

Religious Diversity in America

An Historical Narrative

Written by Karen Barkey and Grace Goudiss with scholarship and recommendations from scholars of the Haas Institute Religious Diversity research cluster at UC Berkeley

A diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown at a protest or rally. They are holding signs that read "POWER" and "BUILDING A CITY OF OPPORTUNITY THAT WORKS FOR ALL". The signs also feature a logo with three stylized human figures. The background is a blurred crowd of people, some wearing yellow shirts.

POWER
BUILDING A CITY OF OPPORTUNITY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

This teaching tool is published by the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley

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Cover Image: A group of people are marching and chanting in a demonstration. Many of the people are holding signs that read "Power" with "building a city of opportunity that works for all" below. At the front of the photo are an African American minister, a woman in a dark blue denim jacket, and a man wearing a Tallit, a Jewish prayer shawl.

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Introduction

There is no doubt that the United States of America is becoming increasingly more ethnically and religiously diverse. How can we think about American religious diversity?

IS IT JUST DIVERSITY on the ground, or a pluralism where difference is interactive and where groups show mutual respect and value each other's difference?

It is the task of this brief to rethink the question of American pluralism, indicating the historical moments when diversity came into question, but also to highlight the strategies of managing diversity. In addition to the historical narrative, we present research by experts, special highlighted in-text features with archival materials, websites and resources for teachers, as well a thorough bibliographical tool to help educators present materials to students. We end the document with a section on the contemporary trends in religious pluralism in the United States as questions to probe the interest of students experiencing the ongoing debates and even some of the more detrimental effects of our divisions.

The United States has often oscillated between simple diversity and complex pluralism, sometimes responding harshly to increasing diversity and at other times finding ways to accommodate and weave together a fabric of pluralism. As such, we found that several themes recur, coalescing into a longer story of religious pluralism. Broadly, the core patterns are reflected in the efforts by the government to manage religious difference in many ways and responses by religious majorities and minorities to these state efforts, often in the interest of preserving the integrity of their religious faiths and their position in society. Overall these state society relations have tended

towards peaceful cohabitation between religious faiths, with moments of increased tension during wars or immigration into the country. Attempts on the part of the government or the native-born population to preserve the Protestant core of the United States, and later to protect the “Judeo-Christian” heritage of the nation, can be understood as a form of nativism. Such nativism or anti-foreign policies led to one form of repression or another, restricting the rights of populations, or in the case of indigenous peoples, attempting forceful assimilation in schools or other institutions. The United States’ history demonstrates a recurrent theme of aversion toward immigration and aggression toward new religions. The origins of American xenophobia could be traced to the early period of Catholic immigration, emerged later with the Asian “exclusion acts,” antisemitism, and contemporary Islamophobia.

The state has recognized the promise and significance of US religious diversity since its founding. Indeed, the management of religious difference has long relied on the acknowledgment and harnessing of religious feeling on the part of the government in order to engage citizens in the national project across religious lines. This took shape in the construction of a meta-narrative using broadly framed religious imagery in the service of national political unity and consequently, framing American goals as transcendent. This has been referred to as American Civil Religion (ACR). Though the term “civil religion” was coined by Rousseau, sociologist Robert Bellah developed the term and refined the

notion of a specifically American form of civil religion. ACR relies on a shared national identity and a sense of history, and a connection of these to the transcendent, but does not in itself constitute a formal religion. Instead, figures like Abraham Lincoln or George Washington become semi-divine, and their service to the nation becomes linked to a higher purpose. These forms of ACR are practiced alongside other religious faiths, and are centrally intended to be compatible with a range of belief systems, even if many of its referents are at their base Christian. In this sense, civil religion acts a glue that binds society together, appeasing its Christian roots and allowing spiritual language's broader inclusion into the American project.

Responses from minority populations to repression and assimilation have varied from being defensive, to proactive and strategic. When defensive, groups have tried to create spaces of self-segregation. When proactive or strategic groups, have tended to engage with the larger community through inclusion and sharing.¹ Minority religious groups have employed a variety of strategies in the interest of maintaining their faith, sometimes entrenching difference while at other times strategically adapting to the larger cultural context. The US was never a homogeneous Protestant or Christian nation, though Protestant Christians remain the largest single religious group in the nation. America is a religious country, and thus immigrant groups emphasized their religiosity while adapting their form of worship to American congregational norms.²

In the following text we proceed by highlighting the key moments in the history of religious pluralism in the United States since the founding of the nation, with particular attention to the threats to pluralism and how they were resolved.

1 Elisabeth Becker discusses similar strategies in her work on two European mosques: "Unsettled Islam: Virtuous Contention in European Mosques," Yale University, May 2018.

2 Stephen Warner cited in Jose Casanova, "Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism: A European Union/United States Comparison," in *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, edited by Thomas Banchoff, Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Religion, Race, and American Politics from the Founding to *Scopes* (1789-1925)

Founding and Expanding the Nation (1789-1820s)

Religious diversity has always been a fact of American life. We begin here immediately after the American Revolution. What would the government's attitude be toward religious freedom and religious diversity? Did the new nation live up to its ideals of religious tolerance?

Religious diversity, at first mostly in the form of inter-Protestant difference, was a reality from the beginning of European life on the continent. Religious toleration was thus of great importance to the framers of the constitution. After the Revolution, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and others set out on the massive project of constructing a legal and political framework for the new nation. At this moment of constitutional framing, the relationship between the government and religious institutions was of primary significance.

The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, passed in 1791, famously states that the government shall make no law that infringes on the practice of religion, nor can the federal government establish a national religion or instate religious tests that would bar any group from attaining office on account of their faith. The Amendment's capacious language signaled the wide latitude of religion apart from government interference. This amendment, however, only applied to the federal government; the final state to disestablish, Massachusetts, did not adopt the law until 1833. Those who did not fit the dominant Protestant mold were especially enthusiastic about such a separation: deists, like Jefferson and Madison, as well as Baptists like Isaac Bacchus, all agreed that the government should favor no religion over another, nor perhaps favor religion at all. Today, what Jefferson famously described as a "wall" between church and state is a powerful motivat-

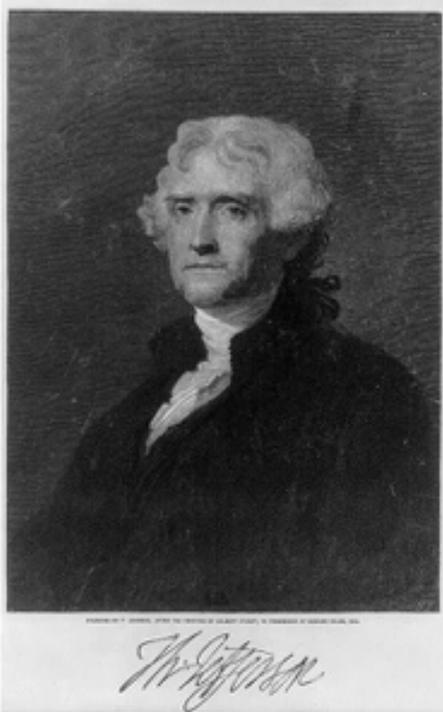
ing idea that continues to reverberate in modern political discourse. For instance, since the end of the nineteenth century in particular, religious minorities (and the anti-religious) have used the first amendment as a strategy to defend their autonomy against incursion by the Protestant majority.³

The ideal of the free practice of religion did not extend to all groups in America. Native American peoples used indigenous religion as a means of contesting territorial expansion by the government. Resistance, military conflict, and religious belief frequently intersected. For example, indigenous involvement in the War of 1812, fought between Indian confederacies, the United States, and Great Britain, was owed in part to the Shawnee Prophet, Tenskawatawa. Formerly a hapless drunk, Tenskawatawa⁴ (a name he adopted, translating to "The Open Door") experienced a vision of a deity he referred to as the Master of Life, and thereafter became a prominent religious leader among Indians in the Old Northwest territory. He encouraged followers to reject alcohol, Anglo-American agriculture, and political relations with the United States. With his brother, the famous military leader Tecumseh, he helped form an Indian confederacy that allied with the British to resist American encroachment on the West. At the end of the nineteenth century, another major indigenous religious movement primarily associated with the Lakota, the Ghost Dance, similarly encouraged pan-In-

3 For more on religion and the First Amendment, see: Nicholas Patrick Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003; Vincent Phillip Muñoz, *God and the Founders: Madison, Washington, and Jefferson*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

4 See also: Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

The First Amendment



The first introduction of the Bill of Rights in the Congress. US Congress, 1789

Source: [Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov/rr/congress/1789/17890304.html)

Additional Resources

- [Full text of the First Amendment](#)
- [Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association](#)
- [Library of Congress on "Religion and the Federal Government"](#)
- [Making of the US Constitution, from the Annals of Congress, V. 1, without amendments](#)
- [Constitution Center Clauses and interpretations of the US Constitution](#)
- [American Civil Liberties Union on religious freedom](#)
- [PBS Learning Media: 1st Amendment and Religion \(contains prayer recordings\)](#)
- [Anti-Defamation League Resources on Religious Freedom](#)
- [Library of Congress on Thomas Jefferson: For teachers, Library of Congress lesson plan on Bill of Rights.](#)
- [The Atlantic: Teaching Tolerance, on Religious Tolerance](#)

dian unity and resistance to white expansionism. American anxiety about this movement was one factor in the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee.

While Native Americans used religious movements to mount political resistance against the United States, white missionaries similarly used Christianity to assimilate indigenous people to Anglo-American civilization. Missionaries founded schools like the Brainerd Mission in Tennessee (1817-1838), designed to integrate Native American children with mission families and households.⁵ For children, life among the missionaries included both educational and religious training. The school day lasted from sunrise to 9 o'clock in the evening, ending the day with prayers. While missionary schools were most certainly an agent of US expansionism and designed to eradicate Indian cultures and ways of life, missionaries did not think of themselves as conquerors, complicit in cultural genocide. Rather, they thought of themselves as benevolent and sympathetic teachers saving the souls of indigenous children. At the Brainerd school, for example, missionaries spoke in Cherokee as well as English and opposed the forced removal of Eastern tribes. Still, the Brainerd Mission primarily targeted the Cherokees and, like other missionary schools, attempted to erase Native American identities and cultures.

Revival and Reform

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, American society saw massive changes as a result of industrial development, territorial expansion, and technological changes/advents in communications technology. Religion was impacted by larger realities. How did the majority religion, Protestantism, change in response to social transformations? How did marginalized groups, like women and African Americans, experience religion in the nineteenth century? What about non-Christian groups, like Mormons or Jews?

Religious life shifted immensely in this period, with the massive growth of evangelical Christianity, a broad swelling of religious feeling, and a large-scale rethinking of accepted Protestant theology. This phenomenon is usually referred to as the Second Great Awakening, in reference to the earlier revival movement of the

1730s and 1740s.⁶ The scale and scope of this awakening outstripped the first, and drastically changed the religious landscape of the nation. It is estimated that church membership doubled in proportion to the population between 1800-1835.⁷ The awakening contributed to the growing diversity within Protestantism, as so-called "upstart" sects like Methodism and Baptism exploded in this period. This era also saw the advent of some of the most famous "homegrown" religious movements, like Mormonism.⁸ Although there were regional differences in the form and effects of revival, the Second Great Awakening was a national event that touched Americans of different genders, races, and political orientations. In the north, evangelical preachers like Charles Grandison Finney popularized a brand of religious perfectionism, which rejected Calvinist notions of predestination and encouraged the perfecting of the individual soul through the reform of society.

Theologically, evangelicalism promoted a direct relationship to the divine, rather than one mediated by traditional church hierarchies. This egalitarian implication was not lost on marginalized groups: the Second Great Awakening saw a flourishing of religion and religious participation among women and African Americans.

In addition, northern reform movements such as temperance, abolitionism, and a burgeoning women's rights movement were largely led by evangelicals, and seen as in confluence with the mission of evangelical religion. Women made up a bulk of revival attendees and those testifying to a spiritual rebirth. In this period, they also gained more control over the religious life of the family, as the doctrine of separate spheres dictated that religion was the in the purview of the woman-run private, domestic world. Some women mobilized this cult of domesticity to advocate for their own rights.

