround the text.

Rashi died on 13 July 1105 when he was 65 years old. He is buried at Troyes, and it is unlikely he travelled far from his home. However, his scholarship and writings have travelled the world over. Rashi's influence has also been honoured with a Jewish typeface known as 'Rashi script', developed in the fifteenth century.

Contribution to Judaism

Rashi wrote a commentary on the Talmud, the first such comprehensive work. In his commentary he discusses each phrase in a question, using ordinary everyday analogies to explain the meaning of the text. Rashi's work was important in determining the correct text of the Talmud, eliminating textual errors and marginal notes. His commentary has been so influential that it is included in every version of the Talmud that has been printed. It continues to be an important basis for rabbinic interpretation and scholarship.

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For further reading on Rashi, see the following:

- Maurice Liber, *Rashi*, New York, Dybbuk Press, 2006 (a reprint of the classic biography first published in 1906).
- A.M. Silberman, *Chumash with Rashi's Commentary*, New York, Feldheim Publishers, 1985 (also available on CD ROM).
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

Rashi also wrote a commentary on the Tanakh covering all books except Chronicles. When the Hebrew Bible was first printed in 1517, it included Rashi's commentary. It grew out of his lectures at the *yeshiva* and is based on the questions his students asked. His commentary on the Torah (*Chumash*) is especially significant. Even today many study '*Chumash* with Rashi' and it is considered a standard text for Orthodox Jewish people.

Impact on Judaism

The explanations of Rashi on the Torah, Tanakh and Talmud are the main reasons that he is so significant for Judaism today. He is also considered an example of scholarship and piety. Even though he lived nearly a thousand years ago, his writings are still one of the best sources of traditional Jewish ideas and explanations of the Hebrew Bible.

Summary

Rashi lived in the eleventh century CE and was a scholar of considerable reputation. His commentaries on the Talmud, Tanakh and Torah have been so influential they are considered the basis for biblical interpretation today.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786 CE)

Life and ideas

Moses Mendelssohn was born in Dessau, Germany, on 6 September 1729. He was a German Jewish philosopher who has been identified as the driving force behind the Jewish enlightenment (*Haskalah*) of the eighteenth century. Moses Mendelssohn has been called the 'third Moses', following the Moses of the Torah and Moses Maimonides, bringing new insights and a new era in Jewish history.

Moses was the son of Mendel of Dessau, thus the name Mendelssohn (Mendel's son). Mendel was a poor scribe who, with a local rabbi, David Frankel, taught his son the Hebrew Bible and Talmud. Moses was not a well child, having developed curvature of the spine. When Rabbi Frankel went to Berlin in 1743, Moses soon followed at the age of 14.

As a poor youth, Moses had to struggle to survive as a student. He was largely self-taught and he learnt to spell and to study philosophy at the same time. He learnt a number of languages, including French, Italian, English and Greek. Using a Latin dictionary he mastered John Locke's 'An essay concerning human understanding', considered an important philosophical work. He was appointed to teach the children of a wealthy silk merchant, Isaac Bernhard, in 1750 and soon became his bookkeeper and partner.

Figure 13A.5 Moses Mendelssohn, German Jewish philosopher. A Jewish biblical scholar, he was the grandfather of Felix Mendelssohn the composer.

In 1754, Mendelssohn met Gotthold Lessing, a playwright who had written a drama (*Die Juden*) intended to prove that Jewish people could possess nobility. Lessing believed he had met that man in Moses Mendelssohn. The two became friends and philosophical partners, working together and producing works that achieved acclaim.

Mendelssohn achieved some prominence and married Fromet Guggenheim in 1762. He was given the status of 'protected Jew' by the King of Prussia, which meant he could live freely in Berlin. He moved in circles that included the philosophers Thomas Abbt and Immanuel Kant, even competing against them to win a prize for an essay.

Mendelssohn was approached in 1763 by a Christian theological student, Johann Kasper Lavater, to ascertain his views about Jesus Christ. He responded that he respected Jesus as long as he kept within the limits of Orthodox Judaism. That led to a prolonged

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literary debate between the two, during which Moses Mendelssohn's health deteriorated. Lavater urged Mendelssohn to convert to Christianity.

Mendelssohn suffered an unusual complaint in 1771, a sense of paralysis and of being lashed on his neck causing great anxiety. It was suggested it was the result of mental stress, or congestion of blood in the brain.

As he grew more famous he became involved in what has been called the 'pantheism controversy'. He was accused by the German philosopher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi of being a pantheist, which in that time meant atheist. He became involved in a series of publications trying to defend his position. Mendelssohn caught a cold while taking a manuscript to the publisher and died on 4 January 1786.

Moses Mendelssohn had six children, of whom only two remained faithful to Judaism. His grandchildren, Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, became well-known composers and were both Christians.

