

# **American Religious History**

**Parts I & II**

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**PUBLISHED BY:**

**THE TEACHING COMPANY**  
4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 500  
Chantilly, Virginia 20151-2299  
1-800-TEACH-12  
Fax—703-378-3819  
www.teach12.com

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Professor Allitt is the author of *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America 1950-1985* (1993), *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (1997), and *Major Problems in American Religious History* (2000) and is now writing a book on American religious history since 1945, to be titled *The Godly People*. He also writes frequent articles and reviews. At Emory, he teaches American religious, intellectual, and environmental history, along with freshman seminars in the history of the American West. In 1999, Professor Allitt won Emory's Excellence in Teaching Award and in 2000, was appointed to the N.E.H./Arthur Blank Professorship of Teaching in the Humanities. He keeps in touch with his homeland by spending about two months of every year on a working holiday in Britain, teaching the history of Victorian England with Emory's summer school at Oxford.

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# American Religious History

## Scope:

This course explores religious life in America from the first European contacts to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It aims to explain why America has shown so much more religious vitality than any other industrial nation and why its religions are so numerous and diverse. It considers religion not only from the point of view of beliefs, ideas, and styles of worship but also as a guide to conduct in everyday life, and it investigates the connection of religious, social, economic, and political concerns. Biographical details and anecdotes about dozens of brilliant or eccentric religious figures illuminate the lectures, among them the Puritan divine Cotton Mather; the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith; the first Christian Scientist, Mary Baker Eddy; and the patriotic fundamentalist Billy Sunday who, during the First World War, declared: “If you turn Hell over, you’ll find ‘Made in Germany’ stamped on the bottom!”

The religious lives of native Americans are contrasted with the religious situation in Europe during the first century of transatlantic contact. The religious characters of colonial settlements from Spain, France, and England are discussed to show how numerous competing groups of Protestants, Catholics, and native Americans treated one another’s forms of religious life and worship. In an age before pluralism and tolerance were virtues, these confrontations were often starkly hostile. Famous incidents, including the work of the Spanish inquisition in America, the *Mayflower* pilgrims’ rigorous and joyless approach to life, and the Salem witch trials, are put in context, in lectures designed to explain rather than moralize.

From the colonial period, the series moves on to discuss the role of religion in the creation of the American republic. First in the Revolutionary War, then later in the Civil War, combatants on both sides believed that they were doing God’s will and fighting on the side of the angels. Religious conviction also played a central role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s numerous reform movements, but often in contradictory ways. Slaveholders could point to as many biblical passages justifying their way of life as abolitionists could find to condemn them. Temperance, Sabbath keeping, urban reform, and women’s rights all sought justification in the Protestant tradition.

A series of shocks complicated the American religious situation in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The first was the arrival of a large number of Catholic

immigrants to what had been, for the preceding two centuries, a largely Protestant place. Catholics from Ireland and, later, Germany, Italy, and Poland, struggled to show that despite their faith and its foreign leader (the pope), they were entirely loyal to America. At times, even so, they had to protect themselves against organized anti-Catholic political parties and even against the attacks of anti-Catholic mobs. Growing numbers of Jewish immigrants further diversified the urban religious landscape in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and also struggled against Protestant intolerance.

The second shock was the rapid growth of industrial cities and of a huge property-less industrial working class, vulnerable to fluctuations in the business cycle. Religious leaders had to rethink the relationships among virtue, prosperity, and God's favor in a situation when employment opportunities outstripped the influence of any individual's will. Did not Jesus, a carpenter's son, teach charity, poverty, compassion, and sharing, rather than the single-minded entrepreneurial individualism that was winning America's material rewards? And which was more important: to reform the whole of society along Christian lines or simply to save individual souls, whatever their material circumstances?

A third shock came from the 19<sup>th</sup> century's discoveries in geology, biology, physics, archaeology, and comparative religion, all of which appeared to cast doubt on the reliability and authority of the Bible. Evolution in particular presented a world of constant predation and strife, promising only extinction to the losers, rather than a world whose outward harmony proved the existence of God. Close study of the ruins and texts of the ancient Near East showed that dozens of civilizations had shared with early Judaism its creation and flood myths and its belief in a series of miraculous divine interventions. Perhaps Judaism and Christianity had survived out of this world by a series of historical coincidences that had more to do with Roman imperial power than God's blessing.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century inherited these 19<sup>th</sup>-century dilemmas, which continue to resonate up to the present in, for example, the conflict between liberal Protestants and fundamentalists. Later parts of the course will follow them, while paying special attention to the way they affected relations between church and state. Ever since the Revolution, citizens have cherished the First Amendment principles of church-state separation and religious freedom. Mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, the Amish, and such "cult" religions as the People's Temple and the "Moonies" forced the Supreme Court to decide where to draw the line

between these two principles. The court sometimes shocked citizens, as when in 1962 and 1963, it decreed that school prayers and Bible reading were unconstitutional.

America became a great power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and played a leading role in the two world wars and the Cold War. Religious Americans agonized over how they should respond to war. Was it a Christian's duty to fight "hunnish barbarism" in World War I, as preachers like Billy Sunday believed? Or should they, as a brave minority argued, follow Jesus in turning the other cheek? When the war ended, many of the more bloodthirsty Christians and Jews felt embarrassed to have been so carried away by the call to fight. No sooner had a majority of them concluded that the pacifist option was morally superior, however, than Hitler rose to power. War, and particularly the Holocaust, continue to resonate up to the present and to influence many corners of American religious life.

The social revolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also had religious consequences. Fundamentalism proved itself adaptable to new technologies, such as radio and television, even to space travel, as Hal Lindsay showed in *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (1970). Generations of immigrants and their descendants assimilated to American life, abandoning old languages and customs but maintaining their religious allegiances. Catholicism and Judaism both took on a distinctive American flavor, which sometimes caused friction with co-religionists abroad, in Rome and Israel. Religion stood squarely at the center of the upheavals of the 1960s. Martin Luther King, Jr., and most other black civil rights leaders were ministers, inspired by the gospel message. Religious conviction likewise intensified resistance to the Vietnam War and played a key role in energizing the feminist movement.

Some Americans, disillusioned by the Judeo-Christian tradition, which they blamed for the nation's woes, turned to the Moslem tradition (the Nation of Islam) or to Asian spirituality, seeking gurus in India or learning Zen Buddhist meditation techniques. At the same time, changes in the immigration laws enabled large numbers of Asian immigrants to move to America, bringing their own traditions and sometimes bumping up against unfamiliar American versions of Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism. Exploration of new levels of religious diversity in the last three decades will close the series, along with conclusions about the way America's populations and traditions have nurtured its religious diversity and vitality.

# Lecture One

## Major Features of American Religious History

**Scope:** American religious history is unusual for its diversity and for its sustained vitality, from the colonial period right through to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This course begins with my own discovery of American religious diversity and vitality when I came from Britain to live, work, and study in the United States. I summarize the principal theories that have attempted to explain this religious situation and show that a historical approach is the best way to understand it. Next, we compare the situation in Europe with that in America, demonstrating that “secularization” theory makes sense in the interpretation of Europe but not the United States. Finally, we note that “religion” itself has been defined in various ways by different interpreters: as a pattern of beliefs, as a set of activities, or as a badge of identity. The lecture concludes with a warning that religious historians cannot assume divine intervention in history (even when they are studying people who did assume it) and that they must be impartial in their use of evidence.

### Outline

- I. Today, the American people appear to be much more religious than those of any other industrialized nation. Public declarations of atheism, common in Europe, are almost unknown here.
  - A. As an immigrant, I was surprised to find churchgoing so common and religion playing such a prominent part in public debates over such issues as abortion.
  - B. Neighbors invited me to join their churches or asked, conversationally, “Have you taken Jesus as your personal savior?”
  - C. Bumper stickers, roadside signs, prayers at sporting events, and “What would Jesus do?” armbands were all outside my previous experience, despite being a former Anglican choirboy.
  - D. Alongside Christian churches from dozens of denominations, I found synagogues, Hindu temples, Moslem mosques, and Zen meditation centers, showing that American religious diversity matched its vitality.

- II.** Why is religion so diverse and energetic? Scholars have advanced several explanations.
- A.** One theory is that the separation of church and state has prevented religion from ever being discredited by association with the moral compromises of political life. In Britain, by contrast, the established Church of England is sometimes referred to, disparagingly, as “the Tory Party at prayer.”
  - B.** A related idea is that separation means that churches and ministers, lacking government subsidy, have always had to “sell” themselves, offering a message and a service that the public is willing to “buy.”
  - C.** A second theory is that religion preserves one aspect of America’s ethnic diversity. Second-generation immigrants lose most of their ancestors’ folkways, often even the language, but they keep the old faith and “Americanize” it.
  - D.** A third theory is that in a society with such high levels of mobility, a relatively rootless population can quickly create a sense of local community by joining local churches. Highly localized Old World societies have a broad range of alternatives.
  - E.** A theory popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that God had singled out America for a destiny in evangelizing the world. All but the most evangelical scholars are more reticent about this theory now, especially given that God’s purposes cannot be measured and studied according to our academic methods.
- III.** There is no better way to look for answers to the puzzle of America’s religious vitality and diversity than to study the nation’s religious history. Many of these theories, which are not mutually exclusive, can then be tested. In recent decades, the study of American religious history has enjoyed a great revival. Why is that?
- A.** The interest is due partly to the failure of “secularization” theory.
    - 1.** Sociologists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century anticipated that as modern science and technology progressed, they would displace religious explanations of the world altogether.
    - 2.** Secularization theory became progressively more complicated. Did secularization mean progressive loss of faith in God, or greater role specialization by churches among all other modern institutions, or creation of alternative means of

explaining the world, or the decline of political power for religious groups?

3. European experience gave credence to the theory, but American experience contradicted it.
  4. The theory had always been attractive to Marxist social theorists, who were outspoken atheists. The exhaustion of Marxism and the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to its eclipse.
  5. Historical research substantiated the view that the past was in some respects less “religious” and the present in some respects, more “religious” than scholars had long assumed.
  6. Religion, far from disappearing from the American public landscape (where, according to the theory, it ought to have disappeared quickest), took on a new importance in the 1980s and 1990s.
  7. Science could explain how the world worked but not why. To answer that question, religion remained as important as ever.
  8. Neither could science explain moral questions or the old theodicy question, which asks: Why do bad things happen if God is good, and why does justice not always prevail?
- B.** The fact that one of the most important social movements in recent American history, the civil rights movement, was led by a minister and inspired by sermons and passages from the gospel should not surprise us. Martin Luther King, Jr., believed that God singled out Montgomery, Alabama, as the place for his movement to begin.
- C.** Historians of all sorts—especially the “new social historians”—have realized that to really understand the people of other ages, you must learn to share, provisionally, their frame of mind and to think as they thought.
1. If religion was central to the lives of people under study, it must be central to the historian’s account of their lives, whatever his or her own opinion.
  2. This view displaced the earlier 20<sup>th</sup>-century historians’ view that history was chiefly a matter of understanding national political power and economic forces.
- D.** American religious history enjoyed a revival not least because of the maturing of a generation of exceptionally talented religious historians in America, notably the evangelical historians George

Marsden, Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch, Grant Wacker, and Joel Carpenter.

- IV. Historians and sociologists argue over what “religion” is.
- A. For some, “religion” connotes a pattern of *beliefs* about matters of ultimate importance: the meaning of life, the origin and destiny of the soul, and the purpose for which the world exists.
  - B. For others, “religion” is chiefly a way of patterning *activities*: worship, prayer, rules governing eating, marriage, dress, and sexuality.
  - C. For still others, religion is preeminently an issue of *identity*, as can be seen among people who say: “I am Jewish, but I am not religious” or “I am Catholic, but I never go to mass.”
- V. How should American religious history be told? I believe that the religious historian’s job is to describe and explain how religious beliefs, activities, and identities have shaped American history. Where possible, the historian’s own religious convictions should be kept well in the background so that readers or listeners, whatever their own views, can learn what happened and why it happened.

**Essential Reading:**

Sidney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*.

Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Is it possible to separate religious issues from political, ethnic, and racial concerns in the study of American history?
2. Why did America retain so much religious vitality as other Western nations lost it?

## Lecture Two

### The European Background

**Scope:** Soon after Columbus discovered the Americas, the Reformation divided Europe. Martin Luther defied the authority of the pope and declared the priesthood of all believers. His assertion of salvation by faith alone challenged the long Catholic tradition of salvation by faith and works. The spread of printing stimulated the widespread distribution of vernacular Bibles and contributed to a rise in literacy. John Calvin's theology of predestination made a further and more radical assault on the Catholic theological tradition, while the theocratic rule he established in Geneva created a model for Protestants. European princes took advantage of these new religious divisions. King Henry VIII of England, who had been denied a divorce by the pope, now separated England from the Catholic communion and seized all the church's assets. His son Edward VI reformed the English church with the help of idealistic Protestants, but his daughter Queen Mary I (1553–1558) tried to re-Catholicize England, martyring the Protestant leaders. Her successor, Elizabeth I, created the compromise on which the Church of England has been based ever since and gave some stability to the developing Anglican tradition. Dissatisfied Protestant reformers, the "Puritans," were among the first religious separatists to contemplate settlement in the Americas.

### Outline

- I. Columbus's discovery of the Americas narrowly preceded the Reformation. Religious hatreds were added to intense national rivalries in the ensuing 200 years, which poisoned relations among the powers that colonized America. Attitudes about the Reformation also affected patterns of migration to the New World.
- II. The Reformation.
  - A. For several centuries, Protestants looked back to the Reformation as a dawn of truth, while Catholics looked on it as a massive outbreak of heresy. Today, historians seek more to understand than

to condemn, but they have to take seriously the intensity with which rival religious ideals were debated and defended.

- B.** Martin Luther's criticism of Johann Tetzel, the seller of papal indulgences, led to a broader controversy with the Vatican.
  - 1. The heart of Luther's teaching was embodied in the three principles *sola scriptura* (Christianity should be based on scripture alone, rather than scripture and tradition), *sola fide* (that man is saved by faith alone, not faith and works), and the priesthood of all believers, without the need for priestly intermediaries.
  - 2. He was protected, after his 1521 excommunication, by Prince Frederick of Saxony.
  - 3. Luther's support for the German princes in suppressing the Peasant Revolt of the 1520s ensured that Lutheranism could become a state religion in much of north Germany and Scandinavia.
- C.** The Swiss Reformation, especially the work of John Calvin in Geneva, created a rigorous Protestant way of life.
  - 1. Calvin emphasized God's power and man's sinfulness in the theology of predestination.
  - 2. Calvinism was iconoclastic, seeking to annihilate all Catholic vestiges.
  - 3. Calvin organized a theocratic government for Geneva, which many later Protestants regarded as a model.
- D.** The English Reformation sprang from Henry VIII's eagerness to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn, in the hope of siring a male heir.
  - 1. Henry had criticized Luther in a 1521 pamphlet and won papal thanks.
  - 2. The pope's Spanish connections forestalled Henry's divorce project.
  - 3. He declared himself head of the English church and seized its extensive properties, making himself much richer and more powerful than before.
  - 4. He did not want to adopt Protestantism wholesale inside English Christianity.

- III.** The coincidence of the Reformation with the rise of printing and literacy enabled more people than ever before to study and interpret the Bible.
- A.** Books were rare, expensive, and labor intensive before 1500 because they were written by hand on vellum.
  - B.** The invention of printing by Gutenberg and others began to reduce the cost of books.
  - C.** Reformers insisted on giving Christians access to the Bible in their vernacular languages. Bibles quickly became common in reformed areas.
  - D.** The complexity of the Bible ensured that different readers would interpret it in different ways, which contributed to the centrifugal character of Protestantism.
- IV.** England endured a long period of religious uncertainty because of different monarchs' beliefs and intentions.
- A.** Henry's premature death and the ascension of his nine-year-old son and heir Edward VI (1547–1553) led to a Protestant-minded regency.
  - B.** Roman Catholic Queen Mary I (1553–1558), by contrast, tried to reverse the Reformation.
    - 1.** She persecuted English Protestants, burning over 200 at the stake, including Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer.
    - 2.** She risked unpopularity at home by marrying King Philip II of Spain, political leader of the Counter-Reformation.
  - C.** Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603) once more shifted the basis of English religious life to Protestantism.
    - 1.** The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England were designed to make the national church an inclusive, moderate Protestant organization, subordinate to the state.
    - 2.** Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and the long war with Spain (culminating in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588) gave most of the English an abiding hatred of Catholicism. (Ironically, English antagonism to Spain and Catholicism [the "Black Legend"] was fueled by the work of Bartolomeo de Las Casas, a Spanish priest in America.)

3. Most English men and women accepted these successive changes—only a few risked persecution and martyrdom with each swing of the pendulum.
- V. Religious controversy continued in England at the dawn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- A. England’s Catholics were disappointed to discover that King James I (1603–1625) did not plan to re-Catholicize England.
    1. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic, had been beheaded by Elizabeth, but he had assured his succession to the throne by accepting the Reformation.
    2. A Catholic conspiracy to blow up the king and Parliament in 1605 (the Guy Fawkes plot) was discovered. Commemoration of the day became an annual event for Protestants, intensifying in their minds the connection between Catholicism and disloyalty.
  - B. Idealistic Protestants in England, especially those who had sheltered in Geneva during the reign of Mary, wanted to complete the Reformation inside England and purge, or purify, the Church of England of what seemed to them “popish” remnants. We remember these idealists as “Puritans.”
    1. They contributed to the writing of the “King James” version of the Bible, the most popular and widespread translation in American history.
    2. Some of them believed that the imperfections of the English church justified them in withdrawing from it altogether. They were “separatists,” and a group of them moved first to Holland, then to America on the *Mayflower*.
    3. Other Puritans, believing they had a duty to serve and reform a corrupt church and kingdom, remained in England at first. However, many of them emigrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony when King James’s son, Charles I, took a Catholic queen (Henrietta Maria, a French princess) and showed favor to Catholics.
- VI. Nearly everyone who went from Europe to America in the 1500s and 1600s went with an acute awareness of (and a strong opinion on) the religious divisions inside Europe.

**Essential Reading:**

A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*,  
ch. 1–3.

**Supplementary Reading:**

David Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*.

Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What combination of religious and political factors facilitated the spread of Protestantism?
2. Why did conditions in England lead to the development of Puritanism?

## Lecture Three

### Natives and Newcomers

**Scope:** Native Americans had elaborate religious ideas, rituals, and traditions. We must be careful in studying them, partly because nearly all the information we have about them comes from biased European observers and partly because the Indians themselves did not have a word for, or concept of, “religion” as something distinct from their approach to all other aspects of life. Despite intertribal differences, most Indian religions shared several characteristics. Among them were: a belief in the “Great Spirit” who presides over the whole of the world and in the existence of lesser spirits in the natural world, not only in animals and plants but also in trees, rivers, hills, the wind, and the Sun. Nearly all the activities of Native Americans took place in a ritual context, as they aimed to propitiate these spirits and assure themselves of divine favor. Some Indians converted to Christianity, but more argued with missionaries (Spanish, British, and French) over what seemed to them its absurdities. Europeans and Euro-Americans were shocked by the strangeness of Indians’ religious practices, such as the self-torture ceremonies of the Mandans, but from our perspective, it is possible to note both similarities and differences in the two civilizations’ religions.

### Outline

- I. Native Americans had elaborate religious ideas of their own that sometimes coincided with, and sometimes clashed against, the Europeans’ religious ways.
  - A. They lived in a world full of spirits that needed to be ritually propitiated.
  - B. Records of their discussions with Christian missionaries show us that each side found plenty to criticize in the ideas of the other.
  - C. Historians and anthropologists understand the need for caution in studying Native Americans, because the documents we have about these religions come from European observers, who often misunderstood, and were sometimes hostile to, the Indians’ religions.

- II.** Despite numerous internal differences, most North American Indians' religions shared several characteristics.
- A.** They believed in a powerful and benign "Great Spirit" and a powerful evil spirit or devil.
    - 1. Techauretanego built sweat lodges, where he prayed to the Great Spirit for protection and health.
    - 2. Cabeza de Vaca heard about the visits of "Evil Thing."
  - B.** They also believed in lesser spirits, inhabiting animals, rivers, the Sun, the wind, the trees, and fire.
    - 1. A Narragansett Indian explained to Roger Williams that fire must be a god because of its life-giving character.
    - 2. Father Paul LeJeune described Indians' faith in animal spirits' dream visits to sleeping hunters.
  - C.** Everyday activities were surrounded by rituals, which were designed to propitiate and win favor from the spirits.
    - 1. Alexander Henry, an English hunter who helped a group of Iroquois kill a bear, watched the women apologizing to it and blowing tobacco smoke into its nostrils.
    - 2. A Montagnais Indian explained to Father LeJeune that the spirit of a beaver visits the cabin of the man who killed it to ensure respectful treatment of its remains.
    - 3. Lewis and Clark witnessed a sex ritual designed to win favor from buffalo spirits.
  - D.** Native Americans understood suffering in a religious context. Their religious rituals, to mark stages in the life cycle, often involved induced hunger or pain; artist George Catlin witnessed self-torturing ceremonies among the Mandans and Sioux on the Great Plains.
  - E.** They believed in an afterlife.
    - 1. Canadian Indians reasoned with Jesuit Father Joseph Jouvency that hell could not be a place of perpetual fire, because there was not enough firewood.
    - 2. A Huron woman warned her husband not to convert to Christianity, because if he went to the Christian heaven, he would find only Frenchmen there and would miss his friends and relatives.