5 For more, see: Hilary E. Wyss, *English Letters and Indian Literacies: Reading, Writing, and New England Missionary Schools, 1750-1830*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

6 See also: Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990; Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in Nineteenth-Century America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth Century America*, 2nd ed, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

7 David Henkin and Rebecca McLennan, *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2015, p. 262.

8 For secondary sources on Mormonism, see: Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989; J. Spencer Fluhman, *A Peculiar People: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

The Second Great Awakening



Camp Meeting. A. Rider pinxit,
by H. Bridport (c. 1829).
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)



Religious Camp Meeting,
by J. Maze Burbank (1839)
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Additional Resources

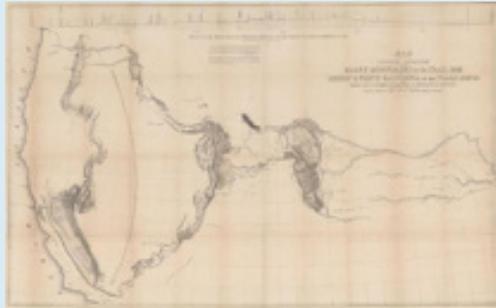
- [Map of the Second Great Awakening](#)
- [Cartoon mocking George Whitefield from Library of Congress](#)
- [National Humanities Center teachers' guide on the Second Great Awakening](#)
- [Khan Academy on the Second Great Awakening,](#)
- [History.com on the connection between Abolitionist movement and the Second Great Awakening](#)
- [Boston University history guide made by students](#)

Mormonism

Religious revival and social change also produced wholly new American religious movements, the most famous of which is Mormonism. Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was born in 1805 in the “Burned-Over District” of Western NY—a region was known for its high concentration of fervent revivals. Smith’s life was shaped by the wrenching changes experienced throughout American society in this period, including massive economic shifts brought on by industrialization, urbanization, and new market relations. In 1830, Smith received a prophecy from God, and produced the Book of Mormon, sparking a religious movement that remains strong in the US and is rapidly gaining converts globally. Mormonism, in no small measure, emerged as a reaction to new historical circumstances



C.C.A. Christensen, “Mormon pioneers crossing the Mississippi on the ice”
Source: Wikimedia Commons



John C. Fremont’s map
Source: History.lds.org

facing Americans—its patriarchal structure, for instance, seems in contrast to the new religious power and visibility held by American women in New York and beyond. Mormons were persecuted for their beliefs. After moving from New York to Illinois, the Mormons eventually settled in Utah under the leadership of Joseph Smith’s protégé, Brigham Young. They called their community “Deseret,” and envisioned it as a theocracy governed not by the laws of the American government, but by the law passed down from God through Smith. Mormons held views, in particular around gender, that defied mainstream norms—most famously, they encouraged plural marriage, or polygamy, but they also granted women the right to vote much earlier than the rest of the nation. Utah was established as a territory in 1851, and until the end of the nineteenth century the US government clashed, sometimes violently, with the Mormon church, often over the issue of polygamy. In the 1890s, facing immense pressure from the federal government, the church forbade plural marriage and in exchange, Utah was granted statehood in 1896.

Additional Resources

Images

- [Nauvoo Temple](#)
- [Nauvoo Temple burning](#)
- [Joseph Smith](#)
- [Brigham Young](#)

Statistics

- [Mormons today](#)

Resources

- [Digital Public Library of America—primary sources on Mormon Migration](#)
- [Digital Public Library of America—Mormon teaching guide](#)
- [PBS The Mormons: The Early and Modern History](#)
- [PBS—Learning Media on Mormons](#)
- [NPS description of Mormon trail](#)
- [BBC on Mormon Pioneers](#)
- [Library of Congress—Mormon Pioneers.](#)

Mormons and First Amendment

- [NYT on Mormons and 1st Amendment](#)

African American Christianity also flowered in this period, though a majority of African Americans would not identify as Christians until after the Civil War, when the black church as it is known today would emerge in its more modern form. The first half of the nineteenth century saw not only the conversion of many slaves and free blacks, but the establishment of some enduring institutions of black Christianity.⁹ Large waves of conversion among black Americans also speaks to the attraction of upstart branches of Christianity, such as Methodism, over long-established sects. Methodists preachers sought to reach nonwhites in addition to white converts, and emphasized lay preaching and challenged the hardened social hierarchies that pervaded many older sects. This appealed greatly to free blacks and slaves, and in 1794 Richard Allen, who had converted to Methodism as a slave, founded the Bethel Church in Philadelphia, a hub of the free black community.¹⁰ But Methodism, like many sects of Christianity, was wrought by racial discrimination, and in 1816 Allen formed the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E), the country's oldest black-founded denomination. Religion was also very important in the formulation of anti-slavery ideologies: many abolitionists, for instance, held the view that slavery itself was a sin, and that in order to bring about the second coming of Christ, America needed to be purged of slavery.¹¹ John Brown, Sojourner Truth, and Nat Turner, all famed anti-slavery crusaders, saw their mission as one of divine providence.¹²

The South was a different story. A lack of urban centers made associational reform movements less feasible, and this culture threatened some white southern values. Evangelical religion did, however, make inroads in the South, though it muted some of its more egalitarian and reformist implications, molding itself to fit white southern cultural norms.¹³ Further, the large-scale participation of

women in northern reform movements clashed with southern gender norms, as men remained the spiritual heads of the household as well as the managers of the home and family, even as family norms in the North changed. Though some aspects of revival evangelicalism clashed with entrenched hierarchies of Southern life, Black southerners still managed to create some independent religious spaces and congregations, though not on the scale that they would after Reconstruction.¹⁴

Simultaneously, American Judaism in the mid-nineteenth century saw the advent of Reform Judaism. This represents another strategy that has been deployed by minority religions—where Mormons moved west to create a separate society, some Jews had a desire to create a form of Judaism that remained true to their faith while also adapting to social and cultural needs of modern American life. The first Reform synagogue was founded in Philadelphia in 1842. Not all Jews supported this modernizing shift, and many turned to Conservative and Orthodox forms. The decision of whether to negotiate with mainstream American society, or to turn inwards and try to reinvigorate a separate Jewish culture, language, and religious orthodoxy continues to divide American Jewry. Most Jews follow the Reform tradition, though thousands still live in Yiddish-speaking, religiously orthodox communities, the largest of which is in Brooklyn, New York.¹⁵

Civil War and Reconstruction

Christian belief played an important role in the Civil War. As noted above, evangelical Christianity was central in the formation of the abolition movement. During the war, both the Union and Confederate sides expressed the purpose of the battles in epic, biblical terms, as an existential struggle for the soul of America and the fate of the continent. This theological understanding of the war is apparent in many realms of culture and discourse of the time. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," one of the most important songs of the era, likened the Jesus's sacrifice to the war effort: "as he died to make

9 For more on African American Christianity in early American history, see: Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

10 See Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, New York: New York University Press, 2008.

11 See John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*, Harvard University Press, 2004.

12 For more on these figures, see: Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*, WW Norton, 1996; Stephen Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: a Biography of John Brown*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1971; Kenneth Greenberg, ed., *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

13 See Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

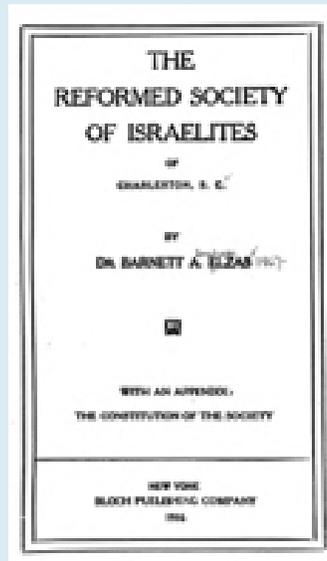
14 See Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

15 For more on Orthodox Jews, see: Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodox Jews in America*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. For a more general history, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. See also: Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

The Jewish Split (1824)



John Rubens Smith, ca 1812,
Beth Elohim, Charleston
Source: [Library of Congress](#)



The Constitution of the Reformed Society of Israelites

Source: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101064798273>

Additional Resources

American Jews

- [Timeline of American Jewish History from American Jewish Archives](#)
- [PBS on Jewish Americans](#)
- [Jewish Virtual Library: Modern American Jewish History](#)
- [American Jews and Civil Rights Movement: from Jewish Women's Archives](#)
- [Harvard's Pluralism Project on Judaism in America](#)
- [National Humanities Center on Jewish Americans in 20th Century](#)
- [Library of Congress on 350 years of Jewish Life in America Exhibition](#)
- [History.com on Judaism](#)
- [Pew Research Center on Jews in America](#)
- [Backstory Radio on Judaism in America](#)
- [Pew Research Center article on American v. Israeli Jews.](#)

Reform and Conservative Judaism

- [BBC on Reform Judaism](#)
- [Encyclopedia Britannica on RJ](#)
- [Encyclopedia.com on RJ](#)
- [Jewish Virtual Library on Reform Judaism](#)
- [Dr. Jill Carroll of Rice University on Reform and Orthodox Judaism](#)

Photos and Media

- [World Union for Progressive Judaism,](#)
- [Reform Jews today](#)
- [UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies Podcasts](#)

men holy let us die to make men free.” With its refrain of “glory, glory, hallelujah!,” “Battle Hymn” exalted the Union cause.¹⁶ Abraham Lincoln himself often used prophetic imagery to frame his speeches and to inspire Americans for the Union cause. For him, questions of the Union and American destiny were paramount. Lincoln is now frequently touted as a symbol of American Civil Religion, a martyr and savior of the nation.¹⁷

The end of slavery meant African Americans in the South could form their own independent religious communities. Black churches spread rapidly, bolstering the unique religious and political culture of African American Christianity. In the post-emancipation South, black preachers were pillars of both political and spiritual life. On one hand, whites persuaded black preachers to instruct their flocks to remain subservient and dutiful. On the other, given the number of black churches burned and black preachers beaten, ministers and church-goers were motivated to take more adamant and vocal stances on freedom and politics. The reverend James Lynch was one of many African Americans who served as both a spiritual and political leader. In 1867 he settled in Mississippi after working as a missionary in the South for several years. There, he greatly expanded his church, helped organize Mississippi’s Republican Party, and became the state’s first African American Secretary of State.¹⁸ Independent Southern black churches caused whites no small degree of consternation. Racist whites became anxious about the political activity and community black churches fostered, and worried that the churches would promote degeneracy and recklessness among blacks as well as hatred for whites. In spite of obstacles posed by white supremacy, black churches served as important sites of community and political organization in the years following emancipation, and would continue to do so throughout the twentieth century.¹⁹

Turn of the Century Changes in American Protestantism

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century also saw many Americans interrogating familiar forms of Christianity, as questions about science, technology, and the place of the Bible created schisms in Protestantism that continue today. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Protestant Christianity found itself riven by fierce theological, political, and social debates. American Protestantism at this time was split in two, and this period of conflict is often known as the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. On the one hand fundamentalists—much like in our modern usage—were theologically more conservative/orthodox, insisting on a literal reading of the bible and doctrinal strictness. Modernists, on the other hand, felt that Christian theology should be updated to better relate to new technological, scientific, and social realities. Evolution was one major issue cleaving Protestants apart. Darwin’s theory had been seeping into mainstream culture since the 1860s, and that had become increasingly troubling to fundamentalists, while it was more and more accepted by modernists. The most famous moment in this controversy came in 1925 with the Scopes Monkey Trial, in which William Jennings Bryan argued passionately for keeping the teaching of evolution out of schools, but is generally remembered as having been embarrassed in this effort. After the trial and decades of strife, it appeared by the 1930s that the modernists had won, and most mainline Protestant churches adopted a theologically and socially liberal stance.²⁰ Fundamentalists, on the other hand formed independent congregations, publishing houses and publications, and colleges, creating a parallel Christian culture (discussed in a later section of this paper). They are considered in large part the precursors to modern evangelical and fundamentalist Christians who remain politically active and highly visible today.²¹

16 See also, John Stauffer and Benjamin Soskis, *Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Biography of the Song that Marches On*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

17 See also: Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Stewart Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002.

18 See Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*, Vintage Books, 1980.

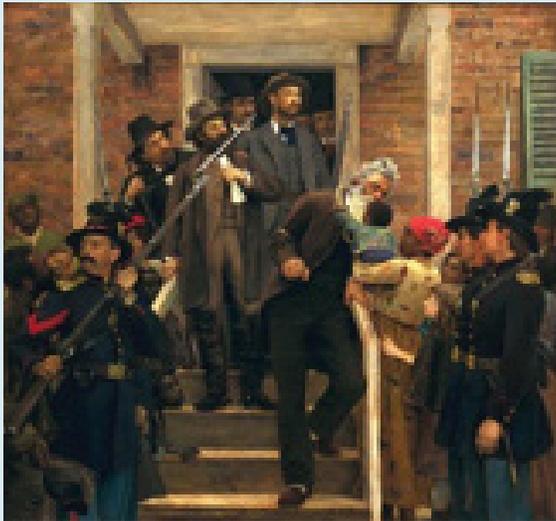
19 For more on religion and Reconstruction, see: Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

20 For more on the Scopes Trial, see Edward Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion*, Basic Books, 1997.

21 For more on Protestantism in this period, see: George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970; Robert Handy, *Undermined Establishment: Church-State Relations in America, 1880-1920*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

"John Brown's Body" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"

The songs "John Brown's Body" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" were the Union's figurative banners during the Civil War. The first song borrowed the melody of a Methodist hymn "Say, Brothers, Will You Meet Us?," and gained popularity during the War, as it became associated with John Brown, an abolitionist who was hanged in 1859. In 1861 the new lyrics were written by future suffragette Julia Ward Howe, and portrayed an image of God marching for truth, intertwining the human motivation for the War to the will of God. Mighty and earnest, this song became the anthem of the Union cause.



