

Stanley D. Brunn *Editor*

The Changing World Religion Map

Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and
Politics

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Preface: A Continuing Journey

Religion has always been a part of my life. I am a Presbyterian PK (preacher's kid). From my father I inherited not only an interest in the histories and geographies of religions, not just Christianity, but also a strong sense of social justice, a thread that has been part of my personal and professional (teaching, research, service) life. My mother was raised as a Quaker and from her I also learned much about social justice, peace and reconciliation and being a part of an effective voice calling for ends to war, social discrimination of various types, and other injustices that seem to be a continual part of daily life on the planet. My father had churches mostly in the rural Upper Middle West. These were open country and small town congregations in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Missouri. The members of these congregations were Germans, Czech, Scandinavians (Norwegians, and Swedes), and English. Perhaps or probably because of these experiences, I had friendships with many young people who comprised the mosaic of the rural Middle West. Our family moved frequently when I was living at home, primarily because my father's views on social issues were often not popular with the rural farming communities. (He lost his church in northwest Missouri in 1953 because he supported the Supreme Court's decision on desegregation of schools. By the time I graduated from high school in a small town in southeastern Illinois, I had attended schools in a half-dozen states; these include one-room school house experiences as well as those in small towns.

During my childhood days my interests in religion were, of course, important in the views I had about many subjects about those of different faiths and many places on the planet. I was born in a Catholic hospital, which I always attribute to the beginning of my ecumenical experiences. The schools I attended mixes of Catholics and Protestants; I had few experiences with Native Americans, Jews and African, and Asian Americans before entering college. But that background changed, as I will explain below. My father was always interested in missionaries and foreign missions and once I considered training for a missionary work. What fascinated me most about missionaries were that they were living in distant lands, places that I just longed to know about; an atlas was always my favorite childhood book, next to a dictionary. I was always glad when missionaries visited our churches and stayed in

our homes. The fascination extended to my corresponding with missionaries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. I was curious what kind of work they did. I also found them a source for stamps, a hobby that I have pursued since primary school. Also I collected the call letters of radio stations, some which were missionary stations, especially in Latin America. (Some of these radio stations are still broadcasting.)

When I enrolled as an undergraduate student at Eastern Illinois University, a small regional university in east central Illinois, I immediately requested roommates from different countries. I very much wanted to make friends with students from outside the United States and learn about their culture. During my 3 years at EIU, I had roommates from Jordan, Samoa, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, and South Korea; these were very formative years in helping me understand cross-cultural, and especially, religious diversity. On reflection, I think that most of the Sunday services I attended were mostly Presbyterian and Methodist, not Catholic, Lutheran, or Baptist. When I entered the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for the M.A. degree, I was again exposed to some different views about religion. The Madison church that fascinated me the most was the Unitarian church, a building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. I remember how different the services and sermons were from Protestant churches, but intellectually I felt at home. My father was not exactly pleased I found the Unitarian church a good worship experience. The UW-Madison experience also introduced me to the study of geography and religion. This was brought home especially in conversations with my longtime and good friend, Dan Gade, but also a cultural geography course I audited with Fred Simoons, whose new book on religion and food prejudices just appeared and I found fascinating. Also I had conversations with John Alexander, who eventually left the department to continue in his own ministry with the Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship. A seminar on Cultural Plant Geography co-taught with Fred Simoons, Jonathan Sauer, and Clarence Olmstead provided some opportunities to explore cultural and historical dimensions of religion, which were the major fields where geographers could study religion. The geographers I knew who were writing about religion were Pierre Deffontaines, Eric Issac, and Xavier de Phanol. That narrow focus, has, of course, changed in the past several decades, as I will discuss below.

