

Week #4: Scripturalization

Notes:

Scriptures

- Texts with authority
- Bible by itself has no authority, until people give it authority

Scriptualization: when community gives book authority

- Ex. Seal of massachusetts bay company logo used bible to justify colonization
- Ex. memes from the christian community who love guns
- Ex. the big book by alcoholics anonymous
 - Lines that have been scriptualized: "I am an alcoholic" "one day at a time" "it works if you work it" "keep it simple" "progress not perfection"

Scriptualization: "[A] social-psychological-political structure establishing its own reality" by Vincent Wimbush

- the initial processes by which a scripture becomes a scripture, encompassing
 - creation
 - We do not know the creation at the moments of divine revelation
 - Then it gets canonized (where community decides the authoritative version of this story)
 - Ex "we the people" didn't exist until it was written in preamble
 - scriptural uptake
 - A community that takes up that scripture and treats it as something special
 - Difference between failed scripture and successful
 - Ex. constitution was ratified by states
- The ongoing process by which scriptural status is
 - maintained and used
 - Scriptures maintained by people pointing to scripture and people continuously reading it
 - People use it and keeps it relevant
 - Ex. articles of confederation didn't work out

Paratext: anything that is next to text, but not the text

- Ex. book of mormon has pictures, title, captions
- 2 types:
 - Peritext: connected, next to the text
 - Epitext: separate, points back to text
 - Ex. Star wars: peritext - scrolling yellow text at the beginning, epi-text - movie poster, movie actor interviews, trailers
- Aspects: commentary and indexing, translation and typography, application
- Suggest a certain kind of work and certain kind of reader
 - Family bible is big, baby bible is tiny and lacy

Civil religion

- Empty signifier: people put meaning in it
- Bellah - descriptive approach to scriptures, rituals, figures
 - George Washington with Greek and Roman symbols
 - Christian nationalism
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Readings:

Seth Perry, Bible Culture and Authority in the Early United States, [Ch. 5. The Many Bibles of Joseph Smith](#).

Scripturalization in Early Mormonism

- **Theme:** One of the central themes is the process of scripturalization, wherein new texts—especially those produced by Joseph Smith—were quickly adopted and treated as scripture by the early Mormon community. This concept reflects the broader Protestant practice of treating texts as authoritative, but it was taken to new levels within early Mormonism.
- **Examples:** The text illustrates this by recounting how Oliver Cowdery, one of Smith's earliest and most fervent supporters, used Smith's revelations as scripture almost immediately after they were issued. Cowdery's letters, for example, used Smith's revelations to encourage and admonish Hyrum Smith in a manner that mirrored how biblical citations were used, reflecting a rhetorical performance of scripturalization that cemented Smith's revelations as authoritative texts. Cowdery's use of selective citation from Smith's revelations, which emphasized divine commands and authority, highlights how early Mormons were making Smith's words into a new kind of scripture almost as soon as they were spoken(Perry-ManyBiblesJoseph-...).

2. Biblical Facility and Print-Bible Culture

- **Theme:** Smith's engagement with the Bible was deeply rooted in the early 19th-century print-bible culture, which emphasized accessibility, a multiplicity of translations, and a wide range of interpretative tools such as concordances and marginal notes. Smith and his collaborators utilized these resources to navigate and create new scriptures that mirrored and reinterpreted biblical texts.
- **Examples:** Perry highlights that Smith's scriptural creations, like the Book of Mormon, were steeped in the formats, styles, and even specific content of the King James Bible, making them feel familiar and authoritative to readers of his day. For instance, the Book of Mormon replicates the style and language of the King James Bible, integrating hundreds of verses directly, such as entire chapters of Isaiah, which are copied with minor modifications to italicized words that suggest Smith was reading directly from a contemporary Bible during dictation. This meticulous attention to detail was not just imitation; it was a deliberate blending of the old and new to create something that felt seamlessly biblical(Perry-ManyBiblesJoseph-...).

3. Material Concerns and Authenticity

- **Theme:** Smith's preoccupation with the material authenticity and reliability of his texts was influenced by a broader cultural anxiety about the material reliability of biblical texts. This anxiety was evident in the way early bibles were presented, often containing prefatory materials that vouched for their historical and scholarly reliability. Smith's texts similarly obsess over their own authenticity, often directly addressing the reader to assert their truthfulness and divine origin.
- **Examples:** Smith's early revelations and the Book of Mormon repeatedly emphasize the reliability of the ancient records they were supposedly drawn from, often featuring direct addresses from supposed ancient authors who attest to the care taken in recording and preserving these texts. For example, the Book of Mormon's many direct addresses to readers from its ancient authors, and Smith's own 1830 preface explaining the loss of the first manuscript pages, were not merely narrative devices; they were essential strategies for assuring readers of the text's divine authenticity. This mirrors the editorial practices of early national bibles, which often contained similar assurances of fidelity and scholarly rigor(Perry-ManyBiblesJoseph-...).

