

## World Religions and Ethical Systems

### A Global View

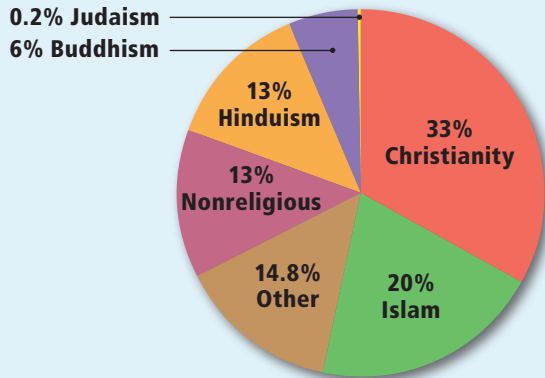
A religion is an organized system of beliefs and practices, often centered on one or more gods. In this book, you have learned about many different religions and their impact on world history. Religions have guided people's beliefs and actions for thousands of years. They have brought people together. But they have also torn them apart.

Religions are powerful forces today as well. They affect everything from what people wear to how they behave. There are thousands of religions in the world. In the following pages, you will learn about five major religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. You will also learn about Confucianism, an ethical system. Like a religion, an ethical system provides guidance on how to live your life. However, unlike religions, ethical systems do not center on the worship of gods. The chart on the opposite page shows what percentages of the world population practice the five major religions. The map shows where these religions are practiced.



## World Population's Religious Affiliations

World population: 6.2 billion (estimated 2002 figure)