- III.** Although the Europeans who met them were struck by the great differences between their own religion and that of the Indians, we can also note some distinct similarities.
- A.** Both believed in the body-soul split, in good and evil spirits, in life after death, and in the power of prayer to remedy illness and anxiety.
  - B.** A flood myth was common among the Indians, as among Christians.
    - 1.** Father Jouvency assumed this similarity was evidence that Noah's flood had afflicted America, too.
    - 2.** George Catlin speculated that the Mandans, who shared the flood myth (and had a virgin birth story), might be descended from lost medieval Welsh travelers.
  - C.** Both groups understood the religious significance of a sacrificial death; John Muir recounted the sacrificial death of a chief among the Alaskan Stickeen Indians, analogous to the Christian sacrifice.
  - D.** Both groups believed that the burden of one person's sins can be transferred; Mary Jemison, living among the Seneca, described the use of an unblemished white dog as a "scapegoat."

**IV.** Conclusion.

- A.** Europeans who spent time with the Indians came to realize that their religions were well thought out and complex and supported an entire way of life, along with providing answers to the ultimate mysteries religion seeks to resolve.
- B.** Europeans nevertheless thought that the Indians' religions were inferior to Christianity, with which they tried to replace it.
- C.** Besides too few understanding visitors, the European invaders brought disease, fear, and cultural breakdown that devastated most Indian societies.
- D.** We should avoid romanticizing the Native Americans' way of life, which involved perpetual anxiety lest the spirits be offended and retaliate.
- E.** Historian Calvin Martin speculates on the possibility that they believed the animals, not the whites, had brought the diseases that devastated their populations.

**Essential Reading:**

Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America from the Algonkian Indians to the New Age*.

D. L. Carmody and J. T. Carmody, *Native American Religions: An Introduction*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*.

Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Were European observers obtuse in their treatment of the Indians' beliefs?
2. Were the Indians' religious views well adapted to their way of life, or do they appear to have been illogical?

## Lecture Four

### The Puritans

**Scope:** The first generation of English Puritan leaders in New England, convinced that they represented God’s chosen people, had developed their ideas in opposition to the Anglican Church establishment. Now they found that they *were* the establishment and must invent methods of running this new society. Believing in the unity of a godly community, they were intolerant of dissent and expelled Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams (the founder of Rhode Island) for theological heterodoxy. They believed in “special providences”: For example, harsh winter weather or storms at sea bespoke God’s anger, while sunshine and good harvests indicated his pleasure. As predestinarians, the Puritans agonized in their search for signs that God had chosen them for salvation. “Jeremiads” were their sermons of lamentation, much analyzed by later historians, who find it difficult to decide whether they were literal catalogues of decline and sin or simply ritualized ways of exhorting parishioners to maintain high standards. Stresses in Puritan society contributed to the Salem witch trials of 1692, when wild accusations led to the conviction and public execution of 20 people, mostly women, for being the devil’s “familiar.”

### Outline

- I. Puritans developed their ideas in opposition to the English establishment but found, when they carried the ideas to America, that now they were the establishment.
  - A. The Reformers rejected monastic separation from the world. But some radical Puritans’ dismay at the “popish” contaminations of the church prompted their decision to separate. They founded Plimoth Plantation in 1620.
  - B. The much larger non-separatist Puritan group that settled Massachusetts Bay in 1630 remained nominally loyal to the Church of England.
    1. Their leaders, John Winthrop, John Cotton, and others, hoped that they might provide an inspiring example to England.

2. They expected to return victorious.
- C. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, nevertheless, they established the Congregational system of self-governing churches, as outlined in the Cambridge Platform of 1648.
- D. Church membership was a prerequisite to participation in politics. Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut approached Calvin's Genevan ideal.
- E. Blasphemy and misuse of the Sabbath were offenses.
- F. Puritans emphasized education.
  1. They condemned Catholicism, partly because it kept the ordinary people ignorant.
  2. Harvard College was founded in 1636 to train ministers.
  3. New communities invested in schools and teachers.
  4. New England achieved nearly universal literacy—probably the first society in the world to do so.
- G. Preaching was the heart of worship.
  1. Two Sunday sermons based on biblical texts were the norm.
  2. These were complemented by special sermons for fast-days, elections, and executions.
  3. Services took place in plain meeting houses.
  4. Psalms were “lined out” and sung without accompaniment.
- H. The Puritans were intolerant and repressive of dissent.
  1. Radical separatist Roger Williams and Antinomian Anne Hutchinson were expelled.
  2. Facial branding with “H” (for “heresy”) and flogging were the punishments for persistent Quakers. Two Quaker men and a woman were hanged in Boston in 1659.
  3. Baptists, like Anne Eaton (wife of the governor of New Haven), were censured and excommunicated.
- II. Puritans hoped for salvation and dreaded damnation and, thus, looked eagerly for reassurance that they were among God's chosen.
  - A. They believed that the church should consist only of the godly, so far as that was possible, but they also knew that God predestined souls for heaven or hell, without ever making his choices clear.
  - B. Covenant theology, modeled on God's covenants with Noah and Abraham, represented the Puritans' attempt to find clues about God's will toward them.

1. Surely God was not entirely capricious in his choices.
  2. “Works” were not efficacious, but the godly would nevertheless live sober lives and do good deeds.
- C. They required evidence of conversion, publicly confessed, for full church membership.
1. Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus and Augustine’s agonizing over the state of his soul were exemplary.
  2. Conversion came in stages, of self-condemnation, despair, revived hope in God, and transforming grace.
  3. “Preparationism” was not a step along the Arminian road.
  4. Hope and doubt of salvation fed each other. Certainty of salvation was a sure sign of its absence!
  5. Paul’s strictures against women speaking in church meant that women’s conversion testimonies were often read aloud by men.
  6. Even the converted struggled to reconcile themselves to God’s mysterious will, as the poems of Ann Bradstreet bear witness.

**III.** A long tradition of “Jeremiads,” sermons lamenting decline, bears witness to the ministers’ fears that they were not living up to the founders’ strenuous ideals.

- A. To their dismay, the Puritan victors in the English Civil Wars did not share their ideals about church organization. The outcome of their “errand into the wilderness” seemed ambiguous.
- B. Declining fervor in the second generation obliged them to make the compromise embodied in the “half-way covenant” of 1662.
- C. They believed in signs from God, “special providences” and “wonders” indicating his pleasure and his wrath.
  1. Storms, bad winters, and failed harvests were signs of God’s anger.
  2. Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson both gave birth to “monsters.”
  3. The Indian Wars of 1675–1676 were a divine chastisement.

**IV.** The Puritans believed that the devil constantly threatened their security and that witches were his intimates.

- A. The Europe from which they migrated had a long history of persecuting witches.

- B. The trend continued in New England, with one or two allegations of witchcraft each year.
  - 1. Witches were usually women, often talkative or argumentative.
  - 2. They were often single, middle-aged or older, and socially marginal.
  - 3. They were believed to have given their souls to Satan in return for malign earthly powers.
  - 4. Suspects sometimes counter-sued their accusers for slander.
  - 5. Courts sometimes convicted witches but were often skeptical.
- C. The Salem outbreak of 1692–1693 was more far reaching than any previous witchcraft scare in the colonial period.
  - 1. It came just after the stressful period of the Glorious Revolution and during King William’s War.
  - 2. It began among a group of excitable teenage girls who were trying to predict whom they would marry.
  - 3. It led to 19 executions (14 of women) by hanging and “pressing.” Judges were more credulous than usual and accepted “spectre testimony.”
  - 4. Distinguished New England clergy, such as Increase Mather, eventually condemned it.
  - 5. Thereafter, prosecutions for witchcraft ceased.
- V. Sober, industrious New Englanders sought signs of God’s favor but often found that their way of life was enriching them and turning their thoughts to the rewards of this world, not the next. Wealth could be a sign of election, but love of money was Satan’s temptation. By 1700, Puritans faced the paradox that their system’s success was transforming (and in their view, damaging) their religion.

### **Essential Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, vol. 1, ch. 7–10.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, ch. 2.

### **Supplementary Reading:**

John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*.

Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Did New England Puritans' actions support or contradict their theological principles?
2. Why was Puritanism psychologically stressful to its adherents?

## Lecture Five

# Colonial Religious Diversity

**Scope:** Settlers in the North American colonies came mainly from England, but early clusters of immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Holland, and Sweden ensured that the area would be religiously and ethnically diverse almost from the beginning. Ironically, the foundations of American religious toleration were laid by this fact of diversity, even though few people favored it in theory. The great tobacco-growing colonies, Virginia and the Carolinas, were nominally in the hands of the established Church of England, but the population's scattering after the colony's early years made regular attendance at religious services difficult. Anglican missionaries were indignant to find religion neglected by the hard-driving planters and more indignant to find that most were not even attempting to convert their African slaves to Christianity. Maryland, originally founded as an English Catholic colony but soon dominated by Anglicans, was no better. Further north, Pennsylvania began as a utopian Quaker experiment under the leadership of William Penn. As pacifists, Quakers wanted to avoid fighting in recurrent wars against the French and Indians; they delegated that duty to their non-Quaker brethren. Some became rich, which led to fears that the religious purity of the colony's founders was not descending to their progeny.

### Outline

- I. The European settlement of colonial America early exhibited religious and ethnic diversity, including English Anglicans and Catholics, Puritans, Antinomians, Baptists, Quakers, and Scottish Presbyterians, Lutherans from Germany and Sweden, Dutch Calvinists, and Jewish merchants.
  - A. Each colony had its own distinct religious character.
  - B. In the short run, most were intolerant—only a few favored tolerance from the outset.
  - C. In the long run, this diversity laid the foundation of American religious pluralism.

- II.** Virginia Anglicans, and later those in the Carolinas and Georgia, had emigrated more for reasons of profit than piety.
- A.** The Jamestown settlement tried to enforce regular churchgoing, but geographical dispersal to plant tobacco soon made it impossible.
  - B.** The settlement undertook a mission to the Indians who lived in the neighborhood. One early success was the conversion of Pocahontas and her marriage to John Rolfe.
  - C.** Churchgoing soon became an occasional, matter-of-fact duty rather than a central preoccupation of settlers' lives, as it was in Puritan New England.
    - 1.** The book of Common Prayer and the King James Bible were central to the religious routine.
    - 2.** Sermons often had nautical themes, appropriate to colonists who had crossed the Atlantic.
  - D.** Vestries declined to appoint priests to the parishes and so retained more power than their English counterparts.
  - E.** Early slaveholders doubted the wisdom of converting their slaves to Christianity.
  - F.** Church of England priest Morgan Godwin went to Virginia in 1684 and was shocked to find the neglect of religion there.
    - 1.** Clergy did not dare give their parishioners necessary criticism, because they were financially dependent on them.
    - 2.** They failed in their duty to convert Indians and slaves and permitted "heathen" practices to flourish.
- III.** Maryland was founded in 1634 by a group of English Catholic aristocrats led by Cecil Calvert, who enjoyed the patronage of King Charles I.
- A.** The colony was primarily a commercial concern, not a religious haven.
  - B.** The majority of settlers from the start were Protestants, and Maryland, from necessity, became the first colony to decree religious freedom.
  - C.** Jesuit priests served the Catholics of the colony.
    - 1.** They tried to convert the Piscataway Indians.

2. They tried to get favorable legal status from the proprietor. He forestalled them, ensuring lay dominance, as in Virginia.
  3. They also won a steady stream of converts from among the Protestant indentured servants.
  4. Their death rate from malaria, yellow fever, and other diseases was very high.
- D.** Religious neglect was as common in Maryland as in Virginia.
- E.** Toleration and Catholic proprietorship both ended in 1689, following the anti-Catholic Glorious Revolution.
1. Anti-Jesuit laws tried to stamp out “popery.”
  2. Catholicism persisted but in private.
- IV.** Quakers also contributed to the early religious diversity of the colonies.
- A.** Quakerism, founded by George Fox, was the radical wing of the Puritan movement in 17<sup>th</sup>-century England.
1. Fox believed in direct divine communication with Christ through the “inner light.”
  2. He visited the colonies in 1672 and made numerous converts.
- B.** The established church feared Quakers, because they appeared to dispense with all forms of hierarchy and ministry.
- C.** In the late 1650s, Massachusetts passed laws to exclude Quakers and hanged three offenders.
- D.** Quaker convert William Penn founded Pennsylvania in 1682.
1. His father was an admiral and a war hero—he was a pacifist.
  2. His colony was meant as an inspirational example of rational planning, religious tolerance, and representative government.
  3. The colony was vexed when the Quaker belief in pacifism clashed with the need to defend itself.
  4. The moral and spiritual intensity of the first generation declined as Philadelphia developed a Quaker merchant aristocracy.
- E.** Quaker John Woolman (1720–1772) was one of the first to speak out against slavery.
- V.** A variety of other European Protestants settled in the middle colonies.
- A.** These included Dutch Calvinists in New York; Swedes in the Delaware River valley; and German Lutherans, Moravians, and Mennonites in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

- B.** Thomas Dongan was amazed to discover, when he went to New York in 1683, Dutch Reformed, a few Anglicans, a few Catholics, “singing Quakers,” “ranting Quakers,” pro- and anti-Sabbatarian Baptists, French Huguenots, Congregationalists, Jewish merchants from the West Indies, and German Lutherans.

**VI.** In retrospect, we can see the way in which these numerous groups contributed to America’s eventual religious diversity and mutual tolerance. At the time, almost no one favored diversity on principle, but circumstances eventually forced them into it.

**Essential Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, vol. I, ch. 12–14.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, ch. 3.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, ch. 1–3.

Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, ch. 3.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why were different Christian groups so resistant to the idea of religious tolerance?
2. Why were Quakers unpopular among other Christian groups?

## Lecture Six

# The Great Awakening

**Scope:** A charismatic English preacher, George Whitefield, toured the American colonies in 1740 and attracted massive crowds, too large to fit in any building. He was, in effect, the founder of the emotional American revival tradition that has played a central role in the nation's religious history ever since. His example drew other clergy's criticism as well as praise, especially when one of his American imitators, John Davenport, preached such inflammatory sermons that he was arrested and declared insane. Whitefield's most famous American contemporary, Jonathan Edwards, is remembered as the most gifted Puritan writer of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Influenced by the leading scientists and philosophers of the era, including Isaac Newton and John Locke, he nevertheless restated the central themes of the Reformation; God's grace, man's powerlessness, the force of sin, and the majesty of creation. This "Great Awakening" of the 1740s was one of the first events to influence all the British colonies in North America, affecting even members of non-English-speaking groups. Historians speculate that empowering individuals to think of themselves as being in direct relationship to God weakened their loyalty to British authority and laid one of the foundations for the coming Revolution.

### Outline

- I. Colonies thrived and expanded in the early 1700s.
  - A. The "Protestant work ethic" contributed to business successes.
  - B. Historians continue to debate whether Protestantism disposes people to create wealth.
  - C. Elaborate church buildings rose in Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, and other urban centers.
  - D. Business sometimes diverted men's attention from religion.
  - E. Most churches' disciplinary functions diminished after 1700.

- II.** Competing denominations enjoyed periodic revivals throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but those of the 1740s were qualitatively larger, with long-lasting results.
- A.** George Whitefield's revivals attracted thousands of hearers.
1. Whitefield was an English preacher, belonging to, but critical of, the Anglican Church.
  2. His preaching style and his public relations effort were unprecedented and drew immense crowds.
  3. His itinerancy and outdoor speaking caused controversy and sometimes resulted in harm to onlookers.
  4. He preached the need for personal conversion.
  5. Thousands of his hearers were convinced of their sinfulness and need for conversion.
  6. Even such skeptics as Benjamin Franklin were impressed.
  7. Whitefield inaugurated the American tradition of charismatic, nondenominational evangelists that persists down to the present.
  8. His Newburyport, Massachusetts, grave became an odd kind of Protestant pilgrimage site.
- B.** The Tennent family, father and four sons, and James Davenport were among Whitefield's fieriest American imitators.
1. They claimed to have had miraculous experiences.
  2. They preached against learned but "unconverted" ministers.
  3. They contributed to splits between "Old Lights" and "New Lights" in several denominations.
  4. Excesses could discredit them, as in the case of John Davenport, who was arrested for disturbing the peace.
- C.** Jonathan Edwards was the most powerful theologian supporting the revivals.
1. Under his care, Northampton, Massachusetts, enjoyed a revival.
  2. He adapted the insights of Newton and Locke to New England theology, arguing that the cyclical regularity of the universe (as opposed to "special providences") and the human consciousness that makes it possible for us to perceive this regularity are arguments for, rather than against, the God of Calvinism.

3. Unlike his Puritan forebears, Edwards found evidence of God's goodness in the natural world.
4. Whitefield admired him and his wife.
5. His rhetorical power can be glimpsed in the famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
6. His parishioners found his standards too high and dismissed him in 1749.

**III.** The lives of clergymen in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century became more complicated as they tried to juggle numerous duties and competing religious ideas.

**A.** The life of Henry Muhlenberg illustrates these complexities.

1. Muhlenberg was born and raised in Germany and migrated in 1742 to pastor a Lutheran congregation in Pennsylvania.
2. He taught himself Dutch, English, and some Swedish to be able to deal with the people among whom he lived.
3. He arbitrated theological and religious difficulties when his parishioners made religious intermarriages.
4. He scorned Quaker pacifism during the Indian wars.

**B.** The life of Charles Woodmason in the Carolina backcountry shows how the revivals affected the established church.

1. He doubted New Lights' sincerity and suspected them of drunken revelry.
2. He was scandalized by the Baptists' immersion ceremony.

**IV.** Growing numbers of Americans after 1740 had the experience of defying the clergy of the established church or witnessing others defying it. Religious conditions made Americans increasingly aware that they had religious choices to make. Indeed, everyone *had* to choose, even if they chose to stay where they were. Such choices, in turn, may have prepared the colonists, mentally, for the possibility of making political choices in the colonial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s.

### **Essential Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, vol. I, ch. 15–19.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, ch. 4.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, ch. 4 and 6.

Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why did the established churches find revivalists so alarming?
2. Is it reasonable to link religious ideas to the history of business (the “Puritan work ethic”) and politics (the revolutionary mentality)?

## Lecture Seven

### Religion and Revolution

**Scope:** Many of the men who fought for American independence argued not only that they were politically justified but that they were fulfilling a divine mandate. They saw the struggle between the American republican ideal and British “tyranny” as a playing out on earth of the great war between God and Satan. Loyalists, conversely, pointed out that Jesus himself had said, “My kingdom is not of this world” and that Christians had a duty to render unto Caesar (that is, George III) what was Caesar’s. Contradicting both sides in the struggle were the Pennsylvania Quakers, who denied that it was ever permissible for Christians to fight. The war went on nevertheless, and the army employed chaplains to uphold morale and tend the sick and wounded.

The upheavals and excitements of the war prompted the formation of numerous utopian millennial sects whose charismatic leaders believed that the war was a portent of the “End Times” before the return of Jesus. Of more lasting significance was the First Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed religious freedom by preventing the new Federal government from either supporting or interfering with any religious group.

### Outline

- I. Religious issues contributed to the onset of the Revolution, although the war was a predominantly secular event.
  - A. References to God in the Declaration of Independence are confined to generalities.
    - 1. The ensuing list of grievances is entirely secular.
    - 2. Jefferson admired Jesus as a secular teacher.
  - B. Such revolutionary leaders as Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin were not religiously motivated.
    - 1. Washington was a lukewarm Anglican.
    - 2. Franklin said that Jesus was a good man but not divine.

- II. The ideals of the revolutionaries were, in many instances however, compatible with the ideals of Christians.
  - A. Republican or “Whig” theory, derived from a Renaissance tradition, informed the revolutionary generation.
  - B. These republican ideals often paralleled Christian ideals.
    - 1. Both saw history as a cosmic struggle between good and evil.
    - 2. Republicans feared tyranny; Christians feared sin.
    - 3. The republican ideal of virtue was analogous to the Christian ideal of godliness.
    - 4. Many people were both republican and Christian.
    - 5. Both honored Cromwell’s Puritan soldiers, who fought against royal tyranny in the 1640s.
- III. Supporters of the Revolution argued that they fought in a godly cause, and many Christians joined the war effort in that belief.
  - A. Colonists suspected that the Quebec Act would introduce Catholicism into the colonies.
  - B. They were afraid that Anglican bishops would introduce ecclesiastical tyranny.
  - C. Thomas Paine was a skeptic (or even an atheist), but he justified declaring independence in *Common Sense* on biblical grounds.
  - D. John Witherspoon explained that even men fighting in a righteous cause are sinners and must suffer for it.
- IV. Loyalists were equally sure that theirs was the righteous path.
  - A. They explained the danger and ungodliness of joining the rebellion.
    - 1. Jonathan Boucher enjoined a religious duty of obedience to authority.
    - 2. Miles Cooper, president of King’s College (Columbia University), predicted that revolution would lead to anarchy.
    - 3. Samuel Seabury feared the tyranny of the mob.
  - B. Loyalist members of the clergy were sometimes forced to separate from their pro-revolutionary flock; Philip Reding closed his church rather than violate his oath of allegiance to the king.