4. Performance of Biblical Authority

- **Theme:** Smith's role as a biblical editor and translator was a performative assertion of authority that extended beyond mere revelation. This process involved reworking biblical texts to align with his vision of restored scripture, thus enhancing his prophetic legitimacy and expanding the scriptural foundation of his movement.
- **Examples:** Smith's extensive work revising the King James Bible, referred to as the "Inspired Version," exemplifies this performance. He didn't just add new revelations; he actively restructured and reworded existing biblical texts. For instance, Smith reworked Genesis into a first-person narrative told by God to Moses, adding lengthy elaborations that repositioned key biblical stories within a new theological framework. His revisions were not random but were systematically grounded in the broader biblical and interpretative traditions of his day, drawing on the same scholarly tools—like concordances and marginal references—that were familiar to learned ministers of the time(Perry-ManyBiblesJoseph-...).

5. Anxiety Over Translation and Transmission

- **Theme:** Smith's texts frequently engage with the anxieties of translation and transmission that were central to the broader bible culture of his time. These concerns were evident in early Protestant bibles, which often included extensive commentary on the historical and linguistic challenges of translating ancient texts. Smith's works echo these concerns, particularly around the idea of textual purity and the need to perfect scripture.
- **Examples:** In his editorial efforts, Smith grappled with the imperfections of existing biblical texts, seeking to "correct" and perfect them through his inspired revisions. For instance, his editorial changes to the Bible often involved reordering or slightly altering passages in ways that addressed perceived inconsistencies or gaps, similar to the work of contemporary biblical commentators who sought to reconcile discrepancies in the text. This reflects Smith's own deep ambivalence about language and writing, captured

poignantly in his personal letters where he lamented the “crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language” of existing texts(Perry-ManyBiblesJoseph-...).

Pasquier, Chapter 2: 10-24

Historical Narratives of Religion in America:

- The text explores how historical interpretations of religion in America have evolved, often shaped by dominant religious groups like Protestantism. Initially, these narratives emphasized America's Christian origins, often marginalizing minority religions.
- Example: Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835 book "Democracy in America" portrayed America's democratic experiment as divinely guided, with a Protestant moral underpinning. He noted the absence of religious freedom for Native Americans and African Americans, highlighting the contradictions in America's Christian narrative.

The Protestant Moral Establishment:

- In the 19th century, Protestantism, particularly evangelical sects, significantly influenced American society and politics, shaping laws and public policies in favor of Protestant norms.
- Example: The Second Great Awakening fueled the rise of a “Protestant moral establishment,” blending law and religion and often suppressing minority religions like Catholicism and Judaism.

Contested Narratives and Inclusion of Minority Religions:

- As America became more religiously diverse, alternative narratives emerged from minority groups such as Catholics, Jews, and African Americans, challenging the dominant Protestant narrative.
- Example: Catholic historian John Gilmary Shea emphasized the long-standing presence and contributions of Catholics in America, countering Protestant-centric histories.

Shift to American Religious History:

- By the 20th century, scholars began shifting from a Protestant-dominated "church history" to a broader "religious history" approach, focusing on the diversity and lived experiences of various religious groups in America.
- Example: Sydney Ahlstrom's work marked a turning point by recognizing America's pluralistic religious landscape, advocating for a more inclusive history that accounted for non-Protestant and non-white experiences.

Public Memory and Civil Religion:

- Beyond academic interpretations, public memory—through media, monuments, and films—plays a significant role in shaping the perception of America's religious history. This often includes nationalistic and religious symbols that blend the nation's identity with Christian values.
- Example: The film "Monumental," produced by Kirk Cameron, presents a narrative that glorifies America's Christian roots, despite historical inaccuracies, reflecting the ongoing influence of public memory on religious perceptions.

Civil Religion and Nationalism:

- The concept of American civil religion describes how religious symbolism and rituals intertwine with national identity, often portraying the U.S. as a “chosen nation” with a divine mission.
- Example: In Washington, D.C., national monuments like the Lincoln Memorial and Jefferson Memorial feature religiously charged inscriptions, reflecting the blend of religious sentiment with American nationalism.

Kerby, "The Dispossessed? Lived History and White Christian Nationalism"

Lived History and Selective Storytelling:

- The article emphasizes how white Christian nationalism is fueled by a sense of dispossession and nostalgia, shaped by selective historical narratives rather than objective facts.
- Example: Christian heritage tours in Washington, D.C., depict America as a once-Christian nation that has lost its way, reinforcing a sense of grievance among participants.

Emotional Mobilization:

- White Christian nationalists use these narratives to transform personal and cultural discontent into a perceived moral duty, justifying extreme actions.
- Example: The Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021, is framed as a defense of America’s “true” Christian heritage, illustrating how lived history shapes political behavior.

Mythologizing a Christian America:

- The narrative of a lost Christian America, perpetuated through tours, books, and speeches, creates a powerful myth that fuels white Christian nationalism.
- Example: These stories often ignore or reinterpret complex historical realities, focusing instead on glorified pasts that never truly existed, fostering a sense of urgency and mission among believers.

Exodus Chapter 20 from any translation of the Jewish or Christian bible

The Ten Commandments:

- Exodus 20 is most notable for presenting the Ten Commandments, which are central ethical guidelines in Judaism and Christianity. These include instructions on worshiping only God, honoring parents, and prohibitions against murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, and coveting.
- Example: “You shall have no other gods before me” emphasizes monotheism and sets the foundation for the commandments that follow.