The move to Ohio State University for my doctoral work did not have the strong religious threads that had emerged before. I attended a variety of Protestant churches, especially Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist. I took no formal courses in geography that dealt with religion, although I was very interested when Wilbur Zelinsky's lengthy article on church membership patterns appeared in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* in 1961. I felt then that this was, and would be, a landmark study in American human geography, as the many maps of denominational membership patterns plus extensive references would form the basis for future scholars interested in religion questions, apart from historical and cultural foci which were the norm at that time. My first article on religion was on religious town names; I wrote it when I was at Ohio State with another longtime friend, Jim Wheeler, who had little interest in religion. I can still remember using my knowledge of biblical place names and going through a Rand McNally atlas

with Jim identifying these town names. This study appeared in *Names*, which cultural geographers acknowledge is one of the premier journals concerned with names and naming processes. Even though my dissertation on changes in the central place functions in small towns in northwest Ohio and southeast Ohio (Appalachia) did not look specifically at churches, I did tabulate the number and variety during extensive fieldwork in both areas.

My first teaching job was at the University of Florida in fall 1966. I decided once I graduated from OSU that I wanted to live in a different part of the United States where I could learn about different regional cultures and politics. I was discouraged by some former teachers about teaching in Florida, especially about the region's segregation history, recent civil rights struggles in the South and also the John Birch Society (which was also active in Columbus when I lived there). The 3 years (1966–1969) in Gainesville were also very rewarding years. These were also very formative years in developing my interests in the social geography, a new field that was just beginning to be studied in the mid-1960s. Included in the forefront of this emerging field of social geographers were Anne Buttimer, Paul Claval, Yi-Fu Tuan, Dick Morrill, Richard Peet, Bill Bunge, Wilbur Zelinsky, David Harvey, and David Smith, all who were challenging geographers to study the social geographies of race, employment, school and housing discrimination, but also poverty, environmental injustice, inequities in federal and state programs promoting human welfare, the privileges of whiteness and the minorities' participation in the voting/political process. Living in northern Florida in the late 1960s or "Wallace years" could not help but alert one to the role that religion was playing in rural and urban areas in the South. Gainesville had distinct racial landscapes. I was definitely a "northerner" and carpetbagger who was an outcast in many ways in southern culture. One vivid memory is attending a University of Florida football game (a good example of regional pride and nationalism) and being about the only person seated while the band played "Dixie." I joined a Congregational/United Church of Christ church which was attended by a small number of "northern faculty" who were supportive of initiatives to end discriminatory practices at local, university, and broader levels. At this time I also was learning about the role of the Southern Baptist Church, a bastion of segregation that was very slow to accommodate to the wishes of those seeking ends to all kinds of overt and subtle discrimination (gender, race, class) practices. The term Bible Belt was also a label that rang true; it represented, as it still does, those who adhere to a literal interpretation of the Bible, a theological position I have never felt comfortable. I soon realized that if one really wanted to make a difference in the lives of those living with discrimination, poverty, and ending racial disenfranchisement in voting, religion was a good arena to express one's feelings and work with others on coordinated efforts. Published research that emerged from my Florida experiences included studies on poverty in the United States (with Jim Wheeler), the geographies of federal outlays to states, an open housing referendum in Flint, Michigan (with Wayne Hoffman), and school levies in cities that illustrated social inequities (with Wayne Hoffman and Gerald Romsa). My Florida years also provided me the first opportunity to travel in the developing world; that was made possible with a summer grant where I visited nearly 15 different Caribbean capitals

where I witnessed housing, social, and infrastructure gaps. This experience provided my first experiences with the developing world and led to a Cities of the World class I taught at Michigan State University and also co-edited several editions with the same title of a book with Jack Williams.

The 11 years at Michigan State University did not result in any major research initiatives related to religion, although it did broaden my horizons about faiths other than Christianity. I began to learn about Islam, especially from graduate students in the department from Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait, and Iran. Many of these I advised on religion topics about their own cultures, especially those dealing with pilgrimages and sacred sites. Probably the main gain from living in Michigan was support for and interest in an emerging secular society. The religious “flavors” of Michigan’s religious landscape ran the full gamut from those who were very traditional and conservative to those who were globally ecumenical, interfaith, and even agnostic. I continued to be active in Presbyterian and United Churches of Christ, both which were intellectually and spiritually challenging places for adult classes and singing in a choir.