Contribution to Judaism

In 1767, Mendelssohn wrote a work on the immortality of the soul, a popular topic of discussion at the time. *Phadon, or About Soul's Immortality*, was an immediate and international success, and Mendelssohn was even called 'the German Socrates'. Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise*, written in 1779, was about a Jewish hero possibly modelled on Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn wrote about philosophy more often than he wrote about religion. He developed an understanding of God as a perfect, wise being. He accepted the existence of God and had faith in God's wisdom, righteousness, goodness and mercy. He accepted revelation but declared it could not contradict reason. Reason could lead to the reality of God and an acceptance of the immortality of the soul.

Following a recommendation from his doctor to take a rest from philosophy, he determined to spend his time 'for the benefit of my children or a goodly portion of my nation'. He did this by translating the Torah and other sections of the Hebrew Bible, including a commentary, into High German. This work, called the *Bi'ur* (meaning 'explanation'), was meant to encourage Jewish people to learn German faster. It included fine rabbinic scholarship, medieval exegesis and *Midrash*. He also began a public school for Jewish boys and through other published works promoted tolerance for Jewish people.

In 1783, Moses Mendelssohn published *Jerusalem*, a call for the freedom of conscience and non-interference. This work was quickly translated into a number of languages and earned praise from Immanuel Kant. The application of reason to Jewish beliefs and religious plurality was to be shown in moral pragmatism.

Impact on Judaism

Moses Mendelssohn is regarded by many as the father of the Jewish renaissance or enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, while others regard him as one who led to the decline of Jewish faith, loss of identity and assimilation with the Gentile community. He was certainly one of the first to bring a secular culture to the Jewish community. He argued that Judaism could withstand philosophical thought, and that logic could lead to religious truth. He has been referred to as the 'German Socrates' or the 'Jewish Socrates', such is his intellectual stature.

Mendelssohn sought to defend Judaism as a religion of reason that could be accessed by all intelligent people. He certainly helped to lift the status of Judaism in European society.

Summary

Moses Mendelssohn is considered the father of the Jewish enlightenment. He was a philosopher who sought to bring Judaism into the province of reason and philosophy. He was held as the model of a 'good Jew' and was influential in developing a wider acceptance of Judaism in the German community.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Moses Mendelssohn, see the following:

- Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: or on Religious Power and Judaism*, Lebanon NH, Brandeis, 1983.
- David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996.
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

Abraham Geiger (1810–1874 CE)

The early nineteenth century was a time when science and reason were championed and tradition was challenged. This was the era of Abraham Geiger, who sought to make Judaism modern using a reasoned and scientific approach.

Life and ideas

Abraham Geiger was a German rabbi who is considered the founder of Reform or Progressive Judaism. He was born in 1810 and as a child began to doubt the teachings of Judaism, particularly the traditional aspects that emphasised the concept of the Jewish people as the 'chosen people' of God. He was an adept scholar and began his writing career at the age of 17, comparing the different styles of the *Mishnah*, the biblical law and the Talmudic law.

Geiger's friends supported him at Heidelberg University, where he studied philology (the study of language and literature) and focused on Syriac, Hebrew and the classics. He also studied archaeology, the Hebrew Bible and philosophy. After a year he went to Bonn University and formed, with Samson Hirsch, a society for Jewish students to promote Jewish values. He preached his

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Figure 13A.6 Germany's first post–World War II female rabbi, Alina Treiger, was ordained in 2011. A woman can lead the synagogue in Reform/Progressive Judaism. Abraham Geiger is considered the founder of Reform Judaism.

first sermon to this society in 1830. Geiger and Hirsch later became bitter enemies on separate sides of the Jewish movements.

While at Bonn, Geiger studied Arabic and the Qur'an and was awarded a doctorate by the University of Marburg. He began to realise that the Qur'an and the Christian New Testament were based on rabbinic literature. He wanted to show that Judaism was influential in the formation of both Christianity and Islam.

Geiger discovered that as a Jewish person he was unable to become a university professor, so he became a rabbi. He continued to write while he was rabbi of Wiesbaden and produced two scholarly journals, which became a forum for the writings of other contemporary scholars.

He was a moderate scholar who based his ideas on his study of history, rather than a concept of divine revelation. Geiger opposed the concept of a Jewish national identity, a concept that would emerge in the Zionist movement in the years following his death. Abraham Geiger died in 1874.

Contribution to Judaism

While in his synagogue, Geiger was also seeking ways to reform the liturgy and practices. He sought a more progressive approach, using the vernacular and omitting many of the traditional prayers that referred to the return to the Land of Israel or Zion (believing they would be seen as unpatriotic to the German authorities). Geiger also introduced the organ so that singing would be more tuneful, and he abolished rote prayers. He made the sermon an important part of the synagogue service, and tried to present Judaism as an acceptable alternative to the Christian expressions around the Jewish community.

