Religious Terms (revised 2/14)

Adi Granth (Sikhism): The Original collection of the primary scripture of the Sikhs
Advent (Christian): Four week celebration for Christmas, period before Christ; approach
Agnosticism: Not know; the existence of God cannot be proven
Ahimsa (Hindu): Nonviolence
Ajiva (Jainism, Sikhism): Matter without soul or life
Alpha (A) and Omega (Ω) (Christianity): First and last letters of Greek alphabet to symbolize God as the beginning and end
Amaterasu (Shinto): Shining in heaven; goddess of the sun
Amitabha Buddha (Buddhism): Buddha of the Western Paradise, a bliss-body Buddha in Mahayana
Analects (Confucianism): Book of the sayings of Confucius
Anatta (Buddhism): Doctrine that there is no soul or permanent essence in people and things
Anichcha (Buddhism): Constant change
Animism: Spirit, soul, life force; all elements of nature filled with spirit or spirits
Anointing of the sick (Christian): Sacrament when a priest anoints a sick person with oil (health) and offers prayers
Apocalypticism (Christianity): The belief that the world will soon come to an end; often in a great battle, final judgment, and a reward for the good
Apostle (Christianity): One of Jesus’ twelve disciples or any early preacher of Christianity
Arhat (Buddhism): A person who has practiced monastic disciplines and reached nirvana, the ideal
Ascension (Christianity): Celebration for forty days after Easter commemorating Jesus’ ascension into heaven
Ashes on forehead (Christianity): At the beginning of Lent (preparation for Easter), stresses the inevitability of death and sorrow for wrongdoing
Ashkenazim (Judaism): Jews from central Europe
Ashram (Hindu): Spiritual community
Ash Wednesday (Christian): Beginning of Lent. Also see ashes on forehead
Atheism: Not God; there is no God or gods
Avatar (Hindu): An earthly embodiment of a deity
Baptism (Christianity): Christian rite of initiation, by immersion or sprinkling with water; cleansing with water
Bar Mitzvah (Judaism): Son (age 13) and sometimes daughters (age 12-18) of the commandment; the coming-of-age ceremony when a young person is considered a legal adult within the Jewish community
Bhagavad Gita (Hindu): Religious literary work about Krishna
Bhakti (Hindu): Devotion to a deity or guru
Bhakti Yoga (Hindu): The spiritual discipline of devotion to a deity or guru
Bible (Christianity): Scriptures containing the books of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament
Biblical Judaism (Judaism): Before the destruction of the Second Temple (70 A.D.)
Bishop (Christianity): Overseer; a priest and church leader in charge of a large geographical area (diocese)
Blessed Water or Holy Water (Christianity): Reminds one of baptism, used to bless objects and people
Bodhi (Buddhism): Enlightenment
Bodhisattva (Buddhism): Person of deep compassion; one who does not enter nirvana but is constantly reborn to help others; a heavenly being of compassion
Bodi Day (Mahayana Buddhist): Festivals of Buddha enlightenment, eight day of 12th month
Brahma (Hindu): God of creation
Brahman (Hindu): Spiritual essence of the universe
Brahmin (Hindu): Member of one of the four major social classes; the priestly caste
Bushido (Shinto): Warrior knight way; military devotion to a ruler demanding loyalty duty and self-sacrifice
Caliph (Islam): Successor; which is a religious and political leader
Calumet: A long-stemmed sacred pipe smoked as a token of peace
Canaan (Judaism): An ancient name for Israel
Candles, Lighted (Christianity): New Understanding
Canon (Christianity): Measure, rule; a list of authoritative books or documents
Circumcised (Judaism): Eight days after birth, the foreskin of the penis is cut off
Chants: Stories and words of a tradition used in sacred ceremonies
Cherye (Confucianism): Ceremony on the first Sunday in May
Chinese Buddhist festivals: Lunar calendar. New Year in February
Christianity Dominations
   Branches of Christianity
      Eastern Orthodox
         Greek
         Russian
         Serbian
         Romanian
         Other
      Western Christianity
         Roman Catholic
            Society of Jesuits or Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola
         Protestant or Sectarianism
            Lutheran, Martin Luther
            Calvinist, John Calvin, Holland, Scotland, United States
            Presbyterian
Puritans, New England
Huguenots, France & North America
Anglican (Church of England), King Henry VIII
Methodist, Charles and John Wesley
Sectarian
Quaker or Society of Friends, George Fox, Pacifists, Pennsylvania
Shakers, Ann Lee, complete celibacy
Baptist
Anabaptists
Mennonite
Amish
Pentecostal, emotion
Nontraditional
Early
Coptic
Nestorian
Recent
Mormons, Church of, Salt Lake City, Utah, Brigham Young
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith
Christian Science, Mary Baker, avoid doctors
Unity Church or Unity Church of Christianity
Jehovah’s Witnesses, Charles D. Russell
Unification Church, Sun Myung Moon
Christmas (Christianity): Jesus' birth, December 25, Christian Saint Nicholas to Santa Clause, gifts to Children around the world

