

Chapter 5

Religions of the Middle East and the U.S.

The Middle East has a long history that affects events in today's world. Because of the relatively short history of the United States, it is often difficult to understand how people can be ready to fight now over something that happened between their ancestors a thousand years ago. Three of the great world religions come from the Middle East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—that have a long history of conflict that now involves the United States. In this unit, we relate some of the significant events in this region's history and its religions and how they relate to U.S. religions. The purpose is to promote understanding and tolerance for the beliefs of others as one of the objectives of global awareness.

Because this topic is too big to cover in a single chapter, information is selected that is intended to provide a perspective on each religion and its peoples that might be missing in the typical student's background in order to promote a more global perspective. Students are encouraged to further their study of world religions and history in a course that is dedicated to the subject.

It is important to understand that any large group of people contains diversity within it and a general description of what a group believes should not be applied to individuals without first getting to know the individual.

Christians adopted a calendar in which the dates are relative to the birth of Jesus whom they revere. Dates after his time are referred to as Anno Domini (A.D.) which stands for *the year of our lord*. Dates before his estimated birth are referred to as Before Christ (B.C.). Religions that do not have similar beliefs about the status of Jesus object to the use of these terms. To avoid offending those people, similar abbreviations are used instead; Common Era (C.E.) and Before the Common Era (B.C.E). Dates in this chapter will use those abbreviations.

Note from the author: If any reader finds a factual error, please let me know and provide an authoritative source. If there is any portion that is offensive, it is unintentional. Please let me know which part and why and please try to do so in a tolerant manner that seeks to promote understanding. Your assistance and patience is appreciated.

Why Do I Need to Know This?

Religion is an important force in the lives of many people. Historically, many countries have wasted their fortunes and the lives of their people on wars that were often based on religion. To communicate effectively

and live together without war, it is vital that we understand people who have different beliefs and recognize that they have rights to life and happiness. You know that within your own religion there is a variety of beliefs and degrees to which individuals act on those beliefs. The same is true within other religious groups so it is important to get to know individuals without prejudging them based on their religion. In this chapter, you will probably learn some things about each of the religions—including your own—that you didn't know. This knowledge and familiarity may affect your attitudes about people of other religions and help you understand their attitudes towards yours. It will certainly make you more globally aware.

1 Jews, Judaism, and Semites

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the Torah and the Talmud. [5.1.1]
2. Identify the common beliefs of Judaism regarding the Torah, Moses, the Messiah, and life after death. [5.1.2]
3. Identify the definition of a Jew. [5.1.3]
4. Identify how Jews and Arabs trace their lineage to Abraham. [5.1.4]
5. Identify the two rivers that are boundaries of the Promised Land and the number of Jews that left Palestine under Jacob and the number that returned under Moses as described in the Torah. [5.1.5]
6. Identify the significance of the city of Jerusalem to Jews. [5.1.6]
7. Describe the limitations on lending money for interest, what the practice was called, and how it affected the relationship between Jews and Christians in Europe in the Middle Ages. [5.1.7]
8. Identify the eugenics theory, its origins, and how it was applied to the Jews by the Nazis, and what that period in time is called. [5.1.8]

The Jewish people have several characteristics that are easily confused by people who are not familiar with their religion, culture, and history.

Religion of Judaism

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people, based on the written **Torah**—five books attributed to Moses—and the **Talmud**—the oral tradition of interpreting the Torah. The Torah is written in **Hebrew**—the historic language of the Jews. Believers take care to avoid writing the name of God so that it is not accidentally erased or defaced. Instead, they might write G-d. Judaism does not have a set of formal mandatory beliefs but

the following list of principles is considered by some to be common to believers in the Jewish religion:
(Judaism 101 2001) [[Link](#)]

G-d exists

G-d is one and unique

G-d is incorporeal

G-d is eternal

Prayer is to be directed to G-d alone and to no other

The words of the prophets are true

Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets

The Written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses

There will be no other Torah

G-d knows the thoughts and deeds of men

G-d will reward the good and punish the wicked

The Messiah will come

The dead will be resurrected

Many Jews are raised in the religion of Judaism but it is also possible for people to convert to Judaism. (Cukierkorn 2010) The **Messiah** (Mashaich)—the anointed one—is expected to be an inspirational military leader and wise judge who will lead the Jewish people to greatness. He will be a human being, not a god and he has not yet arrived. (Judaism 101 2009)

Judaism can be divided into three main subgroups; Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform/Liberal/Progressive which represent a range of strictness in adherence to historic interpretations of laws and traditions.

Definition of a Jew

Jews can be descendants of Abraham through his grandson Jacob who was called **Israel**, or people who have converted to Judaism. The **Orthodox** tradition holds that a Jew is any person whose mother was a Jew or any person who has gone through the formal process of conversion to Judaism. The Reformed movement holds that a child is a Jew if either parent is a Jew but the child must be raised Jewish. (Judaism 101 2009). Many

people who are Jews by birth do not believe in Judaism but they share a common history and heritage. They are known as **secular** Jews. Many cultural traditions of the Jews in the U.S. are traditions from the Jews who lived in a particular part of Europe and are not shared with all Jews. Jews are not a separate race but have a history of including converts. For example, the great-grandmother of King David—Ruth—was a convert and Jewish tradition holds that the Messiah will be a descendent of King David so converts are accepted as being fully Jewish.

Semites

Technically, a Semite is a member of a group of people who speak a Semitic language that includes people from the Middle East—including Arabs—and North Africa. In its most common usage however, the term anti-Semite means anti-Jewish.

Early History

At the time of Abraham, the Jewish people were a small tribe that lived in Palestine, which is an area along the Mediterranean between modern day Egypt and Syria. In Genesis 15:18, God promises the land “from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” to Abraham and his descendants which is known as the **Promised Land**. (Judaism 101 1999) According to the traditions of that time, the oldest son inherited the family's wealth and the blessing of God. According to the story in Genesis—the first book of the Torah—Abraham first had a son named Ishmael by a slave woman named Hagar. Abraham's wife, Sarah, gave birth to a son named Isaac. Sarah convinced Abraham to recognize her son Isaac as heir instead of Ishmael. (Genesis 16) Isaac had twin sons. The first born was Esau and the second was Jacob. When they were young men, Jacob convinced Esau to sell his birthright to him for a bowl of stew and then successfully impersonated Esau to his blind and aging father to gain his official blessing. Jacob was renamed Israel and thereafter his descendants were known as the children of Israel.

One of Jacob's younger sons, Joseph, was a favorite and his envious brothers sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he prospered with God's help. During a famine in Palestine, Joseph invited Jacob's family to move to Egypt which they did in about 1600 B.C.E. They were a small group of *three score and ten* (70) people. (Genesis 46:27) About 400 years later, the Jews had become numerous and many of them wanted to leave Egypt and return to Palestine. According to the Torah in the book of Exodus, they were not free to leave and God inflicted several plagues on Egypt, the last of which was to kill the oldest son. The Jews were told to make a sign on their homes so they would be passed over. This is the origin of the celebration of Passover and the Sabbath—a weekly day of rest from sundown on Friday until nighttime on

Saturday.

