



Faith of Freedom:

A Survey of Christianity in America

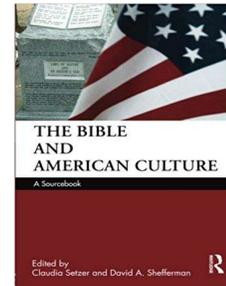
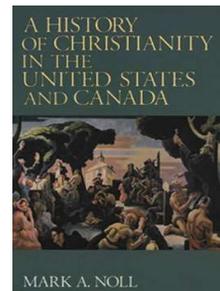
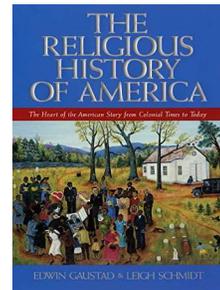
Faith of Freedom

- Past generations of Christians (from the 1st century forward) were controlled by political oppression and/or the rule of (Catholic) church orthodoxy. To believe that Christ is 'King of Kings & Lord of Lords' in those eras typically meant endurance of hardships with hopeful expectation, or default adherence to the teachings of the established authorities.
- For better or worse, America has provided a unique context for the expression of Christian religion within history. To believe in Christ's Kingdom in America often carries with it a spirit of action and achievement.
- The freedoms afforded by the nation have created a new-found openness to many aspects of the faith:
 - Doctrine/Worship/Biblical Interpretation
 - Evangelism & Missionary Activity
 - Function of the Church Community
 - Political/Social Involvement



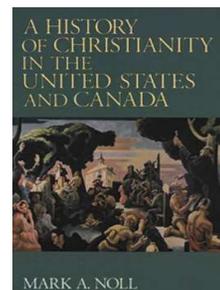
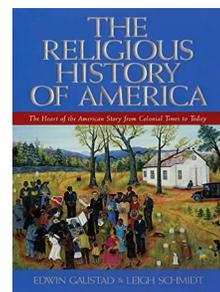
Approach

- The class is a survey of major historical trends of Christian faith and practice as they develop within a particular society.
 - Not just a review of denominational origins
 - History is informative, not authoritative
 - Reliance on outside (human) sources
 - Generalizations are inevitable



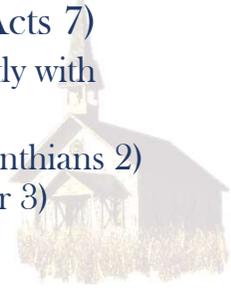
Approach

- The class is a survey of major historical trends of Christian faith and practice as they develop within a particular society.
- A 'charitable benefit of the doubt' regarding what constitutes 'Christian.'
- To accept and/or critique the ideas and practices of Christians based upon their own words
- Simultaneous Acceptance and denial of Restoration Heritage



A Scriptural Basis for Historical Study

- The New Testament appeals to history to teach its readers:
 - Spiritual/Ethical instruction: 1 Corinthians 10:6,11
 - Theological/Doctrinal truths: Romans 4:23-24
- The New Testament Christians recounted the history that served as a critique for the values of his opponents (Acts 7)
 - Lessons from our cultural history often mesh more directly with our present experience than Old Testament history
 - We proceed with the ability of ‘spiritual appraisal’ (I Corinthians 2) to prepare ourselves to give a reason for our hope (I Peter 3)



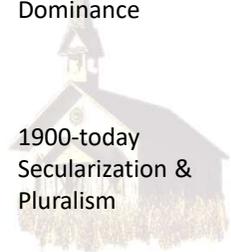
CLASS SCHEDULE

- CLASS 1 -European Reformation and Expansion
- CLASS 2 - Puritan Life and Faith
- CLASS 3 - The ‘Great Awakening’
- CLASS 4 - Faith During the American Revolution
- CLASS 5 - Protestant Growth on the Frontier
- CLASS 6 - The Restoration Movement
- CLASS 7 - ‘Outsider’ Forms of Christianity
- CLASS 8 - Churches in the Civil War
- CLASS 9 - African-American Religious Experience
- CLASS 10 - Rise of the Social Gospel Movement
- CLASS 11 - Intellectual Challenges and Fundamentalism
- CLASS 12 - The New Christian Right
- CLASS 13 - Modern Trends