Church Decorations and Robes Color (Western Christianity):
- Black – death, Good Friday
- Green – growth, agricultural summer months, between Pentecost and Advent
- Red – blood, feast of martyrs (witnesses), Pentecost
- Violet (sometimes Blue - Advent and Lent
- White – Adult funerals
- White and Gold – joy, Christmas and Easter

Communism: Nontheistic religion, primarily atheistic

Confirmation (Christianity): Sacrament of confirmation or strengthening

Confucian birthday (Confucianism): Rituals in September or October, often September 28

Conservative Judaism (Judaism): Branch that tries to blend the best of old and new

Covenant (Judaism): Contract between the Hebrews and their God, Yahweh.

Cross (Christianity): Recall of Jesus death

Crucifix (Christianity): Jesus hanging on a cross

Crusades (Christianity): Attempts to take back the Holy Land (Israel and adjacent territories) with military expeditions

Day of Breaking of the Fast (Islam): Observed after Ramadan is marked by parties and visiting of graves

Day of Sacrifice (Islam): Tenth day of Ramadan in Mina the pilgrims throw small stones at three square pillars. Each family sacrifices a sheep, goat, cow or camel

and shears the food with the poor

Death of Husayn (Islam): Assignment of Muhammad’s son-in-law. Sometimes the devotees cut themselves and cry during street processions

Devi (Hindu): “Feminine Goddess”; Divine; Great Mother

Dharma (Buddhism): Totality of Buddhist teaching
Dhikr (Islam): Devotional remembrance of Allah by the recitation of his ninety-nine names and other devotional practices
Dhyana (Buddhism): Focusing of mind; stages of trance
Dhyana (Hindu): Meditation
Diaspora (Judaism): Dispersion of Jews beyond Israel, such as Persia, Egypt, and the Mediterranean region
Digambara: Clothed in sky; Jam sect monks do not wear clothing
Divali (Hindu): Return of Rama and Sita, honor for Ganesha and Lakshmi, after monsoon season, clean houses and illuminate outside with candles and lights
Divination: A foretelling of the future
Door Pine (Shinto): Decorated arrangement for door made up of pine, bamboo and plum to celebrate the new year
Dualism: Belief that reality is made of two different principles (spirit and matter); the belief in the conflict of two gods (good and evil)
Dukkha (Buddhism): Sorrow, misery
Durga (Hindu): Awe-inspiring; a goddess; a form of Devi
Durga Puka (Hindu): December, celebrates goodness Durga’s ability to overcome dangerous powers, people dance in front of their statues and in Calcutta with the immersion of her statues in the river
Easter (Christian): Spring festival of celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, fertility and new life, Western Church – first Sunday after the full moon that follows the spring equinox, Eastern Orthodox Church – later
Ecumenism (Christianity): Dialogue between denominations
Essenes (Judaism): Semimonastic Jewish community that flourished from 150 B.C. to 68 A.D
Eucharist (Christianity): Good gift; Lord’s Last Supper of bread and wine (body and blood of Jesus)
Evangelical (Christianity): Emphasizing the authority of scripture; used to identify certain Protestant groups
Evangelist (Christianity): Good news person; one of the four (Matthew Mark, Luke, and John) authors of the Gospel
Extreme unction or anointing of the sick (Christian): Sacrament when a priest anoints a sick person with oil (health) and offers prayers
Fana (Islam): Extinction; the loss of self in mystical experiences