Moral and Social Conduct:

- The chapter outlines fundamental principles for personal and communal conduct, shaping the moral framework of believers.
- Example: “Honor your father and your mother” highlights the importance of family respect and social stability.

Week #3: Our U.S. context

Notes:

- Christian privilege: unearned advantages Christians receive and corresponding disadvantages of religious minorities
 - Don't have to be afraid of outing themselves to ask for a holiday off
- Christian normativity: marks Christian values/language/metaphors seem right and true
 - Makes Christianity the "norm"
 - Ex. winter break → Christmas Break
- Christian Hegemony: takes this norm and makes it the dominant worldview, gives it social and legal power
 - Supreme court gets involved - 2014 Hobby Lobby: HL didn't give their employees access to birth control coverage, violated their religious beliefs
 - Get Christian holidays off normally (don't have to ask for it)
- Intersectionality
 - Not everyone is one thing, there is an intersection between race and religion
- Optical illusion of equal religious freedom for all
 - Separation of church and state
 - Not in US constitution
 - In Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists
 - Baptists are for religious freedom back in the day (minority)
 - Now biggest protestant group
 - Amendment I: congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion (Establishment clause) or prohibiting the free exercise thereof (free exercise clause)
 - Reynolds vs. U.S (1878): congress bans polygamy, Reynolds claimed they violated his Free Exercise clause
 - Gov said no: You can believe, you can't practice

Race and religion

- Race is a social construct
 - Race like gender is something we made up
 - We place value in it, monitor it, police it, and teach it
 - Doesn't mean it's not real with real consequences
- Race has a history
 - Contingent and explicable without reference to religion
- Race and religion are co-constitutive
 - 1400s, Colonial projects influenced by european ideas of race and religion
 - Iberian peninsula 1400s: creation of the idea of "limpieza de sangre"
 - "Cleaness of blood" - conversion to christianity wasn't enough, your ancestors had to be christian as well
 - Spain leaders consolidated kingdoms through Christianity and kicking out Jews and Muslims

- These ideas taken to “new world” in 1490s
 - 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas (portugal gets brazil, spain gets rest)
 - Conquer lands in the name of Christianity
 - With flags
- 1800s, In the US, anti-catholic, anti-jewish, anti-LDS bias helped construct Whiteness as bound up with Protestant Christianity
 - Irish people were considered not white because they were catholic
 - Not always by phenotype that race is read
 - Scientific racism - the use of science to be racist
 - Science
 - Phrenology: study of the shape and size of the cranium as a supposed indication of character and mental abilities
 - Evolutionary ideas: Darwin said survival of the fittest on tortoises, so applies to humans too
 - Manifest destiny
 - Genetic ideas
 - Social science
 - “Aryan invasion theory”: race of European or Central Asian “Aryans” swept into the subcontinent displacing the indigenous Indus Valley Civilisation
 - Orientalism (1978): worldview that imagines, exaggerate and distorts the ways Arab and Asian peoples and culture differ from Europeans
 - Not as civilized, so steal knowledge from them
- Today “Muslim” and “Arab” are conflated, even though we know most Muslims come from SE Asia and people from Middle East can be any religion

Religious Texts

- Scriptures like Vedas, Bible, Book of Mormon are a small subset of text
- Also sermons, advice books, novels, commentaries, poetry, films, memes...
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Readings:

Read Khyati Joshi, *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America*, Intro

The introduction to *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America* by Khyati Y. Joshi explores the pervasive presence of Christian privilege in the United States. Despite its status as one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world, the U.S. is deeply embedded in Christian, particularly Protestant, values and practices, which are reflected in its laws, culture, and social norms. This privilege offers Christians significant advantages while marginalizing religious minorities. Joshi argues that Christian privilege is often entangled with

White supremacy, forming a complex web of social, legal, and institutional advantages that disproportionately benefit White Christians.

Key Quotes:

1. **Christian Normativity:**

"Christianity dominates by setting the tone and establishing the rules and assumptions about who belongs or does not belong, about what is acceptable and not acceptable in public discourse" (p. 1).

- This highlights how deeply Christianity is embedded in U.S. societal norms, affecting everything from public policies to cultural expectations.

2. **Intersection of Religion and Race:**

"Christian privilege in the United States has always been entangled with notions of White supremacy" (p. 2).

- Joshi emphasizes that Christianity and White privilege have historically reinforced each other, disadvantaging non-Christian and non-White populations.

3. **Christian Hegemony:**

"Christian hegemony refers to the predominance and endorsement at the national level of Christian observances, beliefs, scriptures, and manners of worship" (p. 4).

- This underlines how Christian beliefs are normalized to the point of being invisible, yet they exert significant power over national identity and societal norms.

Joshi's introduction calls for greater awareness of the structural inequities religious minorities face and advocates for a social justice approach to mitigate the influence of Christian privilege and foster a more equitable society.