Geiger met with other rabbis who wanted to bring reform, and they were concerned that they might be seen as taking steps to oppose the rise of **anti-Semitism**. Geiger did not seek a revolution, but rather a change, a reformation, within Judaism. Reform Judaism (called Progressive Judaism in Australia) was the result of Geiger's efforts.

anti-Semitism
the strong dislike or cruel and unfair treatment of Jewish people

Geiger's reforms drew a response from many Jewish people who wanted to update their worship and approach to life. He brought a sense of holiness into a world that was exploring science and truth, and tried to ensure that any practice seen as not fitting the modern world was abolished. Thus, references to the Messiah, the 'return to Zion', dietary laws, wearing of the *kippah*, *tefillin* and *tallit* were all challenged.

Impact on Judaism

Geiger's challenge to traditional Judaism succeeded in many ways, and Progressive Judaism is the choice of many Jewish people in the expression of their faith. In Australia, most Jewish people are Orthodox, while in the USA the majority belong to Geiger's Reform Judaism.

Unfortunately, the hope that an expression of Judaism seen as patriotic would save Jewish people from anti-Semitism in Germany would not be realised in the long term, as events of the twentieth century indicate. However, Judaism has benefited from Abraham Geiger's efforts and seeks to present a modern form of Jewish belief and practice.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Abraham Geiger, see the following:

- Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Max Wiener, *Abraham Geiger and Liberal Judaism*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1962.

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Summary

Abraham Geiger championed a scientific and reasoned approach to religion. He sought to express a more progressive and liberal form of Judaism. His writings and practices as a rabbi sought to bring change to the traditions of the faith. He is considered one of the founding fathers of Reform (Progressive) Judaism.

Rabbi Isaac Abraham Hacohen Kook (Rav Kook) (1865–1935 CE)

Life and ideas

Abraham Isaac Kook was born in Latvia, part of imperial Russia, in 1865. He became known as Rav Kook, or HaRav (THE Rabbi). His father was a rabbi, a member of the most significant Latvian *yeshiva* (rabbinic school); his mother's father was a member of the Hassidim.

Rav Kook was reported to be a child prodigy. At the age of 18 he joined a *yeshiva* and stayed for about a year and a half. In 1886, at the age of 22, he married Batsheva, daughter of the rabbi of Ponevezh in Lithuania who became the chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Jerusalem. (See Chapter 12 of the print textbook for descriptions of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Judaism.) In 1887, Rav Kook became rabbi of Zaumel in Lithuania. His wife died a year later and he was persuaded by his father-in-law to marry her cousin. He became rabbi of the much larger Bausk in 1895.

Figure 13A.7 Abraham Isaac Kook (Rav Kook)

Rav Kook began to write between 1901 and 1905, developing his ideas in support of a Jewish state in Israel as well as other works on spirituality and morality. In 1904 he moved to Palestine, then controlled by the Ottomans. He became rabbi of Jaffa in Palestine (now Israel), which included developing agricultural settlements, now called kibbutzim. These were secular settlements, but Rav Kook was involved in introducing the Torah and Halacha into the settlements.

Rav Kook was in Europe when World War I broke out in 1914, and he was forced to remain in Switzerland and England. He became rabbi of a synagogue in Whitechapel in London. In England he was involved in formulating the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the British government's promise to help create a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which was later incorporated into the League of Nations Mandate over Palestine and helped in the creation of the state of Israel. After the war he returned to Palestine and became chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Jerusalem in 1921, founding his own *yeshiva*, Mercaz HaRav, in 1924, where students could study the Torah and Talmud.

Rav Kook was first and foremost a teacher and a mystic. His teachings transcend the particularity of Judaism and extend to all of humanity. Addressing all people, he wrote:

> If you desire, human being, look at the light of God's Presence in everything. Look at the Eden of spiritual life, at how it blazes into each corner and crevice of life, spiritual and of this world, right before your eyes of flesh and your eyes of soul …

He believed that people were at their most spiritual when they were the most humane.

> From the well of kindness, your love for humanity must burst forth – not as an arbitrary obligation, for then it would lose the most clear aspect of its brilliance, but as a powerful movement of the spirit within you.

Rav Kook wrote about the potential for creativity that he believed all humans had. He championed the poetic and creative spirit within each individual.

> Every time our heart beats with a true expression of spirituality, every time a new and exalted thought is born, we hear the likeness of a Godly angel's voice at the doors of our soul asking that we allow him entry so that he may appear to us in the totality of his beauty.'

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His message was full of hope and optimism. He wrote:

> to the degree that the quantity of movement toward wholeness grows, evil decreases and goodness is revealed.

