

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD





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- ❖ What do we want to achieve:
- ❖ Get 6 credits
- ❖ To be able to describe the nature and purpose of religion
- ❖ Identify some features of some Pacific traditional religions and some major religions of the world



RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

- ✦ Discuss 'religion' in the light of the teaching of Vatican II
- ✦ Explain the significance for Christians of studying other religions
- ✦ Understand where we are at in our faith journey



WHY STUDY RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD?

- ✦ Religion is the universal tool for explaining things which we do not understand through the context the known physical world.
- ✦ Although there are countless religions, each different from the other, they all serve the same purpose.



Each answers questions which all humans seem to be programmed to ask: Why are we here? What happens when I die? How shall I live my life?



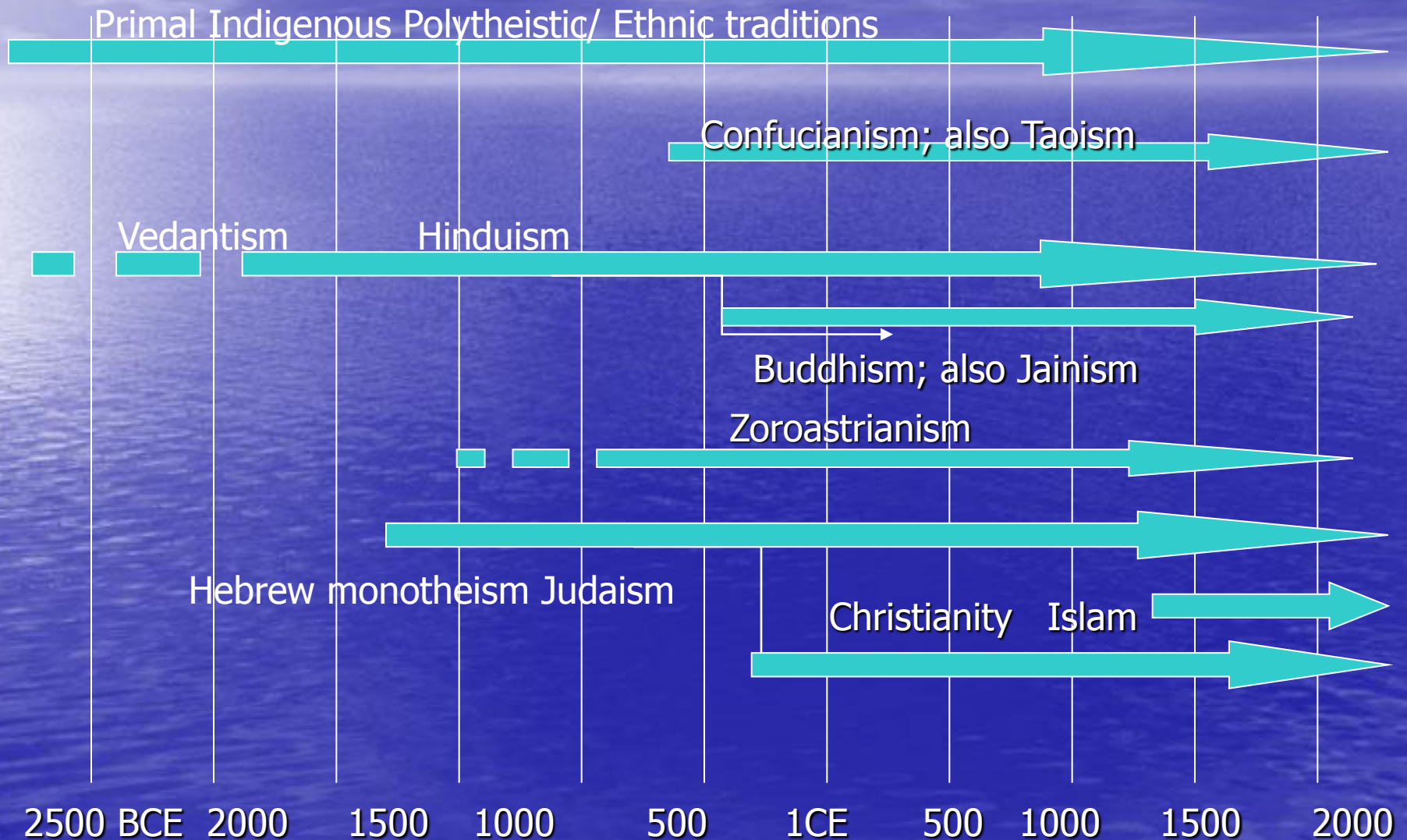


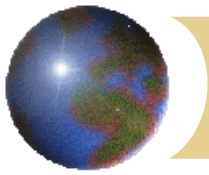
Religions of the World - an overview

What are the major religions of the world?

