



# 'God bless America'



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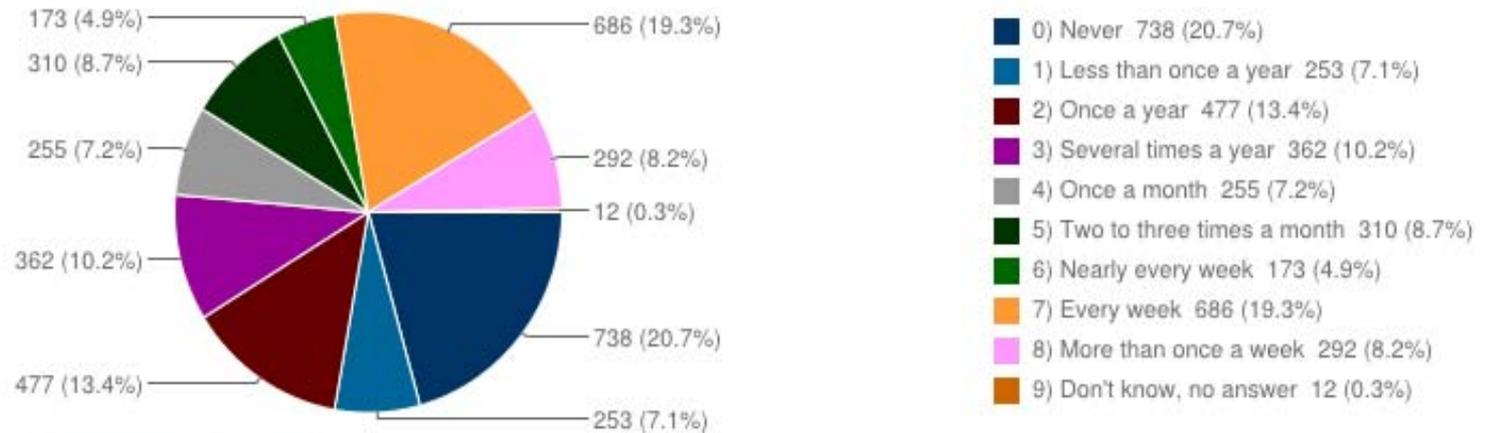
Exploring the role of Religion in American Politics



# Religious America:

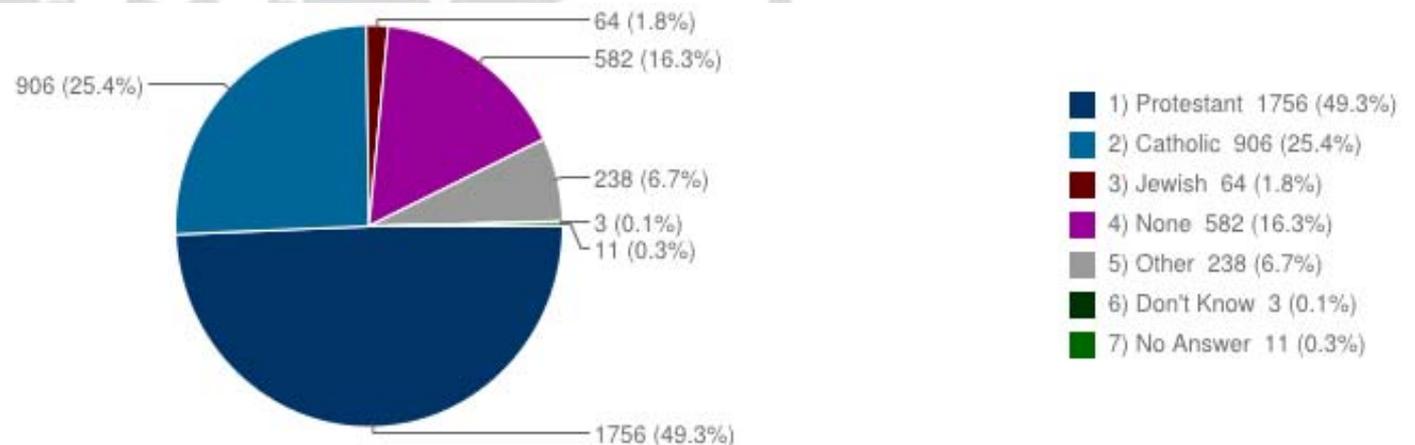
## Worship attendance & religious identification

US Religious Service Attendance (General Social Survey 2008 Cross-Section and Panel Combined)



US church attendance: 50% at least once a month, and 33% weekly

US Religious Preference (General Social Survey 2008 Cross-Section and Panel Combined)



+/- 80% identify with a religion (75% Christian); 16% 'none'.

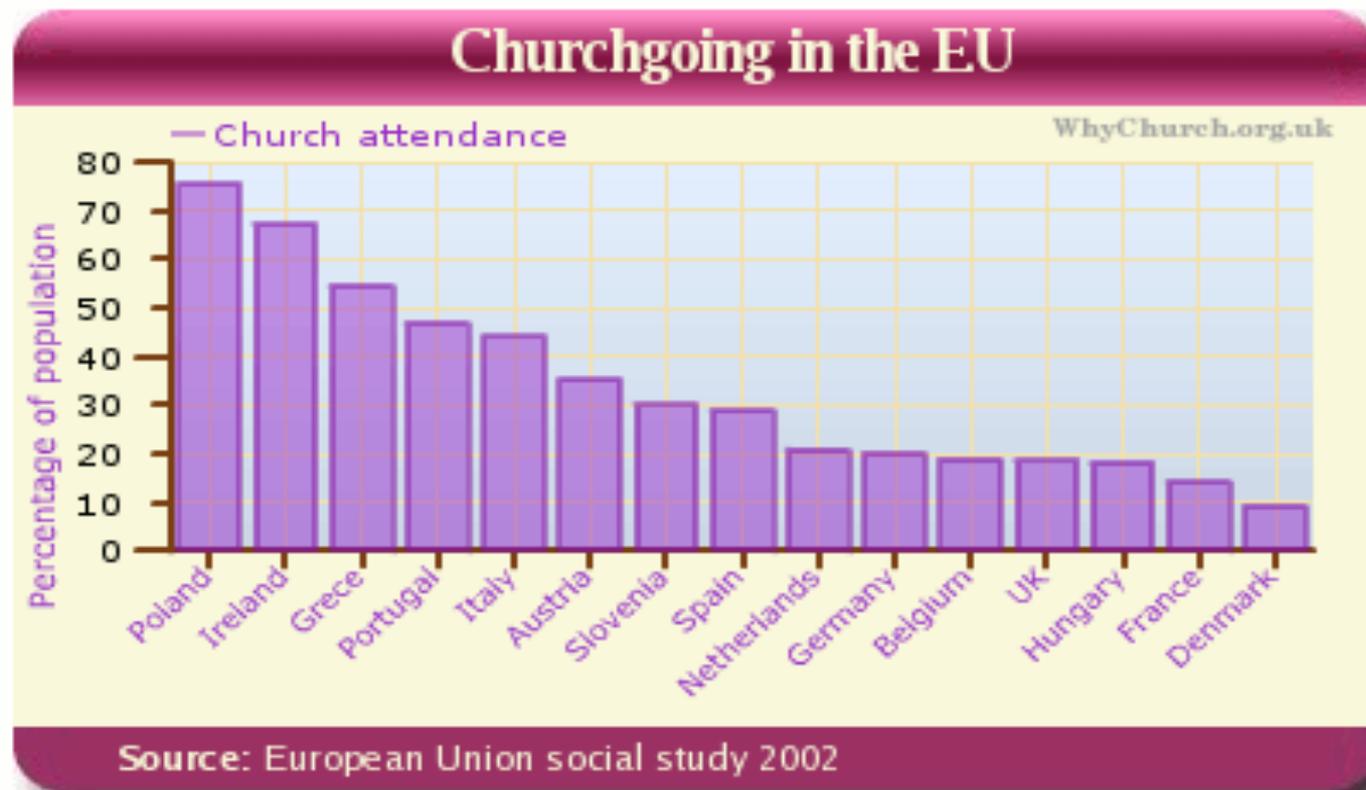
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# Worship attendance in W Europe (monthly)

