

Religion and Tradition

tra·di·tion

n.

1. The passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation, especially by oral communication.
2.
 - a. A mode of thought or behavior followed by a people continuously from generation to generation; a custom or usage.
 - b. A set of such customs and usages viewed as a coherent body of precedents influencing the present: followed family **tradition** in dress and manners.
See Synonyms at heritage.
3. A body of unwritten religious precepts.
4. A time-honored practice or set of such practices.
5. Law. Transfer of property to another.

re·li·gion

1.
 - a. Belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe.
 - b. A personal or institutionalized system grounded in such belief and worship.
2. The life or condition of a person in a religious order.
3. A set of beliefs, values, and practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader.
4. A cause, principle, or activity pursued with zeal or conscientious devotion.

re·li·gious

adj.

1. Having or showing belief in and reverence for God or a deity.
2. Of, concerned with, or teaching religion: *a religious text*.
3. Extremely scrupulous or conscientious: *religious devotion to duty*.

de·nom·i·na·tion

n.

1. A large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy.
2. One of a series of kinds, values, or sizes, as in a system of currency or weights: *Cash registers have compartments for bills of different denominations. The stamps come in 25¢ and 45¢ denominations.*
3. A name or designation, especially for a class or group.

de·nom·i·na·tion·al *adj.*

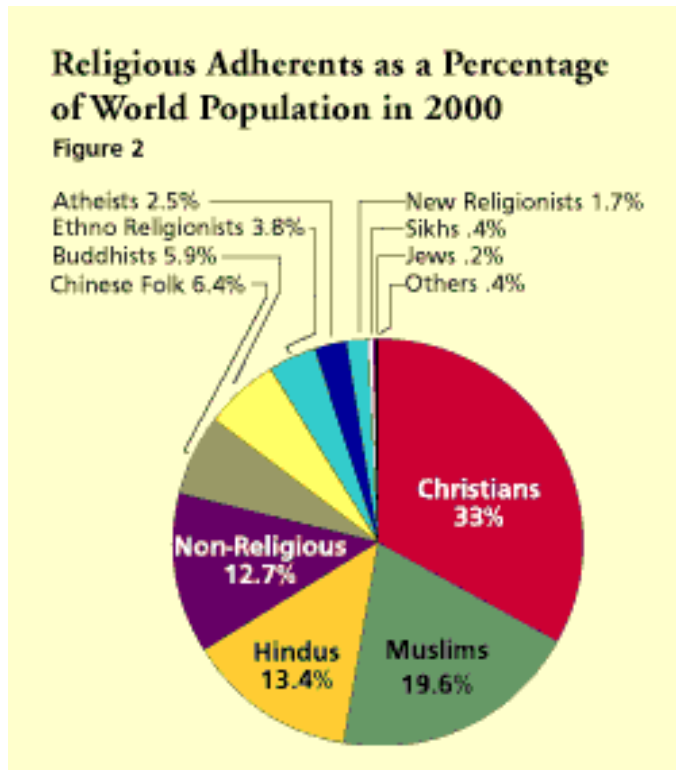
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Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents

Source: http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html

(Sizes shown are *approximate estimates*, and are here mainly for the purpose of ordering the groups, not providing a definitive number. This list is sociological/statistical in perspective.)

1. [Christianity](#): 2 billion
2. [Islam](#): 1.3 billion
3. [Hinduism](#): 900 million
4. [Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist](#): 850 million
5. [Buddhism](#): 360 million
6. [Chinese traditional religion](#): 225 million
7. [primal-indigenous](#): 150 million
8. [African Traditional & Diasporic](#): 95 million
9. [Sikhism](#): 23 million
10. [Juche](#): 19 million
11. [Spiritism](#): 14 million
12. [Judaism](#): 14 million
13. [Baha'i](#): 6 million
14. [Jainism](#): 4 million
15. [Shinto](#): 4 million
16. [Cao Dai](#): 3 million
17. [Tenrikyo](#): 2.4 million
18. [Neo-Paganism](#): 1 million
19. [Unitarian-Universalism](#): 800 thousand
20. [Rastafarianism](#): 700 thousand
21. [Scientology](#): 600 thousand
22. [Zoroastrianism](#): 150 thousand



What is the most popular religion in the world?

With over 1.1 billion adherents, [Islam](#) is the world's most popular single religion. Following Islam, [Catholicism](#), [Hinduism](#), [Protestantism](#), and [Buddhism](#) round out the top five. However, there are almost 2 billion Christians in the world - divided into several subsets of [Christianity](#). Almost one billion people (one-sixth the world's population) are [agnostic, atheists, or indifferent](#) to religion.