According to the Torah in Numbers 26 there were 601,730 men of fighting age when they invaded and conquered the middle portion of the Promised Land. According to the Torah, in Deuteronomy 20:16-17, they were commanded by God "...of the cities of these people...thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them..."

The Jews established a kingdom in Palestine and lived there for centuries. The city of Jerusalem was their capital city and site of important religious buildings including the primary temple of their religion. Part of the Jewish temple still exists and is a sacred site for Jews, as shown in Figure 5.1. (The golden dome in the background is a Muslim holy site.)



Figure 5.1. Remaining wall of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem

Many of the Jewish people were driven from the area, first by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and then by the Romans in 136 C.E. after the Romans crushed a rebellion by the Jews. The dispersion of a people from their homeland is known as a **diaspora**. The Jewish Diaspora scattered Jewish people into other parts of the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Holy Text

Tradition holds that the Torah was written by Moses but scholars who question this position point out that certain Edomite kings are mentioned by name in Genesis that lived after Moses' death. (Friedman 1989) Tradition holds that the original texts were copied accurately and translated accurately many times for centuries. Until recently, the oldest existing copy of the Torah was the Aleppo Codex which was written in

the 10th century C.E. The assumption of consistent versions of the Torah over long periods of time was called into question by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in a cave in Palestine which were written about a thousand years earlier than the Aleppo Codex. The scrolls include copies of parts of the books of the Torah and have some significant differences from the Aleppo Codex version. According to the Oxford Companion to Archeology; *It is now becoming increasingly clear that the Old Testament scripture was extremely fluid until its canonization around 100 AD.* (Fagan and Beck 1996) (A canon is the officially accepted version.)

Other scholars also question the accuracy of the story of Exodus. They point out that if the Israelites had six hundred thousand men, there would have been about two million people including women and children. The estimated population of Egypt at that time was about three million but no Egyptian accounts of the plagues and the exit of millions of slaves have been found. (Bard and Shubert 1999) Some biblical scholars argue that the dates for the migration need to be adjusted to fit the known evidence. Attitudes about the accuracy of the text of the Torah vary among Jews. Some hold that the text as it now exists is completely accurate while others believe that the lessons taught by the stories are more important than the literal facts.

Interpretations of the Torah were passed from one generation to the next in oral form. They were written down between the 2nd and 5th centuries C.E. and are known as the Talmud.

Lending Money for Interest

The Jews who settled in Christian countries in Europe after the diaspora were often discriminated against because of differences of culture, religion, and language. Many types of jobs were not available to them. The Torah specifically forbids Jews from charging interest on loans to their "brothers" but permits charging interest on loans to foreigners. (Deuteronomy 23:21 Complete Hebrew Bible) Consequently, many Jews became moneylenders and financial experts. This practice caused even more resentment when debtors had to repay loans plus interest. Jews were often used by Christians as middlemen. The Christian noble would invest money with a Jew who would then lend it to Christian peasants. The nobleman would expect high interest rates of return such as 30-40% and if the Jew did not collect it, the Jew would be killed. (JewishHistory.com 2010) Extraordinarily high interest rates such as these are called **usury**.

By the 1700s, loaning money and charging interest had become an important part of business and the basis of modern capitalism. Because of their early history as money lenders, Jews played a major role. A Jew named Mayer Amshel Rothschild identified the need for moving money safely between countries. At the time, there was no safe and reliable way to change currency or to move money between countries. Rothschild had five sons and he set each of them up as a banker in a different European country. Because the brothers trusted each other, they could take a deposit from someone in one country and then make an equivalent

amount of money available to that person when they wanted to do business in another country. The Rothschild brothers charged a fee for this service and became very wealthy and influential.

(JewishHistory.com 2010) In the 1800s, the Rothschild family became involved in the production of oil in the Black Sea. They created the Caspian-Black Sea oil company and controlled 42% of Baku oil export. (Azerbaijan Oil Strategy n.d.) In 1897, a Jew named Marcus Samuel founded Shell Oil Company in England to transport oil from the Black Sea in a ship designed specifically to move oil called a **tanker**. Building eight new ships before any of them could earn money required the ability to borrow money which the recently developed system of international banking could provide.

World Wars I and II

Recall that one of the methods of teaching intolerance is to claim that one's own group is superior to all others. In the 1930s there was a theory called **eugenics** which proposed that Aryans—people from Northern Europe—who were tall, blond, and blue-eyed were superior and that this strain of humans could be perfected by eliminating any inferior people who might breed with them. This theory originated in the United States and was treated as a science by established and powerful groups such as the Carnegie Institution and the Rockefeller Foundation. The President of Stanford University in California wrote *Blood of a Nation* in 1902 which declared that talent and poverty were passed through the blood. (Black 2003) Adolf Hitler adopted these teachings and put them into practice in Germany under the rule of the Nazi Party. Nazi Germany hosted the 1936 Olympics where Hitler intended to demonstrate the superiority of the Aryan race only to be embarrassed when a black American—Jesse Owens—was the single most successful athlete who won four gold medals in track. In spite of evidence to the contrary—including the fact that Hitler was not tall, blond, or blue-eyed—many Germans believed in the superiority of their own race.

While Nazi Germany controlled most of Europe, the Nazis systematically killed civilians because of their race, religion, or opposition to Nazi control. They succeeded in killing about six million Jews and another five million Poles, Slavs, Gypsies, and Blacks. The Nazis confiscated the wealth and property of the Jews. Many Jews escaped the Nazis and most of them went to the U.S. or to Palestine.

There are approximately 13 million Jews in the world now. About 40% are in the U.S. (5.3 million) and 43% are in Israel (5.7 million). (Jewish Virtual Library 2010)

Key Takeaways

The written Torah consists of five books; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The oral interpretations of the Torah were written down between 2nd and 5th century C.E and are called the Talmud. [5.1.1]

Judaism holds that the Torah is true and was given to Moses and there is no other Torah. They believe that a new leader of the Jews will arise to lead them to greatness called the Messiah, and that the dead will be resurrected. [5.1.2]

A person can become a Jew by converting to the religion of Judaism or by being born to Jewish parents. Orthodox Jews believe that a person is a Jew if a person's mother was a Jew. Reformed Jews believe that a person is a Jew if either parent is a Jew and the child is raised Jewish. Jews who do not practice Judaism are secular Jews. [5.1.3]

Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob became known as Israel and they are the same person. His descendants are known as Israelites. Arabs trace their lineage back to Ishmael. [5.1.4]

According to the Torah in Genesis 15:18 the two rivers are the river of Egypt and the Euphrates. According to Genesis 46:27 Jacob's family numbered 70 people when they left Palestine to go to Egypt. According to Numbers 26 there were 601,730 Israelite men when they returned. [5.1.5]

Jerusalem was the historic capital of the Jewish people and the temple there was the most important temple in Judaism. [5.1.6]

The Torah forbids Jews from loaning money for interest—usury—to other Jews but allowed it with non-Jews. Jews became bankers and money lenders to Christians in early Europe. [5.1.7]