Fat Tuesday (Christianity): Pre-Lenten celebration, meat and butter were used up in preparation for Lent

Fethers: Play a large part in many oral religions, associated with flight and contact with the world above and beyond

Filioque (Christianity): And from the Son; in Western Church indicating that the Holy Spirit arises from both Father and Son. Was not accepted by Orthodox Christianity, and helped cause a separation of Western and Eastern Churches

Fish (Christianity): Ancient symbol of Christian belief, fishers of men

Five Classics (Confucianism): Classical literature prior to Confucius time, including poetry, history, and divination

Four Books (Confucianism): The major Confucian books, which include the sayings of Confucius and Mencius

Gagaku (Shinto): The stately ceremonial music

Genuflection (Christianity): Bending of the right knee on entering and leaving a church

Golden Temple (Sikh): Spiritual center of Sikh faith

Good Friday (Christianity): Friday before Easter, death of Jesus, 12 PM to 3 PM time Jesus suffered on the cross

Gospel (Christianity): Good news; an account of the life of Jesus

Guanyin (Buddhism): A bodhisattva of compassion in Mahayana

Gurdwara (Sikhism): Sikh temple

Guru (Hindu): Spiritual teacher

Guru (Sikhism): Teacher and his nine successors, who are the mouthpiece of God; the fundamental Guru

Hadith (Islam): Recollection of an act or saying of Muhammad

Hajj (Islam): Pilgrimage to Mecca

Halloween (US folk): Evening before All Saints day (November 1), theme of death and rebirth, ancestors need to be fed, has led to children receiving food (mostly candy)
Hanukkah (Judaism): Early-winter festival, the feast of Dedication celebrated with the lighting of candles for eight days, in memory of the rededication of the Second Temple

Hatha yoga (Hindu): Spiritual discipline of postures and bodily exercises

Hinduism: Many Gods, has many religious images, promotes vegetarianism

Hijra (Islam): Flight; Muhammad’s escape from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina)

HIS (Christianity): Greek letters Iota, eta, and sigma, first 3 letter of the name of Jesus

Holi (Hindu): Spring is celebrated, boys and girls playfully through colored water on each other

Holistic: Culture who’s various elements (art, music, social behavior) may all have religious meaning

Holocaust or Shoa (Judaism): Destruction of European Judaism by the Nazis; Hebrew: extermination, memorialized on Yom Hashoah in April or May

Holy Water or Blessed Water (Christianity): Reminds one of baptism, used to bless objects and people

Holly Week (Christianity): Week before Easter

Hula (Hawaiian): Key element of Hawaiian religion and culture

Hylozoism (Jainism, Sikhism): The belief that all physical matter has life and feeling

Icon or Ikon (Christianity): Image; religious painting on wood, used in the Orthodox Church

Id al-Adha (Islam): Day of Sacrifice during the month of the Hajj, when an animal is sacrificed to remember the submission of Abraham

Imam (Islam): Religious leader; one of the hereditary successors of Muhammad, venerated in Shiite Islam

Immanent: Existing and operating within nature

Incarnation (Christianity): In flesh; a belief that God is visible in Jesus

Incense (Christianity): Burned to symbolize prayer and reverence

Indulgence (Christianity, Catholic): Kindness-toward; remission of time spent in purgatory
Ise (Shinto): In eastern Honshu of a major shrine to Amaterasu

Islam (Islam): Submission; community of believers who have submitted themselves to Allah

Five Pillars
- Creed: There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger
- Prayer: Five times a day, before dawn, midday, midafternoon, sunset, and at nighttime
- Charity to the Poor: Usually 2.5% on all that one owns
- Fasting during Ramadan: avoid all food, liquid, tobacco and sex from dawn until dusk
- Pilgrimage to Mecca: All Muslims, men and women, unless prevented by poverty or sickness are expected to visit Mecca once in their life

