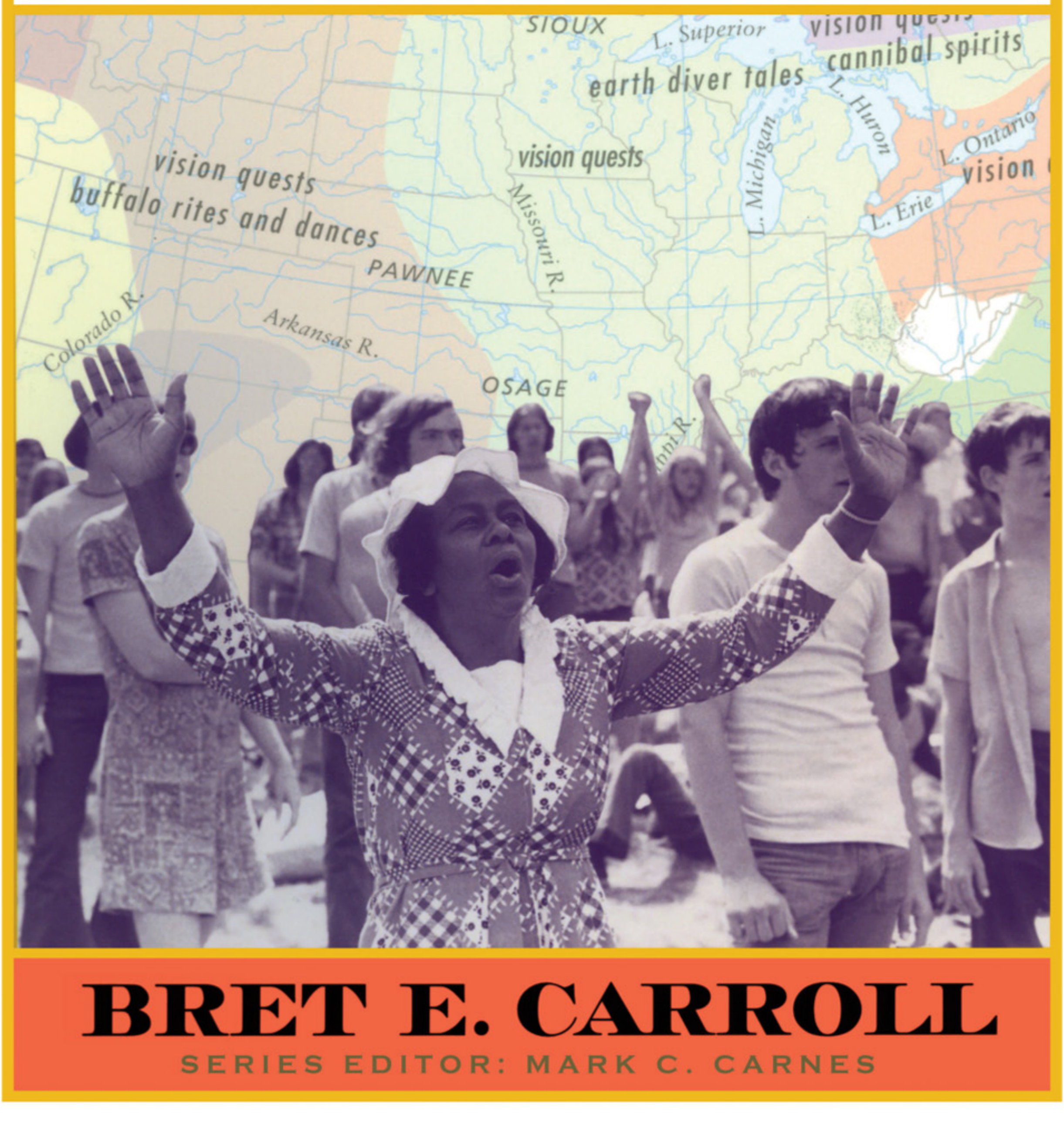
ROUTLEDGE ATLASES OF AMERICAN HISTORY

THE ROUTLEDGE HISTORICAL ATLAS OF RELIGION IN AMERICA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BRET E. CARROLL

SERIES EDITOR: MARK C. CARNES

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OF
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IN
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MARK C. CARNES, SERIES EDITOR

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To Gilbert Carroll (1926–1973), Judith, and Iris

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Foreword

As the first Americans wandered into North America from Siberia, across frozen wastes that are now severed by the Bering Strait, they sought guidance about the spirit world from their shamans. John Winthrop regarded the safe passage of the Puritans from England to Massachusetts Bay as proof that God had given them "a special commission" to carry out His plans in the New World. Brigham Young viewed the Mormon "great trek" from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Great Salt Lake Basin as comparable to the exodus of the Hebrews. During the 2000 presidential campaign, Republican George W. Bush named Jesus as his favorite philosopher and declared June 10 "Jesus Day" in Texas. As if in reply, Democratic candidate Al Gore highlighted the fact that Joseph Lieberman, a practicing Jew, shared Gore's belief in "God Almighty." This is to observe that the history of America is inseparable from the history of religion in America. An historical atlas of religion in America reveals much about the history of the American people.