Source: *World Almanac 2003*





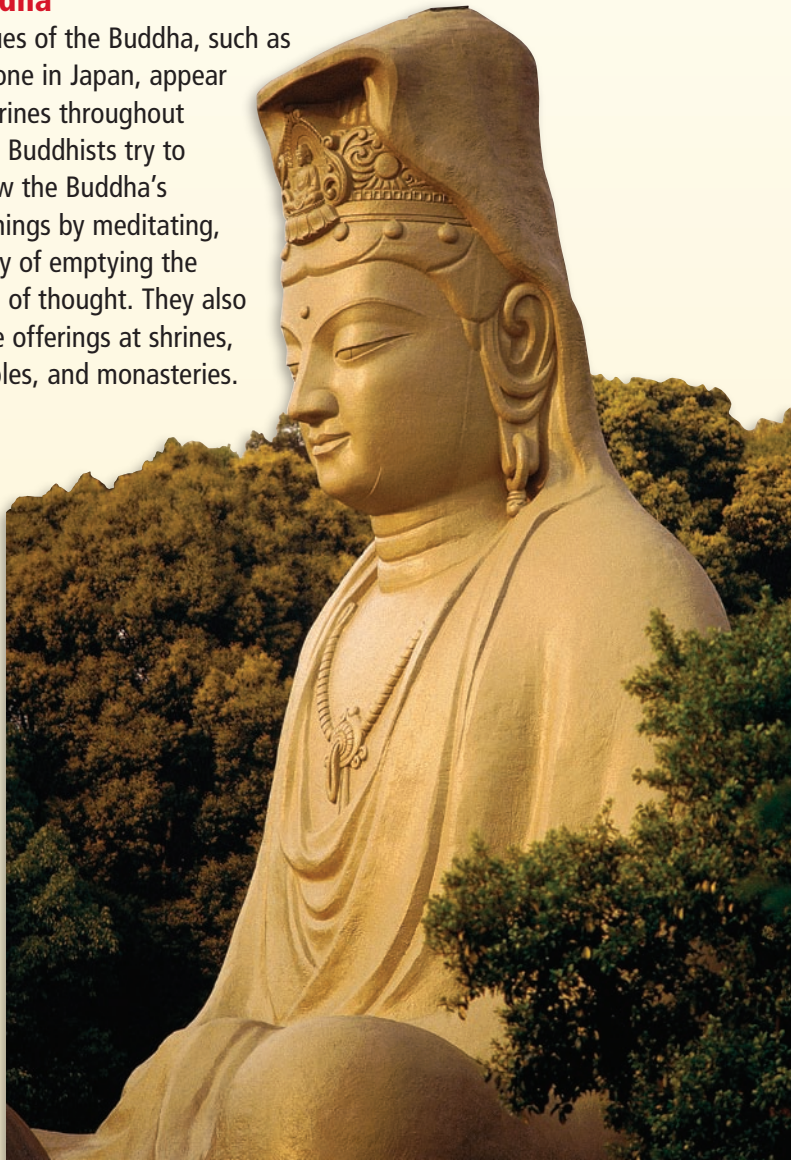
# Buddhism

Buddhism began in India in the sixth century B.C. The religion was founded by Siddhartha Gautama (sīhd•DAHR•tuh GOW•tuh•muh), who came to be known as the Buddha. *Buddha* means “enlightened one.” He was born into a noble family but left home to search for enlightenment, or wisdom. The Buddha is said to have achieved enlightenment after long study. According to Buddhist tradition, he taught his followers that the way to end suffering was by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path. This path involved observing the following: right opinions, right desires, right speech, right action, right job, right effort, right concentration, and right meditation.

After the Buddha’s death, Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon, and Central Asia. Missionaries spread the faith. Buddhist ideas also traveled along trade routes. The religion, however, did not survive on Indian soil. Today, most Buddhists live in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Japan.

## ▼ Buddha

Statues of the Buddha, such as this one in Japan, appear in shrines throughout Asia. Buddhists try to follow the Buddha’s teachings by meditating, a way of emptying the mind of thought. They also make offerings at shrines, temples, and monasteries.



## ▼ Monks

Buddhist monks dedicate their entire life to the teachings of the Buddha. They live together in religious communities called monasteries. There, the monks lead a life of poverty, meditation, and study. In this photograph, Buddhist monks in Myanmar hold their begging bowls.







### ▲ Pilgrimage

For centuries, Buddhists have come to visit places in India and Nepal associated with the Buddha's life. These sites include the Buddha's birthplace and the fig tree where he achieved his enlightenment. Worshipers also visit the site of the Buddha's first sermon, shown here.



## Learn More About Buddhism

**Symbol** The Buddha's teaching, known as the dharma, is often symbolized by a wheel because his teaching was intended to end the cycle of births and deaths. The Buddha is said to have "set in motion the wheel of the dharma" during his first sermon.



### Primary Source

The Buddha called his insight into the nature of suffering the Four Noble Truths (see page 234). In the following selection, the Buddha tells his followers how they can end suffering and find enlightenment. The path involves understanding that life on Earth is brief and full of sadness. It also involves giving up selfish desire.

All created things are transitory [short-lived]; those who realize this are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to pure wisdom.

All created beings are involved in sorrow; those who realize this are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to pure wisdom.

All states are without self; those who realize this are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to pure wisdom.

from the Dhammapada  
Translated by Eknath Easwaran

**Chapter Connection** For more about Buddhism, see Chapter 7.



# Christianity

Christianity is the largest religion in the world, with about 2 billion followers. It is based on the life and teachings of Jesus, as described in the Bible's New Testament. Jesus, a Jew, taught many ideas from the Jewish tradition. Some biblical prophets had spoken of a day when a promised figure would come to save all of humankind. By the end of the first century A.D., many Jews and non-Jews had come to believe that Jesus was the one who would make this happen. Now called "Christians," they spread their faith throughout the Roman Empire.

Christians regard Jesus as the Son of God. They believe that Jesus entered the world and died to save humanity.



## ▼ Easter and Palm Sunday

On Easter, Christians celebrate their belief in Jesus' resurrection, or his being raised to heavenly life after he was put to death. The Sunday before Easter, Christians observe Palm Sunday. This day celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Palm branches, like those carried here, were spread before him.







### ▲ Jesus and the Disciples

Jesus' followers included 12 disciples, or pupils. Jesus passed on his teachings to his disciples. This painting from the 1400s shows Jesus with his disciples.

### ▼ St. Paul

St. Paul was one of the apostles who spread Christian beliefs throughout the Roman Empire. Paul started churches almost everywhere he went. Many churches today, such as this great cathedral in London, are named for this apostle.



## Learn More About Christianity

**Symbol** Jesus was crucified, or put to death on a cross. As a result, the cross became an important symbol of Christianity. It represents the belief that Jesus died to save humanity.



### Primary Source

One of Jesus' most famous sermons is the Sermon on the Mount. In this talk, Jesus provided guidance to his followers. His words were written down in the New Testament, the part of the Bible that describes the teaching of Jesus Christ. In the following verses, Jesus explains that people can be saved by opening their hearts to God and by treating others as they would like to be treated.