Thomas Hovenden (1882-1884), "The Last Moments of John Brown"
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)



William Morris Smith, photographer (1865): Band of the 107th U.S. Colored Infantry
Source: [Library of Congress](#)

Additional Resources

Audio Recordings

- ["John Brown's Body," by Pete Seeger](#)
- ["John Brown's Body," by Gloria Jane \(read lyrics\)](#)
- ["The Battle Hymn of the Republic, by The US Army Field Band](#)
- [the end of Elvis Presley "An American Trilogy" \(read lyrics\)](#)

Images

- [NY State Militia Band, "Sojourner's Battle Hymn" Wikisource with lyrics to a version usually attributed to Sojourner Truth](#)

Other

- [Library of Congress teachers' resource on Band Music during the Civil War Era](#)
- [Library of Congress on Battle Hymn](#)
- [NPR on Battle Hymn](#)
- [JSTOR Daily on Battle Hymn](#)
- [The Atlantic Flashbacks \(including past issues\)](#)
- [New York Times article on The Battle Hymn](#)
- [19th century wind band from Lipscomb university](#)

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

". . . Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." – from *Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address*



Alexander Gardner, 4 March 1865: Abraham Lincoln delivering his second inaugural address as President, Washington, D.C.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, Library of Congress, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/Abraham_Lincoln_second_inaugural_address.jpg



Lincoln taking the oath at his second inauguration, March 18, 1865. *Harper's Weekly*, 1865.

Source: [Library of Congress](#)

Additional Resources

- [Read the full transcript of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address](#)
- [Lesson Plan from the University of Texas on Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address](#)
- [University of California, Davis, Civil War Lesson #5: Lincoln's Speeches](#)

The first years of the twentieth century also saw the emergence of Pentecostalism. Charles Parnham is credited with starting the movement, when he convinced his students of the significance of the second baptism (a baptism of the spirit rather than water), in which the holy spirit would make itself known by speaking through the believer. This practice, glossolalia (or speaking in tongues), is a hallmark of Pentecostal religion. In 1906, William Seymour, an African American Holiness preacher, began preaching at a former AME church on Azusa street, in Los Angeles, which is widely considered the birthplace

of the Pentecostal movement.²² Pentecostalism has since become a massive religious movement that has experienced its own schisms, and is comprised of many different denominations, including COGIC (Church of God in Christ) and Assemblies of God. By the century's end, Pentecostalism would become one of the fastest growing religions in the world, with an estimated 35,000 new converts each day, largely from Africa and South America. Pew estimates that there are 279 million Pentecostals in the world today, comprising about 4 percent of the world's population.²³

22 See Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

23 Richard Vijgen and Bregtje van der Haak, *Atlas of Pentecostalism*. <http://www.atlasofpentecostalism.net/>.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a branch of Christianity and one of the fastest growing religions in the world.



Services at the Pentecostal Church of God. Lejunior, Harlan County, Kentucky. Photo by Russell Lee.

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Current Location: [National Archives Archeological Sites](#).



Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn, New York

Photo by Dasom Nah, taken in March 2018

Additional Resources

- [Atlas of Pentecostalism](#)
- [The Map of Pentecostal Growth, repository of primary sources compiled by Pentecostal groups](#)
- [Congregational Holiness Church Discipline \(bylaws of the church that split from Pentecostal church\)](#)
- [Consortium of Pentecostal Archives](#)

Video

- [Pentecostal worshippers](#)

Immigration and the American Religious Landscape (1845–1924)

WE OFTEN HEAR that “America is a nation of immigrants.” Although this statement problematically ignores the thousands of native peoples who have inhabited the continent for many centuries, it speaks to the reality of diversity that has always defined American life. Migrants to America brought their religions with them to their new home, and religious dictates structured social and political life, as well as relations to native peoples. Even though we have chosen to start this brief with the establishment of the American state, it is important to note the nature of the early immigration as a framework for the issues that followed. While the most pronounced religious diversity in the colonial period came in the form of a multitude of Protestant sects, immigration nonetheless fueled diversity and questions of religious coexistence from the earliest days of European life in the New World. This section will gloss some of the significant moments in which immigration intersected with the development of American religious identities, from the first Europeans on the continent to the advent of the category of “illegal immigration” in 1924.

Prelude: Religion in the Colonial Era

Many European migrants, like the Puritans, were religious dissenters who arrived with the express purpose of practicing their religion freely. Others, such as those from France and Spain, promoted Catholicism through the establishment of missions and religious orders. The first Christians on the continent of North America were Catholics, before the Protestant Reformation, who settled in the Spanish colony of Florida in the 1510s. Although the Catholic Church would not have a major presence in America until the nineteenth century, relatively small numbers of Spanish and French colonists meant there was a permanent Catholic presence in America from the earliest days of European colonization.

The first significant Protestant presence arrived with the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, the first British colony in the New World, in 1607. These colonists primarily belonged to the Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church. The Church of England would remain the predominate, and often official, Church in colonial Virginia and the South. Farther north in New England, religious dissenters known as pilgrims, are perhaps the most famous group of early Protestants—they arrived from England to found Plymouth in 1619. The puritans, in larger numbers than the pilgrims, came from England in the 1630s and established the Massachusetts Bay Company. Throughout the colonial period, the middle colonies—including New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey—were more religiously diverse than New England or the Chesapeake, as different forms of Protestantism including Quakerism, coexisted.²⁴ Native people, for their part, maintained their own religious practices, yet also often adopted Christian ones.

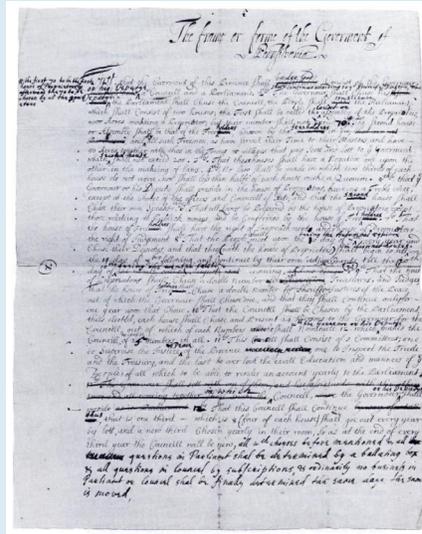
It is hard to conclusively measure the small number of non-Christians in early America. Still, their presence attests to the complex and global history of the colonies in this period. The first Jews arrived in New Netherlands, now New York, in the 1650s when they

²⁴ For more on religion in colonial America, see: Randall Herbert Balmer, *A Perfect Babel of Confusion: Dutch Religion and English Culture in the Middle Colonies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989; Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990; Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster, *Empires of God: Religious Encounters in the Early Modern Atlantic*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011; Tracy Neal Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012; Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (Vol. I), New York, Penguin, 2001; John Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006.

William Penn and the Quakers



Portrait of William Penn.
Unknown (ca. 18th century)
From: [Wikimedia Commons](#)



William Penn - The First Draft of the Frame of Government, The Papers of William Penn, Volume Two (1680–1684), University of Pennsylvania.
Retrieved from: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The son of a naval admiral, William Penn became familiar with the teachings of the Quakers (also known as the Society of Friends), after hearing the speech of a Quaker preacher Thomas Loe. He soon became an outspoken critic of Anglican religious dogma and was imprisoned multiple times for his iconoclastic remarks. Penn wrote 42 books and pamphlets about Quakerism during the first few years of his conversion and using his aristocratic connections and legal training he freed hundreds of people imprisoned for their religious beliefs. Imagining a utopian society free of state oppression of religious freedom, he was granted a charter in the New World from the English King Charles II, and founded Pennsylvania, which he called his “Holy Experiment.” As a governor, Penn dedicatedly protected the rights of the freedom of religion.

Sources: [Brittanica](#).

Additional Resources

- [Pennsylvania Heritage Magazine](#)
- [US History \[dot\] org on William Penn](#)
- [PBS.org on William Penn](#)
- [Patheos on Quakers](#)
- [University of Virginia on Penn and Native Americans](#)
- [Library of Congress: America's Library of William Penn \(interactive tool\)](#)
- [NPS on Penn and religious freedom](#)
- [Library of Congress on Penn](#)
- [State Museum of Pennsylvania on William Penn](#)
- [By William Penn: No Cross, No Crown](#)
- [“The Quaker Ideal of Religious Tolerance” \(from University of Houston\)](#)

Articles

- [ThoughtCo on William Penn and religious tolerance, Berks-Mont Columns.](#)

fled Brazil after Portugal took the colony that had formerly been under Dutch rule. By the mid-18th century, there were approximately 2500 Jews living in the lands that would become the US.²⁵ There is ample evidence of Islam in America as a result of African slavery as early as the seventeenth century, though it is very difficult to estimate numbers of Muslims in this period, partly because of a lack of written sources available to historians.²⁶ Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, one enslaved Muslim African, was an exceptional case in this history. A Senegambian royal, Diallo was enslaved for several years in Maryland before his royal status was uncovered and he was able to be freed by his family's wealth.

Religion and Nativism in the Nineteenth Century

The first large waves of immigration to the US came in the form of Irish (and some German) immigrants in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the colonial period, the vast majority of immigrants hailed from England and Scotland; not so in the antebellum. This meant that at the same time as American Protestantism was facing massive changes because of the Second Great Awakening, immigration was quickly enlarging the Catholic population. In 1845, a potato famine devastated Ireland and spurred an exodus to the United States; from 1845-1854, 1.5 million Irish came to the US (mostly the Northeast), massively expanding the Catholic population.²⁷ As the Catholic church gained strength and visibility as an institution, its growth was accompanied by severe backlash in which nativism bolstered by anti-Catholicism endangered Catholic Americans and immigrants. Anti-Catholicism was deeply ingrained in the American religious fabric, beginning with the Puritans who first settled New England; they accused the Church of England of "popery" and saw the Catholic Church as corrupt, decadent, and even blasphemous. Even through the nineteenth century, many Americans saw the Church as part of a massive conspiracy to gain world control, or as a means of subjugating, enslaving, and exploiting its members in the service of its Pope and clergy.

There were two main strains of anti-Catholic sentiment in the antebellum period, which overlapped significantly: one was the deeply ingrained anti-Catholicism of the reform movement, which saw in Catholicism the corruption and hierarchy so antithetical to their project. In fact, many influential abolitionists, such as Lyman Beecher, were also anti-Catholic. Among reformers, anti-Catholic conspiracy theories were widely shared. Another significant strain was more directly nativist: Catholicism was associated with foreignness, especially that of the Irish, and as immigrants gained greater presence and political power, nativist groups emerged to try and squash them. In the 1850s, as political parties like the Know-Nothings ran on explicitly nativist and anti-immigrant platforms, anti-Catholic ideas became even more widespread.²⁸

Although immigration in the antebellum period reshaped American demographics, its numbers paled in comparison to the massive waves of (mostly European) immigration in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From 1880-1914, 23 million people poured into the US, including many from Southern and Eastern Europe, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of Catholics and Jews living in the US. At the time of the nation's founding, a mere two percent were Catholic. By 1850, in spite of large-scale Irish immigration, Catholics made up a relatively modest five percent. By 1906, their population had more than tripled, and 17 percent of the American population identified as Catholic.²⁹ Millions of German immigrants poured into the US in this period as well, including many Lutherans and some Catholics, who largely settled in the rural Midwest. The numbers of Jews also swelled notably: there were about 250,000 Jews living in the US in 1880—by 1920, there were four million. Economic and political difficulties in eastern Europe, in particular in the Russian Empire, drove Jewish immigration to the US.³⁰

25 William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654-1800*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

26 For more on enslaved Muslims, see: Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, New York University Press, 1998.

27 David M. Henkin, and Rebecca M. McLennan, *Becoming America: a History for the 21st Century*, McGraw-Hill Education, 2015, p. 317.

28 See Jason K. Duncan, *Citizens or Papists?: The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685-1821*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005; John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2003; James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.

29 Julie Byrne, "Roman Catholics and Immigration in Nineteenth-Century America," National Humanities Center, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/nromcath.htm>.

30 For more on immigration in this period, see: John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*, Indiana University Press, 1989; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Harvard University Press, 1998.

Islam in America



Iftar Meal. (2007). US Department of State.

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Contrary to diverse set of narratives that portray American Muslims as Arabs and immigrants, the roots of Islam in the US run deep into American soil. A large population of Muslims from West Africa (in particular, Senegal) brought their religion with them when they were sold as slaves. According to The Pluralism Project at Harvard University it is estimated that one to five million slaves were Muslim. The Pluralism Project also mentions that there are records of Muslims traveling to the New World centuries prior to Columbus famously mistaking the continent as India in 1492. While the state's repression of Islam is illuminated by the restrictive laws and regulations put in place during War on Terror, the resistance is exemplified by the role of Malcolm X in the Black Power Movement of the Civil Rights era.

