

# Religions of the World

LEARNING STRAND: HUMAN EXPERIENCE



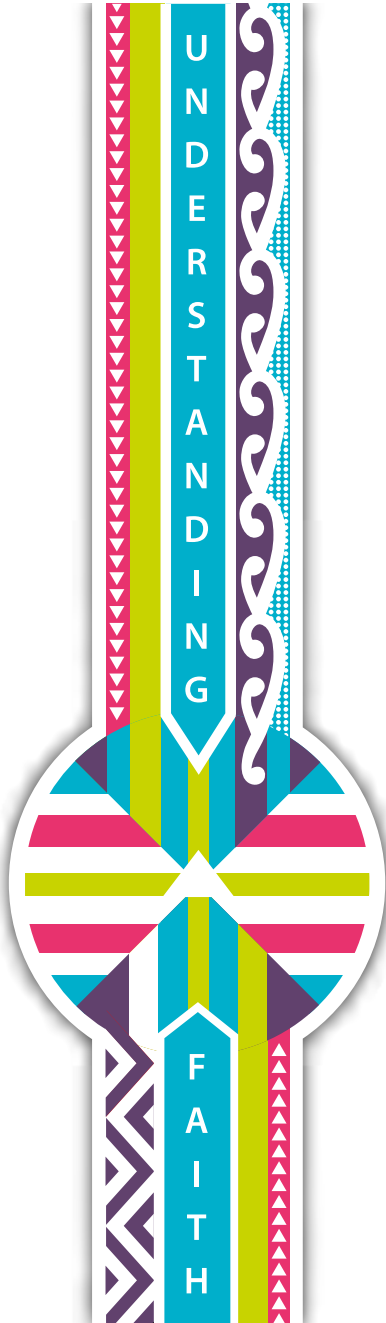
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RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAMME

FOR CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN  
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

12A



## THE LOGO

The logo is an attempt to express Faith as an inward and outward journey.

This faith journey takes us into our own hearts, into the heart of the world and into the heart of Christ who is God's love revealed.

In Christ, God transforms our lives. We can respond to his love for us by reaching out and loving one another.

The circle represents our world. White, the colour of light, represents God. Red is for the suffering of Christ. Red also represents the Holy Spirit. Yellow represents the risen Christ.

The direction of the lines is inwards except for the cross, which stretches outwards.

Our lives are embedded in and dependent upon our environment (green and blue) and our cultures (patterns and textures).

Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, is represented by the blue and white pattern.

The blue also represents the Pacific...

Annette Hanrahan RSCJ

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**LEARNING STRAND: HUMAN EXPERIENCE**



**12A**

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**Māori terms are italicised in the text. The first time a Māori term appears in the text, its English meaning appears in brackets after it. A Māori glossary at the back of the book gives a more detailed explanation of these terms and provides a guide for their pronunciation.**

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# Part One:

## What is Religion?

### Focus:

- **Though of many cultures, languages and religions, all people form one human family and have a common origin in Te Atua (God).**
- **He tangata (human beings) seek answers to life's deepest questions in the various indigenous and world religions.**
- **It is difficult to define religion, but all religions seem to share certain characteristics.**

## Thousands of Religions – One Human Family



At the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic bishops of the world were very conscious that as a result of rapid advances in technology and communications people everywhere were growing closer together. They acknowledged that although humanity is made up of many cultures, languages and religions, all people form one human family and have a common origin in God.

The bishops recognised that in order to build unity and love among the people of the world, attention has to be given to the role religion plays in the lives of the world's people, most of whom are not Christian.

Even though the various religions understand and define God in different ways, people naturally look to them to answer life's deepest questions:

- What does it mean to be human?
- What is goodness? What is sin?
- What makes us sad?
- What is the path to happiness?
- What does death mean?
- What is beyond the grave?
- What is the mystery of life?



### Something to Discuss

**Other than Christianity, which religions have you heard of?  
What do you know about them?**

### Something to Think About

**What other questions might people look to religion to answer?**



## Indigenous and World Religions

In the history of humankind, there have been many thousands of religions, mostly indigenous. An indigenous religion originates within a particular culture and is identified with that culture. If the culture dies out, so does the religion. The traditional religions of the Australian Aboriginal people, of the Māori and other people of the Pacific region, and of the North American Indian are all indigenous.

When a religion's message spreads widely beyond its culture of origin, adapting to other cultures and developing within them, it may become a world religion. A religion's influence, rather than the number of members it has, determines its significance. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism are all world religions that have played a major role in shaping human history, although the number of believers in each of these religions varies greatly.

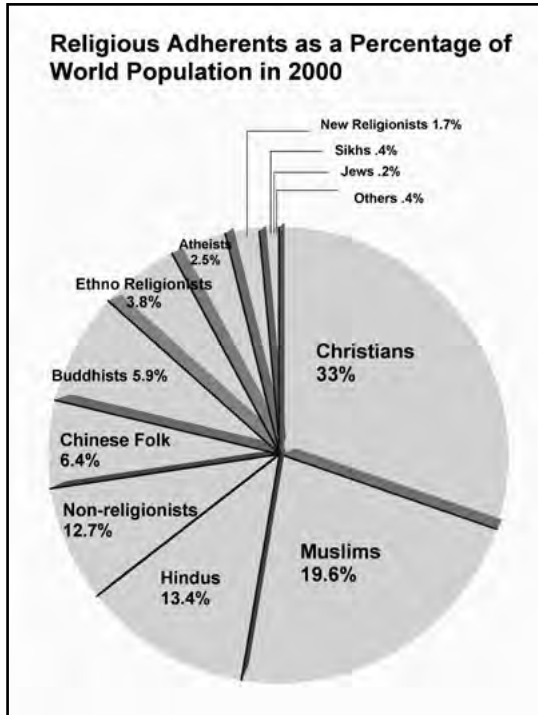
### Task One

**Explain in your own words the difference between indigenous religions and world religions.**

## Task Two

Study the pie graph below.

- Which of the five world religions has the greatest number of followers? Which has the least?
- Identify a country where the number of people involved in indigenous religions is greater than the number of people who belong to each of the two smallest world religions. How can this be the case?



## Defining Religion

Because humanity's religions are so many and varied, there is no one generally agreed definition of what religion is. Here are some people's attempts to define it:

*A religion is a set of personal and social beliefs which have two main characteristics: a deep concern with the ultimate meaning of human existence; and an identification with a supernatural power beyond the limits of the human and natural world.*

*Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life.*

*Religion is the human response to the mystery of life – a response based on faith.*

*Religion is not a thing apart. It cannot be placed in a compartment. It is a part of life and will be found wherever people gather in societies.*

*Religion is an attempt to explain the unknown, to solve the riddles of life and death, to answer the ultimate questions.*

*Science seeks to understand how the universe works; religion responds to the mystery of the universe.*

*Religion takes the visible form of churches and temples, sacred actions and persons set apart to perform them.*

*Religion is concerned with those values in human existence that are worth living and dying for.*

*Religion is the human attempt to pierce the veil of mystery that some refer to as God.*

## Something to Think About

What are some of the points that are emphasised in the above definitions of religion?

## Task Three

Attempt your own definition of religion.

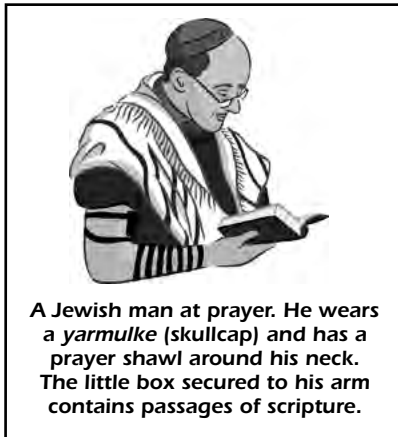
## Characteristics of Religion

Although there is no generally accepted definition of religion, there are some characteristics that all religions seem to share:

Religions are concerned with the *holy* or the *sacred*. They deal with *mysteries* that overwhelm and fascinate us – hidden *spiritual* realities that we cannot make sense of with our rational minds. Instead, people respond to these with *reverence*, *awe* and a sense of *unworthiness*.



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**A Jewish man at prayer. He wears a yarmulke (skullcap) and has a prayer shawl around his neck. The little box secured to his arm contains passages of scripture.**

Religions demand *faith*. Although the content of this faith may differ from religion to religion, and even within the same religion, there is always a sense of trust or confidence in the holy, the sacred, the ultimate, the divine. An important way of expressing faith is through *prayer*.

Religions give rise to *beliefs* of various kinds, including doctrines or creeds. Through *liturgy* or public *worship* members of a religion act out their beliefs in the form of *ritual*. Through *moral behaviour* they express their commitment to their religious beliefs in their daily lives.

Religions maintain a sense of *community* through shared outlooks, meanings, and values. Each religion has some form of *structure* which provides stability of thought, practice, and organisation for its members.

## Nine Dimensions of Religion

There are many ways of studying the various religions. One approach is to analyse the religions in terms of the following aspects:

### Sacred Texts

The sacred texts of a religion are its holy writings. While the major world religions have holy books, indigenous religions which pass on their traditional knowledge and wisdom orally, regard carvings and other works of art as sacred texts.

### Central Beliefs

The central beliefs of a religious group are the important understandings upon which the religion is based and the key themes that are emphasised.

### Sacred Stories

A religion's sacred stories are told and retold by its members because they explain important aspects of the religion's identity and give meaning to people's lives.

### Important Symbols

A religion's sacred symbols are the objects, places and, sometimes people, that have a special meaning and are considered holy by the religion's members.

### Sacred Rituals

Sacred rituals are the various religious rites, ceremonies, prayers and practices through which a religion's members worship and celebrate.

### Moral and Ethical Teachings

A religion's moral and ethical teachings guide people to act correctly and lead lives that are good.

### Social Structure

A religion's social structure or organisation determines the roles that various individuals and groups of believers have within it and the ways they relate to each other.



**Many Christians wear a cross as a sign of their faith in Jesus Christ.**

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## Religious Experience

A person's religious experience includes those attitudes, emotions, commitments and responses that shape their life as a believer.

## Religious History

A religion's history is the story of its development over time, including the ways in which individuals, movements and events have shaped its identity.

### Task Four

In the box below are a number of important features of Catholicism. Link each feature with one of the nine dimensions of religion.

<i>The Reformation</i>	<i>The Crucifix</i>
<i>The Letters of Saint Paul</i>	<i>Accepting God's love</i>
<i>The Easter Candle</i>	<i>The Second Vatican Council</i>
<i>The Four Gospels</i>	<i>Honour your father and your mother</i>
<i>Love your neighbour</i>	<i>Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human</i>
<i>Mary is the Mother of God</i>	<i>The pope is the servant of the servants of God</i>
<i>The Mass</i>	<i>The parable of the Good Samaritan</i>
<i>Learning to forgive others</i>	<i>The escape of the Israelites from Egypt</i>
<i>Praying the rosary</i>	<i>Priests, religious and lay people</i>

## Nine Dimensions of Religion



### Something to Discuss

Work in a group. What other examples for each of the nine dimensions of religion can you think of? Draw on your knowledge of Catholicism or of other Christian traditions that you are familiar with.

## Part Two:

# The Catholic Church and Non-Christian Religions

### Focus:

- **Jesus Christ opens the way for all people to experience the fullness of God's life and *aroha* (love).**
- **Catholics believe that God's presence is revealed most fully through the Catholic Church which continues the saving work of *Hehu Karaiti* (Jesus Christ).**
- **The Catholic Church accepts all that is true and *tapu* (sacred or holy) in other religions and acknowledges that they reflect aspects of *Te Atua*.**
- **The Church encourages Catholics to respect other religions and to learn about them in order to strengthen the human family and build peace.**

## Jesus Christ – The Way, the Truth and the Light

*'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'* (John 14:6-7)

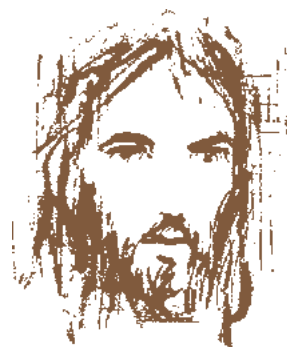


At the heart of Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ whom Christians believe opens the way for everyone to experience the fullness of God's life and love. Through his life, death and resurrection Jesus overcame the power of sin and death, making it possible for all people to live in right relationship with God and with each other. Because he brings salvation to the whole world, the Church insists that Jesus Christ is "the redeemer of humankind" and "the centre of the universe and of history"<sup>1</sup>.

By the power of the *Te Wairua Tapu* (The Holy Spirit), Jesus Christ continues to live and work in our world, bringing people to a knowledge and love of God. While this happens in various ways, God's presence is revealed to people most fully through the Catholic Church which is entrusted with faithfully living and teaching *Te Rongopai* (the Good News) of Jesus Christ.

### Task Five

**What does the Church mean when it claims that Jesus Christ is the redeemer of humankind?**



### Something to Think About

**List all the different ways that the Catholic Church lives and teaches the Good News of Jesus Christ.**



Pope John Paul II emphasised the need for Catholics to join in dialogue and work co-operatively with people of other religions.

<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II. *The Redeemer of Humankind*, 1.

## The Catholic Church and Other Religions

Throughout its two-thousand-year history, the Catholic Church has proclaimed Jesus Christ as the world's one and only saviour, taking seriously its responsibility to carry the Gospel to the whole world:

*'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'* (Matthew 28:18-20)

For many centuries, the Catholic Church's sense of its own mission caused it to emphasise that "outside the Church there is no salvation". Non-Christians, along with members of other Christian churches, were led to believe that unless they became Catholics they would not be saved – that is, they would be denied the possibility of experiencing the fullness of God's goodness and love.

However, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) marked a positive shift in the Catholic Church's attitude to other religions. Its *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, also known as *Nostra Aetate – In Our Day*, instead of condemning non-Christian religions, gives recognition to all that is true and holy in them:

*The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6), in whom everyone finds the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).* (*Nostra Aetate – In Our Day*, 2)

*Nostra Aetate – In Our Day* acknowledges that from the earliest times a deep religious sense has been common to all humanity:

*Throughout history, to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life. At times, there is present even a recognition of a supreme being, or still more of a Father.* (*Nostra Aetate – In Our Day*, 2)

It challenges Catholics, while remaining true to their own faith, to join in dialogue and work co-operatively with members of other religions:

*The Church, therefore, urges its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians together with their social life and culture.* (*Nostra Aetate – In Our Day*, 2)



### Something to Discuss

**How did the Second Vatican Council mark a change in the Catholic Church's attitude towards non-Christian religions?**

### Task Six

**Study the three passages from *Nostra Aetate – In Our Day*, which appear above. In your own words, what are the key points made in each of them?**



## Learning About Other Religions

In the forty years since the close of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has emphasised the value of learning about other faiths and the people who practise them. Through a study of the world's religions we come to an awareness that the members of the human family have more in common than many of us realise. As Pope John Paul II says:

*Instead of marvelling at the fact that Providence allows such a great variety of religions, we should be amazed at the number of common elements found within them.*

(Crossing the Threshold of Hope, page 77)

Today, in many parts of the world, conflict and violence often arise because of misunderstandings between people of different religions. If we ever hope to see an end to the tensions between the world's faiths, we must understand accurately the beliefs and practices of others and respect them.

**Religions are many and varied, and they reflect the desire of men and women down through the ages to enter into a relationship with the Absolute Being.**

**(Pope John Paul II –  
World Day Of Prayer,  
Assisi, 1986)**

The Church acknowledges that study of religious traditions other than our own may well be one of the best contributions we can make as individuals toward the cause of global peace. The people most likely to respect human rights, defend religious freedom, and build a human community based on love not confrontation, are those who believe that it is God's will that they respect the faith of those with different understandings about God.



Some people worry that the study of other religions may weaken a Christian's commitment to Jesus Christ. The opposite is usually true. A serious commitment to learning about other faiths requires us to understand our own religion more deeply and, thus, appreciate it more.

