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Chapter 1 : History of Europe - The Middle Ages | blog.quintoapp.com

The difference between religion and spirituality is not so much about what you believe but about how you live, and what is your attitude. In any of the spiritual/religious traditions on Earth, you will find a majority of people who follow it as a religion, and a minority who follows it as a spiritual path.

Puritan belief and the future history of America. It will take us back years into time. We shall be taking a look at the extraordinary history of the Puritans. This was a company of people who emerged in the spiritual ferment of the English Reformation. The ensuing Biblical Revival fired Christian zeal. This was the first of many Great Awakenings among the English speaking people. And this new realization of personal worth before God inspired great expectations among individual citizens in England. Its wider corporate impact was to foster a spiritual atmosphere in the English society for new beginnings, those being Biblical reform in the English and political reform of the English monarchy. Historians have noted that took form in the womb of England. This truth is overlooked but extremely important. At that time a certain company of Christian activists were beginning to stir and kick within the English mother country. These were the people who sparked the English Reformation. The Puritans were a people who caused others to sit up and listen. They were bound and determined to make an impact in their generation. Their dreams and their goals were both individual and national. They were quite vociferous in the way they engaged the challenges of their time. The Puritans were inclined to express their opinion quite forcefully, even to the point of straining the social constraints of a rigid monarchical English society. This would cause them, and the mother country, some significant pains of travail. Their political emergence came in the following century. This was the beginning of a rather spectacular history, to say the least. The story of the Puritans is much bigger than we have been told. These people have been the leading lights of America since the time of the early English colonies. And the settlement of the New World is a history we have heard much about. But our journey of discovery must trace the roots of the Puritans back into English history as well. This is where we shall make some rather startling discoveries. Then our trip will take another interesting turn. It will lead us "back to the future". It is important to consider the spiritual elements that are at work in peoples, land masses, and nations. This is essential in any study of history and for geography as well. It is especially true as we study Puritan history. And in the English Civil War that ensued they would change England forever. During the ferment of those epic times the Puritans were also setting forth on a great migration across the Atlantic Ocean. There in the new World they would set the standards for not only English colonial history but the subsequent birth of the American nation. They would continue to have an impact on America in the centuries that followed. And the latter half of the 20th Century would see them emerge as the greatest superpower Western Christendom has ever seen. The Puritan impact on world history has been profound so far. Future Puritan history will be even more spectacular. Indeed it will be more awesome than words can describe. This was during the very same time period in which they began to embark upon their epic migrations to the New World. Here were a vibrant, spiritually energized, and hopeful company of people. Their new status as free men walking personally and as a nation under God blessed the nation greatly. In spite of their shortcomings this faith fed their personal and national dreams and visions for a bright future. In England they had been bound and determined to set a new agenda for their English Church. These were the true movers and shakers of their time but their emergence did not come merely because of political aspirations. That reason, as we shall discuss, involved some very telling spiritual factors, not least of them being the coming of the English Bible to the common man. This same time period saw very large migrations of Puritans to America. But the English part of Puritan history is not often appreciated in America. This is in part due to the way that this history is taught. As Westerners we are inclined to lapse back into the Hellenistic Greco-Roman mindset we learned in our former passage through the Greek culture. We think in boxes. Our educational systems compartmentalize history. It chops up the sweep of history and boxes it up into separate subjects according to nation or a certain century. This is most unfortunate.

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American students know their American history and the role the Puritans played in the early settlement of the New World. So they are not getting the complete picture. Students are not being told the "rest of the story". And in the rush to do well and please the teacher or professor few are inclined to think "outside the box". There are other reasons Puritan history has been neglected. It is no secret that the academic elites at the top of the teaching hierarchies espouse a secular humanist view of this world and its histories. When we look at the slanted way they characterize the Puritans in the syllabuses their disdain for them becomes very obvious. We also see that Puritan history is minimized and the impact and scope of the Puritan contribution to American history is cloaked. Why is this so? Secular humanism was and remains today part of an Illuminist agenda to rid the West of the Judeo-Christian faith. Quite clearly there has been and continues to be a spiritual war, an ideological war, and an information war going on here in America. So it should come as no surprise that American educators at the top of the pyramid do not like the Puritans. Quite clearly from the textbooks we see that they very definitely champion the Enlightenment, all this in spite of its dismal failure when it was let loose and crashed in flames amidst the bloodshed of the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. The matter of academic freedom and control over the content of textbooks is troubling. School teachers and college professors are no longer given the teaching liberty they once had. Local schools are not permitted to decide which textbooks they will teach from. Under the educational elites the writers of textbooks quickly learn what elements of history to emphasize or de-emphasize to land these massive contracts. The elites currently bearing rule over public education would particularly like to delete from the record any positive contribution Biblical Christian faith has brought to America. So it is not surprising that they use their academic power over the curriculum to present the Biblical Christianity in a bad light. That is why they have consigned the Puritans to the dustbin of history. Why is this happening? It seems that nestled in the public trust we have some decidedly godless hardliners. They are driven by their dark angels to not only set a certain social agenda but also indoctrinate students into their own secularist and humanist mindset. Most of all, they, or the angels that deceive them, intimidate them, and pull their strings, do not want to see American students continue in or develop a Biblical world view. The matter of "separation of church and state" is a case in point. The original intent of the Founding Fathers was the "non-establishment of any Church Institution by the state". But the people behind the curtain have re-engineered and twisted this doctrine. They now proffer it to Americans as "the rigid exclusion of Christian faith from the state and from public places". The impact of this on the schoolroom, as is now well known has been devastating. The serious decline in academic scores, the bullying which is tolerated, the jungle classrooms, and the school shootings all attest to the moral bankruptcy of public education. And yet elitists setting the agenda for the teaching of American history continue to be hard-liners. They still seek to undermine the very Christian faith that made the nation rise to greatness. The broad trans-Atlantic scope of what is really an Anglo-American Puritan History is just not appreciated in America today. It is difficult for history students to connect the dots. And the full sweeping saga of the Puritans is a story yet untold. So in order to see what the Puritans did in England America we must seek out earlier more reliable sources and do our own homework. What we are seeing here is in fact a form of academic censorship. Because when the facts of history happen to be of a spiritual nature we discover that they have been studiously ignored. They have been left out of the story. Some very important historical details and themes are missing from the textbooks. So we are left with a false and decidedly negative view of the Puritans, and a boring one at that. This academic tyranny over the facts is not just true of history and the liberal arts. Over in the higher halls of science another academic war on truth is being waged right now. In place of the truth they are very keen to advance a number of their favorite myths about the Puritans. They seem to want their students to denigrate them as a people. Then they want students to file Puritan history away in the dustbin of history and forget it.

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Chapter 2 : The Juvenilization of American Christianity - Christian Research Institute

The modern pro-life movement is largely Christian. This pro-life view has been true from the very beginning of Christianity. A Christian document called the Didache, dated from the late first century or early second century, contained instructions against abortion.