Additional Resources

- [National Museum on African American History and Culture on African Muslims in Early America](#)
- [National Humanities Center's report on Islam in America by Thomas A. Tweed, Ph.D.](#)
- [The George Washington University on notable Muslim slaves in early America](#)
- [PBS on Islam in America](#)
- [PBS This Far by Faith: From Africa to America](#)

From Harvard [Pluralism Project](#)

- [Resources for Islam in America](#)
- [Timeline of Islam in America](#)
- [The first Muslims in America](#)
- [Teaching Tolerance on American Muslims](#)
- [Islamic Networks Group lesson plans for American Muslims today](#)

Media and Articles

- [Washington Post on 5 myths about Muslims in America, New York Times on Muslims in early America](#)
- [NYT on Hate Crimes against Muslims in America today](#)
- [CBS on Muslims in America \(compilation of articles\)](#)
- [NPR on Muslims in America: Telling their own stories, The Week on Muslims in America](#)
- [National Geographic on Muslims in current state America](#)
- [The Guardian on Islamophobia in the US.](#)

Statistics

- [Pew \(2018\) estimates on Muslims in America, Pew \(2017\) on Muslims in the US and around the world](#)
- [Pew resource \(compilation of reports on Muslim Americans\)](#)
- [PBS on Muslims in America by the numbers](#)
- [Gallup numbers on Islamophobia](#)
- [Human Rights Watch on Hate Crimes against Muslims](#)
- [ACLU on discrimination against Muslim women](#)

Immigration and Anti-Immigration Acts



From the Old to the New World, Harper's Weekly, (New York) November 7, 1874

Source: [Harper's Weekly](#)

At times, immigration to the US has been encouraged, while at other times, immigrants have been less than welcome. According to the USCIS, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and Alien Contract Labor laws (1885, 1887) were first federal laws that were designed to limit the number of immigrants of foreign laborers coming to the United States. Later, the Immigrant Act (1924) put a nationality quota, further limiting the kinds of immigrants allowed in the country. The quota was finally eliminated in 1940s. Today, the travel ban of the Trump administration echoes the past laws that limited settlement to certain national groups.



Immigrants carrying luggage, Ellis Island, New York

Source: Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014683246/>

Additional Resources

Photos and primary sources

- [Advertisement of Texas land for immigrants](#)
- [Newspaper covering Chinese Exclusion Act](#)
- [Sponsorship document of a Chinese American father to his son](#)
- [2015 Guide for New Immigrants by USCIS](#)
- [2017 Travel Ban Protest sign at JFK.](#)

Laws

- [Fairus.org on immigration laws](#)
- [USCIS on history of American immigration policies](#)
- [Library of Congress Chinese Exclusion Act primary docs](#)
- [Harvard library open collections on CEA](#)
- [2015 Pew report on changes in immigration laws/rules in history of the US](#)

History

- [History.com on US immigration before 1965](#)
- [Library of Congress on Jewish Migration](#)
- [PBS on European emigration \(nineteenth century\)](#)
- [Stanford Report on European migration \(twentieth century\)](#)
- [Population Reference Bureau on Catholicism and Immigration](#)
- [PBS: The Puritans, PBS: Faith in America timeline.](#)

Statistics

- [Migration Policy Institute: frequently requested immigration stats](#)
- [Pew \(2012\) Religious composition of immigrants in past 20 years.](#)

Articles

- [The Guardian on 'Muslim Ban'](#)
- [VOA News on US History of immigration](#)
- [National Humanities Center on Catholicism and Immigration](#)

Other

- [Eligibility guide for Permanent residency \(green card\) request on American Immigration Council](#)
- [Southern Poverty Law Center on Anti-immigrant hate groups.](#)

Parliament of the World's Religions



Chicago Meeting 1893, Unknown

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The first Parliament of the World's Religions was organized in 1893 in Chicago. This convening is often credited as a catalyst for the world inter-faith movement. The second meeting of the Parliament only occurred 100 years after the first event, and since then, there were five more meetings of the Parliament in various places in the world, working on issues of religious tolerance, peace, justice.

Sources: [Berkley Center – Georgetown Univ.](#), [Parliament of the World's Religions](#).

Additional Resources

- [Parliament of the World's Religions, Berkley Center](#)
- [Georgetown University on 1893 and 1993](#)
- [Boston University's Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia on Western Theology on Parliament of World Religions](#)
- [Harvard's Pluralism Project on Parliament of World Religions \(2015\)](#)
- [Harvard's Pluralism Project on 1893 Parliament of World Religions](#)
- [Christian Research Institute on the 1993 Parliament](#)
- [EBSCO on Parliament of World Religions 1893-2015](#)
- [National Catholic Reporter \(Sister Joan Chittister's diary\) on 2009 PoWR](#)
- [McGill University on Parliament of World Religions 2018 \(to be held in Toronto\)](#)
- [Australian Baha'i Community on Youths in Parliament of World Religions](#)
- [Encyclopedia of Chicago](#)
- [Historical source on 1st Parliament of World Religions](#)
- [Articles: Religion News: Parliament of World Religions and inclusion of Mormons in 2015](#)
- [Time.com on Parliament of World Religions and gender politics](#)
- [The Daily Universe \(BYU\) on Parliament of World Religions and Islam](#)
- [Huffington Post on Parliament of World Religions in SLC](#)
- [National Geographic on 1st Parliament of World Religions](#)

Asian immigrants have been conspicuously absent in this narrative so far, largely because they faced unique challenges and restrictions in the US. In the mid-1800s, many Chinese immigrants arrived on the West Coast to work on railroads in the wake of the 1849 discovery of gold in California. These immigrants naturally brought their religion with them to their new home. The first Buddhist temple was founded in San Francisco in 1853. In 1875 and 1882, Asians became targets of the first restrictive immigration policies—the Page Act and the Chinese Exclusion Act, as nativist sentiment grew on the West Coast. While these acts dramatically reduced Asian immigration, it was almost completely barred in 1917 and 1924, when restrictive policies treated immigrants from Asia with special harshness.³¹

In 1917 and again in 1924, immigration in the US came to a halt. In the wake of the nativist swell that accompanied World War I, Congress passed the most extensive anti-immigration bill in American history to that point: the Immigration Act of 1917, which passed despite president Woodrow Wilson's veto. This law explicitly barred anyone from the "Asiatic zone" from entering the country, and instituted literacy tests for all immigrants. In 1924, Congress doubled-down on its restrictive policy with the passage of the Johnson-Reed, or National Origins, Act. This act set quotas for immigration, and effectively invented the category of the "illegal immigrant."³² This act continued the total ban on Asian immigration to the US, and set quotas for immigrants from all other countries to two percent of that nation's population as recorded in the 1890 census. Significantly, in 1890 America had not yet seen the impact of the massive numbers of European immigration. The US did not radically break with this system until 1965. Accordingly, numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and other non-Abrahamic religions would stay at relatively low numbers until the 1970s.

Mexican immigration looked very different. Large-scale immigration from Mexico began with the instability brought on by the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920.) Mexicans were exempt from the strict quotas affecting other groups created by the 1924 immigration act. Largely at the behest

of the agricultural lobby who opposed the restriction of Mexican immigration because of their reliance on labor from that country, the Western Hemisphere was exempt from the act. Though many Mexicans were deported during the Great Depression, their numbers shot up during World War II thanks to the Bracero program, which brought Mexicans to the US in response to the labor shortage of the war. These laborers were in a precarious situation, as they could be deported at any time and were often subject to poor work conditions and low wages. The Bracero program continued until 1964, bringing millions of laborers to the US.³³

Even if non-Christian religions remained relatively limited in their demographic representation, the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago represented a significant moment in the history of interfaith dialogue and inclusion of minority religious groups in the conversation. The Parliament, as part of the massive Columbian Exposition that marked the 400-year anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas, was meant to showcase the diversity of world religions, though it was largely composed of Christians. Still, there were representatives from many religious traditions, including branches of Buddhism, Hinduism, and new movements such as Christian Science. At this meeting, the Reverend Henry Jessup became the first person in the US to discuss the Baha'i faith.³⁴

As new arrivals changed the demographic profile of the nation, they introduced new religious practices and traditions which enriched the US. At the same time, immigration increasingly became the subject of controversy and eventually restrictions by the government. This interplay of religious flourishing and repression continues to affect the immigrant experience and the religious life of America to this day.

31 For more on anti-Chinese sentiment, see Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*, University of North Carolina Press, 2003 and Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

32 For more on Johnson-Reed and the category of "illegal aliens," see May Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton University Press, 2004.

33 For more on this, see George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, Oxford University Press, 1993; David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*, University of California Press, 1995.

34 See also: Richard Hughes Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter*, Chicago, 1893, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

American Religions amid Radical Transformations (1924-2001)

Defining a New Hegemony: Judeo-Christian Identity in the Context of War and Immigration Restriction (1920s-1965)

From around 1920 until the 1960s, the American religious landscape experienced transformations that were in large part the result of an increasing native-born population in the wake of restrictive immigration policy. World War I brought on urgent questions of belonging, exclusion, and what constituted American identity. After this, World War II and the decrease of newcomers encouraged a more inclusive yet homogenous sense of American religious identity in the form of Judeo-Christianity. This, partly, allowed for the entry of Jews and Catholics increasingly into the mainstream: by the 1960s, Jews held high level positions in business and academia, for instance, that they would never have dreamed of before, and the first ever Catholic president was elected in 1960. How did people in this period define who was an American? Why might decreased immigration lead to the formation of new American identities? How did wars and geopolitics affect religion's place in American politics?

Beginning in earnest during World War I, immigrant communities were the subject of "Americanization" efforts. Americanization entailed attempts to erase ethnic difference through enforcing English language instruction, teaching immigrants American customs, and encouraging immigrants to abandon social and cultural customs from their countries of origin. Such efforts echoed earlier ones to censure the practice of American Indian culture in the nineteenth century. This pressure to conform to certain standards of American assimilation accompanied intense anti-German sentiment, as well as a longer tradition that associated radicalism with immigrants and

which seemed especially dangerous in the context of World War. In the 1920s and 1930s, the US (and the world) saw the rise of far-right, nativist, and fascist groups that put religion, ethnicity, and race at the forefront of their political and social agendas. In the United States, the Ku Klux Klan saw a resurgence from about 1915-1925.³⁵ Unlike the post-Civil War Klan, this incarnation was widespread in the North and West, as well as in the South. It was also more capacious in its ire, targeting not only African Americans but also Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and liberals.

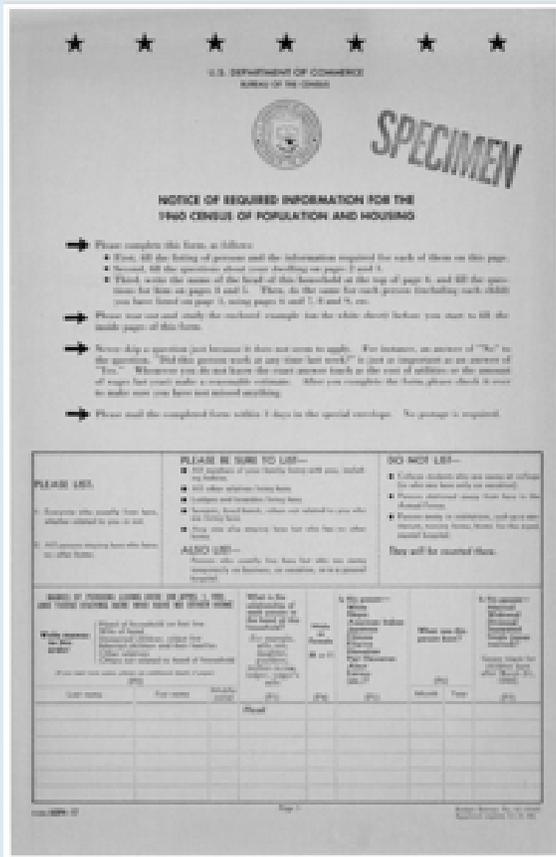
Having immigrated in large numbers since the 1870s, Jews throughout the twentieth century asserted outsized influence in America, though they were also targets of repression. The historian David Hollinger has written of the significance of Jewish intellectuals in reducing the Christian influence in academia and in other forms of public and cultural life.³⁶ Jews were the first non-Christian group to attain status and high-ranking positions in the arts, sciences, business, and other areas, although they often faced discrimination for their beliefs and because of damaging stereotypes about Jewish people. For instance, many elite colleges instituted quotas in the 1920s and 1930s, with an aim of excluding Jewish applicants, who had become proportionally overrepresented at these institutions.³⁷ Some prominent Christians espoused anti-Semitic sentiments freely—including

35 See Kelly Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011.

36 See David Sehat, "Political Atheism: The Secularization and Liberalization of American Public Life," *Modern Intellectual History*, 2018; David Hollinger, *Science, Jews and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Century Intellectual History*, Princeton University Press, 1996.

37 See Jonathan Cole, *The Great American University*, PublicAffairs, 2012, p. 524 fn. 32.

US Census and Religion



The US Census has never included a question on religion. In that, the US strongly differs from the UK or France, where this information is collected by the state. The US census collected information on religious groups in 1850-1936, but never on individuals. In 1956, there was a proposal to adopt a question on religion for the general population in the 1960 Census, which caused great controversy. According to historian K.M. Schultz, the Jewish population opposed the initiative, as it was reminiscent of registries during the Holocaust. In contrast, Catholics favored including such a question, as they thought it would reflect their growing numbers and thus increase their potential influence and visibility. In the end, the question was never included in the census.

Source: <https://acmcu.georgetown.edu/a-question-on-religion>

Front page of 1960 Census, from Census.gov.

Additional Resources

- [Statistical Abstract of the United States 2012 \(incl. Religion\)](#)
- [Pew RC on Census and Religion](#)
- [Pew Research Center on why the US Census does not ask about religion](#)
- [Hartford Institute's Sources for Religious Data that are not US Census](#)
- [1960 Census from Census.gov](#)
- [A profile on Conrad Taeuber \(strong proponent of the question\)](#)

Article

- [Georgetown University on religion in the US Census](#)

Database

- [Duke Religious Database](#)

famed radio preacher Father Coughlin and Ford Motors founder Henry Ford. This is one indication that these sentiments were fairly mainstream.