But what is an historical atlas of religion? Most historical atlases, including those in the Routledge series, examine phenomena of a physical character: the construction of railroads, canals, factories; the voluntary or forced migration of peoples—immigrants, Native Americans, slaves; the advance of explorers or the collision of armies. Such activities were geographical in character: for instance moving foodstuffs from the farms of the Midwest to the urban markets in the East; shifting slaves from the exhausted soils of Virginia to the new cotton fields in Mississippi; finding a northwest passage to the Pacific or cutting the Confederacy in two. And because these activities have an explicit geographical dimension, they are easily mapped.

But how does one map ideas about God?

Most atlases avoid this perplexity by equating religion with the institutions of religion. This allows the mapmakers to exploit masses of data on the major religions. These atlases can readily be identified by their ubiquitous dots: some maps depict individual churches, so that the reader will see clusters of green "Catholic" dots in urban New York and blue "Baptist" dots in South Carolina, and smatterings of brown"Jewish" dots for synagogues; other maps, similarly colored, have dots that signify religiously affiliated universities or missions. Much of this familiar data appears in this atlas as well.

But historian Bret E. Carroll is interested in religion as religion—ideas about God and the nature of belief. He makes use of information on religious institutions in order to illuminate patterns of thought and behavior. He seeks to map the pathways of belief in the American past.

Because new religious ideas were often spawned by solitary religious visionaries or preachers, Carroll at times focuses on such individuals. He thus maps the efforts of Indian prophets of revitalization, ranging from the prophet Popé, who inspired the Pueblo revolt against the Spanish in 1680, to the Paiute visionary, Wovoka, whose transformation of the "Ghost Dance" alarmed whites and resulted in the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee in 1890. Carroll shows the routes of celebrated preachers such as George Whitefield during the First

Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s and of Charles Grandison Finney during the Second Great Awakening a century later. He also depicts activities as varied as the founding of Indian villages by the Puritan missionary John Eliot, the establishment of the Oneidan communes by John Humphrey Noyes, and the blending of eastern and western thought in the Theosophy of the Russian emigrant, Helena Blavatsky.

Carroll understands, further, that religious ideas were spread by groups of people as well as individual preachers or prophets. He locates the multiple origins of American Lutheranism in Sweden, the German Palatinate, and the Netherlands, and tracks its passage, respectively, to the Delaware Valley, the Carolinas, and New York. He shows the origins and merging of voodoo traditions, "call-and-response" worship, and Christian hymnody among slaves.

Carroll devotes considerable attention to missions, which were often central to the transmission of religious ideas. In addition to the usual accounts of Spanish missionaries in the South and French Jesuits along the upper Mississippi and Great Lakes, Carroll describes the diffusion of Russian Orthodox missions in Alaska and the Northwest, Protestant missionary activities in India and China throughout the 19th century, and even the AME Zion (African-American Protestant) missions to Africa during the last third of the 19th century.

Historical atlases that concentrate on religious institutions contain a built-in bias in favor of the major denominations, which, by virtue of their size and continuity, have generated and preserved the information on which such atlases depend. By treating such matters succinctly, Carroll has reserved far more space to consider the full diversity of religious belief and practice in America. Thus his atlas alone includes maps of such extraordinary range as Eskimo bear rites of neolithic times, the 18th-century migration of the Jews from 17th-century Holland and Brazil, the evolution of the Disciples of Christ in the trans-Appalachian West, the origin and spread of Christian Science, the rise of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, and the development of a host of 20th-century faiths ranging from Zen Buddhism, Protestant fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, the Scientology of science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, and the syncretic Baha'i.

Tocqueville was struck by the dull pragmatism of the American people, whose contributions to philosophy, literature, and the arts were, he maintained, modest indeed. But he was impressed that so materialistic a people could succumb to such extravagant religious views and passions. Carroll makes a strong case that religion is the field in which American thought has attained its greatest creativity. He has managed to capture the eye-popping splendor of this imaginative profusion. We must stare hard at it all, for if we cannot understand its religious beliefs, we cannot understand the American nation.