1600-1790s
Separation of
church/state

1790s-1900
Protestant
Dominance

1900-today
Secularization &
Pluralism



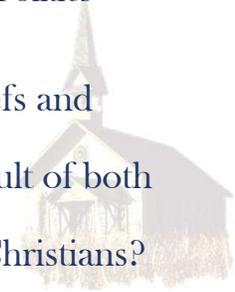
Goals

- To give an account of the historical roots of the modern culture of Christianity in the United States
- To challenge us to think through the benefits and dangers of the American ideal of ‘freedom of religion,’ and how that might provide lessons for our ‘spiritual freedom’
- To highlight the ways in which Christian faith both shaped – and was shaped by – the evolving social and cultural environment of America



Discussion Topics

- Separation of Church and State
- Denominational Differences
- Methods of Evangelism
- Shifts in Theological Convictions
- Variant Readings of the Bible
- Trends toward Religious Pluralism
- Responses to Intellectual Challenges to Faith
- Christian (In)/Action in Politics and Social Reform
- Where does the Bible agree and/or disagree with the beliefs and actions of other Christians?
- How does freedom of religion bring about a two-sided result of both benefits and dangers on these issues?
- What is a proper level of engagement with the world for Christians?



6 Characteristics of American Religion

- Edwin Scott Gaustad

- **Individualism** – political and geographical self-sufficiency, manifested religiously in the belief of personal relationship with God
- **Experimentalism** – a wave of new Bible interpretations, denominational churches, and worship activities
- **Nativism** – a sense of pride in the divine support of all things ‘American’
- **Probabilism** – a trend that people who question restrictions upon their actions generally chose the path of greater liberty
- **Denominationalism** – ecclesiastical organization which only claimed segmented participation in ‘the Universal Church’ and in the life of its members
- **Primitivism** – a (counter-)characteristic effort to return to the natural/original form of religion, typically defined by the Bible



Statistics

Percentages are of the total US population

Christian	70.6%
▶ Evangelical Protestant	25.4%
▶ Mainline Protestant	14.7%
▶ Historically Black Protestant	6.5%
Catholic	20.8%
▶ Mormon	1.6%
▶ Orthodox Christian	0.5%
Jehovah's Witness	0.8%
▶ Other Christian	0.4%