Personal use only; commercial use is strictly prohibited. Historical and Contemporary Realities Summary and Keywords Throughout the nearly fifteen centuries of Muslim-Christian encounter, individual adherents of both traditions often have lived peaceably with each other. At the same time, Muslim expansion into Christian territories and Christian imperialism in Muslims lands have fostered fear and ill-will on both sides. Repercussions from the Crusades continue to resound in the contemporary rhetoric employed by defenders of both faiths. In recent years relations between Muslims and Christians across the globe have become increasingly polarized, fanned by anti-Islamic rhetoric and fearmongering. Old sectarian rivalries play out with serious consequences for minority groups, both Christian and Muslim. Conflicts in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere for much of the 20th century were often labeled as ethnic, political, or ideological perpetuations of long-standing struggles over land, power, and influence. These conflicts now tend to be labeled in accord with the specifically religious affiliation of their participants. It is difficult to imagine a time in history at which there is greater need for serious interfaith engagement than now. It is also important to understand the ways in which members of the two communities experience each other in specific areas of the world today, including the United States, taking note of efforts currently underway to advance interfaith understanding and cooperation. The events of September 11, , and the resulting American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, have led to ugly commentary reminiscent of medieval hyperbole. Right-wing evangelical rhetoric in the United States against Islam has been fueled by incidents of international terrorism involving Muslims, while the well-funded Islamophobia industry in the United States has been producing and distributing large amounts of anti-Muslim material. American Muslims want to exercise their constitutional rights to free speech in expressing their objection to certain American foreign policies, at the same time that they fear the consequences of the Patriot Act and other acts they view as assaults on their civil liberties. Meanwhile other Americans are struggling to understand that the Muslims with whom they interact in businesses, schools, and neighborhoods are different from the Muslim extremists who are calling for ever more dire measures against the United States. This is the general context in which Christian-Muslim dialogue is now taking place and to which it must address itself if it is to be effective. Political resistance to the Prophet Muhammad created a series of conflicts resulting in the crystallization of Islam into its own separate religion and identity. Theological differences were articulated early and have continued throughout history to present major challenges to interfaith relationships. The Persian Sassanian and the Greek Byzantine Empires were exhausted after many years of struggle, and Islam was able to occupy what amounted to a power vacuum in many of the areas to which it spread. Military expeditions were political in nature and not undertaken for the purpose of forcing conversion to Islam. Dhimmis had the right to practice their religion in private and to govern their own communities. Special dress was required and new church buildings could not be constructed. The Christian church as a whole was divided into five apostolic sects at the beginning of Islam, located in Rome, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. The resulting sectarian divisions had significant consequences for the spread of Islam. Many oriental Christians actually welcomed Muslim political authority as a relief from Byzantine oversight, and they cooperated with their new Muslim rulers. From the beginning Christians were nervous about the growth of a new religion that they saw as a Christian heresy and which invaded and took over many of their lands. Certain periods in world history reflected harmonious interactions among the three Abrahamic faiths. Medieval Andalusia, for example, provided a venue for Muslims and Christians, along with Jews, to live in proximity and even mutual appreciation. It was a time of great opulence and achievement, and social intercourse at the upper levels was easy. It was also a period during which a

number of Christians chose to convert to Islam. Medieval Andalusia has often been cited as an ideal place and time of interfaith harmony. To some extent that claim may be justified. If so, however, it was fairly short and was soon supplanted by the tensions, prejudices, and ill treatment of minorities by both Muslims and Christians that more often have characterized relationships between the communities. Other encounters, such as those experienced through the centuries of the Crusades, have left both Christians and Muslims bitter and angry. The question of sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem remained an ongoing issue. Many complex factors went into the call of Pope Urban II for a crusade against Muslims in 1095, primary among them the recapture of Jerusalem for Christianity. Religious zeal carried Christian forces well into Muslim territories, and early efforts actually led to the capture of the prize of Jerusalem, which they held for some years. Western Christians, generally ignorant of the lands of the East, whether Christian or Muslim, vented their ire against their Eastern Christian brethren almost as much as toward Muslims. The two centuries in which Christians occupied Palestine witnessed a constant pattern of shifting alliances. The Crusades lasted for several centuries, ending finally in victory for Islam. By the close of the Middle Ages hostilities between Islam and Western Christendom once again were intense, with active warfare for several centuries. A number of events served as a kind of transition from the Middle Ages to a new era of international engagement. The fall of Constantinople in the middle of the 15th century and the final expulsion of Muslims from Andalusia at the end of that century illustrate this transition. For some eleven centuries Constantinople had stood as the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Its fall to the invading Turks signaled a dramatic change in the power relationships between Islam and Christendom. The specter of a Muslim takeover of all of Europe was raised anew. In the 15th and succeeding centuries Muslim navies roamed the Mediterranean, attacking European ships and coastal towns. Raids were carried out as far north as England and Ireland. Muslim fortunes, however, were reversed in Spain, where, after centuries of glory, they suffered a steady loss of territories under the Christian Reconquista. Initially under Christian rule Muslims were the recipients of a policy of toleration. Gradually, however, the two communities became completely segregated, and a rising tide of anti-Semitism had consequences for both Muslims and Jews. By the turn of the 15th century Muslims in Spain had to choose between conversion, emigration, or death. Yet, another shift in relations soon set in. The rise of rationalism, a fascination on the part of the West with the cultural trappings of the East, and the necessities of international political and economic exchange soon drew the worlds of Islam and Christendom closer together. At the same time, under the influence of Western missionary agencies, a very negative perception of Islam continued to develop in Europe. For a long period Western scholarly research on Islam was dominated by the desire to convert Muslims to Christianity, resulting in analyses of Islam that were apologetic and highly polemical. Before leaving the historical context it is important to note some of the nonmilitary, cultural, and intellectual ways in which East and West encountered each other. Much has been made of the interchange between the Crusaders and the Arabs. In some cases each side found in the other chivalry and respect worthy of admiration and even emulation. For the most part, however, European thinking had little influence on Arab culture. Conversely, the West found great benefit from early Islamic thought in the fields of culture and science. Westerners learned from their encounters with Islamic civilizations in all major scholarly and scientific fields, including philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, and mathematics as well as the arts and music. It is well known that ancient Greek philosophy and science came to the West through the medium of Arab translation. Arab-Islamic medical science had a great influence on the development of the disciplines of medicine in Europe. Unfortunately, since the Middle Ages it has been politics that has dominated thinking on both sides, and a legacy of confrontation, distrust, and misunderstanding has prevailed until the present day. Anti-Islamic stereotypes in both Europe and America today reflect early vitriolic sentiments expressed by ignorant and uninformed Christians aghast at the rise of Islam and by their descendants who suffered defeat by Muslims in the Crusades and beyond. Christian-Muslim Relations in the Early 21st Century The Ottoman Empire, at its height during the 16th and 17th centuries under Suleiman the Magnificent, suffered gradual decline in succeeding centuries, culminating in its defeat as an ally of Imperial Germany during World War I. Having

