

Glossary

Aboriginal Peoples of Australia: indigenous peoples known for using a totem as a sacred symbol; i.e., the Aboriginal kangaroo clan believe that their clan consists of the descendants of their totemic progenitor, the first kangaroo

Adi Granth: text formed by the nine gurus after Nanak that is the focus of Sikh worship

ahimsa: the principle of nonviolence

Ainu: a people in northern Japan who practice the “bear sacrifice,” a ritual in which shamans offer gifts from humans in exchange for an animal’s life

Allah: Arabic word for God; originally, the high god over a pantheon of tribal gods, became the one, true God with the teachings of Muhammad

All Soul’s Festival: a summer event integrating practices from all three traditions, when the gates of purgatory are thought to be held open and the living can connect with departed kin

Amaterasu: head of the Shinto pantheon, kami of the sun

Amitabha/Amida: the name of a Buddha who created a Pure Land doctrine and practice that featured chanting his name

Analects: compilation of Confucius’ teachings, anecdotes, and sayings

anatman: “no-atman” or “nonself”; rejection of Hindu concept of *atman*, or an essential, unchanging interior entity at the center of a person

ancestor veneration: ancient tradition that viewed the universe as being peopled by dead ancestors who were to be highly respected

arhat: an enlightened disciple of the Buddha

atman: individual soul

Augustinianism: the view that the task of Christianity is to transform every society into a Christian society comprising two branches: church and state

Avalokiteshvara: most popular and universal celestial bodhisattva, who came to be known by many other names including Guanyin in China and Kannon in Japan

avatara: incarnations of Vishnu

ayatollah: a senior religious leader among Shia Muslims

bar mitzvah: boy’s ritual, at age 13, that moves him into full membership of the religious community and adulthood

bat mitzvah: extension of *bar mitzvah* ritual to females by the Conservative and Reform Jewish communities

Bhagavad Gita: a portion of the great epic, *Mahabharata*

bhakti: a form of yoga that emphasizes devotion; devotional faith

bhikkhuni: Buddhist nuns

BJP: political party controlled by members of the upper caste; wants to reverse the secular state’s efforts to promote low castes and introduce democratic elections into India’s villages

Bodh Gaya: temple built at the site where the Buddha was enlightened under the bodhi tree

bodhisattva: Mahayana Buddhism’s model Buddhist will not attain final Nirvana until all beings are enlightened

Brahman: the unchanging spirit underlying reality

brahmin: a class consisting of priests

Buddha: one who has “awakened,” ended karmic bondage, and will not be reborn

Buddha nature theory: a Mahayana school that said if nirvana and samsara cannot be separated, then nirvana must interpenetrate all reality, therefore all beings have a portion of nirvana and so possess the latent potential for its realization

Bwiti: a West Central African religion that illustrates how a new religion is formed from combining elements of alien and indigenous religious beliefs and practices (syncretism)

caitya: a *stupa* or any Buddhist shrine

caliph: a successor to Muhammad who served as political and military head of the community

Catholic: one who believes that the way to know God is by faith and reason, scripture and tradition, and guidance from papal authority

Ch’an: a Mahayana school that had formed in China by 600 CE and stressed meditation, this-life realization, and self-power

Ch'ondogyo: Korean religion that merges elements of Confucianism and Daoism; one of the major religions in Korea

Christ: the anointed one, or messiah

Circular time: the conceptualization of time as following the pattern of the celestial and natural world. In hunter-gatherer societies, humans lived by the recurring rhythms of nature

circumcision: ritual called *Bris* or *Brit milah* required for every male at 8 days old, when the child is circumcised and named

city god: receives kitchen gods' and earth gods' yearly reports and in turn informs the celestial Jade Emperor

Confucius: English rendering of the name Master K'ung, by early Jesuit missionaries

Confucianism: tradition rooted in the system of moral observance and ritual performance, established sixth century BCE by Master K'ung