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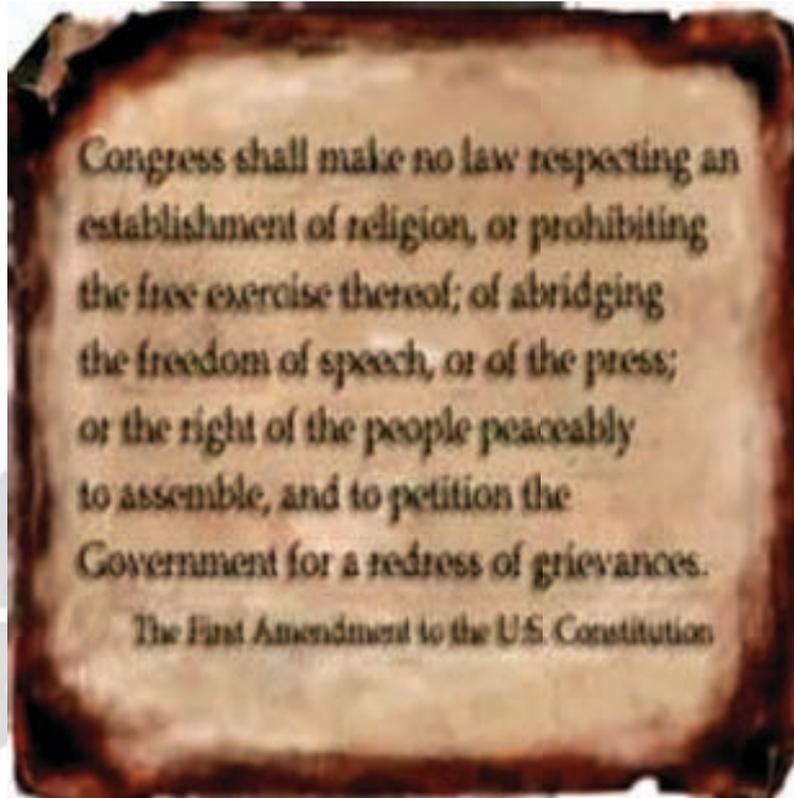


(US +/- S Europe)



## The American paradox: 'neutral' State, but religious Nation

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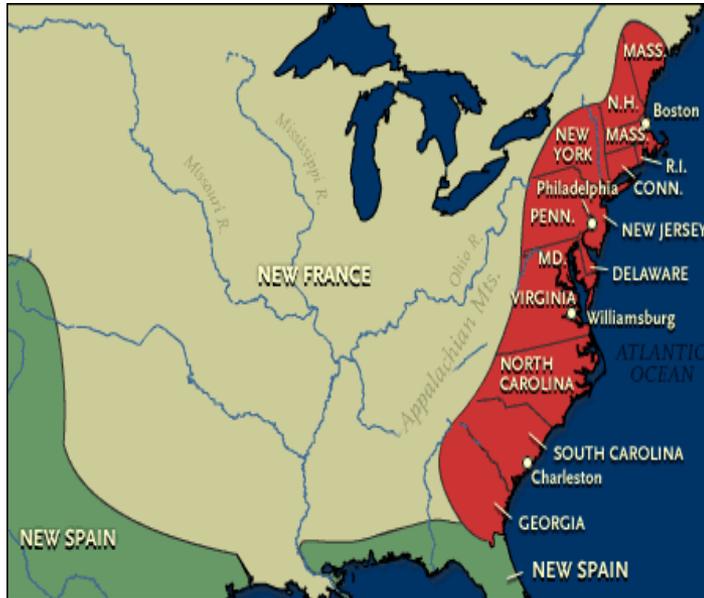
*"Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, the most basic, expression of Americanism."*

*– Pres Dwight D Eisenhower, 1955*



# Foundations: Colonial America

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## Religious Geography: New World, new chances...

Religious pluralism w/o (much) friction (bec of space)

New England: staunch Puritans (Congregationalists) with exceptions

(Rhode Island, Roger Williams: dissenting from the dissenters, 'civil and religious spheres must be separate'; faith is personal)

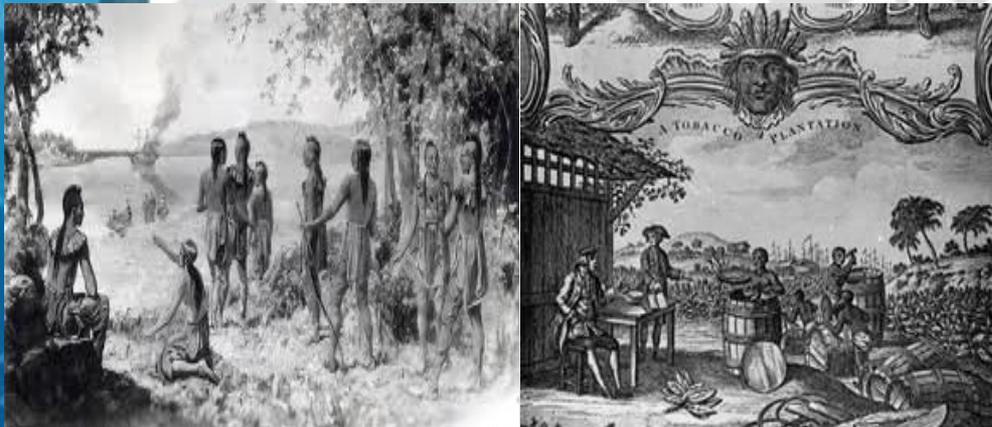
Middle Colonies: mix of Quakers (William Penn), Catholics (Maryland), Lutherans, Jews, Dutch Reformed, etc.

South: also a mix, but more Anglicans, and split-offs (Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians)

## Economic Motivations

Liberal philosophical foundations with Christian elements: J Locke (1632-1704): 'Life, liberty and the pursuit of *property*'. Men have the right, through labor, to appropriate things from nature. Use-value of real estate → one of the 2 darkest aspects of American history (early 19<sup>th</sup> C Manifest destiny → ethnic cleansing of Native Americans)

English economic interest . English Treas Seymour to VA Revd Blair, on latter's request for money to found college: 'Souls? Damn your souls. Make tobacco.'





# Foundations: Constitutional Period

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Prelude to Federal Debate: T Jefferson & J Madison v P Henry on Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1779, 1786). Against state interference in/corruption of religion, not against religion *per se*

Constitutional Convention (1787): Religion as 'the elephant in the room': Little to no open discussion of religion. 'God' not in text (cf 'property,' 'law,' 'trade,' 'natural rights,'...). W Williams (CT) attempted theistic re-write of Preamble: *not* accepted; nor B Franklin's proposal for prayer & perm chaplain. Madison prevailed: concerns for tyranny and factions; no particular sect deserved establishment, and no state interference with free exercise and growth of (primarily Protestant) religion



# Foundations: Constitutional Period

First Amendment to the *federal* Constitution (1791)

And the States? Danbury (CT) Baptists complained (1801) about local discrimination. Then-Pres Jefferson's claim 'wall of separation between church and state', w/o specifying applies at State level (14<sup>e</sup> amend (1868) forced States to conform to Bill of Rights)

Constitution separated Church and State but by no means kept religion out of politics. Penn evangelical R Baird: religious voluntarism → salvation of US. Church and state separate, but 'mutual friends.'