The eugenics theory held that humans could be improved people with defects were not allowed to breed. Eugenics was popular in the U.S. before the Nazis in Germany adopted it as a justification for killing Jews, Slavs, Poles and other people who they thought were lesser breeds of people. The killing of approximately six million Jews and five million other people is called the holocaust.[5.1.8]

2 Christianity

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the relationship of Christianity to Judaism and the concept of the Messiah. [5.2.1]
2. Identify the significance of the cross to Christians. [5.2.2]
3. Identify what beliefs most Christians have in common. [5.2.3]
4. Identify the relationship between the Torah and the Bible. [5.2.4]
5. Identify the significance of Jerusalem to Christians. [5.2.5]
6. Identify the relationship between early Christians and the Roman empire and how that changed under Emperor Constantine. [5.2.6]
7. Identify the centuries in which the crusades occurred, who took part, and how some of

the crusaders behaved is still a cause for conflict today. [5.2.7]

8. Identify the three main divisions of Christianity and how they came about. [5.2.8]

9. Identify the early Christian's beliefs about lending money for interest and how it affected their relationship with Jews. [5.2.9]

10. Identify how religious persecution of protestant sects affected the colonization of the U.S. and the profile of the U.S. population by religion. [5.2.10]

Religion of Christianity

Christianity is an off-shoot of Judaism that occurred in Palestine when it was dominated by Rome. A Jew named Jesus is acclaimed by his followers to be the Messiah—the one who is prophesized to be the next leader of the Jews. Many Jews at the time thought he would be the military leader who would free them from Rome and welcomed him into Jerusalem by laying symbolic palm fronds in his path on what is now celebrated as Palm Sunday. He disappointed those who were looking for a military leader. According to the Christian bible in Luke, chapter 23, the Jewish leaders and an angry crowd of Jews pushed a reluctant Roman governor into executing him. This version of events which is disputed by Jews, is the basis for blaming the Jews for Jesus' death, even though it was the Romans who actually killed him. Jesus was executed as a common criminal by public **crucifixion** which is a combination of torture and slow suffocation that uses crossed wooden timbers to support the victim. The cross became a symbol of Christianity. He was crucified and died on Friday and his body was taken down before the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath at sundown and the beginning of the Passover observance. Christians believe that he revived from the dead on Sunday morning which is why Christians observe Sunday as their holy day. Several of the most significant events in Jesus' life and death occurred in Jerusalem and many Christians still visit these sites each year.

His followers believed that he was the Messiah but his kingdom was in heaven. Many of his followers also believed that he was divine and that believers would go to heaven after death. Few Jews agreed with this interpretation. The Jewish prophesy was interpreted to include non-Jews. (Holy Bible) The belief in the divinity of Jesus spread successfully amongst the Greeks in cities like Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessaloniki that are known to Christians by the letters written to church members in those cities by a convert named Paul. Jesus' Greek followers called him the **Christ** which is Greek for *the anointed one* and they became known as Christians. A branch of the Christian church that traces its origins back to the first Greek converts is the **Greek Orthodox Church** which is still present in Russia and Eastern Europe.

There were differences in the beliefs of early Christians about the divinity of Jesus and about his birth and death. The original documents did not survive and the earliest documents still in existence were written

hundreds of years after Jesus' time and are often translations from other languages. An early statement of the core Christian beliefs—a **creed**—is called the Apostles Creed. Tradition has it that Jesus' closest friends and followers—the twelve **Apostles**—wrote the creed but the oldest surviving version was written in 215 C.E and the currently adopted form was first written in 542 CE. (Anderson 2008) The main points of the Apostles' Creed are statements of the following beliefs:

- God as the creator of heaven and earth
- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary
- Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate (Roman administrator of Palestine)
- Jesus died, was buried, descended into hell, rose from the dead after three days and ascended into heaven
- Belief in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

Many Christians believe that people are sinful and will go to hell unless they convert to Christianity in which case they will go to heaven. Because the afterlife is for eternity, meeting the conditions for salvation is very important. Christianity is inherently an **evangelistic** religion which means that its followers believe they must give as many people as possible the opportunity to convert. As a result, many of them support **missionaries** who are believers that go to other countries and cultures to tell them about Jesus. They call this message the **Gospel**—good news—and that belief in Jesus and his divine nature is the only way to go to heaven and avoid hell. Because of this missionary activity, Christianity spread to all parts of the world and today Christianity is the most popular religion. About one-third of the people on earth, 2.1 Billion, are Christians. (Adherents.com 2005) In the U.S., 51% are Protestant Christian, 24% are Catholic Christians, 16% are unaffiliated, 1.7% are Jewish, and 4.3% have other faiths.

Holy Text

Christians accept the Hebrew Scriptures that they call the **Old Testament** to which they add a series of biographies, letters, and new prophecies called the **New Testament**. Jerusalem and other sites in Palestine that appear in the biographies of Jesus written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are important to Christians and many Christians make pilgrimages to the sites they consider holy including Jerusalem where he died and Bethlehem where he was born. The writings that are included in the New Testament were not canonized—standardized—until three or four hundred years after Jesus' time.

Early History

The Romans tried to suppress the religion and Christians were often tortured and killed by crucifixion. Because the religion emphasized the afterlife and offered an eternal life in heaven for believers; and because it emphasized love of enemies rather than revenge and killing, many were willing to die rather than renounce their religion. In spite of the efforts by the Romans, the religion spread and increased through the Roman Empire until the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and made it the official religion of the Empire in 313 C.E.

The Roman Catholic Church traces its roots back to Peter, one of Jesus' personal friends and followers. The leader of the Catholic Church is called the **Pope**. After the fall of Rome and the dispersion of the Jews, Palestine was captured by non-Christians. The local Christians appealed to the Church in Rome for help and they responded by calling for a holy war to retake Palestine. These expeditions from Europe to Palestine are called **crusades**. The Pope promised the soldiers would have their sins forgiven if they died in the effort. (Crawford 1997) There were several crusades that occurred between 1095 CE and 1272 CE. The behavior of the invading Christian armies was infamous. Many of them were out for plunder and even sacked the Greek Orthodox Christian city of Constantinople and looted local inhabitants regardless of their religion. One of the most noteworthy was the siege and defeat of the city of Ma'arrat al-Numan in 1098 which was in modern-day Syria. According to one account by a Christian, the crusaders ran out of food while attacking the city and the crusaders resorted to cannibalism as reported by Radulph of Caen; "In Maarra our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled." (Zaimeche 2003) The atrocities committed by the crusaders are not widely discussed in Western literature but are well-known in the Middle-East. When President Bush said that there would be a crusade against terrorism following the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, many observers in Europe recognized that his use of this term would be used by America's enemies to prove that America wanted to make war on the people of the Middle-East, not just the terrorists. (Ford 2001)

The Christian crusades that took place almost a thousand years ago are still a vivid image in Middle Eastern culture, especially anti-western politics. The image of a crusader was included on the website of the terrorist who attempted to explode a bomb in Times Square on May 2, 2010, as shown in Figure 5.2, along with pictures of children who have been killed by American bombing.