When I moved to the University of Kentucky in 1980, I knew that living in the Bluegrass State would be different from Michigan in at least two respects. One is that Kentucky was considered a moderate to progressive state with many strong traditional and conservative churches, especially the Southern Baptist denomination. Zelinsky’s map accurately portrayed this region as having a dominance of conservative and evangelical Protestantism. Second, I realized that for anyone interested in advancing social issues related to race and gender equality or environmental quality (especially strip mining in eastern Kentucky), there would likely be some conflicts. I also understood before coming to Kentucky that alcoholic beverage consumption was a big issue in some countries; that fact was evident in an innovative regional map Fraser Hart prepared in a small book about the South. And then there was the issue about science and religion in school curricula. With this foreknowledge, I was looking forward to living in a region where the cross-currents of religion and politics meshed, not only experiencing some of these social issues or schisms firsthand, but also having an opportunity to study them, as I did.

I realized when I moved to Lexington, it was in many ways and still is a slowly progressing socially conscious city. Southern Baptist churches, Christian churches, and Churches of Christ were dominant in the landscape and in their influences on social issues. One could not purchase alcoholic beverages on Sunday in restaurants until a couple referenda were passed in the mid-1980s that permitted sales. I think 90 of the state’s 120 counties were officially dry, although everyone living in a dry county knew where to purchase liquor. One could not see the then-controversial “The Last Temptation of Christ” movie when it appeared unless one would drive three hours to Dayton. “Get Right with God” signs were prominent along rural highways. The University of Kentucky chimes in Memorial Hall on campus played religious hymns until this practice stopped sometime in the middle of the decade; I am not exactly sure why. Public schools had prayers before athletic events; some still do. Teachers in some public schools could lose their jobs if they taught evolution. Creationism was (and still is) alive and well. I was informed by university advisors

that the five most “dangerous” subjects to new UK students were biology, anthropology, astronomy, geology, and physical geography. Students not used to other than literal biblical interpretations were confused and confounded by evolutionary science. Betting on horses was legal, even though gambling was frowned on by some religious leaders. Cock fighting and snake handling still existed (and still do) in pockets in rural eastern Kentucky. In many ways living in Kentucky was like living “on the dark side of gray.” Lexington in many ways was and still is an island or outlier. Desegregation was a slow moving process in a city with a strong southern white traditional heritage. Athletic programs were also rather slow to integrate, especially UK basketball. In short, how could one not study religion in such an atmosphere. Living in Kentucky is sort of the antipode to living in agnostic-thriving New England and Pacific Northwest. I would expect that within 100 miles of Lexington one would discover one of the most diverse religious denominational and faith belief landscapes in the United States. There are the old regular mainline denominations, new faiths that have come into the Bluegrass and also many one-of-a-kind churches, especially in rural eastern, southern, and southeastern Kentucky.

I have undertaken a number of studies related to religion in Kentucky and the South in the past three decades. Some of these have been single-authored projects, others with students and faculty at UK and elsewhere. Some were presentations at professional meetings; some resulted in publications. The topics that fascinated me were ones that I learned from my geography colleagues and those in other disciplines that were understudied. These include the history and current patterns of wet/dry counties in Kentucky, a topic that appears in local and statewide media with communities deciding whether to approve the sale of alcoholic beverages. This study I conducted with historian Tom Appleton. With regularity there were clergy of some fundamentalist denominations who decried the sale of such drinks; opposing these clergy and their supporters were often those interested in promoting tourism and attracting out-of-state traffic on interstates. Also I looked into legislation that focused on science/education interfaces in the public schools and on the types of religious books (or avoidance of such, such as dealing with Marx, Darwin, and interfaith relations) in county libraries. Craig Campbell and I published an article in *Political Geography* on Cristo Redentor (Christ of the Andes statue) as an example of differential locational harmony. At the regional level I investigated with Esther Long the mission statements of seminaries in the South, a study that led to some interesting variations not only in their statements, but course offerings and visual materials on websites. I published with Holly Barcus two articles in *Great Plains Research* about denominational changes in the Great Plains. Missionaries have also been relatively neglected in geography, so I embarked on a study with Elizabeth Leppman that looked at the contents of a leading Quaker journal in the early part of the past century. Religions magazines, as we acknowledged in our study, were (and probably still are) a very important medium for educating the public about places and cultures, especially those where most Americans would have limited first-hand knowledge. The music/religion interface has long fascinated me, not only as a regular choir member, but for the words used to convey messages about spirituality, human welfare and justice, religious traditions and promises of peace and hope.

