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DEDICATION

For William R. Hutchison

26. James Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and its Critics, 1945-1965*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994.
27. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1955.
28. David M. Hummon, *Commonplaces: Community Ideology and Identity in American Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
29. Nancy L. Eiesland, *A Particular Place: Urban Restructuring and Religious Ecology in a Southern Exurb*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000, 209.
30. See, for example, Peter Williams, "Ohio: The One and the Many." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30 (December 1991), 526-31.
31. See John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *The Christian Right's Long Political March* (forthcoming).
32. See Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism*, 2nd ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Harper and Row, 1972.
33. See, for example, Herve Varenne, *Americans Together: Structured Diversity in a Midwestern Town*. New York: Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, 1977. While Varenne finds much attachment to the contemporary value of individualism and individual freedom, it is tempered by and interpreted through a morality that holds community, togetherness, and individual moral duty in equally high regard.
34. Sonya Salamon, *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming, and Community in the Midwest*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. See also, Sonya Salamon, "The Rural People of the Midwest." 352-365 in Emery N. Castle, ed. *The Changing American Countryside: Rural People and Places*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995.
35. See Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997, for a comprehensive study of the fate of congregations in changing communities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE MIDWEST: CONCLUSION

Peter W. Williams

The Midwest, as has often been asserted in this volume and in many others, is more of a construct than a firm social or political reality. In the national media, anchored on either coast, it is usually presented as "flyover country," a rather dull place compared with the allegedly vibrant urban culture of the two coasts. As such, it is the stuff out of which sitcoms are frequently made: "WKRP in Cincinnati," "The Drew Carey Show," "Third Rock from the Sun," and, in at least one memorable version, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," which is still celebrated in downtown Minneapolis with a statue of fictive newscaster Mary Richards's tossing her hat jubilantly into the air. As a counterpoint, it has also been the setting for (relatively) high drama, as in the long-running and phenomenally successful "E.R.," set in Chicago—as was its shorter-running rival, "Chicago Hope." The wealthy suburbs of urban centers such as Chicago and Detroit have been nominal backdrops for films such as "Traffic" and "The Virgin Suicides" but, as in most of the Midwest-based television programs, little distinctive by way of social and cultural backdrop emerges here. In most of these endeavors, the Midwest seems to be little but a synonym for "Mid-America," which, whether in its upper-middle-class or blue-collar versions, emerges as a generic—and uninspiring—concept at best.

These stereotypes, like many others, do contain some grains of truth. As the historians Andrew Cayton and Peter Onuf have demonstrated, the region's nineteenth-century origins as a commerce-oriented region were buttressed by a history-denying and region-negating ideology that saw the Midwest as an escape from the past that weighed down older regions of the nation, such as New England and the South, with inhibitors of progress.¹ The Midwest was burdened neither with Puritanism nor slavery; rather, it was to be a uniquely American place where all sorts of folk could settle for the main purpose and pleasure of that all-American preoccupation,

the making of money. A society would emerge that was rational, orderly, well-settled, and not much concerned with social causes other than those that seemed conducive to the achievement of commercial success for the enterprising. The Midwest, in other words, was to be not just another American region, but a prototype for a nation in which the concept of region would become irrelevant, as a commerce-friendly standardization became a universal norm. Similarly, the Ohio- and Kentucky-based Restoration movement within early nineteenth-century Protestantism was premised on a denial of the denominational creedalism they saw as separating Christians of the day on issues of human rather than biblical origin, and thus emerged as a sort of anti-denomination. So also did the prophets of the Midwest see their foundation as an anti-region, as rooted in entrepreneurial capitalism as the Restorationists were committed to the Bible alone and unadorned.

Both the boundaries and whatever essence the phenomenon of the Midwest may possess are thus elusive, partly by design and partly through the lack of any political institutions that could provide some parameters for the task of definition. The South, for example, is generally defined as consisting of the 11 states that seceded to form the Confederacy during the Civil War, together with the border states in which slavery was also institutionalized. The Midwest has no such history, other than, perhaps, the claim that its constituent states did *not* support slavery—a claim it shared with many other states to its east and west. Its people have not always, or even usually, voted as a predictable bloc, since those of its states that have strong urban populations have not always identified with the interests of those that are agriculturally based.

This divergence in voting patterns suggests that the notion of a monolithic "Midwest" is politically not very helpful, as witnessed in the regional division between "blue" (Democratic) and "red" (Republican) states on the electoral maps used by broadcasters during the 2000 presidential contest. What this split does, perhaps, suggest is that two of the region's economic bedrocks—agriculture and heavy industry—have correlated in the past and, to some extent, continue in the present to correlate with distinctive political cultures. Even this generalization is to some extent an oversimplification, however; the complex ethnic and religious strains that undergird these "blue" and "red" political camps do not lend themselves to easy correlations.