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Introduction

American religious life, like American culture more generally, is nothing if not colorful. From the outset, it has been multiform, diverse, protean, and dynamic. This is what makes its study so interesting. But its kaleidoscopic nature is perhaps better represented by a crazy quilt than by a mandala—there is no single overall pattern—a fact which presents daunting challenges to anyone who would attempt to understand and explain it, and particularly to those who would do so through cartographic or other visual images. Nor is its almost bewildering diversity the only challenge to the student or teacher of American religion. Religion is in important ways—perhaps its *most* important way—a personal thing that is only partially expressed in outward behaviors and institutions and defies analysis, measurement, and quantification. Ultimately, mapping human spirituality may well be impossible. The user of this atlas ought to approach it—as did the author—with these provisos in mind.

But this atlas is predicated on the belief that there is a story—or, perhaps more accurately, many stories, many small patterns rather than one large one—that can be conveyed through maps. Such central themes as migration, immigration, geographic expansion, regional concentration, and the formation of institutions and communities *are* amenable to cartographic expression. Using these overarching themes, this atlas attempts to provide an introductory overview of American religious history, highlighting the rich and colorful diversity that has characterized it since the first peopling of what is now the United States some tens of thousands of years ago. To grasp this diversity is to grasp one of the basic—some would say defining—features of American life. Indeed, because the United States is a land of immigrants and has thereby become home to most of the world's religions, an appreciation of American diversity may lead to an appreciation of the nation's cultural sources in and interrelationships with other regions of the globe.

Diversity has become an important organizing—and disorganizing—principle in studies of American religion, past and present. Not long ago, the nation's religious history was understood in terms of white Protestant domination and development: beginning with English Puritans, white Protestants of European background moved westward starting in the 17th century, first across the Atlantic and then across the North American continent, creating and defining a religious "mainstream." But scholars have increasingly sought in recent years a new historical understanding, a "decentered" approach that removes white Protestants from the heart of the story and challenges the very idea of a "mainstream" to represent more completely and accurately the complexity of America's religious past. Geographically, this new approach has involved a recognition that the conventionally emphasized east-to-west developmental trajectory of white Euro-American Protestantism has coexisted with equally significant west-to-east and south-to-north movements, usually by nonwhite and/or non-Protestant peoples and religions from places other than Europe, across the Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea as well as the Atlantic, and in many cases long before the arrival of the Puritans. This atlas is intended to reflect this "state of the art." It presents a textual and cartographic portrait of the nation's religious diversity and multidirectionality, devoting space to groups and geographic movements traditionally slighted and first bringing Protestantism into view only in the third part.

While this atlas is devoted above all to conveying the diversity of American religious experience, its size does not permit the inclusion or full coverage of all of the thousands of groups and movements that populate U.S. religious history. Its method is to divide that history into six chronologically and topically defined periods, successive but overlapping, and to examine and map the major new developments in each. Groups and movements that exist across long stretches of time arise, therefore, only at moments of particular historical importance. Thus, for example, the Baptists appear only periodically: in the chapter on the colonial period, when they first arrived on the American scene; in the chapter on the 19th century, when waves of revivalism propelled them to their status as the nation's largest Protestant denomination; and in the chapter on modern America, when they contributed to and benefited from a resurgence of conservative evangelical Protestantism in American life.

Native American religions are treated in the first part, for the history of religion in America begins with them. The second and third parts examine European colonization and settlement in North America, first by non-English Europeans from the 16th through the 19th centuries and then by the English in the 17th and 18th centuries. With these groups came the many Judeo-Christian traditions, and particularly the Protestant ones, that gradually and sometimes coercively came to dominate, if never entirely to define, American religious culture. Part four explores the Protestant expansion, innovation, and experimentation, among both white and black Americans, that framed 19th-century American religious life. The fifth part, covering the period from about 1850 to the present, examines the immigration of peoples and religions from Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Arriving especially from 1880 to 1920 and again after World War II, they transformed America's Protestant diversity into a diversity far more inclusive. Part six focuses on the 20th century, when the forces shaping modern American life—urbanization, industrialization, technology, continuing immigration, and internationalism—elicited religious responses and produced new movements that expanded American religion in all of its dimensions. An epilogue examining American religious regions—geographic areas defined by the particular religious characteristics of their residents—is intended to summarize the whole and to examine what is perhaps the most important concept used by geographers and historians to map American religious diversity and discern some order in its apparent chaos.