- V.** Members of the peace churches, Quakers and Mennonites, protested against the fighting.
  - A.** They were persecuted for declining to support the war effort.
  - B.** They tried to explain why fighting is wrong.
- VI.** Chaplains served the Continental Army.
  - A.** Some chaplains were shocked by the soldiers' profanity, Sabbath breaking, and drunkenness.
  - B.** Soldiers were often equally shocked by the poor quality of the chaplains' preaching.
    - 1.** Washington was dismayed by poor quality and absenteeism.
    - 2.** Chaplains sometimes had to uphold morale in face of severe difficulties.
  - C.** Some religious soldiers regarded their role in the war as fulfilling a divine mission.
  - D.** Chaplains attended the sick and wounded, urged soldiers to avoid sin, and preached sermons justifying the Revolution. The book of Judges was put to relevant use for sermon themes.
- VII.** Millennial sects saw the war as evidence of the "End Times" foretold in the book of Revelation. They were among the earliest utopian religions in America, trying to make themselves perfect in readiness for Christ's Second Coming.
  - A.** They interpreted events as "signs of the times" leading to the Apocalypse. The "dark day" May 19, 1780, in northern New England appeared as a millennial portent.
  - B.** Jemima Wilkinson of Rhode Island led the Universal Friends.
  - C.** Shadrach Ireland declared himself immortal and created a millennial commune in Massachusetts.
- VIII.** The Constitution enshrined free exercise and non-establishment of religion at the federal level.
  - A.** Some states, including Massachusetts and Connecticut, retained established churches.
  - B.** Large numbers of Anglican loyalists had fled, eroding their church's power and membership.

- C. Jefferson's proudest achievement was disestablishment in Virginia.
- D. America's small Catholic population was now rewarded for its loyalty to the Revolution.

**Essential Reading:**

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, ch. 7.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, ch. 5–6.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, ch. 23.

Charles H. Lippy, *Being Religious, American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States*, ch. 3.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How effectively did advocates of different views of the Revolution support their views from scripture?
2. Why did many of the revolutionaries criticize established churches?

## Lecture Eight

### The Second Great Awakening

**Scope:** After the Revolution, the Methodist Church began to grow rapidly, especially on the expanding frontier. Its ministers, unlike those of the Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches, were not settled in parishes. Instead, they were “itinerants,” constantly traveling on horseback and following settlers wherever they went, making sure that no outpost of America was beyond the reach of the gospel. Some itinerants, such as Francis Asbury, became legends in their own lifetimes for marathon preaching journeys in the face of great hardships. The trans-Appalachian frontier witnessed wildly emotional revivals, including one in Cane Ridge, Kentucky (1801), in which converts smitten with a sense of their own sinfulness barked like dogs, howled, and flung themselves into the mud. After the revivals, however, Methodism entailed turning from a tough, manly way of life to one that was humble, forgiving, meek, and familial. Revivalists like Asbury and Charles Grandison Finney believed that Christians must act on their newly awakened faith. They sponsored social reform projects, including temperance, sabbatarianism, and abolition of slavery. In this setting, moreover, women began to take up religious leadership positions, among them the Shakers’ founder, Mother Ann Lee, and the pioneer of the Holiness Movement, Phoebe Palmer.

### Outline

- I. A series of revivals transformed the expanding nation between 1800 and 1825.
  - A. Trans-Appalachia was settled rapidly after the Revolution.
  - B. Clergy tried to follow the settlers and bring religion to them.
    1. James McGready invented the camp meeting at Gasper River, Kentucky, in 1800.
    2. He and Barton Stone led the Cane Ridge revival in 1801.
    3. Between 10,000 and 25,000 people attended it.
    4. Many converts underwent extreme physical sensations.
    5. The anthropological concept of “liminality” helps us understand it.

- C. Cane Ridge alarmed Presbyterian leaders back east, leaving Baptists and Methodists to exploit the new revival techniques.
- II.** The Methodists grew from an insignificant sect at the time of the Revolution until, by the Civil War, they were the largest Protestant denomination in America.
- A. Founder John Wesley was a lifelong Anglican.
  - B. Francis Asbury was the only Methodist missionary to stay in America when the Revolution began.
  - C. The Christmas conference in Baltimore in 1784 created Methodism as a distinct American denomination.
  - D. Its Arminian theology gave penitents an active role in their quest for salvation.
  - E. The itinerant system ensured that Methodist ministers would keep pace with frontier settlement.
    - 1. Asbury traveled 300,000 miles and crossed the Appalachians sixty times.
    - 2. Circuit riders, centrally directed by Asbury, were obedient and poor.
    - 3. Peter Cartwright’s colorful autobiography gives us a glimpse of the frontier circuit rider at work.
    - 4. Cartwright relished conflict with rival denominations.
  - F. The classes, love feasts, and virtues emphasized in Methodism constituted a frontier counterculture.
- III.** Charles Grandison Finney took revivalism to the next stage by arguing that revival conversions could be orchestrated.
- A. Finney was converted in 1821 while working as a law clerk.
  - B. He specialized in urban revivals, for which he wrote “how to” manuals on stimulating religious excitement and fervor.
  - C. He created the “anxious bench,” where wavering souls became the focus of everyone else’s prayerful petitions and emotions.
  - D. Critics argued that you need to be in your right mind to receive Christ, not dazzled out of it.
    - 1. Lyman Beecher feared the moral dangers of revivalism.
    - 2. He and other critics compared revivals to the theater.

- E. Revivals used theatrical techniques.
    - 1. Revivalists argued that they could turn their suspect techniques to a virtuous end.
    - 2. *Huckleberry Finn* shows that revivalism was vulnerable to frauds.
    - 3. The history of the Millerites shows that it was also vulnerable to delusions.
  - F. Revivalism was the basis for political party conventions.
- IV. Many permanent institutions came out of the Second Great Awakening.
- A. Oberlin College, an early abolitionist center, was an evangelical foundation. Finney was first a professor there and later its president (1851–1866).
  - B. Tract and Bible societies, Foreign and Home Mission boards, Sunday School union, Education Societies, and temperance groups (all founded from 1810 to 1826) had strong evangelical foundations.
    - 1. The American Bible Society aimed to put a Bible into every household.
    - 2. Its leaders were civic and commercial leaders of New York.
    - 3. They used up-to-date manufacturing and sales methods.
    - 4. They sold elaborate editions of the Bible as consumer status items.
  - C. Mason Weems was a Bible salesman and writer of religious tracts.
    - 1. He wrote pious fictions to drive home a moral message.
    - 2. He also wrote lurid moral melodramas to replace lurid popular fiction.
- V. The Second Great Awakening provided a new leadership role for women.
- A. Revivalists often stressed the feminine virtues.
  - B. Mother Ann Lee, Shaker founder, was an early female religious leader.
    - 1. She, too, was an English immigrant.
    - 2. She created a perfectionist, celibate, communitarian sect.
    - 3. Dancing, singing, and the “heavenly banquet” were signs of the millennial rule of Christ.

- C. The Holiness Movement was begun by New York sisters Sarah Lankford and Phoebe Palmer in the 1830s.
  - 1. Phoebe Palmer converted a prominent minister.
  - 2. She overcame her reluctance to speak in public and to publish her writings.
  - 3. She advocated women's equality in religious life.
- D. Among early women's rights advocates, Lucretia Mott was a Quaker minister, while Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were both evangelical abolitionists.
- E. The Seneca Falls Women's Convention of 1848 took place in a Wesleyan Methodist church.

**Essential Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, vol. I, ch. 26–29.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, ch. 6–7.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, ch. 8–9.

Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

**Questions to Consider:**

- 1. Why were the Methodists more successful in winning frontier converts than the Presbyterians and other, older denominations?
- 2. Were the critics of revivalism justified?

## Lecture Nine

### Oneida and the Mormons

**Scope:** Among the religions founded in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century America, two, Oneida “Perfectionism” and the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), taught unconventional views about sex and marriage. John Humphrey Noyes, the Perfectionists’ founder, favored “complex marriage,” in which all husbands and wives were shared and children were selected by “stirpiculture,” a form of eugenics. His Oneida commune prospered, but pressure from outraged neighbors finally forced it to close.

The Mormons’ plural marriage system led to persecution and migration. Founder Joseph Smith met the Angel Moroni who, in 1826, gave him a set of golden tablets on which were inscribed the text of an ancient book. The text described the fortunes of a lost tribe of Israel that had come to the New World generations before and explained that Jesus, after his mission in Palestine, had visited America, too. The Mormons, founded in light of this revelation, also antagonized their neighbors, and Smith was lynched in 1844. His successor, Brigham Young, reacted by leading the Mormons to a wilderness kingdom in Utah, where he believed they were beyond the reach of angry Americans. Railroad-builders linked Utah to the rest of the country sooner than Young had anticipated, but the area was denied statehood until the Mormons officially abolished polygamy in 1890.

### Outline

- I. The Oneida community, under John Humphrey Noyes, and the Mormons, under the leadership of Joseph Smith and, later, Brigham Young, were two of the more daring religious experiments of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - A. Both scandalized contemporaries by challenging the convention of monogamy.
  - B. Both showed that alternative ways of life, based on strongly held religious views, could prosper.

- II.** Noyes, a Vermont native and Dartmouth graduate, rejected cherished Christian beliefs and established a commune based on his alternative theological views.
  - A.** The commune, first at Putney, Vermont, and later, Oneida, New York, aimed at sinless perfection.
    - 1. Christ’s Second Coming, Noyes said, had taken place in A.D. 70, which meant that millennial perfection was possible.
    - 2. His interpretation of scripture convinced him that a perfect community should enjoy sex but not practice marriage.
    - 3. A combination of “male chastity” and “stirpiculture” enabled men and women to enjoy sexual relations while confining births to superior individuals, as planned by Noyes.
    - 4. The ban on exclusive relationships entailed a high level of self-discipline.
  - B.** Constructive criticism and mutual tolerance reduced friction in the commune.
  - C.** Its high-quality manufactures, first of steel traps, later of cutlery, ensured the commune’s economic success.
  - D.** Neighbors’ criticisms finally forced Oneida to close, and Noyes fled to Canada to escape prosecution. Ironically, the business outlasted the commune that founded it.
- III.** The Mormon founder was Joseph Smith, also Vermont born (1805–1844).
  - A.** He, too, lived in the religiously excitable “burned-over district” of upstate New York.
  - B.** His parents were religious seekers; as a youth, Smith joined his father in treasure hunting and excavation of Indian mounds.
  - C.** The Angel Moroni appeared to Smith in a vision and brought him the golden tablets.
  - D.** From them, with the aid of the Urim and Thummim, he wrote out the *Book of Mormon*.
    - 1. America was populated by lost tribes of Israel.
    - 2. Jesus visited America after his mission in Palestine.
    - 3. Native Americans were the degenerate remnants of these Israelites.

- E. The book has remained controversial ever since.
  - 1. Some historians see it as an allegory.
  - 2. Others believe it to be an ingenious fraud.
  - 3. Mormon historians continue to defend its miraculous origin.

**IV.** The early Mormons moved frequently to escape persecution.

- A. The initial community was founded in 1830 in Ontario County, New York.
- B. They moved to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831 and later to Jackson County, Missouri.
  - 1. Smith believed that the Garden of Eden had been in Missouri.
  - 2. Mormons' anti-slavery views angered local residents in both places.
  - 3. The Haun's Hill Massacre of 1838 was based on the Missouri governor's extermination threat.
- C. Moving to Nauvoo, Illinois, to escape persecution, the Mormons established a thriving riverside community.
  - 1. The Mormon population reached 12,000.
  - 2. Brigham Young's mission to England won new recruits.
- D. Theological anomalies in Mormon teaching annoyed non-Mormons.
  - 1. God is married and has a physical body.
  - 2. Plural marriage is permissible.
  - 3. Proxy baptisms can bring non-Mormons into heaven.
- E. Smith feuded with former associates, some of whom spread tales of financial and sexual impropriety.
- F. John Cook Bennett fed the press lurid accounts of Smith's multiple marriages.

**V.** Smith was murdered in 1844, prompting the second prophet, Brigham Young, to take more dramatic steps.

- A. Smith was awaiting trial in Carthage, Illinois, when lynched.
- B. Brigham Young decided to move the whole community to Utah.
  - 1. Young, a talented organizer and leader, was elected Smith's successor by the Quorum of Twelve.
  - 2. He ordered the evacuation of Nauvoo and a quasi-military approach to the Utah migration.

- C. Mormons used the Platte River route, parallel to the new Oregon Trail.
  - D. Overcoming great physical hardships, they established Salt Lake City and the kingdom of Deseret, then a part of Mexico.
    - 1. Their first crop was saved by the miracle of the seagulls.
    - 2. The Mexican War brought Utah into the United States.
    - 3. Handcart migrants, many from Britain, swelled the population.
    - 4. The 1849 California Gold Rush brought trade to Salt Lake City.
  - E. Polygamy, admitted openly from 1852, continued to cause sharp controversy.
    - 1. Most Americans hated it as something savage.
    - 2. Mark Twain satirized it.
    - 3. It was an effective device for building a strong community.
- VI. The 1840s was a period of rapid national expansion, justified by the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny.
- A. The United States expanded much faster than Brigham Young had anticipated.
  - B. Young's hopes to bring the transcontinental railroad into Salt Lake City (1869) bespoke a new confidence that Mormons and Gentiles could interact.
  - C. Utah's request for statehood was denied because of polygamy.
    - 1. A timely divine message to prophet Wilford Woodruff officially ended polygamy in 1890.
    - 2. Utah became a state in 1896.
- VII. Mormonism became a permanent feature of American religious life, because the first generation was able to pass on its teaching, community life, and inspiration to the second and subsequent generations.

**Essential Reading:**

Spencer Klaw, *The Life and Death of the Oneida Community*.

Richard and Joan Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormonism*.

Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why were many people so strongly attracted to the new Mormon faith while others reacted violently against it?
2. How do persecution and migration influence religious groups?

## Lecture Ten

### Catholicism

**Scope:** Maryland had been founded as a Catholic colony in the 1630s, but religious toleration for Catholics had ended in the Glorious Revolution in 1690. Only a tiny minority of English Catholics had remained in the colony, though one, Charles Carroll, signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. A flow of Irish Catholics began arriving in America in the 1820s and 1830s in search of work. In 1846, however, the flow became a flood, when Catholic Ireland suffered a catastrophic crop failure and famine. Tens of thousands arrived in Boston, New York, Montreal, and Philadelphia, exhausted, starving, and often suffering from hunger-related infectious diseases.

Protestants in America's eastern cities hated and feared the Catholic Irish. The history of the years 1830–1860 was punctuated by bitter anti-Catholic polemics, allegations of sexual orgies between priests and nuns, and convent burnings and street warfare in Boston and Philadelphia. Catholic leaders, such as Archbishop John Hughes of New York, fought back and insisted that Catholics, despite their religious loyalty to the pope, could also be loyal citizens of a democratic America.

### Outline

- I. The Catholic population at the time of the Revolution, mainly of English descent, was small and reticent.
  - A. Charles Carroll was the only Catholic signatory of the Declaration of Independence.
  - B. John Carroll, his brother, became the first Catholic bishop in America.
  - C. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 brought a French Catholic population into the nation.
- II. A steady flow of Irish immigration in the 1820s and 1830s turned into a flood after the 1846 potato blight and famine.
  - A. Refugee Irish immigrants arrived hungry and often sick.

- B. Catholic charities offered them immediate relief and tried to ensure that Catholic families stayed together.
- C. Most Irish immigrants had been peasant farmers but now became members of the urban working class.
  - 1. Their priests and bishops, mainly French and Irish, were socially conservative.
  - 2. They regarded suffering and poverty as inevitable and as opportunities to exhibit Christ-like forbearance.
  - 3. Some Irish priests promoted temperance.
- D. German Catholic immigrants more often became midwestern farmers and laborers. German Catholics were outspoken opponents of the temperance movement.
- E. The ethnic diversity of American Catholicism increased again in 1848 when victory in the war against Mexico brought a population of Hispanic Catholics into the nation.

**III.** To many Protestants, Catholicism was the antithesis of everything America stood for.

- A. Highbrow anti-Catholic propaganda depicted it as inimical to democratic freedom.
  - 1. Samuel Morse argued that it was foreign, monarchical, and authoritarian.
  - 2. Fox's *Book of Martyrs* remained, among Protestants, a popular source of ideas about Catholics.
  - 3. Advice manuals gave Protestant women instructions on how to deal with the Irish Catholic servant girl "Bridget."
- B. Lowbrow anti-Catholic propaganda told lurid tales of sexual depravity and cruelty in convents.
  - 1. Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures* (1836) was a bestseller.
  - 2. Protestants regarded clerical celibacy as unnatural and, possibly, fraudulent.
- C. Anti-Catholic rioting in Boston and Philadelphia intensified antagonisms.
  - 1. The Ursuline convent in Boston was burned down by a Protestant mob in 1834.
  - 2. Three days of anti-Catholic rioting in Philadelphia in 1844 caused fourteen deaths.

- 3. A schoolboy was beaten until he bled in 1859 when he refused, for religious reasons, to recite the Protestant version of the Ten Commandments.
  - D. The Know-Nothing Party aimed at excluding immigrants, especially Catholics, from the United States.
- IV. Catholic bishops tried to ensure that Catholic children would be educated in their parents' faith and that their Church would maintain its pride and visibility.
- A. Archbishop Hughes of New York demanded public funds to finance Catholic schools.
  - B. At the Third Plenary Synod of Baltimore in 1884, Catholic bishops resolved to build parochial schools in every Catholic parish.
  - C. St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York (begun in 1858) made a bold visual claim to Catholics' permanent place in America.
- V. A handful of prominent Americans converted to Catholicism.
- A. Among them were the transcendentalists Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker.
    - 1. Brownson argued that Protestantism lacked any authority principle and was too vulnerable to shifts in public opinion.
    - 2. Hecker believed that the Catholic theory of original sin was more compatible with American republican virtue than the Protestant.
  - B. By 1880, when a massive new Catholic migration began to arrive from Poland, Italy, and the Slavic countries, the American Catholic Church had laid solid institutional foundations and was strongly Irish in character, but had found a way of avoiding absorption into the Protestant mainstream.

**Essential Reading:**

Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*.

R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, ch. 2.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome*.

Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*,  
ch. 24–29.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Was anti-Catholicism justifiable?
2. Why did Catholics place so much emphasis on separate education institutions?

## Lecture Eleven

### African-American Religion

**Scope:** African-American religion combined old African traditions of conjure and music with Christianity. Many slaves were converted during the Second Great Awakening and became preachers in their own right, some with their masters' support and approval; others, covertly. Reading bans in the slave code made theirs a largely oral tradition. Racial prejudice remained intense, even in the north, which induced free blacks to create their own denominations. The antislavery cause drew many committed Christian reformers in the north. Moderate at first, and pledged to gradual abolition of slavery, the movement was shaken in 1840 when William Lloyd Garrison demanded immediate abolition and said that any political cooperation or compromise with the slave south was a pact with the devil. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) intensified abolitionist sentiment in the north, but slave owners, and their theological representatives, countered that the Bible nowhere condemns slavery. One by one in the decades before the Civil War, the Protestant denominations split into pro-slavery southern and anti-slavery northern branches. A generation of brilliant historians since the 1950s has studied slavery very closely. Their work has established the importance of religion to enslaved African Americans. It also has shown the importance of Christianity in, on the one hand, animating the abolitionist movement, and on the other hand, informing the slave owners' self-justification.

### Outline

- I. Slaves came from different African ethnic groups.
  - A. Some practiced African tribal religions; others were Moslems.
  - B. Most colonial-era slave owners were reluctant to evangelize them.
  - C. Historians debate the extent of African influence on African-American Christianity. The influence seems clear in music, chanting, and dance.