Though antisemitism was common, and immigration restriction and racist nativist movements were on the rise, some Americans were emphasizing a different image of American society: in 1924, for instance, (Jewish) philosopher Horace Kallen coined the phrase “cultural pluralism” to emphasize that active celebration, not just tolerance, of difference should define American way of life.³⁸ In many ways, this pluralism was the reality, as ethnic enclaves remained vibrant in big American cities. At the same time, popular culture could have an assimilating effect, as movies and radio (in English) were experienced by Americans of many different backgrounds.³⁹ Oftentimes other marginalized but established religious groups, including Catholic and Jewish organizations, served as important allies for immigrants’ First Amendment rights.

In addition to lower immigration, the global threat of fascism encouraged President Franklin Roosevelt and others to promote the idea of national unity through religious pluralism. In the 1930s, Roosevelt invoked and popularized the phrase “Judeo-Christianity” in response to the antisemitism of the Nazis, and to encourage a unified sense of identity among the nation’s Catholics, Jews, and Protestant Christians. The concept gained some currency with liberal Protestant theologians, and then came into wide use during and after World War II, hitting a high point in the 1950s.⁴⁰ Sociologist Will Herberg’s best-selling 1955 book *Catholic-Protestant-Jew* claimed that projections of “cultural pluralism” had not been borne out, as the “American Way of Life” had come to stand in for ethnic difference. He argued that the US was now a three-religion nation, as religion became a more important marker than ethnicity. A plurality of religions, though, had maintained some autonomy. Significantly, Herberg framed the American way of life as a form of civil religion, a set of common transcendent values—including in the political and economic realms—that stood alongside pre-existing religious identities.

Not every group equally accepted the notion of American pluralism in the form of Judeo-Christianity; evangelicals in particular resisted the implication that the US was not a foremost (Protestant) Christian nation, and unsuccessfully sought to enshrine specific recognition for Christians in US law. This was part of a longer history of attempts at a “Christian Amendment,” first begun during the Civil War, to include explicitly Christian language in a constitutional Amendment. In 1954, those in favor of a Christian amendment suggested the following language: “This nation devoutly recognises the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Savior and Ruler of all nations, through whom are bestowed the blessings of Almighty God.”⁴¹ This amendment did not pass, but it shows the persistent belief of some groups that America is at its core a Christian nation.

The emergence of Judeo-Christianity as a concept accompanied two other related historical developments: the 1950s saw both the highest levels of religiosity—including by measures of church attendance and self-identification—and lower levels of exclusive Protestant dominance. Catholics and Jews both experienced upward mobility after World War II, as a result of postwar prosperity, federal assistance granted in part by the passage of the GI bill, and the lessening of barriers in education and politics, to name a few reasons. In addition to the many contributions of American Jews noted above, increasing Catholic visibility and successes made clear the multifaceted nature of the American religious landscape. One debate that highlights the significance of religious identity in this period and the state’s efforts recognize these identities—to make them legible—was the struggle over whether or not to include, for the first time, religious identification as a category on the 1960 census.⁴²

The 1950s also saw a resurgence in American Civil Religion, which took on special resonance in the context of the Cold War, which was framed as a fight between righteous, religious Americans and the “godless” Communists.⁴³ President

38 For more, see: Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.

39 See Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

40 Gene Zubovich, “The Strange, Short Career of Judeo-Christianity”, *Aeon*, March 22, 2016.

41 *ibid.*

42 See also K.M. Schultz, “Religion as Identity in Postwar America: The Last Serious Attempt to Put a Question on Religion in the United States Census,” *Journal of American History*, September 2006.

43 See: Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Knopf, 2012, and Rohnit Stahl, *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion & State in Modern America* (Harvard University Press, 2017).

Eisenhower welcomed the intense religiosity and embraced an ecumenical stance, in which religion—though not one specific religion, per se—constituted an essential part of American identity. He famously claimed in 1952 that “our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don’t care what it is.”⁴⁴

One concrete example of this shift, for instance, is the addition in 1954 of the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance.⁴⁵ It was in the context of Cold War anxieties and high religious affiliation that evangelical preacher Billy Graham got his start; he led the first of his crusades in 1947, and his influence as a preacher grew from the 1950s onward. He is one of the most visible figures in twentieth century evangelical Christianity, having preached to millions of people and had private audience with most sitting US presidents since Truman. Graham’s tremendous popularity and visibility speaks to the increased role of evangelicals in public life in the second half of the twentieth century.

Exploration and Mobilization in the 1960s

Radical social and political change in the 1960s and 1970s altered Americans’ outlook on different forms of religion, as did the arrival of huge numbers of immigrants from non-European countries after 1965. At the same time, the US saw a major surge in the numbers of religious “nones”, i.e. the religiously unaffiliated, such as humanists, agnostics and atheists. In addition, this period saw the wider-scale and more visible interest in Eastern religions, such as Zen Buddhism, Hare Krishna, and transcendental meditation, as many in the counter-culture felt the pull of eastern mysticism. What were the major demographic trends in this period? How did religion serve as an important basis for some of the political and social movements in the 1960s?

African American religion flourished, as the Civil Rights Movement demonstrated the longstanding centrality of the black church to social and political organizing, and the language of prophetic religion helped frame the black freedom struggle in universal terms and endow it with transcendent significance. The Civil Rights Movement’s most famous leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., was a devout Baptist minister. He not only used prophetic language to motivate followers and allies, but he and

other activists used African American churches as meeting places, sites to facilitate communication and organization, and as community centers.⁴⁶ The subsequent Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s inspired interest in pan-African religious practices and traditions. Islam also became an important force in black religious life in the twentieth century, as an alternative to the Black Church.⁴⁷ Though Islam has existed in America since slaves were first brought to the continent from West Africa, in the twentieth century groups like the Nation of Islam brought new political resonance to the religion in their blend of Muslim theology and radical pro-black politics. Throughout the twentieth century, many African Americans also converted to Islam, and by the 1960s, converts like Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali were household names, both for their religious proclivities and for their radical calls for black self-determination. Like Christianity, African American Islam has included a capacious set of practices and groups: Malcolm X famously broke with the controversial Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad in 1964 and became a Sunni Muslim. The increasing visibility of the Black Church on the national stage in the 1950s and 1960s and the growth of Islam represented larger shifts in black politics, from Civil Rights to Black Power by the end of the 1960s.⁴⁸

In contrast to the high religiosity of the 1950s, many Americans moved away from religion in the 1960s and 1970s. This came as a result of both internal struggles in Protestantism and the immense political and social changes that in part caused this schism. The unaffiliated, or “nones,” although bonded by a modern antipathy, indifference or lesser commitment to religion, came from a variety of origins. One major source was former non-evangelical protestants. Mainline and evangelical churches inherited, in some ways, the fundamentalist-modernist debate of the early twentieth century, and harbored growing animosity as major questions of the 1960s—brought on by the civil rights and black power movements, the Vietnam War, and the sexual revolution—brought

44 “Quotes,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum, and Boyhood Home, https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/quotes.html.

45 See also: Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, Basic Books, 2015.

46 See also David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*, University of North Carolina Press, 2005; Barbara Dianne Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion*, Harvard University Press, 2012.

47 See Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of Black Muslims in the Americas*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

48 For more on this, see Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*, Harvard University Press, 2004.

Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.



Retrieved from: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92522562/>.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X were two icons of the struggle for civil rights for African Americans in the 60s. While both men believed in fighting for the rights of Black Americans, they used different approaches, especially when they began their careers in public life in the 1950s. Their respective legacies have also proceeded along very different tracks. Malcolm X is most remembered as the fiery separatist and Black nationalist, in contrast to King's revered status as an icon of peaceful protest. It is not clear, however, that this sort of dichotomy is always helpful or accurate in describing differences between the two, as they both were nuanced thinkers and changed throughout their careers.

Additional Resources

- [Lesson Plans on MLK, Jr. and Malcolm X from Stanford's Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute](#)
- [World History Project on the meeting of MLK, Jr. and Malcolm X](#)
- [Smithsonian American Museum of the Art on Malcolm X and MLK, Jr.](#)
- [University of Houston Lesson Plan on MLK, Jr. and Malcolm X](#)
- [Rutgers University presentation on MLK, Jr. and Malcolm X with images](#)

Martin Luther King, Jr.

- [History.com on MLK, Jr.](#)
- [Stanford's Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute on Southern Conference Leadership Conference](#)
- [FBI records on Southern Conference Leadership Conference](#)
- [The King Center on MLK, Jr.](#)
- [Nobel Prize Website on King](#)
- [Time on MLK, Jr. and peaceful protests](#)

Malcolm X

- [US History.org on Malcolm X and Nation of Islam](#)
- [Southern Poverty Law Center on Nation of Islam](#)
- [FBI records on Nation of Islam](#)
- [Smithsonian channel on Malcolm X's tapes](#)
- [The Guardian on Malcolm X](#)
- [The Atlantic on Malcolm X](#)

Speeches and Letters

- ["The Ballot or the Bullet" by Malcolm X](#)
- ["Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by MLK, Jr.](#)

Articles & Media

- [CNN on Malcolm X and MLK, Jr.](#)
- ["The Unfinished Dialogue of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X" by Clayborne Carson \(Columbia University\)](#)
- [YouTube: MLK, Jr. and Malcolm X debate](#)

them to very different conclusions. Many—though not all—evangelicals doubled down on a commitment to traditionalist conservative values, while the mainline tacked left. Mainline sects hemorrhaged members in the late 1960s and early 1970s, creating a new demographic of “post-Protestants”: those who grew up in mainline Protestant sects but left their churches in the wake of personal and social changes since the 1960s.⁴⁹ This group, as well as so-called lapsed Catholics and irreligious Jews, greatly increased the number of “nones.” This group is now among the fastest growing religious groups in the nation: according to Pew, fully 24 percent of the nation now identifies itself with the nones, a steep increase over the last 50 years.

Beyond Judeo-Christian America: Immigration from 1965⁵⁰

Both the Civil Rights Movement at home and geopolitical pressures from abroad put pressure on the US government to loosen its restrictive immigration policies in the mid-1960s, and in 1965 congress passed the Nationality and Immigration Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act.⁵¹ The act did away with national origin quotas, allowed immigration of family members and specially skilled immigrants, and effectively ended official race-based immigration restriction. Liberal proponents of the bill, like Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy, assured congress and the public that the act would have a limited effect on the demographic makeup of the United States; this was a severe miscalculation. The act would in fact trigger one of the largest-scale immigration waves in American history. In 1970s, Asian immigration, which had formerly been very limited, swelled to 40 percent of all immigration to the US. This brought huge numbers of Buddhists and Muslims, as well as many more Christians of non-European descent.

In the 45 years since Hart-Celler was passed, almost 38 million immigrants have come to the US, with the largest numbers being from Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Asia.⁵² When the law was passed, under 10 million people in the U.S. were born elsewhere; today, that number is a record 45 million.⁵³ Immigration since 1965 has actually exceeded, in numbers, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century influx that so reshaped American society. Asians now make up a greater proportion of the population (6 percent), but Hispanics are by far the biggest single immigrant group. Since the 1980s, immigration from Mexico has grown immensely. Thousands of Mexicans, including many undocumented immigrants, cross the border each year. In the last ten years, however, migration from Mexico has slowed significantly, due to a number of political and economic factors.

The dramatic increase in immigration since 1965 has had a serious impact on the religious landscape of the United States. There is no doubt that Hart-Celler increased the numbers of many religious groups, including Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. New arrivals have also increased the numbers and styles of diverse forms of Christianity.⁵⁴ Immigrants from Latin America, for instance, lean heavily Catholic and Pentecostal. The Catholic Church in America has a heavy immigrant base, with 28 percent of Catholics identifying as immigrants, and another 15 percent being the children of immigrants.⁵⁵ One major shift has been the decreased demographic dominance of white Christians who are no longer the majority in this country; as Robert P. Jones, head of the Public Religion Research Institute, has deemed our current moment the “end of white Christian America” in his 2016 book by that title. We will look at these trends further in the last section of this brief.

Evangelicals and American Politics

While some Americans were moving away from religious organizations, evangelicals and fundamentalists saw their numbers and political power

49 See David Hollinger, “The Accommodation of Protestant Christianity with the Enlightenment: an Old Drama Still Being Enacted,” in *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History*, Princeton University Press, 2013.

50 See more: J. Zong et al., “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigration,” Migration Policy Institute, February 8, 2018, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>, “The Religious Affiliation of US Immigrants,” Pew Research Center, May 17, 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/05/17/the-religious-affiliation-of-us-immigrants/>.

51 D.S. Fitzgerald and D. Cook-Martin. “Geopolitical Origins of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965,” Migration Policy Institute, February 5, 2018, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/geopolitical-origins-us-immigration-act-1965>.

52 Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, W.W. Norton, 2012, p. 1087.

53 “Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065,” Pew Research Center, September 28, 2015, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>.

54 Numbers and Cohen, eds., *Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States*, “Introduction,” p. 8. Oxford UP, 2013.

55 “A Closer Look at Catholic America,” Pew Research Center, September 14, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/14/a-closer-look-at-catholic-america/>.