While this atlas cannot completely span the breadth and plumb the depth of American religious history, it can introduce the rich tapestry of religious impulses and expressions so central to the American and human experiences. The reader is welcomed to a fascinating world.

PART I: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN RELIGIONS, PREHISTORY–PRESENT

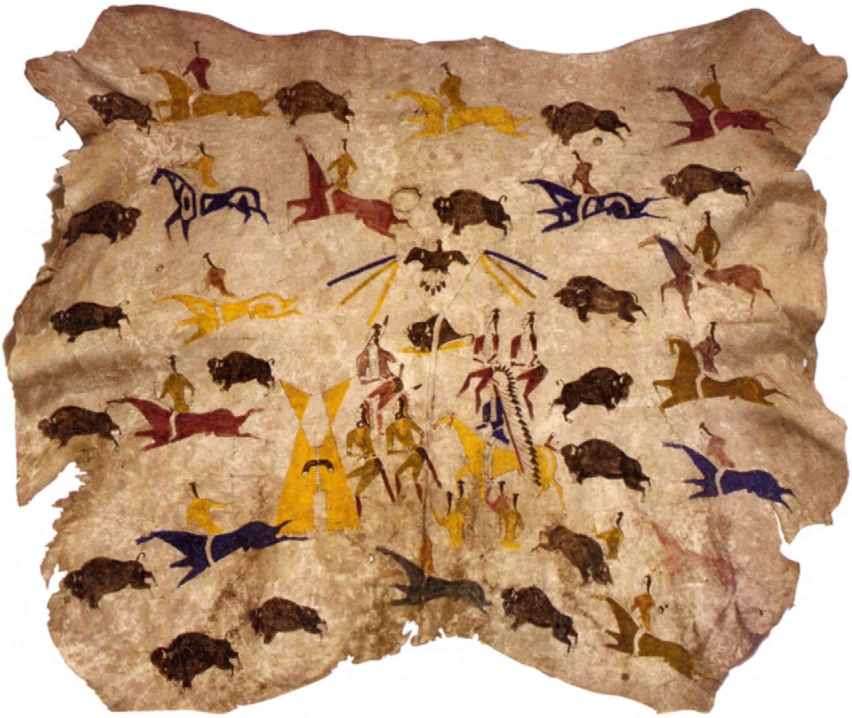
American religious history began some 30,000 to 50,000 years ago when, according to archaeologists, the first human beings set foot on the North American continent. An Ice Age expansion of the Arctic ice cap reduced sea levels sufficiently to expose an area of land currently submerged beneath the Bering Sea and called Beringia. This tundra region attracted eastward-moving hunters from northeastern Siberia, who brought with them their Paleolithic Asiatic cultures and belief systems.

The Beringian crossing ended when milder climatic conditions and rising sea levels obliterated the land bridge, perhaps 10,000 years ago. By then the descendants of the Siberian migrants had spread over the tundra, grasslands, deserts, plateaus, and forests of the Americas, adapting to a wide range of environments and developing their Paleolithic religiosity into a correspondingly wide variety of forms. Meanwhile, Indonesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian peoples of south Asian origin carried other Paleolithic religious forms eastward across the Pacific Ocean to the islands of Polynesia and, by about 500 CE, northward from Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands to the Hawaiian Islands. By the time of European colonization, about 75 million people inhabited the Americas, perhaps 10 million of them in what is now the United States. They were divided into hundreds of ethnic groups, spoke hundreds of languages, practiced an array of subsistence techniques, developed many different patterns of social organization, interacted with each other through trade, migration, and warfare, and devised a kaleidoscopic range of religious systems to address the circumstances of existence. In shaping and reshaping their religions in response to experiences of migration, adaptation, and intercultural exchange, they established enduring patterns of American religious life.

This Southeastern shell gorget from about 1000 CE depicts a shaman, suggesting the retention of Northern hunting traditions in Southern agricultural religious practice.

This diversity complicates any attempt to present indigenous American religions in general terms, but historians and anthropologists have identified several broad characteristics and constructed models by which to make sense of their variety. Perhaps the most basic point about Amerindian religion is that those behaviors and attitudes we term “religious” were for them the central orienting mechanism in a single seamless reality of cosmos, landscape, culture, society, and economy. American aborigines understood themselves as participants in a world of spiritual power at once natural and supernatural—called *Wakan* by the Sioux, *Orenda* by the Iroquois, *Manitou* by the Algonkians, and *Mana* by Hawaiians—upon which they depended for survival and which they encountered mainly through its effects in the natural world. This spiritual force infused humans, animals, plants, landscape features, and natural phenomena and bound them into an integrated web of existence. Humans were only one—and by no means the most powerful—of nature’s active powers.

