

A rustic wooden sign with the word "WELCOME" in white, block letters is mounted on a teal-painted wooden plank background. The sign is made of a single piece of weathered wood with rough, splintered edges. It is held in place by two small wooden pegs on either side. Above the sign, a thin wooden branch is tied to the wall, forming a triangular shape. A vibrant red rose with green leaves is tucked behind the sign on the right side. The teal background is made of vertical wooden planks with visible grain and some wear.

WELCOME

American Culture 2

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CHAPTER 3

The American Religious Heritage

DISCUSSION

1. What religions are popular in all over the world?
2. What religions are popular in Vietnam?
3. What religions are popular in America?



Vietnamese beliefs

Ellis (1995)

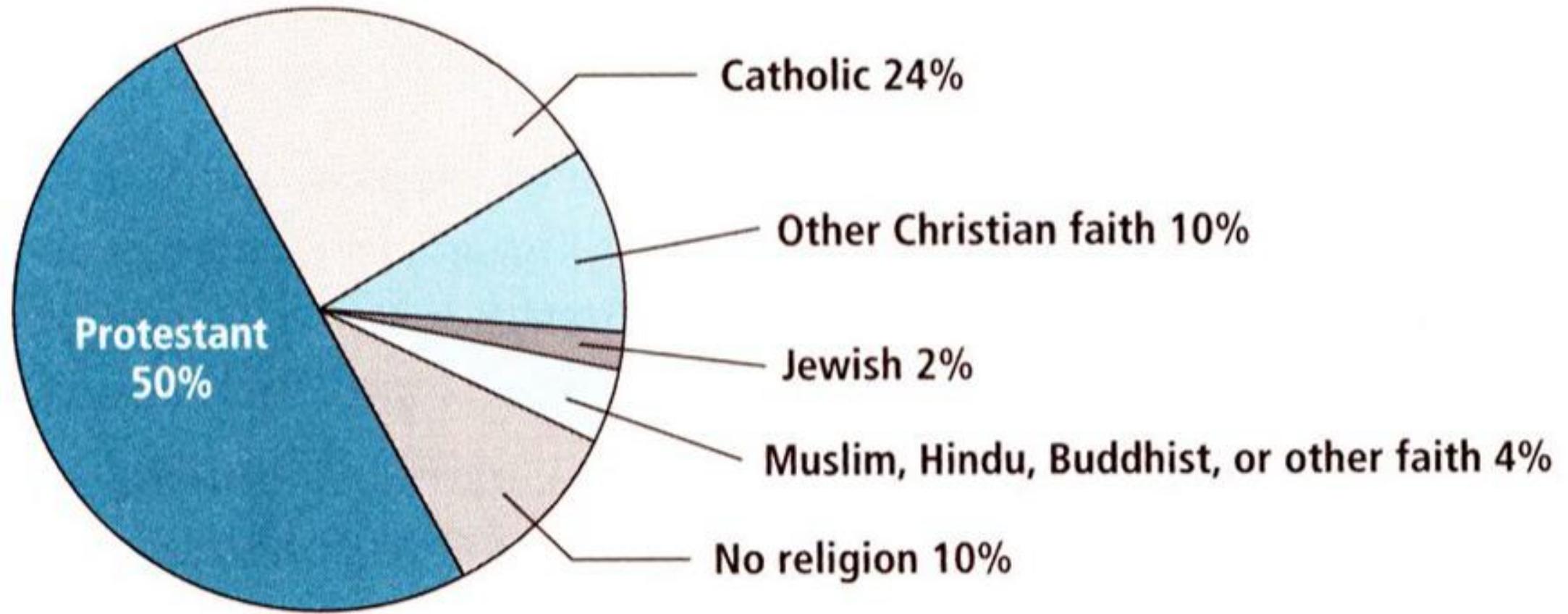


Freedom of Religion in the United States

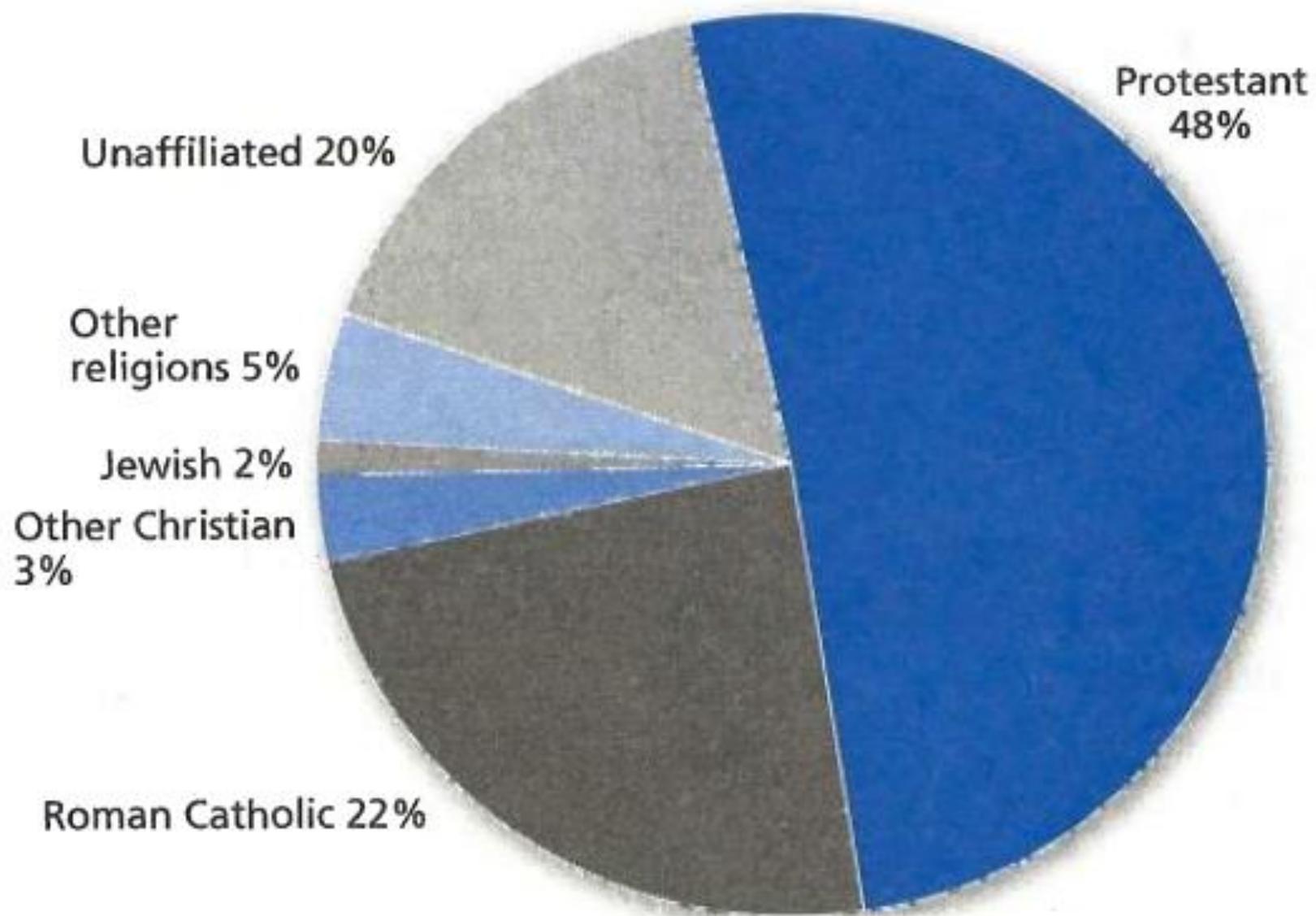
- Individual freedom allows Americans to practice any religion
- The high level of cultural diversity means there is a lot of religious diversity
- 90% of Americans believe in “God”

Freedom of Religion in the United States

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES IN THE UNITED STATES



RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES IN THE UNITED STATES



Freedom of Religion in the United States

- Most Americans are Christians
- However, other religions also contribute to American culture:
 - Muslims (Islam)
 - Jews (Judaism)
 - Daoism (Taoism)
 - Confucianism
 - Shintoism
 - Buddhism

Freedom of Religion in the United States

- Religion has always been important in America
- Catholicism was brought to the US by the Spanish in the 1500s, who founded many cities
- Most European settlers in the 1600's were protestants from England
- The Protestants had the strongest influence on religious culture in America

The Development of Protestantism

- Protestants were Catholics who did not like parts of the Roman Catholic church
- In the 1500s the Roman Catholic church dominated religious life in Western Europe
- The Pope and his priests controlled everything that happened in Catholicism