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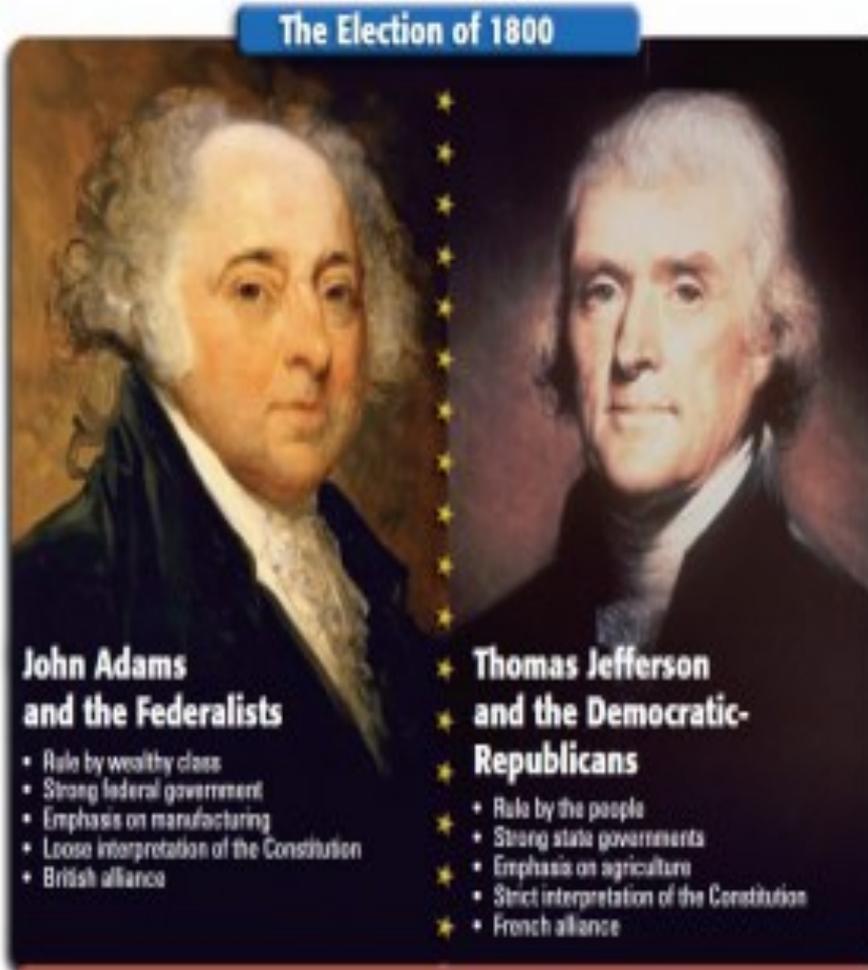




# Religion in Presidential politics, a prelude: Adams v Jefferson (1800)

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**The Election of 1800**



<p><b>John Adams and the Federalists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule by wealthy class</li> <li>• Strong federal government</li> <li>• Emphasis on manufacturing</li> <li>• Loose interpretation of the Constitution</li> <li>• British alliance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic- Republicans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule by the people</li> <li>• Strong state governments</li> <li>• Emphasis on agriculture</li> <li>• Strict interpretation of the Constitution</li> <li>• French alliance</li> </ul>
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- Both Adams and Jefferson religious moderates
- Yet, Jefferson caste as atheist Jacobin
- Adams as dogmatic Calvinist
- Later letters: shared anti-sectarian, rationalist spirituality

## JOHN ADAMS



"Our Littlest President"



THE PRESIDENTIAL DETECTION



## Early assessments of religious marketplace

Disestablishment in States: 1818 end of CT Standing Order (Presby Rev L Beecher: fr 'darkest day' to 'best thing that ever happened to CT'); 1833: Mass last.

De Tocqueville, French aristocrat & sociologist. Review of travels, 1831, *Democracy in America*

'The religious atmosphere ... was the first thing that struck me on my arrival.'  
'The sects which exist in the US are innumerable'

'Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must nevertheless be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country; for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of free institutions.'

'All agreed ... the main reason for the quiet sway of religion over their country was the complete separation of church and state.' 'Any alliance with any political power is bound to be burdensome for religion.'

Yet, danger of individualistic materialism: 'inordinate love of material gratification'. 'Not only do Americans follow their religion out of self interest, but they often place in this world the interest one can have in following it.'



# Roots of distinctively American religion

## The (First) Great Awakening 1730-1750

Gilbert Tennant (Presbyt), George Whitefield (Ang), Jonathan Edwards (Cong)

Emotional, charismatic preaching

*Personal* conversion – George Whitefield ‘New Birth’ (born again)

*First* American ecumenical movement (cooperation → war of independence)



## The Second Great Awakening 1800ff

July 1800 Ceredence Clearwater Church SW KY; Cane Ridge Camp E KY

Dominant element: Arminian theology (John Wesley) → sola gratia, but fide as conditio sine qua non . So: choice is central.

Charles Finney (1792-1875), *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, remorse can be inspired with ‘new measures’ calculated to open hearts

Personal sanctification → social reforms (abolition of slavery, temperance and later civil rights movements, etc.)





# Roots of distinctively American religion

## Pentecostalism

1906 eruption of glossalalia (Acts 2) in William Seymour's *mixed* congregation in L.A. New Pentecost: Azusa Street Revival → world

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944) & International Church of Foursquare Gospel: Street evangelism (by car), Sensational sermons (motorcycle), Media: 1<sup>st</sup> religious radio station, Scale: mega church (Angelus Temple 5000+)





# Keys to American Awakenings and Evangelization

Salvation: can be won, lost, regained

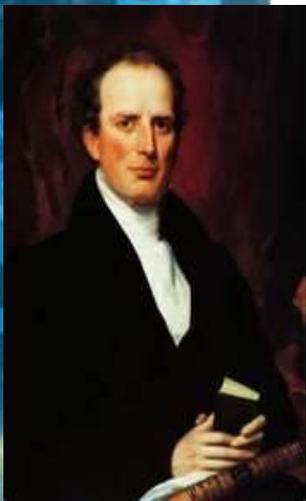
Emotion and experience as central

Awakening as product not just of 'a surprising work of God' but also subject to human input: can be scripted

Charismatic leaders important (Finney, Moody, McPherson, Graham, Schuler...)

Primary focus on individual rather than social

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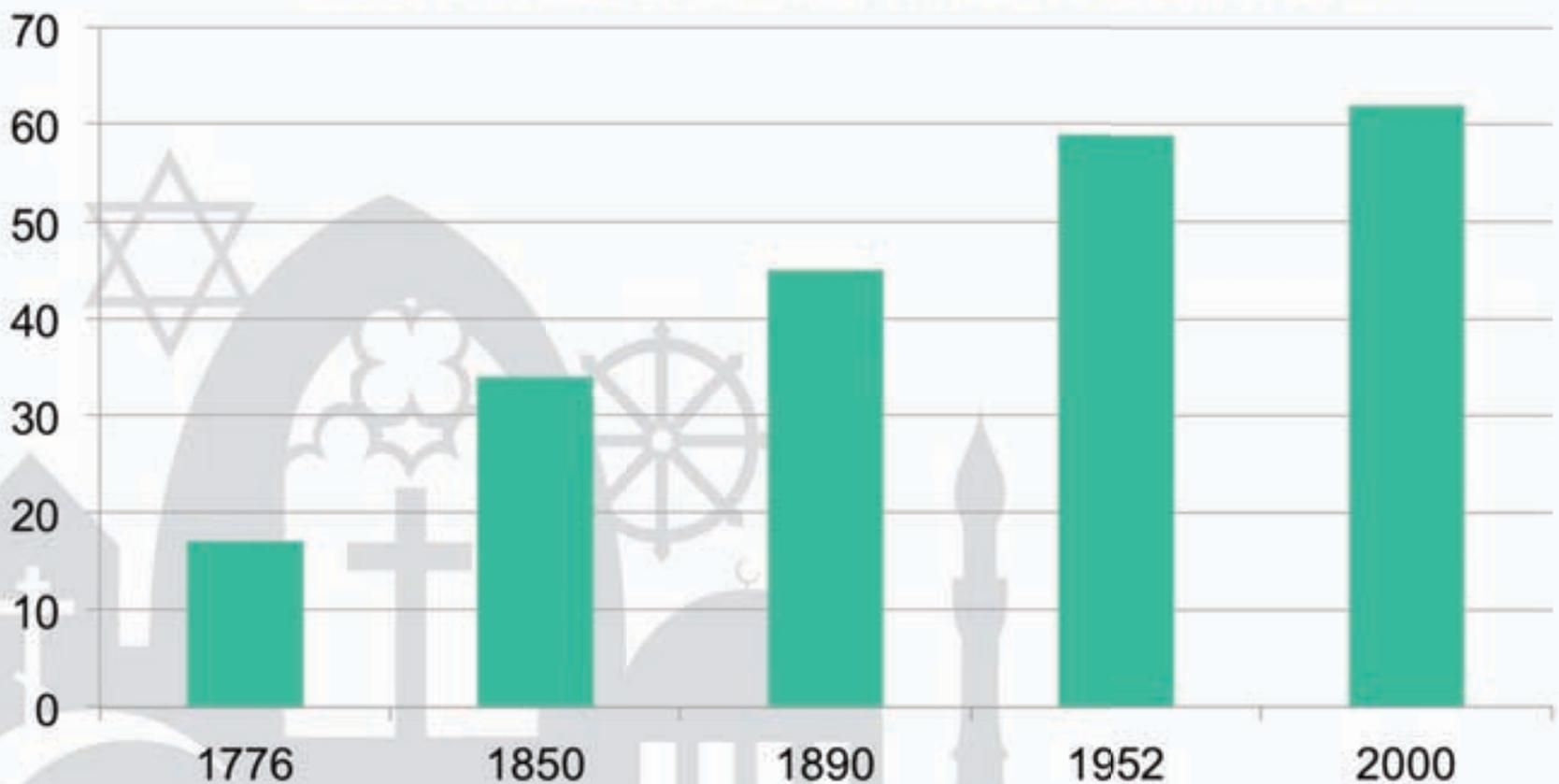