- II.** Many slaves in the north were liberated during and after the Revolution.
  - A.** Revolutionaries' denunciation of the British for "enslaving" them clashed against their own enslavement of African Americans.
  - B.** The rapidly growing Baptist and Methodist denominations were distinctly anti-slavery in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
    - 1.** Harry Hosier, a black preacher, traveled and preached with Francis Asbury.
    - 2.** Another black preacher, "Uncle Jack," was bought out of slavery by admiring whites in his Virginia parish.
  - C.** The emotionalism of the Second Great Awakening was compatible with the emotionalism of African dance and musical traditions.
  - D.** The straightforwardness of Methodist preaching was also an attraction. Emphasis on an inner, personal experience made illiteracy no bar to conversion.
  - E.** Racial prejudice persisted, however, and prompted black separation.
    - 1.** Richard Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1814.
    - 2.** Whites destroyed the African Methodist Church in Charleston after the Denmark Vesey rebellion in 1822.
- III.** About 90 percent of all African Americans were slaves before the Civil War.
  - A.** Southern states' slave codes tried to prevent black literacy, so black Christianity was largely oral.
  - B.** Its informal theology treated the earth as a place of suffering and heaven, across the "Jordan," as a place of rest and reward.
  - C.** Slaves often attended their masters' churches but held separate religious meetings of their own in brush arbors or slave quarters. They risked punishments for holding such meetings.
  - D.** Folk religious traditions, possibly of African origin, persisted.
    - 1.** Many slaves believed in ghosts and haunting.
    - 2.** Conjuring, with the use of magical objects, potions, and powders, offered the hope of exemption from punishment or attraction to members of the opposite sex.

- E. Christian conversion was sometimes so powerful that it broke down the usual sharp lines of separation between master and slave.
  - F. Escaped slaves often found racism among the northern churches.
  - G. Samuel Ringgold Ward honored the Quakers and his own Congregationalist parish as notable exceptions.
- IV. The abolitionist movement was evangelical, inspired by the Second Great Awakening.
- A. Under William Lloyd Garrison, the movement shifted its aim from gradual to immediate.
    - 1. Garrison called the Constitution, so long as it accepted slavery, “a pact with the devil.”
    - 2. Angelina Grimke, in her *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (1840), argued against slavery in Jesus’s idiom.
    - 3. Frederick Douglass made scorching comparisons between true Christianity and the version he had encountered as a slave.
    - 4. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) was a masterful piece of Christian abolitionist propaganda.
  - B. White southern defenders of slavery also justified their conduct with reference to scripture. The Old and New Testaments both refer often to slavery without condemning it.
  - C. Disagreements over slavery led to schisms among Protestant churches.
    - 1. The Methodists divided into northern (anti-slavery) and southern (pro-slavery) branches in 1844.
    - 2. Baptists divided in the same way in 1845.
    - 3. Presbyterians divided in 1857.
- V. Intense religious controversy over slavery added fuel to the political firestorm that eventually led to the secession of the southern states in 1861 and the onset of Civil War.

**Essential Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, vol. II, ch. 39–42.

Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*.

Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What forces shaped the character of African-American Christianity?
2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the abolitionists' case?

## Lecture Twelve

### The Civil War

**Scope:** When the Civil War began in 1861, soldiers on both sides believed that they were fighting in a godly cause. Both saw battlefield victories as signs of God's approval and an enemy's defeat, as signs of his chastisement. Even winners suffered heavy casualties in this first modern, mechanized war, however, which ministers interpreted as divine judgment on the sins of their own side. President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural invoked the idea of God's judgment on a sinful nation. The armies of both sides were swept by evangelical revivals, while freed slaves in the Union ranks prepared for battle with emotional camp meetings.

When the Confederacy lost the war, its advocates remembered that the earthly ministry of Jesus had also ended in defeat and death. The Union, they now said, like the Roman Empire, had had might but not right on its side. Ex-Confederates created the pseudo-religious cult of the "lost cause," featuring Stonewall Jackson (unluckily killed in battle by his own side) as surrogate Messiah. Richmond, Virginia, the ex-capital, became a shrine to southern civil religion, just as the memory of Lincoln took on the overtones of a Christ-like martyrdom.

### Outline

- I. Divisions among the Protestant churches over the slavery question anticipated the political division of the nation in 1861 and the war that followed.
  - A. Because churches were one of the citizens' main sources of information, the split made political disunion more likely.
  - B. During the war, soldiers and civilians on both sides thought that they were fighting a godly fight.
  - C. Slaves interpreted their liberation in 1863 as a religious, as well as political, event.
  - D. Both sides found a way to interpret even the outcome of the war as further evidence of God's blessing.

- II.** John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859 heightened tensions on both sides.
- A.** Brown was a fanatical abolitionist.
  - B.** His Kansas anti-slavery campaign was supported by Unitarian leader Theodore Parker and other prominent northern clergy.
  - C.** He received aid in the form of "Beecher's Bibles" (rifles) from the clergy, but leading abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, refused to join him in the suicidal raid on Harper's Ferry.
  - D.** On trial after the raid's failure, Brown compared himself to Christ and predicted that mighty consequences would ensue from his execution.
  - E.** Northern sympathizers also compared his death to that of Jesus.
- III.** Union soldiers and clergy speculated about the divine significance of the war, while thousands of northern Christians volunteered to aid the war effort.
- A.** Had they sinned by willingly coexisting with slavery for so long?
    - 1. Perhaps the war was God's chastisement on them.
    - 2. Had they been led astray by materialism and worldliness?
    - 3. Does God sometimes make big changes through violence?
  - B.** Was the war an augury of the "End Times" and the Second Coming of Christ? Julia Ward Howe's *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (1862) is apocalyptic.
  - C.** The Christian Commission, founded 1861, brought practical and spiritual aid to northern soldiers in the field.
    - 1. It distributed Bibles and Christian literature.
    - 2. Its members preached revivals.
    - 3. They helped at first aid stations and hospitals.
    - 4. They helped keep soldiers in contact with their families.
  - D.** Northern Catholics were divided on whether to participate in the war.
    - 1. Some joined in the anti-draft riots of 1863.
    - 2. Others, including nursing sisters, volunteered as a way of emphasizing their whole-hearted patriotism.
  - E.** Victory intensified Union Christians' feelings of righteousness.
    - 1. Phillips Brooks thanked God for the reconquest of Richmond.

2. Henry Ward Beecher condemned Confederate leaders to an eternity in hell.
- IV.** Confederate soldiers were equally sure that God was on their side.
- A.** Robert Ryland told his son that he must advertise his Christianity and the godliness of the southern cause to all his comrades.
  - B.** Revivals swept southern camps as often and as fervently as those of the Union soldiers.
  - C.** Confederates remained convinced that the Bible justified slavery.
- V.** Slaves greeted news of their liberation with religious ardor.
- A.** They saw Lincoln as a second Moses.
  - B.** Ex-slaves in the Union army prepared for battle with religious singing and prayer.
  - C.** The American Missionary Association sent teachers and missionaries to help freedmen establish independent lives.
    1. Black and white members were often shocked at the ex-slaves' emotional religiosity, which they saw as barbaric.
    2. After the first shock, many began to appreciate its sincerity.
    3. Black Christians migrated out of the white-led churches.
    4. Black ministers became political, as well as spiritual, leaders.
- VI.** Abraham Lincoln's rhetoric linked the Union's political task to greater religious issues.
- A.** The Gettysburg Address speaks of "consecration," a religious ceremony.
  - B.** The Second Inaugural Address is a meditation on God's inscrutable purposes in permitting the war to continue.
    1. Lincoln knows that both sides pray to the same God.
    2. He speculates that, by means of the war, God might nullify all the gains ever made through slavery.
    3. He proposes a magnanimous reconstruction.
  - C.** These addresses are examples of "civil religion," linking the purposes of the nation to divine (but nondenominational) purposes.
  - D.** Lincoln was assassinated before reconstruction could begin, on Good Friday in 1865. Funeral sermons compared him to Jesus.

**VII.** Defeated Confederates made a religion out of their “lost cause.”

- A. Ceremonies dedicating monuments to old Confederate leaders explicitly linked them to divine figures.
- B. Stonewall Jackson became a central figurehead in this southern civil religion.
- C. Father Abram Ryan was the Catholic priest and poet whose sentimental verse memorialized the lost cause.

**VIII.** The religious life of northerners and southerners was, in many ways, very close, but leaders in each section interpreted religion differently to justify their differing actions. Both inherited the emotional and intellectual energy of the Second Great Awakening and the idea of Manifest Destiny but drew radically different conclusions from the outcome of the conflict.

**Essential Reading:**

Charles Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause*.

Charles Wilson, et al., *Religion and the Civil War*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, vol. II, ch. 39–43.

James Moorehead, *American Apocalypse*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How was each side so readily able to see its own cause as godly?
2. What biblical passages lend themselves to interpretation by people at war?

## Lecture Thirteen

### Victorian Developments

**Scope:** As America became a commercial and industrial nation, it adapted its institutions and ideas to fit new social realities. Several new religious movements catering to the urban middle class, including Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science and Ellen White's Seventh Day Adventists, linked spirituality to reforms in diet. Both supported the rapidly growing temperance movement, which also had female leaders in Frances Willard and Carry Nation. The women's suffrage movement, too, was suffused with evangelical fervor. Clergy in the old denominations feared that Christianity itself was becoming "feminized." One of their methods of regaining manly ground was through the person of Jesus himself, and a literature in which Jesus was the main character (sometimes frankly fictional and sometimes pseudo-biographical) flourished. Women and men could write such books, however, and each muscle-flexing Jesus from a male author was met by a meek and sensitive "gentle Jesus" from the distaff side.

### Outline

- I. Several religious movements linked spirituality and health.
  - A. Sylvester Graham (1794–1851) campaigned against alcoholism and for nutritional reform.
    1. He lectured young men on the need for chastity.
    2. He invented what he thought of as the ideal food, graham crackers.
    3. His nutritional ideas influenced the transcendentalists at Brook Farm and Fruitlands.
  - B. Ellen White incorporated his ideas into Seventh Day Adventism.
    1. This new denomination incorporated elements of Millerism.
    2. White experienced numerous divine visions.
    3. She founded a sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan.
    4. Among her disciples were John Harvey Kellogg (of corn flake fame), J. C. Penney, Montgomery Ward, and John D. Rockefeller.

- C. Mary Baker Eddy founded Christian Science.
  - 1. A chronic invalid for the first 40 years of her life, Eddy was healed by a mesmerist, Phineas Quimby.
  - 2. She came to believe that the mental world is more real than the material and that pain is a state of mind.
  - 3. She founded the Christian Science Church in 1879.
  - 4. She succumbed in 1910 to malicious animal magnetism.
  
- II. Women played an increasing role in public religious life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the example of these women leaders shows.
  - A. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1874, was the first political organization to enjoy the mass participation of women.
    - 1. Frances Willard led the WCTU and linked it to suffrage reform and the anti–white-slavery campaign.
    - 2. Ax-wielding Carry Nation embodied the wild side of temperance activism.
  - B. The suffrage movement found inspiration in the Bible, especially as reinterpreted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
  - C. Church membership was increasingly feminized and clergy, dismayed at their falling status, campaigned for a revival of “muscular Christianity.”
  
- III. Jesus appeared in numerous books of fiction and social reform, sometimes as a delicate, sensitive figure, the ideal of Victorian women, but sometimes as a vigorous manly embodiment of the strenuous life.
  - A. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps regarded Jesus as uniquely sensitive to women.
    - 1. Her Jesus was the most women-oriented man in all history.
    - 2. She wrote a series of books about life in heaven.
  - B. By contrast, the manly Jesus played a key role in Lew Wallace’s *Ben Hur* (1880).
  - C. An implicit Jesus appeared in books on social reform.
    - 1. Henry Ward Beecher answered temperance authors’ plaintive question: Why did he turn water into wine rather than the opposite?
    - 2. William Stead predicted what Christ would do if he came to Chicago.

3. Charles Sheldon, who wrote the bestselling *In His Steps*, asked his congregation to walk in the steps of Jesus.
  - D. Mary Austin said that Jesus was a small-town man who only came to grief when he went to the big city of Jerusalem.
  - E. Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows* presented a sun-bronzed, muscular Jesus, "the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem!"
- IV. Whether or not they realized it, Christians were moving with the changing times. New types of reading matter, new ideas about health and consumerism, and a new and more public role for religious women were all modifying the character of American Christianity as the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended and the 20<sup>th</sup> began.

### **Essential Reading:**

Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*.

Robert C Fuller, *Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life*.

### **Supplementary Reading:**

Charles H. Lippy, *Being Religious, American Style*, ch. 5–6.

R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God*, ch. 4–8.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Why were women able to play a more dominant role in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century religion than previously?
2. Why have diet and health issues remained so popular in America while gradually moving away from these religious sources?

## Lecture Fourteen

### Darwin and Other Dilemmas

**Scope:** Christians assumed for centuries that the findings of science would enhance their understanding of, and admiration for, God's work. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, however, geologists, such as Charles Lyell, and biologists, such as Charles Darwin, were explaining the fossil record and the mutation of species in ways that threatened traditional Christian understandings of nature. In Darwin's view, ruthless competition for ecological niches, not divine planning, explained the order of the natural world. Religious intellectuals split over whether to accept, reject, or adapt Darwin, and a theological debate over creation rattled American Christianity. Social Darwinists also disagreed with Social Gospel advocates on whether society itself was an evolving organism that should be left to itself. Simultaneous developments in comparative religion and archaeology began to paint a more complex picture of the ancient Near East, the area in which Judaism and Christianity had developed. Was it not possible, some scholars asked, that the Bible represented simply one of many bundles of ancient mythical texts rather than a compendium of God's own words about reality? Traditionalists and modernists, disagreeing on these questions, both made intelligent and internally consistent arguments to justify their views, but they could not find common ground.

### Outline

- I. Darwinian biology challenged the Genesis creation story.
  - A. Darwin's idea that species develop and change contradicted the idea of special creation.
    1. In his *Origin of Species* (1859) and subsequent writings, Darwin presented a vision of the world in which every living thing was involved in perpetual war with all others, enabling only the most ruthless and well adapted to survive.
    2. His insistence on random mutation also appeared to deny a purpose or direction to evolution.
    3. For his scheme to be true, the earth must be ancient, as geologist Charles Lyell had argued.

- B. Liberal Protestants embraced Darwin enthusiastically and found ways to harmonize evolution and Christianity.
    - 1. They believed they could strengthen their faith by adapting the most sophisticated intellectual systems.
    - 2. Lyman Abbott, for example, argued that Christianity was itself evolving so that his generation could understand it better than people in Jesus’s own time!
  - C. More orthodox Christians, Protestant and Catholic, denied that this reconciliation was possible.
    - 1. Charles Hodge of Princeton argued, “Darwinism is atheism.”
    - 2. Catholic Orestes Brownson admired Darwin as an empirical scientist but dismissed his “speculative” hypothesis with evidence from cross-breeding and from Egyptian mummies.
- II. Social Darwinism, as well as the biological original, posed nettlesome issues to Christian thinkers, too.
- A. Should the churches acquiesce in great disparities of wealth? Henry Ward Beecher said yes, because poverty is a reflection of both God and evolution at work.
  - B. Social Gospel advocates said no and had to overcome the common assumption that poverty is sinful.
    - 1. They pointed to the business cycle and to Jesus’s concern for the poor.
    - 2. Washington Gladden (1836–1918) argued for the social gospel and for interdenominational cooperation.
    - 3. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) ministered in the Hell’s Kitchen district of New York City and wrote *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), declaring that salvation comes not to individuals but through the collective improvement of society.
    - 4. Rauschenbusch, Francis Peabody, and other Social Gospel professors believed that collecting information about the economy and statistics on wages, unemployment, and labor was vital (and religiously relevant).
    - 5. Economist Richard Ely (1854–1943) played a leading role in the development of academic economics but saw it as a branch of Christian ethics.
    - 6. Josiah Strong, the most dynamic of the Social Gospel advocates, believed in guiding evolution along benign paths.

His book *Our Country* (1885) argued for Anglo-Saxon Christian imperialism.

- C. American Socialists were more Christian than Marxist, and they denounced capitalism as anti-Christian.
  - 1. George Herron (1862–1925) described Jesus as a working carpenter and anti-private-property preacher.
  - 2. Socialist party leader and presidential candidate Eugene Debs was also an advocate of the socialist Jesus.

### III. Developments in philology and comparative religion cast doubt on the reliability of the Bible and the uniqueness of Hebrew origins.

- A. German “higher criticism” applied principles of literary and historical research to the Bible.
  - 1. Did the Bible have multiple authors?
  - 2. Why does the Bible contain contradictions, including two Genesis creation narratives and disagreements among the four gospels?
  - 3. Form critics recognized that the Bible was a mix of poetry, history, laws, and songs.
  - 4. They theorized the existence of older, but now lost, documents, sources of stories common to more than one gospel.
  - 5. Church history showed that councils had *decided* to exclude many Christian apocrypha.
  - 6. Did the personality of God develop through the Scriptures?
- B. The development of comparative religion showed that many ancient peoples had had creation stories, tales of miracles, warnings about great floods, and explanations of the origins of language.
- C. American theological “modernists” favored the acceptance of these theoretical refinements.
  - 1. They were strongly influenced by Horace Bushnell’s (1802–1876) “Dissertation on Language” (1849), which argued that the language of theology cannot be scientific but must be seen as aesthetic and metaphorical.
  - 2. They believed in the essential goodness of mankind as against the old Puritan preoccupation with Original Sin.
  - 3. Their Christianity was preeminently ethical, taking the Sermon on the Mount, rather than Resurrection, as its center.

4. As “postmillennialists,” they aimed to build the kingdom of God on earth.

D. Anti-modernists, by contrast, argued that the Bible itself, not modern knowledge, must be the yardstick by which truth is measured.

IV. In a subsequent lecture, we will see how the defenders of biblical inerrancy became the anchors of fundamentalism as it developed at the turn of the century in reaction against modernism. By 1900, the immense social changes in America and the novel intellectual environment, post-Darwin, had confronted Christianity with its most radical challenges since Copernicus.

### **Essential Reading:**

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, vol. II, ch. 44–48.

Jan Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America*.

### **Supplementary Reading:**

William Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*.

Henry May, *Protestant Churches and Industrializing America*.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Why was evolutionary thought such a complex challenge to traditional Christian ideas?
2. What factors and conditions stimulated the Social Gospel preachers?

## Lecture Fifteen

### Judaism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

**Scope:** The first large Jewish migration to America came from Germany in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, comprising people who belonged to the Reform tradition and were already well assimilated to modern urban life in a predominantly Christian society. They established synagogues that were outwardly similar to Protestant churches and some even switched their Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. The second wave of migration, by contrast, came from Orthodox communities in eastern Europe and Russia, most of which lived by farming in the Jewish “Pale” of settlement, had suffered bouts of severe persecution, had fled from pogroms, and had had little contact with the outside world. The impact of their migration to New York and other industrial cities was immense; they found it difficult to preserve the distinctive characteristics of their faith while adapting to new economic and social realities. The Conservative movement of the 1880s and after was a creative Jewish response to life in the United States, a way of remaining culturally and religiously distinct without making daily life in America too difficult. Many Jews, however, substituted socialism or Zionism for their old religious faith.

### Outline

- I. In numerous ways, American Jews’ way of life marked them out as distinct from the predominantly Christian community.
  - A. They had an unbroken historic tradition dating back several thousand years.
    1. A conception of God acting in history.
    2. No other biblical peoples could be found in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America.
  - B. They had suffered centuries of persecution at the hands of Christians who regarded them as the killers of Christ. A sense of being God’s chosen people helped to preserve them in the face of persecution.
  - C. From Friday night to Saturday night was the Jewish Sabbath.

- D. The home, rather than the synagogue, was the center of Jewish life. Sabbath was celebrated from Friday evening until Saturday evening by rest and ritual meals.
  - E. To be Jewish meant belonging to an ethnic group and fulfilling a set of actions, as well as holding a set of beliefs. Annual festivals were linked to events in Jewish history.
- II.** A handful of Jewish communities dotted eastern cities at the time of the American Revolution.
- A. They were mainly Sephardic—descended from Jews who had lived under Islam in Spain and North Africa until the Spanish expulsion of 1492 and then, usually, in the Netherlands.
  - B. The earliest American synagogue was built in 1763 in Rhode Island.
- III.** A larger migration of Ashkenazim, Jews from Germany, arrived between 1820 and 1860.
- A. They were mainly urban businessmen whose families had experienced emancipation in the German Enlightenment.
  - B. Many joined the new Jewish Reform movement, which sought to remove archaic signs of distinctiveness in dress, diet, and worship.
    - 1. Isaac Meyer Wise was the founding father of American Reform.
    - 2. He arrived in America in 1846 and tried to transform his Albany, New York, congregation.
    - 3. Conflict within his congregation prompted his move to Cincinnati, which became a center of Reform Judaism.
    - 4. The Pittsburgh Platform (1885) made Reform an analog of liberal Protestantism.
  - C. Reform synagogues maintained the old custom of circumcision and frowned on Jewish-Christian intermarriage.
  - D. The Conservative Movement began in reaction to “the shrimp incident” of 1883.
    - 1. Controversy arose at the Hebrew Union College graduation in 1883, when shrimp, a non-kosher (*traifa*) food, was served.
    - 2. Sabato Morais (1823–1897) and other objectors founded the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, which became the center of the Conservative Movement.