After 11 September 2001, I collected information from a number of churches in eastern Kentucky about how that somber event was celebrated and also what hymns they sung on the tenth anniversary. As expected, some were very somber and dignified, others had words about hope, healing, and reaching across traditional religious boundaries that separate us. I also co-authored an article (mostly photos) in *Focus* on the Shankill-Falls divided between Catholic and Protestant areas of Belfast with three students in my geography of religion class at the National University of Ireland in Maynooth. The visualization theme was integral to a paper published in *Geographica Slovenica* on ecumenical spaces and the web pages of the World Council of Churches and papers I delivered how cartoonists depicted the controversial construction of a mosque at Ground Zero. How cartoonists depicted God-Nature themes (the 2011 Haitian earthquake and Icelandic volcanic eruption) were the focus of an article in *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*. I published in *Geographical Review* an article how the renaissance of religion in Russia is depicted on stamp issues since 1991. A major change in my thinking about the subject of religion in the South was the study that I worked on with Jerry Webster and Clark Archer, a study that appeared in the *Southeastern Geographer* in late 2011. We looked at the definition and concept of the Bible Belt as first discussed by Charles Heatwole (who was in my classes when I taught at Michigan State University) in 1978 in the *Journal of Geography*. We wanted to update his study and learn what has happened to the Bible Belt (or Belts) since this pioneering effort. What we learned using the Glenmary Research Center's county data on adherents for the past several decades was that the "buckle" has relocated. As our maps illustrated, the decline in those counties with denominations adhering to a literal interpretation of the Bible in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee and a shift to the high concentration of Bible Belt counties in western Oklahoma and panhandle Texas. In this study using Glenmary data for 2000, we also looked at the demographic and political/voting characteristics of these counties. (In this volume we look at the same phenomenon using 2010 data and also discuss some of the visual features of the Bible Belt landscapes.)

What also was instrumental in my thinking about religion and geography interfaces were activities outside my own research agenda. As someone who has long standing interests in working with others at community levels on peace and justice issues, I worked with three other similarly committed adults in Lexington to organize the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice. CKCPJ emerged in 1983 as an interfaith and interdenominational group committed to working on peace and justice issues within Lexington, in Central Kentucky especially, but also with national and global interests. The other three who were active in this initiative were Betsy Neale (from the Friends), Marylynne Flowers (active in a local Presbyterian church) and Ernie Yanarella (political scientist, Episcopalian, longtime friend, and also contributor to a very thoughtful essay on Weber in this volume). This organization is a key agent in peace/justice issues in the Bluegrass; it hosts meetings, fairs, conferences, and other events for people of all ages, plans annual marches on Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, and is an active voice on issues related to capital punishment,

gun control, gay/lesbian issues, fair trade and employment, environmental responsibility and stewardship, and the rights of women, children, and minorities.

I also led adult classes at Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church where we discussed major theologians and religious writers, including William Spong, Marcus Borg, Joseph Campbell, Philip Jenkins, Diane Eck, Kathleen Norris, Diana Butler Bass, Francis Collins, Sam Harris, Paul Alan Laughlin, James Kugel, Dorothy Bass, and Garry Wills. We discuss issues about science, secularism, death and dying, interfaith dialogue, Christianity in the twenty-first century, images of God, missions and missionaries, and more. I also benefitted from attending church services in the many countries I have traveled, lived, and taught classes in the past three decades. These include services in elaborate, formal, and distinguished cathedrals in Europe, Russian Orthodox services in Central Asia, and services in a black township and white and interracial mainline churches in Cape Town. Often I would attend services where I understood nothing or little, but that did not diminish the opportunity to worship with youth and elders (many more) on Sunday mornings and listen to choirs sing in multiple languages. These personal experiences also became part of my religion pilgrimage.