### Something to Discuss



***A serious commitment to learning about other faiths requires us to understand our own religion more deeply and appreciate it more.***

**Suggest reasons for and against this idea.**

### Task Seven

**Read the following comments from Catholics who found studying religions other than their own a positive experience.**

- Choose three comments that you like or find interesting and explain why they are worthwhile.**
- Write a comment of your own about what you hope to gain from studying other religions during the course of this topic.**



# Valuing Other Religions

*Learning about other religions taught me to be more open to people who are different from me. I came to appreciate other cultures and ways of life much more. (Tina)*

*As I was learning about other religions, I realised that I needed to find out more about my own Catholic faith and not take it for granted. (Adrian)*

*I believe that if people around the globe make a real effort to respect the religious beliefs of others, many of the world's conflicts would be resolved. (Toni)*

*The world's religions all point to a hidden power behind the course of nature and human events. Studying different faiths led me to deepen my own awareness of God. (Fran)*

*I am amazed at what the different religions have in common. Love seems to be at the heart of all genuine faiths. (Paul)*

*Prayers, rituals, sacred books, living a moral life and respecting others seem to be important in all the religions I have studied. (Myra)*

*The world of the twenty-first century seems a much smaller place. Learning about other religions helps me see that all people on our planet are part of God's one human family. (Beth)*

*I believe that the Catholic Church gives me everything I need to grow in my love of Jesus, but I respect the other religions as different pathways to God. (Darryl)*

*As a Christian I believe that Hehu Karaiti wants all people to come to God through the Church. At the same time, I think that the other religions are somehow part of God's plan for our world. (Millie)*



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**The Buddha – hands clasped in prayer.**



**A Hindu praying in the waters of the sacred River Ganges.**

## Praying with People of Other Religions

Pope John Paul II recognised the importance of prayer in establishing sure and lasting peace in the world.

On 27 October, 1986 he presided over the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, Italy. On this occasion sixty-three religious leaders and two hundred members of twelve major religions prayed side by side. Also there were members of indigenous religions, including Native Americans. Those gathered represented three billion people.

The town of Assisi was chosen for the meeting because of its association with Saint Francis – known and revered by people everywhere as a symbol of peace, reconciliation and human co-operation. Each religion was given the space, time and opportunity to express itself in its own traditional way.

In his address to those gathered Pope John Paul said:

*The coming together of so many religious leaders to pray is in itself an invitation today to the world to become aware that there exists another dimension of peace and another way of promoting it which is not a result of negotiations, political compromises or economic bargainings. It is the result of prayer, which, in the diversity of religions, expresses a relationship with a supreme power that surpasses our human capacities alone.*

*Peace, where it exists, is always extremely fragile. It is threatened in so many ways and with such unforeseeable consequences that we must endeavour to provide it with secure foundations. Without in any way denying the need for the many human resources which maintain and strengthen peace, we are here because we are sure that, above and beyond all such measures, we need prayer – intense, humble and trusting prayer – if the world is finally to become a place of true and permanent peace.*

*This Day is, therefore, a day for prayer and for what goes together with prayer: silence, pilgrimage and fasting. By abstaining from food we shall become more conscious of the universal need for penance and inner transformation.*

(From the Address of Pope John Paul II to those gathered in Assisi for the World Day of Prayer, 1986)

The World Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi in 1986 led to similar gatherings, both in Assisi and elsewhere, in the years that followed.

### Something to Discuss

**What important things does Pope John Paul II say about the relationship between prayer and peace?**

### Something to Think About

**What value do you see in gatherings such as the World Day of Prayer for Peace?**



**Pope John Paul II with leaders of the world's religions at the World Day of Prayer for Peace, Assisi.**



**Prayer beads are used by members of many of the world's religions. Catholics use them to pray the rosary.**



**Muslims set aside special rugs upon which they pray.**



**Buddhists, Catholics and people from many other religious traditions use incense during prayer.**

## Part Three:

# Introduction to Religions of the Pacific Region

### Focus:

- **The indigenous people of the Pacific form four main regional groups – Indonesian, Australian, Melanesian and Polynesian – each with its own culture and religion.**
- **The indigenous religions of the Pacific region have many of the characteristics of other traditional religions.**
- **Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europeans have had a significant impact on ancient beliefs and ways of life, including the development of religion.**

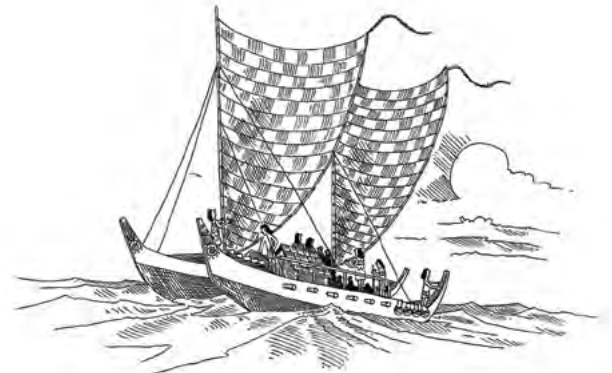
## The Peoples and Religions of the Pacific

The Pacific Ocean covers nearly a third of the earth's surface and the indigenous inhabitants of the area are of four main groups – Indonesian, Australian, Melanesian and Polynesian. Except for Indonesia which has long been influenced by Indian culture and the Islamic world, the Pacific territories have experienced many centuries of isolation.

In their small, remote and mostly island communities, the indigenous peoples of the Pacific have developed cultures in which religion has played an important part. Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the presence of Europeans in the Pacific has had a major impact on indigenous societies, including their traditional religions.

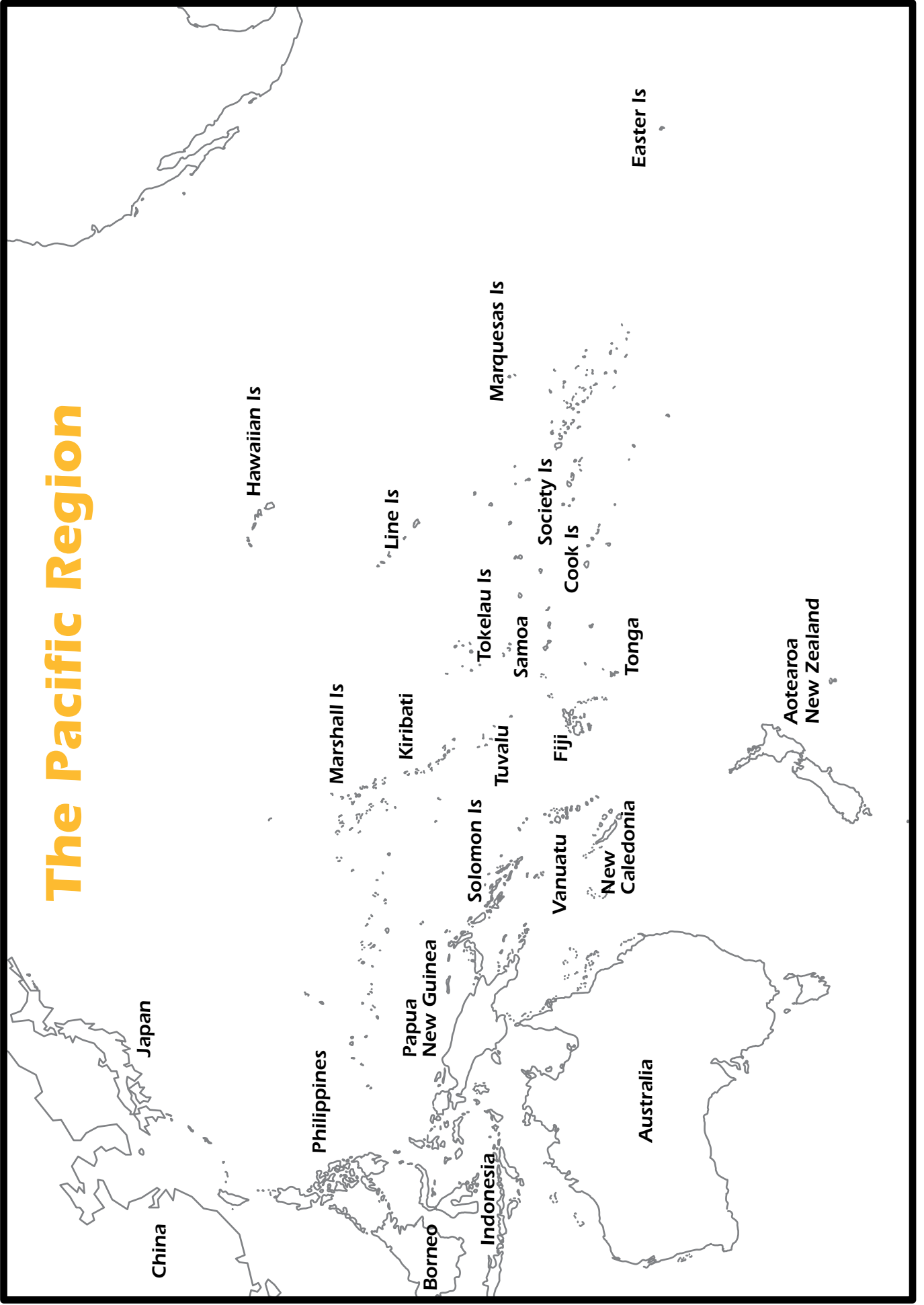
### Something to Do

- On the map of the Pacific region (next page) locate the areas where the four main groupings of indigenous peoples live:**
  - **Indonesia**
  - **Australia**
  - **Melanesia**
  - **Polynesia**
- Name some important countries, states, provinces, islands, cities etc in each of the four areas.**
- What can you find out about the people and cultures in each of these areas?**



Canoes, which the Māori people call *waka*, played an important role in the spread and settlement of indigenous populations throughout the Pacific region.

# The Pacific Region





# Aspects of Indigenous Religion

Since prehistoric times, indigenous peoples throughout the world have had their own unique forms of religion. Among the indigenous inhabitants of Australia, Africa and the Americas many of these traditional religions continue to be practised today.

Here are some comments about indigenous religions, written from a Catholic point of view.<sup>2</sup>

Cult or worship in Traditional Religions is directed generally to the spirits and the ancestors and sometimes to God. It takes the form of prayer especially in the family, worship at shrines and communal sacrifices. Fear of the evil spirits or ancestors motivates many acts of worship.

There is also a belief in other beings which are above humankind but are less than the Supreme Being. They may be called spirits and some experts on the Traditional Religions sometimes call them “deities” or “gods”, with a small “d” or “g”. Deceased adult relatives, ancestors, are also objects of belief.

Traditional Religions generally have a clear belief in One God, in a Supreme Being who goes by such names as Great Spirit, Creator, the Great One, the Mighty Spirit, the Divine, the Transcendent, the One who lives above, Heaven etc.

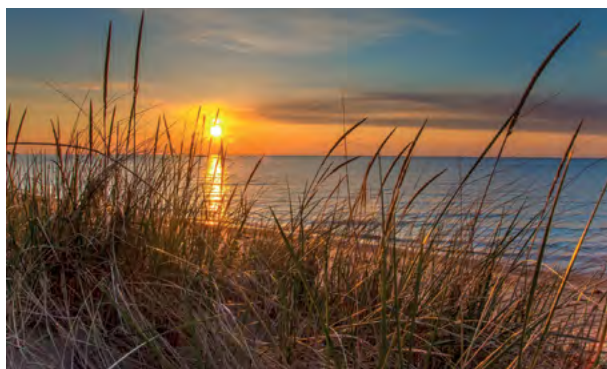
The moral code is regarded as that which has been handed down by past generations and sanctioned by the spirits and the ancestors, and occasionally by God.

Traditional Religions do not generally lay claim to revealed books. Nor are they articulated in theoretical statements of a theological or philosophical nature. The riches of their contents, and their many values, are more often found in their celebrations, stories and proverbs, and conveyed through attitudes, customs and codes of conduct. It is rare that a traditional religion traces itself back to a founder.

In many traditional societies there is a strong sense of the sacred. Religion permeates life to such an extent that it is often difficult to distinguish between strictly religious elements and local custom. Authority is not seen as something secular but is regarded as a sacred trust.

People of Traditional Religions show great attention to the earth. They respect life and celebrate its important stages: birth, entrance into adulthood, marriage, death. There is a strong sense of the family, which includes love of children, respect for the elders, a community link with the ancestors. Symbolism is important for interpreting the invisible world and the human being's relationship with it. There is an obvious love of ritual.

Traditional religions also have their negative elements. Examples can be given: inadequate ideas about God, superstition, fear of the spirits, objectionable moral practices, the rejection of twins (in some places), even occasional human sacrifice.



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<sup>2</sup> From *Pastoral Attention to Traditional Religions*. Letter of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 1993.

### Task Eight

After reading the above information on indigenous or traditional religions, *either* write your own summary or make up a quiz based on them using as many of the following key words as you can.

Supreme Being

worship

stories

sense of the sacred

family

spirits

moral code

celebrations

stages of life

symbolism

ancestors

books

founder

earth

negative elements

### Something to Think About

In your opinion, which are the most appealing aspects of indigenous or traditional religions? Which aspects do you find more difficult to understand or accept?



## The Church in Oceania

In 1998, 117 bishops from throughout the Pacific gathered in Rome for the special Synod of Bishops for Oceania. At this meeting the bishops discussed their hopes and concerns about the Church in the Pacific. Pope John Paul II responded to the bishops in *Ecclesia in Oceania – The Church in Oceania*.

### Something to Discuss

- What positive aspects of the indigenous religions of the Aboriginal, Māori, and island people does John Paul II mention in the passage from *Ecclesia in Oceania – The Church in Oceania*?
- What does John Paul II mean when he says that some missionaries “sought to impose elements which were culturally alien to the people”? Suggest some examples of this.



*When the missionaries first brought the Gospel to Aboriginal or Māori people, or to the island nations, they found peoples who already possessed an ancient and profound sense of the sacred. Religious practices and rituals were very much part of their daily lives and thoroughly permeated their cultures. The missionaries brought the truth of the Gospel which is foreign to no one; but at times some sought to impose elements which were culturally alien to the people. (Ecclesia in Oceania – The Church in Oceania, 7)*

Although there are many different traditional forms of religion in the Pacific region, the material in the following sections of the student text focuses on the indigenous religions of Australia and Polynesia. These are the areas of the Pacific that Aotearoa New Zealand is most closely linked to by geography and history.

## Part Four:

# Australian Aboriginal Religion

### Focus:

- **The Dreaming, a mythical time when the Ancestors inhabited the earth, is the basis of Australian Aboriginal religion.**
- **Totems, such as animals or features of the natural landscape, symbolise the Ancestors of the Dreaming and link the Aboriginal people to them.**
- **In their rituals, Aborigines re-enact and draw power from the actions of the Ancestors.**
- **Initiation is an important aspect of Aboriginal society, which is structured around a system of taboos.**



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**Australian Aborigines are organised into many separate tribes, with differing customs and at least forty distinct languages.**

## Australian Aboriginal Culture

In the eighteenth century, when Europeans first arrived in Australia, they found a vast, sparsely inhabited continent, very different from the one they had left. Australia's climate and terrain ranged from lush forested mountains to harsh deserts.

The Aborigines, the indigenous people of Australia, maintained traditions stretching thousands of years into the past. They were organised into many separate tribes, with differing customs and at least forty distinct languages. Because of this, Europeans found the lifestyles of the Aborigines almost impossible to understand. They initially failed to see that Aborigines had a religion because there were no gods, temples, priests or sacrifices. In time, Europeans recognised that Aborigines throughout Australia, despite their tribal differences, did share certain patterns of life and thought that could be termed "religious".



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**Uluru or Ayers Rock, in central Australia, is of great cultural and spiritual significance to the Anangu people.**

### Something to Think About

**Why did Europeans take such a long time to recognise that Australian Aborigines were "religious"?**

## The Dreaming

The basis of all Aboriginal religion is the Dreaming. According to Aboriginal belief, the world was originally formless. In the far distant past, supernatural beings called Ancestors emerged and roamed about Earth. These Ancestors gave shape to the landscape and created the various forms of life, including the first human beings. They marked out the territory that each human tribe was to occupy and gave each tribe its language, social



**When the Ancestors' work was done they departed the Earth, leaving behind signs and symbols of their presence, in the form of natural landmarks and rock paintings.**

rules, and customs. When the Ancestors' work was done they departed the Earth, leaving behind signs and symbols of their presence, in the form of natural landmarks, rock paintings, and so on.

The time when these mythical Ancestors lived on the earth is called the Dreaming. For Aborigines, the period of the Dreaming lives on because the spiritual essence of the Ancestors remains in the various signs and symbols they left behind in every aspect of the landscape. Features such as outcrops of rock, watering holes and caves are seen as having great spiritual significance. Such sites are believed to be charged with sacred power, and only certain individuals are allowed to approach them – which they must do by following the paths that were originally taken by the Ancestors in the Dreaming. In this way, Aborigines re-enact the mythic events of the Dreaming and re-create their world as it existed in the beginning. By so doing, they gain access to the great spiritual power of the Ancestors.