# Assessing the New Market for Religion (2)

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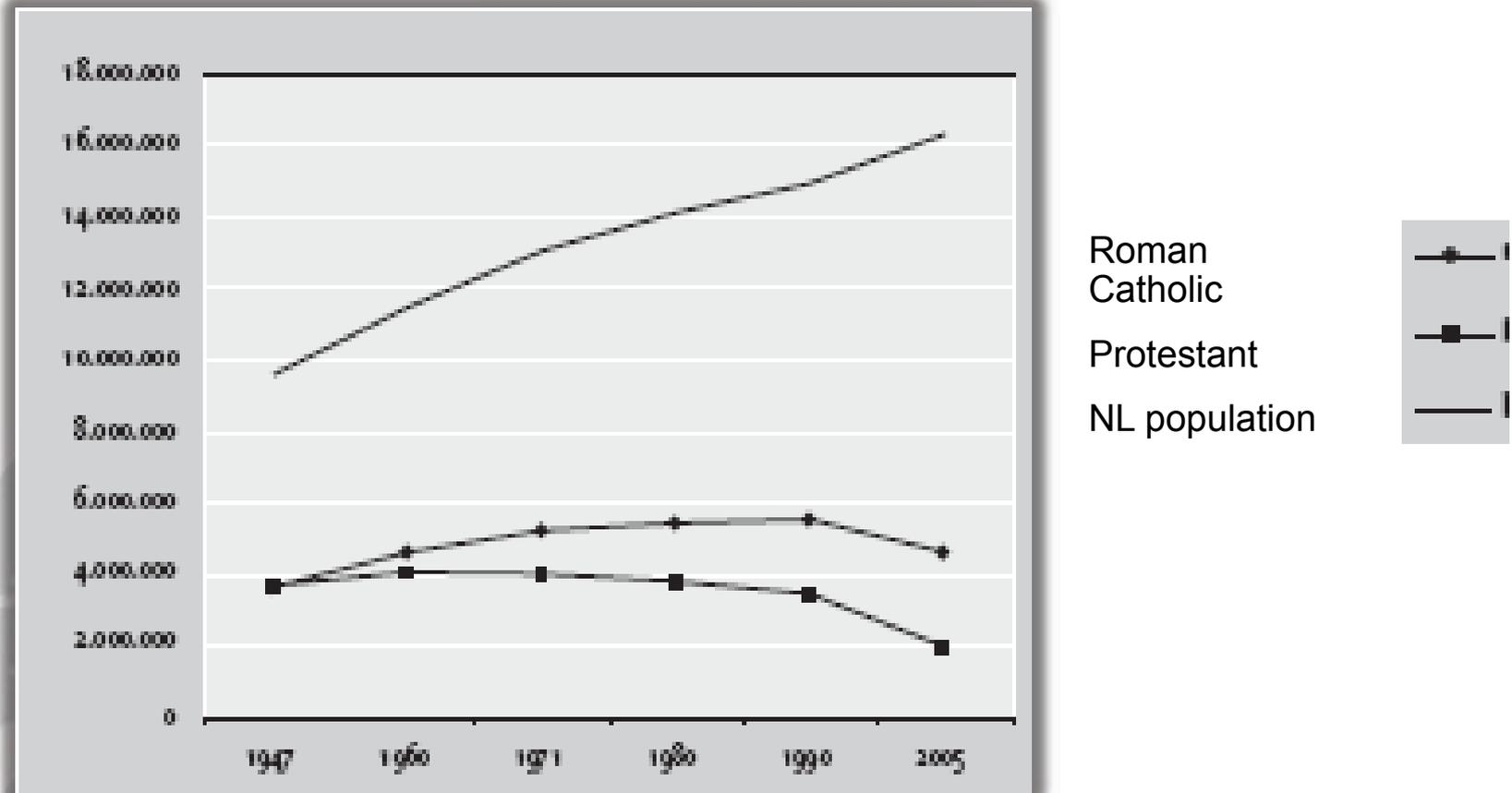
Rates of Religious Adherence, Stark & Finke, 2005





# Membership of the largest NL churches (Roman Catholic & Protestant Ch of NL) 1947-2005:

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Source: SCP 06



# Religion and US National Identity

- Concept of American nation closely tied with religion and with religious themes, especially Judeo-Christian
- Yet importance of religion is equally tied to emphasis on religious freedom
- Characterised by “Judeo-Christian” or passive secularism

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# Religion and US National Identity

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- Founding “myth”, especially amongst Puritans of escape from religious persecution and founding of “New World” of religious freedom and tolerance as an example to the “Old World”
- A city on a hill – Jonathan Winthrop
- Doctrine of Manifest Destiny in 19<sup>th</sup> Century – still re-emerges in various forms at different points in US history





# American Civil Religion

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Robert Bellah (2005) – identified existence of American civil religion – distinct from traditional spiritual religions

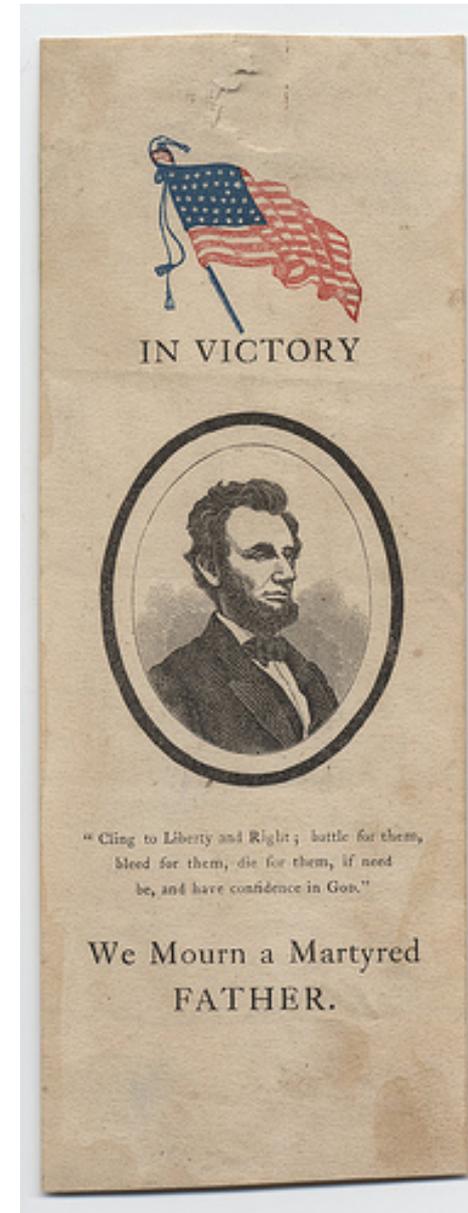
Concept of civil religion helps to make sense of the fact that the USA was the first Western state to be established without an official state church, that the constitution enshrines the separation of powers and yet religion is such a critical and influential role in US politics



# American Civil Religion

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- religious' rituals and memorials, such as national days of remembrance, prayer services, presidential inaugurations and State of the Union addresses (Bellah 2005: 42, 49);
- a body of 'sacred' national documents, such as the US Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Pledge of Allegiance (Bellah 2005: 44);
- the casting of significant figures in US history (particularly Presidents) as prophets and martyrs for the nation (Bellah 2005: 48; Cherry 1971: 6–7 fn. 6) – Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King. Arguably, presidents are also high priests of the American civil religion
- these three 'religious' tendencies within national identity are not unique to the USA (Smith 2000).