While religion has been an important part of my personal life, it was less important as part of my teaching program. Teaching classes on the geography of religion are few and far between in the United States; I think the subject was accepted much more in the instructional and research arenas among geographers in Europe. I think that part of my reluctance to pursue a major book project on religion was that for a long time I considered the subject too narrowly focused, especially on cultural and historical geography. From my reading of the geography and religion literature, there were actually few studies done before 1970s. (See the bibliography at the end of Chap. 1). I took some renewed interest in the subject in the mid-1980s when a number of geographers began to examine religion/nature/environment issues. The pioneering works of Yi-Fu Tuan and Anne Buttimer were instrumental in steering the study of values, ethics, spirituality, and religion into some new and productive directions. These studies paved the way for a number of other studies by social geographers (a field that was not among the major fields until the 1970s and early 1980s). The steady stream of studies on geography and religion continued with the emergence of GORABS (Geography of Religion and Belief Systems) as a Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. The publication of more articles and special journal issues devoted to the geography of religion continued into the last decade of the twentieth century and first decade of this century. The synthetic works of Lily Kong that have regularly appeared in *Progress in Human Geography* further supported those who wanted to look at religion from human/environmental perspectives. These reviews not only introduced the study of religion within geography, but also to those in related scholarly disciplines.

As more and more research appeared in professional journals and more conferences included presentations on religion from different fields and subfields, it became increasing apparent that the time was propitious for a volume that looked at religion/geography interfaces from a number of different perspectives. From my own vantage point, the study of religion was one that could, should, might, and

would benefit from those who have theoretical and conceptual training in many of the discipline's major subfields. The same applied to those who were regional specialists; there were topics meriting study from those who looked at political/religious issues in Southeast Asia or Central America as well as cultural/historical themes in southern Africa and continental Europe and symbolic/architectural features and built environments of religious landscapes in California, southeast Australia, and southwest Asia. Studying religious topics would not have to be limited to those in human geography, but could be seen as opportunities for those studying religion/natural disaster issues in East Asia and southeast United States as well as the spiritual roots of early and contemporary religious thinking in Central Asia, East Asia, Russia, and indigenous groups in South America. For those engaged in the study of gender, law, multicultural education, and media disciplines, there were also opportunities to contribute to the study of this emerging field. In short, there were literally "gold mines" of potential research topics in rural and urban areas everywhere on the continent.

About 7 years ago I decided to offer a class on the geography of religion in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky. The numbers were never larger (less than 15), but these were always enlightening and interesting, because of the views expressed by students. Their views about religion ran the gamut from very conservative to very liberal and also agnostic and atheist, which made, as one would expect, some very interesting exchanges. Students were strongly encouraged (not required, as I could not do this in a public university) to attend a half dozen different worship services during the semester. This did not mean attending First Baptist, Second Baptist, Third Baptist, etc., but different kinds of experiences. For some this course component was the first some had ever attended a Jewish synagogue, Catholic mass, Baptist service, an African American church, Unitarian church, or visited a mosque. Some students used this opportunity to attend Wiccan services, or visit a Buddhist and Hindu temple. Their write-ups about these experiences and the ensuing discussion were one of the high spots of the weekly class. In addition, the classes discussed chapters in various books and articles from the geography literature about the state of studying religion. And we always discussed current news items, using materials from the RNS (Religion News Service) website.

Another ingredient that stimulated my decision to edit a book on the geography of religion emerged from geography of religion conferences held in Europe in recent years. These were organized by my good friends Ceri Peach (Oxford), Reinhard Henkel (Heidelberg), and also Martin Baumann and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti (University of Lucerne). These miniconferences, held in Oxford, Lucerne, and Göttingen, usually attracted 20–40 junior and senior geographers and other religious scholars, and were a rich source of ideas for topics that might be studied. The opportunities for small group discussions, the field trips, and special events were conducive to learning about historical and contemporary changes in the religious landscapes of the European continent and beyond. A number of authors contributing to this volume presented papers at one or more of these conferences. Additional names came from those attending sessions at annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers.