Religious Practices
- Dietary: forbids pork and wine (some interpret as all alcohol)
- Usury and Gambling: charging interest on loans not allowed, gambling is forbidden
- Circumcision: common at 7 or 8 years of age (in some areas both male and female)

Marriage: a civil contract, in traditional Muslim societies is arranged, annulment and divorce and can be initiated by either wife or husband but neither is frequent

Female Roles: different than males but complementary, circumspect in public, in some societies veiled in public, no job outside the home, socialize only with female friends and relatives

Death Rituals: buried in a plain white shroud and faced toward Mecca, headstone is undecorated stone marker

Scripture: Qur’an

Law (Sharia): traditionally does not separate religious and secular spheres

Philosophy: liberal, values reason and can be examined intellectually; conservative is suspicious of reason and that everything is determined by God
Islam Dominations

Islam

Sunnis (tradition, centered in Saudi Arabia and Egypt) (~85%); based on traditional teaching of Muhammad as given in the Qur’an and authoritative hadiths

Shittes (faction, Iran is the center) (~15%); believe that legitimate succession was hereditary from the immediate family of Muhammad, they think that Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad was the first legitimate iman.

Twelvers (Ithna Ashariya); believe that there were 12 imams

Seveners (Ismailis); believe there were 7 imams

Nizari

Mustali Ismaillis

Others

Sufism (wool, heart of Islam); sought the involvement of emotions in Islam by mysticism and a direct experience of God

Mesnevi (Whirling Dervish); circular dance

Qadiri

Suhrawardi

Naqshbandi


Islam Diet (Islam): Forbids pork and wine (sometimes all alcohol)

Islam Rules (Islam): Charging interest on loans and gambling is prohibited, circumcision for males is required, usually done at 7 or 8 years of age, in some countries it is also carried out on females, usually at puberty. Marriages are arranged and divorce is possible although not frequent. Females are often veiled in public. At death prayers from the Qur’an are recited and the body is buried facing Mecca in a plain white shroud. The headstone is an undecorated stone marker.
Izanagi (Shinto): Male who invites; primordial male parent God
Izanami (Shinto): Female who invites; primordial female parent God
Jainism: Religion that is glorified in austerity
Jainism Denominations:
  Digambaras – Monks wear no clothing
  Jan – Ability to purify themselves and perfect their own character, pilgrimage is important
  Shvetambaras – Clothed in white
  Sthanakavasis – do not use temples or images; focus on meditation and individual austerities
Japanese Buddhist Festivals: Western calendar. New year, Visit to a temple and sharing a vegetarian meal; dead (O-Bon) in mid summer, lighted candles drift downstream or out to sea
Japji (Sikhism): Poem recited daily by pious Sikhs
Jihad (Islam): Struggle; spreading Islamic belief and practice
Jina (Jainism, Sikhism): Perfected person who will not be reborn
Jinja (Shinto): Shrine
Jiva (Jainism, Sikhism): Spirit, soul, which enlivens matter; a perfect person who will not be reborn
Jiva (Jains): Believes in gentle methods of ending one life
Jnana Yoga (Hindu): Spiritual discipline of knowledge and insight
Judaism Denominations:
  Ashkenazic – originally centered in Central Europe, virtually ended by the Holocaust, now in the US, Canada and Israel.
  Conservative – modern changes with protection of traditions, use of Hebrew in service, women can be rabbis, large congregation in US.
  Ethiopian (Falashas) – accepts only five books of the Torah
  Orthodox – retaining traditional practices and beliefs, synagogues separate males and females,
service requires a quorum of 10 males, services conducted in Hebrew, only males have bar mitzvah, males use talit and tefillin for prayer, males cover head with skullcap, prayer shawl, or hat, men are breadwinners and women run household, hair and beard in front of ears is not cut, some wear black hat and coat, women cover their heads, keep traditional laws concerning diet, no manual labor on Sabbath such as cooking, driving, walking long distance, dialing of telephone, turning on electric light