# Religion and US National Identity

Key religious themes/symbols in US National Identity and Presidential rhetoric:

US (and sometimes Presidents) as Christ-like figure

Special purpose/calling – carrying with it greater responsibilities and expectations

City On a Hill – a leader/example for the rest of the world to follow

Presidents as priests and prophets of the nation – also held to a higher standard



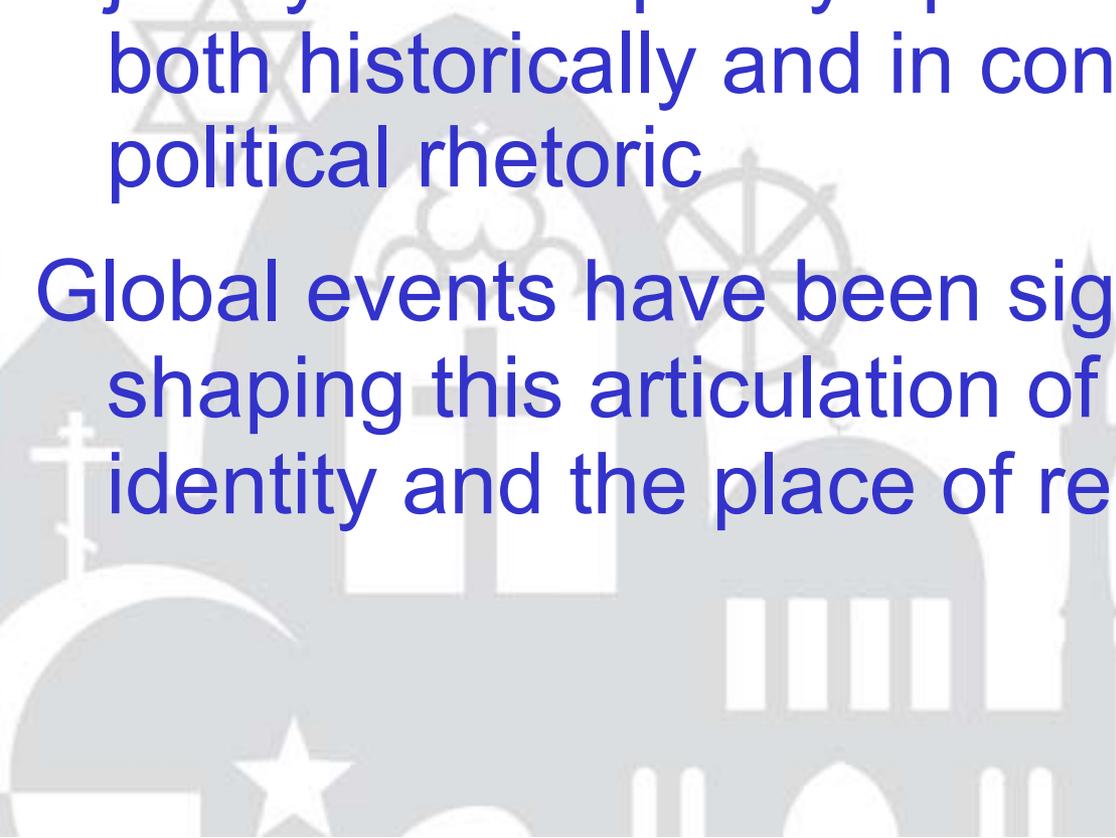


# Religion and US National Identity

These themes recur in various forms, implicit and explicit, and are used to justify certain policy options over others, both historically and in contemporary US political rhetoric

Global events have been significant in shaping this articulation of US national identity and the place of religion in it.

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# Franklin Delano Roosevelt



32<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States of America  
1933-1945 (his death)  
Democrat  
Episcopalian

World War Two significant time of crisis and change for US  
– truly emerged as a global power during the 1940s and after the war

- Times of crisis offer significant moments for the articulation of national identity
- Religious imagery and rhetoric important – language adopted characteristic of what Juergensmeyer has called “cosmic war” and “satanization” – black and white, us and them



# FDR

Excerpts from 1942 State of the Union address (one month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor):

*Destruction of the material and spiritual centers of civilization—this has been and still is the purpose of Hitler and his Italian and Japanese chessmen...*

*They know that victory for us means victory for freedom.*

*They know that victory for us means victory for the institution of democracy—the ideal of the family, the simple principles of common decency and humanity.*

*They know that victory for us means victory for religion. And they could not tolerate that. The world is too small to provide adequate "living room" for both Hitler and God. In proof of that, the Nazis have now announced their plan for enforcing their new German, pagan religion all over the world—a plan by which the Holy Bible and the Cross of Mercy would be displaced by Mein Kampf and the swastika and the naked sword.*



# FDR

*We must not underrate the enemy. He is powerful and cunning—and cruel and ruthless. He will stop at nothing that gives him a chance to kill and to destroy.*

FDR State of the Union 6 January, 1942

‘The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance.’

John 10:10





# FDR

*We are fighting today for security, for progress, and for peace, not only for ourselves but for all men, not only for one generation but for all generations. We are fighting to **cleanse the world of ancient evils, ancient ills.***

*Our enemies are guided by brutal cynicism, by **unholy contempt for the human race. We are inspired by a faith that goes back through all the years to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis: "God created man in His own image."***

***We on our side are striving to be true to that divine heritage. We are fighting, as our fathers have fought, to uphold the doctrine that all men are equal in the sight of God. Those on the other side are striving to destroy this deep belief and to create a world in their own image—a world of tyranny and cruelty and serfdom.***

*That is the conflict that day and night now pervades our lives.*

***No compromise can end that conflict. There never has been—there never can be—successful compromise between good and evil. Only total victory can reward the champions of tolerance, and decency, and freedom, and faith.***



# John Fitzgerald Kennedy



35th President of the United States of America  
 1961-1963 (his death)  
 Democrat  
 Catholic

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Like World War Two, the Cold War was at times depicted as a struggle between good and evil, between the Judeo-Christian West and the “godless communists”

One of the most significant events took place during Kennedy’s presidency, the Cuban Missile Crisis. This was arguably the closest that the US and the USSR came to nuclear war during the entire Cold War Period





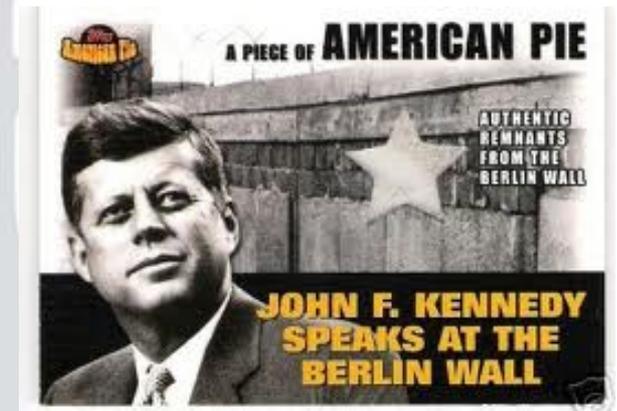
# JFK

## Priest of the Nation:

In the words of a great President, whose birthday we honor today [FDR], closing his final State of the Union Message sixteen years ago, "We pray that we may be worthy of the unlimited opportunities that God has given us." (1961 State of the Union)

And in this high endeavor, may God watch over the United States of America. (1962 State of the Union)

With *thanks to Almighty God* for seeing us through a perilous passage, *we ask His help anew* in guiding the 'Good Ship Union'. (1963 State of the Union)





# Kennedy

This country cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor.