already lost most of its European territories before the war, the empire suffered a breakup into what is now Turkey and the countries of the Middle East, whose boundaries were drawn by the victorious Western allies. It was also at this time that the seeds were sown for the establishment of the state of Israel in the heart of the Middle East, with statehood emerging in . These events of the first half of the 20th century were pivotal for determining the subsequent relations between Muslims and the West Christians and Jews, and now secularists. Meanwhile in other parts of the Muslim world, especially Africa and South Asia, colonialists wreaked havoc, supplanting Islamic educational systems with secular or Christianity-based systems. By more than 90 percent of sub-Saharan Africa was already under European control. Inhumane behavior has never been limited to either Christians or Muslims. Turkey during and after World War I carried out one of the worst genocides in history with the massacre of more than 1 million Armenians. Muslim-Christian relations in Europe today are inevitably affected by centuries-old fears of Islamic violence. These fears, of course, are exacerbated by the terrorist events that have occurred in various parts of the world since the turn of the 21st century. Concern over the rising tide of immigrants coming into Europe from various parts of the Muslim world also has served to raise European nervousness about the presence of Islam. Today some 70 percent of all refugees in the world are Muslim. On the psychological level fear and mistrust tap into a long history of mutual aggression. On the practical level, Europeans fear that they will lose jobs, a fair cut of social services, and the cultural integrity of their respective countries. For their part many Muslims are experiencing what they see as a new form of international colonialism. The West has long been known for supporting corrupt dictators so as to foster its own economic needs. Muslims, not surprisingly, question the sincerity of Western belief in justice and democracy. Selected areas of the world are highlighted in the following subsections as examples of the problems that bear on Christian-Muslim relations. Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa Many areas of Africa, of course, are suffering greatly today as a result of deteriorating conditions and relations between Muslim and Christian groups. One obvious example is Nigeria. Since conflicts between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria have become violent and often deadly. The full picture is complex and related directly to the British colonialist venture in Nigeria. Thus, relations between the two communities are based not only on religion, but also more specifically are a combination of economic, political, and religious factors. The British captured the Sokoto Caliphate in , after which it became known as the Northern Protectorate, which, in , became part of the independent Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Hausa-Fulani, the dominant leadership, were Muslim, and the ethnic minorities were primarily Christian. This racial-ethnic divide remains as the major identifier of groups today, even though issues of conflict may have nothing specifically to do with religion. Interfaith conflict in Nigeria in the contemporary period took a more serious turn when, in , some Muslims objected to Christian evangelization efforts and fighting broke out. These troubles have continued regularly, often with orgies of killing and looting, much of it unrelated to religion or ethnicity. For Muslims themselves, violence among members of the faith may be of greater consequence than struggles between groups representing Islam and Christianity. Today a major player in exacerbating Nigerian sectarian violence is the Muslim sect called Boko Haram, which is strongly opposed to Western values and forms of education and generally shares a Taliban ideology. In recent years, members of Boko Haram have raided schools, churches, and government offices in their fight to carve out an Islamic enclave in northeastern Nigeria. In April , Boko Haram abducted more than schoolgirls, who as of this writing have not been returned. Those familiar with the situation in northern Nigeria believe that Christian and Muslim organizations could greatly assist in ending conflicts said to be carried out in the name of religion. Many observers believe that the key lies with renewed efforts at interreligious dialogue.

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Chapter 3 : Religion and Religious Identity in Modern Japan | Owlcation

Christian Research Institute Our Mission: To provide Christians worldwide with carefully researched information and well-reasoned answers that encourage them in their faith and equip them to intelligently represent it to people influenced by ideas and teachings that assault or undermine orthodox, biblical Christianity.

Summary Christmas, of course, is to honor the birth of a humble itinerant rabbi from the ancient world. Emperors and governors have come and gone, but it is this man Jesus whose birth we still celebrate years later. We hope everyone can enjoy this account in the delightful spirit of Christmas. Even most non-Christians at least respect Jesus as a great moral teacher. In addition, few would argue that this one man has had more impact on the world than any person in history. Most of the following material is from these books: So extensive is the Christian contribution to our laws, our economics, our politics, our arts, our calendar, our holidays, and our moral and cultural priorities that historian J. The concept of universal human rights and equality comes exclusively from the biblical idea that all people are created in the image of God. In ancient cultures, a wife was the property of her husband. Aristotle said that a woman was somewhere between a free man and a slave. According to the book *Reasons for God* by Tim Keller page , "It was extremely common in the Greco-Roman world to throw out new female infants to die from exposure, because of the low status of women in society. The church forbade its members to do so. Greco-Roman society saw no value in an unmarried woman, and therefore it was illegal for a widow to go more than two years without remarrying. But Christianity was the first religion to not force widows to marry. Finally, Christians did not believe in cohabitation. If a Christian man wanted to live with a woman he had to marry her, and this gave women far greater security. Also, the pagan double standard of allowing married men to have extramarital sex and mistresses was forbidden. In all these ways Christian women enjoyed far greater security and equality than did women in the surrounding culture. Christian missionaries were a major influence in stopping these century-old practices and ideas. Also see *Misconceptions* item In the ancient world, for example in classical Rome or Greece, infanticide was not only legal, it was applauded. Through a higher view of life, it was the early Christian church that ultimately brought an end to infanticide. The modern pro-life movement is largely Christian. This pro-life view has been true from the very beginning of Christianity. A Christian document called the *Didache*, dated from the late first century or early second century, contained instructions against abortion. While it is true that Christians have owned slaves in history, it is clear that this was a distortion of biblical teaching. See *Misconceptions* , item Early Christianity elevated the roles of those oppressed in society, by for example, accepting women and slaves as full members. Slaves participated equally in worship and the community and were afforded contract and property rights. According to historian Glenn Sunshine in his book *Why You Think the Way You do*, "Christians were the first people in history to oppose slavery systematically. Early Christians purchased slaves in the markets simply to set them free. For example, historians credit the British evangelical William Wilberforce as the primary force behind the ending of the international slave trade which happened prior to the American Civil War. Two-thirds of the members of the American abolition society in were Christian ministers. A 5th century monk, Telemachus is credited as being the pivotal force ending the gladiator spectacles. Missionary followers of Jesus are credited with stopping cannibalism in many primitive societies. Top of page *Compassion and Mercy* Kennedy and Newcombe in their book detail the rise of charity in the name of Jesus over the centuries. This is in stark contrast to history before Jesus. Historians record that prior to Jesus, the ancient world left little trace of any organized charitable effort. For example, his *Parable of the Good Samaritan* Luke While there are good charitable efforts outside of the name of Jesus, Kennedy and Newcombe argue that Christian charities stand out. They point to Mother Theresa, the Salvation Army, religious hospitals, and church supported soup kitchens and thrift shops in every community. Jesus has had such an enormous impact on charity that one wonders how different things would be if he had never been born. If there is a huge famine or reports of genocide in Africa, most people in other

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cultures are unconcerned. Part of the reason why we do this is because of our Christian assumptions. The ancient Greeks and Romans did not believe this. They held a view quite commonly held in other cultures today: However paradoxical it seems, people who believed most strongly in the next world did the most to improve the situation of people living in this one. This unquestionably arose within the Christian tradition. Those premises were introduced by Christianity into a society to which they were completely foreign. But the phenomenon of education for the masses has its roots in the Protestant Reformation. In order to promote Bible literacy, Christians have been leaders in education. This trend was accelerated with the advent of the printing press at about the same time as the Protestant Reformation. In America, the first law to require education of the masses was passed by the Puritans. By comparison, it has been estimated that in America today, 40 million people are functionally illiterate. All but one of the first colleges in colonial America were Christian institutions. While these universities have lost their Christian identities, it is interesting to read the founding statements of these schools. Harvard, for example, was founded on this statement: Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternall life, John Here are just a few possible arguments in this regard: The Puritan framers of this document required that each aspect of it be grounded in Scripture. Other constitutions to follow contained many similarities to this one. At least 50 of the 55 signers of the U. Constitution were orthodox Christians. There is no doubt that the concept of our Constitutional checks and balances system is a direct result of the biblical doctrine of the sinfulness of mankind. All of our founders understood the importance of this doctrine to the social order. The idea that all men are created equal as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence is a biblical doctrine. The notion of the sovereign authority of God as mentioned in the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, all 50 state constitutions, our currency, etc. The existence of moral absolutes a biblical concept is an important idea in our Declaration of Independence--specifically, self-evident truths and unalienable rights from the Creator. Many other aspects of our laws come directly from the Bible--for example the judicial, legislative and executive branches trace to Isaiah Fair trials with witnesses have numerous Old and New Testament support. Regarding civil liberty, founding father John Adams and others emphasized 2 Corinthians 3: Kennedy and Newcombe argue that Jesus himself was the greatest civil libertarian of all time. Our modern idea of limited government takes the Christian notion of space that is off-limits to state control and extends it to the whole private sphere. The separation of the realms should not be a weapon against Christianity; rather, it is a device supplied by Christianity to promote social peace, religious freedom, and a moral community. If we recovered the concept in its true sense, our society would be better off. See the other article on our site entitled The Bible and Government. Top of page Science Kennedy and Newcombe also argue that science has its roots in Christianity. They point out that other world religions may express a worldview of fatalism everything is fatalistically determined or of illusion that the physical world is an illusion. Science could not have arisen from these worldviews. Christianity on the other hand, is based on the notion that there exists a rational God who is the source of rational truth. This, they argue, gave rise to the possibility of scientific laws. Evidence for this view is that nearly all the founders of modern science were Christians. Thou shalt not covet. Interestingly, there are over references to money in the Bible! But many historians credit theologian John Calvin from years earlier as the person who is most responsible for putting together the principles that were always in the Bible into a system adapted by the American founders. For example, the biblical doctrines of self-reliance and self-denial are the foundation of the famous "Protestant work ethic. A distinction can be made between biblical capitalism and evolutionary capitalism. The emphasis on biblical capitalism is on the importance of servanthood--a key teaching of Jesus. Evolutionary capitalism, on the other hand, relies solely on the survival of the fittest. Anyone who doubts the relationship of biblical ideas to free enterprise need only to note the stark contrast with communism. Communism is specifically an atheistic system that relies on the non-biblical notion that all men are good thus will work for the common good. But communism has been an abject economic failure. To some it is surprising that capitalism developed so easily in conjunction with a Christian