Nones



Gerry Dantone of NYC Atheists Godless Americans March on Washington. The Rally. National Mall. Saturday, 2 November 2002.
Source: Wikimedia Commons (by user TwoWings)

Additional Resources

Statistics

- [Pew Research Center report on “nones” \(2017, 2016, 2015\)](#),
- [Pew RC report on religiosity in the 115th Congress](#)
- [American Family Survey 2017 \(Brigham Young University\)](#)
- [Gallup Poll on Religiosity 2017, General Social Survey 2014 \(Hout and Smith\)](#).

Other

- [Profile of “Nones” in America \(Trinity College\)](#)
- [National Geographic on Worldwide Nones](#)
- [NPR on nones, Religion Dispatches on Nones](#)
- [USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture on Nones](#)

Atheist Political Cartoonist Watson Heston (selections of his comics)*

- [Biblical contradictions](#)
- [Looking Out for Number One \(the Priest\)](#)
- [A Pertinent Question](#)

* limited share—non commercial shares allowed

Evangelicals and the Law



2009 March for Life in Washington D.C. by John Stephen Dwyer
Retrieved from [Wikimedia Commons](#). [Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike License 3.0](#).

A series of fraught legal cases drove evangelical action in the public sphere, especially in response to perceived federal incursion into the rights of religious people. Sexual and gender politics were central: most famously, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion, and helped forge a coalition of evangelicals and conservative Catholics who opposed the decision. Many evangelicals forcefully denounced born-again president Jimmy Carter's support of the Equal Rights Amendment, citing the value of traditional gender roles in the family. Education also proved an intensely meaningful issue and led to an increased evangelical mistrust of the federal government. First, several rulings in the early and mid-1960s, including *Engel v. Vitale* (1961), effectively ended prayer and bible reading in schools. Then, in 1976, the IRS revoked Bob Jones University's tax-exempt status because of racially discriminatory practices, in the case of *Bob Jones University v. the United States*.

Additional Resources

- [Pew Research on *Roe v. Wade*—40 years later](#),
- [NPR on religion and abortion](#)
- [Planned Parenthood on *Roe v. Wade*](#)
- [United States court's educational resource on *Engel v. Vitale*](#)
- [Oyez, Cornell University's legal archive, with resources on *Engel v. Vitale* and](#)
- [Oyez on Bob Jones](#)
- [Berkley center \(Georgetown University\) on *Bob Jones Univ. v. the US*](#)

Movies

- [God's Next Army](#)

increase significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. Evangelicals, though strong in numbers, had largely stayed out of national and local politics for the better part of the mid-century period. Beginning largely in the 1950s, and continuing through the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, evangelicals built their own counterculture, including parallel educational, publishing, campus-based organizations. This network, a massive swelling in their numbers during the 1970s, and a fraught political and cultural climate set up evangelicals to become a powerful political force.⁵⁶ Why did evangelicals reenter the political arena in this period, and how did they do so? What political issues motivated them?

According to Newsweek Magazine, 1976 was the “year of the evangelical.” In retrospect, this might seem a reasonable nomination: by then, their numbers had skyrocketed, the nation would elect the first born-again president, Jimmy Carter, and evangelical political organization was proceeding at a rapid rate. The late 1970s were indeed a critical time for the politicization of the evangelical movement, specifically in terms of the rise of the religious right. Though they initially showed support, throughout his presidency evangelicals abandoned Carter for his liberal feelings on foreign policy, women’s rights, and race. High profile preachers, most notably Jerry Falwell, were hard at work mobilizing evangelical constituencies for the Republican Party. After expressing ambivalence about the presence of evangelicals in politics in the 1960s, Falwell founded the Moral Majority in 1979. This organization would prove to be of tremendous importance to Ronald Reagan and the continued mobilization of Christian activists. Although evangelicals might have rejected some aspects of modern ‘secular’ culture, they did not reject modern forms of organizing or the harnessing of technology to spread their message. In 1977, the reverend Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcast Network got its own cable channel; its flagship program, the 700 Club, is the longest-running show on television.

While it is clear that since the 1960s most of the concerted, organized energy of the evangelical constituency has been in the service of conservative goals, evangelicals have never been a homogenous group.⁵⁷ In politics, though, many evangelicals have often proven themselves resistant to change, whether in the case of amending the meaning of marriage, accepting novel gender arrangements, or supporting civil rights legislation. Evangelical conservative mobilization was indispensable for Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election to the presidency. Where Carter had won 56 percent of Southern Baptists in the 1976 presidential race, Reagan won that same number against Carter in 1980. The move of so many evangelicals back to the Republican party solidified a trend that had been in the making for decades, and also partly reflects the success of the “Southern Strategy” first attempted by Richard Nixon to wrench, once and for all, the hold of the Democratic party on the south.⁵⁸ Reagan’s actions and message resonated with his evangelical base, in a reflection of the recent trend of the rise of the religious right, but also relying on the longer history of American Civil Religion. He often used religious imagery in his speeches, and cast the continuing Cold War with the Soviet Union in terms of a divinely sanctioned mission between the God-fearing US and the atheistic communists. He was the first presidential nominee to utter the words “God Bless America,” and the first to close a State of the Union Address in that way. The Christian Right thrived throughout the 1980s, though their influence diminished somewhat during the presidency of Bill Clinton.

During the presidency of George W. Bush, evangelicals remained a major force on the national political stage, in the context of both domestic and international political shifts. In 2000, white evangelicals voted for Bush in record numbers—about 80 percent—over Al Gore, his Democratic challenger. By this election, the Christian Right represented a major part of the conservative coalition, and Bush’s message of faith-based “compassionate conservatism” resonated with large swaths of evangelicals who assisted his narrow electoral victories. Further, in the wake of the devastating attacks on September 11th, 2001, Bush often framed his responses in biblical or religious terms,

56 For more on evangelicals and political mobilization, see Axel Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicals from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right*, Oxford University Press, 2011; Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, Oxford University Press, 2013; John G. Turner, Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: *The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America*, Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 2008; Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*, Simon and Schuster, 2017.

57 David Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in the Age of Conservatism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

58 Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.

such as in a speech given on the day of the attacks in which he quoted Psalm 23: 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me.'⁵⁹ A few days later, he established September 14 as a National Day of Prayer. These examples echo earlier deployments of American Civil Religion, though many of Bush's proclamations seem particularly Christian. Still, there is a similarity in the use of religious imagery and language in the service of encouraging national unity. Though in some ways Bush was harkening back to a long tradition of religious language in political discourse, he also faced much criticism from proponents of the separation of church and state, who accused him of allowing religion into the political sphere in inappropriate or unconstitu-

tional ways. Last, it is important to remember that Bush's religious (or Christian) references post-9/11 came in the context of a renewed attention to global Islam. Though Bush himself encouraged the acceptance and support of American Muslims—for instance visiting the Islamic Center in Washington in the days after the attacks—Western anxieties over Islamic terrorism encouraged ideas about the “clash of civilizations” between Islam and the West. Though this thesis was first conceived by political scientist Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1997), it gained currency particularly in conservative circles after 9/11.

59 For this quote and more on faith and the Bush presidency, see Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Contemporary Religious Landscape

THE CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS landscape in the United States is, of course, the product of a long and complex history. Although continuities with the past are clear, today we see several realities of the American religious landscape that would be surprising if not unimaginable to Americans just a couple generations ago. The main theme that runs throughout is the increasing diversity—ethnic and religious—of the United States. This has prompted changes at several levels: structural, cultural, and political. One dramatic outcome has been the end of the White Protestant majority in the US. This has been largely attributed to, and has resulted in, an increase in the religiously unaffiliated and the increasing ethnic diversity of American Christianity. Though not all of these changes have been welcomed by everyone, as we see in instances of Islamophobia or anti-Semitism, for example, it is clear that the profile of America will continue to diversify.

The Decline of the White Christian Majority in the US

In his 2016 book, *The End of White Christian America*, Robert P. Jones of the Public Religion Research Institute makes a convincing case for the end of demographic dominance by the United States' historical majority. Though Christians overall still represent a majority of Americans their numbers have fallen significantly even just in the last 10 or so years, from 78 percent in 2007 to about 70 percent in 2014. Protestantism has lost especially significant numbers: while 63 percent of Americans in 1974 identified as Protestants, that number is 47 percent as of 2014. Strikingly, this decline has been mostly attributable to the shrinkage of white Protestants as a percentage of the US population. While for the entire twentieth cen-

tury, over half of the nation identified as white Protestants, that group today represents a dramatically smaller 32 percent. On the other hand, percentages of African American Protestants have generally held steady, and Protestant Hispanics have made modest but proportionately significant numeric gains.⁶⁰ Overall, the story of the drastically declining membership of mainline Protestant denominations is familiar, as it has been happening since the 1960s. What has been more startling to researchers is the smaller and more recent decline in membership among predominantly white evangelical congregations. This seems to indicate a larger shift of white Americans away from Protestantism to non-belief or non-affiliation. Catholics have also seen their numbers slightly shrink, from about 24 percent to about 21 percent of the population. Perhaps one factor in the relative steadiness of the Catholics is that Catholics today are more likely than any other group⁶¹ to be immigrants or the children of immigrants.

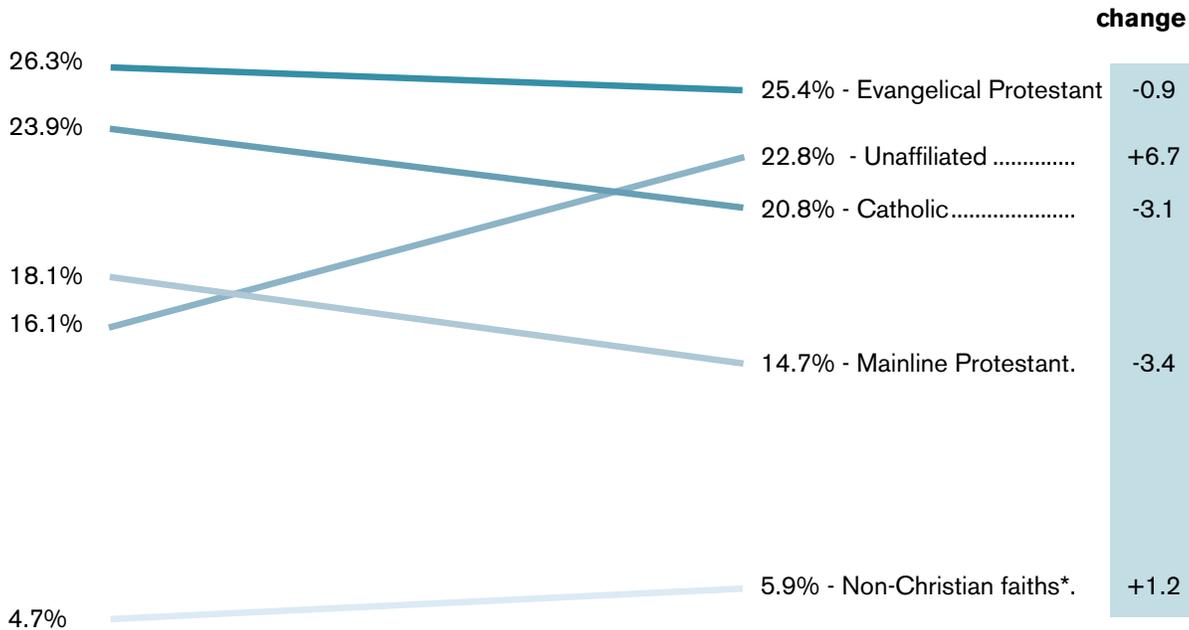
In sum, two main causes of the end of the demographic majority of white Protestants are: the increasing ethnic, thus religious, diversity of the United States as a whole and the rising number of people, in particular young people, who are leaving the churches of their youth becoming unaffiliated. It is in this context as well that issues of Islamophobia and Antisemitism have become more salient.

60 Robert P. Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, Simon & Schuster, 2017, pp. 50-51.

61 "A Closer Look at Catholic America," Pew Research Center, September 14, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/14/a-closer-look-at-catholic-america/>

Changing US Religious Landscape

Between 2007 and 2014, the Christian share of the population fell from 78.4% to 70.6%, driven mainly by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics. The unaffiliated experienced the most growth, and the share of Americans who belong to non-Christian faiths also increased.



* Includes Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, other world religions and other faiths. Those who did not answer the religious identity question, as well as groups whose share of the population did not change significantly, including the historically black Protestant tradition, Mormons and others, are not shown.

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30 2014

PEW Research Center

Ethnic Diversity of American Christianity

The United States is becoming more diverse. Pew predicts⁶² that by 2055, there will be no ethnic or racial majority in the US. Since the Hart-Celler Act reformed immigration in 1965, the number of immigrants living in the United States has tripled, rapidly and dramatically increasing the diversity of the US as many immigrants from Asia, as well as Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, have arrived. This has had an immense impact not only on religious diversity, as more Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have joined the American fold,

but it has also importantly shaped the profile of American Christianity. While non-Hispanic whites have declined as a percent of American Christians (see above), Hispanics have increased⁶³ as a percentage of mainline Protestants, evangelical Protestants, and Catholics.