## Totems

Aborigines also believe that the spiritual essence of the Ancestors lives within each individual. An unborn child becomes filled with the spirit of a particular Ancestor when the mother or another relative makes contact with a sacred site. Usually this happens through a ritual that draws the Ancestor's spiritual essence into the unborn child.

Through this connection, each Aborigine becomes a living representation of an Ancestor. This relationship is symbolised by a totem – the natural form that the Ancestor took in the Dreaming. The totem may be an animal, such as a kangaroo, lizard or snake, or a rock formation or other feature of the landscape. Individuals and groups remain linked with their Ancestor through their totems.

## Rituals and Myths

Aborigines recognise the close inter-relationship between the supernatural, human and natural worlds. Through ritual they maintain harmony between these three aspects of reality.

For Aborigines, ritual is essential if life is to have meaning. Through ceremonial performances of song and dance the sacred power of the Dreaming is experienced and links with the Ancestors are strengthened. By carrying out the proper rituals – which were taught to the first humans by the Ancestors – people connected with a particular Ancestor allow that Ancestor's power to come to them and flow into their environment. In this way, the Ancestors of the Dreaming continually nourish and renew human life and the natural world.

Each ritual re-enacts certain actions of the Ancestors during the Dreaming. For example, rituals that present the story of the creation of the first kangaroo are performed at sacred sites associated with this "event" in order to maintain the kangaroo population. In this way, Aborigines protect an important food source.

## Taboo

Aboriginal society is tightly structured around the principle of taboo. Only some people are permitted to come into contact with certain sacred objects or join in particular sacred actions. Other members of the groups are forbidden to have anything to do with them – sometimes under threat of death.

Restrictions may be based on gender – some sites and rituals are for men only, while others, such as those connected with childbirth, are limited to women. Maturity and levels of religious training also determine who is able to visit sacred sites and take part in rituals.

Through a process of initiation people gain access to activities and places that were previously restricted to them.

## Initiation

Initiation ceremonies are performed to introduce and celebrate adolescent boys and girls as adult members of the community.

In Aboriginal society a person's spiritual identity comes to them from their Ancestor. Although a person receives their spiritual identity before they are born, it is only at the time of their initiation into adult life that this spirit is awakened.

Initiation rituals mark the death of childhood and the spiritual rebirth into adulthood. At this time of transition young people are taught about the Dreaming and the various myths and traditions that are important to the tribe. They learn how to live and act in the world, performing the roles given to them as male or female members of their tribe.



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**Some Australian aboriginal rock paintings are between 60,000 and 200,000 years old.**

## The Mak Mak Totem

The following comments by Mak Mak people, who live south-west of Darwin, describe what their totem, the Sea Eagle, means to them:

*My strength. The strength of that land.*

*You can feel it in yourself, you belong there. It's your country, your dust, your place.*

*You remember the old people.*

*They [the birds] always greet me. It's home.*

*Safety and security.*

*You see the birds, you see the country, and your senses come back to you. You know what to do and where to go.*



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Initiation usually occurs during puberty, sometime between the ages of ten and sixteen years. Only those boys and girls who had proven themselves worthy of the responsibility of adulthood mentally and physically are initiated. Although both boys and girls undergo initiation, the rituals for boys are especially elaborate.

In most traditional Aboriginal communities boys are initiated into manhood in a cycle of ceremonies in which they are taught their traditional songs and dances. The rituals take place over a number of days and sometimes weeks. The boys are decorated with body paint and ornaments and are often given a permanent symbol on their bodies to show that they had been initiated into adult life. Sometimes those being initiated have a tooth removed, their ears or nose pierced or flesh cut with particular sacred markings. Finally they are circumcised.



**For Aborigines, ritual is essential if life is to have meaning.**

IMAGE FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

### Task Nine

**Form twelve statements about aboriginal religion by linking the start of each statement in the left hand column with its correct conclusion in the right.**

Column A	Column B
1. Despite their differing languages and customs	A. is the basis of all Aboriginal religion.
2. At first, Europeans did not recognise that Aborigines had a religion	B. determine who can join in sacred actions or visit sacred sites.
3. The Dreaming, when the ancestors roamed the earth,	C. takes the form that their Ancestor did in the Dreaming.
4. The Dreaming lives on	D. Aborigines throughout Australia shared certain "religious" patterns of life and thought.
5. A person's totem links them with their Ancestor and	E. enable Aborigines to experience the sacred power of the Dreaming.
6. People receive their spiritual essence before they are born	F. actions of the Ancestors during the Dreaming.
7. Rituals and ceremonies involving song and dance	G. because the spiritual essence of the Ancestors remains in certain sacred sites.
8. Rituals present	H. which gives people access to things previously forbidden to them.
9. Aboriginal society is organised around taboos or restrictions which	I. through a connection with their sacred site.
10. Initiation is a process	J. because there were no gods, temples, priests or sacrifices.
11. Initiation awakens a person's spiritual identity	K. as a sign that initiation has taken place.
12. A person's body will be marked in some way	L. and celebrates their acceptance as adult members of the community.

### Something to Research

**Choose one of the following aspects of Aboriginal religion that you read about in this section of the topic and were interested in:**

**The Dreaming      Totems      Rituals and Myths      Initiation**

- Write down three or four questions that come to mind after reading about this aspect of Aboriginal religion.
- Use the Internet or library to find answers to your questions.
- Decide which of the nine dimensions of religion your chosen aspect best fits.



## Part Five:

### Traditional Polynesian Religion

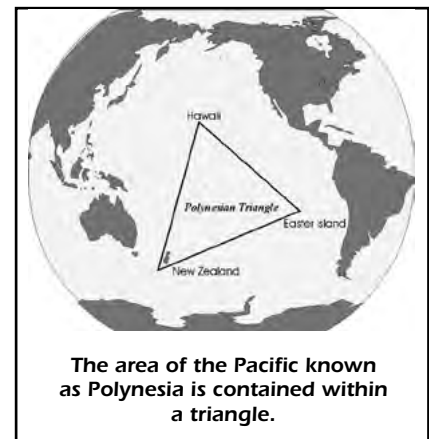
#### Focus:

- **Traditional Polynesian religion acknowledges a Supreme Being who created the cosmos.**
- **Earth and Sky are the parents of various *atua* (spiritual guardians) who gave life to human beings and control various human activities.**
- ***Mana* (spiritual power) is passed down through the generations, by ancestors to their descendants.**
- **Through various prayers and rituals, chiefs and *tohunga* (priests or experts) accessed the power and favour of the gods.**
- **The arrival of Christian missionaries caused many Polynesian people to abandon or adapt traditional religious beliefs and practices.**

### The Polynesian Triangle

Geographically, the area of the Pacific known as Polynesia – meaning “many islands” – forms a triangle with its three corners at Hawai’i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). The other main island groups located within the Polynesian triangle are Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands and the various island chains that make up French Polynesia.

The ancestors of the Polynesian people left Southeast Asia more than four thousand years ago. Migrating eastward into the Pacific, they eventually reached the islands of Polynesia where they settled and developed their own distinctive culture and religion.



### Polynesian Religion

Before the arrival of Christianity, Polynesian people lived in a world inhabited by countless supernatural beings. These possessed varying degrees of power and sacredness. In most of Polynesia, the Supreme Being was called Tangaroa<sup>3</sup>. He created the cosmos out of nothing and separated Earth and Sky, who were the parents of various *atua*. In turn, these *atua* gave life to human beings. Different *atua* were responsible for particular aspects of human life: Tāne for forests and woodcutting, Tū for warfare, and Hina for motherhood and weaving. There were also many lesser spirits, ghosts and demons.

*Atua* stand at the head of long lines of noble ancestors, passing on through them the *mana* which brings life and prosperity to their living descendants. Families trace their histories back to the mythical homeland Hawaiiki through genealogies and migration stories. After death, a person’s spirit returns to Hawaiiki to rest.

Although gods and ancestor-spirits are felt to be close at hand, mystery and awe lie at the heart of Polynesian religion. Direct access to the power and favour of the gods was traditionally reserved for chiefs – who were regarded as gods themselves – and for *tohunga*.

*Tohunga* possessed secret knowledge about important tribal matters. By reciting special prayers and chants at shrines and on *marae* (traditional meeting places) they would call upon the help of gods and ancestor-spirits.

Honoured by various ceremonies, that often included feasting and dancing, the gods, if they were pleased, would increase the *mana* of the chiefs, their people and their tribal lands.

First-fruits from freshly gathered foods or a catch of fish would also be offered to gain the co-operation of *atua*. Sometimes, in an effort to win the gods’ favour, human sacrifices would be made. For example, the first enemy killed in battle might be offered to the god of war. Human sacrifice was commonly practised in the consecration of buildings, war canoes and other types of sacred object.

Rites of purification protected people from any negative effects that might come from contact with what was *tapu*. Water was sprinkled on new-born children, bloodstained warriors and those contaminated by sickness or death to purify them. This would free them from *tapu* and make them safe for contact with other people.

<sup>3</sup> The pronunciation and spelling of the name vary throughout Polynesia – Tana’oa, Taka’oa, Ta’aroa, Tangaloa, and Kanaloa. Among the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand the Supreme Being is Io.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Giant stone monoliths called Moai dot the coastline of Rapa Nui (Easter Island). They are believed to represent the spirits of chiefly ancestors.

Priests used a variety of rituals and chants for healing, for insight into the will of *atua*, for protection from evil spirits, and to ensure the peaceful departure of the spirits of the dead to Hawaiki.

The arrival of Christian missionaries in Polynesia led to the destruction of objects and places held sacred by the people. Converts to Christianity challenged traditional religious beliefs and the authority of *tohunga*. In many places traditional rituals and sacred places were outlawed. Many Polynesian people abandoned important aspects of their own heritage, often out of a sense of shame.

### Crossword Activity

**Complete the crossword on Polynesian religion which your teacher will give you. All the information you need is in this section of the student text.**

## A Creation Story from Tahiti – Ti'i and Hina

Ta'aroa, the great god, was quite alone in space. He lived in an egg-shaped shell which spun around and around in the darkness. When he finally burst out from his shell, Ta'aroa wanted a friend. He created the god Tu, who would help Ta'aroa to make the world.

When the world was finished, Ta'aroa and Tu made gods to fill every part of it. They made all the earth's creatures, and people last of all.

Ti'i was the very first man to be created. When Ta'aroa called him from the earth he was covered in sand. Ti'i was cruel and wicked. He had a fierce white bird, which cast spells on people, and killed them.

Ti'i's wife, Hina, was like the gods. She had a face in front, and one at her back as well. She was kind and good.

When the world was finished, there was peace among the gods and among the people. This didn't last. In time, the gods began to fight among themselves and so did the people. Ta'aroa and Tu decided to punish them all.

They put a spell on the stars, making them blink, and on the moon, causing it to disappear. Kindly Hina stepped in, and it is because of her that the stars still twinkle, and the moon always re-appears.

Ta'aroa and Tu also put a spell on the sea, causing low tide. Again, Hina stepped in, bringing the waters to high tide. That is why, to this day, the tides ebb and flow.

A spell was put on the rivers. All their waters seeped away beneath the earth. Hina created small waterfalls and springs. Now the rivers always have water running into them.

Ta'aroa and Tu also put a spell on the trees. Their leaves changed colour, and in some seasons did not bear fruit. Hina made sure that new leaves always grew on the trees and the fruit always returned.

Hina was a kind and loving goddess. She would have protected the lives of the people except that her husband, Ti'i, caused their death.

'Oh Ti'i', Hina cried, 'Don't keep trying to cause people to die. You know that I will always bring them back to life. See the moon and the stars, the trees with all their fruit. Aren't these things more beautiful than death?'

Ti'i answered: 'Ta'aroa is putting spells on everything and making the world die. He loves to kill. I, too, will put death spells on all the people whom my fierce white bird touches'.

So, the Tahitians say, it was the man Ti'i and not the woman who made people lose their lives. At the end, Ti'i too was cursed, and died from the touch of his own white bird.

### Task Ten

**As well as telling about the origins of the cosmos and of people, creation stories also explain why different features of the natural world and of human existence are the way they are.**

**What events in nature and in human life does the Tahitian story of Ti'i and Hina offer an explanation for? List as many as you can.**

### Something to Discuss

**How does the role of Ta'aroa in the Tahitian story of Ti'i and Hina differ from that of Tangaroa in the story of Ranginui and Papatūānuku from Aotearoa New Zealand?**



Creation stories, such as that of Ti'i and Hina, explain why different features of the natural and human worlds are the way they are.

## Part Six:

### Traditional Māori Spirituality and Religion

#### Focus:

- **The distinctive culture and spirituality of the Māori people of Aotearoa developed out of their Polynesian background.**
- **Before the coming of Christianity, many Māori recognised the existence of a Supreme Being, *Io*, who was the source of all existence.**
- ***Tapu* and *mana* are essential dimensions of Māori life and spirituality that must be acknowledged.**

### Te Ao Wairua – The Spiritual World

Since 1642, when Abel Tasman, the Dutch explorer, arrived in the land he named New Zealand, many Europeans have failed to recognise the rich culture and spirituality of the Māori people.

When the ancestors of the Māori first came to Aotearoa from the islands of Polynesia about one thousand years ago, they brought their religious beliefs and practices with them. Over many centuries, a distinctive Māori culture developed.

The religion of the first inhabitants of Aotearoa acknowledged the close and sacred relationship between the different aspects of the created world – spiritual beings, people, land, sky, plants, birds, reptiles, fish and other animals. To the Māori every created thing was *tapu* because every part of creation was linked with a spiritual being. All living things and places had a *mauri* (life force) that came from the spiritual world.

*Atua* were active in every part of nature. Some *atua* were distant ancestors who controlled whole areas of life. For example, *Tangaroa*<sup>4</sup> was responsible for the sea, while *Tāne* protected the forests and birds. Other *atua* were family ancestors who were present to their descendants, especially to those of chiefly rank. These *atua* looked after their direct descendants, communicating with them through priests, dreams, omens, or through certain animals. Different *atua* also controlled the various human activities such as fishing, gardening or making clothes.

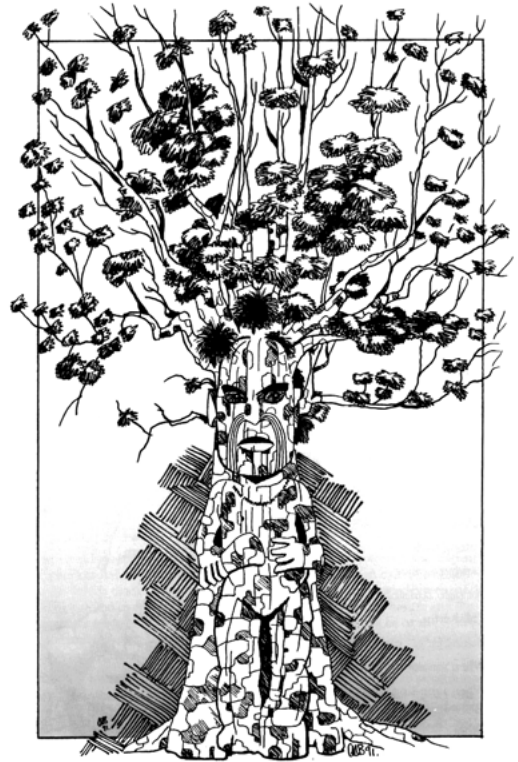
Māori valued their contact with the spiritual world and safeguarded it by following the laws of *tapu*. These laws set apart those people, times and places where *atua* were present and in communication with the human world. Various rituals and *karakia* (prayers) were used to make people *noa* (free from the restrictions of *tapu*). This allowed them to make contact with sacred things without being harmed.

For example, when a new building was being constructed it was placed under the *tapu* and *mana* of *Tāne* (spiritual guardian of the forest) and of various spirits of construction and carving. Before the building could be used it had to be freed from the *tapu* and *mana* of those spiritual guardians. Special *pure* (purification rites) were carried out to make sure that future users of the building would not be harmed.

*Mana* was the power of the spiritual beings at work in everyday life. It was important to protect *mana* against attacks by enemies and other forces.

Contact with the spirits of their own *Tūpuna* (ancestors) gave people courage and confidence in their daily lives but the fear of hostile *atua* could lead to death.

<sup>4</sup> In the myths of the Māori of Aotearoa *Tangaroa* is one of the children of *Ranginui* (Sky) and *Papatūānuku* (Earth) rather than the Supreme Being who gave life to the cosmos.





## Io – the Supreme Being

The idea of a Supreme Being, greater than all other *atua* and spiritual forces, was already a part of Māori spiritual belief before the coming of Christianity to Aotearoa.