Statistics

Percentages are of the total US population

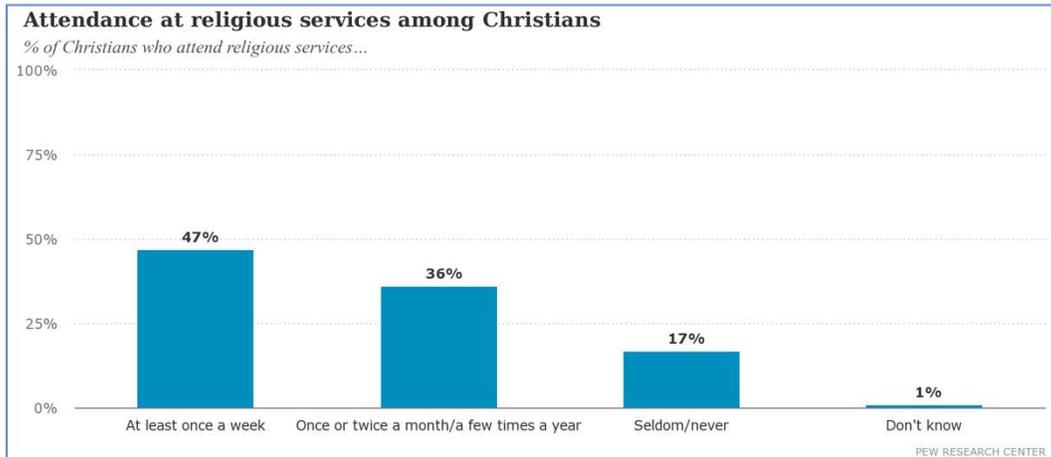
▼ Evangelical Protestant	25.4%
▶ Baptist Family (Evangelical Trad.)	9.2%
▶ Methodist Family (Evangelical Trad.)	< 0.3%
▶ Nondenominational Family (Evangelical Trad.)	4.9%
▶ Lutheran Family (Evangelical Trad.)	1.5%
▶ Presbyterian Family (Evangelical Trad.)	0.8%
▶ Pentecostal Family (Evangelical Trad.)	3.6%
▶ Episcopal/Anglican Family (Evangelical Trad.)	< 0.3%
▶ Restorationist Family (Evangelical Trad.)	1.6%
▶ Congregationalist Family (Evangelical Trad.)	< 0.3%
▶ Holiness Family (Evangelical Trad.)	0.7%
▶ Reformed Family (Evangelical Trad.)	< 0.3%
▶ Adventist Family (Evangelical Trad.)	0.6%

Statistics

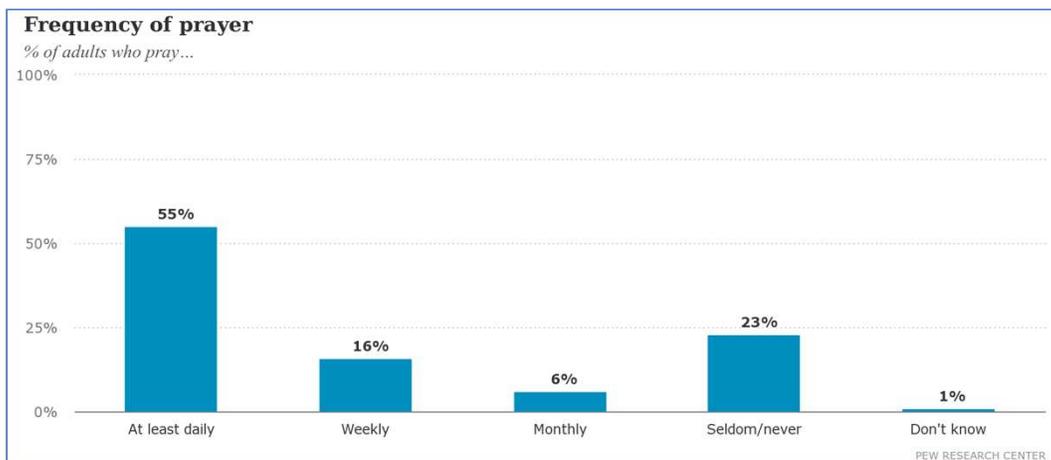
Percentages are of the total US population

▼ Mainline Protestant	14.7%
▶ Baptist Family (Mainline Trad.)	2.1%
▶ Methodist Family (Mainline Trad.)	3.9%
▶ Nondenominational Family (Mainline Trad.)	1.0%
▶ Lutheran Family (Mainline Trad.)	2.1%
▶ Presbyterian Family (Mainline Trad.)	1.4%
▶ Episcopal/Anglican Family (Mainline Trad.)	1.2%
▶ Restorationist Family (Mainline Trad.)	0.3%
▶ Congregationalist Family (Mainline Trad.)	0.5%
▶ Reformed Family (Mainline Trad.)	< 0.3%