Pakistani Taliban claim credit for failed NYC Tim Square car bombing

By BILL ROGGIO May 2, 2010



Figure 5.2. Terrorist website

Christianity initially split into two parts. One was based in Rome—The Roman Catholic Church—and the other in Constantinople—The Greek Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic Church became corrupt and even sold forgiveness of sins—**indulgencies**—to raise money. This was not the official position of the church but this was often the misunderstanding of the participants. This practice resulted in protest from some church members. Martin Luther was a German priest who taught that salvation was a free gift and that each individual could interpret the Bible for himself or herself. The church **excommunicated** him—cut him off from the church and salvation—when he refused to withdraw his teachings. Luther was backed by many other Germans who broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. His followers are known as Lutherans. This was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation when many groups broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Without the unifying control of a central authority with one interpretation of the Bible, the protestant movement divided into many sub-groups that have a wide range of beliefs regarding the literal accuracy of the Holy Bible, the beliefs or actions that are necessary to be saved from hell, and the validity of any other group's path to heaven. For some groups, tolerance of the beliefs of other religions is not doing

them a favor because they will go to hell because of their errors.

The Roman Catholic Church went through its own reformation with the founding of the **Jesuits**—The Society of Jesus—in 1534 who were devoted to preaching and winning new converts. (Connor 2003)

Money Lending

Because Christians share a common background with Jews, they accept the Torah and other sacred writings of the Jews as the Old Testament. The Roman Catholic Church accepted the same teaching against loaning money for interest. Christians often needed loans and used the banking and loan services offered by Jews. In some cases, Christian nobles used Jews as middlemen so that when payments were collected, their subjects blamed the Jews. Christians eventually refined their interpretation of the Bible to mean that they could not loan money at unusually high interest rates, called usury. In the U.S., the definition of usury is twice the maximum legal limit as defined in each state. For example, the maximum rate on a loan between two individuals in the State of Michigan is 7%. States usually have higher limits for banks and credit card companies and many states do not have a limit. Most credit card companies have their headquarters in states that do not have laws against usury or a cap on interest rates. Borrowing and lending money is essential to the capitalist system in which someone borrows money to buy the means to produce goods that can be sold for a profit and repay the loan with enough extra to pay the interest and make a profit.

Wars

The Protestant Reformation divided the church and countries that were led by Protestant rulers were often at war with countries led by Catholic Rulers. The religious differences contributed to a series of wars between European countries for centuries. Regardless of whether the country's leaders were Catholic or Protestant, the government usually supported the church by taxing the people to support the clergy and maintain the church buildings. As the number of protestant **sects**—groups with differing religious beliefs—increased, the minority sects were not willing to pay taxes to support the majority religion, even if it was also a protestant sect.

Several small protestant groups immigrated to the U.S. where they could enjoy being in the majority in their own small area. In England, the established religion was known as the Church of England and in the English colonies in North America it was known as the Anglican or Episcopalian Church. People who were not members of the Anglican Church in the colonies were called **dissenters**. Some colonies tried to impose a tax to pay for Anglican churches but those who were members of other sects were violently opposed to paying for someone else's church. This disagreement over imposing a state-sponsored Anglican Church

played a significant role in the Revolutionary War which led to the independence of the United States of America.

Because there were citizens with many different religions in the U.S., the founders recognized that the government could not choose a single religion to back and declared that there would not be a preferred religion in the U.S. The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution says;

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...

Most of the founders and framers of the U.S. Constitution and its first presidents believed that religion was an important factor in a well-behaved and peaceful population. It is not accurate to assume that they all believed in the same Christian principles. For example, two of the first six presidents (John Adams, and John Quincy Adams) were Unitarians (Adherants.com 2005) which is a sect that does not accept the divinity of Jesus and Thomas Jefferson compiled his own version of the New Testament that excluded all the references to Jesus' divinity and miracles. (The Washington Post 2011)

About three-fourths of the adult population of the U.S. identifies themselves with a Christian religion, as shown in Figure 5.3. (U.S. Census Bureau 2008)

Religion of Adults in the U.S.
U.S. Census Bureau 2008

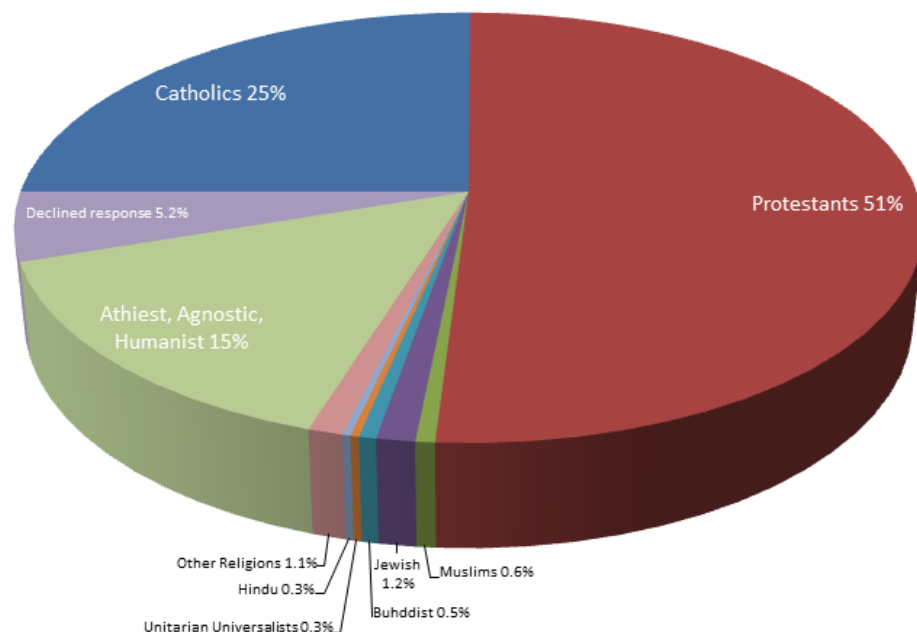


Figure 5.3. Religion of Adults in the United States

Key Takeaways

Jesus was a Jew that his followers believe was the Jewish Messiah. Most Jews do not accept Jesus as the Messiah but Christians believe that his kingdom is spiritual and he is the Messiah. The term Messiah means "anointed one" in Hebrew. The term Christ also means "anointed one" in Greek. [5.2.1]

Jesus was tortured and killed on a wooden cross. The cross is a symbol of his sacrifice for Christians. [5.2.2]

A majority of Christians accept the Apostles Creed and believe in the deity of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead and eternal life after death in either heaven or hell. [5.2.3]

Christians accept the Torah and other traditional texts of Judaism and call it the Old Testament which is part of the Christian Bible. [5.2.4]

Jerusalem is the site of the major events in the final days of Jesus' life and is considered a holy site. [5.2.5]

Christians were persecuted by the Romans until one of their Emperors—Constantine—converted to Christianity. He allowed freedom of worship and made Christianity the official religion. [5.2.6]

The crusades to recapture Palestine occurred over a three hundred year period from 1095 CE to 1272 CE. Christians from the Roman Catholic areas of Europe took part. In some cases, they killed and looted for personal gain instead of the purposes of the church regardless of the religion of the people. Christian crusaders are still a vivid image in Middle Eastern culture, especially anti-western politics. For example, the images of crusaders are used by America's enemies in terrorist website. [5.2.7]