- IV.** The mass migration of Eastern European Jews between 1880 and 1914, who were poorer, less well assimilated, and more Orthodox, transformed the character of American Judaism.
- A.** The sudden contact with New York could have a shattering effect on Orthodox Jews' ideas and actions.
    - 1. Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* is a vivid fictionalized account of this experience.
    - 2. Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* explores competing ideals, Jewish and American, about what sort of work men and women ought to do.
  - B.** Matters of taste, wealth, and national tradition kept the German and Russian Jews apart, but a common sense of Jewishness, by contrast, promoted mutual aid.
    - 1. Wise hoped they would be Americanized as quickly as possible, to avoid bigotry and gain respect.
    - 2. Cyrus Adler (1863–1940), a student of Sabato Morais, disagreed and saw the role of the Conservative movement as aiding and uplifting, but preserving the faith of, the newcomers.
    - 3. Adler and other Conservative leaders brought Solomon Schechter from England to be the new president of the Jewish Theological Seminary.
- V.** American Jews played leading roles in other movements.
- A.** Some followed Theodore Herzl (1860–1904), founder of modern Zionism.
  - B.** Others were enthusiastic socialists and comprised the Marxist strand in American socialism.
- VI.** These competing strands, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox, all experienced continual change and adaptation to American conditions. Reform intended change and welcomed it. Orthodox aimed to resist it but could not prevent new generations from learning English; adapting to urban, multicultural, and multi-religious New York; and having to decide how to hold the line and where to make concessions to new realities. Jews formed a distinctive part of the mass immigration of 1880–1920, before immigration restriction laws of 1921 and 1924 closed the gates.

**Essential Reading:**

Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism*.

Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*.

Isaac Meyer Wise, *Reminiscences*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What were the benefits and drawbacks of America to Jewish immigrants?
2. Why was the Reform movement so eager to adapt and change Jewish traditions in the New World?

## Lecture Sixteen

### Fundamentalism

**Scope:** In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after a series of confrontations and heresy trials, many Protestant churches divided. Their modern or liberal branches aimed to reconcile faith with contemporary scholarship, while the fundamentalist branches insisted on the Bible's absolute reliability. American fundamentalists were influenced by dispensational premillennialism, the theory that the prophetic books of the Bible spelled out timetables for the ages of world history and the coming apocalypse. Believing that the world was foundering, most put little energy into social reforms, with some exceptions, including the Salvation Army. Larger-than-life preachers, such as Billy Sunday, a former major league baseball player, advanced the fundamentalist cause in small towns nationwide in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. William Jennings Bryan, former Democratic presidential candidate, also preached and wrote for the cause and spoke against evolution in the "Scopes Monkey Trial" of 1925. Liberal commentators expected fundamentalism to dwindle and disappear after that, but it did neither, reappearing after World War II, and especially in the late 1970s, as a vibrant religious force, well adapted to television and eager to reassert itself in American public life.

### Outline

- I. Conservative evangelicals opposed the concept of evolution.
  - A. They believed the Bible to be infallibly true, and they opposed the developing logic of the higher criticism.
    1. Some admitted, however, that the six days of creation might have been much longer than current days.
    2. They were intellectually rigorous but started from different premises than their liberal Protestant antagonists.
  - B. They thought that Darwinism, linking men to lower animals, compromised the dignity of man.
  - C. It seemed, also, to undermine morality.

**II.** Conservative evangelicals preserved the old belief in individual salvation through conversion. They denigrated the collective salvation idea of the Social Gospel.

**A.** Conversion was central to the ministry of evangelist Dwight Moody (1837–1899).

1. Moody abandoned social work when he concluded that it distracted his listeners from the gospel.
2. He believed the world was deteriorating and that he must try to save a remnant from the coming catastrophe.
3. He established Bible conferences and an institute at Northfield, Massachusetts.

**B.** Moody’s successor as leading evangelist was Billy Sunday (1862–1935).

1. Sunday, an orphan, had a first career as a professional baseball player.
2. He used baseball metaphors in his entertaining sermons.
3. He drew vivid verbal pictures to distinguish right from wrong and mixed faith with patriotism.

**C.** Not all evangelicals turned away from social work. The Salvation Army specialized in charitable work and in “rescuing” sinners from working-class places of entertainment.

1. Its members set Christian words to popular songs.
2. Its uniforms, brass bands, and pseudo-military drill gave members a sense of pride, purpose, and unity.
3. It developed out of the Holiness movement.

**III.** Many American evangelicals interpreted the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation to mean that Christ’s Second Coming was imminent.

**A.** Dispensational premillennialists denied human perfectibility and awaited the rapture.

1. John Nelson Darby, from Britain, popularized his method of scriptural interpretation in America.
2. “Dispensations” were eras in the earth’s history, each of which ended in catastrophe.
3. The theory offered an explanation for the worrying transformation of society.

**B.** Elaborate diagrams were necessary to chart the connections between historical events and biblical predictions.

1. Unlike the modernists, premillennialists regarded historical events in the light of a supernatural conflict between good and evil.
  2. They were enthusiastic supporters of the Zionist movement, believing that Christ would not come again until all the Jews were gathered together in Israel.
- C. The annotated Scofield Bible (1909) was a systematic attempt to explain all of scripture in light of this theory.
- IV.** Most Protestant denominations split between evangelical conservatives and liberal modernists.
- A. Southerners were most likely to support the conservative side.
  - B. Heresy trials, including that of Presbyterian Charles Briggs (1841–1913), led to expulsions and denominational divisions.
- V.** “The Fundamentals” was a series of paperback booklets, published from 1910 to 1915, that gave this branch of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Protestantism its name.
- A. The five main fundamentals were:
    1. The Virgin birth of Christ.
    2. Substitutionary atonement (the idea that Christ, by his death, saved humanity from sin).
    3. The reality of the resurrection.
    4. The reality of miracles.
    5. The inerrancy of the Bible.
  - B. Californian oil millionaires Milton and Lyman Stewart subsidized publication of these booklets.
  - C. Three million copies were distributed free to teachers, preachers, youth leaders, and professors.
  - D. They tried to outline an unnegotiable minimum position for all Christians.
- VI.** World War I gave fundamentalists the opportunity to assert their 100 percent Americanism.
- A. Until then, their movement had seemed simultaneously to embrace and to scorn the nation.
  - B. Fundamentalists noted that Germany, the enemy, was the source of higher criticism.

- C. After the war, fundamentalists became active in politics.
  - 1. Tennessee passed a law forbidding the teaching of evolution.
  - 2. John Scopes's challenge to the law led to a symbolic confrontation of modernists and fundamentalists in 1925 at Dayton, Tennessee, in the "Scopes Monkey Trial."
  - 3. William Jennings Bryan for the prosecution confronted Clarence Darrow for the defense.
  - 4. The prosecution won its case but lost the public relations contest.

**VII.** Despite their theological anti-modernism, fundamentalists adapted quickly to urban conditions and to new media.

- A. Fundamentalists were among the first radio and, later, TV preachers.
- B. Aimee Semple McPherson adapted her Pentecostal message to the Hollywood movie culture.
  - 1. Pentecostalism featured *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) and faith healing.
  - 2. McPherson skillfully manipulated familiar Hollywood symbols.
  - 3. A 1926 sex scandal damaged her reputation.
  - 4. She was the model for a character in Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* (1927).

**VIII.** Historians before the 1970s believed that fundamentalism would gradually lose its momentum and capacity to inspire loyalty. A brilliant generation of evangelical historians led by George Marsden has shown otherwise. The revival and political importance of fundamentalism since the 1970s, and its continued skill in adapting to new forms of communication (including television and direct mail), demonstrated its renewed vitality; it continues to appeal to large sections of the American population.

### **Essential Reading:**

George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*.  
Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, ch. 9, 11, 14.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Lyle Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*.

George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why did evangelicalism and fundamentalism attract, and why do they continue to attract, such large numbers of Americans?
2. What were the benefits and drawbacks of modern, urban, technical society to the early fundamentalists?

## Lecture Seventeen

### War and Peace

**Scope:** When America entered World War I in 1917, a fervent wave of anti-German sentiment led to persecution of German Americans and members of the historic peace churches (Quakers and Mennonites). When the war was over and its lurid atrocity stories proved to have been false, penitent clergy swore that they would never again permit themselves to be carried away by war propaganda and joined the peace movement. As a result, they were reluctant, twenty years later, to believe Holocaust stories coming out of Germany and were wrong again, this time for being too skeptical. When Reinhold Niebuhr argued that this pacifism, in the face of Hitler, was inadequate and that war against evil was sometimes justified, he was ostracized by old friends. Pearl Harbor led to some rapid rethinking, however, and most American churches supported the government throughout World War II. The Cold War years witnessed a succession of debates over the Christian morality of nuclear weapons, veering from the strong support of them offered by such Catholic bishops as Cardinal Spellman in the 1950s to widespread church demands for unilateral disarmament in the early 1980s. Between these two dates, the national upheaval over Vietnam convinced many churchmen that their faith demanded a public display of opposition to war.

### Outline

- I. American entry into the First World War was accompanied by a wild surge of pro-war propaganda from the churches.
  - A. Protestant ministers preached against the “barbaric Huns” and passed on false atrocity stories about German conduct.
    1. Newell Dwight Hillis of Brooklyn went into almost pornographic detail about the rape of the Belgian nuns.
    2. Evangelicals, such as Billy Sunday, were as enthusiastic as liberal Protestants.
    3. YMCA and other Christian organizations arranged preaching, canteens, and wholesome entertainment for the troops.



- D. Was use of the atomic bomb against Japan in 1945 compatible with defense of the Judeo-Christian tradition? Protestant and Catholic journals protested against the “Jupiter Complex.”
  - E. The Holocaust eventually provoked a crisis of religious meaning for American Jews.
    - 1. Was it a visitation of God’s judgment on an erring people?
    - 2. Did it nullify the whole idea of a benevolent God?
    - 3. Was Judaism now a matter of sheer survival as a people, and should Israel, founded in 1948, be a religious nation?
    - 4. Much of this debate was, however, delayed until the 1960s.
- IV. The Cold War kept Christians’ attention focused on nuclear weapons.
- A. Reinhold Niebuhr’s *The Irony of American History* argued the self-defeating character of nuclear weapons for America.
  - B. Cold War conservatives justified the threat to use nuclear weapons in this standoff against “godless communism.”
  - C. Jesuit theologian John C. Murray argued the apocalyptic character of the confrontation.
- V. The Vietnam War (1964–1973) led to a new round of self-analysis and doubt.
- A. Orthodox anti-communism justified the Americans’ role.
    - 1. Cardinal Spellman supported the war and visited Vietnam at Christmas in 1966.
    - 2. Evangelical leaders were equally enthusiastic at first.
  - B. Prominent figures from all denominations began to oppose the Americans’ role after 1965.
    - 1. Clergy Concerned about Vietnam brought Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish representatives together in opposition.
    - 2. Roger LaPorte’s self-immolation on the steps of the United Nations imitated Vietnamese Buddhist priests’ self-sacrifice.
    - 3. The Berrigan brothers protested against the draft with their own blood.
    - 4. Numerous churches aided conscientious objectors, deserters, and draft resisters.
  - C. In the deflated, post-Vietnam environment, growing numbers of churches turned against war and war-preparation policies.

1. The Catholic bishops wrote a pastoral letter against nuclear war.
2. Many Protestants followed their lead.
3. Neoconservative Jews and Catholics, by contrast, still sympathetic to the Cold War mission and to Israel, rebutted them.

VI. The end of the Cold War in 1989–1991 briefly offered the hope of world peace. Before long, however, the eclipse of communism in southeastern Europe led to a revival of older religious and ethnic conflicts, provoking brutal and prolonged warfare. The Gulf War also bespoke the continuing need for a political outlook that included war. The religious issues surrounding war remained unresolved.

**Essential Reading:**

Ray Abrams, *Preachers Present Arms*.

Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, ch. 52–56.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Richard W. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography*.

Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What dilemmas were Christian pacifists forced to confront in resisting war?
2. How is the biblical ambiguity about the rights and wrongs of war reflected in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Americans' attitudes toward conflict?

## Lecture Eighteen

### Twentieth-Century Catholicism

**Scope:** Catholic immigrants from Italy, Poland, the Slavic lands, and south Germany found, as they arrived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a church dominated by the Irish Americans, whose leaders were not always ready to acknowledge the newcomers' distinctive styles of worship. Tensions persisted into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but a series of powerful consolidating bishops, including O'Connell of Boston and Mundelein of Chicago, established order and uniformity over their patchwork dioceses and emphasized their people's patriotism. Catholics made sure of their continuing distinctiveness from Protestants by building a parallel educational system, run by generations of self-sacrificing nuns. The first Catholic presidential candidate, Al Smith, lost the election of 1928, but John F. Kennedy's victory in 1960 bore witness to a decline in anti-Catholic prejudice. Catholics remained distinctive because of their opposition to birth control at a time that other churches accepted it, but the outcome of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) was to make them less distinctive than hitherto. Catholics devoted the last thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to debating the merits and drawbacks of the council and absorbing the shocks it had caused.

### Outline

- I. A generation of centralizing bishops tried to impose order on an array of diverse customs and practices.
  - A. They were hamstrung by the independence of the religious orders, which were often beyond their control and ran their own schools, colleges, hospitals, and charities.
  - B. They discouraged ethnic parishes and devotions.
    1. Some flourished in any case, such as the Italian devotions of Manhattan's 115<sup>th</sup> Street.
    2. The bishops discovered that immigrants often became more religiously observant than they had been at home.
  - C. These bishops also emphasized their loyalty to America, while taking care not to antagonize Vatican authorities in Rome.

1. The “Americanism” crisis, including a papal condemnation in 1899, warned them against too much assimilation.
  2. The seminary library of Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago was modeled on the University of Virginia on the outside but the Roman Barberini Palace on the inside.
  3. Cardinal Mundelein issued an “English only” order for all Catholic schools, winning praise from the city’s civic and religious leaders.
  4. A shrewd businessman and manager, he sold shares in himself that kept their value in the Great Depression years.
- II.** Anti-Catholic prejudice among Protestants persisted far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- A. Al Smith, Democratic presidential candidate in 1928, proved unacceptable to many southern evangelicals, who normally voted Democratic.
  - B. The image of sinister Catholics shown in Thomas Nast’s old cartoons persisted.
  - C. The Legion of Decency threatened an organized boycott of all Hollywood films that did not meet its stringent criteria and led to the creation of the Hays Office.
  - D. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Paul Blanshard argued that Catholicism posed the same kind of threat to the republic as Communism.
  - E. In the 1960 election, John F. Kennedy, the Catholic Democratic candidate, denied the allegation that if elected, he would be subservient to Vatican directives.
    1. Organized Protestant groups and celebrities, such as Norman Vincent Peale, campaigned against Kennedy.
    2. In a speech to the Houston Ministerial Association, Kennedy told the city’s Protestant ministers that no religious authorities would dictate policy to him.
    3. No major party since 1960 has nominated a Catholic candidate for president.
- III.** The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) transformed numerous time-honored Catholic customs.
- A. Services were held in English instead of Latin.

- B. The importance of confession diminished.
  - C. The church was reconceptualized as “the People of God” and Protestants as “the separated brethren.”
  - D. For the first time, Catholics were permitted to visit other churches and synagogues.
  - E. Orders of nuns modified or abandoned their traditional habits.
  - F. The combination of Vatican II and the social upheavals of the 1960s led to an era of rapid change and experimentation.
    - 1. Priests and nuns appeared among civil rights demonstrators.
    - 2. Leading Catholic colleges put themselves into the hands of lay trustees and began to emulate the principles and standards of secular universities.
- IV.** Catholic teaching about sexuality had also made Catholics distinctive through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this teaching did not change.
- A. The papal encyclical letter *Casti Conubii* (1929) explicitly prohibited artificial contraception.
    - 1. Catholic families tended to be bigger than the national average.
    - 2. Pius XII’s allocution to Italian midwives (1951) implied assent to the use of the “rhythm method.”
    - 3. Fears about overpopulation and Catholic couples’ distress over fertility issues created pressure for a change in the teaching.
    - 4. *Humanae Vitae* (1968) upheld the old teaching.
    - 5. Charles Curran and other Catholics made vocal protests.
    - 6. Catholic fertility subsequently became more similar to that of all other Americans.
  - B. The Catholic teaching against abortion no longer enjoyed widespread assent in America.
    - 1. State laws against abortion had been passed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, partly from anti-Catholic motives.
    - 2. Gathering support for liberalized abortion laws was followed by the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973).
    - 3. Opposition to abortion was one of the issues that created an alliance between traditionalist Catholics and evangelical Protestants.

- C. The Catholic prohibition of divorce also butted up against American practices in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The annulment option was widely perceived as slow, expensive, and uneven in its application.
  - D. At a time when many churches were becoming more favorably disposed to homosexuality, the Catholic Church maintained its traditional condemnation.
- V. By the 1980s, Catholicism had lost much of the distinctiveness that had made it a subculture through the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Catholic people were no longer poor, recently migrated, or socially marginal. They had become an integral part of the American population but now had to decide whether they wanted to take their lead from their nation or their church when the two appeared to be in conflict.

### **Essential Reading:**

Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*.

Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*.

### **Supplementary Reading:**

Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America: 1950–1985*.

Edward Kantowicz, *Corporation Sole: Cardinal Mundelein and Chicago Catholicism*.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Why was anti-Catholic prejudice so persistent, and why did it eventually diminish?
2. Why were questions of sexuality central to Catholic debate between 1960 and 1990?

## Lecture Nineteen

### The Affluent Society

**Scope:** The years immediately after World War II witnessed a powerful religious revival. Among evangelicals, Billy Graham, in the tradition of Whitefield and Finney, seized the headlines and converted hundreds at vast open-air rallies. More than any predecessor, Graham took the theology out of Christianity, emphasizing instead an emotional turning to Jesus as friend and helper. Liberal Protestant churches also boomed in these years, though critics said that they were simply playing the role of social clubs in the proliferating new suburbs. American congregations were richer than ever before, and the postwar decades witnessed a renaissance of ambitious (sometimes ostentatious) church building. Some were daring in their modernism, such as the new Catholic Cathedral of San Francisco, the chapel of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and the nondenominational Rothko Chapel in Houston. Members of the clergy, meanwhile, found their role changing also. Less of their time was devoted to preaching and more to counseling parishioners. A series of “feel-good” religious bestsellers of the postwar years included *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) by Norman Vincent Peale, while a Catholic priest, Fulton Sheen, became a surprise hit on prime-time television in the mid-1950s with his irenic series “Life Is Worth Living.”

### Outline

- I. After World War II, the United States experienced a great religious revival, and church membership grew by millions, to include more than 60 percent of the whole population by the mid-1950s, more than ever before. Explanations for the revival varied.
  - A. According to some observers, it was a response to the rootlessness of America’s highly mobile society.
  - B. Suburbanization was breaking down old ethnic-religious neighborhoods. Churches became the suburbs’ social centers.
  - C. Others suggested that the revival was caused by parents’ eagerness to have the era’s huge cohort of children (the baby boom) brought up in church.

- D. Perhaps the fear of nuclear annihilation drove citizens to church in unprecedented numbers.
    - 1. The *Partisan Review* symposium described the revival as a symptom of a collective failure of nerve.
    - 2. Religious intellectuals, notably Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, denounced the illusion of perfectibility and embraced existentialism.
  - E. The fact that America's Cold War adversary, the Soviet Union, was explicitly atheist, gave Americans an incentive to emphasize that they represented a Judeo-Christian way of life.
  - F. In 1954, Congress approved the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.
  - G. Will Herberg demonstrated the sociological functions of the revival in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955).
  - H. In a famous conversation, Reinhold Niebuhr urged Herberg *not* to become a Christian but to rediscover the riches of his Jewish heritage.
  - I. The phrase "Judeo-Christian tradition" became a popular way of muting an ancient division.
- II. After the New Deal, government took care of many social service tasks previously undertaken by religious groups. Churches' functions narrowed, but they picked up some new ones, including psychological counseling.
- A. Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), had been dismissive of religion.
  - B. Clergy found a demand for counseling among their parishioners.
    - 1. Hell, and God the vengeful judge, were in decline, except in hard-line evangelical churches.
    - 2. The hazards of clergy-counselors' work are amusingly recounted in John Updike's fiction.
  - C. A series of religious/psychological bestsellers shared the market in the late 1940s and 1950s.
    - 1. Norman Vincent Peale, Joshua Loth Liebman, and Fulton Sheen all contributed to this literature.
    - 2. Sheen, a Catholic priest, was an unexpected TV success with "Life Is Worth Living" in the mid-1950s.