This Supreme Being, *Io*, had a number of titles and was described in different ways:



<i>Io</i>	the core of all spiritual powers
<i>Io Nui</i>	the greatest of all Beings
<i>Io Roa</i>	everlasting, not knowing death
<i>Io Matua</i>	the parent of human beings and of all things
<i>Io Matua Kore</i>	the parentless, nothing but himself
<i>Io TakeTake</i>	permanent, all enduring, complete, immovable
<i>Io Te Pukenga</i>	the source of all things
<i>Io Te Wananga</i>	the source of all knowledge, whether good or evil
<i>Io Te Toi O Nga Rangī</i>	the crown of heavens
<i>Io Mata Nui</i>	the all-seeing
<i>Io Mata Ngaro</i>	the hidden (unseen) face
<i>Io Uru Tapu</i>	the totally sacred.

## Tapu

For Māori, every aspect of creation is *tapu* because it is linked with one or other of the spiritual powers. All *tapu* has its origins in *Io*, the Supreme Being. The highest expression of *tapu* is found in people.

*Te Wā* (the journey of life) is filled with many opportunities for people to acknowledge the *tapu* of others by respecting their dignity as human beings created by God. The common greeting “*Kia ora!*” (literally, “Have life!”) is one way of acknowledging the *tapu* and worth of another person.

To ensure that the *tapu* of every person and situation is respected – and that no harm comes through contact with the sacred – Māori have set ways of behaving in certain situations.

*Tapu* is respected and protected in three important ways:

- through *tika* (justice)
- through *pono* (integrity or faithfulness to *tika*)
- and through *aroha* (love)



## Mana

When Māori speak about the *mana* of a person they are referring to that person's worth. *Mana* isn't something that someone can set out to earn or achieve. *Mana* is a force that brings about change; the power to act in ways that move people. It comes from a lifetime of experiencing and respecting the unseen world of *tapu*.

### Something to Find Out

**How do Māori behave in the following situations so that *tapu* is respected and no harm comes through contact with the sacred?**

- **At a *tangihanga* (funeral)**
- **In an *urupā* (cemetery)**
- **During the carving of a *whareniui* (meeting house)**

### Something to Discuss

**Suggest ways in which people can acknowledge the *tapu* or dignity of others.**

# Part Seven:

## Hinduism

### Focus:

- **Hinduism, the main religion of India, acknowledges many gods and includes a great range of beliefs, practices and traditions.**
- **Belief in reincarnation is a central feature of Hinduism.**
- **The spiritual aim of Hindus is release from the continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth.**
- **Various forms of meditation, including yoga, enable people to transform their consciousness and achieve a sense of unity with the divine.**
- **Hinduism has many sacred books, the most famous of which is the *Bhagavadgita*.**
- **Hindu society has traditionally been organised according to the caste system**

## A Religion of Diversity

Hinduism is the principal religion of India and the oldest world religion. Today, with over eight hundred million Hindus worldwide, Hinduism is humankind's third-largest religion. Most Hindus still live in India.

Hinduism is not a single, unified religion established by one founder, but a great range of beliefs, practices and traditions. These originated in a great civilisation which flourished five thousand years ago along the banks of the Indus River in what is now Pakistan.

Religious beliefs and practices vary considerably from one region of India to another and even between neighbouring villages. Hindus worship in different ways, honour different gods, have different temples and sacred sites, observe different festivals and read a variety of sacred writings. Some Hindus believe in a supreme being who is personal, but others do not. Hindus may worship one god or many. Some Hindu beliefs can be expressed simply while others are more complex.



The **Om** is the Hindu symbol for the Godhead.

## Thirty-Three Million Gods

Hinduism appeals to some people because of its tradition of philosophy and meditation, but for many ordinary Indians the worship of various gods and goddesses is of great importance. Tradition claims there are thirty-three million different deities! Hindu temples are full of their images. Posters and paintings depict their exploits.

The three most important Hindu gods are:

- Brahma – the Creator who continues to create new realities
- Vishnu (Krishna) – the Preserver, who sustains these new creations
- Shiva – the Destroyer, who is at times compassionate and erotic, as well as destructive



**Brahma – the Creator of all life.**

Westerners often describe Hinduism as **polytheistic** because of its numerous gods. However, many Hindus prefer to be seen as **monists**, believing that their many gods are all expressions of the one ultimate reality.



**Shiva – the Destroyer.**

### Something to Discuss

**Why is it misleading to claim that Hinduism is a single, unified, polytheistic religion?**

### Something to Research

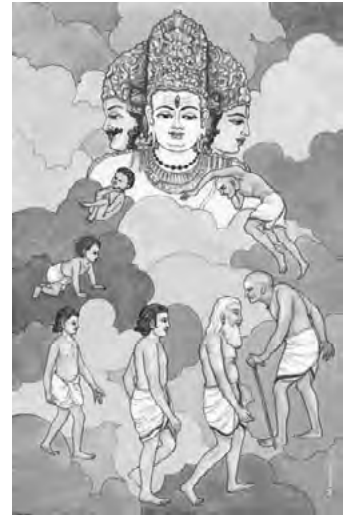
**Brahma, Vishnu (Krishna) and Shiva are the most important Hindu gods.**

- **What can you find out about them?**
- **What other Hindu gods or goddesses can you name?**

## Reincarnation

For most Hindus the individual *atman* or soul had its origin in the universal *Brahman* – the ultimate reality, the source of all that is. At death the body dies, but the *atman* takes on a new life within a new body – reincarnation. *Samsara* is the continual process of birth and rebirth that all people are believed to experience. The moral principle of *karma* explains that what a person does in this life determines the circumstances of that person's next life – their health, social status, and wealth. If a person has lived a moral and righteous life they can look forward to their next reincarnation. On the other hand, if a person has behaved immorally, without concern for what is right or wrong, they will be treated badly and suffer misfortune in their next life. The ultimate spiritual aim of Hindus is release from this cycle of *samsara*, from the continual round of birth and rebirth with all its disappointments, misery and struggles. *Moksha* or liberation is the goal of the religious life.

Hindus believe all people experience *samsara*, the continual process of birth and rebirth.



### Task Eleven

**Present the Hindu understanding of reincarnation in the form of a diagram that combines text and illustration. Make sure you show what is meant by *atman*, *karma*, *samsara* and *moksha*.**

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All forms of yoga emphasise control of the body and mind.

## Yoga

From the earliest times, Hindus have emphasised the value of meditation as a means of achieving *moksha*. Through the practice of a group of disciplines known as yoga people claim to experience a transformation of consciousness and a sense of unity with the divine. All forms of yoga emphasise control of the body and mind. Some forms of yoga involving difficult physical techniques and postures have become very popular in the West.

## The Bhagavadgita

Hinduism has many sacred texts written over a period of more than a thousand years. These include the four *Vedas* (1300–200 BCE) and the *Upanishads*. The most famous Hindu sacred text is the *Bhagavadgita*, a poem from the great Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. The *Bhagavadgita* or Song of the Lord is a conversation that takes place on the eve of a great battle between Arjuna, a warrior prince, and the Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, who is disguised as Arjuna's charioteer.

The *Bhagavadgita* recommends *bhakti* or loving devotion to Krishna as the most effective path to *moksha*. The Lord Krishna desires to draw those who are devoted to him into a warm, loving relationship, regardless of their status in life, and is himself personal, gracious and loving:

*In any way that people love me, in that same way they find my love: for many are the paths of people, but they all in the end come to me.* (Bhagavadgita 4:11)

In the West, devotion to Krishna is most commonly known through the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as the Hare Krishna movement, which was founded in 1965.

### Something to Think About

**Yoga and the Hare Krishna movement are two of the more obvious expressions of Hinduism in New Zealand. What do you know about them?**

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness is better known in the West as the Hare Krishna movement.



Vishnu (Krishna) – the Sustainer and Preserver of life.



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## The Caste System



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**The coloured dot on the forehead reveals that the wearer is a Hindu. It symbolises the third eye – the one focused inwards toward God.**

Hindu society is organised according to *jati* or caste – the social status that a person inherits at birth. A person's *jati* (literally meaning 'birth') is hereditary and they belong to the same *jati* as their parents. Because marriage outside one's *jati* group is traditionally forbidden, parents will almost always be of the same *jati*. The caste system imposes many other social restrictions, including eating only within one's caste group. Many occupations – for example, barbers, gardeners, potters etc – are restricted to people of a particular caste.

Underlying the caste system is the belief that certain people and things are "unclean" and threaten the "purity" of others. Because all that is dead and all that comes out of the body is polluting, undertakers, barbers and others whose occupations bring them into contact with such things are considered polluting to other groups. All members of a caste group are polluted purely because of their association with that caste, regardless of whether they personally practise that occupation.

At the top of the caste hierarchy are the Brahmins, who perform religious rituals and study sacred texts. Because all castes can come into contact with Brahmins without risk of pollution, many Brahmins also take up other careers, including owning restaurants and practising medicine.

The lowest ranked people in Hindu society are the Dalits who are considered to be "outside" the caste system. Dalits are known as 'Untouchables' – even to come into contact with their shadow is polluting. Dalits perform those tasks which are highly polluting, such as road sweeping and dealing with sewage. Although the caste system is no longer protected by Indian law, it still operates in many areas of Hindu social life, particularly when it comes to marriage.

### Task Twelve

**Mahatma Gandhi, the most famous Hindu of the twentieth-century, often spoke out on behalf of those injured by the caste system. What aspects of this system do you think he would have criticised? Why?**



PUBLIC DOMAIN

**"I have no other wish in this world but to find light and joy and peace through Hinduism."  
(Mahatma Gandhi, 1869–1948)**

### The Four Traditional Caste Divisions

**Brahmins** – the priests.

**Kshatriyas** – the warriors and rulers.

**Vaishyas** – the farmers, landlords and merchants.

**Shudras** – the craftsmen and servants.

## Part Eight: Buddhism

### Focus:

- **Buddhism, the fourth largest religion in the world, was founded by Siddhartha Gautama – the Buddha.**
- **The Four Noble Truths express the Buddhist understanding of reality and the human condition.**
- **The Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts outline practical steps to be taken towards enlightenment.**
- **There are three main traditions within Buddhism.**

### The Origins of Buddhism

Buddhism, which originated in India as a development within Hinduism, is the fourth-largest religion in the world with over 357 million followers. 'Buddha', which means 'enlightened one', is the title given to Prince Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of the Buddhist religion, who lived in North India during the fifth century BCE.

Siddhartha Gautama was brought up surrounded by luxury and isolated from the world outside. When he was about thirty years of age he grew restless and escaped the confines of the palace. Three fateful meetings caused him to reflect on the nature of life: a weak old man, a man sick with leprosy, and a corpse about to be cremated. The shock of these sights forced Gautama to the realisation that ageing, sickness and death are experienced by all people. A fourth excursion led to an encounter with a holy man. This meeting inspired Gautama to leave his wife, baby son and privileged lifestyle and go in search of enlightenment.

Gautama's travels led him to various teachers, ideas, and practices, but he was left unsatisfied and unenlightened. Finally, he sat under a tree – known later as the *bodhi* (enlightened) tree – and decided not to move until he received full insight into the nature of the world. At the age of thirty-five this happened – finally he was the Buddha.



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**Enlightenment finally came to Gautama under the *bodhi* tree.**

### Task Thirteen

**Describe the process that transformed Prince Siddhartha Gautama into the Buddha.**

### Constant Change

Influenced by his earlier experiences, the Buddha taught that nothing is permanent, everything is subject to change. For the Buddha, even the 'self' or 'soul' lacks permanence. To think in terms of a 'self' or essential 'me' that does not change is misleading.

The doctrine of *anatta* or 'not-self' is central to Buddhism. According to this teaching, a person is a collection of complex and rapidly changing physical and mental events and states. Because one state influences the next, there is some pattern to the change and a continuity of personal characteristics.

Thinking of life as a series of passing moments, we are able to see that one human state leads to another – for example, frustration leads to anger which in turn may result in violence. Because people do not have full power over these changing states, which are often influenced by forces beyond our control, human life is unsettled and frustrating. Our existence is characterised by *dukkha* – suffering, illness, dissatisfaction.



**Buddhists reject the idea of a permanent 'self' or essential 'me'.**



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**Images of the Buddha – the Enlightened One – are found throughout much of Asia.**

### Something to Discuss

Discuss with a partner each of the following Buddhist teachings in the box on the right:

- Which is the easiest for you to understand?
- Which is the most difficult?
- Which do you most agree with?
- Which do you find most challenging?

**Nothing is permanent.**  
**There is no essential 'self' or 'me'.**  
**A person is a series of rapidly changing mental and physical events.**  
**Life is a series of moments.**  
**People cannot control change.**  
**Life is unsettled and frustrating.**  
**Human life is suffering and dissatisfaction.**



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Nirvana can be compared to the blowing out of a flame.

## The Afterlife and Nirvana

Buddhism's understanding of reincarnation differs from that of Hinduism. For Buddhists, there is no permanent self that travels from life to life burdened with the *karma* of previous lives. Just as in this life one psychological or physical state gives rise to the next, so our attitudes and desires give rise to a re-born state of being in the next life. In Buddhism, it is not wrong action which brings about rebirth, but rather the desire for life. Only by eliminating desire, giving up attachment to this world, and rejecting the very belief that one is a self to be saved, can a person find release from the cycle of reincarnation. Buddhists often describe the goal of their spiritual quest as nirvana – a state of *being without desire*. This is a 'blowing out' of self, an extinguishing of the flames of desire, delusion and craving.

Nirvana is not some heavenly state where the self exists in perfect happiness. To reach nirvana means that after death there will be no more re-birth. The series of states and events that makes up the individual

ceases – the flame is extinguished. Whether or not individuals continue to exist after death was of no concern to the Buddha. He believed that speculation about the afterlife was pointless and distracted people from the spiritual quest in this life. Buddhists believe that nirvana cannot be compared to anything we know now – in a sense it is beyond existence.

## The Four Noble Truths

The teachings known as the Four Noble Truths form the core of Buddhism. These set out the Buddhist understanding of reality and the human condition:

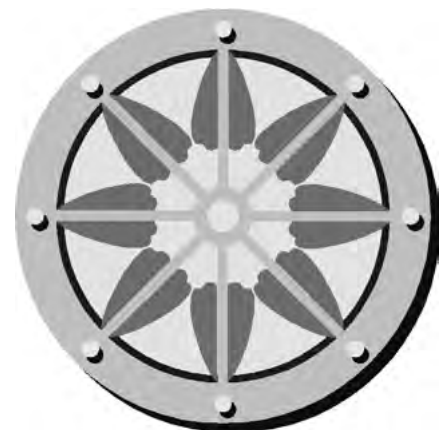
- All forms of existence, particularly human life, are marked by *dukkha* (suffering, illness, dissatisfaction)
- Dukkha* and rebirth are caused by desire for the things of this world and for the survival of the self
- Escape from *dukkha* – nirvana – is only possible if human desire can be eliminated
- Release from desire and *dukkha* comes by following the Noble Eightfold Path

### Task Fourteen

Explain in your own words what Buddhists mean by nirvana.

### Something to Think About

How do Buddhists differ from Hindus in their understanding of reincarnation?



For Buddhists, the still point at the centre of the turning wheel represents nirvana. The eight spokes indicate the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to nirvana.

## The Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts

The **Noble Eightfold Path** sets out the practical steps to be taken towards enlightenment. It is sometimes called 'the middle path' because it avoids extremes. The eight stages of the path are:

1. Right understanding.
2. Right directed thought or right intention.
3. Right speech.
4. Right action.
5. Right livelihood.
6. Right effort.
7. Right mindfulness.
8. Right concentration.



For Buddhists, the lotus flower symbolises purity of the body, speech and mind, even when surrounded by temptations.

The first two stages of the path – right understanding and right directed thought – concern wisdom. These steps are essential for spiritual seekers who need to have a correct understanding of reality and must direct their thoughts to achieve that end.

The next three stages – right speech, right action and right livelihood – relate to Buddhist morality, which is summed up in the **Five Precepts** (or virtues). Spiritual seekers must avoid:

1. Harming living beings (animals as well as people).
2. Stealing (taking that which is not given).
3. Misconduct concerning the pleasures of the senses (fornication, adultery).
4. False speech (lying, boasting, gossiping, causing offence).
5. The use of substances such as drugs and alcohol, as these tend to hinder awareness and lead to loss of control and wrong thought.

The final three stages of the Noble Eightfold Path – right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration – are central to Buddhist practice. Through meditation and mental discipline the mind is able to achieve *samadhi* (a state of concentration free from distracting thoughts and images). Contemplation is often practised by sitting in a quiet place, as the Buddha had done under the *bodhi* tree, and by concentrating on a single object.