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ethic. Some critics accuse capitalism of being a selfish system, but the selfishness is not in capitalism—it is in human nature. While profit remains the final goal, entrepreneurs spend the better part of each day figuring out how better to serve the needs of their actual and potential customers. They are operationally, if not intentionally, altruistic. One may say that capitalism civilizes greed in much the same way that marriage civilizes lust. There may never have developed the cantata, the concerto, or the symphony. Handel, Vivaldi, and Bach were Christians who worked to honor God with their work.

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Chapter 4 : PURITAN HISTORY, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

In that year a new constitution was accepted "based on national and Christian foundations." With a new era, however, he does not mean a new political era, but rather a new "spiritual order", with the task of government being the embedding of "the political system in a new cultural era".

Christianity in the middle ages dominated the lives of both peasants and the nobility. Religious institutors including the Church and the monasteries became wealthy and influential given the fact that the state allocated a significant budget for religious activities. History Gregory I the Great played a significant role in establishing a strong and influential papacy and church machinery. His first step in asserting the control of the papacy is elaborated by the fact that he sent monks to convert the Anglo-Saxons whom he considered pagan. Gregory established an early system in which the Church yielded as much power as the State and sometimes more. Archbishops would supervise the bishops and the pope would supervise the archbishops. English missionaries in the 8th century influenced the French to adopt a system of papal governance. However, the rise of feudalism threatened and curbed the influence that the Christian church had amassed. This saw the Church fall under the influence of secular local rulers and kings, toward the end of the ninth century. Christianity as a religion emerged from Judaism. The Christianity that was spread across Europe during the middle ages was based on the scriptures that recounted the life of the Christ and his disciples. The rise of Christianity during the Roman Empire was seen as a threat against the Empire. This led to the persecution of Christians but this harassment ended when Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire took the throne. When the Roman Empire began to fall in the 5th century, Germanic barbarian tribes took over Rome. This triggered what is known in history as the Dark Ages, which saw the establishment of the Christian Catholic Church as the sole source of moral authority. The term Catholic comes from the English term catholik, the old French term catholique and the Latin term catholicus, all of which mean universal. Throughout most of the medieval era, any religion outside of Christianity was as considered heretical. The Christian Church had its own lands, laws and taxes. The Church was so influential that it too collected taxes from its followers. The Church also accepted different types of gifts from nobility and anyone who was looking for divine favor. As the role of the Church grew, bishops archbishops, and the pope bore great influence on the reigning kings in Europe. Those who spoke negatively of the church or opposed it were excommunicated so that they were not eligible for communion or to attend services in the church. This great split resulted from divided opinion about the crusades in which Christians fought against Muslims over the Holy Land. Pope Urban I of Italy played a critical role in prompting the crusades. Following aggression from Seljuk Turks, the pope asked Christians across Europe to wage a war against the aggressive Turks. In his speech at the Council of Clermont in November 27, he encouraged Christians to conduct a holy war against their foes. Then within the Western Catholicism branch there occurred another division between and France was opposed to this move and in turn elected and appointed their own pope in Avignon. The Council of Constance mended the divide within the Western branch, following mediation. This resulted to the Christian Catholicism adopting a new name, Roman Catholic religion. The division between the East and West are still largely present today but with a different set of doctrinal differences. Pilgrimage, Missionary and Education Christianity in the middle ages honored the concept of pilgrimage. The most popular destination for pilgrimage was the Holy Land but the dangers of travelling during the Middle Ages confined people to local pilgrimage sites. Missionary activity was rife in the early days of Christianity in the medieval era. Many who sought to dedicate their lives to the Church went to study, live and work in the monasteries. The monks were zealous about their faith and spread it with equal enthusiasm. Ulfilas was one of the earliest missionaries to spread the Christian Gospel. He spent more than 30 years ministering to the Visigoths tribes of the Middle Ages and helped to translate the Bible into Gothic. Ulfilas and the early Christian missionaries were disciples of Arius, thus most of the Germanic society except the Anglo- Saxon and the Franks adopted the Arian version of Christianity. This prompted the Franks to adopt

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Roman Catholicism, leading to the strong relationship between the papacy and Frankish rulers. In the Middle Ages the Church was not only influential in political matters but was also a source of knowledge. In England, Irish monasteries served as a reliable place for seeking education. The peasants often sent their children to the schools established by the Church. Even though the education was meager, it allowed the selected students to pursue studies in religion, philosophy and Latin at the monasteries or in universities. The modern universities of the West originated from the middle ages Christian church. Universities first started as cathedral schools where attending students were categorized as clerics. The cathedral learning centers gradually transformed into independent schools administered separately from the cathedral. The earliest universities to emerge from the medieval church were the University of Paris, the Oxford University and the University of Bologna. The concept of issuing degrees in universities was derived from the Muslim madrasahs established in 9th century.

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Chapter 5 : New Era Church in Portland, Or

In a society in which there are no absolutes, every individual is a free agent, we are taught to be self-reliant and independent, and Christianity is no longer the automatic, default faith of young adults, new ways of relating to Americans and exposing the heart and soul of the Christian faith are required.