Constantinianism: Constantine was the first monarch to legally permit Christianity. He created a model in which the church is ruled by the state, through the Christian emperor, as the form Christian civilization should take

cosmogony: an account of the world's origins and its essential powers

covenant: a mutual agreement between two parties that is both an expression of mutual love and care and a legal agreement on the model of a marriage contract

Cultural Revolution: between 1949 and 1976 the Communist party-led government disestablished nearly every public religious institution associated with the "three faiths" and pushed the devout underground

dana: the first stage in *punya*, a merit-making donation, "dana" means "self-less giving" to diminish desire

Dani: a simple agricultural group in highland New Guinea whose lives are shaped by soul belief and the soul's survival into an afterlife

Dao: primal force or reality of the universe

Daoist: one who practices the tradition that teaches cultivating an immediate sense of personal connection with the Dao

Daruma-san: the founding saint of Zen Buddhism

deism: belief that God made a perfect machine when he made the world and it runs on its own without further assistance from God; God does not actively guide or influence events in the world

dependent origination: Buddhist doctrine that views reality as an ongoing, impermanent, and interdependent flux in the form of a circle divided into twelve parts

dharma: duty in life according to caste

dhimmi: one of three choices given to conquered non-Muslims was to become "protected people," or *dhimmi*, by paying a special tax

Diaspora: Jews who were dispersed in the Roman Empire

diffuse religion: ancient practices rooted in ancestor veneration and spirit worship over time became blended with basic elements of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism

divine: representing the gods

"Dreamtime": term used by the Aboriginal kangaroo clan describing the time when the world as we know it was being created

dual Torah: the sacred oral and written teachings that established the covenant with Israel

Eightfold Path: comprises eight ways of thinking and acting that can be categorized as morality, meditation, and wisdom

Émile Durkheim: influential French sociologist who theorized that humans instituted religion

"engaged Buddhism": a movement started by Thich Nhat Hanh that asserts that when faced with the inevitable suffering in the world, Buddhists must take action and engage their society

enlightenment: the elimination of ignorance, which completely clears the mind to see reality as it truly is

ethical: right action as expressed in myth and ritual

evangelical: form of pietist Christianity that emphasizes the centrality of the "born again" experience of spiritual transformation rather than dogma as the key to Christian authenticity and union among Christians in all their diversity

fatwa: official legal opinions or interpretations of Islamic law

Five Classics: the Confucian canon; officially established c. 175 CE

Four Good Deeds: a doctrinal statement that provides guidance for how to live, aimed at the laity

Four Noble Truths: a diagnosis of the human condition and a prescription for liberation, which involves following the Eightfold Path

Full Moon Festival: a time to worship the harvest moon, associated with Buddhism and Daoism

fundamentalist: rejects important aspects of modernity and desires to return to the “purer” socio-political order of their ancestors

Gemara: commentary on the Mishnah that linked oral and written Torah

gentile: a non-Jewish person

Ghost Dance: an attempt by North American shamans to revitalize native peoples in the nineteenth century with this dance ritual prescribed by the spirits

globalization: the world religions encounter each other, with much more overlap than ever before

Gospel: stories of the life of Jesus found in the New Testament, traditionally believed to be written by apostles and disciples of Jesus, but in fact written over two to three generations, with each gospel beginning from shared oral traditions

grace: the undeserved gift of God’s acceptance of the sinner given through faith for Protestants. For Catholics it is an undeserved gift that transforms the sinner and enables the sinner to cooperate in God’s work of spiritual renewal of the individual

Guanyin: celestial bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara as known in China

guru: religious or spiritual teacher or master; spiritual guide

Gurudwara: a Sikh temple

hadith: tradition, narrative stories about what Muhammad said and did that make up the Sunna

hajj: fifth pillar of Islam, the pilgrimage to Mecca that every Muslim who is physically and financially able is expected to make at least once

halakhah: the premodern Talmudic tradition; Jewish law

haredim: refers to eastern European Jews “of true piety”