Ch. 1

The chapter "Christianity and American National Identity" from *White Christian Privilege* by Khyati Y. Joshi explores how Christianity, especially Protestantism, has been deeply intertwined with American national identity and legal structures, leading to a Christian normativity that advantages Christians while marginalizing religious minorities. The chapter argues that Christianity's privileged status in America is often invisible to those who benefit from it, as it is embedded in everyday life and public institutions, creating an "optical illusion" of religious equality.

Key points include:

- **Christian Normativity:** Christianity is often treated as universal and secular in public discourse. For instance, Governor Sonny Perdue's defense of displaying the Ten Commandments on government property as "principle-centered" rather than religious highlights how Christian values are normalized as a moral basis for society, rather than as religious doctrine.

- **Civil Religion:** The chapter critiques the concept of "civil religion," which blends Christian rituals and symbols into national identity (e.g., presidential inaugurations with Christian prayers), masking the dominance of Christianity as a national standard
- **Optical Illusion of Religious Freedom:** While the First Amendment enshrines religious freedom, the reality is that American law and social practices have historically privileged Christianity, particularly Protestantism, while other religions have faced discrimination. The illusion of religious neutrality is maintained by the belief that the separation of church and state actually exists, when in fact Christianity continues to shape American legal and social norms
- **Racialization of Religion:** Joshi also explores how Christianity has been racialized as "White," while non-Christian religions are racialized as foreign and inferior. This has led to widespread misconceptions and discrimination against religious minorities, such as the association of brown skin with Islam post-9/11

The chapter reveals how deeply Christianity is ingrained in American identity and law, perpetuating privilege for Christians and continuing the marginalization of religious minorities under the guise of religious freedom and equality.

Here are some key quotes from *Christianity and American National Identity* that highlight central themes discussed in the chapter:

1. **Christian Normativity and Public Life:**

- *"Christianity's normative power in US culture reflects the assumption by Christians that their own belief system is universal, or ought to be rendered universal without question or critique."*

This quote emphasizes how Christian beliefs are often seen as the default or universal moral framework in American society, allowing Christians to rationalize government support for Christian teachings without perceiving it as discriminatory.

2. **The Optical Illusion of Religious Freedom:**

- *"The idea that there is equal religious freedom for all in the United States is an optical illusion."*

Joshi critiques the notion that the U.S. truly has religious freedom for all, arguing that while the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, in practice, the country's laws and customs have consistently privileged Christianity at the expense of minority religions

3. **Civil Religion as a Mask for Christian Hegemony:**

- *"Far from being 'secular,' these images and ideas reinforce an underlying Christian normativity that privileges Christianity above other faiths and traditions."*

Joshi points out that symbols and celebrations often seen as part of "American culture" (like Christmas trees or Easter egg hunts) are actually rooted in Christian traditions. By masking them as secular, the dominant position of Christianity is maintained

4. **Racialization of Religion:**

- *"Christianity has been racialized as White in a way that establishes it both as virtuous and superior, while the religions of African, Asian, and Native peoples are racialized by association with phenotypical features that are seen as markers of savage, uncivilized, exotic, and inferior peoples."*

This quote underscores how religion in America has been racialized, with Christianity aligned with Whiteness and superiority, while non-Christian religions, particularly those associated with people of color, are viewed as foreign and inferior

5. **The Persistence of Christian Privilege:**

- *"Christian privilege runs so deep that a Christian does not have to do anything to benefit from its advantages."*

This quote illustrates how Christian privilege is ingrained in American society, often unnoticed by those who benefit from it, as it is embedded in laws, institutions, and cultural practices

These quotes provide insight into the structural advantages Christianity enjoys in America, while also showing how this privilege intersects with race and national identity to perpetuate systemic inequalities.

Ch.2

The text "Christianity and the Construction of White Supremacy" from *White Christian Privilege* by Khyati Y. Joshi examines how Christianity has historically been intertwined with racial hierarchies, specifically white supremacy. This relationship is evident both in U.S. history and globally, with key themes centering on how Christianity was used to justify racial domination and how whiteness itself was constructed in conjunction with religious identity.

1. **Christianity as a Tool for Racial Supremacy:** Christianity, particularly Protestantism, has been used throughout history to justify racial hierarchies and promote white supremacy. National Geographic's 2018 apology highlights the media's role in perpetuating the dichotomy of a civilized Christian West versus a savage, exotic "other."
 - a. "Its coverage had encouraged 'seeing the cultures and religions of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Central and South America as exotic things to be consumed'". This demonstrates the broader use of Christian imagery and narratives to reinforce a racial order that privileges whiteness.
2. **Religious Justification for Colonialism:** European colonial powers used Christianity to justify their exploitation and subjugation of non-Christian peoples. Colonialism, particularly in the Americas, was seen as a civilizing mission. Religious difference became biologized, with notions of race and religion reinforcing one another in the colonial mindset.
 - a. "European colonialism was a worldwide enterprise that involved not only economic exploitation but also the perpetuation and enforcement of ideas of White Christian superiority". The repression of Jews and Muslims in Spain and the spread of Christianity through colonial efforts both reflected and reinforced white Christian dominance.