- III.** Church building boomed in the era, with many unremarkable suburban edifices being joined by a handful of outstanding ones—suspiciously like temples to human aesthetic values rather than to the Almighty.
- A.** Congregation Beth Shalom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, hired Frank Lloyd Wright, a non-Jewish celebrity architect, to design its new synagogue (1954–1959).
  - B.** The Chapel of the Air Force Academy (1959–1963) is America’s leading symbol of Christian-military anti-Communism.
  - C.** Controversy surrounded the building of the Catholic Cathedral of San Francisco (1965–1970), but it ultimately embodied Vatican II ideals.
  - D.** The nondenominational Rothko Chapel in Houston elevated abstract expressionist art to pseudo-religious dimensions (1964–1970).
  - E.** Drive-in churches were also built.
- IV.** The decades after World War II also gave rise to a series of colorful religious personalities.
- A.** Billy Graham, the greatest of the postwar revivalists, inherited the mantle of Whitefield, Finney, and Moody, as an irenic figure with political, as well as evangelical, influence.
  - B.** Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, cautioned her co-religionists against welcoming the affluent society.
    - 1.** She was an uncompromising pacifist.
    - 2.** She offered a model of sanctification through failure.
  - C.** Thomas Merton became America’s first and only famous monk.
    - 1.** His *Seven Storey Mountain* (1948) was another bestseller.
    - 2.** He died mysteriously in 1968, apparently on the verge of an ecumenical breakthrough.
  - D.** Harvey Cox showed that a theologian could embrace rather than resist the secular world.
    - 1.** *The Secular City* taught that God wants us to grow up and manage without him.
    - 2.** Cox tried to build religious bridges across the “generation gap.”

- V. The extraordinary generosity of Americans to their churches and synagogues made buildings, charities, mission work, and publications possible on an immense scale. While churches decayed in Europe (or, like Westminster Abbey and Canterbury, thrived on the tourist business), American churches and organized religious life prospered as never before.

**Essential Reading:**

Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*.

Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*.

Stephen Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What is the connection between religiosity and prosperity?
2. How did congregations justify the building of large and expensive churches and synagogues?

## Lecture Twenty

### The Civil Rights Movement

**Scope:** Between Reconstruction and the 1950s, black ministers often played the role of community leaders. One such minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., led the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955–1956. He understood how to use the American patriotic idiom and the Bible that both blacks and whites knew well to condemn segregation. His movement’s commitment to nonviolence enabled it to maintain the moral high ground. Revulsion at segregationist attacks against black churches, notably in Birmingham, Alabama in 1964, created national political support for civil rights legislation. The Nation of Islam offered an alternative religious vision to American blacks. It offered them pride and power but not racial integration and was embodied in the powerful speeches of ex-convict Malcolm X. Black political aspirations remained concentrated on religious leaders in subsequent decades, of whom the best known was Jesse Jackson. The civil rights movement inspired later reform movements, many of which followed King’s example of publicly breaking unjust laws in the name of a divine higher law and as a way of drawing attention to the injustice. Among these imitators were the sanctuary and pro-life movements.

### Outline

- I. Religion was a powerful community building and sustaining force in the segregation era.
  - A. W. E. B. DuBois paid tribute to the power of religion in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).
  - B. Black ministers played a vital role in community life as the best-educated leaders not dependent on whites’ good will.
  - C. They created “storefront” churches after the great migration of rural blacks to the urban north.
  - D. Politicized blacks in 1930s and 1940s were sometimes annoyed at the otherworldliness of religion there.

- II.** It is no coincidence that ministers (including Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson, and Andrew Young) led the civil rights movement.
- A.** King came from a family of ministers, and his father led a relatively prosperous congregation of the black middle class in Atlanta.
  - B.** He was highly educated in northern schools and studied for the doctorate at Boston University.
  - C.** By accepting the call of the Dexter Road Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, King returned to the heart of the segregated south.
  - D.** He led the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955–1956.
    - 1.** Mass meetings were held in his and other churches.
    - 2.** Preaching and hymns promoted movement unity.
    - 3.** Following a death threat, King felt his faith strengthened during a profound religious experience.
    - 4.** King believed that God had chosen Montgomery as the starting point of the movement.
- III.** The civil rights movement caused controversy across the American religious landscape.
- A.** King was one of the founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957.
    - 1.** Part of his skill as a leader came from his use of biblical language and idioms, recognized by black and white audiences alike.
    - 2.** By refusing to fight back when attacked, civil rights demonstrators kept the moral high ground.
    - 3.** The SCLC adapted techniques used by Gandhi and Thoreau.
  - B.** Joseph Jackson and other black southern Baptist leaders believed that political activism in the church was inappropriate, which led to a split in the organization.
  - C.** Segregationists also believed that they were religiously justified. Lawrence Neff, a white Atlanta Methodist, wrote *Jesus: Master-Segregationist*.

- D. The symbolic significance of religion in the movement intensified, but the media downplayed it.
    - 1. King's "I Have a Dream" speech and his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" mixed biblical and patriotic rhetoric.
    - 2. The religious theme was apparent in the September 1963 bombing attack on a Birmingham, Alabama, church.
    - 3. In Memphis on the night before his death in 1968, King summoned up the image of Moses on the mountaintop.
  - E. White liberal Protestants and Catholics joined in the movement eagerly; their support of desegregation sometimes antagonized their congregations.
  - F. After 1966, harmonious interracial cooperation in the movement began to break down.
    - 1. James Forman demanded reparations from white churches.
    - 2. Evangelicals were angered by such gestures.
- IV. The Black Muslims offered an alternative approach to racial change.
- A. Elijah Muhammad encountered Wallace Fard, who described the creation of the white "devil race" by Mr. Yacub.
  - B. Proselytizing in prisons, the Nation of Islam converted Malcolm X, who became their most well known advocate.
  - C. Their way of life and ritual cleanliness was a direct response to inner-city conditions.
  - D. Malcolm X's rhetoric had the opposite effect from King's—antagonizing and scaring whites and promoting an image of black pride and separatism.
  - E. After making the *hajj* pilgrimage, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam and attempted to create a more orthodox form of Islam.
- V. Later protest movements imitated the civil rights movement, breaking the law under the discipline of prayer and in the conviction of righteousness.
- A. Members of the sanctuary movement risked arrest by helping Central American refugees in the 1980s.
    - 1. Liberation theology grew out of Latin American conditions.
    - 2. Sanctuary workers, many of them nuns like Darlene Nicgorsky, used the analogy of the Underground Railroad.

- B.** Religiously motivated anti-abortion activists were subject to repeated arrests.
1. Joan Andrews refused to cooperate with prison authorities and suffered solitary confinement in prison.
  2. Randall Terry tried to fill the jails to publicize Operation Rescue.
  3. Pro-life activists used the slavery analogy and the Nazi analogy.

**VI.** In one sense, the civil rights movement permanently changed American life, by creating a form of citizen activism that subjects laws to a religious test. But in another way, the movement simply revived the kind of unyielding godly activism undertaken by the abolitionists. It showed, too, that the motivating power of religion had not declined with the modernization of society.

**Essential Reading:**

David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*.

Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

James Baldwin, *The First Next Time*.

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What religious factors made the civil rights movement possible in the 1950s and 1960s that had inhibited it earlier?
2. Were later protest movements legitimate heirs of the civil rights movement?

## Lecture Twenty-One

### The Counterculture and Feminism

**Scope:** As disaffected youths “dropped out” of mainstream society in the 1960s, many experimented with mind-expanding drugs and promiscuous sex. The results were often disappointing, and many turned next to the Jesus movement. Its advocates pointed out that Jesus had been a proto-hippie: a wandering holy man who had given up all his worldly goods and preached peace, brotherhood, and love. The Jesus movement recreated what it saw as the authentic spirit of the early church, with close community living in an atmosphere of holy poverty. Other communal groups, such as Jim Jones’s People’s Temple, gathered around charismatic leaders, sometimes with ominous consequences. The women’s movement of the 1960s gave rise to new female leadership roles in many of the mainstream churches and arguments about whether women should be ministers in others. It also led to an array of experiments in women’s spirituality, including witchcraft and goddess worship. A third outgrowth of the 1960s, environmentalism, also provoked serious religious questions about the relationship of humans and the natural world.

### Outline

- I. A generation of young men and women experimented with promiscuous sex, drugs, and other forms of consciousness changing in the 1960s.
  - A. Theologian Harvey Cox pointed out that, properly understood, these young people belonged to an American tradition of hyper-emotional exploration.
  - B. The Jesus movement (or “Jesus freaks”) sought out disillusioned hippies and established countercultural Christian communes. In their view, Jesus was a hippie, too.
  - C. The best-selling book of the late 1960s and early 1970s was Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, arguing that the imminent “rapture” was more thrilling even than the 1969 moon landing.

- D. Jim Jones's People's Temple mixed a progressive racial and social program with dictatorial leadership and ended in catastrophe.
    - 1. Jones believed in racial integration and socialism.
    - 2. His Ukiah commune sought shelter from imminent nuclear war.
    - 3. His involvement in San Francisco politics offered the opportunity of becoming "mainstream."
    - 4. The move to Jonestown, Guyana, prevented this change.
    - 5. Organized opposition to the group led to a congressional investigation.
    - 6. Over 900 members committed suicide in 1978.
  - E. The Heaven's Gate mass suicide of 1998 similarly mixed themes from apocalyptic religion and high-tech society.
- II.** The women's movement, also emerging out of the 1960s but with more durable consequences, raised profound questions for Judaism and Christianity.
- A. Was the Western religious tradition irredeemably "patriarchal"?
    - 1. Feminist Scripture scholars reinterpreted familiar Bible stories in light of feminist insights.
    - 2. They discovered neglected religious "foremothers," such as Hildegard of Bingen, and reinterpreted familiar ones, such as Teresa of Avila.
  - B. Women began to take leadership roles, especially in Reform synagogues and liberal Protestant churches. Feminist consciousness raising suddenly made the exclusion of women seem unjust and intolerable.
  - C. Catholics and Orthodox Jews refused to ordain women, using the argument of complementarity and difference.
    - 1. Should "natural law" or "natural rights" prevail?
    - 2. Was the gender of Jesus and his twelve apostles significant?
    - 3. Pope Paul VI and Pope John-Paul II maintained the Catholic prohibition in the face of intense and organized American opposition.
  - D. Some women abandoned Judaism and Christianity altogether and sought alternative forms of religion.
    - 1. Some turned to worship of the ancient goddess.
    - 2. "Starhawk" turned to witchcraft.

3. Mary Daly created a brilliant alternative religious world and language and argued that the annunciation was a rape scene.
4. Traditional religious women opposed women's ordination and religious feminism.

**III.** Environmentalism, another movement growing out of the 1960s, also developed religious overtones.

- A. Lynn White, Jr., charged that the Christian frame of mind was responsible for the mess in the first place.
- B. Paul Ehrlich added that Catholic population policies were criminally irresponsible.
- C. Religious critics feared that certain features of environmentalism might be idolatrous or pantheistic.
- D. Most churches accepted a mild, but still anthropocentric, version of environmentalism.
- E. James Lovelock's "Gaia" hypothesis, in some interpreters' hands, made earth itself a living, suffering entity, deserving of a kind of religious veneration.

**IV.** The 1960s expanded individual freedoms in many directions and religion was one of them. The decade's emphasis on equality, born out of the civil rights movement, had profound effects, especially on women, and was even extended by some observers to non-human parts of the natural world. The 1960s also generated religious conflict between those on one side, who tried to adapt the messages of the era to their faith, and those on the other, who condemned the movements in the name of a more traditional interpretation of their faith.

**Essential Reading:**

Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*.

Robert S. Ellwood, *The 60s Spiritual Awakening*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools*.

Robert Booth Fowler, *The Greening of Protestant Thought*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why, and with what religious consequences, did the 1960s suddenly and drastically change ideas about women's position in society?
2. What was the attraction of cult groups, such as the People's Temple?

## Lecture Twenty-Two

### Asian Religions

**Scope:** Orthodox Christianity came to America first through Russia and Alaska. Many non-Christian Asian religions followed. The Swami Vivekenanda was acclaimed for his speech on Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. The Vedanta Society, based on his ideas, coexisted with the pseudo-Asian theosophy movement in America from then on. After World War II, Beat Generation writers interpreted Zen Buddhism as a philosophy of existential freedom and adapted it to their critique of American materialism. Americans who turned to Zen or became Hare Krishnas in the 1960s were taking an exotic step. At the same time, however, a large-scale migration from Asia brought what to the migrants were familiar forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. In some ways, the new Asian immigrants went through the same assimilation process as European immigrants half a century earlier, though they found America less familiar with their religions than it had been with earlier groups' varieties of Christianity. Muslims in particular found difficulty in maintaining their daily religious obligations in a still predominantly Judeo-Christian America.

### Outline

- I. The Orthodox Christians were Russians who settled Alaska, then parts of Oregon and California.
  - A. Their practice was reminiscent of other Eastern religions. They meditated, used constant repetition of simple prayers, and attributed spiritual power to icons.
  - B. The arrival of Greek, Syrian, and Lebanese Christians increased the Orthodox presence in America and encouraged union.
  - C. They adapted gradually to American customs, putting seats into their churches and using the English language and musical instruments.

- II.** Scattered interest in Asian religions in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries usually grew out of dissatisfaction with aspects of Christianity.
- A.** Theosophists were the first Western group to pay sympathetic attention to Eastern religion and to mix themes from Eastern and Western religious practices.
  - B.** Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), a Russian immigrant, published *Isis Unveiled* in 1877 and *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888, using occult language and portentous mystical phrasing.
    - 1. All religions have their origins in Brahmanism and Buddhism.
    - 2. The material world is a crystallization of the spirit.
    - 3. Magic is possible when you understand the harmony of the earthly and heavenly spheres.
    - 4. Blavatsky claimed to have visited the Himalayan Mahatmas.
    - 5. Henry Olcott, a corporation lawyer, popularized her ideas.
  - C.** The Swami Vivekenanda spoke at the World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893 and became America’s first Hindu celebrity.
    - 1. The event demonstrated American religious tolerance.
    - 2. Vivekenanda praised the Vedas.
    - 3. His speech contrasted cyclical Hinduism with the Judeo-Christian idea of God moving through history.
    - 4. He found much to praise in America and saw it as the culmination of civilization.
  - D.** The Beat Generation’s rebellion against American materialism embraced an idealized version of Buddhism.
    - 1. Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Alan Watts, and Gary Snyder adapted the ideas of Daisetz Suzuki (1870–1966), a Rinzai Zen Buddhist.
    - 2. They linked Zen to themes of existentialism.
    - 3. For them, Zen was a source of impulsiveness, freedom, and anti-materialism.
    - 4. Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums* (1958) fictionalized Snyder, Ginsberg, and others.
- III.** In the 1960s, large numbers of Americans adopted meditation and other Buddhist practices, often in the context of the counterculture. Serious scholarship on Asian religions blossomed at the same time.

- A. The Beatles visited India and adopted the teachings of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1967.
  - B. Jacob Needleman described a growing sense of dissatisfaction with Judeo-Christian tradition and looked to Asia for an alternative that purged the individual of desire.
  - C. Harvard theologian Harvey Cox found Asian spirituality and practice thriving in Cambridge, Massachusetts, too.
    - 1. He began as an observer but became a participant.
    - 2. Converts to the Hare Krishna movement told him that they found the emotional intensity, community, and happiness a “high” that sex, drugs, and rock ’n ’roll could not match.
    - 3. Cox found that some Asian religions were changed beyond recognition in America.
  - D. Rajneeshis created a durable communal life through the 1970s and into the 1980s.
- IV. Changes in immigration law in 1965 and the aftermath of the Vietnam War brought large numbers of Asians into America.**
- A. Vietnamese immigrants went through an assimilation process comparable to that of European immigrants a century earlier.
    - 1. Legal and social requirements obliged them to adapt traditional customs and rituals.
    - 2. Ancestor worship was moved out of the home.
  - B. Muslim arrivals experienced intergenerational tensions because of conflicting ideals of marriage. Migration could, however, strengthen rather than dilute religious adherence.
  - C. Living the life of an observant Muslim in America created numerous challenges.
    - 1. Praying in public five times each day and the Ramadan fast did not fit easily with American ideas of timetabling.
    - 2. A dress code designed to make Muslim women inconspicuous had the opposite effect in America.
    - 3. Widespread fears of fanaticism and violence put American Muslims on the defensive.
    - 4. The tradition of mutual religious deference nevertheless sometimes favored Muslims.

- V. Academics who study the reconciliation of whites and Asians in Asian religions emphasize the importance of experience—what is actually happening, rather than formal philosophical or theological teachings. The tension between Asian religions as familiar links to home and exotic assertions of dissatisfaction with “home” persisted to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Essential Reading:**

Harvey Cox, *Turning East, The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism*.  
Yvonne Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*.

R. Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner, eds., *Gatherings in Diaspora: Communities and the New Immigration*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What aspects of Asian religions make them attractive to Americans?
2. Will it be possible for observant Muslims to be fully integrated into American life without compromising their tradition?

## Lecture Twenty-Three

### Church and State

**Scope:** The Supreme Court was called on ever more frequently in the years after World War II to decide where the line should be drawn between church and state and to decide whether acting to ensure one group's free exercise did not entail crossing that line with "excessive entanglement." Among the more inflammatory "Establishment clause" decisions were those of 1962 and 1963, which prohibited reading the Bible and saying public prayers in public schools. Further cases challenged the displaying of Christmas crèches in public places lest they, too, be taken as state endorsements of the Christian religion. Immense protests and noncompliance swirled around these and many related decisions, while every session of Congress since 1963 has seen attempts to amend the Constitution on behalf of public prayer. School prayer, abortion, changing family roles, and Cold War fears fueled Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in its 1980 campaign for Ronald Reagan, which aimed to narrow the gap between religion and public life. Court defeats, political complications, and the televangelist scandals of 1987 prevented the group from accomplishing these aims.

### Outline

- I. Establishments were common at the time of the Revolution and some persisted into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - A. Connecticut abandoned its established church in 1816, and Massachusetts, not until 1832.
  - B. Horace Mann's public school experiment assumed that America was a Protestant country. Catholic Archbishop Hughes dissented sharply, especially against use of the King James Bible and Protestant prayers.
  - C. The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) extended the Bill of Rights to the states.
  - D. The anti-polygamy *Reynolds* decision (1879) affirmed that America was a Christian nation.

- E. A Mormon polygamist was convicted of violating the bigamy laws, despite his free exercise claim under the First Amendment.
  - F. The right of religious groups to run their own schools was guaranteed in the Oregon case *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925).
- II.** The Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren made a series of decisions against school prayer and Bible reading in 1962 and 1963. They heightened the “wall of separation” between church and state and created a national uproar.
- A. *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) prohibited New York schoolchildren from reciting a nondenominational prayer that the state’s Regents had written.
  - B. The Court prohibited Bible reading and the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools in its 1963 decisions *Schempp v. Abington Township* and *Murray v. Curlett*.
    - 1. Liberal Protestant groups, the ACLU, and most Jewish groups praised the decision.
    - 2. Evangelical and Roman Catholic groups deplored it, especially in the context of the Cold War conflict with “godless communism.”
  - C. Draft constitutional amendments, notably the Becker Amendment, aimed to restore prayer to public schools but failed. Some conservatives also supported a movement to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren.
  - D. *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) heightened the wall of separation by preventing states from aiding religious schools, even in purely secular matters. The decision also established the three-part “Lemon test.”
  - E. Churches enjoy tax exemption, and some strict separationists have argued that the exemption is itself a policy that advances religion and, therefore, fails the Lemon test.
- III.** The two clauses of the First Amendment appeared to come into conflict when protecting free exercise and seemed, to some observers, to be opening the door to establishment.
- A. In *Braunfeld v. Brown* (1961), Orthodox Jewish shopkeepers were denied an exemption from Pennsylvania’s Sunday closing laws.

- B. In *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), by contrast, Amish children were granted exemption from that state’s compulsory school attendance laws.
  - C. In *Lynch v. Donnelly* (1984), the Supreme Court drew back slightly from its “high wall” posture by permitting the city to display a Christmas crèche as part of its seasonal decorations.
    - 1. Ten Protestant clergy members were among the plaintiffs.
    - 2. The Supreme Court majority interpreted the decorations as traditional and celebratory, rather than religious.
    - 3. Sharp minority dissents again indicated the passions and ambiguities surrounding the case.
  - D. By the 1980s, every Supreme Court decision was destined to annoy some factions, and the fund of precedents was rich and varied enough to permit any outcome.
- IV. By the 1970s, evangelical Protestants believed that a parody religion, “secular humanism,” threatened the nation’s moral and religious foundations.
- A. The Moral Majority was a fundamentalist pressure group.
    - 1. Jerry Falwell, the founder, ran a television ministry in Lynchburg, Virginia.
    - 2. School prayer, abortion, family integrity, and feminism were its key issues.
    - 3. People for the American Way and other anti-Moral Majority groups argued that it was covertly breaching the wall of separation.
  - B. The Moral Majority campaigned on behalf of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election and demonstrated the continuing strength and potential influence of evangelicalism.
  - C. This campaign, ironically, targeted President Jimmy Carter, a born-again southern Baptist, and supported Reagan, the first divorcee in the White House.
  - D. Its alliance with conservative Catholics and Orthodox Jews also bore witness to what Robert Wuthnow called “the restructuring of American religion.”
  - E. The Reagan administration disappointed the Moral Majority’s hopes.

1. It did little or nothing to stop abortion and restore school prayer.
  2. “Creation science” cases in Arkansas and Louisiana demonstrated the continuing political power of fundamentalists and their inability to convince the courts.
  3. Televangelist sex and money scandals sullied fundamentalists’ claims of moral superiority.
- V. The new Christian right remained an important element of the political landscape into the 1990s nevertheless. (Pat Robertson, televangelist, ran for president in 1988.) As the century ended, the appropriate boundaries between religious and political ideas and actions remained widely controversial.