- ✚ Judaism
- ✚ Christianity
- ✚ Islam
- ✚ Baha'i Faith
- ✚ Zoroastrianism
- ✚ Hinduism
- ✚ Buddhism
- ✚ Sikhism
- ✚ Jainism
- ✚ Taoism
- ✚ Confucianism
- ✚ Shinto

From the Dawn of Time

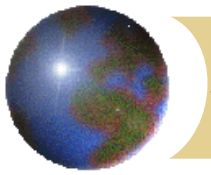




Categorizing Religions:

- Ethnic vs. Universal

- ❖ **Ethnic:** the religion of a particular people or culture (e.g., Judaism, Shinto, Hinduism) (tend to be localized and do *not* actively seek converts)
- ❖ **Universal:** a religion which sees its message as true for all people (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) (have spread throughout the world and tend to be very large in population, have actively sought converts from many cultures)



Categorizing Religions:

- Theistic vs. Non-theistic

- ✚ **Theistic:** focus on a personal God (mono-) or gods (poly-) (god = supernatural "person," spirit being) (most common in western religions)
- ✚ **Non-theistic:** Ultimate Reality or ultimate goal of the religion does *not* involve a personal god (impersonal Ultimate Reality) (force or energy) (found mostly in the eastern religions)



Categorizing Religions:

- Major vs. Minor

- ✚ **Major religions:** Religions that are high in population, widespread throughout the world, the basis upon which other religions were built and/or otherwise highly influential
- ✚ **Minor Religions:** Religions that are limited in population, geographic locale and/or influence



Categorizing Religions:

- Western vs. Eastern

✿ **Western:** Religions that developed *west* of the Urals (e.g. in the Near East and Europe):

- ✿ **Judaism**
- ✿ **Christianity**
- ✿ **Islam**
- ✿ **Baha'i Faith**
- ✿ **Zoroastrianism**

✿ **Eastern:** Religions that developed *east* of the Urals (e.g., in India, China and Japan)

India

- **Hinduism**
- **Buddhism**
- **Sikhism**
- **Jainism**

Far East

- **Taoism**
- **Confucianism**
- **Shinto**



Western and Eastern Religions in Contrast:

Western/Christian

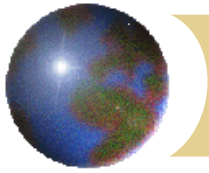
Eastern/Hindu

	Western/Christian	Eastern/Hindu
Time:	Linear/Singular	Cyclical/Repeating
Ultimate Reality:	Monotheistic (one personal god)	Poly- or non-theistic (many gods or impersonal)
Afterlife:	Disembodied (one life then Judgment , heaven or hell)	Embodied (many lives - Reincarnation)
The Human Condition: (problem)	Sin (separation from God due to bad deeds)	Ignorance & Karma (impurity of soul caused by good and bad deeds)
Solution: (liberation)	avoid, eliminate, or overcome sin (salvation)	elimination of ignorance & karma (moksha)



Western and Eastern Religions in Contrast:

	Western/Christian	Eastern/Hindu
Encounter With God:	God is heard (texts)	God is seen (images)
Mediated through:	Prophets (messengers of God, bring God to people)	Gurus (personal spiritual guides, bring people to truth)
Revelation/Enlightenment:	God revealed in the world through miraculous historical & relational Events (supernatural)	Gods revealed in nature ; abstract truths revealed to the mind through wisdom & philosophical ideas
Relationship Between Self & God:	Dualistic ("I and Thou")	Identity ("That art Thou")



Some statistics to consider

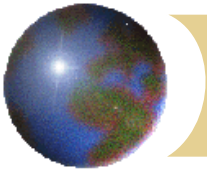
Statistics

No religious group even comes close to enjoying a global majority. The largest single

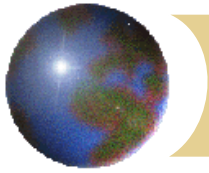
group, comprising all the various Christian sects, is outnumbered two-to-one by non Christians worldwide.



- ❖ Christians vastly outnumber non-Christians in Europe, the Americas, and Oceania. In Asia, however, where the majority of the world's population resides, non-Christians outnumber Christians more than ten-to-one.
- ❖ Muslims are the second-largest religious group, and Hindus the fourth-largest. The Muslim population is perhaps the most evenly distributed about the globe, whereas 99 percent of the world's Hindu population is concentrated in southern Asia.



- ✪ The third-largest group, making up almost one fifth of the world's population, comprises unbelievers and disbelievers. Secularists make up about 1/3 of Asians, 1/5 of Europeans, 1/8 of the population of Oceania, and 1/10 of people in the U.S. and Canada. They are most outnumbered in Africa and Latin America.

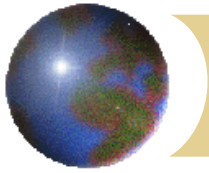


- ✦ Though a minority in N.Z., Roman Catholics account for fully half of all Christians worldwide, Protestants and Anglicans together for only about a quarter.



Conclusions

- ✚ Roman Catholics are the world's largest individual religious sect, yet they are slightly outnumbered by secularists.
- Spiritual non-theists — *e.g.*, Buddhists, Confucians, spiritual people — number about twice those who classify themselves as atheists. If this number is added to the number of secularists, the number of people who do not believe in a God make up between one fourth and one third of the world's population.

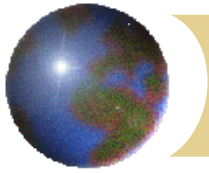


✚ Spiritual and secular non-theists together number more than any single theistic group except Christians



Vatican II

- ✚ Vatican II Statement on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions was called *Nostra Aetate*
- ✚ The significance of *Nostra Aetate* as a new starting point in the Church's relations with Judaism.
- ✚ Pope John Paul II and Ecumenism



Vatican II

- ✚ The Church moved from the position “that outside the Church there is no salvation” to recognise all that is true and holy in non-Christian religions. The Council challenged Catholics to work with other members of other faiths.