3. **The Construction of Whiteness:** The concept of whiteness, particularly in the United States, has been deeply shaped by religious as well as racial boundaries. In America, whiteness and Christianity became closely linked, with Christianity being used to justify the racial subjugation of African Americans, Native Americans, and other non-white groups.
 - a. "Whiteness is not a free-standing idea; its shifting definition is given contour by other factors such as culture, geography, and religion". This symbiosis can be traced back to the colonial era, where religion and race were both used to exclude and marginalize non-Christian, non-white populations.
4. **Christianity and Slavery:** The Christian theology of racial difference played a pivotal role in justifying the enslavement of African peoples. Religious justifications for slavery eventually transitioned into racial ones, with the biblical "Curse of Ham" being used to rationalize Black servitude.
 - a. "Race, religion, and the idea of White Christian superiority neatly excluded the multiple non-Christian 'others' in the New World". This doctrine not only helped to codify slavery but also perpetuated long-lasting racial hierarchies in American society.
5. **Religious Suppression of Indigenous Peoples:** Christianity was central to the forced assimilation of Native Americans. Missionary schools, such as those established under the Civilization Fund, were designed to erase indigenous cultures and impose Protestant Christian values.
 - a. "Christian settlers imagined divine purposes behind the epidemics that wiped out Native populations and allowed colonial theft and exploitation of Native American villages and farmlands". This religious suppression culminated in acts like the Indian Removal Act, which not only displaced Native peoples but also severed their spiritual connections to the land.
6. **Ongoing Religious and Racial Exclusion:** The legacies of white Christian supremacy continue to shape modern issues, including opposition to civil rights, immigration reform, and environmental protections for Native lands. Joshi discusses how resistance to equality movements is often framed as a defense of religious freedom.
 - a. "For those who imagine an American 'blood purity' that interweaves Christianity and Whiteness, current immigration trends represent not just demographic change but a loss of national identity"

[Keeping it 101, episode 102, "Who Gets Left out of 'Religion'?" \(34:20\)](#)

Defining religion

- Trying to get healthcare set up in Maine
 - Catholic hospitals ask for religion, wants to know what religion you are to know what to do in case of emergency
 - Didn't know what Pagan was and wanted to put her into a box
- Jewish holidays don't have days off in public school/daycare calendar
 - Don't have childcare on Christmas
 - Have to respond to email on Jewish Yom Kippur (biggest holiday), but don't email Christians on Christmas

- Have to argue/out yourself/use sick days to practice religion
- Legally allowed to take day off, but not guaranteed

Material consequences to defining religion

- Satanic temple
 - Group founded in 1900s that cares about religion freedom in US
 - Freedom to practice religion how and where they want
 - Getting government to not pick sides in religion
- Disestablishment and free exercise
 - Disestablishment: US gov can't favor one religion over another
 - No state religion too
 - Free exercise: religions can believe what they want, and fight in court whether they can practice on those beliefs
- Consequences in legal history
 - Laws need defined terms
 - Decide what counts as religion and what doesn't
 - Sikhs (official religion by IRS) had to fight for being a police officer in a turban
 - Religions made themselves look more like American Protestantism to be recognized as real religion
 - In 2015, NYC public school system recognized Eid as official Muslim holiday so closed (largest school district in country)
 - 2019, bill in convo for NY state schools to close without penalty to 180 school days for Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim holidays (7.5%+ identified)
 - Did not pass committee stage

Satanic temple Statue of Baphomet

- Goat headed figure with angel wings and children snuggling its knees
- Oklahoma wanted a 10 commandments statue, so Satanic Temple wanted the goat
 - over the top, big and showy makes a point,
 - OK gov said ST wasn't a real religion, so local Hindus said they want statue too and OK backed down
 - Arkansas state gov tried same thing and is getting sued by ST

Week #2: What is religion?

Notes:

Religion is what people do

- Broad definitions of religion
 - Sigmund Freud: religion is the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity
 - Psychology = sigmund = sickness
 - Karl Marx: Religion is the opium of the people
 - Marx = Make you numb
 - Reductionist views (minimizes religion to one main action)
 - Emile Durkheim: religion is an eminently social thing composed of beliefs and practices unity people in a "single moral community"

- Emile = Eminently social
- Clifford Geertz: religion is a cultural system of symbols which act to
 - establish powerful moods in men
 - formulating conceptions of general order of existence
 - clothing those conception with such an aura of factuality
 - the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic
 - **Clifford and the big red definition of religion**
- Rachel Gross: practices, narratives and emotions that connect us to sacred or meaningful relationships, past and present
- Joseph Blankholm: Religion is that which is analogous to Christianity
- Sociology: Robert Wunthow and Conrad Hackett (Pew research)
- Anthropology: Suad Abdul Khaheer
 - Ethnography
 - Participant observation
 - Thick description (context, interpretation)
- Historical Methods: archical source, text, material culture, census data, discourse analysis, visual analysis