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man of you, if his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

Matthew 7:7-12

**Chapter Connection** For more about Christianity, see Chapter 14.



# Hinduism

Hinduism is a way of life guided by religious beliefs and practices that developed over thousands of years. Hindus believe that a supreme being called Brahman is the soul of the universe. The same presence, they believe, can also be found within each person. People can be freed from suffering and desires once they understand the nature of Brahman. The religious practices of Hindus include prayer, meditation, selfless acts, and worship of the various Hindu gods.

Today, Hinduism is the major religion of India and Nepal. It also has followers in Indonesia, Africa, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere.

## ▼ Festival of Diwali

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is the most important festival in India. Diwali may have begun as a harvest festival in ancient India. Today, it marks the beginning of the year for many Hindus. They celebrate the festival by lighting candles and lamps, as shown in this photograph.





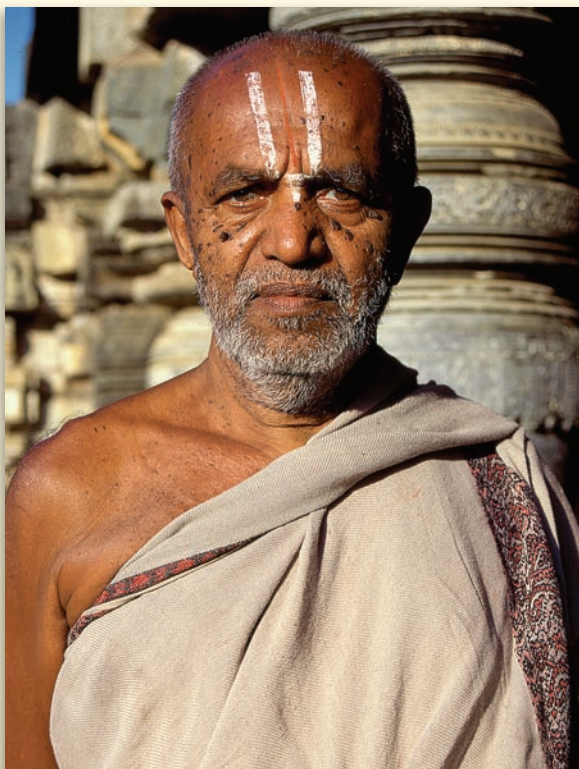


### ▲ Gods

Brahman often takes the form of three gods in Hinduism. Brahma is the creator of the universe. Vishnu is its protector. Shiva is its destroyer. All three gods are represented in this sculpture.

### ▼ Brahmin Priest

Brahmin priests, like the one shown here, are among Hinduism's religious leaders. These priests take care of the holy images in temples and read from the religion's sacred books.



## Learn More About Hinduism

**Symbol** This symbol represents the word *Om* (or *Aum*), which is used at the beginning and end of prayers. *Om* is the most sacred syllable for Hindus because they believe that it is the basic sound of the world and that it contains all other sounds.



### Primary Source

Hinduism has many sacred writings. The Vedas, four collections of prayers, rituals, and other sacred texts, are the oldest Hindu scriptures. They are believed to contain all knowledge, past and future.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is another important Hindu text. In this work, the god Vishnu takes on the personality of a chariot driver named Krishna. Krishna and the warrior Arjuna discuss the meaning of life and religious faith. In this selection, Krishna explains that Brahman cannot be destroyed.

Weapons do not cut it,  
fire does not burn it,  
waters do not wet it,  
wind does not wither it.

It cannot be cut or burned;  
it cannot be wet or withered;  
it is enduring, all-pervasive,  
fixed, immovable, and timeless.

*Bhagavad Gita* 2:23–24

**Chapter Connection** For more about Hinduism, see Chapter 7.



# Islam

Islam is a religion based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the religion's holy book. Followers of Islam, known as Muslims, believe that God revealed these teachings to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel around A.D. 610. Islam teaches that there is only one God—the same God that is worshiped in Christianity and Judaism. In Arabic, God is called Allah. Muslims also believe in the prophets of Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Muslims traditionally refer to Christians and Jews as “people of the book.” That is because Christians and Jews have received divine revelations from scriptures in the Bible.