As chief rabbi, Rav Kook developed a leadership in Palestine that included both a strict application of Halacha and openness to new ideas. He was also concerned with maintaining open communication between the various groups emerging in Palestine – secular Zionists, religious Zionists and non-Zionist Orthodox. He believed that the formation of a Jewish state was part of a divine plan to bring in the Messianic age. He saw the secular Zionists as part of this divine plan, along with the re-establishment of the Sanhedrin.

Rav Kook's ideas were not shared by everyone. For example, some secular Zionists did not respect the Torah while still revering it as a brilliant, if not sacred, work. Secular Zionists also generally chose not to observe Halacha such as dietary laws and Shabbat. However they still respected Rav Kook. His strongest opposition came from the ultra-Orthodox, who saw him as too close to the secular community.

While Rav Kook is often identified with religious Zionism, he was critical of the movement's extreme wing, which wanted to impose religious law on the secular state. He sought cooperation and dialogue with the different groups. He saw the establishment of a state of Israel as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy and based on Jewish law.

After his death in 1935, Rav Kook's *yeshiva* was taken over by his son, Zvi Yehuda Kook, who promulgated his father's teachings. The Hardal movement – a new label standing for 'Haredi Leumi', meaning 'ultra-Orthodox nationalists' – is today led by rabbis who trained under Zvi Yehuda Kook at Mercaz HaRav. The Hardal stream of Zionism places more importance on faith, emotions and the expectation of the Messiah. It calls for a stricter form of religious Zionism.

Contribution to Judaism

Rav Kook was instrumental in seeking a religious basis to what would become the state of Israel. His work as rabbi in Palestine was part of that effort. He established his *yeshiva* to help in the religious education of Jewish people in Israel. However, he acknowledged the secular leadership as well. In fact he noted that the atheists may be right in that the God they rejected was often an immature and distorted image of God.

He was involved in the formulation of the Balfour Declaration that would lead to the establishment of a Jewish homeland.

Rav Kook is also noted because of his philosophical and mystical writings. He saw the physical land of Palestine to be a place where spiritual life can be best expressed, bringing 'light' to the world, a physical location that could bring purity and full life to the Jewish people.

While he saw that Zionism was largely secular, he saw it as part of bringing in the Messianic age. While he criticised those who broke Halacha, he stated:

> every labour and activity, spiritual or material, that contributes directly or indirectly to the ingathering of our exile and the return of our people to our Land is embraced by me with an affection of soul that knows no bounds.

Impact on Judaism

Rav Kook is an influential figure, who played an important role in developing a place for Jewish people in Palestine and the hope of a Jewish state, finally realised in 1948. His willingness to enter into dialogue was important in helping to establish that state, and his emphasis on the divine control of events has developed a firm religious Zionism. His philosophical and mystical writings are still widely read today, and quite accessible.

Summary

Rav Kook was born in Latvia but immigrated to Palestine, where he became chief rabbi of Jerusalem and was eventually appointed as the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the *yishuv* (Jewish community). He was involved in helping to develop the Jewish community in Palestine and his writings have developed a cooperative approach to Zionism.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Rav Kook, see the following:

- Ben Zion Boshker, *Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitence, the Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters and Poems*, New Jersey, Paulist Press, 1978.
- Abraham Isaac Kook, *The Essential Writings of Abraham Isaac Kook*, New Jersey, Ben Yehuda Press, 2006.
- Ari Ze'ev Schwartz, *The Spiritual Revolution of Rav Kook,* New York, Gefen Publishing House, 2018.
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

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EXERCISE 13A.1

Choose ONE of the significant people previously discussed and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the life of ONE significant person.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that significant person to Judaism.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that significant person on the Judaism of their day as well as their ongoing impact today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13A.1

1 Create an annotated timeline of the significant person you have chosen, noting significant events in their life.
2 Research and **analyse** the impact of the significant person on modern Judaism, with particular reference to Australia.
3 Debate the following topic: 'This particular person has challenged a Judaism that has retreated into emphasising its heritage instead of seeking modern relevance'.

Kabbalah

Ideas

Kabbalah (literally 'receiving') refers to the body of Jewish mystical texts that were preserved and studied by a small group of elite scholars until modern times. Kabbalah gradually developed as a school of thought, although Kabbalists would emphasise that it cannot be studied independently of traditional Jewish learning but only as an extension of it. Exponents of Kabbalah, such as the music star Madonna and the footballer David Beckham, have been taught some of the mystical practices of Kabbalists but appear to have little knowledge of authentic Kabbalistic texts or genuine Kabbalah. However, their interest has brought publicity to this relatively quiet and sometimes secretive movement.

Kabbalah is a set of very esoteric teachings that attempt to unlock the secret inner meaning of the Tanakh and the Talmud. 'Esoteric' refers to the fact that these are secret concepts only obtainable by or revealed to a few people.