Some of my initial thoughts and inspiration about a book came from the course I taught, conversations with friends who studied and did not study religion, and also the book I edited on megaengineering projects. This three-volume, 126-chapter book, *Engineering Earth: The Impacts of Megaengineering Projects*, was published in 2011 by Springer. There were only a few chapters in this book that had a religious content, one on megachurches, another on liberation theologians fighting megadevelopment projects in the Philippines and Guatemala. When I approached Evelien Bakker and Bernadette Deelen-Mans, my first geography editors at Springer, about a religion book, they were excited and supportive, as they have been since day one. They gave me the encouragement, certainly the latitude (and probably the longitude) to pursue the idea, knowing that I would identify significant cutting-edge topics about religion and culture and society in all major world regions. The prospectus I developed was for an innovative book that would include the contributions of scholars from the social sciences and humanities, those from different countries and those from different faiths. For their confidence and support, I am very grateful. The reviews they obtained of the prospectus were encouraging and acknowledging that there was a definite need for a major international, interdisciplinary, and interfaith volume. Springer also saw this book as an opportunity to emphasize its new directions in the social sciences and humanities. I also want to thank Stefan Einarson who came on board late in the project and shepherded the project to its completion with the usual Springer traits of professionalism, kindness, and commitment to the project's publication. And I wish to thank Chitra Sundarajan and her staff for helpful professionalism in preparing the final manuscript for publication.

The organization of the book, which is discussed in Chapter One, basically reflects the way I look at religion from a geographical perspective. I look at the subject as more than simply investigations into human geography's fields and subfields, including cultural and historical, but also economic, social, and political geography, but also human/environmental geography (dealing with human values, ethics, behavior, disasters, etc.). I also look at the study of religious topics and phenomena with respects to major concepts we use in geography; these include landscapes, networks, hierarchies, scales, regions, organization of space, the delivery of services, and virtual religion. I started contacting potential authors in September 2010. Since then I have sent or received over 15,000 emails related the volume.

I am deeply indebted to many friends for providing names of potential authors. I relied on my global network of geography colleagues in colleges and universities around the world, who not only recommended specific individuals, but also topics they deemed worthy of inclusion. Some were geographers, but many were not; some taught in universities, others in divinity schools and departments of religion around the world. Those I specifically want to acknowledge include: Barbara Ambrose, Martin Checa Artasu, Martin Baumann, John Benson, Gary Bouma, John Benson, Dwight Billings, Marion Bowman, John D. Brewer, David Brunn, David Butler, Ron Byars, Heidi Campbell, Caroline Creamer, Janel Curry, David Eicher, Elizabeth Ferris, Richard Gale, Don Gross, Wayne Gnatuk, Martin Haigh, Dan Hofrenning, Wil Holden, Hannah Holtschneider, Monica Ingalls, Nicole Karapanagiotis, Aharon Kellerman, Judith Kenny, Jean Kilde, Ted Levin, James

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And I want to thank John Kostelnick who provided the GORABS Working Bibliography; most of the entries, except dissertations and theses, are included in Chap. 1 bibliography. Others who helped him prepare this valuable bibliography also need to be acknowledged: John Bauer, Ed Davis, Michael Ferber, Julian Holloway, Lily Kong, Elizabeth Leppman, Carolyn Prorock, Simon Potter, Thomas Rumney, Rana P.B. Singh, and Robert Stoddard. These are scholars who devoted their lifetimes to advancing research on geography and religion.

Finally I want to thank Donna Gilbreath for another splendid effort preparing all the chapters for Springer. She formatted the chapters and prepared all the tables and illustrations per the publisher's guidelines. Donna is an invaluable and skilled professional who deserves much credit for working with multiple authors and the publisher to ensure that all text materials were correct and in order. Also I am indebted to her husband, Richard Gilbreath, for helping prepare some of the maps and graphics for authors without cartographic services and making changes on others. As Director of the Gyula Pauer Center for Cartography and GIS, Dick's work is always first class. And, finally, thanks are much in order to Natalya Tyutenkova for her interest, support, patience, and endurance in the past several years working on this megaproject, thinking and believing it would never end.

The journey continues.

February 2014

Stanley D. Brunn

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