Through meditation and mental discipline the mind is able to achieve *samadhi*.

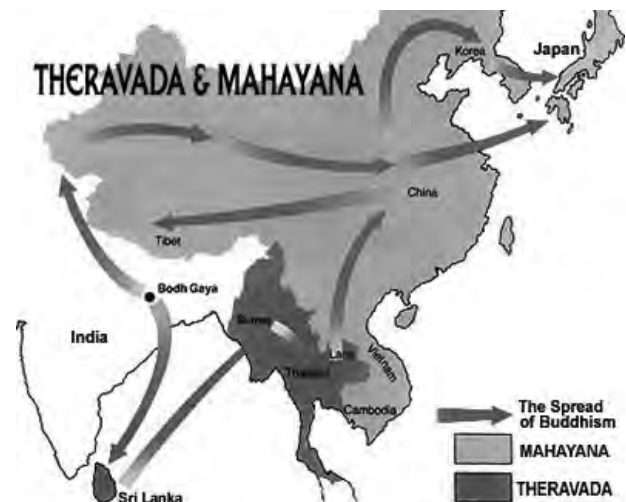
### Something to Do

**Design a brochure combining text and illustration that presents some of the key Buddhist teachings contained in the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts.**

## Schools of Buddhism

Since the time of the Buddha, various forms of Buddhism have developed and spread throughout Asia. Although the differences between them are often complex, there are essentially two broad streams:

- A conservative stream, which wants to preserve the original teachings of the Buddha without changing them.
- A more liberal stream, which adapts the Buddha's teachings to new circumstances.





Monasticism is an important feature of Theravada Buddhism.

### Theravada Buddhism

(also known as Southern Buddhism) is a conservative tradition that seeks to preserve the original teaching of the Buddha. *Theravada* means ‘the teaching of the elders’. Theravada Buddhism first became firmly established in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where the early Theravadan monks compiled and preserved the most important Buddhist sacred texts, the *Tipitaka* – meaning ‘three baskets of truth’. Written originally in Pali, an ancient North Indian language, these contain the teachings and sermons of the Buddha.

Theravada Buddhism rejects the idea of a Supreme Being who requires worship. They see the Buddha as a man of great spiritual insight but not as a god. The followers of Theravada Buddhism claim that it is the purest form of Buddhism, emphasising wisdom above all other virtues. Meditation and monasticism are very important in the Theravada tradition. Today, Theravada Buddhism is the most popular form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

### Mahayana Buddhism

(also known as Eastern Buddhism) is the second main stream of Buddhism. It emerged in northern India around the first century CE and is now commonly practised in China, Korea and Japan. Although Buddhism does not worship a Supreme Being, some movements within Mahayana Buddhism tend to regard the Buddha as a god.

Central to Mahayana teaching is the doctrine of the ‘bodhisattva’ – a person who has achieved enlightenment but has chosen not to enter nirvana, instead remaining in the world in order to help lesser beings achieve an enlightened state. Linked with this is Mahayana tradition’s emphasis on compassion – out of compassion for others the bodhisattva postpones their own nirvana. Because all living beings are able to attain buddhahood, the bodhisattva seeks to assist them towards this goal.



The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, belongs to the Vajrayana school of Buddhism.

### Vajrayana Buddhism

(also known as Northern Buddhism) takes its name from the *vajra* (diamond sceptre) which the Buddha is often pictured holding. Vajrayana – literally ‘Way of the Diamond’ – developed out of the Mahayana tradition in Tibet and the Himalayas before spreading to Mongolia. Although only a small minority of Buddhists belong to the Vajrayana school, its practices are distinctive. Mandalas (patterned icons), mudras (choreographed hand movements) and mantras (chants) are used to achieve the goal of spiritual enlightenment.

The most recognisable Buddhist in the world, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, belongs to the Vajrayana school of Buddhism.



Mandalas are constructed out of grains of coloured sand carefully placed on a specially prepared platform. They are temporary structures built of impermanent materials.

### Task Fifteen

Which of the three schools of Buddhism described above are each of the following key words connected with?

**Dalai Lama**  
**eastern**  
**northern**  
**Tibet**  
**Tipitaka**

**wisdom**  
**monasticism**  
**southern**  
**Korea**  
**mandalas**

**compassion**  
**bodhisattva**  
**diamond**  
**Sri Lanka**  
**China**

### Something to Find Out

The Dalai Lama has visited New Zealand on a number of occasions. What can you find out about him?

### Something to Think About

Why do you think sand mandalas are destroyed once they have been completed?



# Part Nine:

## Judaism

### Focus:

- **Judaism, which expresses faith in one God, is the religion of the Jewish people and the oldest of the world's great monotheistic religions.**
- **The basis of Judaism are the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the Torah or Law of Moses. These reveal God's special relationship with the descendants of Abraham.**
- **Throughout their often tragic history, the Jewish people have waited for a Messiah who will save them from their troubles.**
- **Today, there are a number of religious movements within Judaism which interpret the Torah in different ways.**

## Judaism

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people, who currently number around 15 million worldwide. While around 4.5 million Jews live in Israel, almost half of the Jewish population – around 7 million – live in the United States.

While many Jews want to maintain their Jewish identity, most Jews are secular and show little interest in the beliefs and practices of Judaism as a religion. For example, less than a third of American Jews are members of one of the Jewish religious movements.



The six points of the Star of David symbolise God's rule over the universe in all six directions: north, south, east, west, up and down.

## Key Jewish Beliefs

Like Christianity and Islam, which developed from it, Judaism is monotheistic, expressing faith in one God. The beliefs of Judaism are complex, but include the following:

*There is only one God.*

*The world is not the product of chance, but the deliberate creation of God, who continues to maintain its existence moment by moment.*

*God is not made up of matter as humans are, but is spirit.*

*God is all-good, all-wise, all-knowing and all-powerful. God is so far above humanity that any understanding of God is greatly limited.*

*God's will is expressed in a natural moral law and also in the Torah.*

*God is constantly active in the world, guiding and directing history and providing spiritual and material support and growth.*

*After death, the individual is judged by God and rewarded or punished accordingly.*

*To disobey God's law is sin.*

### Task Sixteen

**Christianity grew out of a Jewish movement. Which of the key Jewish beliefs listed above are also shared by Christians?**

## The Sacred Texts of Judaism

The most important source of Judaism is the Hebrew Scriptures. These include twenty-four books, organised into three categories:

- The *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch)
- The *Neviim* (the Prophets)
- The *Ketuvim* (the Writings)

A large collection of discussions and commentaries on the Torah by various rabbis is also a vital source of Jewish teaching. This includes:

- The *Mishnah* (around 200 CE), an important collection of Jewish legal material developed over a period of about two-hundred years
- The *Talmud* (between 450 and 700 CE), a collection of traditions and reflections on Jewish life and law.



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**The Jewish Scriptures are traditionally stored on scrolls.**

## The Origins of Judaism

Judaism has its roots in the ancient history of Israel. It traces its human origins back to Abraham, “our father in faith”, whom God commanded to settle in the land of Canaan. The Hebrew Scriptures – known to Christians as the Old Testament – tell of God’s special relationship with Abraham and his descendants, the Chosen People.

The Promised Land of Israel has always occupied a prominent place in Jewish thinking. Through the leadership of Moses, God led the Chosen People out of slavery in Egypt. On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the *Torah* or Law, formalising the covenant first made with Abraham. Under this covenant, in return for the land which God had promised to Abraham (see Genesis 12:7; 13:15), the Jews agreed to remain faithful to God and be an example to other nations. In Old Testament times, the *Torah* functioned as the religious and civil law of Israel, an independent Jewish nation.



**God gave Moses the *Torah* or Law, formalising the covenant first made with Abraham.**

The greatest king of Israel was David (circa 1037–967 BC), the ruler from whom all rightful kings of Israel had to be descended. David’s reign is deeply significant for the Jewish people. To this day, there is a widespread belief that they will be liberated by God when the Messiah, a descendant of King David, arises to found a perfect and peaceful society. Jews still pray for the house of David to be restored.

## The Destruction of the Temple and the Spread of Judaism

The religion of the Jewish people was focused upon the Temple, its priests, and the sacrifices that were offered there. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, the sacrificial system could no longer operate. Laws could not be imposed and religious festivals were no longer celebrated as national events. In 135 CE the Jewish nation ceased to exist and only a minority of Jews remained. The rest left for other countries in a movement commonly referred to as the Diaspora (dispersal).

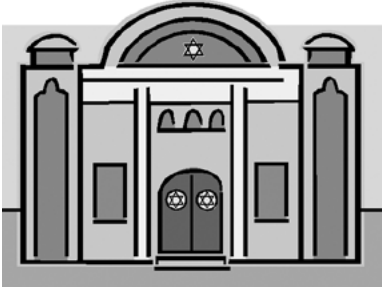
In the centuries that followed, as Jews established communities around the world, people’s homes and local synagogues became the focal points for religious activity. Religious teachers, called rabbis, became key figures in these Jewish communities.

In many places where Jews settled they became victims of anti-Semitism. They were treated with suspicion and violence, especially by Christians who held them responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. In some parts of Europe Jews were forced to live in ghettos – walled areas of a town which they were forbidden to leave at night. They were also barred from many professions and unable to own land. During times of crisis, such as plagues or wars, Jews were often blamed for what went wrong. Persecutions called pogroms were carried out against them. Despite these hardships, many Jewish people made outstanding contributions to culture and learning, especially in the fields of art, music, literature, philosophy and science.



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**Jews still pray at the Temple’s Western Wall, which remained intact following Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 CE.**



The synagogue has become more important as the focal point for community worship and religious instruction.

Today, the family remains the basic unit of Jewish ritual and key festivals, such as the Passover, are still celebrated within the home. However, as Jewish homes have become increasingly secular the synagogue has become more important as the focal point for community worship and religious instruction.

## The Establishment of the Modern State of Israel

Although most Jews have not lived in Israel since 70 CE, they have continued to feel a strong attachment to the Promised Land. Synagogues were built facing Jerusalem and Jewish liturgy spoke of a longing to return. During the nineteenth century, a Zionist movement developed plans for the Jewish colonisation of Palestine. Support for this movement grew in the twentieth century.

After the Second World War and the horrors of the Holocaust – the murder of over six million Jews by the Nazis – the establishment of a Jewish State received the support of the United Nations. In 1948, the State of Israel was formed. Zionism is still an active movement that encourages Jews to return to Israel. For Zionists, many of whom are not religious, the state of Israel is of supreme importance as the protector of the Jewish people and culture.

### Task Seventeen

**Study the timeline of Jewish history. Choose any five people or events that are mentioned and describe them in more detail. A number of these people and events are discussed in this section of the student text.**

Timeline of Jewish History	
Date	Event / Person
c. 2000 BCE	Birth of Abraham and Sarah, father and mother of the Jewish people
c. 1275 BCE	Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt and gives God's Law or Torah to Israel
c. 1000 BCE	David is king of Israel
931 BCE	The Kingdom divides into two: the North (Israel), the South (Judah)
722 BCE	The Assyrians conquer the North (Israel)
586 BCE	The Babylonians conquer the South (Judah) and the Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed
587–538 BCE	Jews live in exile in Babylon
539 BCE	Cyrus the Great of Persia defeats the Babylonians and the Jews are later able to return to Judea
516 BCE	The Temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt
332 BCE	The Greeks conquer Palestine
167 BCE	Judas Maccabeus leads a revolt
63 BCE	The Romans conquer Palestine
70 CE	The Romans destroy Jerusalem and its Temple – the Diaspora (dispersal) begins
450–700 CE	The beginning of Rabbinic Judaism and development of the Talmud
900 CE	Numbers of Jews move into Western Europe
1135–1204 CE	During his lifetime, Moses Maimonides, a great Jewish scholar, makes a lasting contribution to learning
1290 CE	Jews are expelled from England
1306 CE	Jews are expelled from France
1348 CE	Jews are accused of poisoning wells and of causing the Black Death
1492 CE	Jews are expelled from Spain
1648–1649 CE	Pogroms (massacres) in the Ukraine and Poland kill thousands of Jews
19th century	Large numbers of Jews from central Europe migrate to the USA. The Zionist movement develops
1930s–1945	Over six million Jews are exterminated in the Holocaust
1948 CE	The modern State of Israel is created

# Shabbat

The family and community are very important within Jewish life. The most important day of the week is *Shabbat* – the Sabbath. On Shabbat Jews take a break from their usual routine to recall “the seventh day” when God rested from all the work of creation (see Genesis 2:2-3). At the beginning of Shabbat, which starts on Friday evening and ends at sunset on Saturday, the family shares a meal. During Shabbat, services are held at the synagogue, often led by a Rabbi.



On Friday evening a special family meal marks the beginning of Shabbat.

## Jewish Festivals

There are also many religious festivals which occur throughout the Jewish year. All of these recall significant events in Jewish history.



### Something to Research

The important Jewish festivals appear on the following chart next to the month of the Jewish year in which they are celebrated. Choose one of the festivals that is listed and briefly described.

Use the library and / or Internet to find out more about it.

- a) Explain when the festival originated and why.
- b) Describe what happens during the festival.

## THE FESTIVALS OF JUDAISM

<b>NISAN</b> ■	←	<b>PESACH / PASSOVER:</b> A joyful family festival which celebrates the deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.
<b>IYAR</b>		<b>FIRSTFRUITS:</b> The week long Passover festival ends with a spring harvest festival.
<b>SIVAN</b> ■	←	<b>PENTECOST / SHAVOUT:</b> Another harvest festival, celebrated seven weeks after passover. It also commemorates the giving of the Law to Moses.
<b>TAMUZ</b>		
<b>AV</b> ■	←	<b>THE NINTH OF AV:</b> A day of mourning and fasting, commemorating the destruction of the temple in CE70.
<b>ELLUL</b>		<b>ROSH HASHANAH / NEW YEAR / TRUMPETS:</b> A time of reckoning with God.
<b>TISHRI</b> ■	←	<b>YOM KIPPUR / THE DAY OF ATONEMENT:</b> The most Holy day in the Jewish year.
<b>CHESHVAN</b>		<b>SUKKOT / TABERNACLES:</b> A joyful harvest festival, giving thanks for God’s goodness, and his care for the Hebrews on their forty year journey from Egypt to the land of Israel.
<b>KISLEV</b> ■	←	<b>SIMCHAT TORAH / REJOICING IN THE LAW:</b> Celebration giving thanks for the Law – the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.
<b>TEVETH</b>		<b>HANUKKAH / LIGHTS:</b> An eight day festival which commemorates the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem after Judas Maccabeus had expelled the occupying Syrians in 16BC.
<b>SHEVAT</b>		
<b>ADAR</b> ■	←	<b>PURIM:</b> A celebration which commemorates the events of the Book of Esther when the Jews in Persia were saved from massacre.

## Groupings within Judaism

There are two broad families of Jews, the Ashkenazim and the Sepharadim. Although both are united in their commitment to the survival and growth of Judaism, they each have their own distinctive customs, traditions and rituals.

The Ashkenazim are those Jews who have their modern origins in Germany and northern France. Communities that later settled in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe usually belong to Ashkenazic Jewry. Their common language, known as Yiddish, was a mixture of Hebrew, High German and various local languages.

The Sepharadim are Jews that descended from communities that settled in Spain and Portugal. As a result of the forced mass expulsion at the end of the fifteenth century, many Sephardic Jews fled east and settled in Italy, Turkey, Palestine and North Africa. Others moved north into Western Europe, particularly Holland, Germany and England. Eventually, fleeing persecution, many migrated to North America and Latin America. The common language of Sephardic Jews is the Spanish-based Ladino.



**Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–88), the key figure in the development of Orthodox Judaism.**

## Other Divisions within Judaism

There are six main religious movements within Judaism:

**Reform Judaism**, which is sometimes called Liberal or Progressive Judaism, began in early nineteenth-century Germany. It aimed to adapt the rituals of Judaism and explain its basic beliefs in terms that the people of the time could understand.

**Ultra-Orthodox Judaism** emerged in the early nineteenth century as an anti-reform movement. Rabbi Mosheh Sofer (1762–1839), an influential leader, argued that any departure from traditional Jewish belief and practice was a direct rejection of the will of God. His followers and disciples distanced themselves from other Jews and developed separate communities.

**Orthodox Judaism** includes a range of distinct groups who follow the views of Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–88). Hirsch insisted on the unchanging authority of the Torah and agreed with some of the concerns of Ultra-Orthodox Jews. However, he also felt that Jews needed to integrate into wider European society rather than remain separate. While staying faithful to the Torah, Orthodox Jews want to make the most of what the modern world has to offer.