It is the era in which the great cathedrals of Europe were built and the Catholic Church started its universities in Paris, Tubingen, Cambridge and Oxford. The laws of the land and leading roles in the government were all in the hands of the leading church leaders like bishops and archbishops. It was an era when the vested powers in the hands of the Pope were so great that he could even excommunicate a king for a misdeed. From birth to death, the life of the medieval people was dominated entirely by the church and many religious institutions gained power and wealth. Large Cathedrals were built when the traditional Roman style churches became insufficient for accommodating the increased population by the twelfth Century. Lausanne Cathedral and Regensburg Cathedral are among the most famous one built during this age, they are known for their architecture. Christianity The monks and nuns in the Christian monasteries had to live by the rules set by St Benedict and were known as Benedictines. They were forbidden the right to their own property, to leave the monastery or get involved in worldly concerns and desires. They had to perform manual labour and follow the stringent regulations of the Church. Monks and nuns of this era were generally well educated; they devoted their entire lives to learning and writing. Various scriptures on history and science in the era were written by monks. The monasteries also served as a place for the preservation of the knowledge and learning of classical world. Monks were encouraged to copy valuable manuscripts in various languages making monasteries a haven for learning. Pilgrimages were also an important religious activity of the medieval people. Visit to holy shrines such as the Church of St. James at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the Canterbury cathedral in England, and sites in Jerusalem and Rome was considered to redeem people from their sins and open the gates of heaven. The Early Middle Ages also saw an extensive increase in missionary activities. The missionaries spread Christianity to various parts of the world and helped in the fusion of various cultures along with it. Christian Campaigns against other Religions Since Christianity was the dominant religion during the Middle Ages, attempts to purify the church and society led to many Christian campaigns against other religions. These campaigns were led by bishops, scholars and warriors who made efforts to make the Christian world free of all the non-Christians. This included Jews, Muslims and Pagans and Gypsies. Jews in fact suffered the most as they were considered to be the greatest threat to Christianity. Anti-Semitic hatred was increased among the common masses by quoting biblical texts which put the blame of the crucifixion of Christ on the Jews. They were banished from various European countries. They were in fact skilful tradesmen and goldsmiths in the whole of Europe, because all those works that were dealing with money were considered not pure by the Catholics. Judaism in the Middle Ages was thus practiced in private to avoid persecution. Islam was in its golden period during the Middle Ages. The philosophers, scientists and engineers of the Islamic World contributed greatly to knowledge, arts, civilization and architecture. The spread of this religion was perceived as a threat to Christianity. The Muslims were increasing their territory in fighting wars with Christian and Hindu rulers. Thousands of innocent lives were taken in the name of religion. Disagreements within Christianity itself were reason enough. The Church would call a bad Christian a heretic and his belief as heresy. A heretic would generally be burnt at the stake. An entire jurisdiction was exercised by the church which protected the widows, orphans and helpless and also dealt with offenses. The church could exercise its jurisdiction in collaboration with the secular courts. The church also penalized a number of religious offenses like heresy, sorcery, apostasy and sexual sins. Matrimonial cases too were considered like matters relating to the legitimacy of children, recording of marriages, wills and personal property. Orders Various religious orders were followed by the Catholic Church of which the Benedictines and Cistercians were most popular. The Benedictines or followers of St. Benedict wore black robes and lived in monasteries built in towns or in

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the countryside. On the other hand, the Cistercians wore white robes and remained in remote areas to avoid distraction in their prayers. A new order was found towards the later Middle Ages by the name of Friars for spreading Christianity. The friars also took religious vows and lived in religious communities. But unlike monks, they could leave their priories every day for spreading their religion to the masses. It was the stabilizing force in everyday life which kept the community framework together. The laws and rules of the land, public policies and governance of the people were all affected by religion during the Middle Ages. Any attempt at threatening Christianity by other religions was met with force and all measures were taken to spread the religion in other parts of the world. The society was superstitious and ignorant and believed in what the religious institutions taught them. Islam was also shaping up in this era with a wide spread in the religion during this period. Many territories were fought and won in the name of religion. Judaism, which had many setbacks towards the end of the middle ages, also survived the ordeal. Many other small religions also came up in various parts of the world shaping societies. The arts, architecture and teachings of this era bear testimony to this fact.

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Chapter 6 : Religion in the Middle Ages | Middle Ages

A philosophical descendant of Max Weber, Fifield married Christian thought with a new era of economic development, and spread the gospel through his organization, Spiritual Mobilization.

Stearns, Peter The decline of the classical empires contributed several ingredients to the spread of what turned out to be the great world religions. Previously, most religion had been regional. Buddhism, spreading through India at various points in the classical period, could embrace a whole subcontinent. As Hinduism evolved from the Brahman religion, it did the same and also spread to a few other areas of Indian commercial influence in Southeast Asia. Christianity showed an ability to win a growing minority in the Roman Empire and at a few points beyond its borders, in the Middle East and North Africa. The waning of the great empires so confused and reshuffled geographical boundaries, from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, that the regional confines of religion were modified more dramatically. The same political decline encouraged people to turn to more spiritual institutions and rewards. Even religions still essentially regional, such as Daoism in China and Hinduism in India, worked to win new levels of active popular adherence. Just as the 5th century B. Christianity moved westward from its original center in the Middle East, just as in Asia, Buddhism was spreading east from India. Though initially less significant than Buddhism in terms of numbers of converts, Christianity would ultimately prove to be one of the two largest world faiths. It would play a direct role in the formation of two postclassical civilizations, those of eastern and western Europe. Christianity resembled Buddhism in important ways. Not surprisingly, Christianity, like Buddhism, produced an important monastic movement, in which especially holy individuals grouped to live a spiritual life and serve their religion through their sanctity. Christianity resembled the version of Buddhism that spread to China and later Korea and Japan by stressing the possibility of an afterlife and the role that holy leaders could play in helping to attain it. The Chinese version of Buddhism, called Mahayana or the Greater Vehicle, placed considerable emphasis on Buddha as god or savior. Statues of the Buddha as god violated earlier Buddhist hostility to religious images, but they served to emphasize the religion as a channel of salvation. Well-organized temples, with priests and rituals, also helped bring religious solace to ordinary people in East Asia. The idea developed also that Buddhist holy men, or bodhisattvas, built up spiritual merits such that their prayers, even after death, could aid people and allow them to achieve some reflected holiness. Christianity in many respects moved in similar directions. It too came to emphasize salvation, with well-organized rituals designed to promote its achievement. Religious images, though contrary to Jewish beliefs against idol-worship, helped focus popular belief in most versions of Christianity. Holy men, sometimes granted the title saint after their death, were revered not only as models but also because their spiritual attainments could lend merit to the strivings of more ordinary folk. The broad similarities between Christianity and the evolving Buddhism of East Asia remind us of the common processes apparently at work as new religions spread amid the ruins of great empires. Yet Christianity had a flavor of its own. More than any of the forms of Buddhism, it came to place great emphasis on church organization and structure, copying the example of the Roman Empire. More perhaps than any other major religion, certainly more than contemplative and tolerant Buddhism, Christianity stressed its possession of exclusive truth and its intolerance of competing beliefs. The common dynamic and chronology shared by Christianity and spreading Buddhism suggest a similar process at work, as ordinary people sought a well-organized spiritual outlet different from traditional animism, more focused on otherworldly salvation. Christianity must also be understood, however, in the particular context of earlier Mediterranean religious traditions and the declining Roman Empire. Its emphasis on doctrines and exclusive loyalty differentiated it from the more tranquil religions of eastern and southern Asia, India as well as China, where a larger variety of beliefs and practices could be combined with Buddhism or Hinduism. Christianity began, as part of a Jewish reform movement. During the two centuries before the birth of Christ many insurgent Jews had preached the coming of a Messiah, or savior, who would bring a Last Judgment on