Religions before and what becomes the US

- European world map
 - 8th century:
 - Center is mediterranean sea
 - Oriented to east at top
 - Medieval
 - Center is still mediterranean sea
 - Oriented still with east
 - More places like africa
 - Obris terrea (T-O) maps - 12th century
 - 1490, spread to asia (silk road and indian ocean)
 - travel around cape of good hope and indian ocean trade
 - North star is now on top
 - 1513, has a bit of America but are confused
 - Didn't value americas (blobs) compared to spice trade countries
- Americas firsts
 - First settlement: St. Augustine, FL 1565
 - First capitol (still here): Sante Fe 1609
 - First asian in US: Barataria Bay, 1763 (enslaved filipinos)
 - First African in US: Estevanico Azemmouri
 - Came here as a Spanish slave but then learned languages, geography, trade and more to gain his own freedom
 - No water route to east: Lewis and Clark letter to Jefferson, 1805
 - Religious encounters:
 - Friar ramon pane in the caribbean, 1493-8
 - First dominicans and franciscans arrive, 1510

- Missionary efforts to mainland (catholic), 1515
 - Went disastrous
 - First catholics (franciscans) to arrive in North America, 1519
- Spanish exploration of west coast, 1542
- Russian orthodox arrive in Alaska, 1793
- Mayan culture
 - 250-900 CE, built city states
 - Tikal (Guatemala)
- Tenochtitlan (Mexico) 1325-1521
- Florentine Codex: beginning of anthropology

Readings:

Pasquier, Chapter 3: 26-58

Religion and Colonialism in Early America (1400s–1770s)

- Native American Religions:
 - over 300 languages spoken and distinct religious beliefs
 - European theories of religion influenced indigenous practices during colonization
 - Religious beliefs were deeply integrated into life, governing areas such as creation myths, cosmology, and the afterlife.
 - Hopewell Indians practiced an earth-diver myth that spread across various Native American groups.
- African Religions:
 - via the transatlantic slave trade introduced traditional African religions, Islam, and Christianity to the New World
 - practices included the worship of spirits or "orishas" and the use of rituals for healing and maintaining social harmony
 - Christianity, especially in Catholic forms, began to blend with traditional African beliefs, as seen in the Kongolese adaptation of Christian saints to local deities.
- European Christianity:
 - The Protestant Reformation in Europe heavily influenced the colonization of North America.
 - Both Catholicism and Protestantism were brought to the New World, with Spain and France spreading Roman Catholicism, and English colonists introducing Protestant sects such as Anglicanism, Puritanism, and Quakerism
 - Colonial powers often used religion to justify their imperial ambitions, especially in the conversion of Native populations.

The Great Awakening and Evangelical Protestantism

- 18th century spread across American colonies

- The movement emphasized personal religious experiences, emotional conversion, and the importance of biblical authority.
- Rise of evangelical Protestant denominations such as Methodists and Baptists, which challenged the established churches and promoted a more personal form of Christianity.
- Prominent figures like Jonathan Edwards were instrumental in spreading revivalist ideas, particularly through sermons like "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

Slavery and Religion

- While Christianity was used by some colonists as a tool for control, enslaved people also found ways to adapt and incorporate African religious traditions into Christian practices.
 - enslaved Africans in Louisiana maintained elements of traditional religion through rituals and spiritual practices, which provided a form of resistance against their oppressors.
- The rise of evangelical Protestantism in the South, particularly during the Great Awakening, offered African Americans new forms of religious expression and communal support, despite the oppressive social structure.

Religious Diversity and Pluralism

- increasing religious diversity in America over time, particularly with the rise of immigration and the introduction of new religious traditions
- The interaction between Catholic, Protestant, and indigenous religious systems created a complex and often contentious religious environment in the colonies.

Religion in Modern America

- Religious movements developed through key periods like American Revolution, the Civil War, and the rise of the modern nation-state
- During these times, religious movements such as the Second Great Awakening and the rise of new religious sects (e.g., Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism) reflected broader social and cultural changes.
- Discussions on American identity, politics, and society in the contemporary period, especially in debates about religious freedom, pluralism, and the role of religion in public life.

Book 1: The Gods, fols. vr (v recto), xivr (xiv recto) – 1r (1 recto)

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The passage emphasizes the importance of understanding the root causes of spiritual and physical illnesses for effective treatment. Just as a physician must understand the origin of a patient's illness to apply the right medicine, preachers and confessors, as "physicians of souls," must be knowledgeable about spiritual ailments and remedies to address sins effectively. The text stresses that sins like idolatry and superstitions still exist, even if they are overlooked or misunderstood due to a lack of knowledge about their origins. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún

warns that ignorance of these practices could allow idolatrous behavior to continue unnoticed. To remedy this, Sahagún, under the order of Fray Francisco de Toral, wrote twelve books documenting the idolatrous beliefs, rituals, and customs of the natives of New Spain, aiming to equip future ministers with the knowledge needed to combat these spiritual ailments.

Book 3: The Origin of the Gods, fols. iv (i verso) – 6r (6 recto)

FLORENCE CODEX

This passage, inspired by Augustine's approach in *The City of God*, emphasizes the importance of understanding the myths and false beliefs of pagans or native cultures in order to effectively teach them the truth about God. By revealing the fables and falsehoods that these people believed about their gods, preachers can more easily guide them toward the true God and show that their former gods were not divine but deceptive devils. The author, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, warns that while some may believe that these old beliefs are forgotten, the devil is always ready to reassert his influence. Therefore, it is crucial to be prepared with knowledge of past idolatry, as the devil could use these forgotten practices to regain control. The detailed records in Sahagún's books will help preachers and the faithful recognize and combat idolatrous beliefs should they resurface. These writings, covering the gods, rituals, and beliefs of the natives, serve as a valuable resource for future generations in maintaining their faith and defending against deception.