**Conservative Judaism** also arose in mid-nineteenth-century Germany. Unhappy with the customs and the tradition-bound worship of Orthodoxy, but not willing to go as far as the reformers, some Jewish leaders wanted to see Judaism carefully evolve into a religion for the modern age. They set out to conserve traditional Judaism, but in a way that took more account of the modern situation. They maintained traditional practices such as the separate seating of men and women in the synagogue, but supported the ordination of women as rabbis and their training as cantors. They insisted on the authority of the Torah, but stopped short of claiming that it was the actual Word of God. Conservative Judaism is strongest in the United States.

**Hasidic Judaism** developed in Poland in the eighteenth century. It emphasises devotion, prayer and a meaningful relationship with God rather than learning. Although they are sometimes linked with Ultra-Orthodoxy, Hasidic Jews form a separate group. They refuse to participate in secular education and enforce very strict food rules. Their appearance is distinctive – long beards, long ear locks of hair and long black clothes.

**Humanistic Judaism** and **Reconstructionist Judaism** are more recent movements founded in the United States. They celebrate Jewish identity and culture but reject many aspects of traditional Jewish religion, including the notion of an all-knowing God who speaks through the Scriptures. Other groups within Judaism see them as being too willing to adopt the beliefs and values of secular society.

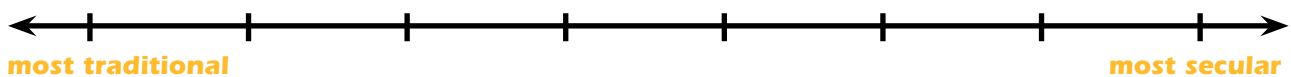


**Hasidic Jews are distinctive in their appearance.**

### Something to Discuss

**The six religious movements within Judaism each see the relationship between the Jewish faith and the modern world differently. On the continuum below where would you place each of them?**

**You should be able to give reasons for your decisions.**



## Part Ten:

### Christianity

#### Focus:

- **Christians follow the teachings of Jesus Christ whom they believe is both fully God and fully human.**
- **Through the life, death and *Te Aranga* (resurrection) of Christ, the fullness of God's life and love is shown to the world.**
- **The key beliefs of Christianity are revealed in the Bible and expressed in the creeds and traditions of the Church.**
- **Today, Christianity is the world's largest religion, although various historical divisions mean it is far from unified.**

### Christianity Today



Christians are the followers of Jesus, a Jew born in Palestine during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE). Every form of Christianity claims to receive its authority from Jesus, whom Christians call “Christ” – “the anointed one”.

Today, with more than two billion believers – over thirty-two per cent of the world's population – Christianity is the largest of the world's religions. Although it has been weakening in the West, in Africa and in some parts of Asia and Latin America Christianity is spreading rapidly. As it has spread Christianity has come into contact with many cultures and other religions. As a result, there are many new forms of Christianity or adaptations of it.

**The cross, the instrument of Jesus' execution, is for Christians a symbol of Jesus' victory over death.**

### The Story of Salvation

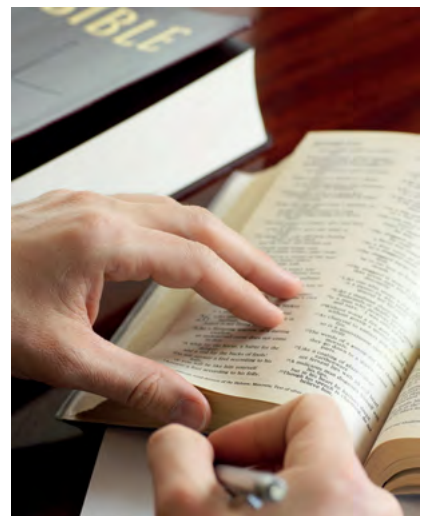
The Bible, which is the sacred text of Christians, is made up of two main collections of writings – the Old Testament and the New Testament. Much of what we know about Jesus is found in the gospels, the first four books of the New Testament.

Central to the gospels and to the New Testament as a whole are the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Through Jesus, who is both fully God and fully human, God acted decisively to save the world from sin and death:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)*

For Christians, Jesus is at the centre of the story of salvation. On the cross, Jesus faced sin and death head on – and by offering his life in love to God overcame them. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a sign that death – ‘the final enemy’ – need have no hold on us. Fullness of life is possible for all who believe in Jesus.

For the first Christians, Jesus' resurrection revealed that he was the Christ, the Messiah promised to Israel many years before. Christ's resurrection was an indication that *Te Rangatiratanga* (God's reign) had begun on earth.



**Christians read the Bible to learn about God's relationship with the world and its people.**

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#### Task Eighteen

**In your own words explain why the death and resurrection of Jesus are so central to the faith of Christians.**



## The Rise and Spread of Christianity

Initially a sect of Judaism, the community of Christ's followers – the Church – first organised itself in Jerusalem. From the beginning, Christians would gather on the first day of the week to celebrate the Eucharist, the sacred meal that made present again Christ's saving death and resurrection.

Within twenty years Christianity had moved out into the Gentile (non-Jewish) world, spreading rapidly westward into Europe and Africa, and eastward into Asia. Even when they had to face persecution the first generations of Christians were filled with hope. They looked forward to the time when Christ would return in power and glory to bring God's reign to its fulfilment.

*For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.*  
(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

## Controversies and Creeds

The first five centuries of Christianity saw many debates and controversies within the Church. In response to these, councils of the Church's bishops formulated creeds – statements which express the most important Christian beliefs. The creed that developed following the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE is the one most familiar to Catholics today because it is usually said at Sunday Mass:

### Something to Discuss

- Which statements in the Nicene Creed do you find easiest to understand?**
- Which parts of the Creed do you find confusing or challenging?**

### Task Nineteen

**Choose three or four important Christian beliefs that are expressed in the Nicene Creed and describe in your own words what they mean.**

### Something to Think About

**Can you think of any important Christian beliefs that are not mentioned in the Nicene Creed?**

## The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.



## The East – West Split

While Christianity's initial expansion was within a unified Roman empire, political changes within the empire had a lasting effect on the Church. In the late third century, because it was becoming too large to manage, the empire was divided in two. The Eastern half, which included Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine and Egypt, was predominantly Greek-speaking. The Western half, which included the rest of North Africa, Britain, Gaul, Spain and Italy, spoke Latin.

Although they had begun to drift apart many centuries before, by the eleventh century, the Church in the East and the Church in the West had formally separated. The Orthodox Church in the East and the Roman Catholic Church in the West had each developed its own distinct traditions of theology and liturgy. They also differed in their understandings of the role of the Bishop of Rome within the Church and the Church's relationship with the state.

## The Reformation

During the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Church in Western Europe was divided. Protestant reformers, especially Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–64), challenged a number of important Catholic beliefs about the authority of the pope, the Church, the ordained priesthood, and the sacraments. Protestants declared the Bible to be the sole authority for Church teaching and insisted that salvation comes through faith alone.

To begin with, Protestantism was split into two main groups, the Lutheran (following Martin Luther) and the Reformed (following John Calvin). Soon a third wing of radical reformers emerged – the Anabaptists (re-baptisers) who required adult baptism as a mark of Church membership.

Since the Reformation, many sects and denominations have formed within Christianity. Some denominations, such as the Methodists and Baptists, have become mainstream and a global presence. The principal modern Protestant denominations are Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Free Churches and Pentecostals. Although various features distinguish one branch of Christianity from another, a key area of difference among them is their understanding of authority.

### Something to Discuss

**Which people, events, movements or ideas from the history of Christianity that are mentioned in this section of the topic have you heard of? Brainstorm in your group what you know about them.**



The division of the Roman Empire late in the third century encouraged the development of distinctive forms of Christianity in the East (Orthodox) and the West (Catholic).



# Part Eleven: Islam

## Focus:

- **Islam is the second largest and the fastest growing world religion.**
- **Muslims submit themselves to the will of Allah, the one and only God, whose prophet is Muhammad.**
- **Islam's sacred text is the Qur'an which is trustworthy in all respects because it comes directly from Allah.**
- **The Five Pillars of Wisdom express the five essential duties which all Muslims are expected to perform.**
- **There are two basic groupings within Islam – Sunni and Shia.**

## What is Islam?

With more than a billion followers, Islam is the second largest world religion after Christianity and the fastest-growing. The word *islam* means submission to the will of Allah, the one and only God.

A faithful Muslim is a person who acknowledges and obediently submits to Allah in all areas of life – personal, social and political – as set out in Islam's sacred book, the Qur'an. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the literal word of Allah as delivered by to his special messenger, the prophet Muhammad (around 570–632 CE).

Muslims make a double confession, known as the *Shahadah*:

*La ilaha ilia Allah; Muhammad rasul Allah.*

There is no god but God (Allah), and Muhammad is his prophet.

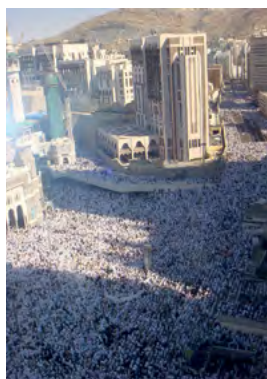
Islam is strictly monotheistic. For Muslims, the greatest sin is the denial of the uniqueness of God by claiming that there are other beings equal with God. There must be no worship of other gods and no idolatry.

Islam's great emphasis on the oneness of God grew out of the religious environment in which Muhammad was brought up. The inhabitants of Mecca where Muhammad was born worshipped a Supreme Being, Allah, along with other divinities, including three goddesses known as the Daughters of Allah. This type of worship offended Muhammad who insisted that only Allah be worshipped.

Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, looks to Abraham as the first of a great line of prophets. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last and the greatest of these. He is seen as the first true monotheist – the first Muslim to fully submit to God alone.



**The crescent moon and star are internationally recognised symbols of Islam, although many Muslims reject them because of their pagan origins.**



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## The Life of Muhammad

According to traditional accounts, Muhammad lived a relatively poor existence until about the age of twenty-five when he married his employer, Khadija, a wealthy widow. Fifteen years later, while on a solitary retreat in the hills near Mecca, Muhammad was visited by the angel Gabriel who told him that he was to be the messenger of Allah. After a period of self-doubt, Muhammad began preaching the message of Islam to his fellow Meccans. He continued receiving the revelations that form the Qur'an (literally 'recitation') until his death.

**Every year, during the last month of the Islamic calendar, more than one million Muslims make a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, the most sacred of city in Islam. According to Islamic tradition, Muslims around the world must face Mecca during their daily prayers.**

## The Qur'an

The complete Qur'an, which is a little shorter than the New Testament, contains one-hundred-and-fourteen *suras* or chapters. Except for the first *sura* – 'the Opening', which is only seven verses long – the *suras* are arranged in order of length. The second and longest *sura* has 286 verses and the shortest *suras* at the end have only three verses. The Qur'an is supposed to be recited and listened to rather than read silently.

The Qur'an is understood to be the Word of God that existed in eternity before Gabriel related the words to Muhammad. For Muslims, the Qur'an is trustworthy in all respects, coming as it does directly from Allah.

Muslims reject as blasphemous the Christian claim that Jesus is the Son of God. However, they acknowledge that like the other prophets – Abraham, Moses and David – Jesus received revelations from God. In the light of the Qur'an, these revelations are imperfect and incomplete. Only the Qur'an remains as the pure communication of God to humanity.

## The Sunna

In Islam, a source of spiritual authority second only in importance to the Qur'an is Muhammad himself. Muhammad is often understood to be the 'perfect man' who lived a sinless life. Everything he did and said reveals the will of God.

Muslims believe that the Sunna (Way of the Prophet), a multi-volume collection of anecdotes, stories, observations and collected memories, is a record of Muhammad's sayings and deeds. Each of these accounts, called a *hadith* (tradition), assist the Muslim community towards a correct understanding of the Qur'an.

## The Five Pillars of Islam

For Muslims there are five essential religious duties – the Five Pillars of Islam:



The Five Pillars are the five essential duties that all Muslims must faithfully carry out.

- The *Shahadah* (the profession of faith) is the sincere recitation of the two-fold confession concerning God and his chosen messenger: 'There is no god but God [Allah], and Muhammad is his prophet.'
- *Salat* (formal prayer) must be performed at certain hours, five times a day, while facing towards the holy city of Mecca, the focal point of community worship.
- *Zakat* (the giving of alms) is a form of community welfare which involves the sharing of one's wealth out of gratitude for Allah's favour.
- *Sawm* (fasting) is the religious requirement to abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan, the ninth month.
- If at all possible, every Muslim should undertake a *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. The proper time for the pilgrimage is a period of four days during the twelfth month of the Islamic year, which is lunar.

### Task Twenty

**Which of the following statements about Muhammad and Islam are true and which are false? If a statement is false change it so that it becomes true.**

- a) Islam is the world's largest religion.
- b) A faithful Muslim submits to the will of Allah in all areas of life.

- c) The confession that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet contains the most important truths of Islam.
- d) The Qur'an is not to be interpreted literally.
- e) Judaism, Christianity and Islam all look to Moses as the first of a great line of prophets.
- f) For Muslims, Abraham is the last and greatest prophet.
- g) Islam is strictly monotheistic.
- h) The angel Raphael played an important role in Muhammad's life.
- i) The longest *suras* in the Qur'an come at the end.
- j) Muslims believe that Jesus is a prophet who received revelations from God.
- k) The Sunna assists Muslims in understanding the Qur'an.
- l) Muslims must pray seven times a day.
- m) During the month of Ramadan Muslims must fast between sunset and sunrise.
- n) All Muslims are expected to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at least once.
- o) The Five Pillars of Islam express the essential religious duties that Muslims must perform.

### Something to Discuss

- a) In your opinion, which Islamic beliefs or values are most similar to those of Christianity?
- b) What aspects of Islam seem to differ most from Christian beliefs or values?

## The Sunni and the Shia

There are two basic groupings within Islam – Sunni and Shia. The division between the two was caused by a disagreement over who should succeed Muhammad when he unexpectedly died. The majority of Muhammad's followers recognised his companion, Abu Bakr, as the first caliph or leader. He was followed by three others. These four came to be referred to as 'the rightly guided caliphs'. Muslims who accepted them also regarded the Sunna and *hadith* with great respect. They were called Sunni. Most Muslims today – around eighty-five to ninety percent – are Sunni.

Other followers of Muhammad claimed that during his lifetime, Muhammad had made clear that his son-in-law was to be his successor. These became known as 'the party of Ali' or *Shi'* at 'Ali. For Shia Muslims,

authority lies in the imam, the divinely appointed leader of the community, the successor of Ali. Shia Muslims believe that Allah provides an imam for each age. Shia Muslims claim that Sunni collections of *hadith* are unreliable, biased reports designed to undermine the beliefs about the leadership of the Shia community. Shiites have their own commentaries on the Qur'an.

The Shia, who number only about forty million, can be found in Iran, the Lebanon, the Indian subcontinent, Yemen, Bahrain and Iraq. Shia Islam is strongest in Iran, where it has been the official religion since the sixteenth century.

## Sufism

Another distinctive form of Islam is Sufism. This Islamic tradition, which emphasises a spiritual union with God through love, has attracted great interest in the Western world.

Sufism is a reaction against a faith that was becoming too concerned with religious laws and regulations. Muslims who wanted a more devotional, warm and closely personal spirituality were attracted to Sufi thinkers who emphasised a life of loving devotion to Allah.

Sufism exists within both Sunni and Shiite Islam. It is organised into orders or 'paths' of spiritual guidance. Large, disciplined brotherhoods of mystics are led by a *shaikh* or spiritual leader. The teachings of *shaikhs* are spread by their appointed representatives, the *khalifas*, who, in turn, often set up their own spiritual centres. The different Sufi *shaikhs* and their *khalifas* teach their own particular methods by which a devotee can experience divine closeness and eventually achieve union with Allah.

### Task Twenty-One

**Sort the following details into three groups depending on whether they apply to Sunni, Shia or Sufi traditions within Islam:**

- They are strongest in Iran
- They seek a close spiritual union with God
- They show respect for the *hadith*
- They are organised into brotherhoods
- They challenge the *hadith*
- They form the majority group within Islam
- They recognise the authority of the first four caliphs
- They number forty million
- They reacted against religious laws and regulations
- They see the imam as divinely appointed
- They are a mystical tradition
- They take their name from the Sunna

## Women in Islamic Societies

To many people in the West, Muslim women in some parts of the world, depending on the local culture, seem to live very restricted lives:



- Women are always under the protection of a male relative – father, husband, brother, uncle or son.
- Women's first responsibility is to their family and home. They seldom go out alone.
- Women must dress modestly, covering their hair and their bodies from neck to wrist and ankle. In some cultures hands, feet and face must also be concealed.
- Marriages are often arranged, sometimes between children.
- Muslim men are permitted to have up to four wives at the same time as long as they are able to support them.
- It is easy for a man to divorce his wife, but it is very difficult for a woman to divorce her husband.