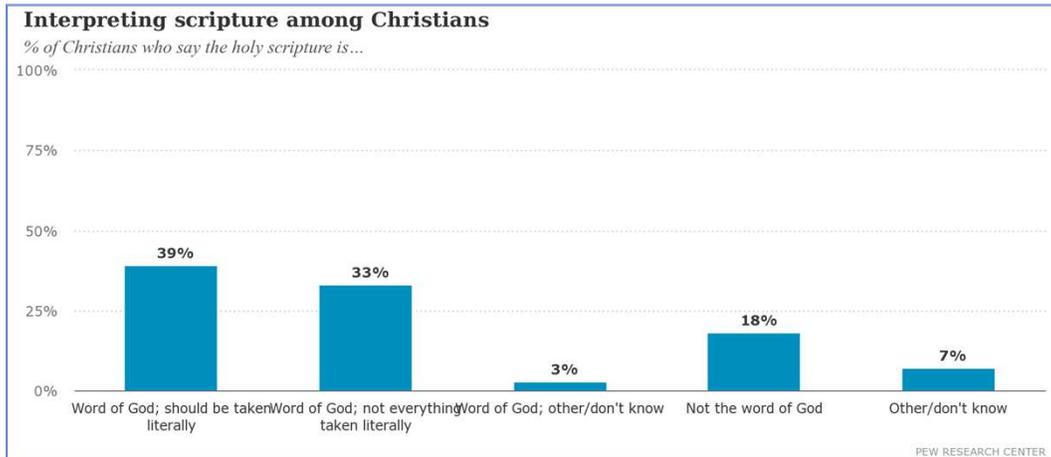
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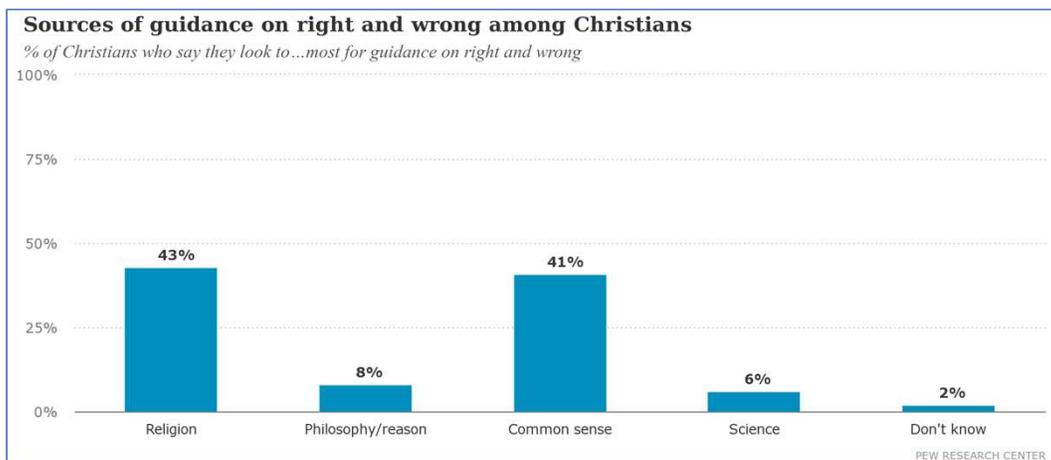
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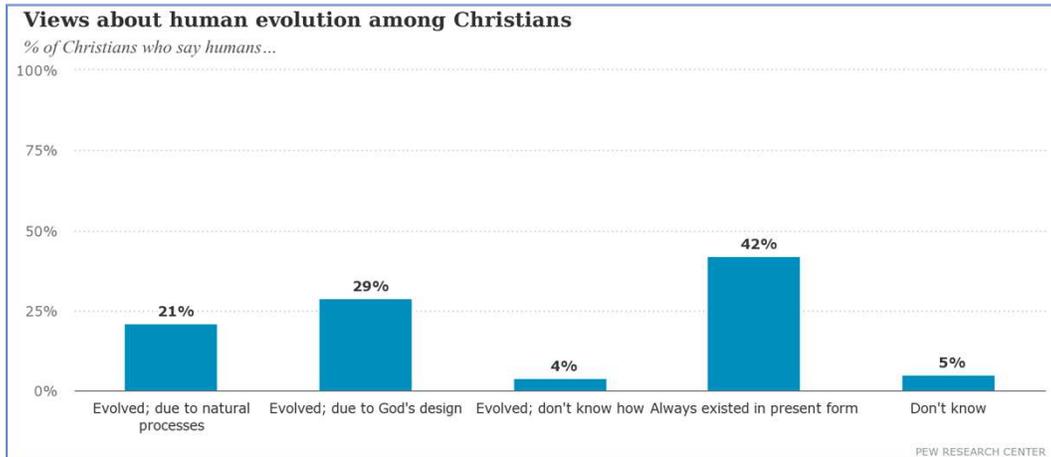