humankind. Many reformed Jews also stressed the possibility of a life after death for the virtuous, which was a new element in Judaism. Jesus of Nazareth, believed by Christians to be the son of God sent to earth to live a sinless life so that the sacrifice of his body on the cross would redeem human sin, crystallized this radical reform movement. Combining extraordinary gentleness of spirit and great charisma, Jesus preached widely in Israel and gathered a group of loyal disciples around him. Initially, there seems to have been no intent to found a new religion. Only gradually when the Second Coming did not transpire, did the disciples begin to fan out and, through preaching, pick up growing numbers of supporters in various parts of the Roman Empire. The message of Jesus and his disciples seemed clear: There was a single God, who loved humankind despite earthly sin. A virtuous life should be dedicated to the worship of God and fellowship among other believers; worldly concerns were secondary, and a life of poverty might be most conducive to holiness. This message spread at an opportune time. The official religion of the Greeks and Romans had long seemed rather sterile, particularly to many of the poor. The Christian emphasis on the beauty of poverty and the spiritual equality of all people, plus the fervor of the early Christians and the satisfying rituals they provided, gained growing attention. The wide reach of the Roman Empire made it relatively easy for Christian missionaries to travel extensively in Europe and the Middle East and spread the new word. Then, when conditions began to deteriorate in the empire, the solace of this otherworldly religion won even wider response. The adjustments affected by early Christian leaders maximized their conversions. Under the guidance of Paul, Christians began to see themselves as part of a new religion rather than a Jewish reform movement, and they welcomed non-Jewish converts. Paul also encouraged more formal organization in the new church, with local groups selecting elders to govern them; soon, a single leader, or bishop, was appointed for each major city. This structure paralleled the provincial government of the empire. Finally, Christian doctrine became increasingly organized, as the writings of several disciples and others were collected into what became the New Testament of the Christian Bible. During the first three centuries after Christ, the new religion competed among a number of Eastern mystery religions. It also faced, as we have seen, periodic persecution from the normally tolerant imperial government. But it became much easier to spread Christianity with official favor. Christian writers began to claim that both church and empire were works of God. At the same time continued deterioration of the empire added to the motives to join this amazingly successful new church. In the eastern Mediterranean, where imperial rule remained strong, state control of the church became a way of life. But in the west, where conditions were far more chaotic, bishops had a freer hand. A centralized church organization under the leadership of the bishop of Rome, called "Pope" from the word *papa*, or father, gave the Western church unusual strength and independence. By the time Rome collapsed, Christianity thus had demonstrated immense spiritual power and possessed a solid organization, though one that differed from east to west. The new church faced a number of controversies over doctrine but managed to promote certain standard beliefs as against several heresies. A key tenet involved a complex doctrine of the Trinity, which held that the one God had three persons, the Father, the Son Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Ruling against Arianism, the resultant Nicene Creed insisted on the shared Godhead of all three parts of the Trinity. An important if complex decision in itself, the council also showed how important unified doctrine was to Christianity, in contrast to the greater toleration of diversity in Hinduism and Buddhism. Experience in fighting heresies promoted Christian interest in defending a single belief and strengthened its intolerance for any competing doctrine or faith. Early Christianity also produced an important formal theology, through formative writers such as Augustine. This theology incorporated many elements of classical philosophy with Christian belief, and helped the church gain respectability among intellectuals. Theologians like Augustine grappled with such problems as freedom of the will: If God is all-powerful, can mere human beings have free will? And if not, how can human beings be justly punished for sin? By working out these issues in elaborate doctrine, the early theologians, or church fathers, provided an important role for formal, rational thought in a religion that continued to emphasize the primary importance of faith. Like all successful religions, Christianity combined a number of appeals. It offered blind devotion to an all-powerful God. One church father, denying the validity of human thought,

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simply stated, "I believe because it is absurd. Mystical holy men and women flourished under Christian banners, particularly in the Middle East. The Benedictine Rule, which soon spread to many other monasteries and convents, urged a disciplined life with prayer and spiritual excitement alternating with hard work in agriculture and in study. Monastic movements also developed in the eastern empires, in Greece and Turkey, and also in Egypt. Eastern monasticism was organized by St. Basil in the 4th century. Thus Christianity attempted to encourage but also discipline intense piety, and to avoid a complete gulf between the lives of saintly men and women and the spiritual concerns of ordinary people. But the new religion never became the creature of the upper classes alone, as its popular message of ritual and salvation continued to draw the poor. Rather like Hinduism in India, Christianity provided some religious unity among different social groups. There was even a special interest for women. Christianity promoted a new culture among those won to its banners. The rituals, the otherworldly emphasis, the interest in spiritual equality - these were far different from the central themes of classical Mediterranean civilization. Christianity modified classical beliefs in the central importance of the state and political loyalties. Though Christians accepted the state, they did not put it first. Christianity also worked against other classical institutions, such as slavery, in the name of brotherhood though later Christians would accept slavery in other contexts. Christianity may have fostered a greater respectability for disciplined work than had been current in the aristocratic ethic of Mediterranean civilization, particularly through the values promoted by Western monasticism. Certainly, Christianity sought some changes in classical culture, including greater emphasis on sexual restraint, beyond its central religious message. But Christianity preserved important classical values in addition to the interest in solid organization and some of the themes of classical philosophy. Church buildings in western Europe retained Roman architectural styles, though often with greater simplicity if only because of the poverty of the later empire and subsequent Germanic states. Latin remained the language of the church in the West, Greek the language of most Christians in the eastern Mediterranean. Monasticism played an immensely valuable role in preserving classical as well as Christian learning through the patient librarianship of the monks. When the Roman Empire fell, Christian history was still in its infancy. The Western church would soon spread its missionary zeal to northern Europe, and the Eastern church would reach into the Slavic lands of the Balkans and Russia. But Christianity was already established as a significant world religion - one of the few ever generated. A world religion is defined by unusual durability and drawing power and by a complexity that can win adherence from many different kinds of people. Major world religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, show some ability to cut across different cultures, to win converts in a wide geographic area and amid considerable diversity. One final world religion remained to enter the lists.

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Chapter 7 : Christian Traditions | Pew Research Center

Within modern society, the Catholic Church occupies a unique role as mediator in the ongoing, often-conflicted transitions and dialogue between the world of Islam and the secular West due to the many interests and ideas that it shares with both sides.

See Defining Christian Traditions. Catholic The Catholic Church has 1. Most of the countries with the largest Catholic populations have Catholic majorities. There are 67 countries in which Catholics make up a majority of the population. The Protestant Reformation, which split Western Christianity and gave birth to Protestantism, took place in Europe in the 16th century. Today, however, only two of the 10 countries with the largest Protestant populations are European. Protestants form a majority of the total population in 49 countries. Ethiopia has the second-largest number of Orthodox Christians and more than three times as many Orthodox as Greece. Although Turkey is the seat of the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, one of the highest archbishops in Orthodox Christianity see Defining Christian Traditions for details , its Orthodox population is relatively small about , See spotlights on Ethiopia and Egypt. Orthodox Christians make up a majority of the total population in 14 countries. The Orthodox Christian population is heavily concentrated in Europe, which, for the purposes of this report, includes all of Russia. Other Christian Traditions There are about 28 million Christians in the world who do not belong to the three largest Christian traditions. Defining Christian Traditions Catholic The Catholic Church includes the international body of churches in full communion with the bishop of Rome, the pope. These churches include the Western or Latin church and 22 Eastern Catholic churches. The Western Latin church is the largest of these autonomous churches. Peter, possesses a unique authority in the church. Protestant Protestants are broadly defined in this report to include three groups. This category refers to Christians who belong to churches with historical connections to the Church of England or have similar beliefs, worship styles and church structures. Independent Christians have developed ecclesial structures, beliefs and practices that are claimed to be independent of historic, organized Christianity. Orthodox Christian Orthodox Christians are members of self-governing churches that belong to the Eastern Christian tradition. This formalized a cleavage that had been growing for centuries. The Eastern insistence on ecclesial autonomy persists: Orthodox Christianity has two main branches: Eastern Orthodox churches and Oriental Orthodox churches. The Oriental Orthodox churches are therefore also called non-Chalcedonian churches. For example, the canon of the Mormon church includes four texts: Her book, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, is one of its central texts, along with the Bible. Barrett, editor, World Christian Encyclopedia: Johnson and Kenneth R. Many councils were convened to address specific theological disputes. For example, the First Council of Nicaea was convened in to resolve disagreements concerning the relationship between Christ and God the Father; the First Council of Constantinople was convened in to ratify the work of the Council of Nicaea and definitively end ongoing controversy concerning the relationship between Christ and the Father; and the First Council of Ephesus was convened in to resolve emerging disagreement concerning the nature of Christ and the relationship between his humanity and divinity. The Council of Chalcedon was convened in to resolve disagreements concerning the nature of Christ.