The main text for Kabbalah is the *Zohar* (literally 'splendour of radiance'). It is a mystical commentary on the Torah, written in Aramaic (the language of the Talmud, closely related to Hebrew) and discusses issues such as the nature of God, sin, the universe, souls, redemption and other related topics. The *Zohar* is believed to have first appeared in Spain in the thirteenth century and was credited to a second-century-CE rabbi. It discusses four levels of interpretation required in reading a text, ranging from the direct meaning to the hidden or secret meaning. Followers of Kabbalah suggest that it is important to study the Torah in this way, but other Jewish people consider this approach almost heretical.

It is not clear when the Kabbalah movement actually began. Many believe it grew in the eleventh or thirteenth century, while some see Kabbalah evident in early documents from the first century CE. Kabbalah tradition says that secret knowledge was passed down from the Patriarchs and prophets, and that it was practised in the tenth century BCE. The reason it became hidden was due to the conquest of invading forces and the eventual diaspora. There are different schools of Kabbalah, and also highly mystical and abstract concepts that make study of Kabbalah difficult to define and examine.

Figure 13A.8 King David's psalms displayed according to Kabbalah rules

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Kabbalah views God as the source of all knowledge. God is neither matter nor spirit; he is the creator of both. He is essentially impersonal and is ultimately unknowable, but has revealed himself by a series of divine revelations, so can be knowable to a certain extent. These revelations or emanations of God are called the *Sefirot* and are the way God created the universe. They are revelations of God's creative will, and are often depicted as the Tree of the Ten Sefirot.

The Ten Sefirot represents a process of creation that reveals the ethical nature of God and his creation. Human beings are created with several elements. The *nefesh* enters every human being at birth. The *ru'ach* and *neshamah* can be developed over time. *Ru'ach* refers to the spirit, the moral virtues and the ability to tell good from evil. *Neshamah* is the higher soul that is an awareness of the divine. The *Zohar* suggests there is an even higher form of the soul that can be accessed by using Kabbalah techniques and knowledge.

While Kabbalah talks of monotheism, many see it as promoting a dualism, or even a form of polytheism. The Ten Sefirot are often criticised by opponents of Kabbalah as being different expressions of God, thus different gods. Certainly in the *Zohar* there seems to be the suggestion of at least two divine beings – the *Sitra Achra*, who is seen as the 'evil' side of God and almost as a separate being, as opposed to the *Ein Sof*, 'the infinite God'. The heavenly court, expressed in the early chapter of the Book of Job, is seen as an example of this concept.

One feature of Kabbalah is the fact that every Hebrew letter has a numeric value. Hebrew does not have a separate number system. The suggestion is that the Torah contains secret encoded messages that can be discovered using the numerical alphabet. By converting the letters to numbers, these hidden meanings can be accessed. There are many different methods of doing this, thus the importance of having the secret knowledge.

Judaism and Jewish worship have long held a tradition of esoteric knowledge and this has been one of the features of the Hassidic movement in modern times. Kabbalists look back to Abraham, or even Adam, as the source of esoteric knowledge. Ultimately, Kabbalists believe that the infinite nature of God cannot be understood; rather, they seek to understand the revealed aspect of God.

The hidden aspects of mysticism are believed by many Kabbalists to have come from the Garden of Eden – that is, from the time and place of creation itself. It is perceived as being part of the oral law of Moses, and the secret knowledge was allegedly encrypted in the writings of the Tanakh in the fifth century BCE. The Torah is seen as describing the mysteries of creation in the concepts of the godhead, the nature of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Additional mysteries include Moses' encounter with the burning bush and the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, including the difficult-to-understand visions of God.

During the time the Talmud was developed, the rabbis warned against teaching esoteric concepts; if they taught them, it was to a limited group of students, usually one at a time. The contrast between the God of justice and the God of mercy was an essential concept in Kabbalah during this time, as were the Ten Sefirot.

With the influence of Moses Maimonides, who developed the idea of committing oral traditions to writing, many Kabbalists of the era committed their teachings to writing. It was around this time that the *Zohar* was written, and the term Kabbalah referred to this work.

Contribution to Judaism

Various teachers carried on the teachings of Kabbalah, but it was the Ba'al Shem Tov (1698–1760) and the formation of the Hassidic movement that popularised the concepts of Kabbalah. It is through the ongoing work of the Hassidim, especially with the writing of Rav Kook and the Lubavitch community, that Kabbalah is receiving renewed interest.

Kabbalah has been criticised for regarding Jewish people and Gentiles as different. Some writings suggest that Jewish people have an additional level of soul that others do not have. However, others suggest these views are misinterpreted. Other strange concepts are sometimes included in the ideas of Kabbalah, such as the creation of a clay man (the golem), described as coming to life when a piece of paper bearing the name of God is placed in its mouth.