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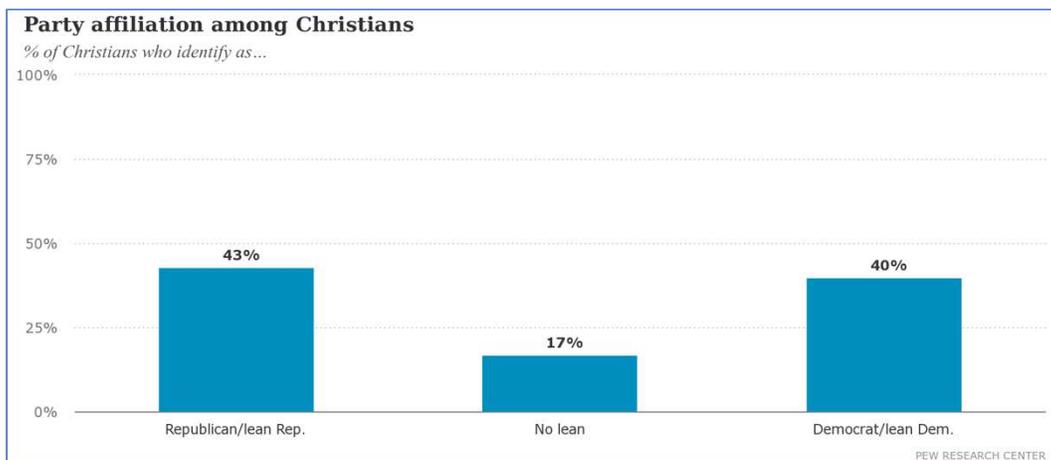
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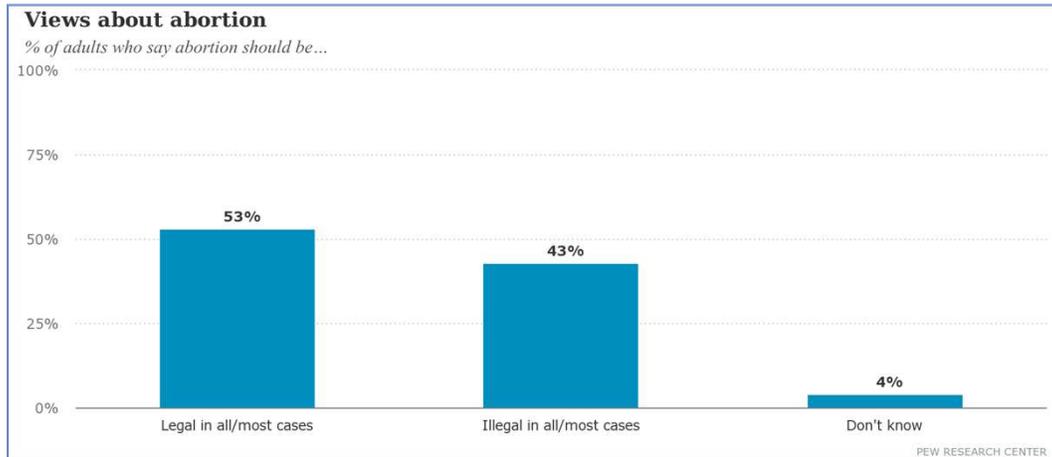
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Statistics