The Development of Protestantism

- However, Protestants said that individuals could communicate directly with God (i.e. they did not have to use a priest)
- In this way, the power and authority of priests was reduced (to ministers)

The Development of Protestantism

- The Protestants then began to argue amongst themselves and broke into different denominations:
- Baptist
- Methodist
- Lutheran
- Presbyterian
- Episcopalian
- United Church of Christ

The Development of Protestantism

- In the 1600s, there was a lot of anger between denominations in Europe
- Many Protestants were persecuted for their beliefs
- Many 'escaped' to America to have religious freedom

The Development of Protestantism

- Because there was no established church in America in the 1600s, many Protestants who were not persecuted also went there
- Denominations fought for control, but the colonies were too large for any one to succeed
- This led to the idea of separation of church and state
- There is no national religion in America – this is forbidden by the constitution
- Religious diversity increased – the various Protestant denominations are now very different from each other

The Protestant Heritage: Self-Improvement

- Protestantism has greatly influenced American values
- Protestants believe that they are alone before God, and are therefore responsible for their own lives
- This has led to a strong desire for self-improvement (i.e. become less sinful)

The Protestant Heritage: Self-Improvement

- The desire for self-improvement is not limited to religion, but has expanded into all aspects of life:
- Weight loss / fitness
- Education
- Relationships
- Career
- “God helps those who help themselves”

Material Success, Hard Work, and Self-Discipline

- Early Protestants believed that material possessions were a blessing from God
- “Godliness is in league with riches....Material prosperity is helping to make the national character sweeter, more joyous, more unselfish, more Christlike.”
- - Bishop William Lawrence, 1900

Material Success, Hard Work, and Self-Discipline

- Wealth was seen a reward for hard work and self-discipline. Inherited/easy wealth was frowned upon
- These values contributed to the industrial success of America
- Self-discipline was a 'holy' characteristic
- E.g to save and invest money

Material Success, Hard Work, and Self-Discipline

- “The Protestant/Puritan work ethic”
- Hard work
- Self-discipline
- Pursuit of wealth
- This ethic is shared by many Americans, not just protestants
- E.g. Americans take less vacation than many other countries

Volunteerism and Humanitarianism

- Self-improvement can also be achieved through helping others:
- Charity work / donation
- Educational causes
- Religious causes

Volunteerism and Humanitarianism

- Many wealthy Americans give a lot of money to charities
- Andrew Carnegie
- John D. Rockefeller
- Many Americans believe they should give to religious/humanitarian causes to be accepted by God and other Americans

Born-Again Christians and the Religious Right

- People who (re)discover Christ at a late age are often called “born again” Christians
- They are usually very conservative in their religious beliefs
- Between 1/3 and 1/2 of Americans are religiously conservative
- Religious conservatism = political conservatism

September 11, 2001, and the National Religion

- The attack on the World Trade Center in New York had a profound effect on Americans
- Most New Yorkers were not angry, but were very saddened by the event

September 11, 2001, and the National Religion

- Americans became very patriotic following the attack
- This was illustrated by:
- Donations and fundraising for victims
- Displaying the American flag
- Singing patriotic songs e.g. “God Bless America”

September 11, 2001, and the National Religion

- Even though there is no official national religion in America, one has developed
- Religion mixed with patriotism has been called the “national religion” of America
- This provides support for the dominant values, and comfort in a crisis.

September 11, 2001, and the National Religion

- The national religion can sometimes be harmful, especially to those who don't conform with national practices
- EX: people who disagree with war may be called “unpatriotic”

Religious Diversity in the United States: A Spiritual Kaleidoscope

- Freedom of religion has encouraged a tolerance and acceptance of many different religions
- There are ~2000 distinct religious groups in the U.S.

Religious Diversity in the United States: A Spiritual Kaleidoscope

- There are 4 trends in American Religion
- Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, multiple religions
- Expressive individualism (pick'n'mix)
- Emergence of new religious organizational structures for a specific purpose e.g. help the homeless
- Spiritual rather than religious

Religious Diversity in the United States: A Spiritual Kaleidoscope

- Religious freedom is a basic American right
- Majority religions do not wish to impose their beliefs on other groups
- The basic values of America are acceptable to many diverse faiths i.e. people can still practice their own religion and still be 100% “American”