**Essential Reading:**

Marvin E. Frankel, *Faith and Freedom: Religious Freedom in America*.

Albert J. Menendez, *The December Wars: Religious Symbols and Ceremonies in the Public Square*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Robert S. Alley, ed., *The Supreme Court on Church and State*.

Nancy Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why have so many Americans been so energetic on behalf of preventing breaches of the Establishment clause when the last established church in America was abolished nearly 170 years ago?
2. Is there any logic or direction to the Supreme Court’s church-state decisions since 1960?

## Lecture Twenty-Four

### The Enduring Religious Sensibility

**Scope:** This course has shown that religion has played a central theme in the development of American society and in shaping its distinctive characteristics. Pluralistic from the first, it became steadily more so, with its original Protestant bodies embracing first Catholics, then Jews, and more recently an array of Asian religions and new forms of spirituality. At the same time, it has tended steadily to become less doctrinal and more ethical and emotional in content. Most striking in comparative perspective is the fact that American religious involvement and commitment did not decline at a time when such declines were the experience of the other Western industrial nations. It proved able to overcome intellectual objections, the growing distractions of a materialistic society, and an intricate dalliance with the political system (never too close, never too remote). Numerous other themes in American religion could be addressed to further enrich this survey given sufficient additional time.

### Outline

- I. Many more issues could be examined with unlimited time.
  - A. Sights: America has many majestic churches, including the National Cathedral in Washington, DC; Princeton Chapel; St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York; and the National Basilica in Washington, DC, among others. Some very humble places, such as Quaker meeting houses, can also have a significant impact on religious emotions.
  - B. Clothing: Americans dress up out of respect for their religion. The American Easter parade is an example of this.
  - C. Social life: American churches are often places where flirting and courtship take place.
  - D. The unusual: American churches are often forums for unusual events, the study of which can be revealing and rewarding. The Baptist and Mormon baptismal ceremonies are examples.

- E.** Sounds: America has a rich religious vocal and musical tradition, including gospel music, “call and response” singing, chanting, and the use of the Latin language.
  - F.** Food: Each religious group is associated with its own particular food products.
  - G.** Civil religion: America offers a plethora of sacred sites for the student of civil religion, such as Plymouth Rock, Lexington Green, Harper’s Ferry, Gettysburg, Arlington Cemetery, the Vietnam War Memorial, and many more.
  - H.** Ceremonies and festivals: Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Ramadan and many more moments of “sacred time” punctuate the American calendar’s “ordinary time.” A study of religious behavior at such moments is revealing and rewarding.
  - I.** Religious change: Millions of Americans grow up in one religious tradition and change to another, while a few invent their own. The motives and forces leading to conversion are complex and illuminating.
  - J.** Variety: I have mentioned several dozen of the major religious groups, but hundreds more, even some quite large groups, have had to be omitted, not because they are insignificant, but just for lack of space.
  - K.** Meaning: Throughout this course, I have given empirical, or secular, explanations for what happened. Religious people, however, will never exclude the possibility of God’s working in the world.
  - L.** Miracles: Can laws of nature be broken? Is God limited?
- II.** One of the principal themes of the course is that religion has played a central role in the development of American society and culture.
- A.** It was among the strongest motives inducing settlement in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially in New England.
  - B.** Religious controversy between Catholics and Protestants, and between whites and Indians, underlay intergroup tensions in colonial America. Mutual intolerance and mutual misunderstanding were grounded in the belief, for many, that intolerance was a virtue.

- C. The American revolutionaries agreed to disagree about religion and so created the most inclusive and tolerant religious society in modern history.
  - 1. This separation demonstrated that a civil society does not require the glue of a shared or dominant established church.
  - 2. The lesson was one with lasting significance for America and accounts for the fervor with which some citizens try to ensure strict separation of church and state.
  - 3. It caused lasting anxiety among citizens who were afraid that the bonds of society would dissolve and accounts for the persistent “accommodationist” impulse in church-state relations.
  - 4. It is certainly true that Americans have a widely shared set of civil values and moral principles—a code on which the nation has conducted itself.

**III.** The characteristic American religion gradually changed from a Protestantism dominated by concern for doctrinal purity to one dominated by ethical and emotional intensity.

- A. The Great Awakening and the Whitefield sensation began the change.
- B. The Second Great Awakening and the high passions of Cane Ridge and other revivals sustained this change in the republic, ensuring the importance of celebrity revival preachers, such as Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham.
- C. Evangelical revivalism led directly to most of the important social reform movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It lay at the heart of the abolition, temperance, sabbatarian, education, and labor reform movements.

**IV.** In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States became decisively pluralistic in religion.

- A. The arrival of a large Catholic population, first from Ireland, later from Italy, Poland, Germany, the Slavic countries, and Latin America, challenged the older ideal of America as a Protestant haven.
- B. The arrival of Jewish immigrants, first from Germany, then from Eastern Europe and Russia, challenged the ideal of a Christian

America and eventually gave rise to the idea of a “Judeo-Christian tradition.”

- C. The fissiparous tendencies of Protestantism and the attempt to adjust to new intellectual and economic conditions led to a proliferation of new denominations, most making exclusive claims to religious truth but forced, in practice, to coexist with many rivals.
- V. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America retained high levels of religious involvement and religious membership at a time when other Western industrialized nations did not.
  - A. Religion provided a permissible link with a fading ethnic identity as each new immigrant group began to assimilate.
  - B. Their sharp detachment from the state prevented churches from suffering political discredit.
  - C. In a highly mobile, rootless society, religious organizations offered a welcome source of community and identity.
  - D. Religious organizations pioneered important social reforms, notably the civil rights movement.
- VI. Religiosity persisted despite repeated claims that it was exhausted or intellectually inadequate to meet new challenges.
  - A. The Scopes Monkey Trial did not spell the end of fundamentalism, and it returned to the political forum stronger than ever in the late 1970s.
  - B. The 1960s offered numerous challenges to tradition and authority. The era modified the form of many religious groups but not the religious impulse itself.
  - C. American religion has long operated in the competitive business environment and proved adaptable to commercial society, even while standing in judgment over it.
  - D. The United States remains, accordingly, an unusually religious nation. The situation and its historical background can be explained in great detail, but it remains anomalous and a source of continual surprise.

### **Essential Reading:**

Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*.

Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*.  
Mary McCarthy, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*.  
Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*.  
Philip Roth, *The Conversion of the Jews*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief*.  
David Hackett, ed., *Religion and American Culture*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why has America resisted the challenge of social, intellectual, and political alternatives to its religious life better than the other advanced Western nations?
2. Which is more striking about America's hundreds of religions: the similarities or the differences?

## Timeline

1517 .....	Luther’s challenge to the indulgence trade sets the Reformation in motion.
1533 .....	King Henry VIII declares the Church of England independent of Rome.
1553–1558 .....	Queen Mary I attempts to reverse the English Reformation and creates a series of Protestant martyrs, intensifying religious animosities.
1563 .....	Elizabeth I issues the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, leaving radical Protestants, “Puritans,” dissatisfied by their compromises.
1607 .....	English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia.
1621 .....	Voyage of the <i>Mayflower</i> and settlement at Plymouth of the separatist “Pilgrim Fathers.”
1630 .....	Arrival in Massachusetts Bay of the Puritan settlers under John Winthrop.
1634 .....	Foundation of Maryland by Caecilius Calvert, a Roman Catholic.
1636 .....	Foundation of Harvard University to train the next generation of Puritan ministers.
1662 .....	The “half-way covenant” attempts to accommodate Puritan family-members who had not undergone the conversion experience.
1681 .....	Foundation of Pennsylvania by Quaker William Penn.

1692 .....	Accusation, trials, and execution of the alleged Salem witches.
1739 .....	First visit to the American colonies of George Whitefield, whose charismatic preaching helped ignite the “Great Awakening.”
1776 .....	The Declaration of Independence claims the justification of “nature and nature’s god.”
1784 .....	Formal creation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, at Baltimore.
1787–1789 .....	Drafting and approval of the U.S. Constitution includes the First Amendment, which guarantees no federal established church and religious freedom of all citizens.
1801 .....	Great revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky.
1803 .....	Louisiana Purchase nearly doubles the land area of the United States and brings a French Catholic population into the nation.
1832 .....	Triumphant New York City revival preached by Charles G. Finney.
1844 .....	Assassination of Mormon founder Joseph Smith.
1844 .....	Anti-Catholic riots in Philadelphia.
1846–1850 .....	Famine in Ireland provokes the mass migration of Irish Catholics to America, intensifying Protestant anti-Catholicism.

- 1848 ..... The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ends the Mexican War and brings a large Hispanic Catholic population into the nation.
- 1852 ..... Publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reinforces northern evangelical antislavery opinion.
- 1859 ..... Publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* begins a prolonged debate among Christians about the reliability of the Genesis creation narrative.
- 1863 ..... Lincoln frees American slaves and delivers the Gettysburg Address.
- 1865 ..... Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, his death, and the end of the Civil War.
- 1866 ..... Mary Baker Eddy, healed by Phineas Quimby and biblical inspiration, begins Christian Science.
- 1879 ..... Supreme Court rules that Mormon bigamy is not protected under the free exercise clause of the First Amendment.
- 1880 ..... The Salvation Army begins its evangelizing work in poor areas of American industrial cities.
- 1884 ..... At the Third Plenary Synod of Baltimore, America's Catholic bishops resolve to create a parallel educational system.
- 1896 ..... Publication of Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps*, whose characters are guided by the question: What would Jesus do?

1910–1915 .....	Publication of <i>The Fundamentals</i> series gives a name to defenders of Protestant orthodoxy and biblical inerrancy.
1917–1918 .....	American participation in World War I leads to zealous anti-German preaching by most American clergy.
1925 .....	The Scopes Monkey Trial upholds Tennessee’s anti-evolution law but discredits fundamentalists among the educated elite.
1928 .....	Defeat of the first Catholic presidential candidate, Al Smith (Democrat).
1941 .....	Reinhold Niebuhr’s <i>Christianity and Crisis</i> makes the Christian case for participating in World War II.
1948 .....	Creation of the state of Israel fulfills the principal aim of Zionism.
1955–1956 .....	A Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., leads the Montgomery bus boycott and inaugurates the activist phase of the civil rights movement.
1960 .....	Election of John F. Kennedy, the first Roman Catholic president, after a campaign in which his faith was a major issue.
1962–1965 .....	Second Vatican Council modifies Catholic practices and self-conception, leading to a more ecumenical and conciliatory approach to other religious groups.
1962–1963 .....	Supreme Court decisions prohibit prayer and Bible reading in public schools.

- 1965 ..... Immigration Act abolishes geographic and racial restrictions and opens the door to large-scale Asian immigration.
- 1973 ..... Supreme Court’s finding in *Roe v. Wade* that women may avail themselves of first-trimester abortions provokes religious protests.
- 1976 ..... Born-again Baptist Jimmy Carter elected president.
- 1978 ..... Mass suicide of the People’s Temple at Jonestown, British Guyana.
- 1980 ..... Moral Majority, an evangelical pressure group led by Jerry Falwell, helps Ronald Reagan oust Carter from the presidency, in the name of a more pro-life, pro-family, pro-Christian social agenda and against “secular humanism.”
- 1984 ..... Supreme Court in *Lynch v. Donnelly* permits a publicly owned Christmas crèche to remain on display alongside Santa and reindeer.
- 1987 ..... Sex and money scandals undermine the “televangelist” ministries of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart.
- 1997 ..... Mass suicide of the “Heaven’s Gate” cult, whose members believed they were joining a UFO behind the Hale-Bopp comet.

## Glossary

**agnostic:** A person who believes that the question of whether or not God exists cannot be answered.

**Amish:** American Mennonites of German descent who live by traditional farming methods and refuse to adopt industrial technology.

**atheist:** A person who believes that there is no God.

**Baptist:** Member of one of the Protestant denominations that believe baptism should take place only when an individual is capable of making a rational and informed assent to the rite, usually following an experience of conversion.

**Buddhism:** One of the principal Asian religions, with numerous Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Burmese, and Vietnamese variants. It recognizes the spiritual leadership of the Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama), an ascetic and seeker after enlightenment from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. who achieved “nirvana.”

**Calvinism:** The branch of Protestantism, first established in Geneva by John Calvin, which emphasized man’s absolute depravity and predestination to heaven or hell. Calvinism was a central component of the Puritanism that inspired the first generation of migrations to Massachusetts.

**Catholic:** A member of the Roman Catholic Church, the central Christian tradition in Western Europe, recognizing the spiritual leadership of the pope. In America, Catholics are mainly of Irish, Italian, Polish, south German, French, Slavic, and Hispanic descent.

**Christian Science:** The branch of Christianity founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1866, which denies the ultimate reality of the material world and rejects all stimulants and medicines.

**Conjure:** The magical tradition among African Americans, derived from their ancestors’ African religions.

**conversion:** (1) Becoming a member of a different religious group. (2) Undergoing a profound spiritual experience of “awakening” or being “born again.”

**cult:** The term for a small religious group that demands the complete devotion of its members and structures their entire way of life. The word “cult” is usually used in a derogatory way by a group’s critics.

**Deism:** The belief, held by Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and other devotees of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Enlightenment, that a divine being exists but that the details and supernaturalism of Christianity are archaic and irrelevant.

**denomination:** A particular religious group or organization. In America, the many different Protestant churches, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Unitarian, Methodist, Baptist, Assemblies of God, and so on, are usually referred to as “the denominations.”

**diocese:** An organizational district presided over by a bishop in the Catholic, Episcopalian, and Orthodox traditions. An archbishop presides over an archdiocese, which includes numerous dioceses.

**Dispensational Premillennialism:** The belief among some fundamentalists that history is divided into eras or “dispensations,” each one of which has ended in catastrophe (Adam’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Noah’s flood, the Crucifixion, and so on) and that only the return of Jesus can create the millennial kingdom promised in scripture.

**Episcopalian:** A member of the American Episcopal church, which broke off from the Church of England (or Anglican Church) at the time of the Revolution.

**Establishment:** A church run by, or directly linked to, the civil government and subsidized by tax revenues. Most colonies before the Revolution had an established church and a few states continued to have them after the Revolution, but the First Amendment prohibited any federally established church.

**Evangelical:** A Christian who believes in spreading the Christian message (evangelizing) and trying to win converts. In 20<sup>th</sup>-century America, the term was sometimes used interchangeably with “fundamentalist.” To the extent that there is a difference, evangelicals concentrate on the emotional side of faith; fundamentalists, on the doctrinal side.

**First Amendment:** The constitutional amendment that specifies that there shall be no federally established church and that the free exercise of religion shall not be prevented. The Supreme Court has had to interpret the exact

meaning of these two clauses frequently, especially since 1950, in the face of intense partisan disagreements.

**Fundamentalist** (see also **Evangelical**): A Protestant who believes in the literal truth of the Bible, including the Creation, biblical miracles, the virgin birth, and the bodily resurrection of Christ. The term was coined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to differentiate fundamentalists from liberal Protestants. Fundamentalists can belong to the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and other denominations.

**Holiness**: The Holiness movement, an outgrowth of Methodism in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, was based on the belief that humans could achieve a state of sinlessness during their earthly lives.

**iconoclasm**: The smashing of idols, statues, and religious objects. The early years of the Reformation in Europe witnessed widespread iconoclasm, and led to the tradition of simple, unadorned churches among many Protestant groups.

**Inerrancy**: The idea, held chiefly by fundamentalists, that the Bible is exactly and literally true in everything it says.

**Infallibility**: The Roman Catholic claim that the pope, when he speaks on questions of faith and morals, is divinely inspired and cannot be mistaken. Defined only in 1870, the claim of speaking infallibility has been made very rarely and, by some popes, not at all.

**Islam**: The religion of Muslims. In America, Islam is the religion of recent immigrants from the Middle East but also of the Black Muslims or Nation of Islam, the group to which Malcolm X belonged.

**Jehovah's Witness**: A member of the denomination founded by Charles Taze Russell, a Pennsylvania haberdasher, in the 1870s. Jehovah's Witnesses are fundamentalists who believe that Christ's Second Coming is imminent. Their intense evangelism (efforts to win recruits door-to-door) have made them controversial and sometimes resented by other Americans.

**Judaism**: The religion of Jews. Three main subdivisions of American Judaism are Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform, representing increasing degrees of assimilation to the customs of the Christian majority population in which they live. Reform Jews are mainly descended from 19<sup>th</sup>-century German immigrants; Orthodox, mainly from Russian and Eastern European

immigrants. Conservatism and its offshoot, Reconstructionism, are American adaptations.

**Liberal Protestant:** A member of the Protestant denominations who believes it is appropriate to adapt his or her faith to new social and economic conditions and new intellectual trends, rather than simply reasserting an unchanged faith in the Bible. The term is usually used as the antithesis of fundamentalist.

**liminality:** The anthropological term for being in an extraordinary situation in which emotions and expectations are heightened. Native American religious practices, such as the sun dance, and evangelical revivals both depended on the liminal condition of participants.

**Methodist:** A member of one of the churches inspired (but not actually founded) by John Wesley. Methodism grew meteorically between 1784 and 1860, becoming, with Baptism, the leading Protestant denomination.

**Mormon:** A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, founded by Joseph Smith after his encounter with the Angel Moroni and led into its Utah sanctuary by Brigham Young after Smith's assassination.

**Orthodox Church:** The form of Christianity dominant in Russia and southeastern Europe. Orthodox immigrants to Alaska and the Pacific northwest in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greek immigrants to the industrial cities formed the basis of the Orthodox Church in America.

**Pentecostalist:** A member of the passionately emotional sects, black and white, who believed that they had been given the gift of speaking in tongues they had not formally learned and of healing the sick by faith, in the manner of the disciples of Jesus at the original Pentecost. Pentecostalism was popular among the urban poor in "storefront churches" in the industrial cities.

**predestination:** The belief among Calvinists that God decides, even before an individual's birth, whether he or she is destined for salvation or damnation and that people are powerless to change God's will in the matter.

**Protestant:** A member of one of the churches created during or after the Reformation in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Protestants divide over many issues, but they agree in rejecting the authority of the Pope and usually stress the authority of the Bible alone, rather than the joint authority (as Catholics say) of scripture and tradition. Among the major Protestant groups in

American history are Lutherans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Unitarians, and the Assemblies of God.

**Puritan:** A member of the Church of England in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century who believed that the Reformation had been left incomplete and who hoped that the church could be purified. Some Puritans established colonies in America in the hope they could act as inspirational beacons to their co-religionists in Britain.

**Quaker:** A member of the sect established by George Fox in the 1640s. Originally renowned for trembling or quaking in the direct presence of God (hence the name), they soon developed a tradition for extreme religious simplicity, unadorned and silent worship, and absolute pacifism. William Penn, a Quaker, founded Pennsylvania.

**Rapture:** Fundamentalists awaiting the imminent Second Coming of Jesus expect that he will spare them the great tribulations foretold in the book of Revelation as the old world order ends. They will be “raptured,” suddenly disappearing from their everyday lives and brought up into the air to meet Jesus.

**Reformation:** The transformation of Christianity in Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, under the leadership of Luther, Calvin, King Henry VIII of England, and other princes, preachers, and intellectuals. Collectively, the Reformation denied the authority and legitimacy of Roman Catholicism and established the Protestant churches, but it was never able to prevent the rapid fragmentation of Protestant groups.

**revival:** A meeting or series of meetings at which charismatic preachers attempt to generate emotional religious fervor. A central element of the American Protestant tradition.

**sect:** A small religious group or denomination with distinctive teachings. “Sectarian” implies unwillingness to compromise and a tendency to divisiveness, but the term is less pejorative than “cult.”

**secularization:** The theory, plausible in Europe but seemingly disproved in the American case, that as a society modernizes and undergoes industrialization, it becomes progressively less religious.

**Shakers:** Members of the religious communes founded by Mother Ann Lee, who believed in celibacy, gained members only by recruitment, and developed distinctive styles of work, singing, and craftsmanship.

**Social Gospel:** The movement among liberal Protestants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that regarded urban reform and the defeat of poverty as central tasks of Christianity. Its leaders, notably Rauschenbusch and Gladden, criticized individualistic forms of evangelical conversion.

**televangelist:** An evangelical or fundamentalist preacher who spreads the word by television rather than in person. In recent American history, the term applied to Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim Bakker, nearly all of whom faced allegations of manipulating their viewers and unscrupulous money-raising techniques.

**theology:** The intellectual study of God, and of the relations between humanity and God, often including elements of ethics, scripture, and history.

## Biographical Notes

**Francis Asbury** (1745–1816). One of the great pioneers of American Methodism. Born and raised in England, he converted at age 13 and signed on to evangelize in America at the age of 26, when John Wesley asked for volunteers. Most of the early Methodists were Loyalists, who left the colonies when the Revolution began, but Asbury stayed on and participated in the founding Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784, which established the American Methodist church. As “General Superintendent,” Asbury was an autocrat, but he put in place an effective scheme for evangelizing frontier communities that older churches could not easily reach.

