

World Religions 3101

Chapter 1: Introduction

Imagine A Country Where Young People Rise To Greet The Day In The Following Ways:

- Turn to the rising sun and pray.
- Walk to the neighborhood synagogue.
- Lay out your prayer rug in the direction of Mecca.
- Twisting your hair and covering it with a turban.
- Sit in the lotus position and mediate.
- Burning sweet grass for a smudging ceremony.

That Country Is Canada!!!

- The United Nations has declared Canada the most multicultural society on earth.
- The interaction of today's major religions, with the positive attitude of Canadians, is called **Religious Pluralism**, and is an ongoing feature of Canadian society.
- What better place to study the world's major religions than in a Canadian classroom.

At The End Of This Unit You Should Be Able To.....

1. Identify the diverse religions found in Canada.
2. Understand the common features and questions associated with religion and the search for spiritual meaning.
3. Explain the relationship between religion and ethics.
4. Evaluate religion's place in our highly technological world.
5. Understand religion's place in Canada.

Religious Impulse:

- Religion has probably been around even longer than humans! Neanderthals showed an understanding of a supernatural force.
- The common thread among countless human religions is the instinct or impulse to worship something.
- **Religious Impulse** is therefore the universal urge to believe in something beyond ourselves.
- It seems to be thriving, even in our modern age of scientific advancements and technological wonders.

So What IS Religion?

- The belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship.
- Religion is the worship of higher powers from the sense of need.
- There are three aspects to every great religion...faith , hope and charity. **Faith** is the theology, **hope** is the ritual and **charity** is the ethics.

- The belief in the conservation of values.
- Religion is any specific system of belief about deity, often involving rituals, a code of ethics, a philosophy of life, and a worldview."
- A worldview is a set of basic, foundational beliefs concerning deity, humanity and the rest of the universe.

The Common Features of Religion

- Belief in the supernatural and life after death.
- The existence of a soul.
- Sacred writings and scriptures.
- Organized institutions.
- A strong sense of family and community.
- Answers to pressing human questions.
- Rules of conduct.
- A system of ethics.
- Founders and inspired leaders.
- Search for salvation
- A life of faith and worship.

What Factors May Lead People To Turn to Religion?

- **Fear** – of death and what lies beyond it.
- **Wonder** – of our existence and a spiritual realm beyond everyday life.
- **Questioning** - our life's purpose! We don't want our lives determined solely by chance, like a lottery.

- **Identity** – lives that have purpose and are meaningful. A **soul**, the spiritual or immaterial part of a human.
- **Intuition** – that something is missing from the materialism of modern life.

The Big Questions

- Where did the universe come from?
- What happens to us when we die?
- Why are we here?
- How should I live my life?
- Is there a God? (or) What is God like?