But while American Christianity as a whole is becoming more diverse, individual churches have remained fairly homogenous. Martin Luther King, Jr. once famously said that 11 o'clock on Sunday morning was the most segregated hour in America, suggesting the complex knot of racial and religious identity that has defined the American experience. Since the turn of the century in particular, many historically white congrega-

62 D. Cohn and A. Caumont, "10 demographic trends that are shaping the U.S. and the world," Pew Research Center, March 31, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/>

63 "America's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/america-changing-religious-landscape/>.

Catholics More Likely Than Other Americans to Be Hispanic, Immigrants

Between 2007 and 2014, the Christian share of the population fell from 78.4% to 70.6%, driven mainly by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics. The unaffiliated experienced the most growth, and the share of Americans who belong to non-Christian faiths also increased.

Race, Ethnicity



Immigration



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30 2014. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Whites include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

PEW Research Center

tions like the Southern Baptist Convention have espoused a desire to put racial animus in the past, and to move forward with the integration of churches. It seems that some positive changes have followed: according to one study⁶⁴ from 2012, one-in-five Americans say that they worship in a congregation where no ethnic or racial group predominates. While there is still a large degree of racial segregation along religious lines, it seems that this might be changing as a norm in the US.⁶⁵

64 Michael Lipka, "Many U.S. congregations are still racially segregated, but things are changing," Pew Research Center, December 12, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/08/many-u-s-congregations-are-still-rationally-segregated-but-things-are-changing-2/>.

65 But some sources indicate that this trend could be rolled back. For further reading, see: Campbell Robertson, "A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches," The New York Times, March 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/blacks-evangelical-churches.html> and T. Campolo and S. Claiborne, "The Evangelicalism

Rise of the Nones

Another huge factor affecting the changing religious landscape in the U.S. has been the rise of "nones," or the unaffiliated. Nones now make up nearly a quarter of the population (22.8 percent according to Pew⁶⁶ in 2014). Their numbers are not just rising dramatically, but quickly: in 2007, only about 16 percent of Americans identified as unaffiliated. There is some debate about whether these numbers reflect a genuine shift, or is the result of changing attitudes around affiliation. Pew found⁶⁷,

of Old White Men Is Dead," The New York Times, November 29, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/opinion/the-evangelicalism-of-old-white-men-is-dead.html>.

66 "America's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015. Accessed on May 10, 2018: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

67 Gregory A. Smith and Cooperman, A, "The Factors Driving the Growth of Religious 'Nones' in the U.S.," Pew Research

Half of 'nones' left childhood faith over lack of belief, one-in-five cite dislike of organized religion

Reasons for disaffiliating among those who were raised in a religion and are currently...

	NET Unaffiliated	Atheist	Agnostic	Nothing in particular
NET Don't believe	49	82	63	37
Disenchanted/don't believe	36	71	46	25
Not interested in/don't need religion	7	3	8	7
Views evolved	7	7	12	5
Went through a crisis of faith	1	2	1	1
NET Dislike organized religion	20	10	19	22
Anti-institutional religion	15	2	17	16
Religion focuses on power/politics	4	5	1	6
Religion causes conflict	1	3	2	1
NET Religiously unsure/undecided	18	5	12	22
Unaffiliated but religious	7	1	1	10
Seeking/open-minded	6	3	5	7
Spiritual but not religious	3	2	4	3
Uncertain about beliefs	2	0	4	2
NET Inactive believer	10	0	3	14
Non-practicing	8	0	2	11
Too busy	2	0	1	3
Other	<1	0	<1	1
Unclear/no answer	6	3	7	6

Note: Excludes those who said they had been misclassified and were still affiliated with a religion. Figures do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted. Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC13. "Choosing a New Church or House of Worship" - PEW Research Center

for instance, that the youth (millennials born after 1980) is much more likely to identify as atheist or unaffiliated than older people who report similar levels of religious observance, which seems to reflect a broader acceptance of irreligiosity. At the same time, however, it is true that the number of American adults who report low religiosity has itself risen, from 14 percent in 2007 to 19 percent in 2014. The increase in "nones" has had a direct impact on American religion, as 78 percent of nones report-

ed⁶⁸ that they were raised in a religious tradition that they chose to leave, which corresponds to the declining membership in Christian denominations. According to the *Huffington Post* and the *New York Times*, not only are younger Americans more comfortable self-identifying as nones, but they are also more visibly troubled by the harmful effects of religious polarization and the rise of outright religious politics. It is interesting that young evangelicals are also moving away from their parents' generation of politicized evangelicalism, citing a more

Center, September 14, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/14/the-factors-driving-the-growth-of-religious-nones-in-the-u-s/>.

68 Michael Lipka, "Why America's 'Nones' Left Religion Behind," Pew Research Center, August 24, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>.

In US, one-in-five raised with mixed religious background



21 percent mixed - Raised by 2 people with different religions

9 percent Both religiously affiliated

6 percent 1 Protestant, 1 Catholic

3 percent Other combination

12 percent 1 religiously affiliated, 1 unaffiliated

7 percent 1 Protestant, 1 unaffiliated

3 percent 1 Catholic, 1 unaffiliated

1 percent 1 other religion, 1 unaffiliated



79 percent Single - Raised in a single religious background

65 percent By two parents

34 percent Both Protestant

21 percent Both Catholic

6 percent Both other religion

4 percent Both unaffiliated

14 percent By a single parent

7 percent who was Protestant

4 percent who was Catholic

1 percent who identified with other religion

2 percent who was religiously unaffiliated

tolerant attitude towards diversity whether social or cultural.⁶⁹ Although it is clear that some of the stigma around nonbelief has eroded, nones remain strikingly underrepresented, especially in national politics. For instance, according to the Pew⁷⁰ center, there is only one unaffiliated congressperson. That means that, in congress, nones compose .2

percent, as opposed to 24 percent of the general public. Christians in general are overrepresented as a proportion of the population: about 90 percent of congress identifies as Christian, as opposed to around 70 percent of the population. Jewish congress people are also more common than Jewish people in general, composing over 5 percent of congress as opposed to 2 percent of the general population. The lack of nones, or at least those publicly self-identifying as such, speaks to the continued value of religious faith in public sphere, despite America's theoretical and practical commitment to the separation of church and state.

69 Carolyn Custis James, "The Millennial Exodus," The Huffington Post, September 26, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-millennial-exodus_us_59ca5cd8e4b08d66155045d0. Ross Douthat, "Is there an Evangelical Crisis?," The New York Times, November 25, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/25/opinion/sunday/trump-evangelical-crisis.html>.

70 "Faith on the Hill," Pew Research Center, January 5, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/01/05/faith-on-the-hill/>.

The increased visibility of Muslims/ increased Islamophobia

Although Islam came to America as early as the 16th century because of the slave trade from West Africa, and has been part of the American consciousness ever since, the 21st century is marked with increased animosity and stereotyping of the Muslim community. As discussed above, the number of Muslims in the US remained negligible for much of the twentieth century, until immigration reform opened the door for more Muslim immigrants. Even so, Muslims represent only 3-4 percent of the US population, though they loom large in American political discourse.

America's longest war continues to be waged in the Middle East. Since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, the relationship between Muslims and the America has been fraught as Muslims are now portrayed through geopolitical issues rather than on their own merit. As such, they are seen as fundamentalist, terrorist, un-American and "otherized." This reaction towards 9/11 has promoted not only the overtly deleterious generalization about Islam and its adherents, but it has also led to the racialization of Muslims. That is, Muslims are now seen and profiled as a people, with a particular phenotype, dark skin, speaking unknown languages and being different. But Islam in America is tremendously diverse since it incorporates peoples from Africa (especially west Africa), South Asia, the Middle East, Arab countries, and Iran to say the least. Furthermore, with the stigmatization of Islam, Muslim African Americans are at risk of further discrimination and prejudice along racial and religious lines.

The (false) association of Islam and political violence / radicalism has continued to plague American politics, as commentators on the right in particular have emphasized violence perpetrated in the name of Islam as a foremost threat to Americans and American life.

In parallel to the rise of anti-Black and anti-immigrant sentiments, it is important to note that the political persecution of Islam and the fixation on religious extremism have occurred in the context of the shrinking demographic and political dominance of white Christians. At the same time, an anti-Muslim crusade perpetuated by many white Christians is accompanied with increasing anti-Semitism in America. At local levels, the at-

tack on both communities is bringing Jewish and Muslim worshippers closer together, perhaps the only salutary outcome of such religious animus.⁷¹

Rise in Anti-Semitism

There has been a disturbing recent uptick in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in the United States. The visibility of the so-called "Alt-Right", a right-wing movement known for white nationalism and Nazi symbolism, fueled by anti-Jewish and Islamophobic attitudes, has made clear that right wing hate speech remains a significant threat to the public good and to political discourse in the United States. In addition to hateful rhetoric, statistics show that there has been a very real increase in violence against and harassment of Jews. According to the Anti-Defamation League⁷², 2017 saw a 57 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents across the United States, from 1,267 in 2016 to 1,986 in 2017. According to the ADL, the largest numbers of attacks occurred in states like California, New York, and New Jersey, suggesting that the number of incidents correlates to large Jewish populations. The ADL divided up the incidents into three main categories: harassment (verbal or written), vandalism (property damage), and assault (bodily injury). They found that incidents of vandalism most sharply increased (up 86 percent from 2016.)

Increased polarization / Increased tolerance

On a more hopeful note, some studies suggest that Americans are becoming more tolerant of religions other than their own, and of practitioners of those religions. In their 2010 book *American Grace: How Religion Divides Us and Unites Us*, social scientists Robert Putnam and David Campbell argue that two of the defining trends in the American religious landscape are: first, an increase in polarization in terms of degree of religiosity, and second, an overall increased tolerance of people of other faith. The commonality they

71 Meenakshi Chakraverti, "In US, Jewish-Muslim Solidarity," Deccan Chronicle, December 7, 2016, <https://deccanchronicle.com/opinion/op-ed/071216/in-us-jewish-muslim-solidarity.html>, Travis Andersen, "In Boston, A March for Solidarity with Jews and Muslims," The Boston Globe, December 21, 2016, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/12/21/jews-lead-march-for-solidarity-with-muslims/vdtHeZ5fDHcJZ8MVYZZWMI/story.html>

72 "2017 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents," Anti-Defamation League, 2017, <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/2017-audit-of-anti-semitic-incidents#major-findings>.

found most striking was not within denominations or even larger religions, but between those with a similar degree of religious faith across traditions. In other words, they found that highly religious Catholics were more likely to agree with highly religious Muslims, and that likewise those with lower levels of religious commitment were more likely to have things in common across faith backgrounds than they were with highly religious people in their same tradition. Overall, this indicates that America has become more polarized in terms of religiosity, if not in terms of tribal distinctions between faiths.

At the same time, Putnam and Campbell also found that people were overall more tolerant of people in different religious groups. This second argument is consistent with the first—if highly religious people of different background have more in common than they do with the less religious in their own group, it follows that they would come to have more respect for those in other faiths. Putnam and Campbell argue that the striking co-existence of religious pluralism and religious polarity is the immense fluidity of religion in America. This fluidity means that people move more easily between different religions, and are more likely to form networks with those outside of their own religious tradition. Family ties, for instance, are a

significant indicator of religious tolerance: when people have family members of different faiths, through marriage or conversion, they are more likely to have warm feelings toward that group. Interfaith marriage is especially common in the US. Pew found⁷³, for example, that one-in-five Americans grew up in an interfaith home. At the same time, Putnam and Campbell argue that while the presence in interfaith coalitions and other evidence show hopeful signs for religious tolerance, that this tolerance has not thus far extended proportionally to the nones, or non-religious, who remain a stigmatized group.

73 "One-in-Five U.S. Adults Were Raised in Interfaith Homes," Pew Research Center, October 26, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/10/26/one-in-five-u-s-adults-were-raised-in-interfaith-homes/>.

Chinese-Americans, Confucian values, and the challenges of “secularization”

by Mark Csikszentmihalyi

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The Bay Area’s Chinese-American student community is diverse, even though in its broad outlines it shares several key features with the broader Chinese-American population, which is predominantly coastal and urban, and more likely to identify as Christian than Buddhist. Discussions of religious identification with Chinese-American students run into particular problems with Confucianism, especially when the conversation turns to Confucianism as a source of religious values. There are several roadblocks that, in my classroom experience, tend to come up in the discussion of Confucianism that do not arise with other traditions. For example, in the absence of church-like institutions, identification with Confucianism is more reliant on issues of cultural identity. Related to this is the view that since Confucian values are generally more relevant to social and interpersonal contexts, they are compatible with personal religious belief in another tradition. Finally, talking about “secularized Confucian values” often presents a conundrum since students are wont to identify core values of filial piety or harmony as “this-worldly” or secular even within a Confucian context.