Therefore, by holding down the budgetary cost of existing programs to keep within the limitations I have set, it is both possible and imperative to adopt other new measures that we cannot afford to postpone.

These measures are based on a series of fundamental premises, grouped under four related headings:

First, we need to strengthen our Nation by investing in our youth...

Second, we need to strengthen our Nation by safeguarding its health...

Third, we need to strengthen our Nation by protecting the basic rights of its citizens...

Fourth, we need to strengthen our Nation by making the best and the most economical use of its resources and facilities...





# Kennedy

These are not domestic concerns alone. For upon our achievement of greater vitality and strength here at home hang *our fate and future* in the world: *our ability to sustain and supply the security of free men and nations, our ability to command their respect for our leadership, our ability to expand our trade without threat to our balance of payments, and our ability to adjust to the changing demands of cold war competition and challenge.*



We shall be *judged* more by what we do at home than by what we *preach* abroad. Nothing we could do to help the developing countries would help them half as much as a booming U.S. economy. And nothing our opponents could do to encourage their own ambitions would encourage them half as much as a chronic lagging U.S. economy. These domestic tasks do not divert energy from our security – *they provide the very foundation for freedom's survival and success.*

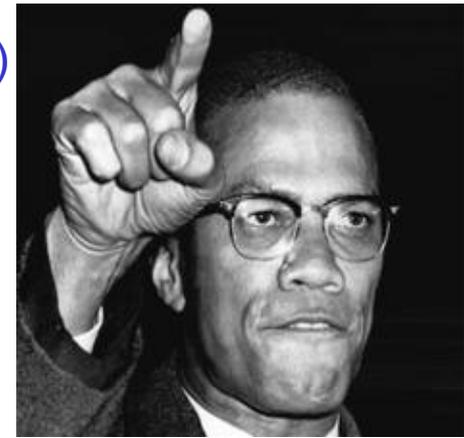


# Civil rights movement: a prototype?



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- Background on African American religion and Christianity
  - Baptist/Methodist
  - WEB DuBois: 'The Preacher, the music, the frenzy'
  - Segregation
- Christian initiative of Black Church leadership
  - Non-violence
  - Biblical imagery in struggle for freedom
  - Appeal to American 'civil religion'
- Consequences (unintended and otherwise)
  - *Federal* Court & Legislative successes
    - *Brown v Board* ('54), *Civil Rts Act* ('64), *Voting Rts* ('65)
  - Reactionaries (KKK, Nol) and Progressives (NCC)
  - Black churches ultimately weakened
  - Transformation of segregation (white flight, academies)
  - Realignment of political parties





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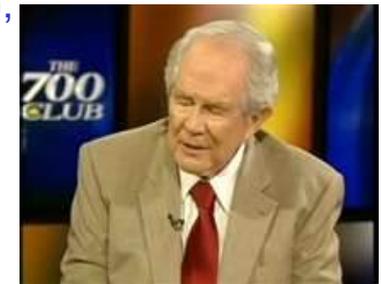
# Rise of political partisanship of Religion

Combination of a specific political stance and religion relatively new (post-1950s); Yet, all presidents (nominally) Christian, mostly Protestant [12 Anglican, 8 Presbyt, 4 Bapt, 4 Methodist, 2 Quakers (HH&RN!), 1 Catholic (6 unaffiliated Christians: TJ, AL, AJ, UG, RBH, & BO)]

1960s cultural change & '60s & '70s Court decisions → family, education, sexuality

Moral Majority Jerry Falwell et al. 'to take back America'; Robertson: separation of Church and State as 'liberal, anti-Christian ploy to keep God out of public life.'

3 key successes (Kanawha, Dade & ERA): secular conservatives take notice





# Rise of political partisanship of Religion

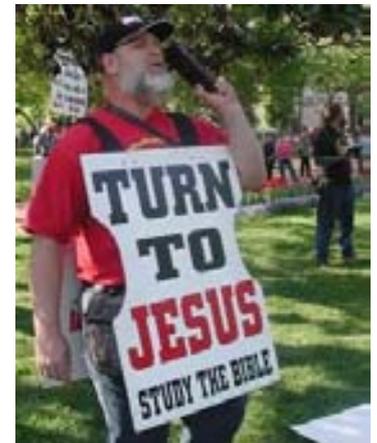
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Jimmy Carter – first ‘born again’ Pres – disappoints conservatives

Penny drops: Weyrich et al. mobilize Christian Right for Republicans

‘Wait a second – these folks are numerous ... and they’re not organized. Let’s get them voting and see what happens.’

Factors for success: Left divided & Dem party not embracing religion;  
 Religious Right’s message simple and organization motivated

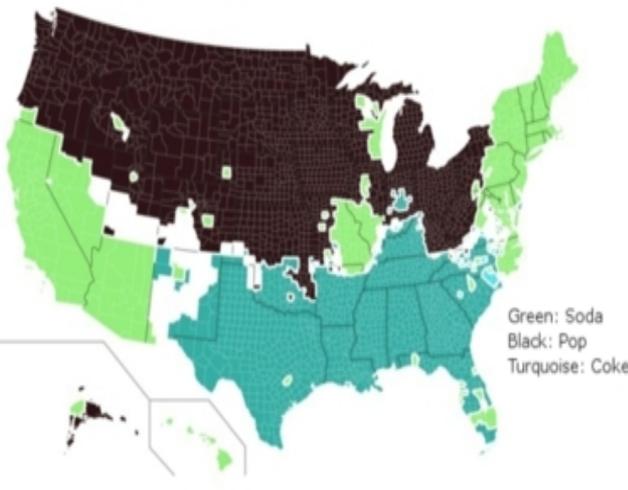




# America(s)... *political/cultural differences*

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The Soft Drink Borders: Soda, Pop, or Coke?



'Pop' culture



1976



2004



1996



2008

Republican 'Southern strategy':  
Reagan revolution, Red v. Blue States



# Ronald Reagan



40th President of the United States of America  
1981-1989  
Republican  
Protestant (Disciples of Christ)

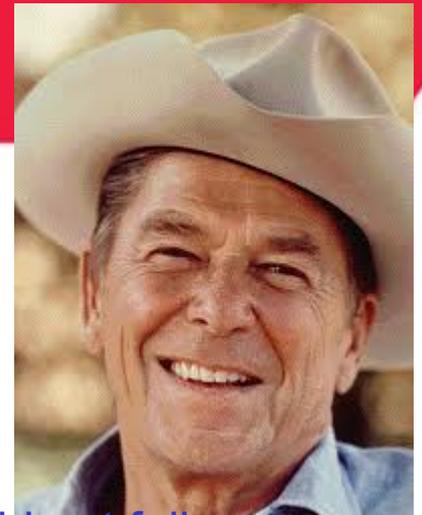
Reagan president during what is sometimes referred to as the “Second Cold War”, a period of heightened tension between the USA and the USSR. The era of “Star Wars” and increased military spending. The Reagan Presidency was also arguably the first to be heavily influenced by the Religious Right

Priest of the Nation:

*Let us be sure that those who come after will say of us in our time, that in our time we did everything that could be done. We finished the race; we kept them free; we kept the faith. Thank you very much. God bless you, and God bless America.*

(1984 State of the Union)

‘I have fought the good fight, I have run the race, I have kept the faith.’  
2 Timothy 4:7



# Ronald Reagan

Priest of the Nation:

Well, that President [Abraham Lincoln] and that Congress did not fail the American people. Together they weathered the storm and preserved the Union. Let it be said of us that we, too, did not fail; that we, too, worked together to bring America through difficult times. Let us so conduct ourselves that two centuries from now, another Congress and another President, meeting in this Chamber as we are meeting, will speak of us with pride, saying that we met the test and preserved for them in their day the **sacred flame of liberty—this last, best hope of man on Earth.**

**God bless you, and thank you.** (1983 State of the Union)

That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people (1 Timothy 4:10)

Suggests US as Christ-like figure





# George HW Bush



41st President of the United States of America  
1989-1993  
Republican  
Episcopalian

End of the Cold War significant time of change and transition for the US and global politics. Changed the lens through which politicians and policy makers viewed the world. Time of instability, and uncertainty for US identity – for so long it had defined itself in opposition to the USSR...