Reconstructionist: Individual interpretation of Judaism, it never stands still but evolves

Reform – enter mainstream of life, in synagogue men and women can sit together, service in native language and Hebrew, choirs organ music are used, talit and tefillin is optional, traditional dress disappeared, equality of men and women, women may be rabbis, girls have bar mitzvah

Sephardic – originally centered in Southern Spain, expulsion occurred in 1492, most live in Israel today

Junzi (Confucianism): Noble person; refined human ideal of Confucianism
Justification or Righteousness (Christianity): Being sinless in the sight of God
Kabah (Islam): Cube; the square shrine in the center of the mosque of Mecca
Kabbalah (Judaism): Received, handed down; whole body of Jewish mystical literature
Kali (Hindu): A form of Dci; a goddess of destruction and rebirth
Kami (Shinto): A spirit, god, or goddess
Kamidan (Shinto): Shell or home altar for the veneration of Kami
Kamikaze (Shinto): Spirit wind; suicide fighter pilots of World War II
Karma (Hindu): Moral law of cause and effect; determines the direction of rebirth
Kara (Sikhism): A steel Sikh bracelet
Karma Yoga (Hindu): Spiritual discipline of selfless action
Karuna (Buddhism): Compassion, empathy
Kethuvim (Judaism): Writings; the third section of the Hebrew scriptures, consisting of poetry, proverbs, and literary works
Kippah (Judaism): Skull cap
Koan (Chan and Zen Buddhism): Question that cannot be answered logically; used to test consciousness and bring awakening
Kojiki (Shinto): Earliest chronicle of Japanese history
Koran (Islam): See Qur’an
Korean Buddhist festivals: Lunar calendar
Kosher (Judaism): Ritually correct; said particularly about food preparation and consumption. All blood must be drained from
meat, can not consume animals that have died in the field or are killed by larger animals, there are also specific methods of
slaughter, inspection and preservation, pork and shellfish are forbidden, meat and dairy products can not be mixed or eaten
together at the same meal, separate cooking and starving implements
Krishna (Hindu): God associated with divine playfulness; a form of Vishnu
Lama (Buddhism): Tibetan Buddhist teacher
Laozi (Taoism): Founder of Taoism
Last Supper (Christianity): Thursday before Easter, washing of feet of 12 people
Legalists (Chinese): Strictest Chinese philosophical schools, which advocated strong laws and punishments
Lei (Hawaiian): Wreaths of flowers around the head, wrists and ankles are used in the hula and are religious objects
Lent (Christianity): Lengthening day, spring; the preparatory period (forty days represents the period Jesus spent in the desert
before public life) before Easter, starts on Ash Wednesday, some attend church services daily, restrict intake of food and
pleasures and music and marriages are sometimes forbidden
Li (Confucianism, Taoism): Appropriate action, ritual, propriety, and etiquette
Libation: Pouring a liquid as an offering to a God
Mahayana Buddhist Festivals:
  Buddha birth, eight day of forty month
  Buddha enlightenment (Bodi Day), eight day of 12th month
Buddha death, 15th of second month

Maitreya (Buddhism): A Buddha (or bodhisattva) expected to appear on earth in the future

Mandala (Buddhism): A circular design containing deities, geometrical forms, symbols, that represent totality, the self, or the universe.

Mantra (Hindu): Short sacred phrase, often chanted

Marriage (Christian): Two people commit, after administering the sacraments to each other, for life

Masks: Play an important role in several oral religions and often are used with a dance

Maya (Hindu): Illusion that keeps us from seeing reality correctly

Mecca pilgrimage (Islam): All male (hajji) and female (hajjiyah) Muslims are expected to visit Mecca or Hajj (black meteorite) at least once in their lifetime (Only Muslims may visit)

Menorah (Judaism): A candelabrum usually containing seven or sometimes nine branches, and used for religious celebrations

Messiah (Christianity): Anointed; a special messenger sent by God, and believed to be Jesus

Messiah (Judaism): Savior figure to be sent by God, awaited by the Jews

Mezuzah (Judaism): Placed on the door step at the entrance of a home, containing words from the Torah, it is reverently touched upon entering.