**Many of the restrictions placed on Muslim women are intended to preserve their honour – on which depends the honour of the whole family.**

## Islam Today

In the twenty-first century Islam is a global faith which is spreading into countries which were traditionally Christian. Islam has also become much more diverse. While some Muslims try to live an Islamic lifestyle that is compatible with the modern Western world, others see Western secularism and capitalism as threats to Islamic culture and religion.

Although Sufism has had a growing influence, the most obvious trend within contemporary Islam is towards 'fundamentalism' or 'Islamicism'. Since the term 'fundamentalist' was first applied to Iranian revolutionaries in 1979, it has been used to describe various movements within Islam. These include Hamas (Israel / Palestine) and the Taliban (Afghanistan).

Islamic fundamentalism has been blamed for many extreme activities, including suicide bombings and the terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11th September 2001.

Because fundamentalist Islamic groups have received wide publicity, many non-Muslims have formed a negative image of Islam and Muslims. The position of women within the Muslim world has come in for particularly harsh criticism from people in the West.

Modernist groups within Islam wish to reduce customary male privilege within the family and take advantage of the benefits of better education for girls and women.

- They argue that the Qur'an supports monogamous marriage, not polygamy
- They wish to raise the minimum age of marriage for young men and women – and prevent marriages between children
- They seek to restrict the male right of divorce and increase the grounds upon which women may end a marriage.



**Islamic fundamentalism has been blamed for the terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York in 2001.**

### Something to Do

**Keep a record of the way Islam and Muslims are presented in the media. How balanced do you think this media coverage is?**

## Part Twelve:

### Māori Religious Movements – Ringatū

#### Focus:

- **The Ringatū faith was established in the 1860s by Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki in response to the loss of *mana* that Māori experienced when their lands were sold or confiscated.**
- **The Ringatū Church combines aspects of Christianity with traditional spiritual beliefs and practices of the Māori.**

## The New Zealand Wars

In the period following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand of greater numbers of European settlers posed a serious threat to Māori identity and *mana*. Tensions between Māori and Pākehā over possession of land led to a series of violent engagements known as the New Zealand Wars. By the 1860s, fighting between rebel Māori and government forces was most intense in the Waikato and in Taranaki. More than one thousand Māori and seven hundred Pākehā were killed in the Waikato alone. However, as the hostilities dragged on it became clear to Māori who opposed the government that despite some military success they had little chance of getting their land back by force.

## Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki

Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki of the Rongowhakaata tribe of Poverty Bay was the best-known of a series of Māori prophets who offered to restore lost *mana* to their followers in the wake of the New Zealand Wars.

During the conflict in Taranaki, Te Kooti Arikirangi had fought on the side of the government forces. However, because he was suspected of aiding the enemy he was arrested and sent to the Chatham Islands without trial. While there, Te Kooti studied the Bible, giving special attention to certain books of the Old Testament. A series of visions led him to found the Ringatū faith. He compiled many prayers containing scriptural verses and held religious services twice daily.

In July 1868, Te Kooti, along with three hundred of his followers, escaped to New Zealand in the schooner *Rifleman*. They landed at Whareongaonga, south of Poverty Bay. Government forces continued to pursue Te Kooti through various parts of the central North Island until 1883 when he was pardoned. During Te Kooti's lifetime many people listened to his prophecies and the Ringatū movement grew in popularity. His death at Ohiwa in 1893 fulfilled his prediction that he would be killed in an accident.



**Ringatū – the upraised hand**



**Te Kooti's banner was captured by colonial forces in October 1869. The letters 'WI' probably stand for *Wairua Tapu* (the Holy Spirit) and also refer to the Holy Spirit in the Ringatū Faith. The crescent moon is a *tohu* (mark or sign) of a new world; the red cross is the fighting cross of the Archangel Michael.**

**Something to Think About**  
**In what ways did the New Zealand Wars bring a loss of *mana* to Māori?**

**Something to Research**  
**Find out more about the life of Te Kooti Aikirangi. Suggest reasons why he was hated and feared by many Pākehā.**

## The Ringatū Faith

The religious movement founded by Te Kooti was given the name Ringatū (Upraised Hand). This referred to the practice of Te Kooti and his followers who would often raise their hands in blessing.

Through the religion he established Te Kooti encouraged his people to identify with the Jews in the Old Testament who escaped slavery in Egypt and wandered for forty years in the wilderness before God led them to safety in the Promised Land. Like the Jews, Māori had lost their land and had been harshly treated by those in power. Te Kooti taught

his followers, who were mainly from the Tuhoe tribe based in the Urewera mountains between Lake Taupo and Hawkes Bay, to beware of Pākehā.

The Ringatū movement officially became a Christian Church in 1938. Today, it is strongest on the East Coast and in the Bay of Plenty. Around two percent of Māori claim membership of the Ringatū Church.

Ringatū services are held in tribal meeting houses. There are no robes of office or paid ministers. The movement's head or *poutikanga* (main pillar or support) is elected every two years along with an executive of twelve members. They hear all grievances within the church, keep a record of all members qualified to perform marriage services, and report back to the general assembly of church members.

**Task Twenty-Two**  
**The following comments are by Wi Tarei, a member of the Ringatū Church. List five important things that you learn about Ringatū from what he says.**

Ringatū is based on the Bible and is one of the most Christian Churches in the world. Everything that we know from the Bible is committed to memory and taken with the Church member everywhere, day and night.	This Church observes the Sabbath, and holds special <i>hui</i> on New Year's Day and in June. But the most important part of Ringatū worship is the observation of <i>Te Kaumarua</i> (the Twelfth), on the twelfth day of each month. This is a cycle of services – of prayers, chants and hymns – devised by Te Kooti and carried on at his instruction.	The duration of the service is the time it takes the cycle of hymns, <i>panui</i> (verses from the Bible), psalms and prayers to go right round the meeting house. They are led by different people one at a time, moving in a clockwise direction around the house.
The services always open with a call for honour and glory to God, peace on earth and goodwill to all. All the words of the hymns and <i>panui</i> are taken from the Bible – Te Kooti took passages of Scripture and rearranged them to give them consistent themes and a feeling of completion at the close	The speech of the Ringatū is spontaneous and they speak of the subject in hand at that time.	Each Twelfth may have five services. They will be led by a <i>tohunga</i> or priest. The purpose of each service is announced by the <i>tohunga</i> who leads it. It may be greetings, thanksgiving, pleas for protection or healing, or calls for assistance with private problems.
The hymns are the most sacred part of the service. They can only be led by a <i>tohunga</i> , and everyone must stand for them. After they are finished, a prayer of separation (to separate the very holy from the merely holy) is necessary, and the congregation remains standing for this.	The <i>panui</i> are all chanted to the same tune. The psalms too are sung to a single tune and anyone can lead them. There has to be at least one in the course of a service.	All Ringatū ritual, including the services, close with the Lord's Prayer, rewritten and shortened according to Te Kooti's inspiration, and ending with the words, "We believe and glorify your holy name. Amen." The services finish with two final prayers for deliverance from confusion and a plea that the doors of truthfulness, life and strength shall be opened up.
Prayers can be said by anybody, for any particular cause. Very often those causes may concern the sick, the crippled or the unhappy who have been especially brought to the Twelfth to seek relief. Prayers close with the words, "We glorify your holy name" and as this is said, hands are upraised, the gesture of the Church's name, Ringatū.	During the Twelfth, between the services, members get to their feet and discuss the politics, organisation, theology and affairs of the Church.	On the morning of the Twelfth, after a night of prayer and fasting, the <i>hākari</i> (communal feast) is held. Everybody attending the Twelfth comes together in the dining room and eats and drinks in fellowship. Before the end of one Twelfth, a person will stand and 'call' the next Twelfth at another <i>marae</i> . In this way they circulate around different <i>marae</i> in the course of a year.
	<i>Tohunga</i> are selected for training and for the ministry by other <i>tohunga</i> . They are people who display a special interest and aptitude, a distinctive spirituality. They must also have good memories to learn all the ritual by heart. Some <i>tohunga</i> are entitled to lead services and are also allowed to perform marriages. Others specialise in healing people. Many <i>tohunga</i> are identifiable because they wear the Church symbol – the upraised hand – as a crest on the pockets of their jackets.	

## Part Thirteen:

### Māori Religious Movements – Rātana

#### Focus:

- **The Rātana movement emerged to give hope to the Māori people during a time of crisis.**
- **The Rātana movement, which has both religious and political dimensions, combines traditional Christian beliefs and practices with the insights “revealed” to its founder, Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana.**

### The Need for a Leader

During 1918 and 1919 a deadly influenza epidemic known as the Spanish Lady killed two hundred million people around the world. When the ‘flu reached New Zealand in October 1918, it quickly spread, especially among the Māori population. Although many Māori turned to their traditional *tohunga* for protection, the virus devastated their communities.

On top of this, at the end of 1918, Māori soldiers who had fought on equal terms alongside their Pākehā comrades during the First World War returned to New Zealand with the expectation that they would be treated fairly. However, few Māori ex-servicemen qualified for rehabilitation assistance. Legislation forbidding the sale of alcohol to Māori and refusing them finance for housing and the development of farms added to their anger and frustration.

In such uncertain circumstances, it is understandable that Māori would seek strong spiritual and moral guidance. The prophet, Mere Rikiriki, who had earlier established *Te Hahi o te Wairua Tapu* (the Church of the Holy Spirit) at Parewanui, predicted the rise of a new Māori leader. She even identified her own nephew, Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana, a ploughman from the Rangitikei district south of Wanganui, as the chosen one.

#### Something to Think About

**What circumstances during the second decade of the twentieth century caused Māori to look for a leader who would provide spiritual and moral guidance?**

### T. W. Rātana Receives a Sign

T. W. Rātana received the first indication of his special calling in March 1918. He was camping with his wife and their twin sons, Arepa (Alpha) and Omeka (Omega), on the coastline between the Whangaehu and Turakina Rivers when a series of unusually large waves threw two whales onto the shore. One whale was killed immediately by the impact, the other died after a struggle. Rātana came to see this incident as having special spiritual significance.

Eight months later, while recovering from the influenza epidemic which had wiped out most of his family, T. W. Rātana’s spiritual mission was revealed to him. On 8 November, as he sat on the verandah of his family home looking out to sea, a small cloud arose from the water and hovered over the house. From the cloud Rātana heard the voice of God announce that Māori were to be God’s chosen people in the present age just as the Jews had been in Old Testament times. Rātana’s mission was to unite Māori and turn them towards God. From that time, Rātana, who was forty-five years old, assumed the title of *Māngai* or ‘Mouthpiece of God’.



**Many Māori soldiers who fought under the New Zealand flag during the First World War (1914–1918) were angry and frustrated at the way they were treated on their return home.**



**The beaching of the two whales had a special significance for T. W. Rātana’s mission – one whale represented the spiritual aspects of his work, the other the political dimension.**

## The Māngai's Mission

Rātana, who as a young man had lived a fairly wild life, prepared himself for his new role by reading the Bible carefully. He preached *kotahitanga* (the essential unity of the Māori people) and began to develop a reputation for faith healing. As news of the *Māngai's* gifts spread, people from all over New Zealand came to the Rātana farm, many bringing sick relatives to be healed.

While some of Rātana's followers came from among his own people, Ngāti Apa and Ngāti Raukawa, the *Māngai* appealed to Māori from the many tribes throughout New Zealand. Rātana travelled up and down the country bringing special encouragement to Māori who had moved to cities and towns and were losing touch with their tribal leaders. These displaced people he called *mōrehu* (survivors, remnant).

Rātana was especially concerned with Māori health, welfare and farming. He promoted the total well-being of Māori, recognising that this would only come about when due recognition was given to the Treaty of Waitangi, which he believed was sacred and the founding document of New Zealand. A petition circulated by members of the Rātana movement in 1922 calling for ratification of the Treaty of Waitangi obtained over 30,000 signatures. In 1924 Rātana visited Britain and sent a delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva to promote Māori rights.

## Opposition to Traditional Māori Beliefs and Practices

T. W. Rātana worked for the unity of the Māori people and was a strong supporter of their rights. He opposed tribalism and also insisted that Māori abandon their traditional religious beliefs and practices. The *Māngai* refused to allow any Māori carvings to be incorporated into churches and other buildings associated with the Rātana movement. He even visited traditional sacred sites in order to show that they were no longer *tapu*.

The *Māngai* was especially critical of *tohunga* – perhaps because of his anger at their failure to protect people from the devastation of the influenza epidemic.

Because he saw the future of the Māori people in their adoption of European ways, T. W. Rātana also rejected Māori social customs, including *marae* protocol, the hereditary system, and lengthy *tangihanga*.

## The Foundation of the Rātana Church

By December 1920, a temple had been built at Rātana P. On Christmas Day 1920 three thousand people gathered there to hear the *Māngai* speak.

At first, T. W. Rātana's opposition to tribalism and traditional Māori practices brought him support from the leaders of the mainstream Christian churches. However, as the Rātana movement developed its own distinctive beliefs which it expressed in its own creed, the Anglican bishops moved to excommunicate those Anglicans who accepted Rātana's teachings. Following the formal establishment of the Rātana Church in May 1935, many Māori left the Anglican Church to become members of the new body. Because the Methodists adopted a policy of assisting rather than opposing Rātana, the Methodist Church has had a continuing relationship with the Rātana movement.

Today, around eight percent of Māori claim membership of the Rātana Church.

### Task Twenty-Three

**Choose three of the following headlines. For each of them write a short paragraph for a newspaper article on T. W. Rātana and the movement he established.**



Rātana Pa, Rātana, Wanganui.

CREATIVE COMMONS

**Vision Reveals Māngai's Mission**  
**Rātana Gathers Followers as Reputation Spreads**  
**Rātana Opposes Māori Traditions**  
**Mainstream Churches Change Attitude**



## Key Beliefs of the Rātana Church

A key feature that distinguishes the Rātana Church from mainstream Christianity is the great emphasis that is given to angels (as channels of communication between God and human beings) and to the *Māngai* (Rātana himself). Many Christians feel that this focus is exaggerated and diverts the attention of believers away from the central place of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – in the Christian tradition.

From a Christian point of view, the God of the Rātana Church seems much closer to the mighty judge of the Old Testament – Jehovah – than to the loving Father that Jesus revealed and asked us to pray to.

**Ratana church near Raetihi.**

### Something to Think About

**Which aspects of the following Rātana prayer would be difficult for many Christians to accept? Why?**

*May the peace of God the Father  
Son and Holy Ghost (Spirit)  
with the Holy Angels  
Guard and watch over all of us.  
May the Faithful Māngai  
Lead us in the right way  
In truth and righteousness  
To the throne of Jehovah.*

## The Organisation of the Rātana Church

The Rātana Church adapted a number of features from the mainstream churches to its own purposes. These include a synod, various committees, and registered ministers. There are orders of *apōtoro* (apostles), *akonga* (disciples), and *awhina* (deaconesses or helping sisters). Other members of the church serve as psalmists and choir members, or as members of bands. Only ordained ministers are permitted to perform the various functions of the priesthood. Brightly coloured robes of blue, white, purple, gold, and red, worn by the different orders, follow the colours of the vestments worn by the priests in Old Testament times.

Music is very important in the Rātana Church. The *Māngai* believed that music was the softener of human hearts. Like the Israelites of old he believed musicians would lead the procession into the Promised Land and bring down the strongholds of the old system, as seen in the collapse of Jericho's walls.

In keeping with that episode of biblical history, T. W. Rātana insisted there be seven brass bands scattered about the country. These all come together for the celebrations each year at Rātana Pā to march visitors onto the *marae*.

## Worship in the Rātana Church

Rātana services of worship include many of the features found in mainstream Christian celebrations – hymns, readings from the Bible, prayers, and sermons. Weddings, baptisms, and funerals are similar to those of the other churches. However, the sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated only occasionally in the Rātana Church and is restricted to church leaders.



## Rātana Symbols

The most obvious Rātana symbol combines a five-pointed star and a crescent moon. Known as *whetū marama* (star-moon), this represents the clarity that Rātana's mission brings in the war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of magic and superstition represented by the *tohunga*.