Hasidism: a movement marked by piety, great devotion and expression of great joy in response to God’s presence, which is found everywhere in creation

heresy: a teaching that does not follow prescribed dogma

heretic: from the ancient Greek word that means “to choose”

hijab: the headscarf worn by many Muslim women

hijrah: Muhammad’s emigration from Mecca to Medina in 622

Hindutva: a call for the reform of Hinduism in national life and the reconstitution of India as a Hindu state

homoousios: from the Council of Nicaea, “same as,” i.e., the Word through which all things were created was the same as God

Homo religiosus: coined by scholar Mircea Eliade, means “religious humanity” and indicates the universality and centrality of religion in human societies

Hong Xiuquan: Chinese convert to Christianity, founder of China’s first “new religion,” a militant sect that wages the most destructive civil war in world history, then falls apart

ijtihad: a reinterpretation of Islamic law to meet the needs of the modern world, promoted by Islamic modernist reformers

Israel: “wrestler with God”; Jacob renamed by God

jihad: means to “struggle” or to “strive”; generally means the obligation of all Muslims to fulfill God’s will, as well as armed struggle to defend oneself, community, or religion when under attack

justification by faith: Luther’s teaching that knowledge of God can be obtained only through faith and scripture, untouched by reason, became the central doctrine of the Protestant Reformation

Kabbalah: Jewish mysticism, emerged in the late medieval period; defining work is the *Zohar*, Book of Splendor

Kali Yuga: one of the four eras of creation, according to Hindu cosmology. Kali Yuga is the post-Vedic age in which human spiritual potential is declining

kami: deities native to Japan, eternally present

karma: a natural law that generally states that a person’s actions determine his or her destiny

Khalsa: means "pure" and refers to the collective body of all baptized Sikhs; goes back to Sikhs who underwent the sacred Amrit Ceremony initiated by the tenth guru, Gobind Singh in the late 1600s, becoming the political leader

Kingdom of God: according to Christian canon, Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God, which is completed at the second coming when all injustice is overcome and suffering and death will be no more

kitchen god: the deity Zao Wangye found in traditional Chinese and Korean homes, records household goings on, from the kitchen hearth

koan: a paradoxical word problem given to disciples that can lead to small awakenings or nirvana

kosher: rules for dining

Kung San: a late-surviving hunter-gatherer group in southern Africa

Lakota Sioux: a North American group that believes that every human being has the potential for supernatural connection; young men go to a sacred wilderness region on a "vision quest"

Lao Zi: credited for authoring the *Daodejing*, the basis of Daoism

li: chief means to *ren*, cultivation of virtue

ling: spiritual force that is imminent in a thing

Lotus Sutra: popular Buddhist scripture in East Asia, develops the Mahayana doctrine of cosmic Buddhahood

Madhyamaka: deconstructive philosophically based school of thought founded by Nagarjuna

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: Hindu guru who gave spiritual instruction to the Beatles

Mahayana: name given to the Great Vehicle division when the sangha aligned under two main divisions after the death of the Buddha

mahdi: Divinely guided one. An eschatological figure who Muslims believe will usher in an era of justice and true belief just prior to the end of time

mappo: Japanese belief that the world had entered into a period of decline, in which human capacity for spiritual pursuit was degraded

Master K'ung: the Chinese name of Confucius

matha: Hindu monasteries

Mencius: Master Meng, a disciple of Confucius, who developed Confucian views and was partially responsible for success of Confucius' teachings

metanarrative: all-encompassing sacred stories through which humans interpreted life in their respective cultures

Mishnah: the writings that form the core of the Talmud, primarily written by students of Hillel

Mitzvot: deeds of loving kindness

mizuko cult: Japanese cult organized to seek the forgiveness of the spirits of aborted fetuses, from Kannon devotionalism

modern: characterized by viewing religion as a matter of private personal faith or opinion rather than objective public knowledge

moksha: "release" from the cycle of future rebirth and redeath

mosque: or, *masjid*—"place of prostration"

mudang: Korean shaman, usually women

mufti: an Islamic legal expert

myth: a symbolic story about the origins and destiny of human beings and their world

