# Ch. 6 Religion

Key Issue 1: Where are religions distributed?

There are 2 types of religions:

*Universalizing- religions that attempt to be global and appeal to all people.*

*Ethnic- religion that primarily appeals to one group of people living in one place. More closely tied to the physical geography of a particular region, especially with agriculture.*

*Branch- a large fundamental division within a religion.*

*Denomination- a division of a branch that unites a number of local congregations in a single legal and administrative body.*

*Sect- a relatively small group that has broken away from an established denomination. Pilgrimage- a sacred religious journey.*

The 3 main universalizing religions are:

CHRISTIANITY- 2 billion followers in N. and S. America, Europe, Australia, and some

Asian and African countries. 50% Roman Catholic, 25% Protestant, 10%

Eastern Orthodox, and 15% miscellaneous. About 90% of the Western Hemisphere is Christian. 95% Roman Catholic in Latin American, 50% Protestant in the U.S.

ISLAM- 1.3 billion followers in Middle East, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh.

Core of beliefs is based on the 5 pillars of faith:

1. There is no god worthy of worship other than the one God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.
2. A Muslim must pray 5 times daily facing the city of Mecca.
3. A Muslim gives generously to charity, as an act of purification and growth.
4. A Muslim fasts during the month of Ramadan, as an act of self-purification.
5. If physically and financially able, a Muslim makes a pilgrimage to Mecca.

The branches of Islam are Sunni (83%) and Shiite (16%).

BUDDHISM- 365 million followers in China and S.E. Asia mainly.

Based on the 4 Noble Truths:

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

The branches of Buddhism are Mahayana (56%), Theravada (38%), and Tantrayana (6%).

The other two main universalizing religions other than the above three are:

-Sikhism 24 million followers, 21 of which are clustered in the Punjab region of India.

-Bahá’í 7 million followers dispersed across the globe.

Some notable ethnic religions are:

HINDU- the world’s 3rd largest religion with 820 million adherents. 97% live in India

CONFUCIANISM- mainly in China, stresses ethical lifestyles

TAOISM- mainly in China also, followers seek the dao (tao) meaning the way or path.

SHINTO- mainly in Japan, before WWII was the state religion and emperor was regarded as divine.

JUDAISM- 6 million followers in U.S., 4 million in Israel, 2 million in Russia, 2 million elsewhere. First religion to support *monotheism- the belief in only 1 god,* as opposed to *polytheism- the belief in many gods.*

ANIMISM- *traditional African religions that focus on the animate qualities of normally considered inanimate objects, like stones, water, etc. Animism is a sort of allencompassing term rather than a specific religion.* I will now shamelessly plug my own work and say that for more info on African religions, ask Mr. King to see the truly fabulous one-of-a-kind presentation that a certain student of his has prepared.

Key Issue 2: Why do religions have different distributions?

As a general rule, universalizing religions have origins based on a specific individual’s life in the past, ethnic religions typically have either no origin or an unclear one at best.

Some religious origins:

Christianity- based on the life of Jesus

Islam-trace lineage back through Abraham’s other son Ishmael; based on the life of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam.

Buddhism- based on the life of Siddhartha Gautama, who later became Buddha (the enlightened one)

Sikhism- founded by Guru Nanak about 500 years ago.

Hindu- did not originate with a specific founder. Beginnings of Hindu date back to before recorded history.

*Missionaries- individuals who help to transmit a universalizing religion through relocation diffusion.*

*Pagan- followers of polytheistic religions in ancient times.*

*Ghetto- city slum designated for Jew habitation.*

*Cosmogony- creation story.*

*Solstice- day when sun is at highest or lowest point in the sky.*

Diffusion of Religions

Christianity spread mainly through the work of missionaries, and also by some conquest and colonization.

Islam spread mainly through conquest.

Buddhism spread mainly through missionaries and trade merchants.