Your Personal Creed

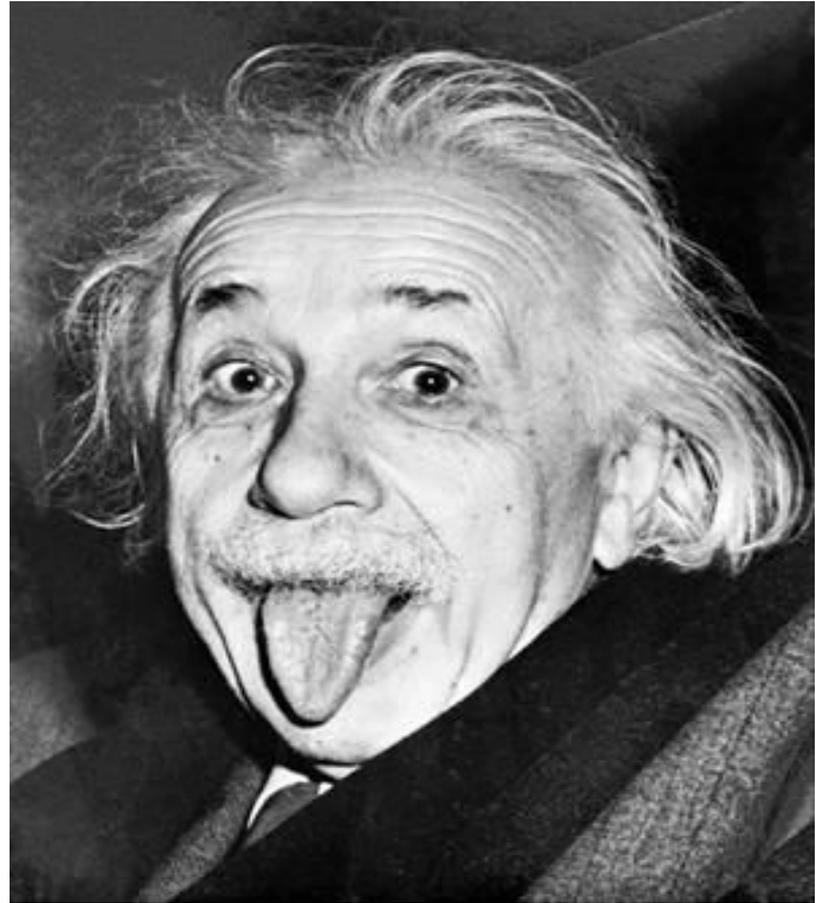
- What do you believe?
- What questions do you have?
- How do you plan to find answers to those questions?
- Learning about other religions may help you to find out what you believe and what's important to you.

Religion And Ethics

- Both religion and ethics are concerned about doing the right thing. One does not, however, have to be religious to be ethical.
- **Humanists**, who have system of thought that humankind is the source of all value and meaning, believe that leading a good and useful life should be the central goal of our existence.
- Being good is a significant concern for most people, religious or not.

Science and Religion

- Many people view science and religion as rivals or opposites
- They appear to be competitors in the race to understand and explain the true nature of our world
- **Evolutionary**: A person who believes that evolution explains the origin of the species



- Evolutionary theories appear to clash with religion (especially Christianity)
- Can science and religion co-exist?
- Both are concerned with truth and understanding; especially the search for purpose and meaning

Religion and Culture

- **Ethnicity** – one can't assume someone's religion by their ethnic background.
- **Popular Culture** – Our understanding of the world is heavily influenced by our exposure to pop culture.
- A great example of the influence of popular culture is the meaning of Christmas.

- Christmas has become commercialized as we spend 40% of our yearly spending during that time.
- Many Canadians are not Christian and therefore Christmas has a different meaning for them.
- Christmas is suppose to be the celebration of Christ's birth, but we don't know when he was born and it most likely was not December 25th.
- The Nativity vs. Santa Claus.

- The **Nativity** generally refers to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, in a lowly stable, attended by shepherds and three Magi or wise men. It also has the added drama of King Herod trying to kill the child because of the prophecy that the child would become a king.
- Santa Claus or St. Nicholas, has origins in Turkey as the patron saint of children. In Holland he was known as Sinter Cleas. The tradition of hanging your stockings to be filled with goodies was brought to North America by Dutch settlers.
- In 1822, Clement Moore wrote “The Night Before Christmas” to give Santa an American feel.