Midrash (Judaism): Search; rabbinical commentary on concerning the scriptures and oral law

Mihrab (Islam): Niche inside a mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca

Minaret (Islam): Tower used to call people to prayer

Misogi (Shinto): Purification ritual of standing under a waterfall

Mohists (Chinese): Chinese school that taught universal love

Moksha (Hindu): Liberation from personal limitation, egotism, and rebirth

Monotheism: Belief in one God

Mosque: (Islam); Muslim place of worship
Mother (Hindu): French women who in India became a Hindu guru
Mudra (Buddhism): Symbolic hand gesture
Muezzin (Islam): Chanter who calls people to prayer
Muhammad’s birthday (Islam): Twelfth day of the third month, celebrating and reading religious text
Muslim (Islam): Person who submits to Allah
Nevi’im (Judaism): Prophets; second section of the Hebrew scriptures, containing historical and prophetic books
Nihongi (Shinto): Second chronicle of Japanese history
Nirvana (Buddhism): Release from suffering and rebirth that brings inner peace
Noh (Shinto): Dramas performed in mask and costume
Nontheistic: Not asserting or denying the existence of any deity; unconcerned with the supernatural
Oil and Salt (Christianity): Blessing as a symbol of health
Omoto (Shinto): New Religion, stressing art and beauty
Ordination (Christianity): Sacrament of official empowerment of a ministry
Original sin (Christianity): Human inclination toward evil, inherited from Adam
Orthodox (Christianity): Straight opinion; correct belief
Orthodox (Judaism): The most traditional branch
Orthodoxy (Christianity): The Eastern branch
Palms and Palm Sunday (Christianity): Used in the Sunday before Easter to recall Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem
Pantheism: Belief that everything in the universe is divine
Passover (Judaism): A spring (first lunar month) festival that celebrates the Hebrews’ exodus from Egypt and freedom from oppression
Patriarch (Christianity): Bishop of one of the major ancient sites (Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Moscow) of Christianity
Pentecost feast (Christianity): Ten days after Ascension, the first preaching of early Christians
Pharisees (Judaism): Faction during the Second-Temple period that emphasized the creation and support of the nation of Israel
Polytheism: Belief in many gods
Pope (Christianity): Father; bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic Church
Pray (Christianity): On both knees as a sign of denotation
Predestination (Christianity, Calvinism): Belief that God is all-powerful and all-knowing, a human being’s ultimate reward or punishment is already decreed by God
Prophet (Judaism): Person inspired by God to speak for him
Protestant Principle (Christianity): Ability of each believer to rethink and interpret the ideas and values of Christianity
Puja (Hindu): Offerings and ritual for a Deity
Puja (Jainism, Sikhism): Ritual in honor of a tirthankara
Purim (Judaism): Early spring festival in that celebrates (Book of Esther) Jews’ being saved from destruction in Mesopotamia
Qi (Confucianism, Taoism): Life force
Qiblah (Islam): Direction toward Mecca; toward which Muslims pray
Qur’an (Islam): Recitation; God’s words in Arabic as revealed to and recited by Muhammad; authorized edition of the written words that appeared after Muhammad’s death
Rabbi (Judaism): Religious teacher, Jewish minister
Rabbinical Judaism (Judaism): Developed after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 A.D.)
Raja Yoga (Hindu): Discipline of meditation
Rama (Hindu): God and mythical king; a form of Vishnu
Ramadan (Islam): Month of fasting, avoiding all food, liquid, tobacco and sex from sun up to sun down; the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, 11 days earlier than the previous year
Reconciliation (Christian): The sacrament of reconciliation or penance, a repentant person admits sins to a priest and is absolved
Reconstructionism (Judaism): Liberal branch that emphasizes cultural aspects
Redemption (Christianity): Buy again, buy back; the belief that the death of Jesus has paid the price of justice for all humans
Reform (Judaism): Liberal branch
Rejoicing of the Torah (Judaism): Eight day of Sukkot ends the festival with the reading from the end of the Torah
Ren (Confucianism): Empathy, consideration for others, humaneness
Righteousness or Justification (Christianity): Being sinless in the sight of God
Robe of Abraham (Islam): Male robe worn when visiting Mecca. Two piece white seamless cloth. One piece is worn around the waist and lower body and the other covers the upper body and the left arm.
Rosary (Christianity, Islamic): A string of beads used in counting prayers
Rosh Hashanah (Judaism): Beginning of the year (seventh lunar month); celebration of the New Year, consider obligations and pay off debts
Sabbath (Christianity): Sunday
Sabbath (Judaism): Rest; the seventh day (Saturday) of the week, for prayer and rest from work
Sacrament (Christianity): Sacred action; one of the essential rituals
Sadducees (Judaism): Priestly faction, during the Second-Temple
Saint Patrick’s Day (Christianity): Celebrated on March 17
Sallekhana (Jainism): Holy death; death by self-starvation, valued as a noble end of a long life of virtue and detachment
Salt and Oil (Christianity): Blessing as a symbol of health
Samadhi (Buddhism): State of deep awareness, the result of intensive meditation
Samadhi (Hindu): State of complete inner peace due to meditation
Samsara (Buddhism): Constant rebirth and the attendant suffering; the everyday world of change
Samurai (Shinto): Feudal soldier
Sangha (Buddhism): Community of monks and nuns; lowercased; also refers to an individual monastic community
Sannyasin (Hindu): A wandering holy man
Satori (Zen Buddhism): Enlightened awareness
Secular Government: Separation of church and state