Early Christianity split into the Roman Catholics based in Rome and the Eastern Orthodox church based in Constantinople. Many members of the Roman Catholic Church left to create many new sects of Christianity in protest of church policies and are generally known as Protestants. [5.2.8]

Because Christians accept the Torah as part of the Old Testament, early Christians had similar beliefs about lending money as the Jews. They would not lend money for interest to fellow Christians so Jews had the opportunity to provide that service without direct competition from Christians. The belief has changed in modern times to prohibition against charging too much interest. [5.2.9]

Some people founded colonies in North America to practice their own Christian beliefs. Consequently, the colonies that became the United States did not have one dominant sect that could be supported by the government. About half of the U.S. adults are protestant, a quarter are Catholic, and fifteen percent are atheist, agnostic, or humanist. [5.2.10]

3 Arabs and Islam

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the relationship of Islam to Christianity and Judaism. [5.3.1]
2. Identify the correct use of the terms Islam and Muslim and the relationship to Arabs. [5.3.2]
3. Identify what beliefs most Muslims have in common. [5.3.3]
4. Identify the relationship between the Qur'an, the Torah, and the Bible. [5.3.4]
5. Identify the significance of Jerusalem to Muslims. [5.3.5]
7. Identify the six countries with the largest Muslim populations. [5.3.6]
8. Identify the two main groups within Islam and how they came about. [5.3.7]
9. Identify the Muslim beliefs about lending money for interest and Muslim financial institutions finance projects. [5.3.8]
10. Identify how the Balkan wars and World Wars I and II affected the nations of the Middle East and formed today's countries. [5.3.9]

The dominant religion in the Middle East is **Islam**. It is the second largest religion in the world with 1.5 billion members. It is a major influence in the actions of people and countries and no course in global awareness would be complete without knowledge of its history and basic beliefs. A person who is a believer in Islam is a **Muslim**.

Religion of Islam and the Arab People

Islam incorporated practices and beliefs that were part of Arab traditions that pre-date Islam. Arab people trace their ancestry back to Abraham through his son Ishmael. Ishmael was Abraham's oldest son by Hagar—an Egyptian servant who was Abraham's second wife. In the city of Mecca is the site of an ancient shrine that, according to tradition, was established by Adam and that Adam is buried in Mecca (similarly Eve is thought to be buried near Jeddah whose name means *maternal ancestor*) but the first shrine was destroyed in the great flood.

Tradition further has it that Abraham brought his Egyptian wife Hagar and her son Ishmael to live in Mecca and while Abraham was absent Hagar and Ishmael ran out of water. Hagar looked in the hills for water seven times until an angel appeared and struck the ground creating a spring that is still the source of water for Mecca. Abraham returned after Hagar had died and proceeded to rebuild the shrine, known as the **Ka'Ba**, according to divine instructions at a location shown to him by the angel Gabriel. After Abraham's

day, pagan idols were added to the shrine but it was still an important practice to make a pilgrimage to the shrine and by tradition, no weapons or hostility was allowed to hinder the pilgrimage known as the Hajj. (Mecca, Saudi Arabia 2006)

Muslims believe in:

- One Unique, Incomparable God
- The angels created by him
- the prophets; Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elias, Johah, John the Baptist, and Jesus
- a day of judgment and individual accountability; people with good records will be welcomed into heaven and those with bad records will be cast into hell
- God's authority over life after death

(Islamic Dictionary 2007)

According to the Islam's holy text, warriors who die fighting in the cause of God are ushered immediately into God's presence (Surah 2:159, 3:169)

One may convert to Islam by saying; "there is no deity apart from God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God".

Many Muslims believe that there will be a messiah-like person known as Mahdi—divinely guided one—who will restore Islam to power for a short golden age of seven to nine years before the end of the world. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2011)

Anyone may convert to Islam and become a Muslim so it is important to recognize the difference between Arabs and Muslims. Arabs can be any religion, for example, there are about 2.5 million Arab Christians in Egypt, 2 million in Syria, and about a quarter of the people in Lebanon are Arab Christians. Similarly, people from other ethnic backgrounds can be Muslims. The people of Iran are mostly Muslim but they are Persians, not Arabs, and have a distinctly different history and culture. Five of the six countries with the largest Muslim populations are not Arab. They are Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Nigeria (Egypt is fifth largest).

Islam was founded by Muhammad and he is one of the most influential figures in history. The following overview is based on the book, *Islam: A short History* by Karen Armstrong. Her book begins with the following text. The author's comments [mine] are in brackets:

During the month of Ramadan in 610 C.E., an Arab businessman had an experience that changed the history of the world. Every year at this time, Muhammad ibn Abdallah used to retire to a cave on the

summit of Mount Hira, just outside [the city of] Mecca in the Arabian Hijaz [western coast], where he prayed, fasted and gave alms to the poor. He had long been worried by what he perceived to be a crisis in Arab society. In recent decades his tribe, the Quraysh, had become rich by trading in the surrounding countries. Mecca had become a thriving mercantile city, but in the aggressive stampede for wealth some of the old tribal values had been lost. Instead of looking after the weaker members of the tribe, as the nomadic code prescribed, the Quraysh were now intent on making money at the expense of some of the tribe's poorer family groupings, or clans. There was also spiritual restlessness in Mecca and throughout the peninsula. Arabs knew that Judaism and Christianity, which were practiced in the Byzantine and Persian empires, were more sophisticated than their own pagan traditions. Some had come to believe that the High God of the pantheon, al-Lah (whose name simply meant "the God"), was the deity worshipped by the Jews and the Christians, but he had sent the Arabs no prophet and no scripture in their own language...Throughout Arabia one tribe fought another, in a murderous cycle of vendetta and counter-vendetta. It seemed to many of the more thoughtful people in Arabia that the Arabs were a lost people, exiled forever from the civilized world and ignored by God himself. But that changed on the night of 17 Ramadan...[when] he heard the first words of a new Arab's scripture pouring from his lips. (Armstrong 2000)

*The new sect would eventually be called Islam (surrender); a Muslim was a man or a woman who had made this submission of their entire being to Allah and his demand that human beings behave to one another with justice, equity and compassion. It was an attitude expressed in the prostrations of the ritual prayer (*salat*) which Muslims were required to make three times a day. (Later this would be increased to five times daily.) The old tribal ethic had been egalitarian; Arabs did not approve of the idea of monarchy, and it was abhorrent to them to grovel on the ground like slaves. But the prostrations were designed to counter the hard arrogance and self-sufficiency that was growing in Mecca. The postures of their bodies would re-educate the Muslims, teaching them to lay aside their pride and selfishness, and recall that before God they were nothing....Muslims were also required to give a regular portion of their income to the poor in alms (*zakat*). They would also fast during Ramadan to remind themselves of the privations of the poor, who could not eat or drink whenever they choose. [Muslims do not eat during daylight hours during Ramadan and make a greater effort to avoid obscene and irreligious sights and sounds.] (Armstrong 2000)*

Ramadan is one of the months of the Islamic calendar during which Muslims *fast*—refrain from eating and drinking—during daylight hours. The first three days of the next month are days of celebration and feasting. The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar consisting of twelve months, each of which is one cycle of the moon's appearance which takes approximately 29 days. The lunar calendar has 354 or 355 days. The month of Ramadan moves each year relative to the Western calendar by ten or eleven days a year. For example, in 2012 Ramadan begins on July 20 and in 2013 it begins on July 9. The date of Ramadan advances approximately 11 days each year on the Christian calendar.