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Holiday Pack

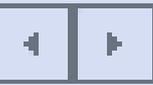


Santa Claus

Merry Christmas

New Year

Decorations

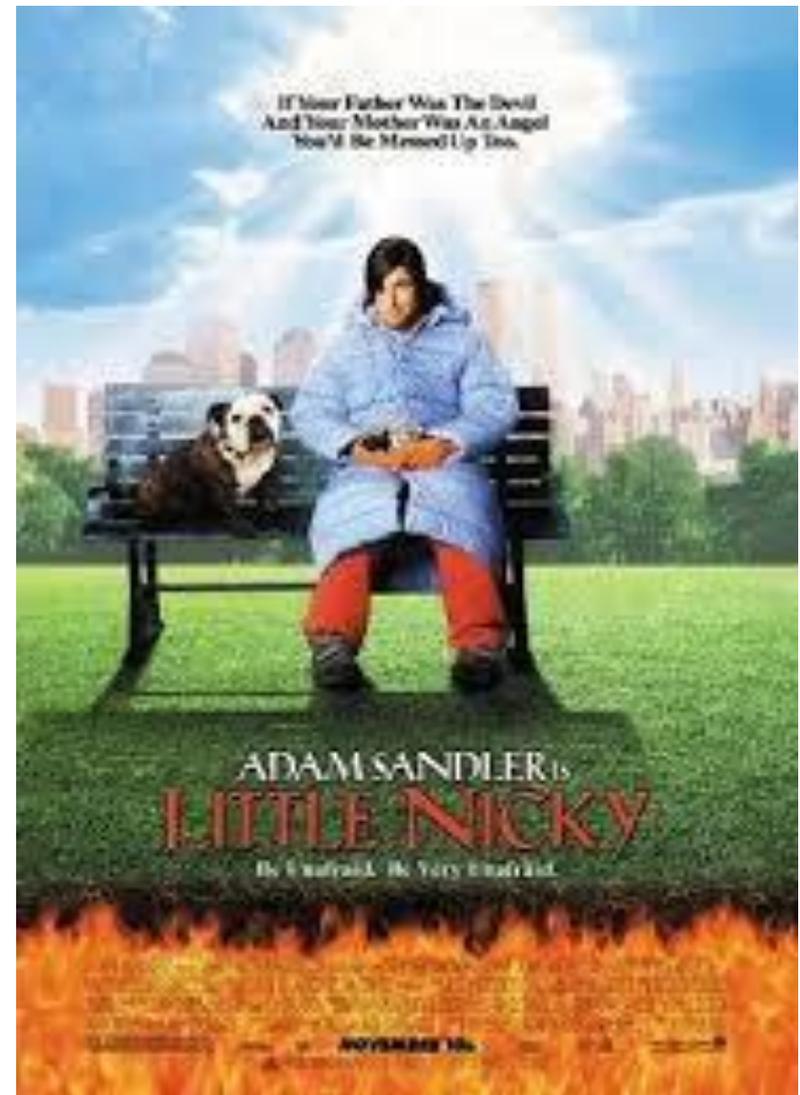
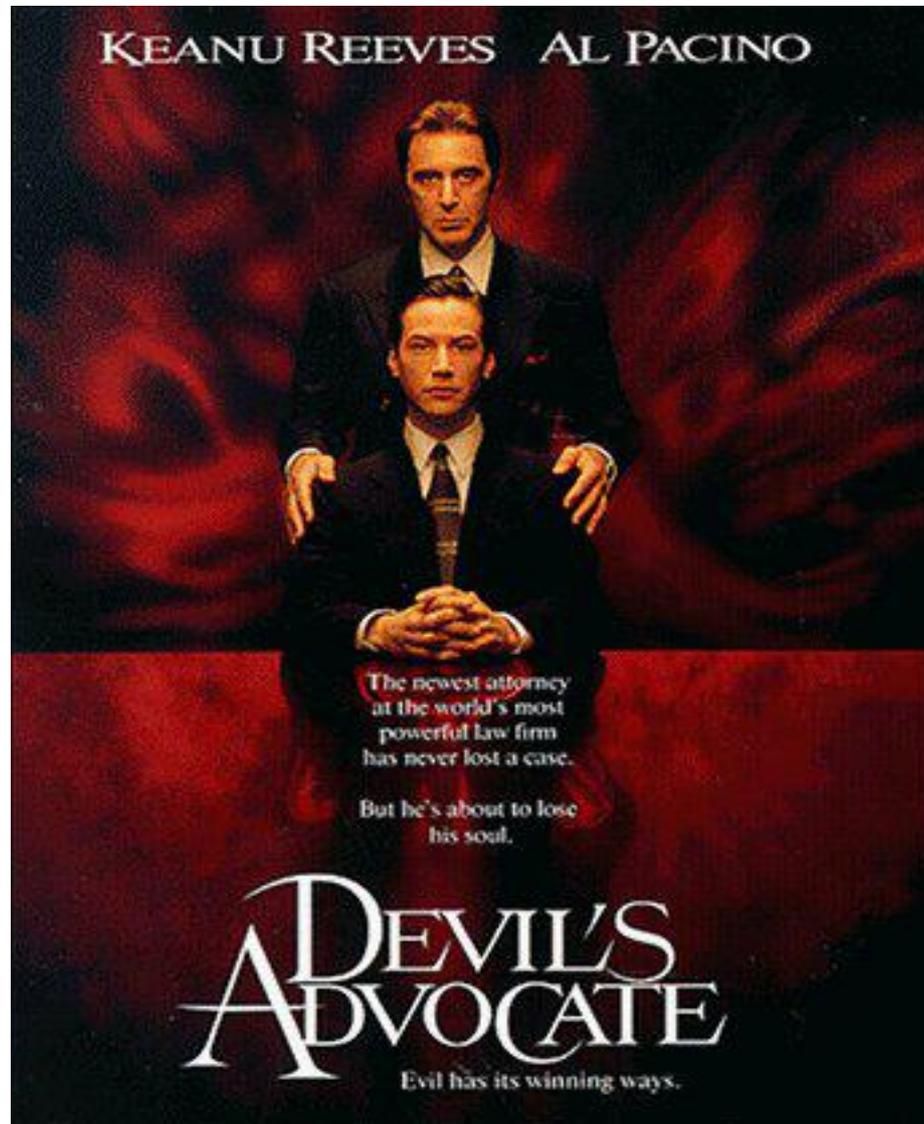