Native Americans expressed such beliefs in their various origin myths, intended to explain cosmically their geographic location, their relationship to



This Shoshone hide painting of a buffalo dance suggests the importance of the buffalo and hunting to ritual life on the Plains.

the environment, and their social and cultural systems. These myths were expressed in rituals, which differed from group to group but aimed through sacred words, songs, gestures, and objects to align humanity with the spiritual world and to harness its powers for personal or group welfare. The assurances of ritual were particularly important at crucial junctures in the life of the group (before and after hunts and wars, for example, or at the time of planting and harvest) or of the individual (puberty, illness, or death). Many groups identified certain individuals, called *shamans* (usually but not always men), as possessing special spiritual gifts that gave them authority to conduct rituals, but most groups also emphasized ordinary people's connection to the spiritual world and encouraged personal ritual encounters with it, as men might do before hunting or women when menstruating.

In addition to such broad commonalities, scholars have identified two broad and interpenetrating "traditions" within North America's precontact indigenous religions. The first was a Paleolithic "northern hunting tradition" that came to the continent with the first Siberians and spread eastward and southward; the other was a younger "southern agrarian tradition" that accompanied the development of settled agricultural economies in Mesoamerica and spread northward with maize cultivation. After contact with white Europeans and Americans, Amerindian groups developed a spectrum of religious responses, often categorized into "revitalization" and "accommodation" movements, by which they resisted or adapted to an expanding Euro-American presence and rethought their relations with the land.

Northern Hunting Religions

Siberia
Beringia
shaman spirit voyages

Northern hunting religions developed from those of Paleolithic Siberia and Beringia. Their features were evident wherever hunting was common but remained most pronounced in northern North America.

America's hunting peoples regarded animals, on which they depended for survival and which appeared well adapted to environmental conditions, as superior in wisdom and power and deserving of respect and reverence. Their origin myths typically featured local animals as earth's shapers and first inhabitants. Great Lakes tribes, for instance, attributed hills, valleys, and streams to a Great Beaver that dredged soil from a primeval sea and a hawk that flapped its wings to dry it. A Great Hare then summoned human beings into existence and taught them to survive. Many northern tribes were divided into clans claiming descent from animal ancestors.

Hunting and animals dominated ritual life as well. Throughout the Northeast and on the Plains, hunters sought the supernatural aid of bear, eagle, and badger spirits in dramatic vision quests. Shamans conducted collective rites that used imitative gesture and costume to petition desired animals prior to hunting and offered ceremonial thanks to the animal spirits afterward. Arctic Eskimo solemnly addressed Grandfather Bear, while tribes of the Pacific Northwest returned the skeletons of a season's first salmon catch to rivers in order to ensure continued supplies. On the Plains, Sioux, Pawnee, and Osage ritual reflected dependence on buffalo.

The shaman was particularly important in most hunting tribes. Most shamans of the Americas beckoned spirits to approach and possess them, but those of the Arctic, Bering, and north Pacific Coast regions retained the Siberian practice of spirit flight, their souls traveling great distances to contend with powerful spirits and ensure successful hunting. Other groups looked less to shamans than to medicine men or secret societies for healing magic.

Hunting groups dealt gingerly with the female power of fertility, thought harmful to the spiritual power men required for hunting. Tlingit men, for instance, considered continence a prerequisite for prehunt visions, and men of whaling tribes sometimes avoided their wives for the entire whaling season. Menstruating women were ceremonially isolated from the group and forbidden contact with all objects touched by the men. Young women learned of their power in rites of passage at first menses.

Native religions often symbolized environmental hazards as spirits. Many Eskimo peoples, like their Siberian ancestors, feared a cannibal spirit representing what was probably a grim reality of Arctic life. The Ojibwa of the Great Lakes likewise hoped that the cannibal spirit Windigo would not visit in nightmares. Eskimo hunters also imagined a half-human, half-animal spirit that, like the vast whiteness of the landscape, threatened to hypnotize and destroy them. Harmful shouting spirits might bedevil hunters in the cold, windy forests of western Canada and the Pacific Northwest. Such were the challenges, difficulties, and religious expressions of hunting life in the North.