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Chapter 8 : The Impact of Christianity - Faith Facts

In this historical period when socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, promoting the Sinicization of Christianity, consistently strengthening its political awareness in recognition of contemporary China, consciously integrating into its culture and adapting to society, establishing a blood line linked with the Chinese.

In few places in the world do so many values and traditions of the past coexist alongside the ideas and practices of the present. The persisting contradiction between old and new, tradition and modernity, is a defining characteristic of present-day Japan. This chasm between old-world tradition and new-world lifestyle is not without repercussions, effectively creating a schism in the modern Japanese psyche. Japanese beliefs and lifestyles grow increasingly more difficult to mesh, resulting in internal confusion and isolation. It is a nation proud of both its long, continuous history and its bountiful culture, replete with deeply embedded customs and traditions. Buddhism and Shinto are chiefly practiced within the country. However, these beliefs, which value nature and ancestry and spurn materialism, exist in stark contrast with the modern, consumer-driven society that has grown so rapidly since the 1950s. Today, Japan is the leading industrial state of East Asia and rivals the most advanced economic powers of the West. Only the United States out-produces it. The Japanese people enjoy an unprecedented supply of goods and their many cities including the sprawling metropolis of Tokyo, home on its own to over nineteen million people are as modern as any urban areas in the world. Especially in recent years, as the focus within the workplace shifts from the group to the individual, Japanese citizens are faced with an ever more difficult struggle to correlate their religious beliefs with the world around them. Collectively, they will be forced to decide if they will adapt their religion to suit their society, adapt their society to suit their religion, or suffer quietly with their own cognitive dissonance. The topic of ideological conflicts between Japanese religious belief and its modern lifestyle is one that has rarely been examined in detail. While numerous documentations are available of incidents and protests related to the desire to return to a more traditional lifestyle, these typically exclude any discussion of a broader cultural perspective. When the subject has been touched upon, it is generally paired with a belief in the inevitability of change. He contends that tradition including religion must inevitably change. Traditional Japan Kinkakuji Temple, Kyoto, Japan Source Religion in Japan In Japan today, religion is freely practiced and, at least in small numbers, a multitude of religions are present. Although in the West religious faiths are viewed as mutually exclusive, in Japan it is common for a person to adopt beliefs from more than one theology. The majority of the population therefore is both Buddhist and Shinto. Both of these faiths center upon nonmaterial, group values. Buddhism stresses oneness; people are not isolated, but are instead part of a network of souls. Buddhists traditionally eschew material possessions and strive to reach nirvana, becoming one with the universal spirit and thus throwing off the yoke of their individual identities. Similarly, Shinto beliefs hold that all things possess spirits; Shinto stresses the importance of nature and ancestral bonds. A nationalistic religion, it too values the group over the individual. In this way, the Japanese have acquired many of their defining culture traits, including one of their major religions. Buddhism arrived in Japan in the sixth century. Although it originated in India, Buddhism came to Japan via China and Korea, so much of the religion retained a distinctive Chinese flair as evidenced still today in the architecture, decoration, and the style of the representations of Buddha and the bodhisattvas found of in many Pure Land temples throughout Japan. The Japanese embraced Buddhism and, by the eighth century, had absorbed the religion so readily into their own culture that it took on a national character and its far-flung roots were all but forgotten. Founded by Siddhartha Gotama around 563 B.C. It is greed and self-centeredness that bring suffering, because desire can never be satisfied. This can open the door to lasting peace. The fourth noble truth, Magga, is the noble truth of the path. By following them, one can bring an end to his or her own karma and be released from the cycle of rebirth. A set of laws, known as the Five Precepts, also govern Buddhist thought. Within Buddhism, there are many different branches; the most common in Japan are Mahayana and Zen Buddhism. In contrast, Zen

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stresses that only direct experience can lead to enlightenment. Practitioners meditate to increase awareness and purify their minds. Zen finds expression in many forms throughout Japan, including martial arts, gardening, poetry most notably, the haiku and the minimalist aesthetic characteristic in Japanese art. Shinto is the native religion of Japan; early Shinto mythology indicated that the Japanese were descended from divine beings; this civil religion helped fuel nationalistic fervor during World War II. Today, many Japanese may not necessarily practice Shinto as a religion, but still, often almost unconsciously, incorporate its customs and traditions into their daily lives. Often defined as an animistic, in Shinto, all things, both animate and inanimate, have their own kami spirits or gods. Traditionally, the line between the living and the dead kami is permeable. Kami are worshipped at shrines, represented by a distinctive gate, or torii. Today, there are over , Shinto shrines scattered throughout Japan. Central to Shinto is the belief that community life and religion are one; the greatest personal destiny is one that is merged with the greater destiny of the nation. The ie was the key unit of Japanese society. More than just a family, it was defined primarily by participation in the ie economy, and unrelated persons could be adopted into it. Furthermore, an ie continued through succeeding generations, including not only living members, but also dead ancestors and unborn descendants. A village was a group of ie. Even commercial enterprises were organized as ie. In the ie, one learned to embrace group identity and suppress the self. At the very heart of Buddhism is the belief that human misery comes from the desire for things. In order to achieve inner peace and, eventually, enlightenment, one must deny the pleasures of the senses. In modern Japanese society, these pleasures are abundant and, despite the current economic downturn, still easily affordable. In any major Japanese city, one can find a plethora of restaurants, coffee shops, video and pachinko gambling arcades, karaoke parlors, towering department stores, hostess bars for female companionship , nightclubs, massage houses and public baths. Although Buddhism discourages the consumption of alcohol, the Japanese certainly do imbibe. Beer can typically be purchased from vending machines along many urban streets! Today urban dwellers the majority in Japan typically partake in modern conveniences and diversions without much thought, frequently while still espousing religious beliefs their actions flagrantly contradict. There has been a backlash, especially among rural citizens fearful of losing their traditional ways of life. In fact, the corruption wrought by modernization is a common theme in popular Japanese anime films such as Akira, Princess Mononoke, and Spirited Away. The roots of this ideological conflict lie in a long-standing distrust of modernization. In the early s, Japan adopted a policy of commercial isolation in order to retain its national autonomy. To assure its freedom from all foreign influence, it curtailed all foreign trade in favor of domestic development, remaining isolated from the rest of the world for a period of over two hundred years. However, when Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan in , intent upon forcing the Japanese into both trading with the U. This marked the beginning of a new era in Japanese history. Exposed to this new technology, the Japanese, great cultural borrowers, quickly modernized their country, becoming both an industrial and imperial power in their own right by Following a decade of controversy over the management of foreign relations, in , the Meiji restoration began, abolishing the samurai class and adopting a national policy of expansionistic militarism and swift modernization. The Meiji period launched Japan on the road to modernization, developing a sound technological base for modern industry. By the s, Japan was erecting factories, assembling steamships, conscripting an army, and preparing a parliament. However, though the Japanese excelled at their new task of modernization, they entered this period of rapid transformation under duress. As unwilling trade partners with the West, industrialization was rather unceremoniously thrust upon them. To protect their country from Western powers, the Japanese had quickly realized that modernizing was their only viable option. Although forced to embrace industrialization out of necessity, the Japanese still harbored distrust for the West and for the modernization that accompanied it. The Meiji restoration was a time of great upheaval and change; during much of the Meiji restoration, Buddhism was suppressed and the nationalist overtones of Shinto were emphasized to promote production. Although the Japanese embraced the modern, they did so without any real conception of what it meant to be part of a modern nation. However, privately, they began to note an inconsistency between the Meiji ideal and the reality