Seder (Judaism): Order; ritual meal (thin, flat bread, shank bone of lamb, nuts, fruits, parsley in salt water, bitter herbs) at Passover, celebrating the Hebrews’ exodus from Egypt

Sephardim (Judaism): Jews of Spain, Morocco, and the Mediterranean area

Shaman: One who contacts and attempts to manipulate the power of spirits

Sharia (Islam): Path; the whole body of Islamic law

Shavuot (Judaism): Feast of weeks, 50 days after Passover, originally summer grain harvest festival, now celebrates God giving Moses the Ten Commandments

Shiite (Islam): Minority branch of Islam, which holds that Muhammad’s genuine successors descended from his son-in-law Ali

Shimenawa (Shinto): Twisted rope, marking a sacred spot

Shiva (Hindu): God of destruction and rebirth

Shoat or Holocaust (Judaism): Destruction of European Judaism by the Nazis; Hebrew: extermination

Shofar (Judaism): Blowing of the ram’s horn, to remind people that they stand before God

Shu (Confucianism): Reciprocity

Shunyaata (Mahayana Buddhism): Emptiness; the universe is empty of permanent reality

Shvetambara (Jain sect): Clothed in white; Jain sect monks and nuns wear white clothing

Sign of the cross (Christianity): Fingers of the right hand touch the forehead, the chest, and the two shoulders

Sikh (Sikhism): Disciple; a follower of the Sikh religion

Sin (Christianity): Wrong doing; disobedience to God

Statues and Pictures of Jesus, Mary, Angels, Saints (Christianity): Symbols used in Christianity

Sthanakavasi (Jam sect): Building person; youngest Jam sect, which rejects the use of statues and temples

Stupa (Buddhism): A shrine, usually a dome, used to mark Buddhist relics or sacred sites

Sufism (Islam): Group of devotional movements in Islam
Sukkot (Judaism): Shelters for people to sleep during harvest; booths; late autumn festival celebrating the Jews’ period of wandering in the desert after their exodus from Egypt

Sunni (Islam): Majority branch of Islam, which holds that genuine succession from Muhammad did not depend on hereditary descent from his son-in-law Ali

Suras (Islam): Chapter (114) in the Qur’an

Sutra (Buddhism): A sacred text, one records the words of the Buddha

Taboo (Tongan: tabu; Hawaiian: kapu): A social prohibition

Talmud (Judaism): An encyclopedic commentary on the Hebrew scriptures

Tanakh (Judaism): Complete Hebrew scriptures, containing the Torah, Prophets (Nevi’im), and Writings (Kethuvim)