Asbury himself, and other Methodist preachers under his authority, were itinerants (travelers), constantly on the move and seeking out potential converts on both sides of the Appalachian Mountains in the rapidly expanding new republic. Asbury traveled the length and breadth of the nation repeatedly, on horseback and in all weather, often sick, preaching everywhere and winning converts with his straightforward, colorful, and persuasive preaching.

**Henry Ward Beecher** (1813–1887). Among the most famous Protestant preachers and writers of his day, he was the son of Lyman Beecher, one of the last “fire and brimstone” Puritans, and the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. A graduate of Lane Seminary and an abolitionist before the Civil War, he helped to arm John Brown for the antislavery battle in Kansas, sending out rifles packaged in Bible crates (“Beecher’s Bibles”). He was convinced that the Union was justified in its war to suppress southern secession and preached harsh punishment for Confederate leaders when it ended.

Beecher, who preached to a prosperous Brooklyn congregation, was a liberal Protestant in the sense that he favored adapting his faith to new intellectual conditions. He tried, for example, to reconcile Christianity and evolution, arguing that humanity was now so much more advanced (“evolved”) that it could understand Jesus better than his own contemporaries had done. Socially and economically, however, Beecher was a conservative. He had little compassion for the overworked, underpaid industrial working classes and believed that urban poverty was a sign of personal laziness and divine disfavor rather than a side effect of fluctuations

in the business cycle. Popular, charming, prolific, and widely admired, he even survived an alleged adultery scandal with Elizabeth Tilton.

**Dorothy Day** (1897–1980). Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. As a restless young radical in Greenwich Village, Day worked as a socialist journalist, enjoyed affairs with anarchists, and had an abortion. Her life changed abruptly with her conversion to Catholicism in the mid-1920s, but she remained committed, from this new vantage point, to working on behalf of the poor and dispossessed. With the help of a wandering French sage, Peter Maurin, Day founded the Catholic Worker Movement. Its newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*, blended support for workers and the poor with Catholic orthodoxy. Its Houses of Hospitality and communal farms gave food and shelter to any who needed it, for as long as they needed it.

Day's rising reputation suffered among mainstream Catholics, first when she refused to support Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War and again when, as an absolute pacifist, she refused to support the Americans' role in World War II. To the minority who favored her uncompromising stand for peace and against capitalist materialism, she was an inspiring figure (and is now a candidate for sainthood). Her opposition to a Cold War deterrence policy and America's role in Vietnam brought her renewed popularity from the Catholic left in the 1960s.

**Mary Baker Eddy** (1821–1910). The founder of Christian Science. For the first 40 years of her life, Mary Baker Eddy, a native of New Hampshire, was an almost constant invalid. Under treatment by traveling mesmerist Phineas Quimby, however, she gained new vitality, and when he died in 1866, she resolved to advance his work. She became a religious healer and wrote *Science and Health* (1875), in which she advanced the idea that the material world is subordinate to the mental and that disease, pain, and even death can be eliminated by faith and the right mental attitude.

Eddy created an empire of Christian Science churches, colleges, and publications, winning a middle-class audience to her theories. At a time when conventional medicine was primitive and doctors often did more harm than good, her “hands off” approach to medication and her prohibition of alcohol and all other stimulants was probably as effective a route to health as any other. She became reclusive in the last 20 years of her life and did not even attend the opening of her immense Mother Church in Boston. Eddy died at age 89, believing that beams of “malicious animal

magnetism” sent by her enemies, rather than age and infirmity, were the cause of her demise.

**Charles Grandison Finney** (1792–1875). Fiery, Connecticut-born preacher who lacked academic theological education but became the foremost revivalist of his day. Dramatically converted while working as a lawyer, Finney preached passionate revivals along the course of the Erie Canal in upstate New York, culminating in immense revivals at Rochester in 1830 and New York City in 1832. He alarmed contemporaries by declaring that revival preaching was a science and that the conversion of sinners could be induced by rhetorical and oratorical effects. Finney popularized the “anxious bench,” on which potential converts sat and, under acute psychological pressure, became the center of attention. He specialized, too, in prolonged meetings that intensified the drama of his preaching. A perfectionist and a reformer, he insisted that converts show by their actual conduct in the world that their lives had changed. He believed, indeed, that complete elimination of sin was possible.

Leaving the Presbyterian Church, whose guardians disapproved of his “new measures,” Finney became professor of theology at Oberlin College, a center of the antislavery movement, in 1835 and, later, its president (1851–1866). He pioneered in creating a coeducational school environment and in campaigning against Freemasons, whose secret society he regarded as a threat to the nation.

**Archbishop John Hughes** (1797–1864). Catholic Archbishop of New York during the era of mass Irish immigration and widespread political anti-Catholicism. Hughes, born in Ireland, emigrated as a teenager and trained for the priesthood in Maryland. After working as a parish priest in Philadelphia and speaking and writing in the polemical wars over whether Catholics could be good Americans, he became bishop in 1838 and rapidly asserted his authority over New York. He worked to Americanize German and Irish Catholic immigrants; seized control of church property, which until then had usually been held by lay trustees; and demanded of Protestants that Catholics be granted equal treatment.

Hughes campaigned to exclude Protestant prayers and the Protestant King James translation of the Bible from New York’s public schools. Dissatisfied with the outcome of the controversy, he then ordered New York Catholics to create a parallel educational system of their own to ensure the preservation of young Catholics’ faith. When anti-Catholic rioting broke

out in Philadelphia in 1844, he armed Catholic guards in front of all his church properties and warned the mayor of New York that attacks on Catholics or their possessions would be met with force. Always aggressive on behalf of Catholics and their rights, Hughes won the grudging admiration of political leaders and was invited to preach before Congress in 1847. He founded St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1858 and befriended Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. His intervention helped quell anti-draft riots among Irish immigrants in New York City during 1863.

**Mother Ann Lee** (1736–1784). Founder of the Shakers. A native of Manchester, England, and daughter of a blacksmith, Ann Lee Stanley was a “Shaking Quaker” at first and suffered imprisonment when her impassioned, unlicensed preaching was condemned for breach of peace. While in jail, she experienced a religious vision that told her she was the “Second Pillar of the Church of God,” the female counterpart of Jesus—in effect, the Second Coming. In 1774, accompanied by eight disciples, she emigrated to America and established a community at Watervliet in upstate New York.

Recruits to the community came mainly from revived Baptists, excited by the millennial fervor of the Revolutionary War but unable to find a suitable church. In the community, they had to practice celibacy, with the result that the movement's only source of new members was outside recruiting. They also practiced austere vegetarian dieting but joined together in unaccompanied singing and a form of ecstatic religious dance, all of which they accepted as preparation and self-purification for the imminent millennium. Mother Ann Lee died in 1784 but left behind a movement that would prosper for the next century, about the closest American Protestants ever came to monasticism.

**Cotton Mather** (1663–1728). Son and grandson of prominent Puritan preachers, Cotton Mather was the most famous of the New England Congregational ministers and saw his mission in life as preserving Puritan orthodoxy at a time when prosperity and economic growth threatened it. He had a voracious intellectual appetite and an inexhaustible pen, entering Harvard at age 12 and, in later life, publishing 469 separate books and pamphlets on subjects ranging from the reality of angels to the value of inoculation against smallpox. Assistant minister to his father in Boston, Mather wrote about the nearby Salem witchcraft trials of 1692 and defended some of the executions. A political intriguer, he lacked the diplomacy and guile necessary to succeed in colonial-era politics. Despite

his intellectual fame—which led to his election as a member of the London Royal Society in 1713—Mather was also kept out of the presidency of Harvard, a job he longed for. Later generations mocked him as the representative of Puritanism at its most priggish and superstitious, but in his day, he held “advanced” views on many scientific issues and was not as intolerant in practice as he sometimes sounded in print.

**Reinhold Niebuhr** (1892–1971). Theologian of Christian Realism or Neo-orthodoxy. Born and raised in an evangelical Lutheran family in Missouri (his brother Richard was also a prominent theologian), Niebuhr encouraged his church to switch to the use of English during the anti-German frenzy that swept through the United States in 1917. As a young minister in Detroit, he espoused many of the liberal Protestant pieties of the day, including pacifism. His skill as a religious journalist and as a writer of theological ethics led to his appointment as a professor at Union Seminary, New York, where he produced his first masterpiece, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* in 1932. The rise of Hitler led to a rapid reorientation of Niebuhr’s thinking. He broke with most of his clergy colleagues in urging an early entry for America into World War II. His journal, *Christianity and Crisis*, aimed to combat the immense evil he recognized in Hitler and Nazism.

The great theme running through Niebuhr’s mature writings is the power of sin, the imperfectability of mankind, and the danger of utopianism. A leading figure in Americans for Democratic Action after World War II and a liberal anti-Communist, he commented shrewdly on political developments. Niebuhr was in the unique position for a 20<sup>th</sup>-century theologian of winning the admiration of many nonreligious people. Philosopher Morton White joked that he was a member of “Atheists for Niebuhr.”

**Daniel Alexander Payne** (1811–1893). A native of Charleston, South Carolina, and a free black man, Payne established a school for other free black children in 1829. In 1834, the state legislature declared it illegal to teach blacks, free or slave, to read and forced Payne to leave the city and move to the north. An evangelical Christian, he trained for the Lutheran ministry in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, but soon after ordination, left to join the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church that had been founded by Richard Allen, a Philadelphia free black, in 1816. Insisting on the universality of God’s love, Payne risked unpopularity in defending the right

of a white woman to become a member of the AME when many of his colleagues opposed her.

Payne became a bishop in 1852 and, recognizing the importance of an educated black ministry, helped to found Wilberforce University in Ohio, where he served as president between 1863 and 1879. Despite these responsibilities, he returned to Charleston at the end of the Civil War to establish the AME Church there and begin the process of educating freedmen. He was dismayed by the emotional, “shouting” style of Christianity he encountered among the recently liberated ex-slaves and urged on them a greater sense of restraint and decorum.

**Solomon Schechter** (1847–1915). Central figure in the development of Conservative Judaism in America. Born and raised in Rumania, Schechter became a professor of Judaic studies at Cambridge University, England but was lured to America in 1902 to become president of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The JTS was an ailing institution when Schechter arrived, but he turned it into a thriving intellectual center and a rigorous school for English-speaking rabbis. The Orthodox community disliked his embrace of modern German-inspired academic scholarship and condemned him in 1904. Reform Jews, on the other hand, were intolerant of his belief that the traditional dietary laws should be maintained and rejected his appeals for Jewish unity.

Schechter was sympathetic to Zionism, however, and understood the importance of restoring a sense of pride and relevance to those Jews who began to feel that their religion was an old-world encumbrance. As a result, his methods and ideas gathered influential adherents and, in 1913, he created and became the first president of a Conservative Jewish organization, the United Synagogue of America.

**Joseph Smith** (1805–1844). The founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). Smith, an upstate New York farmboy, was visited by an angel with golden tablets, from which he wrote out the Book of Mormon, describing biblical events, including a visit from Jesus, in prehistoric America. Proving widely persuasive to many neighbors, Smith founded his church in 1830 but soon moved to Kirtland, Ohio, in the face of critics’ claims that he was a charlatan.

The early Mormons moved again in the face of recurrent persecution, to Ohio, then to Missouri (which Smith considered the literal site of the Garden of Eden), then to Nauvoo, Illinois. Their clannishness and

commercial success fanned neighbors' resentment, which intensified when rumors that Mormon leaders practiced polygamy began to spread. The rumors were justified—Smith and his fellow leaders had multiple wives. In 1844, Smith preached that God had an actual physical body and other doctrines that some of his followers found difficult to accept. Before he could elaborate these new theories, he was killed by a lynch mob in Carthage, Illinois, the event that prompted his successor, Brigham Young, to take the Mormon “saints” on their Great Migration to Utah.

**Billy Sunday** (1862–1935). Fundamentalist revival preacher in the tradition of Charles Grandison Finney and a specialist in urban revivals for plain farmers and working-class people. Raised in an Iowa orphanage, Sunday became a professional baseball player for Chicago and Pittsburgh teams but was won away at the age of twenty-nine by a call to evangelize for the YMCA. Always emotional, colorful, and entertaining, he carried his old baseball stunts into the revival tent and sometimes slid up to the lectern as though stealing second base, declaring: “The Devil says I’m out, but the Lord says I’m safe!” One of his books was *Burning Truths from Billy’s Bat* (1914).

Despite his theological premillennialism, according to which unaided human action could not delay or avert the coming catastrophe, Sunday preached a fiery brand of anti-German patriotism during World War I and criticized liberal Protestants for succumbing to German critical theories. Intellectuals were often the butt of his jokes and social criticisms. He was an ardent temperance man and on the 1920 day that Prohibition came into effect, he preached a mock funeral for “John Barleycorn,” predicting (quite wrongly as it turned out) that most of the worst sins and miseries of America would now disappear. Sunday was satirized by novelist Sinclair Lewis in *Babbitt*, where he appears as “Mike Monday.”

**George Whitefield** (1714–1770). Son of a tavern-keeper, Church of England preacher, and friend of John Wesley, who galvanized the Great Awakening in the American colonies during the 1740s. Whitefield began preaching on behalf of an orphanage he had established in Georgia but soon became famous for spellbinding outdoor oratory and so, takes his place as the first in a long line of revivalists whose reputation spread far beyond the bounds of his particular denomination. Eschewing the solemn written sermons of his contemporaries, Whitefield, who had originally hoped to be an actor, memorized and dramatized his sermons, which led audiences to feel he spoke directly to their spiritual needs. The famous English actor

David Garrick, his contemporary, said: “I would give a hundred guineas if only I could say ‘Oh!’ like Mr. Whitefield.”

Puritan clergy in New England had mixed opinions about Whitefield’s impact, some admiring his skill, others fearing that he would unsettle church members and create civil disorder. His meetings did sometimes lead to disorder, and four listeners were crushed to death during his first Boston appearance. Nevertheless, the colonies went into collective mourning when he died in 1770 during another of his many visits from a Britain in which he was equally renowned. His grave at Newburyport, Massachusetts, became a kind of Protestant shrine or pilgrimage site.

**Isaac Meyer Wise** (1819–1900). A Jewish rabbi and immigrant who became the leader of American Reform Judaism. A passionate admirer of American liberty, Wise wanted Jews to join him in learning English as quickly as possible, but ironically, he was sometimes forced to persuade them in a German-language newspaper. Migrating from Bohemia in 1846, first to Charleston, then to Albany, New York, he tried unsuccessfully to persuade all the synagogues in America to unite and to agree on one form of worship. Many established Ashkenazic (German) and Sephardic (from Muslim countries) Jews refused, and his own congregation, upset by some of his efforts at modernization, dismissed him.

Undeterred, Wise moved to Cincinnati in 1854, where he established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1874, published a standard prayer book (*minhag*) for Reform Jews, and founded a seminary, the Hebrew Union College. He joined David Rabbi Einhorn, the theoretician of Reform, in support of the Pittsburgh Platform (1885), which treated Judaism as a religion, not a people, and committed it to progressive, scientific, and ethical goals.

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Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). Elderly now, but still the best straight introduction to American Jewish history.

Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: Five Hundred Years of Religion in America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1984). The greatest living expert on American Protestant history. This title is just one of more than twenty good books he has written on the subject; all deserve your time.

R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Another brilliant book showing how Mormons, Catholics, Jews, and others actually benefited by depicting themselves as outsiders and persecuted minorities.

———, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). How American religion learned to sell itself, advertise, and adopt business methods—all in the name of spreading the gospel.

Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church* (New York: Random House, 1997). If you can only read one book on Catholicism in your lifetime, this is the one to go for.

Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929. New York: Henry Holt, 1957). A classic work of religious sociology by a theologian, explaining why American Protestantism is so divided by geography, class, race, and educational levels.

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992). What the book loses by not discussing Judaism and other American religions it gains by regular journeys into Canada for illuminating comparisons.

Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). A rattling good yarn—600 pages' worth—from the political analyst turned popular historian.

Peter Williams, *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures* (New York: Macmillan, 1990). Williams summarizes and explains the basic history and teachings of hundreds of denominations.

## II. Specialized Works

Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America from the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Exploration of the religious power of the natural world to Indians and whites throughout American history.

Nancy Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987). Fair-minded and highly intelligent account of the varieties of fundamentalism.

James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). The confrontation of Indians' and Europeans' religious systems.

Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1992). Hair-raising history of people who have time-tabled the “rapture,” the coming of Antichrist, and the Battle of Armageddon.

Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). Nineteenth-century women found leadership opportunities in unexpected places.

Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984). The author is a first-rate historian, as well as a Mormon, and makes a persuasive case for the Angel Moroni.

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Engrossing account of competition among denominations and the rapid spread of Christianity in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University, 1997). The Billy Graham movement and its aftermath.

Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965). An academic sensation in its day, showing that Christianity leads to secularization and should embrace, rather than resist, it.

———, *Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977). A witty but informative and intelligent account of white Americans embracing Asian religions, by the Harvard divinity professor.

Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). Nice use of double-meaning with that “consuming,” and she is right on both counts.

John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). A first-rate writer and researcher puts the Salem witchcraft cases in context.

A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: Batsford, 1989). A comprehensive introduction to the English prelude of America’s religious history.

Lyle Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). Sympathetic account of the baseball pro turned evangelist.

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903. New York: Norton, 1999). A great classic on African-American life and religion.

Robert Ellwood, *The Sixties’ Spiritual Awakening* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994). A mixture of fond memories and shrewd historical analysis of the crazier side of the spiritual sixties.

James Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). Superb and fascinating account of Catholics who didn’t want to achieve middle-class respectability.

David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Vintage, 1986). A thoroughly deserving Pulitzer Prize winner.

C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985). How divisions in the denominations laid the groundwork for secession and war.

Ramon Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). A modern classic on the displacement of Native American religion by Christianity.

David Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972). New England theology is no easy matter, but Hall is probably the best living exponent of its complexities.

Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists: 1865–1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Striking parallels between black and white Baptists, even in an age of sharp racial segregation.

Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Christianity in the early republic was for everyone, but Hatch shows that its democratic leaders were autocrats.

———, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). How religious and political ideals fitted together for the American revolutionaries.

Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Knopf, 1997). Colonial and early republican origins of the south's special brand of evangelical fervor.

Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976). Masterpiece on the lives of Jewish immigrants to New York in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

William Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880–1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994). How Jews learned

to honor their own tradition and American culture at the same time, in food, furnishings, customs, camps, and books.

Alvin Josephy, ed., *Wounded Knee: Lest We Forget* (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1993). The Sioux ghost dance religion brutally repressed by the U.S. Army.

George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). The profoundly important book that forced American historians to take fundamentalism seriously for the first time in 50 years.

Henry May, *The Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949). The first good history of the social gospel movement and still the best place to start in understanding it.

Eugene McCarragher, *Christian Critics: Religion and the Impasse in Modern American Social Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). Ethical and social dilemmas faced by the most brilliant Protestant and Catholic observers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Mary McCarthy, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1957). Humorous but insightful account of life with the nuns by the novelist, a lapsed Catholic.

Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). The furniture, candles, books, clothes, and wallpaper that have accompanied Christian life in America—an ingenious book.

John McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). To outsiders, it looked like barefaced racism, but to working-class Catholics, it was a matter of defending the sacred space of their homes and parish communities.

Thomas Merton, *The Seven Stoery Mountain* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948). Spiritual odyssey of America's most famous monk—compellingly readable, even when he's wrong.

Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop-Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts* (New York: Pantheon, 1980). Exploration of the borderlands between psychology and religion.

Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1939 and 1953). Miller was the towering genius who recovered the whole subject of colonial religion as something serious and

intellectually vital rather than morbid and irrelevant. Set aside several weeks for the reading of his double-barreled masterpiece.

James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). A surprisingly ingenious array of Christian attempts to say that their faith fit nicely with evolutionary theory.

Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958). Morgan provisionally enters into the Puritan leader's frame of mind and shows how, from Winthrop's point of view, creating a godly commonwealth presented powerful moral, religious, and practical challenges.

Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985). Spectacularly intelligent anthropological and historical account of an urban religious subculture.

Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). How slaves added Christianity to their religious repertoire and how it both helped and hindered their quest for freedom.

Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985). Impartial and accurate explanation of tendencies and schisms in Judaism.

Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Explains how becoming a frontier Methodist entailed adopting an entirely new way of life—less macho, more feminine.

Gardiner Shattuck, *A Shield and a Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987). Both sides knew it for a fact: God was on their side.

Richard Shaw, *Dagger John: The Unquiet Life and Times of Archbishop John Hughes of New York* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). The title of this biography of a lordly Catholic leader says it all.

Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988). History of the big religion

headlines, including a superb chapter on the invention of the idea of a “Judeo-Christian Tradition.”

Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland: University Press of Case Western Reserve, 1969). Explains the religious foundations of radical abolitionism.

Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950–1985* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Modesty compels me to break alphabetical ranks in recommending this superb book.

## Notes