Ethnic religions rarely diffuse, and when they do, it is to a small extent. Thus, the universalizing religions diffuse mainly at the expense of the smaller ethnic religions, and often a semi-hybrid religion will result with concepts from both the ethnic religion and the universalizing religion intertwined. Judaism is an exception in that it has diffused widely throughout the years, mainly because its people have had to flee persecution from many areas in the world.

Buddhism and Islam are the universalizing religions that place the most emphasis on identifying shrines/holy places. In universalizing religions, the holy places are generally locations at which memorable events happened in the founder’s life, such as Mecca is in Islam because it is Muhammad’s birthplace. Holy places in ethnic religions are often physical features that are closely tied to the religion. For example, in Hindu one of the most important rituals is the bathing of oneself in the Ganges River.

Cosmogony and calendars also differ betwixt universalizing religions and ethnic religions. Ethnic religious creation stories tend to deal with the physical environment and natural events, whereas universalizing religion stories often attempt to explain the mystical. Ethnic religions typically organize their calendars around the seasons, other natural events, or the physical geography. Universalizing religions’ main purpose in calendars is to commemorate events in the founder’s life, thus the seasons or weather are not central to the structure.

Key Issue 3: Why do religions organize space in distinctive patterns?

The distribution of religious elements on the landscape reflects the importance of religion in people’s values.

In Christianity, the landscape is dominated by a high density of churches. They are critical because of the emphasis placed on regularly attending worship.

In Islam, mosques are the places for general assembly. They are not viewed as a sanctified place but rather a convening point for the community. A mosque normally has a central courtyard surrounded by classrooms.

In Hinduism, temples are built within the home or individual community. They have a central room to house a spirit, with rooms for rituals, and outer purifying pools.

In both Buddhism and Shinto, pagodas are the common architecture. They are typically built to enshrine sacred religious artifacts.

In Bahá’í, the church officials decided to open seven Houses of Worship on multiple continents to stress the universality of their religion.

The disposing of the dead differs from religion to religion. Some prefer to bury while others choose to cremate.

Religion often influences the place-names of certain regions. Ex. The vast amount of places named for saints in predominantly Roman Catholic Quebec.

*Hierarchical religion- well-defined geographic structure with a high degree of organization.*

*Ex. The Roman Catholic Church*

*Diocese- the basic geographic unit of the R.C.C.*

*Autonomous religions- self-sufficient religions with little organization.*

*Ex. Islam prefers to unify by faith rather than specific boundaries.*

Most ethnic religions are autonomous. Protestant faiths vary.

Key Issue 4: Why do territorial conflicts arise among religious groups?

RELIGION IS ARGUABLY THE MOST VOLITALE OF ALL HUMAN RELATIONS AND THE SOURCE OF MOST VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT HISTORY.

*Fundamentalism- the literal interpretation and strict intense adherence to one’s religious principles. Fundamentalists try to return society to its religious ways. The most obvious example is the Taliban in Afghanistan.*

*Caste- the class or distinct hereditary order into which a Hindu was assigned according to religious law.*

Religion is nearly always suppressed in communist countries. Leaders believe that religion has a tendency to upset stability and therefore ban it altogether, though often they just concrete the people’s religious adherence instead of destroying it.

Other times, when people of different religions live in close proximity to one another,

engage in contact often, or share interests in a particular location, especially violent interaction will occur. Ex. The Middle East. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have fought for over 2,000 years to control the same small strip of land in the East Mediterranean. Historically the Crusades between Christians and Muslims played out as each fought to control the Holy Lands. Hostilities continue in the modern era over these same lands. Attempting to summate the issue in a few sentences would not be sufficient, see pgs. 213-220.

The controversy in Ireland occurred when predominantly Catholic South Ireland wished to secede from predominantly Protestant Great Britain. However, the northernmost six counties of Ireland are overwhelmingly Protestant and wished to remain part of the U.K. When the split occurred a small number of Roman Catholics in both N. Ireland and the Republic of Ireland joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a militant organization devoted to achieving Irish unity by whatever means necessary. A Protestant organization has formed in return. Violence continues as extremists from both sides disrupt the lives of peaceful civilians.