Today, Muslims live in southwestern and central Asia and parts of Africa. Islam also has many followers in Southeast Asia. Muslims show their devotion by performing acts of worship known as the Five Pillars of Islam. These include faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and a pilgrimage to Mecca.



## ▲ Muslim Prayer

Five times a day—dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening—Muslims face toward Mecca to pray. Like the people in this photograph, Muslims stop what they are doing when they hear the call to prayer. Everything comes to a halt—even traffic.

## ▼ The Dome of the Rock

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is one of Islam's holiest sites. The rock on the site is the spot from which Muslims say Muhammad rose to heaven to learn Allah's will. With Allah's blessing, Muhammad returned to Earth to bring God's message to all people.





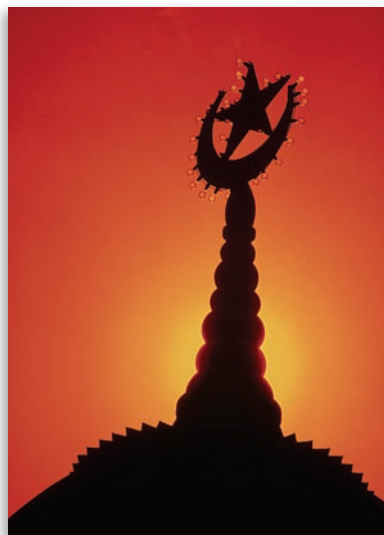
### ▼ Ramadan

During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast, or do not eat or drink, from dawn to sunset. The family shown here is ending their fast. The most important night of Ramadan is called the Night of Power. This is believed to be the night the angel Gabriel first spoke to Muhammad.



## Learn More About Islam

**Symbol** The crescent moon has become a symbol of Islam. The symbol may be related to the new moon that begins each month in the Islamic lunar calendar.



### Primary Source

The Qur'an is the spiritual guide for Muslims. It also contains teachings for Muslim daily life. The following chapter is called the Exordium (introduction). Muslims recite this short chapter as well as other passages from the Qur'an, when they pray.

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate,  
the Merciful*

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe,  
The Compassionate, the Merciful,  
Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!  
You alone we worship, and to You alone  
we turn for help.

Guide us to the straight path,  
The path of those whom You have favored,  
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,  
Nor of those who have gone astray.

Qur'an 1:1-6



# Judaism

Judaism was the first major monotheistic religion—that is, based on the concept of one God. The basic teachings of Judaism come from the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Judaism teaches that a person serves God by studying the Torah and living by its teachings. The Torah became the basis for the civil and religious laws of Judaism. The followers of Judaism, or Jews, also believe that God set down many moral laws for all of humanity with the Ten Commandments.

Today, there are more than 14 million Jews throughout the world. Many live in Israel, where a Jewish state was created in 1948.

## ▼ Abraham

According to the Torah, God chose a Hebrew shepherd named Abraham to be the “father” of the Hebrew people. In the 19th century B.C., Abraham led his family to a land that he believed God had promised them. This painting illustrates their journey.







### ▲ Rabbi

Rabbis are the Jewish people's spiritual leaders and teachers. A rabbi often conducts the services in a synagogue, or Jewish house of worship. Like the rabbi shown here, he or she may also conduct the ceremony that marks Jewish children's entrance into the religious community.

### ▼ Western Wall

Many Jews make the pilgrimage to the Western Wall, shown here. The sacred wall, also known as the Wailing Wall, formed the western wall of the courtyard of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. The temple was built in the second century B.C. The Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70.



## Learn More About Judaism

**Symbol** The Star of David, also called the Shield of David, is a very important symbol of Judaism. The symbol honors King David, who ruled the kingdom of Israel about 1000–962 B.C.



### Primary Source

The Book of Genesis is the first book of the Hebrew Bible and of the Torah. Genesis tells the history of the Hebrew people. It focuses on the individuals with whom God had a special relationship. In the following verses, God speaks to Abraham. His words express a promise of land and a special pledge to the Hebrew people.

Now the Lord said to Abram [Abraham], "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves."