Proemium and Chapter 25

FIRST TEXT THAT SHOWS ACTIVE IMPERIAL RESISTANCE

Religious framework of the K'iche' Maya, their gods, rituals, and the influence of Christianity.

- Importance of understanding both Christian and indigenous theological concepts, focusing on the need for proper understanding of God, divinity, and religious practices in order to guide the K'iche' people away from idolatry.
- highlights the deities and rituals of the K'iche' people, including references to specific gods, such as the Hero Twins, Xib'alb'a, and other prominent figures from their mythology. These deities were central to their cosmological and spiritual understanding of the world.
- importance of evangelism and preaching to convert the indigenous people from their idolatrous practices. It suggests that their belief in idols and ceremonial practices, such as the veneration of stones and sticks, is misguided and must be corrected through Christian teaching.
- Despite the adoption of Christianity, the document warns that remnants of idolatry still persist among the K'iche', with their traditional practices continuing under new guises. The author encourages vigilance in identifying and eradicating these remnants of paganism.
- There is a strong emphasis on spiritual awakening, with a call for the K'iche' to abandon their former ways and fully embrace the teachings of Christianity. This is presented as a way to achieve spiritual rectitude and eternal salvation.

- contrast between Christian beliefs and the practices of the K'iche', such as the veneration of effigies made from stone and wood, and how these practices should be replaced with Christian devotion.
- The mention of specific K'iche' gods like Xb'alanke and Jun Ajpu ties their mythology to the broader conversation about conversion and the replacement of old gods with the Christian God.

Pasquier, Chapter 1

1. Religion is presented not just as a personal belief system but as a social institution deeply intertwined with societal structures like race, politics, and economics.
 - W.E.B. Du Bois distinguished between "church" (a social institution) and "religion" (a moral and philosophical framework), and how African American churches became central to Black life in the U.S. while simultaneously critiquing the racial and political systems in which these churches operated
2. Religion is multidisciplinary, involving sociology, history, psychology, and anthropology.
 - Scholars like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and William James are referenced for their sociological and psychological approaches to religion. Durkheim viewed religion as a social phenomenon, while James emphasized personal religious experiences. Religion shapes both individual and collective identities.
3. Religion forms both racial and national identities in the U.S.
 - Du Bois's work shows how religion intersected with the struggles of African Americans during slavery and emancipation. Similarly, Weber's theory on the Protestant ethic linked religion to the economic foundations of early America, although his racial biases limited his understanding of the full complexity of race and religion
4. Critical Reflection on the Concept of Religion
 - Religion has evolved, particularly from the Renaissance and Reformation periods, and warns against simplistic definitions. The discussion of Clifford Geertz's view that religion is a cultural system shows the importance of understanding religion as embedded in broader social and psychological processes

[E101: What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?](#)

- Books have meaning in the relationship of people reading them
- Religion is not just about text
 - No singular text, no singular story, can have contradictions
 - Hinduism: lots of text with lots of different scarcity and meanings
- Religion vs belief
 - Belief: cannot be measured, not the same thing as a single religion
 - Christianity holds belief of Jesus is king, others hold practice as more important
 - Most religions on the world focus on actions and not beliefs
 - Did you live in a way that the community has believed was best?
- Religions exist in context of the community/society
- No such thing as "major" and "minor" religions

- Sikh is the 5th most practiced religion but often under minority while Judaism is considered major with only 1-2% of the population
- All about power, racism, and colonialism
- Theology is about picking a side, religious studies is looking at what people do and why
 - Descriptive: beliefs and practices structures
 - Prescriptive: what's right and what's wrong in religion
- History to religion, how one of the host's mom wouldn't allow bacon cheeseburger in her house but can eat outside, also named the vv white name of Florence
 - Shows a history of jewish people trying to assimilate into Christian America
- Religion is what people do (community, context, practice, more than just beliefs)

Week #1: introduction

Intros and quizzes

Reading: Pasquier, Chapter 7: 155-182

1. Religion in America After 9/11: National Tragedy and the **Limits of Religious Unity**

- After 9/11/2001, terrorist attacks brought a temporary sense of religious unity in America, but also highlighted the limits of this unity, revealing underlying tensions and conflicts within the American religious landscape.
- Evidence:
 - Prayer for America Ceremony (2001): On September 23, 2001, **a diverse group of about 20,000 people gathered at Yankee Stadium for a "Prayer for America"** event to reflect on the 9/11 attacks. The ceremony featured religious leaders from various faiths (e.g., Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Protestant), celebrities, and political figures, all **emphasizing themes of unity, diversity, and resilience** (e.g., Oprah Winfrey, James Earl Jones, Rudy Giuliani, and George Pataki). This event exemplified an attempt to use religious pluralism and national unity to respond to tragedy.
 - Religious Pluralism as an Ideal: Despite the display of unity, the subsequent years exposed the fragility of this religious cohesion. CNN correspondent Martin Savidge noted the tension between "diversity and unity" as showcased during the ceremony. **The post-9/11 unity was soon challenged by the realities of political divisions, foreign wars, and religious differences, questioning the sustainability of religious pluralism in a diverse society.**
 - Anti-Muslim Sentiments and Actions: While the immediate aftermath saw a rise in favorable views towards Muslim Americans (from 45% to 59%), there was also a **significant increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes, from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001, reflecting a sharp 1,618% increase.** This indicates that while public sentiment appeared supportive, significant undercurrents of prejudice and division persisted.