Tao (Taoism): Origin of the universe which is present and visible in everything

Tao Te Ching (Taoism): Scripture of Taoism

Tasha Be-Av (Judaism): Nine weeks after Shavuot, a day of fasting recalls the destruction of the two temples

Tathata (Buddhism): Uniqueness of each changing reality

Taut (Judaism): Prayer shawl for devout males

Tefilhin (Judaism): Phylacteries; two small boxes containing biblical passages worn by Orthodox males on their head and left arm at Morning Prayer

Ten Commandments (Christianity):

1. You shall have no other God
2. You shall make or worship no carved images
3. You shall not misuse his name
4. Keep the Sabbath holy
5. Honor your Father and Mother
6. You shall not commit murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not give false evidence
10. You shall not covet anything belonging to your neighbor

Tenrikyo (Heavenly reasoning teaching, Shinto): New Religion stressing human betterment
Testament (Christianity): A contract; Old and New Testament constitute the scriptures
Thanksgiving (American): Holiday of harvest festival
Theophany (Judaism): Revelation or appearance of God
Tilit (Judaism): Prayer shawl usually white with dark stripes, covers man’s head and body during prayer
Tirthankara (Jainism): Crossing maker; one of the twenty-four ideal human beings of the past
Torah (Judaism): Teaching, instruction; the first five books of Hebrew Scriptures; also, additional instructions of God, believed to have been transmitted orally from Moses by a succession of teachers and rabbis
Torii (Shinto): A gate like structure that marks a sacred place
Totem: An animal (or image) related by blood to a family as a guardian or symbol
Totem pole: Wood carving on a pole usually of animals stacked one on top of the other memorialize ancestors or represent kinship
Transcendent: Not limited by the physical world
Trikaya (Buddhism): Three “bodies” of the Buddha
   A) Dharmakaya (cosmic Buddha),
   B) Sambhogakaya (celestial Buddhas), and
   C) Nirmanakaya (historical Buddhas)
Trimurti (Hindu): Three gods; Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva
Trinity (Christianity): The three persons in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
Tripitaka (Buddhism): Three “baskets,” or collections, of Buddhist texts
Upanishads (Hindu): Written meditations of the universe and the self
Vajra (Tibetan Buddhism): Diamond scepter used to symbolize compassion
Valentine’s Day (Christianity): Saint Valentine’s Day, in the West, February 14
Vedas (Hindu): Collections of four ancient prayers and rituals
Vesak (Theravada Buddhist): Festival celebration of Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and death; full moon in May
Vishnu (Hindu): God of preservation and love
Wen (Confucianism): Cultural refinement
Western Wall (Judaism): The foundation stones of the western wall of the last temple of Jerusalem, a place of prayer
Wu Wei (Taoism, Confucianism): No action, no strain, effortlessness; only doing what comes spontaneously and naturally
Xiao (Confucianism): Family devotion, filial piety
XP (Christianity): First two letters of the name of Christ, basis for Xmas being the abbreviation for Christmas
Yang (Taoism, Confucianism): Active aspect of reality; expresses itself in speech, light, and heat
Yarmulke (Judaism): Skullcap worn by devout males
Yiddish (Judaism): Jewish language
Yijing (Confucianism): An ancient but still in use today, Confucian book of divination, one of the Five Classics
Yin (Taoism, Confucianism): Receptive aspect of the universe that expresses itself in silence, darkness, coolness, and rest. See also Yang
Yoga: Method for perfecting one’s union with the divine
Yom Kippur (Judaism): Day of Atonement, to make up for one’s faults, prayer and fasting
Zealots (Judaism): Anti-Roman, nationalistic Jews, active during the Roman period of control over Israel
Zhuangzi (Taoism): Author of Zhuangzi, that express themes of early Taoist thought
Zionism (Judaism): Movement that encouraged the creation, and the nation of Israel