Genesis 12:1–3

**Chapter Connection** For more about Judaism, see Chapter 10.



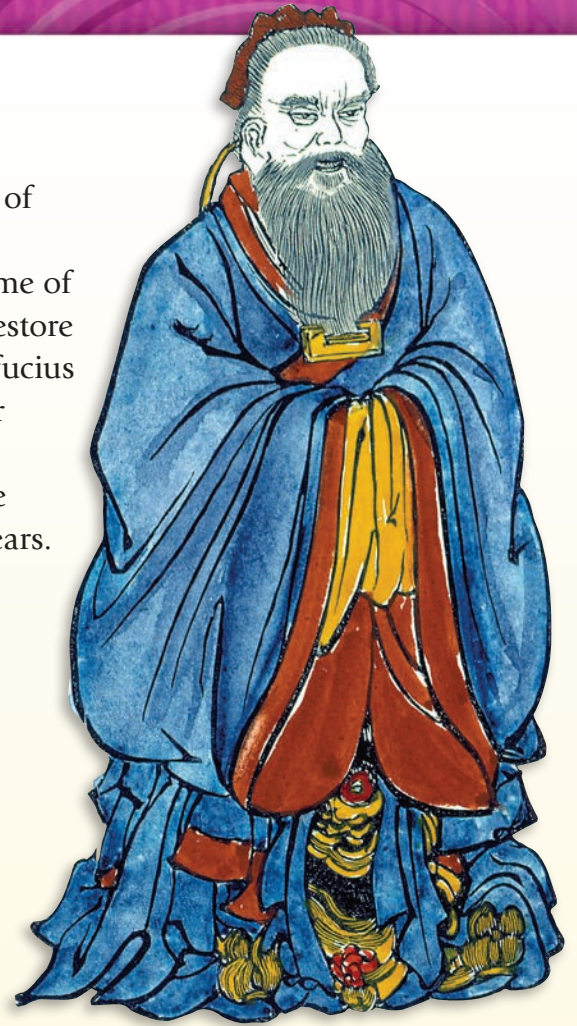
# Confucianism

Confucianism is an ethical system based on the teachings of the Chinese scholar Confucius. It stresses social and civic responsibility. Confucius was born in 551 B.C., during a time of crisis in China. He hoped his ideas and teachings would restore the order of earlier times to his society. But although Confucius was active in politics, he never had enough political power to put his ideas into practice. After his death, Confucius' students spread his teachings. As a result, his ideas became the foundation of Chinese thought for more than 2,000 years.

Today, Confucianism guides the actions of millions of Chinese people and other peoples of the East. It has also greatly influenced people's spiritual beliefs. While East Asians declare themselves to follow a number of religions, many also claim to be Confucians.

## ▼ Temple

Although Confucianism has no clergy or gods to worship, temples, like this one in Taiwan, have been built to honor Confucius. In ancient times, the temples provided schools of higher education. Today, many have been turned into museums.





## ◀ Confucius

Confucius believed that society should be organized around five basic relationships. These are the relationships between (1) ruler and subject, (2) father and son, (3) husband and wife, (4) elder brother and junior brother, and (5) friend and friend.



## ▲ Confucius' Birthday

Historians do not know for certain the day when Confucius was born, but people in East Asia celebrate his birthday on September 28. In Taiwan and China, it is an official holiday known as Teachers' Day. The holiday pays tribute to teachers because Confucius himself was a teacher. Here, students in Beijing take part in a ceremony honoring their teachers.

## Learn More About Confucianism

**Symbol** The yin-and-yang symbol represents opposite forces in the world working together. Yin represents all that is cold, dark, soft, and mysterious. Yang represents everything that is warm, bright, hard, and clear. The yin-and-yang symbol represents the harmony that Confucius hoped to restore to society.



## Primary Source

Confucius' teachings were collected by his students in a book called the *Analects*. In the following selections from the *Analects*, Confucius (called the Master) instructs his students about living a moral and thoughtful life.

The Master said: "Even in the midst of eating coarse rice and drinking water and using a bent arm for a pillow happiness is surely to be found; riches and honors acquired by unrighteous means are to me like the floating clouds." (7.16)

The Master said: "When I walk with two others, I always receive instruction from them. I select their good qualities and copy them, and improve on their bad qualities." (7.22)

The Master said: "The people may be made to follow something, but may not be made to understand it." (8.9)