Native American Church: a successful example of the phenomenon of the "Pan-Americanization" of indigenous peoples; in this case, Native Americans have integrated elements of Christianity, but still utilize ceremonial use of peyote as the group's own communal sacrament

neo-Confucianism: scholars who edited the foundational texts of Confucius

neo-Shintoism: when the Shinto tradition is adopted by the state as a "state" religion, with ties to ancient reverence of indigenous deities of the Japanese Islands

"new religions": religious movements that arose in the modern era in East Asia that did not rely on old practices or old deities, and were usually independent of the traditional institutions of Daoism, Buddhism, and premodern Shintoism

Nichiren: Buddhist leader in Japan who opposed the popular Pure Land school and viewed the *Lotus Sutra* as containing the supreme teaching

nirguna Brahman: "without characteristics"

nirvana: the final state of liberation

num/chi: Kung shamans' term for the natural force within the body that travels up the spine

numinous: a spiritual power that inhabits a place or object of nature such as a tree

OM: sacred sound made during chanting or meditation

Om-kara: Nanak's term for the one God who is beyond form and human categories

original sin: the will to do good in all human beings was corrupted by Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God's will

orthodoxy: acceptance of doctrines set forth in texts and by scholars

orthopraxy: acting in the prescribed manner

Pali Canon: the only complete version of the Buddha's teachings, recited and corrected at the Fifth Buddhist Council in 1871

Pentecostal: form of Christianity that focuses on personal conversion and the ecstatic experience of "speaking in tongues" as the signs of God's gift of grace in the Spirit

People of the Book: Jews and Christians, as people who shared the same God as Muslims, were automatically entitled to receive protective status (*dhimmi*) when their territory was conquered by Muslims

postmodern: characterized by the collapse of *all* metanarratives, including those from religion and science

prajna: insight or wisdom—the full development of prajna is essential to salvation

prasad: remains of a puja offering, carrying an infusion of divine blessing

premodern: when religion played the decisive role in explaining and ordering life

Protestant: one who believes that the way to know God is through faith and study of scripture, and no mediator such as the Catholic Church hierarchy is needed

"Protestant Buddhism": modern reformation of Buddhist tradition begun in colonial Ceylon

Protestant ethic: a demand that one live simply and work hard, based on teachings of John Calvin

puja: offerings to one's chosen deity

punya: the merit system for measuring spiritual advancement

puranas: a new collection of Sanskrit texts that emerged during the classical age in which devotional faith, or *bhakti*, becomes the ideal model for human behavior

Pure Land: a form of Mahayana Buddhism founded in India but spreading more widely to China and then Japan; it promoted deferring enlightenment-seeking from the human state until rebirth in a heaven; must rely on "other power" of celestial Buddhas to reach nirvana

qi: life force or primal energy

qi gong: a healing art that draws upon Daoist theories of vital energy in the body

Qing-Ming: a festival called "Ancestor's Day" or "Pure Brightness Festival"; the first of two dates over the year when families must visit the ancestral graves to maintain them, make sacrifices, and feast with the departed spirits

Quran: the Islamic book of scripture, as revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty-two years; considered to be the very word of God; the primary material source of Islamic law

Rabbinic: the Judaism of the dual Torah under the leadership of the rabbis

Ramadan: the ninth month of Islam's lunar calendar; the month-long fast is the fourth pillar of Islam

Ramakrishna Mission: the first great global Hindu organization with a vision of ecumenical Hinduism as the savior of the world; founded by Vivekananda

Ramanuja: Hindu theologian who linked scholastic theology with popular theistic practice by emphasizing Vishnu as the form of Brahman most effectively worshiped

religion: expresses the sense of being tied and bound to whatever powers we believe govern our destiny

ren: Confucian term roughly meaning "being fully human"

ritual: actions that connect the individual and the community to the sacred

RSS: political group that wants to establish India as a Hindu nation

sacraments: in Catholicism, seven sacraments are believed to be outward and visible signs of God's inward, invisible grace; can only be administered by ordained clergy. Protestantism reduced the number to two: baptism and communion

saguna Brahman: relating to Brahman as a personal divinity with characteristics such as power and grace

salat: prayer or worship five times a day, the second pillar of Islam

samsara: introduced in the Upanishads, means “the world,” in which all phenomena are really only secondary appearances

sangha: Buddhist monastic community

satyagraha: a principle, “grasping the truth,” developed by Gandhi with roots in the doctrine of nonviolence, or *ahimsa*