Priest of the Nation

And finally, *let all Americans* – all of us together here in this Chamber, the symbolic center of democracy – *affirm our allegiance to this idea we call America*. And let us remember that *the state of the Union depends on each and every one of us*. *God bless all of you, and may God bless this great nation, the United States of America*.  
George HW Bush, 1990 State of the Union



# George HW Bush

*There are singular moments in history, dates that divide all that goes before from all that comes after. And many of us in this Chamber have lived much of our lives in a world whose fundamental features were defined in 1945; and the events of that year decreed the shape of nations, the pace of progress, freedom or oppression for millions of people around the world.*

Nineteen forty-five provided the common frame of reference, the compass points of the postwar era we've relied upon to understand ourselves. And that was our world, until now. The events of the year just ended, the Revolution of '89, have been a chain reaction, changes so striking that it marks the beginning of a new era in the world's affairs.

(Bush 1990, emphasis added)

And to the children and young people out there tonight: *With you rests our hope, all that America will mean in the years and decades ahead. Fix your vision on a new century – your century, on dreams we cannot see, on destiny that is yours and yours alone.*

(Bush 1990, emphasis added)





# George W Bush



43rd President of the United States of America  
2001-2009  
Republican  
Methodist



Presidency severely affected by the events of 11 September 2001.

Although religion had been present in global politics long before this event, arguably it was 9/11 that made scholars and policy makers pay closer attention.

Some argue it marked a new era in global politics – the changing nature of warfare, growing power and influence of non-state actors – others argued it changed very little

Either way, the event had a significant impact on the US and President Bush



# GW Bush & 9/11



Priest of the Nation:

*Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory. Thank you all. May God bless.*

(2002 State of the Union)

*We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not know—we do not claim to know all the ways of providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history.*

*May He guide us now. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.*

(2003 State of the Union)



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# GWB

Prophet of the nation:

In four short months, our nation has *comforted* the victims, begun to rebuild New York and the Pentagon, rallied a great coalition, captured, arrested, and rid the world of thousands of terrorists, destroyed Afghanistan's terrorist training camps, *saved* a people from starvation, and *freed a country from brutal oppression*.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach *good news to the poor*. He has sent me to proclaim *freedom* for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to *release the oppressed*, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

(Isaiah 61: 1; Luke 4:18–9,  
New International Version (NIV))





# GWB

*States like these and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.*

*We will work closely with our coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology, and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction. We will develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America and our allies from sudden attack. And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our Nation's security...*

*My budget includes the largest increase in defense spending in two decades, because while the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high. Whatever it costs to defend our country, we will pay.*

Throughout the speech, Bush also describes the terrorists as “mad”, “parasites” and “evil”



# Barack Obama



44th President of the United States of America  
2009 - present  
Democrat  
Protestant

President during the worst financial crisis since the 1930s, not just for the US, but the entire globe.

US debt and unemployment have been at some of their worst levels in the post World War Two period, reaching 10% unemployment in October 2009, and current debt at over \$16 trillion, a combination of tax cuts and increased defense spending under Bush and the GFC

Again significant time of uncertainty and instability for the US, prompting reinforcement of US national identity





# Barack Obama

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Priest of the Nation:

*The spirit that has sustained this Nation for more than two centuries lives on in you, its people. We have finished a difficult year. We have come through a difficult decade. But a new year has come. A new decade stretches before us. We don't quit. I don't quit. Let's seize this moment to start anew, to carry the dream forward, and to strengthen our Union once more. Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.*

(2010 State of the Union Address)

The idea of America endures. Our destiny remains our choice. And tonight more than two centuries later, it's because of our people that our future is hopeful, our journey goes forward, and the state of our Union is strong. Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

(2011 State of the Union)



# Religion and Politics in the 2012 Campaign

- Religion playing a bigger role in the vice-presidential campaigns than the presidential campaigns. Both Joe Biden and Paul Ryan are Catholics. VP debate saw them both discussing how their faith influences their politics, and in different ways arguing to protect the right of religious freedom – Biden for individuals, Ryan for institutions
- In part, the heightened emphasis on religion and the VPs is because of perhaps “questionable” religious heritage for both Presidents
- Obama – Christian, has spoken openly about faith, but:
  - Affiliation with Jeremiah Wright – controversial Chicago pastor who claimed 9/11 was a judgement on the US
  - 17% of registered voters in the US believe Obama is a Muslim (Huffington Post).

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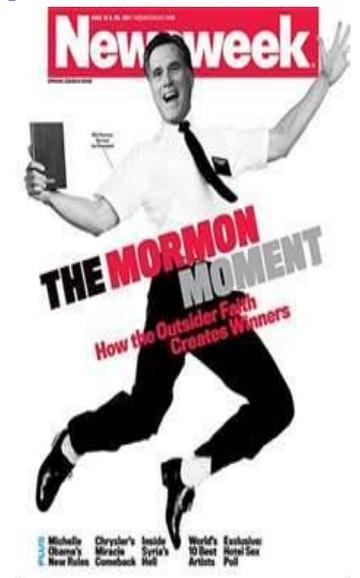


# Religion and Politics in the 2012 Campaign

## Romney

- Mormon – while this seems to be less of a problem in 2012 than it was in 2008 when he ran for nomination, Mormonism is still not widely understood amongst the US population

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# Religion and Politics in the 2012 Campaign

Nonetheless, both candidates have still made use of religious language in their campaigns.

## Romney

*The strength and power and goodness of America has always been based on the strength and power and goodness of our communities, our families, our faiths.*

*As president, I will protect the sanctity of life. I will honor the institution of marriage. And I will guarantee America's first liberty: the freedom of religion.*



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*The America we all know has been a story of the many becoming one, uniting to preserve liberty, uniting to build the greatest economy in the world, uniting to save the world from unspeakable darkness...*

*That America, that united America, will uphold the constellation of rights that were endowed by our Creator, and codified in our Constitution.*

*That united America will care for the poor and the sick, will honor and respect the elderly, and will give a helping hand to those in need...*

*If I am elected President of these United States, I will work with all my energy and soul to restore that America, to lift our eyes to a better future. That future is our destiny. That future is out there. It is waiting for us. Our children deserve it, our nation depends upon it, the peace and freedom of the world require it. And with your help we will deliver it. Let us begin that future together tonight.*



# Religion and Politics in the 2012 Campaign

## Obama

*As Americans, we believe we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, rights that no man or government can take away...*

*We, the people, recognize that we have responsibilities as well as rights; that our destinies are bound together; that a freedom which asks only 'what's in it for me', a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals, and those who died in their defense...*

*While I'm proud of what we've achieved together, I'm far more mindful of my own failings, knowing exactly what Lincoln meant when he said, 'I have been driven to my knees many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had no place else to go...*

*These people remind me, in the words of Scripture, that ours is a future filled with hope[Proverbs 23:18; 24:14; Jeremiah 29:11]. And if you share that faith with me, if you share that hope with me, I ask you tonight for your vote...*