of their new, modern life. As citizens publicly strove to better the new Japan for their emperor and their nation, privately they began to strive for themselves. As it grew less clear what it meant to be Japanese, the individual began to emerge from the group in society. Critics, such as the novelist Soseki Natsume, began to condemn the selfishness developing in modern society. After the war, newly humbled by an inconceivable and devastating defeat, the Japanese began to reexamine themselves. Much of Japan was in rubble, having suffered numerous bombings including, of course, the two atomic bomb strikes ; it had been stripped of its colonies, was forced to renounce the divinity of its emperor, and was under the occupation of a foreign power the United States that would subsequently write a constitution for it and establish its new government. Clearly, the Japanese people had much to reevaluate. To achieve *shutai-sei*, one had to discard all old conventions, such as traditional societal duties and the suppression of the individual for the sake of displaying consensus. *Shutai-sei* therefore was essentially the establishment of an autonomous identity. Prior to the late s, this conception of individuality was socially unheard of. The Japanese, despite any private qualms, had remained resolutely steadfast in their lack of a public self; the thoughts and values they expressed had always been the thoughts and values of their community. For a brief time, this new conception of *shutai-sei* entered mainstream Japanese consciousness in the late s, advocating the cultivation of an autonomous self. These modernists advocated two new forms of autonomy: They advanced these forms of autonomy in opposition to the old notion of community. The Modernists argued that belonging to the group offered no identity or free will; the Japanese citizen that abandoned group tradition in favor of individuality was the new, democratic type needed to sustain a democratic nation. The debate over *shutai-sei* was short-lived, collapsing by the end of the decade and the Japanese, for the most part, returned to their old notions of community. Mishima, whose works embodied many Buddhist ideals and often bordered upon nihilism, was very outspoken in his criticism of modern society, advocating a return to the traditions of the past. When he failed to rally support for his cause, he decided to proclaim his dissent by committing public suicide by ceremonial *seppuku* a self-willed ritualistic act of annihilation born of samurai tradition. Although temporarily set back by wartime destruction and the consequences of military defeat, Japan soon recovered, emerging again as a world power, though this time an economic rather than a military one. Its strength now derived from its productivity, in the past few decades Japan has focused upon becoming superior in its technological advancement. Rural Japanese have found this encroaching modernity especially threatening to their ways of life. The students saw the airport in geopolitical terms this coincided with the Vietnam War , while the farmers refused to leave the land that had nurtured generations of their ancestors. Their vehement complaints were fueled by long-held beliefs anchored in the Shinto tradition and were directed toward modernization itself, as a force that remains a constant threat to long-held Japanese culture and traditions, stripping Japan of its national character. These rural protestors were not easily assuaged, and today, when visiting Narita Airport, at Terminal 2, one can still see a field of mulberry trees in the middle of the tarmac, the land of one farmer who still refuses to give up his land.

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Chapter 9 : List of new religious movements - Wikipedia

There is a growing ideological conflict between Japan's religious beliefs and its modern, materialist society. In few places in the world do so many values and traditions of the past coexist alongside the ideas and practices of the present. The persisting contradiction between old and new.

Problems the Christian Church is Facing Today 1. The Christian Church is becoming theologically illiterate. What used to be basic, universally-known truths about Christianity are now unknown mysteries to a large and growing share of Americans, especially young adults. For instance, Barna Group studies in showed that while most people regard Easter as a religious holiday, only a minority of adults associate Easter with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As younger generations ascend to numerical and positional supremacy in churches across the nation, the data suggests that biblical literacy is likely to decline significantly. The theological free-for-all that is encroaching in Protestant churches nationwide suggests the coming decade will be a time of unparalleled theological diversity and inconsistency. Christians are becoming more ingrown and less outreach-oriented. Despite technological advances that make communications instant and far-reaching, Christians are becoming more spiritually isolated from non-Christians than was true a decade ago. Examples of this tendency include the fact that less than one-third of born again Christians planned to invite anyone to join them at a church event during the Easter season; teenagers are less inclined to discuss Christianity with their friends than was true in the past; most of the people who become Christians these days do so in response to a personal crisis or the fear of death particularly among older Americans. With atheists becoming more strategic in championing their godless worldview, as well as the increased religious plurality driven by education and immigration, the increasing reticence of Christians to engage in faith-oriented conversations assumes heightened significance. Why would a Christian be reticent about living and sharing his faith in Jesus Christ? And could that be because the doctrine presented to most Christians is illogical, self-contradictory, confusing, bland, or unmotivating? And that takes us to the next point. Growing numbers of people are less interested in spiritual principles and more desirous of learning pragmatic solutions for life. When asked what matters most, teenagers prioritize education, career development, friendships, and travel. Faith is significant to them, but it takes a back seat to life accomplishments and is not necessarily perceived to affect their ability to achieve their dreams. Among adults the areas of growing importance are lifestyle comfort, success, and personal achievements. Those dimensions have risen at the expense of investment in both faith and family. The turbo-charged pace of society leaves people with little time for reflection. Spiritual practices like contemplation, solitude, silence, and simplicity are rare. Practical to a fault, Americans consider survival in the present to be much more significant than eternal security and spiritual possibilities. Because we continue to separate our spirituality from other dimensions of life through compartmentalization, a relatively superficial approach to faith has become a central means of optimizing our life experience. This attitude shows that too many Christians are not being taught the truth of the Word, which is all about how to live, that is, how to be and what to do in any situation. People cannot be living truth unless they first hear truth. Among Christians, interest in participating in community action is escalating. Largely driven by the passion and energy of young adults, Christians are more open to and more involved in community service activities than has been true in the recent past. The more that churches and believers can be recognized as people doing good deeds out of genuine love and compassion, then the more appealing the Christian life will be to those who are on the sidelines watching. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is winning over the Christian Church. This increased leniency is made possible by the very limited accountability that occurs within the Body of Christ. There are fewer and fewer issues that Christians believe churches should be dogmatic about. The idea of love has been redefined to mean the absence of conflict and confrontation, as if there are no moral absolutes that are worth fighting for. That may not be surprising in a Church in which a minority believes there are moral absolutes dictated by the Scriptures. The challenge for every Christian in the U. How can we present

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life-changing truth to people if we tiptoe around the basic truths of Scripture? Of course we want to present them as palatably as we can, but at some point whether or not a person chooses to ingest and digest the truth is about his own level of hunger. The influence of Christianity on culture and individual lives is largely invisible. Christianity has arguably added more value to American culture than any other religion, philosophy, ideology or community. Yet, contemporary Americans are hard pressed to identify any specific value added. In a period of history where image is reality, and life-changing decisions are made on the basis of such images, the Christian Church is in desperate need of a more positive and accessible image. The primary obstacle is not the substance of the principles on which Christianity is based. The most influential aspect of Christianity in America is how believers do -or do not- implement their faith in public and private. In a society in which there are no absolutes, every individual is a free agent, we are taught to be self-reliant and independent, and Christianity is no longer the automatic, default faith of young adults, new ways of relating to Americans and exposing the heart and soul of the Christian faith are required. Culture is shaped by people, and people are influenced by other people, either for good or for bad.