Second Coming: when Christ will return to raise the dead and judge the heavens and earth

secular: nonreligious

shahadah: (“to witness or declare”), first pillar of Islam, confession of faith, “There is no God but the God and Muhammad is the messenger of God,” allows one to become a Muslim

Shakyaditya: organization formed in 1987 by 150 women, dedicated to the restoration of full ordination of Theravadin nuns

Shaman: a spirit medium, that is a religious figure who mediates between the human community and the usually unseen supernatural beings; most likely, the first religious specialist

shamanism: a healer, as records indicate, from as long as 30,000 years ago, acts as a bridge between this world and the world of spirits; today shamanism is especially popular in East Asia

Shang-di: signifies the elevation of one Shang ancestor to supreme status; high deity

Shankara: brilliant religious philosopher who is responsible for the Advaita Vedanta school of monism having a central place among Hindu philosophies

sharia: Islamic law

Shema: Judaism’s creed that states, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one”

Shiah: followers of Ali, fourth caliph and Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law; this major branch of Islam was a minority from its beginning and operated from a worldview based on suffering, oppression, and being victims of injustice. Believes that the imam or leader must be a direct descendant of Muhammad’s family and is a religiopolitical leader

Shinto: religious tradition indigenous to Japan

shramana: a person who pursues ascetic practices in seeking enlightenment

skandha: the five aggregates making up a human being

Soka Gakkai: the largest “new religion” of Japan formed in association with Nichiren Buddhism in 1937; works for world peace and human welfare; missionizing

sorcerers: refers to spirit mediums who attempt to communicate with the dead and sometimes become “possessed”

soul belief: replaces the term “animism” and refers to the belief that there is an invisible soul or intangible spirit inside our visible, tangible bodies; “soul” may be attributed to a variety of entities such as humans, animals, rivers, mountains, etc.

Spirit flight: state achieved by shamans while in trance or altered state of consciousness

Spirit medium: another name for shaman

stupa: relic mound shrines, eight of which contain ashes of the Buddha

Sufism: Islamic mysticism; began as a reform movement to counter a trend of the Umayyad caliphs to live lavishly

Sunnah: the second source of Islamic law, the example of Muhammad, what he said and did, who serves as a living model for Muslims to follow

Sunni: the majority branch of Islam, 85 percent today, believes that the caliph is the selected or elected successor of Muhammad, not as prophet but as political and military leader

sympathetic imagination: empathy necessary to understand religious language and messages of different religious traditions

synagogue: house of study and prayer

syncretism: when a new religion is formed from combining elements of alien and indigenous religious beliefs and practices

syncretistic: some beliefs and practices of a religion are Christianized versions of indigenous pre-Christian religious elements

taboo: forbidden

Taiiping Rebellion: battle from 1850–1864 between the followers of Hong Xiuquan, called *Taipings*, and the Qing state

Talmud: insights of the oral tradition written down, from second to fifth centuries, initiated by the Pharisees; emergence of Rabbinic Judaism

Tanak: Jewish Bible that came into existence at end of first century; called the Old Testament by Christians

Tannaim: “those who study”

tantra: an innovative Hindu tradition that weaves together teaching and texts into an esoteric teaching offered only to those deemed capable; sees the human body as a microcosm of the universe and by harnessing bodily energies, individuals can have transformative religious experiences

Tattvabodhini Sabha: an influential, revivalist group in nineteenth-century Calcutta, made up of middle class and upper class elites, associated with the teachings of Rammohan Roy

tawhid: the oneness or unity of God, monotheism

temple: center of Jewish life until its destruction in 70 CE

Tenrikyo: “Religion of Heavenly Wisdom,” became a recognized Shinto sect in 1838 and rapidly spread throughout Japan

