

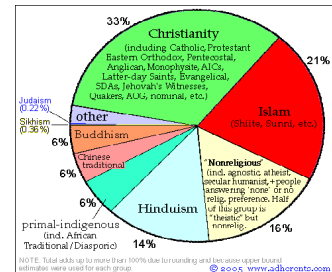
Ch. 2: Religion in the American Context

0. Untitled introduction:
- A. Contrasting views
 1. Little religious seriousness (early 19th c. British writer Harriet Martineau)
 2. "A nation with the soul of a church" (early 20th c. British writer G. K. Chesterton)
 - B. Sources of contrasting views
 1. Mix of secular and sacred in U.S. society
 2. Conflicting definitions of religion
- I. Understanding religion
- A. Types of religion T 2.1, p. 26 <http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/Families/>;
<http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/maps/USMaps.asp>; <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/>
 1. *Formal (organized or institutionalize) religion* (from above): manifested in formal organizations, clergy, doctrines, liturgy, & rituals
 2. *Informal (popular or personal or grassroots) religion*: generated by individual concerns and needs
 - a. Spiritual
 - b. Emotional
 - c. Material
 - B. Forces within ("faces" of) religion
 1. *Creed*: theological beliefs, ethical codes, and symbols
 2. *Institution*:
 - a. Movements: groups of individuals with shared religious values but not yet organized
 - b. Organizations: specific denominations made up of member churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples
 3. *Social/cultural group*: a subculture or community of believers with shared status & values

II. Patterns of religious affiliation

- A. There is a staggering diversity of American religious identity and expression

1. **World religions**
 - a. Judaism
 - b. Christianity
 - c. Islam
 - d. Hinduism
 - e. Buddhism



2. **Religious faiths (traditions or families) in the U.S.** (Seven clusters of those denominations, congregations, and individuals with core beliefs, histories, and racial or ethnic composition – *but not always formal organizations* – that distinguish them from the others) F 2.1, p. 28; T 2.2, p. 31

- a. **(White) Evangelical Protestant** [20%] – a fractious family
 - (1) Exhibit a common set of core theological beliefs
 - (a) Stress the resurrected Christ's role as a personal savior
 - (b) Experience salvation through a very personal "born-again" conversion experience
 - (c) Believe in both the *inerrancy* and *sole authority* of the Bible on spiritual matters
 - (d) See the church's principal task as sustaining and extending belief
 - (2) Primarily, Baptists and the southern wings of Methodists, Presbyterians, & Lutherans
 - (3) We will see in Ch. 8 that Protestant Evangelicals are divided into three basic subgroups with important theological disagreements
 - (a) *Moderate evangelicals* (Billy Graham) www.billygraham.org; e.g., American Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran, United Methodist
 - (b) *Fundamentalist evangelicals* (Jerry Falwell) www.falwell.com; e.g., Churches of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist, Southern Baptist, Presbyterian Church in America, Evangelical Methodist, Lutheran (Missouri Synod)
 - (c) *Charismatic/Pentecostal evangelicals* (Pat Robertson) <http://www.patrobertson.com/>; e.g., Church of God in Christ, Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), Church of the Nazarene

- b. **(White) Mainline Protestant** [19%]
 - (1) Composed of *theologically liberal denominations*: e.g., Episcopal, Unitarian-Universalist, United Church of Christ, Congregational, and northern wings of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans
 - (2) United by common core beliefs:
 - (a) Emphasize the social gospel of Jesus – to help those in need
 - (b) Sanctify altruism and regard selfishness as a cardinal sin
 - (c) Treat the Bible as a book with deep truths that have to be discerned amidst myth and archaic stories and accept many other sources of religious truth
- c. **Black Protestant** [11%]
 - (1) e.g., Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Pentecostal (most racially integrated of the three)
 - (2) Combine the evangelical emphasis on salvation with the mainline commitment to social justice and activism
- d. **Catholic** [25%] – Roman, Orthodox, Maronite
- e. **Jewish** [3%] – Hasidic, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform
- f. **Other religious faith** [4%] – (Ch. 10 looks at these in detail)
 - (1) Non-traditional Christian:
 - (a) With 19th c. revelations (e.g., LDS, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses)
 - (b) Other small denominations (e.g., Mennonites and Amish)
 - (2) Non-Christian: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American
- g. **Seculars – no religion** [15%] – agnostic or atheist

- 3. **Religious denomination**: a religious organization uniting those local-level congregations that share basic beliefs
- 4. **Religious congregation**: a local-level religious organization; e.g., the 6 pages of churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, etc. listed in the Wilmington yellow pages telephone directory
 - a. Denominational congregations
 - b. Nondenominational congregations (have increased in numbers & influence since the 1960s)

III. Basic political tendencies T 2.3, p. 32

- A. Party identification
 - 1. Most Democratic: Jews, Black Protestants, seculars
 - 2. Leaning Democratic: Catholics
 - 3. Leaning Republican: Mainline Protestants
 - 4. Most Republican: Evangelical Protestants
- B. Political ideology
 - 1. Most liberal: Jews
 - 2. Leaning liberal: seculars
 - 3. Leaning conservative: Catholics, Black Protestants
 - 4. Most conservative: Evangelical Protestants & Mainline Protestants
- C. Presidential vote in 2008
 - 1. Strongest for Obama (D): Black Protestants, Jews, & seculars
 - 2. Leaning Obama: Catholics
 - 3. Leaning McCain: Mainline Protestants
 - 4. Strongest for McCain: Evangelical Protestants

- D. Overview T 2.4 p. 35
 - 1. Jews and seculars are the most consistently liberal & Democratic
 - 2. Black Protestants, Catholics, and Mainline Protestants are more mixed
 - 3. Evangelical Protestants are the most consistently conservative & Republican