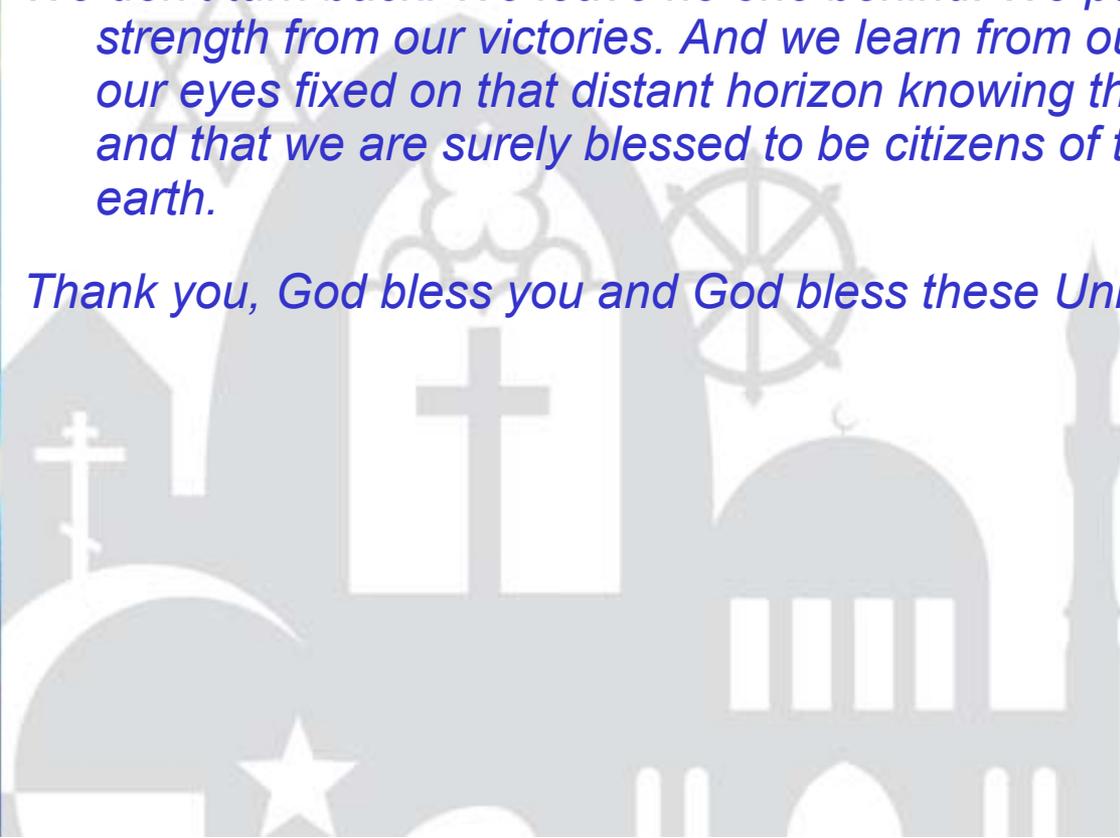
# Religion and Politics in the 2012 Campaign

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*America, I never said this journey would be easy, and I won't promise that now. Yes, our path is harder, but it leads to a better place. Yes our road is longer, but we travel it together. [Matthew 7:13-14]*

*We don't turn back. We leave no one behind. We pull each other up. We draw strength from our victories. And we learn from our mistakes. But we keep our eyes fixed on that distant horizon knowing that providence is with us and that we are surely blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation on earth.*

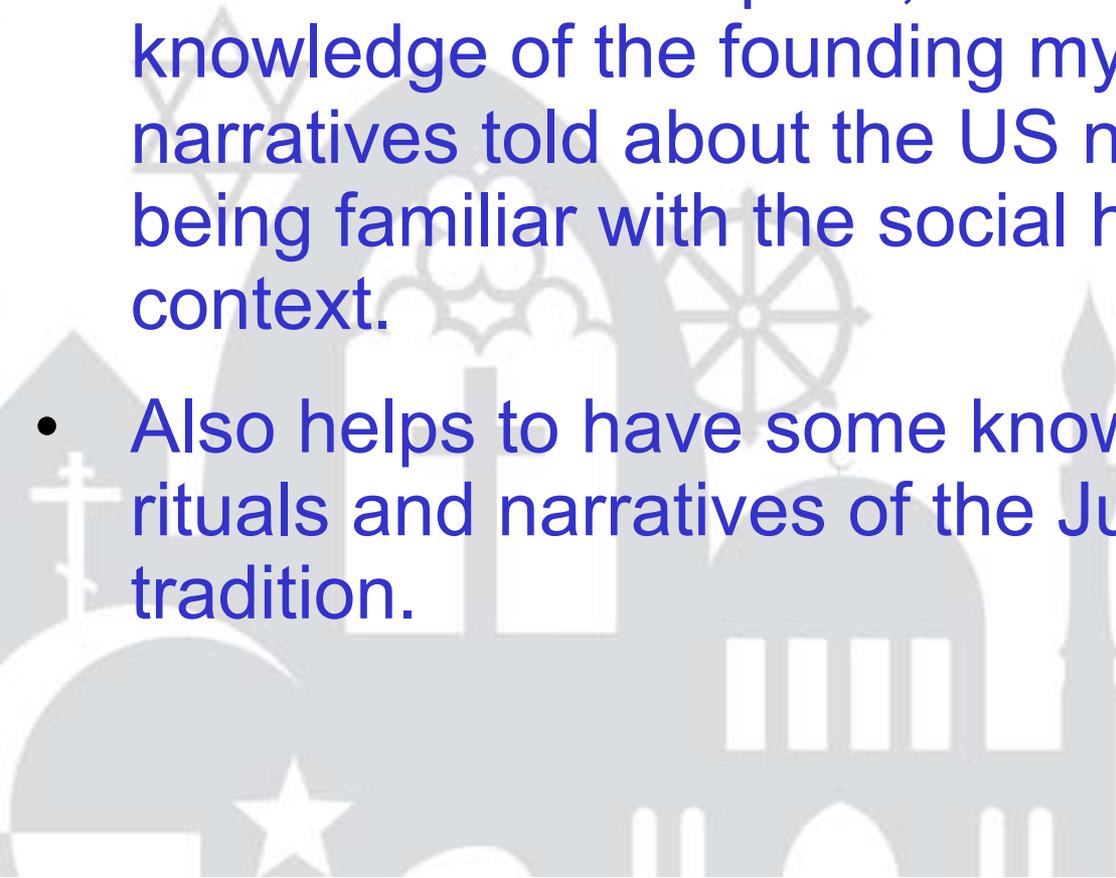
*Thank you, God bless you and God bless these United States.*





# Conclusions

- Some religious language in US presidential politics is obvious and explicit
- But a lot is also implied, subtle, requiring knowledge of the founding myths and narratives told about the US nation, as well as being familiar with the social history and context.
- Also helps to have some knowledge of the rituals and narratives of the Judeo-Christian tradition.





# Conclusions

- Not just Republicans who make use of rhetoric with religious overtones,
- Supposed recent turn to religion by Democrats is actually not that new – both FDR and JFK were democrats.
- But it's also not as simple as saying “America is a Christian nation”
- Rather America is a nation with a complex civil religion, founded on freedom of conscience – that civil religion just happens to be quite heavily influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition.





## The Religion Factor

<http://religionfactor.net> and on Facebook

## Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain

[http://www.rug.nl/ggw/onderzoek/onderzoeksinstituten/  
CentreforRCPD](http://www.rug.nl/ggw/onderzoek/onderzoeksinstituten/CentreforRCPD) and Facebook

*After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics.*  
2012. Palgrave Macmillan

## The American Presidency Project

[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/  
sou.php#axzz29LtXhC7S](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/sou.php#axzz29LtXhC7S)

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# Religions...

## Top Ten ORGANIZED Religions in the United States, 2001 (self-identification, ARIS)

Religion	2001 Est. Adult Pop.	<u>2004 Est. Total Pop.</u>	% of U.S. Pop., 2001
Christianity	159,030,000	224,437,959	76.5%
Judaism	2,831,000	3,995,371	1.3%
Islam	1,104,000	1,558,068	0.5%
Buddhism	1,082,000	1,527,019	0.5%
Hinduism	766,000	1,081,051	0.4%
Unitarian Universalist	629,000	887,703	0.3%
Wiccan/ Pagan/Druid	307,000	433,267	0.1%
Spiritualist	116,000	163,710	0.05%
Native American Religion	103,000	145,363	0.05%
Baha'i	84,000	118,549	0.04%