Kabbalah has contributed an emphasis on secret knowledge that is related to mysticism in Judaism. This has been rediscovered in modern Judaism.

Impact on Judaism

Some Jewish authors are quite critical of Kabbalah. Progressive and Liberal Judaism initially rejected Kabbalah, but with the revival in interest there has been a new openness to its concepts. It should be noted that gradually, mainly through the medium of Hassidism, some Kabbalistic teachings and even some practices have become part of mainstream Judaism. The modern expressions of Kabbalah that are publicised in the media are suspect to many Jewish people. The wearing of a red string is not necessarily a Kabbalah practice and certainly not exclusive to Kabbalah (it is part of many Mediterranean cultures). Madonna and many celebrities are linked to the Kabbalah Centre, run by Rabbi Phil Berg, who is regarded with some suspicion by many Jewish leaders. Recent public statements by high-profile personalities have certainly introduced Kabbalah to a new audience.

Summary

Kabbalah is a mystical form of Judaism that has recently become more popular in the mass media. It is a long-held form of Judaism that uses the idea of secret knowledge to understand Jewish belief. While often criticised, it has been renewed through the Hassidic movement.

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INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Kabbalah, see the following:

- Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, New Jersey, Jason Aronson, 1984.
- Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, New York, Penguin, 1974.
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.

Zionism

Ideas

Zionism, as a concept, can be traced back to biblical times. The term Zion began as the name of the mountain on which Jerusalem is built. Under King David it came to refer to the city and, in time, to the Land of Israel.

Zionism is the political movement that supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The homeland is sometimes referred to as *Eretz Yisra'el*. This movement has resulted in the modern state of Israel.

Diverse Zionist organisations and associations, which had begun appearing towards the end of the nineteenth century, were unified into a single movement by the Austro-Hungarian Jewish leader Theodor Herzl (1860–1904). Herzl was a journalist who witnessed anti-Semitism when working in Paris. The catalyst was the trial of a French Jewish soldier, Alfred Dreyfus, who was accused of spying, and was tried amid a climate of anti-Semitism. In 1890, the term was used by the Austrian Jewish publisher Nathan Birnbaum. Over the next few years, through the work of Herzl, it was clearly identified with the struggle of the Jewish people to find a homeland. Herzl wrote the book Der *Judenstaat* (The state of the Jewish people), and when it was published in 1896 he became the leading spokesperson for Zionism.

As part of his efforts to enlist diplomatic support for his vision, in 1896 Theodor Herzl met with the Sultan of Turkey, who controlled Palestine; when asked, he refused to cede Palestine to the Jewish Zionists. Herzl met with the German Emperor and the Ottoman Emperor, and appeared before the British Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. These proved to be unsuccessful ventures, but Herzl was being listened to, especially by the British. As the plight of Russian Jewish people worsened, an alternative solution was suggested for a settlement in Uganda. The Zionist movement rejected that offer. Another spokesperson for the Zionist cause was Rav Kook.

Herzl established the First Zionist Congress in 1897, which later became the World Zionist Organization (WZO), and was president and representative of the Congress and WZO until his death in 1904. Herzl died of heart failure, before many of these issues were resolved, at the age of 44. He was buried in Vienna, Austria, but in 1949 his remains were reburied on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

Figure 13A.9 Children at the tomb of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, in Döbling Cemetery, Vienna, Austria. Herzl's remains were later moved to Jerusalem.

Contribution to Judaism

While Zionism was developing as a concept in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish settlement had been occurring in Palestine for some time. While they were largely scattered during the first century CE, there had always been Jewish people living in Palestine. Small groups had migrated to Palestine in the intervening years, with a significant growth in 1882. Most were from Russia, where anti-Semitism was growing. They founded agricultural settlements (now called kibbutzim), supported financially by wealthy European Jewish people, who purchased the land. The Zionists who founded the kibbutzim were driven by a socialist idea to create an ideal society where all were equal, and to work the land with their own hands. Most were secular, although a small number of religious kibbutzim were also founded.

Herzl's contribution was in bringing the diverse Zionist groups together to make a concerted effort to both settle the land and to achieve diplomatic recognition. He facilitated the financial basis for the settlement effort, whereby wealthy Jewish people supported those with the willingness to work the land but not the ability to purchase any. He brought Zionists together and enabled them to clarify and refine their vision and its implementation.

Herzl's efforts increased over the years following the First Zionist Congress, with pressure on the Ottoman and British Empires to allow settlement. Significant groups moved to Palestine from 1904 (Ottoman control) and from the 1930s from Germany (when Palestine was under British control).

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The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was a significant step in the endorsement of a Jewish state by the British. A Jewish homeland finally seemed achievable. However, this was resisted by the Arab nations and there were riots in the 1920s, including massacres of Jewish people. After the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, many were made stateless by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which resulted in increased migration to Palestine and the 1936 and 1939 Arab riots in Palestine.