The *whetū marama* is the official crest of the Rātana Church and is often worn by its members as a badge. In its design, the name "T. W. Rātana" appears on the crescent moon. The letters "A" and "O", which are written at either end of the moon, stand for Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of Rātana's work.

The *whetū marama* symbol also appears on the temple at Rātana Pā where it is repeated around the interior. Each star-moon is joined to its neighbour by five chains. This linkage, which symbolically holds the temple together, indicates T.W. Rātana's mission to unite the Māori people. Each of the five chains and the points of the stars are given different colours. These colours stand for different aspects of divinity.

- Blue represents *Te Matua* (the Father)
- White represents *Te Tama* (the Son)
- Red represents *Te Wairua Tapu* (the Holy Spirit)
- Purple represents *Nga Anahera Pono* (the Faithful Angels)
- Yellow / gold represents the *Māngai* (Rātana, the Mouth-Piece of God to the people and of the people to God)

Another important example of symbolism in the Rātana temple is the pattern of concentric circles which represents the 'eye of God'.

## The Political Movement

In 1928, recognising that Māori needed a strong and united voice in Parliament if their hopes for a better future were to be realised, Rātana decided that four of his followers should stand for election. The first Rātana Member of Parliament was Eruera Tirakatene who was elected to the Southern Māori seat in 1932.

When the first Labour Government was elected in 1935, Rātana went to meet the new Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, placing before him a potato, a broken gold watch, a greenstone *tiki*, and a *huia* feather. He explained the symbolism of these objects as follows:

- The potato was the ordinary Māori who needed land because "a potato cannot grow without soil".
- The watch was broken and needed fixing – like the law which protected Māori land.
- The *tiki* represented the traditions and *mana* of the Māori people.
- The *huia* feather was the sign of a chief – Savage would have the right to wear it if he looked after the interests of Māori.

The strong alliance which formed between the Rātana movement and the Labour Party was to last into the twenty-first century. The winning of all four Māori seats for Labour – 'The Four Quarters' – was first achieved by Rātana candidates in 1943.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

### Something to Do

**Symbolic objects and actions have always played an important part in the Rātana movement. Using text and illustration, design a picture glossary that explains some of the key Rātana symbols.**

**Eruera Tirikatene – the first Rātana Member of Parliament.**



**The *whetū marama* (star-moon), the best known Rātana symbol, is often worn as a badge.**

## Summary

- **Human beings seek answers to life's deepest questions in the various indigenous and world religions which seem to share certain characteristics.**
- **Catholics believe that God's presence is revealed most fully through the Catholic Church which continues the saving work of Jesus Christ. It accepts all that is true and holy in other religions and acknowledges that they reflect aspects of God. It urges its members to respect and learn about other religions in order to strengthen the human family and build peace.**
- **The indigenous religions of the Pacific region have many of the characteristics of other traditional religions.**
- **The Dreaming, a mythical time when the Ancestors inhabited the earth, is the basis of Australian Aboriginal religion. Totems of the natural landscape symbolise the Ancestors of the Dreaming and link the Aboriginal people to them. In their rituals, Aborigines re-enact and draw power from the actions of the Ancestors. Initiation is an important aspect of Aboriginal society, which is structured around a system of taboos.**
- **Traditional Polynesian religion acknowledges a Supreme Being who created the cosmos. Earth and Sky are the parents of various *atua* who gave life to human beings and control various human activities. *Mana* is passed down through the generations, by ancestors to their descendants.**
- **Before the coming of Christianity, many Māori recognised the existence of a Supreme Being, *Io*, who was the source of all existence. *Tapu* and *mana* are essential dimensions of Māori life and spirituality that must be acknowledged.**
- **Hinduism, the main religion of India, acknowledges many gods and includes a great range of beliefs, practices and traditions. The spiritual aim of Hindus is release from the continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Various forms of meditation, including yoga enable people to transform their consciousness and achieve a sense of unity with the divine. Hinduism has many sacred books, the most famous of which is the *Bhagavadgita*. Hindu society has traditionally been organised according to the caste system.**
- **Buddhism, the fourth largest religion in the world, was founded by Siddhartha Gautama – the Buddha. The Four Noble Truths express the Buddhist understanding of reality and the human condition. The Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts outline practical steps to be taken towards enlightenment.**
- **Judaism, which expresses faith in one God, is the religion of the Jewish people and the oldest of the world's great monotheistic religions. The basis of Judaism are the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the *Torah* or Law of Moses. These reveal God's special relationship with the descendants of Abraham. There are a number of religious movements within Judaism which interpret the *Torah* and respond to modern society in different ways.**
- **Christians follow the teachings of Jesus Christ whom they believe is both fully God and fully human. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the fullness of God's life and love is shown to the world. The key beliefs of Christianity are revealed in the Bible and expressed in the creeds and traditions of the Church. Today, Christianity is the world's largest religion, although various historical divisions mean it is far from unified.**
- **Islam is the second largest and the fastest growing world religion. Muslims submit themselves to the will of Allah, the one and only God, whose prophet is Muhammad. Islam's sacred text is the *Qur'an* which is trustworthy in all respects because it comes directly from Allah. The Five Pillars of Wisdom express the five essential duties which all Muslims are expected to perform. There are two basic groupings within Islam – Sunni and Shia.**
- **The Ringatū faith was established in the 1860s by Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki in response to the loss of *mana* that Māori experienced when their lands were sold or confiscated. It combines aspects of Christianity with traditional spiritual beliefs and practices of the Māori.**
- **The Rātana movement emerged to give hope to the Māori people during a time of crisis. It has both religious and political dimensions, combining traditional Christian beliefs and practices with the insights "revealed" to its founder, Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana.**

# GLOSSARY OF Māori TERMS

This glossary gives explanation of Māori terms which are italicised in the text. The first time a Māori term appears in the text, its English meaning appears in brackets after it.

Pronunciation – correct pronunciation of Māori comes only with practice in listening to and speaking the language. The English phonetic equivalents provided under each Māori word are intended to provide a reasonably accurate guide for students. If in doubt please seek assistance from someone practised in correct pronunciation of Te Reo Māori.

´ indicates stressed syllable

<b>Akonga</b> – úh-kaw-nguh	Disciples.
<b>Anahera Pono</b> – úh-nuh-heh-ruh páw-naw	Faithful angels.
<b>Apōtoro</b> – áh-páw-taw-raw	Apostle.
<b>Aroha</b> – úh-raw-huh	In general, means love and/or compassion. Note that the word is used in two senses: 1. a joyful relationship involving the expression of goodwill and the doing of good, empathy. 2. sympathy, compassion towards those who are unhappy or suffering.
<b>Atua</b> – úh-too-uh	The Māori word Atua has been used to describe God in the Christian sense since missionary times. Before the coming of Christianity, Māori used the word atua to describe many kinds of spiritual beings (in the way we now use the word “spirit”) and also unusual events. Only the priestly and aristocratic classes of Māori society (ariki, rangatira and tohunga) had access to knowledge of the Supreme Being, Io, also known as Io-matua, Io-matua-i-te-kore, Io-te-wananga, etc. It seems that many, but not all, tribes had this belief in Io before missionary times. Māori use several words to refer to God in the Christian sense: Te Atua – God, the Supreme Being Ihowa – Jehovah Te Ariki – Lord, more correctly used of Jesus Te Matua – the father (literally, parent) Io – a term used for God in some, but not all Māori circles. (Te Atua is acceptable in all circles).
<b>Awhina</b> – áh-fee-nuh	Deaconesses or helping sisters in the Rātana movement.
<b>Hahi</b> – háh-hee	Religion, church, denomination.
<b>Hakari</b> – háh-kuh-ree	Ritual feast.
<b>He Tangata</b> – heh túh-nguh-tuh	Human beings, humankind.
<b>Hehu Karaiti</b> – héh-hoo kuh-rúh-ee-tee	Jesus Christ.
<b>Hui</b> – hóo-ee	Meeting.
<b>Karakia</b> – kúh-ruh-kee-uh	Prayer, ritual.

<b>Kotahitanga</b> – kāv-tuh-hee-túh-nguh	The essential unity of the Māori people.
<b>Mana</b> – múh-nuh	Spiritual power and authority. Its sources are both divine and human, namely, God, one's ancestors and one's achievements in life. Mana comes to people in three ways: <b>mana tangata</b> from people, <b>mana whenua</b> , from the land, and <b>mana atua</b> , from the spiritual powers. Please note: when mana refers to Mana of God it is written as Mana.
<b>Māngai</b> – máh-nguh-ee	Mouth. Mouthpiece of God was the title given to T. W. Rātana.
<b>Marae</b> – múh-ruh-ee	Traditional meeting place, consisting of a meeting house (whare hui) and dining room (whare kai). Strictly speaking, the term refers to the marae atea, the courtyard in front of the meeting house.
<b>Mauri</b> – múh-ruh-ee	The life force or principle of all creation.
<b>Merehu</b> – máv-reh-hoo	Remnant, survivor.
<b>Noa</b> – náv-uh	Free from tapu restrictions, which have been lifted by ceremony or ritual. This form of noa is positive, it is the freedom to go on with life after being released from restricting factors, e.g. after a powhiri; on leaving a cemetery; after a reconciliation; etc. Noa can also be negative: a state of weakness and powerlessness which affects both people who have suffered violation or abuse and also those who have caused violation or abuse.
<b>Pa</b> – páh	Village, settlement. Traditionally these were fortified.
<b>Panui</b> – púh-noo-ee	Verses from the Bible. Notices.
<b>Papatūānuku</b> – puh-puh-tóo-áh-noo-koo	The Earth Mother, often called Papa.
<b>Pono</b> – páv-naw	Integrity or faithfulness.
<b>Poutikanga</b> – páv-oo-tée-kuh-nguh	Main pillar or support. The title given to the elected head of the Ringatu movement.
<b>Pure</b> – púh-reh	Purification rites which make it possible for people to come into contact with the sacred without being harmed. Ceremony for removing tapu.
<b>Ranginui</b> – rúh-ngee-noo-ee	The Sky Father, often called Rangi.
<b>Rongopai</b> – ráw-ngaw-puh-ee	Gospel or Good News. Ngā Rongopai (plural). Te Rongopai (singular).
<b>Tane Mahuta</b> – táh-neh múh-hoo-tuh	The spirit and guardian of forests. The ancestor of human beings.
<b>Tangaroa</b> – túh-nguh-raw-uh	In Aotearoa New Zealand Tangaroa is the spirit of the sea and all things that live in water. Elsewhere in Polynesia he is the Supreme Being who gave life to the cosmos.
<b>Tangi</b> – túh-ngee	A word meaning 'cry' and in particular the wailing or keening for the dead expressed by Māori women. Very often it is used as an abbreviation for tangihanga, meaning the customary form of Māori funeral – a hui involving a process of grieving.

<b>Tapu</b> – túh-poo	This word is used in three senses: 1. restrictions or prohibitions which safeguard the dignity and survival of people and things. 2. the value, dignity, or worth of someone or something, eg the holiness of God, human dignity, the value of the environment. 3. the intrinsic being or essence of someone or something, eg Tapu i Te Atua is the intrinsic being of God, the divine nature. Please note: when tapu refers to the Tapu of God it is written as Tapu.
<b>Te Ao Wairua</b> – teh úh-oo wúh-ee-roo-uh	The spiritual world.
<b>Te Aranga</b> – teh úh-ruh-nguh	The Resurrection.
<b>Te Kaumarua</b> – teh kúh-oo-muh-roo-uh	The Twelfth. The celebration held on the twelfth day of each month within the Ringatu movement.
<b>Te Matua</b> – teh-múh-too-uh	The Father. God.
<b>Te Rangatiratanga</b> – teh ruh-nguh-tée-ruh-tuh-nguh	The Kingdom or Reign of God.
<b>Te Tama</b> – teh túh-muh	The Son (of God).
<b>Te Wā</b> – teh wáh	A period in time in which a series of events affecting people and their lives takes place, which enables them to reach goals or moments of achievement.
<b>Te Wairua Tapu</b> – teh wúh-ee-roo-uh túh-poo	The Holy Spirit.
<b>Tika</b> – tée-kuh	Justice.
<b>Tohunga</b> – táw-hoo-nguh	Expert, priest.
<b>Tūpuna</b> – tóo-poo-nuh	Ancestors. Some areas use the term tīpuna.
<b>Urupā</b> – oo-roo-páh	Cemetery.
<b>Wairua</b> – wúh-ee-roo-uh	Spirit.
<b>Whanau</b> – fáh-nuh-oo	Extended Family.
<b>Wharenui</b> – fúh-reh-nóo-ee	Meeting house. Literally, big house.
<b>Whetū marama</b> – feh-tóo múh-ruh-muh	Star-moon. The Rātana symbol.



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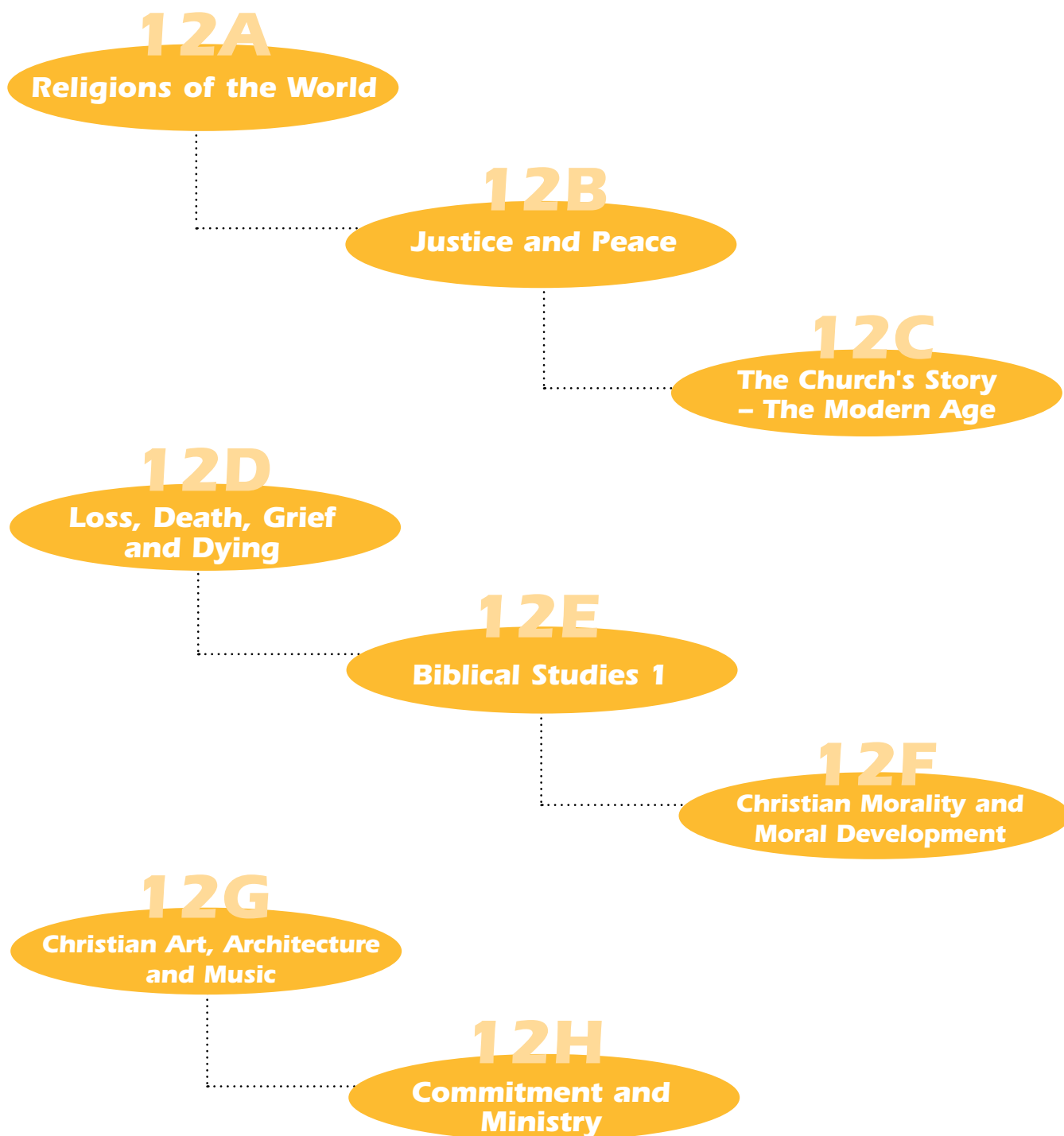
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