Jerusalem is an important city for Muslims. According to the Qur'an in Chapter 17, titled *The Children of Israel*, the Angel Gabriel took Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem one night where Muhammad ascended to heaven where he met with the prophets and led them in prayer. The site from which Muhammad ascended into heaven is marked by a mosque called the Dome of the Rock which was built

shortly after Muhammad's death shown in Figure 5.4. It is close to the remains of the Jewish temple and is visible in the background of Figure 5.1.



Figure 5.4. Dome of the Rock Mosque

The Qur'an

According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad continued to receive revelations but did not share them for two years. These revelations were spread by public recitations and this new message became known as recitations, which is **Qur'an** in Arabic, and its chapters are called **surahs**. The surahs came to Muhammad over a period of 21 years. There are 114 surahs in the Qur'an. According to Muslim tradition, 86 of them are from the time period when Muhammad was in Mecca and the remainder when he was in Medina.

Muhammad exhorted his followers to return to fundamental tribal values of sharing wealth and treating the poor with respect. Many of those who read the Qur'an in Arabic are impressed by its poetry and literary value which adds to its appeal which is similar to the way that many Christians feel about the King James translation of the Bible in English. Others claim that Arabic is a precise language that is best for writing precise statements of laws such as those regarding gender. For example, proponents point out that the Qur'an does not use a masculine pronoun to refer to Allah which avoids the misconception of God as a male Father figure. (Submission.org 2003) Muslims believe that the Qur'an are messages from God, dictated to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel and recited accurately in the original language—Arabic—until it was written down shortly after his death. Because the surahs were widely memorized during Muhammad's life and written down in Arabic shortly after his death, Muslims believe that the Qur'an in Arabic is the most

authoritative version of God's message. The Qur'an teaches Muslims to believe the revelations given to all of the prophets including Jewish prophets and Jesus but that Muhammad is the most important, and final prophet.

Lending Money

Islamic law—**Sharia**—is based on the teachings of the Qur'an. Sharia forbids usury. The term for usury in Arabic is **Reba** which means excess. To fund projects like buying a home, a car, or building a hotel, Muslims obtain money from Sharia-compliant banks. Instead of charging interest on the loan, there are several ways the bank avoids charging interest. For example if you wanted to buy a car with help from a Sharia-compliant bank, they might use one of the following methods:

The bank buys the car, and then sells it to you at a higher price. You are allowed to pay for the car in monthly installments.

The bank and the buyer form a partnership to buy the car where you put in some money and the bank puts up the rest. The bank rents the car to you at a profit. You split the profit with the bank based on your share of the partnership.

Sharia-compliant banks must apply the ethics of the Qur'an to their business practices.

Early History

Unlike Jesus who was primarily a spiritual leader, Muhammad was also a political and military leader. When his followers grew in number, they were persecuted in Mecca and moved to Medina. Muhammad led his people in battle against Meccan troops and defeated an attacking force of 10,000 with only 3,000 by using a new defensive technology—the trench—to defeat their cavalry. Muhammad demonstrated his genius for spiritual leadership by making the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca unarmed, trusting in the honor of the Meccans to observe Arab tradition and listen to his call for peace which was ultimately successful. Muhammad removed the idols from the Ka'ba, shown in Figure 5.5, and made it the most important shrine in Islam. Muslims are required to make the Hajj at least once in their lifetime, if possible, and face Mecca when they pray.

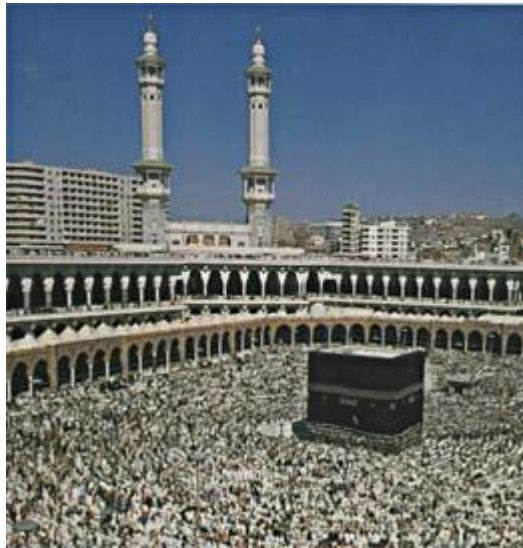


Figure 5.5. Ka'ba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia

Muhammad had several wives but most were older women who were under his protection. He only had children by his first wife—three daughters and no sons. When he died, there was no established method of choosing a successor and this proved to be a major problem. Some thought that his closest male relative—Ali ibn Abi Talib—should become leader of the Muslims. Ali was pious but young and inexperienced and the remaining leaders choose Abubakr al-Sadiq to succeed Muhammad as **caliph**—leader—during this critical period. Tribes that had allegiance to Muhammad as a prophet had to be convinced that they should stay together in a new alliance based on his revelations. In two years Abubakr consolidated the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula by refocusing their energy and religious zeal outward toward neighboring countries instead of toward old grievances between tribes. Under the next two caliphs, Umar and Uthman, they were spectacularly successful in conquering the Persians, Byzantines, Egyptians, and North Africans in only 22 years and spread Islam from India to Spain, as shown in Figure 5.6. This area included the holy city of Jerusalem in Palestine.