After World War II and the Holocaust, support for Zionism increased. Attempts to restrict immigration to Palestine were imposed and largely failed. In 1947, Palestine was partitioned into a Jewish state, an Arab state and a United Nations–controlled territory.

The Arab states opposed this concept, and when the Jewish Agency declared the creation of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948, the Arab countries invaded Israel. Israel emerged triumphant from the battle, enlarging its territory and creating about 700 000 Palestinian refugees. In 1967, the Arab states attacked again with a similar result.

Impact on Judaism

There are variations in the expression of Zionism, mainly related to the role of Judaism in the state of Israel. Labor Zionism is largely a secular movement that began in Russia. This was the Zionism of the first Israeli president, David Ben-Gurion. Yiddish – the religious language of the diaspora – was rejected and the use of Hebrew was encouraged. Those who oppose Zionism include a tiny proportion of so-called ultra-Orthodox. Religious Zionism was taught by Rav Kook, and those who follow this path wish to develop dialogue with the Israeli leadership.

Other groups worthy of mention include the American Jewish lobby, which pours great amounts of money into Israel and lobbies the US government to protect Israel from attack or invasion. Many American fundamentalist Christians, who are dispensationalists awaiting the physical return of Jesus to Jerusalem, also support Israel, seeing it as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy. The Jamaican Rastafarians also have a concept of Zionism, but it is related to the African state of Ethiopia and the fate of the black people of the Earth they consider to be the 'new' Israel.

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was the great achievement of the Zionist movement. Many of those who were ambivalent towards Zionism before the creation of the state, or even opposed it such as the American Reform Movement, were won over when they recognised the importance of Israel as a place of refuge for survivors of the Shoah (Holocaust), Jewish people from Arab countries and refugees from the former Soviet Union.

A new group of critics of Zionism has arisen calling themselves Post-Zionists. These are predominantly Israelis who feel that the Zionist movement ignored the plight of Palestinian Arabs. They are part of the left-wing Israelis and mainly work to find a just solution for the problem they identified.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Zionism, see the following:

- Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, Voasha Publishing, 2008.
- Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, New York, Schoken (Random House), 2003.
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its History and Its People*, New York, William Morrow, 1991.
- James Michener, *The Source*, New York, Penguin Random House, 1965. Michener illustrates some of the differing views on Zionism in the story 'Level I – Rebbe Itzik and the Sabra'.

Summary

Zionism was the movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, which was galvanised by Theodor Herzl. He was largely motivated by opposition to anti-Semitism, although other proponents of the movement were inspired with a social vision or a religious impetus. While Herzl died in 1904, his dream was realised in 1948 with the establishment of the state of Israel.

Figure 13A.10 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu under a portrait of Theodor Herzl

Jewish feminism

Ideas

Jewish feminism reflects the diversity of interpretations in Judaism, both religious and secular. The aim of Jewish feminists is to improve women's religious, legal and social standing within Judaism. All of the major groups in Judaism have been affected by this movement but reflect it in different ways.

The Tanakh is an ancient piece of literature and, as may be expected, reflects a patriarchal society. Few women are identified in the Tanakh, yet those who are mentioned are very significant. They include Moses' sister Miriam, and Deborah, Ruth and Esther. It is

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worth noting that there are generally more references to women in the Tanakh than in the other writings of this era. Women in the Tanakh could be prophets and Nazarites and could perform a role in the spiritual life of Israel. In Talmudic literature there are very few references to individual women. Indeed, Beruriah is the only female scholar or religious authority referred to by name in the entire Talmud.

As Judaism emerged as a formalised religious tradition, women were largely kept to domestic roles (as was common in society as a whole). Women could learn the Torah and participate in women's prayer groups. Generally, the principle was applied that women were exempt from the *mitzvot* (commandments) that had to be performed at a specific time. They were also discouraged from studying the Torah beyond what was necessary to run a household, as raising Jewish children and running a Jewish home was considered their primary religious duty.

The social changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s affected the civil rights movement and feminism in general. Feminist movements gained prominence and adherents in several organised religions (such as Christian feminism). Some Jewish women embraced these changes as well.

In 1970 and 1972, two major articles were published that addressed the freedom of Jewish women and the role of Halacha in relation to women. These articles were 'The unfreedom of Jewish women' by Trude Weiss-Rosmarin published in the *Jewish Spectator*, and 'The Jew who wasn't there: *Halakhah* and the Jewish woman' by Rachel Adler, an Orthodox Jew.