Moving from the classroom to the realm of social scientific research, these particular aspects of Confucian identity create methodological challenges for conclusions about Chinese-American religious identity, which derive in large part from the confusing history of the category of “Confucian religion.” Two key elements of most of the traditions identified with Confucius across Chinese history are at odds with universal models of religion: the lack of independent institutions, and the non-exclusive dimension of Confucian religious identity. One of the first sociologists to articulate the “relative weakness of institutional religion in Chinese society” was C. K. Yang (Yang, 294). Yang’s discussion of “secularization,” then, entailed a generally disappearance of the diffused religious aspect of social institutions. The exclusive nature of Christian identity in Europe was generally not a feature of the East Asian religious landscape, where people visit institutions affiliated with different traditions on the same day, even while many of them identify as “not religious” (Reader, 200). In this pluralistic context, Confucianism’s relative lack of attention to issues of afterlife led some early European missionaries such as Martin Martini (1614-1661) to describe China as an “atheist” country. Today, similar issues have led some to question whether Confucianism is a religion at all, and indeed there is a marked preference for categorizing it not as a “religion” but as a “philosophy” in China today.

Religious affiliation means something different with respect to Confucianism, and this difference provides conceptual challenges for explanatory systems that assume values must derive from personal religious belief. A recent study of the values of Chinese university students exemplifies this problem. While the survey methodology of “Sources of Meaning in Life Among Chinese University Students” is relatively sophisticated, its conclusions are based on a key assumption that Chinese student values are secularized versions of those found in the “three traditions” of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

Interestingly, while six times as many participants responded to a question about belief by identifying as “Communist” as compared to “Confucian,” the surveys revealed a concern with “fulfilling our duties and responsibilities with regard to other people” solely in terms of “moral principles in the Confucian discipline,” (Zhang 1475). In the context of Asian-Americans, identifying whether personal values originate from Confucianism is also not straightforward. The process of “secularization” of Confucian religious values assumes a particular type of religious subject that my students have great difficulty recognizing in their parents’ or their grandparents’ generation. Given the considerations about the particular nature of Confucian traditions above, that is not surprising.

To be sure, other issues, such as a failure to differentiate between different meanings of the word “China,” or “Chinese-American” are also challenges for talking about Chinese-American religious identity. Yet Confucianism provides a unique challenge to standard concepts of religious identity, and therefore to models of secularization. Behind this, of course, is the idea that thinking about religious pluralism in America requires not just that we take stock of and appreciate the diversity of religious affiliations, but also that we attend to the different ways that people derive values from traditions and to the fact that modes of religious affiliation themselves may diverge.

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American Atheists: Adding a Critical Voice to the Conversation

by Jerome P. Baggett

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Fewer than one-half of all religiously affiliated Americans today think of themselves as being “critical,” whereas a full two-thirds of all atheists in the U.S. claim this as a personality trait that describes them quite well.⁷⁴ Moreover, as I have learned through my interview-based research, atheists are not especially bashful about aiming their critical sensibilities in the direction of religious faith, doctrines and institutions. Then, given that they have so much to say, why do we hear so very little about what your average atheists think about such things? Why are their criticisms of religion, in all their variety and with all their nuances, never really heard within the public square?

One reason is the widespread habit of conflating atheists in general with the particular subset of best-selling atheist authors – the so-called New Atheists – who evince disconcertedly little nuance when addressing religion. The source of religious commitment, they tell readers, is merely mass “delusion” (Richard Dawkins) or a kind of primordial and still lingering “spell” cast upon a not-yet-awoken populace (Daniel Dennett). Furthermore, they continue ominously, religion’s inevitable end is that it ultimately “poisons everything” (Christopher Hitchens) and leads inexorably to “a future of ignorance and slaughter” (Sam Harris).⁷⁵ Not much hair splitting there. Such thinkers represent an influential strand of public atheism and, without question, many of their more keenly targeted criticisms of religious intolerance, hypocrisy, patriarchy, dogmatism and the like are certainly valid. Yet, when their proclivity for overblown polemics is presumed to characterize the critical views of everyday atheists, then their voices can be all-too-easily dismissed as a consequence.

This erroneous presumption is compounded by a second problem: the stereotyping of atheists. If their message is widely found “guilty by association” with the New Atheists’ ham-handed polemics, the messenger fares little better in the eyes of the general public. Its perception of atheists, however, is as dependably unflattering as it is false. For instance, even though they are consistently stigmatized as immoral, there is simply no empirical support for this. Whatever else they might suggest, the interviews I conducted with atheists reveal (as it were) people’s often considerable efforts to carve out intellectually honest and ethically discerning lives for themselves. Something similar can be said for the pervasive notion that atheists live meaningless, superficial lives. The preponderance of my interviewees (83 percent) agree that “my life has a real purpose” and, according to a recent national study, the proportion (roughly one-half) who report feeling a “deep sense of wonder” at least once every month is about the same as it is for their actively religious counterparts.⁷⁶ So, what about the stereotypical “unhappy” or “angry”

74 Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, “The Baylor Religion Survey, Wave II” (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University, 2007).

75 The first three fragments come from the titles or subtitles of these authors’ well-known books: Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007). The fourth one comes from Sam Harris’ *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 223.

76 Joseph O. Baker and Buster G. Smith, *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems* (New

atheists? Turns out they are hard to find as well. The approximately 9 in 10 atheists who consider themselves to be either “very” or “pretty” happy almost exactly mirrors what actively religious people report. And, rather than being angry with them, most atheists have close friends, family members and, for about half of those who are married, even spouses who are believers. Little wonder, then, that only about one-third of the people I queried say they “tend to dislike religious people.” So, what about the religiously ignorant atheists? They, too, are more imagined than real. The majority of American atheists were socialized into religious adherence as children; according to the General Social Survey, 43 percent of them attended church services at least once every week at the age of twelve.⁷⁷ To this day, nearly two-thirds of those I spoke to say they enjoy reading books about religion and, according to a recent Pew study, atheists (along with agnostics) are on average the nation’s most religiously knowledgeable citizens.⁷⁸

The cautionary note here is that, if what atheists have to say is presumed to lack subtlety and if atheists themselves are habitually thought to be immoral, superficial, unhappy, angry and ignorant, then there is scant incentive to pay attention to their critical views about religion. This situation is only exacerbated by yet another reason why atheists’ perspectives are so often not heard – they just as often go unspoken. Experiences of stigma and the persistence of stereotypes, even easily debunked ones, likely go a long way toward creating a hushing effect among nonbelievers. According to another Pew study, about two-thirds of all atheists in the U.S. say they seldom or never discuss their views on religion with people of faith.⁷⁹ Most religiously affiliated Americans are not even close to being this tight-lipped.

Fortunately, things loosen up a bit when one takes the time to truly listen. In doing so, we discover that, in much the same way as churchgoers’ “lived religion” departs in many respects from the orthodoxies typically articulated by religious authorities, atheists generally refrain from the New Atheists’ ungainly black-and-white verities and offer reflections that, as the great G. F. W. Hegel once noted of philosophy, are painted “grey in grey.”⁸⁰ They apply greyer hues, for example, when they distinguish believers’ religious impulses, which they often respect, from the religious dogmatism they roundly eschew. Same goes for when they distinguish between religious people and institutions, much preferring the former to the latter. And they are even considerably less bothered by others’ belief in God per se than by certain problematic images of God they contend lead to pernicious behaviors of various kinds.

Along with gaining a sense of these (and other) nuances, actually taking the time to listen is also likely to engender a revalorization of atheism itself. Here I mean something more than moving from a stigmatizing, stereotypical perception of atheists to a more accurate one. This, too, is crucial, of course. Yet, beyond even that, I also mean moving from envisioning atheism negatively, in terms of a rejection (abandoning religion) or a negation (not believing) or an absence (without faith) to seeing it as an active and affirmative embrace of convictions and dispositions that are substantial in their own right. As much as the arcs of their lives have taken them from belief, they have also directed the people with whom I spoke toward new, wholly desirable ways of being in the world that deserve to be attended to in an equally new, interpretively generous manner. I can think of no better way to accord atheists their rightful place amid conversations concerning the nation’s religious diversity.

York: NYU Press, 2015), 92.

77 Ibid., 162.

78 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey” (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2010).

79 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Religious Landscape Study” (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015).

80 G. F. W. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (1821; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 13.

Magazines and Religious Diversity in America, 1741-1860

by Heather A. Haveman

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This piece is excerpted and revised from Haveman's book *Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community, and Print Culture, 1741-1860*, Princeton University Press, 2015.

Religious diversity has long been the hallmark of America. Before the Revolution, America was home to a wide array of faiths. Although nine of the thirteen British colonies that formed the original core of the United States had established (state-sanctioned and state-supported) churches at the time of the Revolution, a large minority of inhabitants were members of over a dozen “dissenting” denominations. Religious diversity became even greater after the Revolution when state churches were disestablished, making it easier for other faiths to gain adherents. Waves of immigration brought more Catholics, Anabaptists, and Lutherans into the mix. Finally, three series of religious revivals greatly increased the number of distinct faiths, as the leaders of revivalistic religious movements clashed with established religious authorities and seceded from their communities to found dozens of new sects. Religious participation increased as new upstart churches and countermovement's within existing churches aggressively courted adherents.

Because of the wide variety of denominations in America, religion in this era was replete with disputes about the nature of faith, which took the form of struggles over meaning, authority, and boundaries. The high level of religious rancor prompted Timothy Flint, prominent western minister and author, to charge in 1830, “Nine pulpits in ten in our country are occupied chiefly in the denunciation of other sects” (quoted in Mott 1930: 369).

In this era of religious contention, magazines proved to be powerful platforms for religious partisans. Vicious battles were fought in an ever-increasing number of scholarly theological reviews and newsy magazines for the laity. These debates produced a torrent of talk about faith: news, loud praise and even louder denunciations, emotional exhortations, and eloquent arguments that generated much material for the religious press. Over 90 percent of religious magazines (1,142 of the 1,229 that were published before 1861) proclaimed a doctrinal and/or organizational affiliation with a particular community of faith, a handful were explicitly nondenominational, and the remained focused on attacking a particular sub-community—Catholics, Jews, or Freemasons—but did not proclaim a particular denominational affiliation. Revivalists were particularly likely to use magazines to reinforce their messages, as these leaders of new religious movements sought to reinforce their charismatic authority over recent converts. Indeed, over half of the religious magazines in this era that had an explicit denominational connection were affiliated with revivalist faiths like the Methodists, Baptists, and Disciples of Christ. By 1830, religious periodicals had become “the grand engine of a burgeoning religious culture, the primary means of promotion for, and bond of union within, competing religious groups” (Hatch 1989: 125–26).

Although a few religious magazines sought national religious unity, most of these actually favored some religious traditions over others. Most notable among these “not really nondenominational” magazines were those that supported the Congregationalists

and Presbyterians' Plan of Union, which sought to combine their domestic missionary efforts, recognize each other's ministry and church organization, and allow newly formed congregations to affiliate with either a presbytery or a Congregational association. The ultimate goal was to counter advances by the upstart Baptists and Methodists.

Religious magazines forged bonds among the faithful, thus sustaining the new religious communities that arose from revivals and propelled their expansion. Religious magazines also provided a voice for theological reassessment and the restructuring of ecclesiastical authority, thus hastening the transformation of the established churches that were challenged by revivalists and schismatic movements. The upshot is that magazines helped sustain modern, translocal communities of faith, helping them to craft distinctive identities and compete against other faiths, and to forge bonds among far-flung adherents (see also Goldstein and Haveman 2013).

By publishing magazines, religious communities competed both locally and nationally to recruit and retain adherents. Competitive mobilization through magazines depended on the extent to which rivalries among faiths played out simultaneously in multiple markets. Three related trends—the development of a pluralistic nationwide field of religion, the competition engendered by pluralism, and the rise of internal competition from schismatic groups—had independent effects on the growth of denominational magazine publishing. But my analysis also shows that magazine publishing efforts grew faster when and where both competition and resources were high: the impetus to mobilize in the face of competition drove religious groups to act only when and where they had the capacity to mobilize substantial resources.

Finally, my analysis shows that religion in this era was a critical supporter of social-reform movements, in part through the magazines they published. My analysis extends our thinking about the relationship between religion and reform from a narrow focus on the strength of religious belief to include their content. Specifically, churches with different theological orientations had different relationships to antislavery societies: this-worldly churches supported them, while otherworldly churches undermined them (see also King and Haveman 2008).

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Conclusion

America's tradition of pluralism is our greatest asset. The United States has always been home to diversity along multiple dimensions, such as class, race, ethnicity, region and religion, to name a few. As such it has been a dynamic and flexible society, innovative in its ideas and usually respectful of traditions. We must continue teaching and explaining the power of such diversity to maintain healthy democratic institutions and to ensure that future generations are in a position to protect our most valuable cultural resources.

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This teaching tool was developed by faculty and researchers from the Religious Diversity research cluster of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley. The Religious Diversity cluster is composed of scholars interested in historical and comparative study of the role of religion, religious pluralism and toleration in public life across different regions of the world. More specifically, our work is united around two key questions: How do social and political institutions create or inhibit religious diversity and pluralism? How does religious diversity affect political and social institutions, religious tolerance in society, and legal and cultural inclusion of religious minorities? We therefore also pay attention to the diversity of religious doctrines, meanings, practices, and membership, and compare religious diversity across places, times, and cultures. We hope to grow and develop further to include psychological, cognitive, social, linguistic, or neurophysiological studies of the sources of diverse religious feelings, beliefs, and identities and of the determinants of tolerance (or intolerance) for this religious diversity.

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The Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society brings together researchers, community stakeholders, and policymakers to identify and challenge the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society in order to create transformative change.



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