If we are to say anything meaningful about the Midwest as a region, we need to:

1. begin with some broad historical sketches of basic regional themes;
2. take a look at the emergence of cultural and religious pluralism in the region as a distinctive regional characteristic; and
3. see how these themes have resulted in a distinctive regional religious and civic culture by the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Some Broad Themes

If the lack of a sense of history is characteristically American, then the Midwest may have some claim to being a distinctively *American* region. Although skirmishes between Anglo-Americans and the French and native peoples certainly took place during the late colonial era and into the early decades of the nineteenth century, the society that emerged as the latter century progressed owed little consciously to its regional predecessors. Although a few pockets of descendants of early French settlers can be found in places along the Mississippi, the most lasting evidence of a Francophone past can be found in the mispronounced place names that range from Detroit to Des Moines to St. Louis. (A shibboleth for detecting true Detroiters is to ask how they pronounce the name of one of that city's major arteries, "Gratiot."²) Similarly, at least to the east of the Mississippi River, living evidence of the once-abundant aboriginal dwellers in the region are few and far between, while the residence patterns of those now living further west usually represent the results of enforced resettlement during the nineteenth century.

What the French and native peoples had in common was the venerable notion that religious and socio-political identity were, and were supposed to be, coextensive, although they enacted this notion in very different ways. The English-speaking colonists to whom they gradually yielded, however, had already rejected this idea in both theory and practice. Although the British monarchy had made some attempts among the Atlantic colonies to impose the Church of England as the established church of its overseas colonies as well, this effort had failed nearly universally by the time of the Revolution, and the threat of its being realized more fully had actually provided fuel for the insurrectionary flames. Interestingly, the guarantees of religious liberty enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution for the entire nation had been anticipated in the Northwest Ordinance, enacted four years prior to the Bill of Rights as a governmental charter for that region to the west that would eventually constitute a major part of what would be called the Midwest. Unlike the original colonies, an "establishment of religion" had never been known in this emergent region, nor had there been enough of a colonial European-American presence to have resulted even in an informal religious hegemony. The result was a virtual *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which any number of forms of individual and collective religiosity might be inscribed, as long as none tried to impinge on the rights of its neighbors. If religious freedom and pluralism can be taken as hallmarks of a distinctively *American* ethos, then the Midwest came into being even before the nation itself as a political incarnation of this new order of things.

Another broad motif of American religious history that is relevant to the emergence of a distinctively regional ethos is the related notion of the *voluntary*

principle, or in a more American vernacular form, *voluntarism*. The federal government, and before too many years all of the state governments, were forbidden by fundamental law from either promoting or harassing particular religions. Those religious institutions that had in their Old World incarnations depended on the state for financial support, enforced attendance, and the elimination of competition now had to look to their own resources for survival. As Lyman Beecher—the Connecticut Congregationalist who went on to become president of Presbyterian Lane Seminary in Cincinnati—was to acknowledge, this ban on the establishment of religion by the government was to prove “the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut.” The same can be said, presumably, of Ohio and the other states of the Midwest, although the latter had never known the religious establishments that had prevailed in colonial Connecticut and other colonies of New England and the tidewater South.³

Beecher’s fraternal denominational families, the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, approached the challenge of the western frontier in 1801 with an innovative arrangement brokered by Jonathan Edwards, Jr., the son of the Massachusetts evangelist and theologian of the Great Awakening of the 1740s. In the heady atmosphere of what Beecher and his confreres regarded as a Second Great Awakening, the “Plan of Union” ensured that these two groups of British Calvinist stock would avoid redundancy and competition in their attempted evangelization of the frontier by refraining from building a church of one denomination within five miles of that of the other, and by enabling clergy of either group to minister to one another’s congregation.

The problem for both of these denominations, however, was that, like the Episcopalians, they were so wedded to such conventions as an educated ministry and a formal order of public worship—both having an appeal primarily to the “better” classes—that they believed they could easily reach out to the rough and ready sorts attracted by the promise of frontier life. As Mark Noll points out in his essay in this volume, it was, instead, the emergent Methodists who were best equipped to thrive in a region where settlers were scattered, higher education and wealth in short supply, and denominational allegiance not to be taken for granted.