Although the Reform Movement included ideas of gender equality from its inception, the Conservative Movement (an offshoot of Reform that valued traditional practices) failed to offer women the same religious opportunities. In 1972, there were 10 Conservative Jewish feminists who established a group named Ezrat Nashim to discuss issues related to Jewish women. They produced a document called the 'Call for change', which raised issues such as the fact that Jewish women were not allowed to be witnesses under Jewish law, the need for women to perform *mitzvot*, equal rights in marriage (including the right to initiate divorce), being counted as part of a *minyan*, assuming leadership positions in the synagogue and participating in religious observances. It was 11 years later (1983) that women were finally accepted into the rabbinic school at the (Conservative) Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Over the past three decades, great strides have been made towards equality for women in the Conservative Movement.

Modern Orthodoxy, too, has its feminist movement, led by Blu Greenberg, founder of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA). Dozens of institutions for Orthodox Women's learning at the highest level have been established, including Matan, Eida and Midreshet Lindenbaum, and Orthodox women scholars rival their male counterparts. There are also movements such as Shira Hadasha, which look to extend the boundaries of Orthodox women's participation in ritual, particularly in the synagogue service. Women's *tefillah* (prayer) groups, where Orthodox women read from the Torah, are common in most large Jewish communities. Ultra-Orthodox, a strict traditional group within Orthodox Judaism, considers Jewish feminism unnecessary. Instead, women should aspire to the qualities espoused in Proverbs 31 – wisdom, courage, business expertise, insight and so on. For the ultra-Orthodox, women reach their potential in becoming wives and successful mothers.

Figure 13A.11 Members of the Nivcharot foundation, a Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish feminist group, chat during a work meeting in Kfar Saba, Israel, in November 2019. The group are breaking a taboo to launch an awareness campaign to counter violence against women within the Haredi communities.

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There have been many debates about the role of women in Orthodox Judaism, with a number of rabbis becoming more moderate in their attitudes.

Contribution to Judaism

Modern Orthodox feminism seeks to change women's status under Jewish law and in positions of leadership and general life. Where there is a conflict between religious law and feminism, the law is seen to hold sway. Orthodox feminists are concerned with issues such as divorce, education and modesty. In some Orthodox synagogues, women are allowed to take on a variety of non-liturgical positions, including that of president of the synagogue. Sometimes they are allowed to give the sermon (*d'var Torah*).

Most Modern Orthodox women are highly educated in the secular world and many struggle with their exclusion from aspects of ritual life. This accounts for the popularity of women's *tefillah* groups. Yet many issues remain unresolved.

In Jewish rabbinical courts, women are not 'kosher' witnesses for many matters. This issue came to a head in an important case in America. Rabbi Tendler was accused of sexual harassment. He claimed that women were not allowed to be witnesses, and therefore the allegations should be dismissed. The court ruled that, in this class of case, women had an obligation to testify and could be relied upon as witnesses. However, this case did not solve the broader questions of women's status in religious courts, a matter that is being addressed in Israel through the training of female experts in religious law who appear in religious courts as legal experts and consultants. Another unresolved issue is the inability of a woman to initiate divorce proceedings – a legal handicap that has left at least hundreds of Jewish women around the world unable to get a divorce and thus unable to remarry.

INVESTIGATE

For further reading on Jewish feminism, see the following:

- Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1981.
- Susan Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, New York, Schocken (Random House), 1983.
- Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

Due to the complexities of how religious obligations (*mitzvot*) are understood, Orthodoxy upholds the idea of men and women sitting separately for prayers, and the term 'rabbi' is only used for men.

Progressive Judaism has allowed women a much greater role in Jewish life. They are allowed to be rabbis, read the Torah, and participate freely in synagogue services where men and women sit together, and in Jewish life. All of the practices accepted in Conservative Judaism are acceptable in Progressive Judaism.

Impact on Judaism

The first woman to be ordained as a rabbi was Regina Jonas, a German Jewish woman ordained in 1935. She was killed in Auschwitz in 1944. Several Australian women have worked as rabbis in Progressive synagogues in Australia, including Rabbi Aviva Kipen (the first Australian woman to be ordained as a rabbi), Jacqueline Ninio and Orna Triguboff.

The role of women in Judaism is slowly changing and is having a significant impact on attitudes in all variants of Judaism.

EXERCISE 13A.2

Choose ONE of the schools of thought discussed previously and complete the following exercises and activities.

1 **Outline** the teachings of a Jewish school of thought.
2 **Explain** the contribution of that school of thought to Judaism.
3 **Analyse** the impact of that school of thought on the Judaism of that era, and its significance today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 13A.2

1 Choose a particular area or aspect of life. **Explain** how the particular school of Judaism you have chosen will impact on that area or aspect of Jewish life.
2 Research and **analyse** the impact of the school of thought on modern Judaism in general, with particular reference to Australia.
3 Develop a learning tool (such as an acrostic, mnemonic, mind map) that will help you to remember and analyse the contribution of a school of thought to Judaism.

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