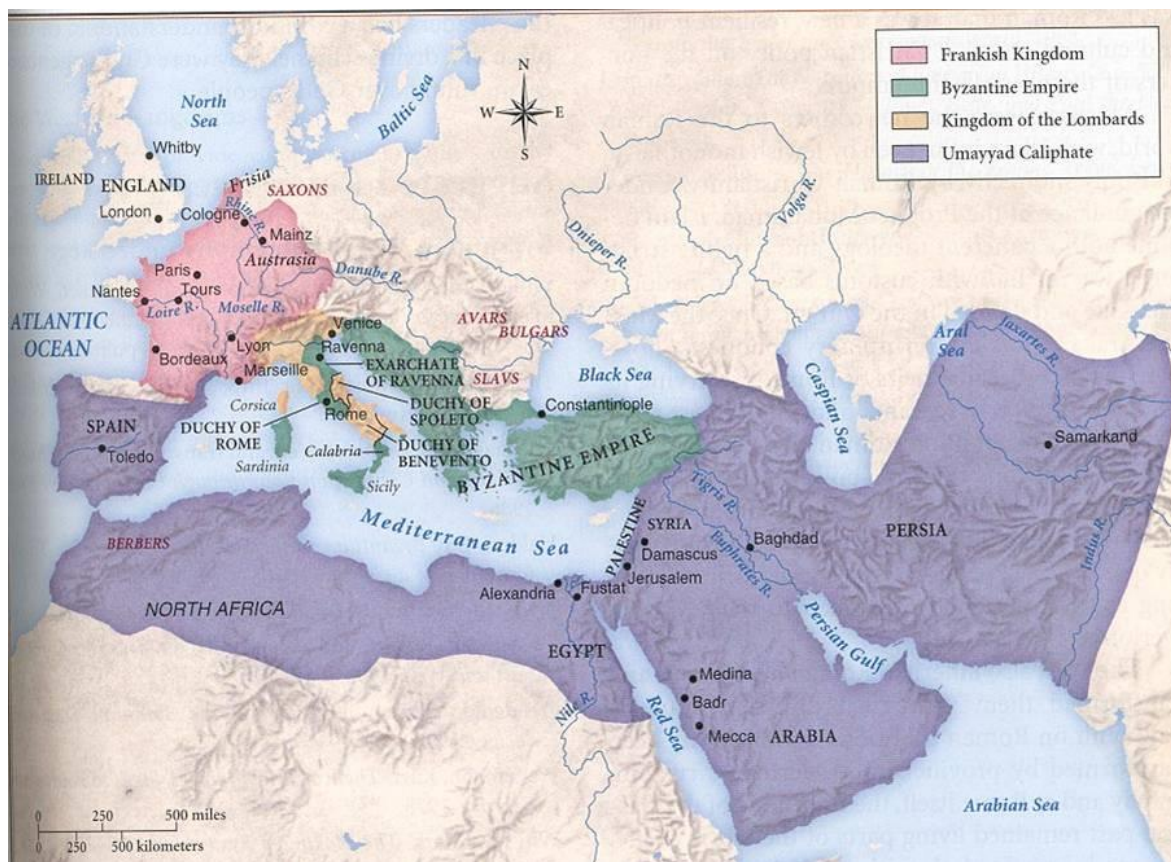


Figure 5.6. Early Caliphate in Muslim Expansion

Success bred discontent because Uthman did not want the victorious soldiers to become rich from the spoils of war and lose their focus on piety and the simplicity of their faith.

In 656 CE, dissatisfied soldiers broke into Uthman's home and killed him and proclaimed Muhammad's cousin, Ali, as the new caliph. As a pious Muslim, Ali could not condone the murder but he didn't prosecute the soldiers either. The head of Uthman's clan, Muawiyyah was honor-bound to avenge his death and the Muslim empire was on the verge of disintegrating into civil war. Muawiyyah and Ali attempted to negotiate and submitted their cause to arbitration by neutral Muslims. The arbitration went against Ali and Muawiyyah proclaimed himself to be the next caliph. Ali's supporters were split and the Kharajites (seceders) would not accept Muawiyyah or acknowledge Ali's capitulation. Ali killed the leaders of the Kharajites but Ali was later killed by a Kharajite. Ali became a symbol of the inherent injustice of life. Later groups, like the Kharajites, would challenge the caliph in power for not being devout enough and call for Muslims to join them in a struggle (**jihad**) for higher Islamic standards. These groups considered themselves the Shiah i-Ali (partisans of Ali) and are known today as **Shia** Muslims. They hold that the leadership should be traced through Ali and Muhammad's relatives.

The empire continued under the rule of caliphs and it made the transition from a tribal structure to an empire that needed a system of laws with which to govern the people. By the late 800s and early 900s, many Muslims called **Sunnis** respected the early caliphs, including Ali, as holy men who were founders of the empire and who were capable political leaders. Refer to Figure 5.7 for a comparison of Sunni and Shi'ah beliefs and teachings. (Religion Facts 2010)

	Sunnah	Shia (or Shi'ah)
adherents called	Sunnis	Shiites, Shi'i
meaning of name	"well-trodden path" or "tradition"	"party" or "partisans" of Ali
current adherents	940 million	120 million
percentage of total Muslims	90%	10%
primary locations	most Muslim countries	Iran, Iraq, Yemen
subjects	none, but four major schools of Muslim law are recognized	Ithna 'Ashariyah (Twelvers; the largest), Isma'iliyah and Zaydiyyah
origins	c. 632 CE; theology developed especially in 10th cent.	c. 632-650 CE; killing of Ali's son Husayn in 680 CE is major event
did Muhammad designate a successor?	no	yes
true successor of the Prophet	Abu Bakr, father of the Prophet's favoured wife, 'A'ishah (elected by people of Medina)	'Ali ibn Abi Talib, husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatimah (designated by the Prophet)
qualifications for ruler of Islam	tribe of the Prophet (Quraysh); later, any qualified ruler	family of the Prophet
current leaders	imams	mujtahids
identity of imams	human leaders	infallible manifestations of God and perfect interpreters of the Qur'an
Al Mahdi	will come in the future	was already on earth, is currently the "hidden imam" who works through mujtahids to interpret Qur'an; and will return at the end of time
religious authority other than the Qu'ran	ijma' (consensus) of the Muslim community	infallible imams
concealing faith for self-protection (taqiya)	affirmed under certain circumstances	emphasized
temporary marriage (mut'ah)	practiced in the Prophet's time, but now rejected	still practiced
holy cities	Mecca , Medina , Jerusalem	Mecca , Medina , Jerusalem , Najaf , Karbala
major holidays	Eid al-Adha , Eid al-Fitr	Eid al-Adha , Eid al-Fitr , Ashura

Figure 5.7. Comparison of Sunnah and Shia beliefs

Muslims were in control of the Middle East when the European crusaders invaded and recaptured Palestine during the first crusade. Muslim forces under Saladin recaptured the area in 1187 and it remained under Muslim control until the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the WWI.

Like Christianity, there are many different interpretations of Islam and they differ in their attitudes toward indigenous culture and other religions and in their acceptance of differences. A 13th century Sufi saint taught that all religions were one and that they are all manifestations of the same divine reality. (Dalrymple 2010)

Reform movements and a call to return to piety are a recurring theme in Muslim history. In the 18th century, a group of Sunni Muslims was led by Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab who preached against moral decline and political weakness. He wanted to purge Islam of idolatry and impurity. He considered shrines that were built at gravesites as inappropriate. Abd-al-Wahhab became influential in his home town but was driven out by a nearby prince after he convinced the local ruler to remove a dome over the grave of a famous local martyr and had an adulteress stoned to death. Abd-al-Wahhab was welcomed by Muhammed Ibn Saud who supported him and his teachings. (Baz n.d.) Abd-al-Wahhab condemned and prohibited Sufism. (Hamzeh and Kekmejian 1996) Wahhabism is the dominant form of Islam in modern Saudi Arabia.