Theravada: name given to the elder traditionalists, or Sthaviravadins, when the sangha aligned under two main divisions after the death of the Buddha

“three faiths”: refers to Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism

Three Marks of Existence: suffering, impermanence, and nonself

Three Refuges: a recitation used to mark conversion to Buddhism, to affirm one’s devotion, or to start Buddhist rituals; the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha

Thunder Vehicle: a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, also called tantra; emphasized realizing salvation fast and in this lifetime

Tisha B’Av: the day of mourning for commemorating the historical tragedies of Judaism, especially the fall of the first and second Temples

TM: Transcendental Meditation: mantra-centered meditation movement started by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi that has taken Hindu traditions across the globe

T’oegyehak: movement founded by Lee Dong-choon in the twentieth century, based on writings of South Korean philosopher Yi T’oegye reinterpreting Confucian values

totem: a group symbol that establishes identity, promotes a collective solidarity, and regulates the group’s relations with outsiders. The totem could be an animal, reptile, insect, or plant that is emblematic of the group and it is treated as sacred.

transcendent: being beyond all finite things

Trinity: God is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; through the trinity God is not all things (pantheism) but is *in* all things (panentheism)

Tu-di Gong: cult of the “earth ruler,” popular during the formative era from 1122–221 BCE

tutelary spirit: a protective, supernatural agent that aids shamans, often an ancestral spirit

two natures, one person: the Council of Chalcedon decided that in the person of Jesus the two natures of divinity and humanity were united yet completely distinct

E. B. Tylor: Nineteenth-century scholar who argued that religion originated in the universal human perception that there is a soul and that all indigenous societies held such a belief

Tzaddik: Hasidic term for a righteous man

“Venus” figurines: from prehistoric times, small stone sculptures of females with large breasts and hips, and may represent veneration of a mother goddess

ulama: “learned ones,” religious scholars

ultimate reality: that which is the highest in value and meaning

ummah: Muslim community

Upanishad: tracts of teachings that began to be appended to the Vedic hymns after 1000 BCE

Vajrayana: another name for the Thunderbolt Vehicle branch of Mahayana Buddhism

Vedas: a collection of over a thousand hymns of praise and supplication addressed to the gods; existed over 2,000 years in oral form

via analogia: using familiar words to create an analogy that describes something less familiar

via negativa: the assertion of what God or ultimate reality is not

vipassana meditation: a form of meditation emphasized by the Theravada school

Vishva Hindu Prasad (VHP): founded in 1964, the organization views Hinduism as declining and seeks its roots in the earlier texts, particularly the Bhagavad Gita

White Shamans: Westerners who have promoted shamanic traditions in businesses and organizations

Won Buddhism: Founded in Korea in 1924, became popular after lifting of Japanese occupation; emphasizes that Buddhist doctrines are compatible with modern thought, encourages women to be leaders, and interested in ecumenical relations with other faiths

wu-wei: a Daoist principle that states the ideal human conduct is to let go and follow the path of noninterference

xiao: Confucian principle of filial conduct

yin-yang theory: the main system for conceptualizing the constantly changing universe, as always in motion, with apparent “opposites” containing the seed of each other

yoga: a discipline practice through which one realizes the atman within

Yoga Sutras: a compilation of yoga practices for the spiritually advanced elite, attributed to the sage Patanjali

zakat: almsgiving, the third pillar of Islam

Zen: formed as Ch’an in China; reaching nirvana is an individual effort; stresses meditation as the means

Zhu Xi: “Second Master” of Confucianism, authored the influential *Jinsi Lu*

Zhuang Zi: the second Daoist classic, attributed to Zhuang Zi, who lived several centuries after Lao Zi

Zionism: form of nationalism that returns Israel to Jews exclusively

Zohar: most important Kabbalistic work, also called Book of Splendor