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World Religions

Source: http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html

Religion	Date Founded	Sacred Texts	Membership	% of World
Christianity	30 CE	The Bible	2,015 million	33% (dropping) ₅
Islam	622 CE	Qur'an & Hadith	1,215 million	20% (growing) ₅
No religion *	No date	None	925 million	15% (dropping) ₅
Hinduism	1,500 BCE	The Veda	786 million	13% (stable) ₅
Buddhism	523 BCE	The Tripitaka	362 million	6% (stable) ₅
Atheists	No date	None	211 million	4%
Chinese folk rel.	270 BCE	None	188 million	4%
New Asian rel.	Various	Various	106 million	2%
Tribal Religions, Animism	Prehistory	Oral tradition	91 million	2%
Other	Various	Various	19 million	<1%
Judaism	No consensus	Torah, Talmud	18 million	<1%
Sikhism	1500 CE	Guru Granth Sahib	16 million	<1%
Shamanists	Prehistory	Oral Tradition	12 million	<1%
Spiritism			7 million	<1%
Confucianism	520 BCE	Lun Yu	5 million	<1%
Baha'i Faith	1863 CE	Most Holy Book	4 million	<1%
Jainism	570 BCE	Siddhanta, Pakrit	3 million	<1%
Shinto	500 CE	Kojiki, Nohon Shoki	3 million	<1%
Wicca	800 BCE, 1940 CE	None	500,000?	<1%
Zoroastrianism	No consensus	Avesta	0.2 million	<1%

*Persons with no religion, [agnostics](#), freethinkers, [humanists](#), secularists, etc.

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Christian Denominations in the US

Largest denominational families in U.S., 2001

Source: http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html

(self-identification, ARIS)

Denomination	1990 Est. Adult Pop.	2001 Est. Adult Pop.	Est. % of U.S. Pop., 2001	% Change 1990 - 2001
Catholic	46,004,000	50,873,000	24.5%	+11%
Baptist	33,964,000	33,830,000	16.3%	0%
Methodist/Wesleyan	14,174,000	14,150,000	6.8%	0%
Lutheran	9,110,000	9,580,000	4.6%	+5%
Presbyterian	4,985,000	5,596,000	2.7%	+12%
Pentecostal/Charismatic	3,191,000	4,407,000	2.1%	+38%
Episcopalian/Anglican	3,042,000	3,451,000	1.7%	+13%
Judaism	3,137,000	2,831,000	1.3%	-10%
Latter-day Saints/Mormon	2,487,000	2,697,000	1.3%	+8%
Churches of Christ	1,769,000	2,593,000	1.2%	+47%
Congregational/ United Church of Christ	599,000	1,378,000	0.7%	+130%
Jehovah's Witnesses	1,381,000	1,331,000	0.6%	-4%
Assemblies of God	660,000	1,106,000	0.5%	+68%

Religion, as defined by Webster's Dictionary, is, among other things, "any specific system of belief, worship, conduct, etc., often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy; an institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices"; and also "a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held with ardor and faith". It is derived from the Latin "religio", meaning "reverence", which in turn is derived from "religare", to bind back. It is, in fact, a bond.

Tradition is defined to be "the delivery of opinions, doctrines, practices, rites, and customs from generation to generation by oral communication. It is an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or a social custom)". It is in theology, an unwritten saying, action or a code of laws attributed to the founder and the earlier promoters of

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a religion. It is derived from the Latin "traditio", meaning "action of handing over", from "tradere", to deliver.

The difference between a religious practice and a social custom is rather a new concept. In ancient times - times, during which most of the existing religions were founded -- every social custom was, sooner or later, accepted as a religious practice. Therefore, Religion and Tradition are almost taken to belong to each other, so much so that some would take the two as synonyms. That explains why the zealous are so zealous to maintain traditions as a religious obligation. To them, every tradition is but a religious tenet.

So, when is tradition or religion bad? When it gets in the way of the Word of God. How can you tell the difference between good and bad tradition? Let the Word of God be your guide.

Tradition – The Good and the Bad

Gal 1:11-24 (KJV)

- 11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.
- 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:
- 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the **traditions** of my fathers.
- 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,
- 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:
- 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.
- 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.
- 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.
- 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.
- 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
- 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:
- 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
- 24 And they glorified God in me.

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II Thes 2:1-17 (KJV)

- 1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,
- 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.
- 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
- 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.
- 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?
- 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.
- 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.
- 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
- 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
- 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
- 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:
- 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
- 13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:
- 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the **traditions** which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.
- 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
- 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Matt 15:1-6 (KJV)

- 1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
- 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the **tradition** of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.
- 3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your **tradition**?
- 4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.
- 5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

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6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your **tradition**.

Mark 7:1-13 (KJV)

1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the **tradition** of the elders.

4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the **tradition** of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the **tradition** of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own **tradition**.

10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

13 Making the word of God of none effect through your **tradition**, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

1 Pet 1:13-25 (KJV)

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by **tradition** from your fathers;

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- 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:
20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,
21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.
22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:
23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.
24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:
25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Col 2:1-23 (KJV)

- 1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;
2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.
5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.
6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the **tradition** of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:
11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;
15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:
17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

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- 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
- 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.
- 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,
- 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
- 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?
- 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.