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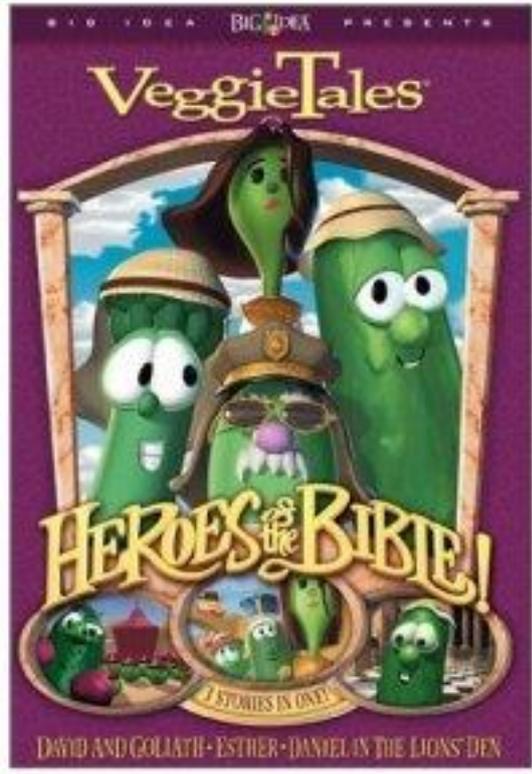
“I think next year I’ll go straight to my parents and cut out the middleman.”

Movies



TV





Religion in Canada Today

- In Canada, Religion and the state are separate institutions
- Religion is a personal matter for Canadians
- They may be **Atheist** (One who holds that no God exists)
- **Agnostic**: A person who doubts that humankind can know the existence of a possible god and the possible existence of anything beyond this life
- This freedom of religion is part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (P.20)

Cont'd

- Freedom of religion and the separation of church and state are not absolute
- Stats show that regular attendance at religious services among Canadians is decreasing (10 percent between 1988 and 1998)
- The most regular worshipers were married couples with children, senior citizens, recent immigrants (especially those from Asia), and residents of rural areas