Statistics



CLASS 1

European Reformation and Expansion

- Catholic Missionary Influence
- Protestant Reformation
- Anglican Establishment



Catholic Missionary Influence

- The first Christians in North America were Catholic Missionaries in the 1400s & 1500s, who saw 'The New World' as the opening of a new era in the history of God's salvation ('Doctrine of Discovery')

"We therefore are rightly led, and hold it as our duty...to seek out and discover certain islands and mainlands remote and unknown and not hitherto discovered by others, to the end that you might bring to the worship of our Redeemer and the profession of the Catholic faith their residents and inhabitants..." – Pope Alexander VI (1493)

- Spanish missionaries coming up from Mexico and the Caribbean founded mission churches among natives in the American Southwest and Florida
- French Jesuit priests in the North and Midwest



Catholic Missionary Influence

- Efforts made to convert Native Americans / 'Indians' had mixed results.
- Most Spanish missions failed due to the language barrier (especially written), but also due to the imposition of Imperial culture and control. Many natives rebelled against a religion that promised a better life but included subjection to a king or pope across the sea.
- Many also objected to their treatment by Spanish friars:

"[They] persecute our old people, calling them 'witches,' and they always reprimand us, injure us, oppress us, preach to us, call us bad Christians, and deprive us of all happiness"



Catholic Missionary Influence

- Later French trader missionaries had more evangelistic success in their territories due to their more moderate approach:

“The way to succeed in converting the Barbarians, is to endeavor to make them men before we go about to make them Christians...You must have sincere affection for the Savages, looking upon them as ransomed by the blood of the son of God, and as our Brethren with whom we are to pass the rest of our lives.” – Jean Brebeuf (1637)

- Conversions to the faith were largely a product of attitudes about the superiority (or lack thereof) of European culture and ethnicity.
- Most missionary activity resulted only in incorporation of Christian ideas into existing native religion.



Protestant Reformation

- Within two generations of their first foray into The New World, the backlash against Catholicism had left Europe religiously divided. That division would set the stage for diversity of Christian faith in America.
- Led by figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, who saw corruption in the practices, authority and doctrine of the Church, many new forms of Christian faith arose during the 1500s.
- Influential ideas during the period included access to the Bible for the common people, and justification before God on the basis of grace, by faith and not works.



Anglican Establishment

- One of the major outcomes during the time of the Protestant Reformation was the separation of the Church of England from the pope, whereby King Henry VIII would become the sole head of the national church.
- By the late 1500s, his successors had been convinced of the economic benefits of expanding England's territorial and religious interests in America, leading to the establishment of the Virginia colony and the Jamestown settlement in 1607.

"...a peculiar people, marked and chosen by the finger of God, to possess [the land], for undoubtedly He is with us." – John Rolfe (1607)



Anglican Establishment

- In 1619, Virginia affirmed that the Church of England would be the official, and only state-supported church in the colony.
 - Parishes were laid out to define religious communities and clergy support
 - Any clergyman was required to present ordination credentials to the governor in Jamestown; Any non-ordained ministers were 'suspended'
 - Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles and Book of Common Prayer were the standard for doctrine and worship practice
- Many Problems for first Anglicans in Virginia
 - Harsh living conditions resulted in disease and death
 - Parish land sizes were too big for the population
 - Second-rate ministers and no 'American' Bishop
- Anglican faith grew only due to its 'official' status



Review Questions

A) How does Jean Brebeuf's expression of Christian doctrine in culturally-bound hymns show an attempt to accommodate the faith to the culture?

B) Why is a belief in the Bible for all people such an important idea?

C) How did the structure and activity of Anglican ministers in Virginia contrast with the chartered mission of the Jamestown colony?

