



1

## CLASS 13

### Modern Trends

- Megachurches
- Televangelism
- Non-Denominational/  
Independent Churches



2

## Megachurches

- Although the concept goes back to the 1800s, the ‘megachurch’ has seen a considerable increase in number and size over the last 30 years.
- Megachurches typically have a regular weekly attendance over 2,000, but the largest are upwards of 20,000 members.
  - Lakewood Church; Houston, TX - 43,500
  - North Point CC; Alpharetta, GA (multi-site) - 30,600\*
  - Life.Church; Edmond, OK (online) - 30,000\*
- Typified by charismatic and authoritative leadership, social outreach ministry, and contemporary performance worship



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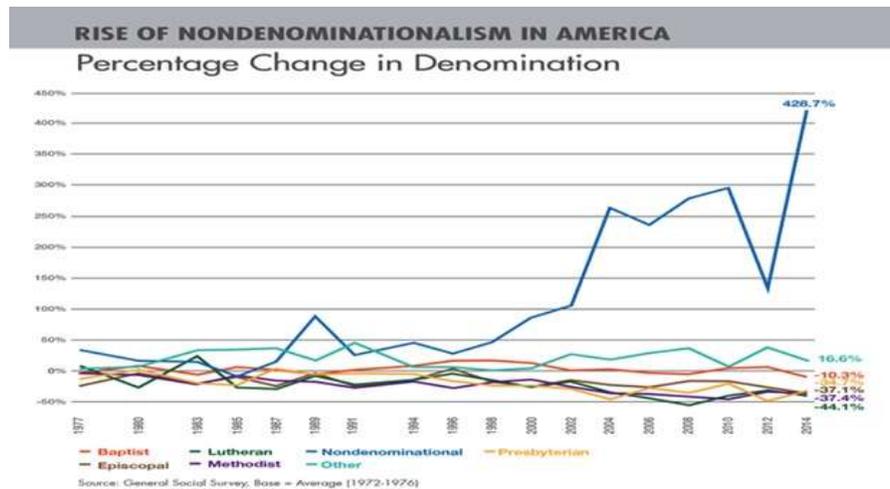
## Televangelism

- Though many Christian preachers have used media to their benefit, deregulated media in America has permitted many to use radio and television to spread their message.
  - The first use of the term was in 1952, by Time magazine referring to Roman Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen.
  - Trinity Broadcasting Network / The God Channel
- Because of their dependence on contributions from TV and radio audiences, many ‘televangelists’ incorporate some form of ‘prosperity’ teaching into their message.
- This has led to wide-spread criticism of this type of ministry as self-serving and exploitative.



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## Non-Denominational Christianity



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## Non-Denominational/Independent Churches

- Over the last 40 years, the number of Protestant Christians identifying as non-denominational has risen by over 400%. This corresponds to a decline in many traditional Protestant denominations.
- This trend corresponds to a growing skepticism of institutional religion represented by large church organizations. Many see denominational ties as sociological markers which they prefer to avoid.
- These non-denominational churches prefer to retain a character of 'simple' Christianity that is unaffiliated to broader religious structure.



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# REVIEW

- Characteristics of American Christianity
- Scriptural Reflection



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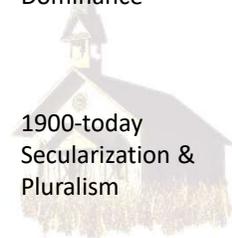
# CLASS SCHEDULE

- 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



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## 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’
- **Primitivism** – a (counter-)characteristic effort to return to the natural/original form of religion, typically defined by the Bible
- **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



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## Scriptural Reflection

- **Deuteronomy 28:1-10** – Why do you think so many Americans identified themselves with Israel? What is dangerous about that idea?
- **Matthew 28:19** – What measures have American Christians taken in the name of ‘making disciples’? How are those consistent/inconsistent with the mission of the church?
- **1 Corinthians 1:26-28** – How have ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘outsider’ groups in America used Christian faith form an identity?
- **2 Timothy 3:16** – What are positive and negative examples from Christians in America in their use of Scripture?
- **John 17:20-22** – Why is there such a history of division among churches in America? Why do efforts to unite often fail?
- **Galatians 5:13** – In what ways has Freedom of Religion in America given an opportunity to the flesh?



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