This division between conservative Muslims and Sufis still exists. Several Sufi Mosques in Pakistan have been bombed by conservative Muslims for their liberal ideas. (BBC News South Asia 2011) The distinction between the followers of Abd-al-Wahhab who attacked the World Trade Center in 2001 and Sufis who have had their places of worship bombed by similar conservatives was not understood by many people who opposed the opening of a Sufi cultural center near the site of the World Trade Center memorial. (Dalrymple 2010)

The Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) was Muslim and it was centered in modern-day Turkey. It extended into Europe, North Africa, and both sides of the Arabian Peninsula, as shown in Figure 5.8. (The Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi Order of America 2011)



Figure 5.8. Ottoman Empire

Balkan Wars and World Wars I and II

The Muslim Ottomans did not grant their Christian citizens equal political or religious rights. The Christian Armenians were caught in the middle of a power struggle for control of the Ottoman Empire between a secular government that had a constitutional monarchy and an Islamic movement that wanted religious control of government. The Armenians backed the secular government because it would mean better conditions for themselves. During this conflict, tens of thousands of Armenians were killed. (New York Times 1909)

With the help of Christian countries in Europe, the Christians in the **Balkans**—the mountainous region of south-eastern Europe—revolted in 1912 and broke away from Ottoman rule. Many Muslims stayed in the region which had been their home for centuries. Recent wars in Bosnia and Chechnya are examples of religious and ethnic conflicts that still occur in this region. Muslim refugees from the Balkan wars moved into the Eastern part of the Ottoman Empire where they came into conflict with the Christian Armenians. The secular government also tried to impose Turkish as the official language which offended the Arabic-speaking

tribes.

The effects of the Balkan wars and World War I were disastrous for the Ottoman Empire. It was beset by internal strife between its Muslim and Christian residents and between the secular and Islamic political groups. The secular leaders were a group known as Young Turks who were intent on westernizing their society. When WW I broke out, the Young Turks chose to side with the central powers (Germany, Austro-Hungarian, and Bulgarian). The British attacked but could not defeat the Ottomans directly so they took advantage of the internal divisions within the empire by backing Arabs who wanted independence from Ottoman control who were led by Sharif Hussein. The Arabs fought the Ottoman Empire and expected to be rewarded for their efforts with independence. After the defeat of the Ottomans, the Arabs proclaimed an independent state centered in Damascus. The British and French did not recognize this state. They had signed a secret agreement to share the Middle East between them which left the Arabs feeling betrayed. The French took control of the area around Damascus to create the country of Syria and then split off the section with the most Christians to create Lebanon. The UN created the Kingdom of Iraq under British control and made Faisal—one of Hussein's sons—the king.

The British controlled Iraq, Palestine and Egypt. They split off the section of Palestine on the eastern side of the Jordan River and named it Jordan. They installed Abdullah—another of Hussein's sons—as king. The British allowed their Arab ally—Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, shown in Figure 5.9—to create the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the Arabian Peninsula which included the holy cities of Mecca and Medina where Islam began.



Figure 5.9. Abdul Aziz ibn Saud—founder of Saudi Arabia

The Turks took control of the remains of the Ottoman Empire to create the country of Turkey. They chose to have a secular government with a democratically elected government and more western values. Turkey is a charter member of the United Nations and a member of NATO—a military alliance of Western European countries and the United States. Turkey's constitution provides for freedom of religion and they are

opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. (U.S. Department of State 2002)

Estimates for the number of Muslims in the United States varies considerably but there appear to be about 2 million. (Robinson 2010)

Key Takeaways

Islam recognizes the prophets of the Jews and they recognize Jesus and John the Baptist as prophets. They consider the Qur'an to be the final message from God and Muhammad to be the most important and final messenger from God. [5.3.1]

Islam is the religion and it means "surrender". A person who is a believer or adherent of Islam is a Muslim. Arabs are an ethnic group of people who trace their ancestry back to Abraham through his oldest son Ishmael whose mother was an Egyptian slave. Not all Arabs are Muslims and a majority of Muslims are not Arabs. [5.3.2]

Muslims believe in one God, and an afterlife in either heaven or hell. They believe that Muhammad is the chief prophet and a messenger from God. [5.3.3]

The Qur'an is a collection of revelations from God dictated to by Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. The Qur'an teaches Muslims to believe the revelations given to all of the prophets including Jewish prophets and Jesus. [5.3.4]

Muslims believe that Muhammad ascended to heaven from the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem where he met the other prophets and led them in prayer. This site is the third most holy site for Muslims after Mecca and Medina. [5.3.5]

The six countries with the largest Muslim populations are Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Egypt and Nigeria. [5.3.6]

The two largest groups within Islam are the Sunni and the Shi'a. They differ originally over the succession of leadership after Muhammad's death. [5.3.7]

Muslims are forbidden to loan money for interest. Instead, Muslim financial institutions form partnerships that share profits proportionally to the initial investment or the financial institution buys the property and rents it to the prospective buyer. [5.3.8]

The Balkan wars weakened the Muslim Ottoman Empire. They lost much of their territory in Europe. Muslims from those areas moved into eastern areas of the empire that were occupied by Christians. In WW I, internal fighting between ethnic and religious groups resulted in great loss of life. Great Britain backed Arabs in their fight to break away from Ottoman rule and establish their own countries. After WW I, Great Britain and France divided up the Middle East into the present-day countries. They drew the boundaries of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. [5.3.9]

Key Terms

Apostles

closest friends and followers

Balkans

mountainous region of south eastern Europe

caliph

leader

canon

official version

Christ

Greek word for "the anointed one" used to refer to Jesus

creed

statement of beliefs

crusades

series of military expeditions from Europe to retake the Middle East

crucifixion

method of execution used by the Romans

diaspora

dispersion of a people from their homeland

dissenter

non-members off the Anglican Church in the American colonies

eugenics

theory of improvement of the human race by preventing inbreeding with inferior or defective people

evangelistic

seeks to convince others to adopt a particular religion or belief

excommunicate

cut off from the church and salvation

Gospel

means "good news", refers to the Christian view of religion

Greek Orthodox Church

Eastern Christian Church

Hajj

pilgrimage to the shrine in Mecca

Hebrew

historic language of the Jews

indulgences

forgiveness of punishment of sins

Islam

second most popular religion; adherents believe in one God and that Muhammad is his greatest prophet

Israel

name given to Jacob and his descendants and to the Jewish state

Jesuits

members of the Society of Jesus within the Roman Catholic Church

jihad

struggle

Ka'ba

shrine in Mecca central to Islam

Messiah (Mashaich)

anointed one, anticipated leader of the Jews

missionaries

people who seek to convert others to their religion

Mahdi

anticipated great leader of Islam

Muslim

a person of the Islamic faith

New Testament

second part of the Christian bible, a collection of writings composed after Jesus' death

Old Testament

first part of the Christian bible that corresponds to Hebrew scriptures

Orthodox

traditional, literal interpretation of scripture

Pope

leader of the Roman Catholic Church

Promised Land

area referred to in Genesis 15:18 as the area promised to the descendants of Abraham

Qur'an (Koran)

revelations to Muhammad—holy scripture of Islam

ribi

interest charged on loans, Arabic

salat

ritual prayer

sect

faction or subdivision

Secular

not belonging to a religion

Sharia

Islamic law based on the Qur'an

Shia

teaching within Islam – name refers to partisans of Ali

Sunni

teaching within Islam, largest group

Sufi

liberal teaching within Islam

surah

chapter in the Qur'an

Talmud

traditional interpretations of the Torah

Torah

five books attributed to Moses

usury

interest on a loan, often interpreted as excessive interest

zakat

gift for the poor

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