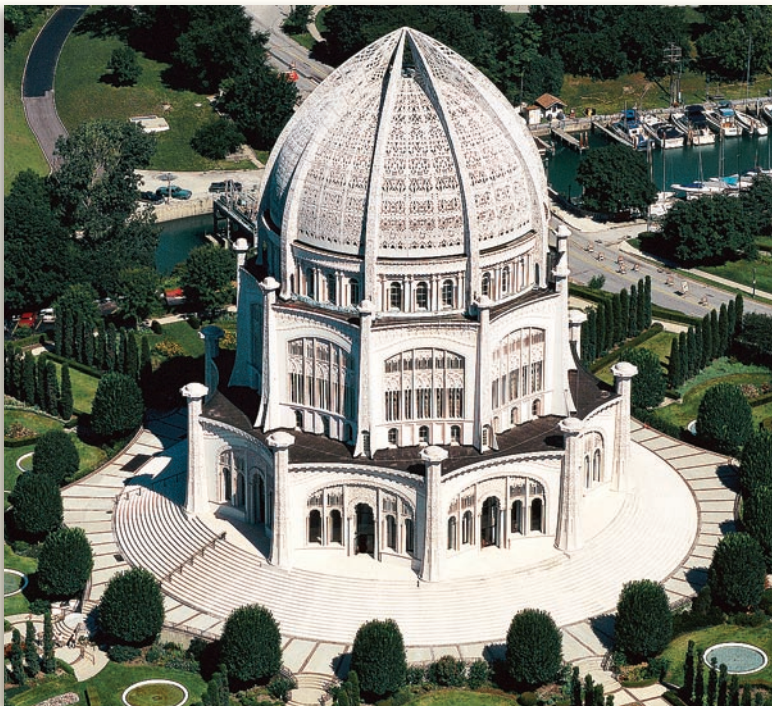
from the *Analects*  
Translated by Raymond Dawson

**Chapter Connection** For more about Confucianism, see Chapter 8.



## Other Important Religions

You have learned about the five major world religions. Now find out about some other important religions: Bahaism, Shinto, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. These religions are important both historically and because they have many followers today.



### ▲ Bahaism

Bahaism (buh•HAH•IHZ•uhm) is a young religion, with more than 7 million followers throughout the world. It was founded in 1863 in Persia (modern-day Iran) by a man known as Bahá'u'lláh, which means “splendor of God” in Arabic. Followers believe that, in time, God will make barriers of race, class, and nation break down. When this happens, people will form a single, united society. All of the Bahá'í houses of worship have nine sides and a central dome, symbolizing this unity. The Bahá'í house of worship shown here is located in Illinois.

### ▼ Shinto

Shinto, meaning “way of the gods,” is Japan’s oldest and only native religion. Shintoists worship many gods, called *kami*. They believe that *kami* are spirits found in mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, and other parts of nature. Shintoists often worship the *kami* at shrines in their homes. They also celebrate the gods during special festivals, such as the one shown here. Today, there are about 3 million Shintoists, mostly in Japan.







### ◀ Sikhism

Sikhism (SEEK•IHZ•uhm) was founded in India over 500 years ago by Guru Nanak, a man raised in the Hindu tradition. The religion's 24 million followers, called Sikhs, believe in one God. Like Buddhists and Hindus, Sikhs believe that the soul goes through repeated cycles of life and death. However, Sikhs do not believe that they have to live outside the world to end the cycle. Rather, they can achieve salvation by living a good and simple life. Uncut hair symbolizes this simple life. Many Sikh men cover their long hair with a turban, like the one worn by the man here.









### ▲ Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism (ZAWR•oh•AS•tree•uh•NIHZ•uhm) was founded in ancient Persia around 600 B.C. by a prophet named Zoroaster. This prophet taught that Earth is a battleground where a great struggle is fought between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Each person is expected to take part in this struggle. At death, the Zoroastrian god, called Ahura Mazda (ah•HUR•uh MAZ•duh), will judge the person on how well he or she fought. This stone relief shows Ahura Mazda (*right*) giving the crown to a Persian king. Today, there are about 2.5 million Zoroastrians throughout the world.





