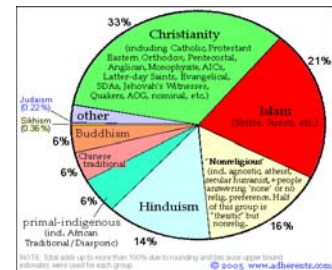


## Ch. 2: Religion in the American Context

0. Untitled introduction:
- A. Contrasting views
1. Little religious seriousness (early 19<sup>th</sup> c. British writer Harriet Martineau)
  2. "A nation with the soul of a church" (early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Table 2.1, p. 27 <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
- a. **World religions**
- (1) Judaism
  - (2) Christianity
  - (3) Islam
  - (4) Hinduism
  - (5) Buddhism



- b. **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) Figure 2.1, p. 29
- (1) (White) Evangelical Protestant [20%] – a fractious family
    - (a) Exhibit a common set of core theological beliefs
      - i) Stress the resurrected Christ's role as a personal savior
      - ii) Experience salvation through a very personal "born-again" conversion experience
      - iii) Believe in both the *inerrancy* and *sole authority* of the Bible on spiritual matters
      - iv) See the church's principal task as sustaining and extending belief
    - (b) Primarily, Baptists and the southern wings of Methodists, Presbyterians, & Lutherans
    - (c) We will see in Ch. 8 that Protestant Evangelicals are divided into three basic subgroups with important theological disagreements
      - i) *Moderate evangelicals* (Billy Graham) [www.billygraham.org](http://www.billygraham.org); e.g., American Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran, United Methodist
      - ii) *Fundamentalist evangelicals* (Jerry Falwell) [www.falwell.com](http://www.falwell.com); e.g., Churches of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist, Southern Baptist, Presbyterian Church in America, Evangelical Methodist, Lutheran (Missouri Synod)
      - iii) *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
  - (2) (White) Mainline Protestant [19%]

- (a) Composed of *theologically liberal denominations*: e.g., Episcopal, Unitarian-Universalist, United Church of Christ, Congregational, and northern wings of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans
- (b) United by common core beliefs:
  - i) Emphasize the social gospel of Jesus – to help those in need
  - ii) Sanctify altruism and regard selfishness as a cardinal sin
  - iii) 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
- (3) Black Protestant [11%]
  - (a) e.g., Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Pentecostal (most racially integrated of the three)
  - (b) Combine the evangelical emphasis on salvation with the mainline commitment to social justice and activism
- (4) Catholic [25%] – Roman, Orthodox, Maronite
- (5) Jewish [3%] – Hasidic, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform
- (6) Other religious faith [4%] – (Ch. 10 looks at these in detail)
  - (a) Non-traditional Christian:
    - i) With 19<sup>th</sup> c. revelations (e.g., LDS, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses)
    - ii) Other small denominations (e.g., Mennonites and Amish)
  - (b) Non-Christian: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American
- (7) Seculars – no religion [15%] – agnostic or atheist

- c. **Religious denomination**: a religious organization uniting those local-level congregations that share basic beliefs
- d. **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
  - (1) Denominational congregations
  - (2) Nondenominational congregations (have increased in numbers & influence since the 1960s)

### III. Basic political tendencies Table 2.4, p. 35

- 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 2004
  - 1. Strongest for Kerry (D): Black Protestants & Jews
  - 2. Leaning Kerry: seculars & Catholics
  - 3. Leaning Bush:
  - 4. Strongest for Bush: Evangelical Protestants & Mainline Protestants
- D. Overview
  - 1. Jews are the most consistently liberal & Democratic of all
  - 2. Black Protestants & seculars are next
  - 3. Catholics are most consistently centrist
  - 4. Mainline Protestants are more conservative & Republican
  - 5. Evangelical Protestants are the most conservative & Republican of all