2. Hope, Race, and Rage: **Religious and Racial Dynamics in American Politics**

- The political and religious landscape of the early 21st century was heavily influenced by themes of hope, race, and rage, particularly during the presidency of Barack Obama and the rise of movements like Black Lives Matter.
- Evidence:
 - Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign and Religious Dynamics: **Obama's campaign highlighted the complex interplay of race and religion.** His relationship with Reverend Jeremiah Wright became a national controversy when Wright's sermons criticizing U.S. policies and racial injustices were publicized. Obama addressed these tensions in his speech on race, acknowledging the historical grievances of African Americans while calling for unity and a move beyond racial divides.
 - Rise of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement: Triggered by police violence and race-based injustices, the BLM movement, founded after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin, **exhibited a range of religious and spiritual attitudes toward social reform.** The movement was diverse, with connections to various ideologies, including Christian liberation theology, Marxism, feminism, and African spirituality. Events such as the Charleston church shooting in 2015 further galvanized the movement, highlighting the intersection of race, religion, and activism.
 - Religious Reactions to Social Issues: The document discusses how **religious leaders and communities responded to major social and political events**, such as the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and the Charleston church shooting. Religious responses ranged from calls for unity and healing to more divisive rhetoric that highlighted existing racial and political divides.

3. Religious Pluralism as an Ideal and Its Challenges

- Religious pluralism is presented as an ideal in American society, **emphasizing the coexistence** and mutual respect of diverse religious beliefs. However, achieving this ideal is complicated by socio-political realities and conflicting religious ideologies.
- Evidence:
 - Demographic Shifts in Religious Affiliation: The document notes significant changes in American religious demographics over the first two decades of the 21st century. The **number of Americans identifying as Protestant fell from 52% in 2001 to 35% in 2021, while those unaffiliated with any religion rose from 5% to 21%.** These shifts reflect broader trends towards secularization and increased religious diversity, challenging the dominance of traditional religious norms and practices.
 - Christian Nationalism and Its Rise: The **rise of Christian nationalism, particularly during Donald Trump's presidency, is presented as a counterforce to the ideals of religious pluralism.** Christian nationalism advocates for a fusion of American civic life with a particular type of Christian identity, often excluding non-Christian and secular perspectives. This movement reflects a significant portion of the American population who view religious pluralism as a threat to their cultural and religious values.

- Interreligious Efforts and Projects: The document also mentions various efforts to promote interreligious dialogue and cooperation, such as the **Pluralism Project at Harvard University, which aims to engage Americans with the realities of religious diversity**. These efforts highlight ongoing attempts to foster a more inclusive and respectful religious landscape.

4. Religion and Politics: **The Interplay of Faith and Governance** in Modern America

- The interplay between religion and politics in America has shaped the country's governance, particularly in moments of national crisis and during presidential administrations.
- Evidence:
 - Bush Administration Post-9/11: President George W. **Bush's response to 9/11 was marked by religious rhetoric, invoking God and Biblical references to rally the nation against perceived evil and to promote unity**. Bush's framing of the "War on Terror" as a battle of good versus evil, and his administration's policies, were heavily influenced by his evangelical Christian beliefs.
 - Obama Administration and Religious Policies: Obama's presidency included several decisions that reflected a commitment to religious pluralism and diversity, such as appointing two liberal justices to the Supreme Court, **repealing the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, and supporting same-sex marriage**. These actions often put him at odds with more conservative religious groups, highlighting the political divides within American religious communities.
 - Trump Administration and Christian Nationalism: Trump's presidency saw a marked rise in Christian nationalism, with policies and rhetoric that appealed to conservative Christian voters, including **opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights and support for religious liberty in ways that often prioritized Christian viewpoints**. Events such as the January 6, 2021, Capitol riot further illustrated the potent mix of religion and politics, with many rioters identifying as Christian nationalists.

5. The **Evolving Role of Religion** in American Public Life

- Religion continues to play a crucial role in American public life, influencing social movements, political decisions, and public discourse.
- Evidence:
 - Religious Influence on Social Movements: The document discusses how religious beliefs and communities have influenced major social movements in American history, from the Civil Rights Movement to contemporary movements like Black Lives Matter. **Religious rhetoric and symbols are often employed to articulate moral visions and galvanize public support for various causes**.
 - Media and Religion: The rise of the Internet and social media has transformed how religious ideas are disseminated and debated in American society. **Platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become spaces for religious communities to interact, but also for polarization and conflict, reflecting broader trends in American public life**.