# Comparing World Religions and Ethical Systems

	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Confucianism
						
<b>Followers worldwide</b> (estimated 2003 figures)	364 million	2 billion	828 million	1.2 billion	14.5 million	6.3 million
<b>Name of god</b>	no god	God	Brahman	Allah	God	no god
<b>Founder</b>	the Buddha	Jesus Christ	no one founder	no founder but spread by Muhammad	Abraham	Confucius
<b>Holy book</b>	many sacred books, including the Dhammapada	Bible, including Old Testament and New Testament	many sacred books, including the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	Qur'an	Hebrew Bible, including the Torah	<i>Analects</i>
<b>Clergy</b>	Buddhist monks	priests, ministers, monks, and nuns	Brahmin priests, monks, and gurus	no clergy but a scholar class, called the ulama, and imams, who may lead prayers	rabbis	no clergy
<b>Basic beliefs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Followers can achieve enlightenment by understanding the Four Noble Truths and by following the Noble Eightfold Path of right opinions, right desires, right speech, right action, right jobs, right effort, right concentration, and right meditation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is only one God, who watches over and cares for his people.</li> <li>Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He died to save humanity. His death and resurrection made eternal life possible for others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The soul never dies but is continually reborn until it becomes enlightened.</li> <li>Persons achieve happiness and enlightenment after they free themselves from their earthly desires.</li> <li>Freedom from earthly desires comes from many lifetimes of worship, knowledge, and virtuous acts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persons achieve salvation by following the Five Pillars of Islam and living a just life. The pillars are faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is only one God, who watches over and cares for his people.</li> <li>God loves and protects his people but also holds people accountable for their sins and shortcomings.</li> <li>Persons serve God by studying the Torah and living by its teachings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social order, harmony, and good government should be based on strong family relationships.</li> <li>Respect for parents and elders is important to a well-ordered society.</li> <li>Education is important for the welfare of both the individual and society.</li> </ul>

Source: *World Almanac 2004*



## Standards-Based Assessment

### Review

#### MAIN IDEAS

##### Buddhism (pages R62–R63)

1. How did the Buddha believe that his followers could end their suffering?
2. How did Buddhism spread?

##### Christianity (pages R64–R65)

3. Why is Jesus Christ important to the Christian religion?
4. What are some Christian beliefs?

##### Hinduism (pages R66–R67)

5. What is the importance of Brahman in Hinduism?
6. What three gods does Brahman often take the form of?

##### Islam (pages R68–R69)

7. How do Muslims believe the teachings of the Qur'an were revealed?
8. Why do Muslims traditionally refer to Christians and Jews as "people of the book"?

##### Judaism (pages R70–R71)

9. What does it mean to say that Judaism is a monotheistic religion?
10. What are the Ten Commandments?

##### Confucianism (pages R72–R73)

11. What did Confucius hope to restore?
12. What five relationships are important in Confucianism?

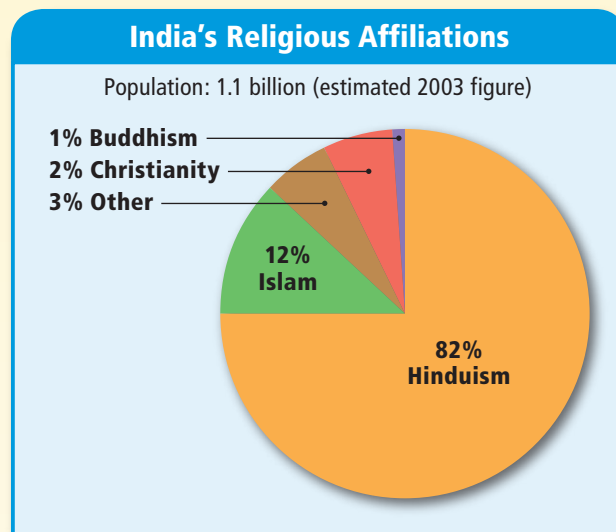
##### Other Important Religions (pages R74–R75)

13. How does Shinto differ from Bahaim, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism?
14. How is Sikhism similar to Buddhism and Hinduism?

#### CRITICAL THINKING

15. **COMPARING** What goal do Buddhists and Hindus have in common?
16. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** How does Islam affect the everyday lives of its followers?
17. **SUMMARIZING** Which of the religions you have studied are monotheistic?

**Interpreting a Pie Chart** The pie chart below shows what percentages of the population of India practice the major religions. Use the pie chart to answer the following questions.



Source: *World Almanac 2004*

1. **What percentage of the people in India practice Hinduism?**  
A. 1 percent  
B. 2 percent  
C. 12 percent  
D. 82 percent
2. **Which religion is practiced by 12 percent of the population?**  
A. Christianity  
B. Hinduism  
C. Buddhism  
D. Islam



Additional Test Practice, pp. S1–S33