The “circuit riders” who rode themselves into exhaustion and early deaths were remarkably effective in spreading an interpretation of Christianity that emphasized not doctrine but direct experience of divine grace. These dedicated, if not highly educated, folk were most adept at devising new techniques of evangelization and organization that could reach the people of the frontier quite literally where they were. The emphasis on knowledge acquired through direct experience, a pragmatic flexibility in favoring effectiveness over tradition, and a skepticism about the value of formal education, were the religious counterparts of the ethos that would later empower Midwestern Anglo Protestants such as Thomas

Edison, Henry Ford, and Wilbur and Orville Wright in their quests for personal fortune attained through hands-on experience, innovation, and disciplined individual effort.

Despite this diffuse Methodist ethos, another theme of this foundational period dominated by the spread of evangelical Protestantism from east to west was the importance of education. T. Scott Miyakawa pointed out some time ago that a variety of Protestant denominations spearheaded early efforts on the Midwestern frontier towards the establishment of civic, and especially educational, institutions in the region.⁴ They were motivated in part at least by the desire to spread their versions of a Protestant Christianity in which religious information was conveyed primarily in verbal form, both spoken—from the pulpit—and written, in Scripture.

A telling example can be found in the career of William Holmes McGuffey, who, while a professor of ancient languages at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, began to edit the series of “eclectic readers” that would become a preeminent means of instruction in literacy throughout the region and beyond into the twentieth century (and that continue to inspire nostalgia among cultural conservatives into the twenty-first). Although McGuffey included excerpts from authors of established literary reputation, as well as biblical passages and exemplary stories of virtue rewarded and vice punished, his emphasis was on the practical tools of literacy and elocution as a means to this-worldly ends, fortified by a generic but distinctively Protestant emphasis on discipline, individualism, and personal and public morality.⁵ That Miami was, in its early days, essentially a Presbyterian institution dependent in part on public funding illustrates well both the importance that regional Protestants placed on education at all levels, as well as the rather blurry line between church and state in the realm of education at the time. (Indiana University had similar origins, in which religious goals and public funding went together with little protest.)

Even though education at all levels had its origins in a now-unthinkable mixture of religious and governmental initiative and support, the Midwest is distinguishable from other “benchmark” regions, such as the South and New England, because of the distinct pattern of higher education that emerged there during the nineteenth century. On the one hand, the “Yankee Exodus” out of New England brought with it as part of its cultural heritage a commitment to denominationally sponsored collegiate education. This resulted in a proliferation of colleges founded in the nineteenth century by Congregationalists (e.g., Marietta and Oberlin), Presbyterians (Albion, Knox, Wooster), Methodists (Ohio Wesleyan), Episcopalians (Kenyon), Roman Catholics (John Carroll, Marquette, Notre Dame), and many others. Most of these have survived to the present day, although denominational ties have in many cases become attenuated. On the other hand,

the region has historically been the seat of state-sponsored higher education, aided in part by the Morrill Act of 1863, which provided federal support for land-grant schools. Although religious connections existed even here—in addition to Indiana and Miami, one might cite the Roman Catholic priest Gabriel Richard's role in founding what would become the University of Michigan—these faded over the years as well.

The "Big Ten" state universities, together with myriad campuses founded in the wake of the G.I. Bill following World War II, have thus provided the region with an alternate track for wide-scale higher education. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the role of religiously affiliated schools in emphasizing loyalty to a particular tradition had begun to diminish in importance (although Notre Dame, for example, has become a nationally respected institution with a high percentage of Catholic enrollment, the number of Catholic students attending state or originally Protestant schools rose dramatically in the post-Vatican II decades).

Variants on these latter themes can be adduced in the subsequent decades of nineteenth-century Midwestern history. Lyman Beecher's Lane Seminary, for example, was to be torn apart during the 1830s by a band of students led by Theodore Dwight Weld who were adamantly opposed to the poor condition of people of color in surrounding Cincinnati, as well as the even worse fortunes of those enslaved directly across the Ohio River in Kentucky. (It was while in residence here with her father that Harriet Beecher Stowe had a chance to make a first-hand acquaintance with the "peculiar institution.") Weld soon led an exodus of his followers to the more sympathetic Oberlin College in northeastern Ohio, from whence they spread out to organize antislavery societies throughout the region's communities and their churches. After the Civil War, the same organizational and lobbying tactics pioneered by "Weld's Band of Seventy" would be taken up by the advocates of temperance; two of its most vociferous promoters, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, were founded, respectively, at Oberlin in 1874 and Cleveland in 1893.

The president of Oberlin at the time of the beginnings of organized antislavery in the region had been the evangelist Charles G. Finney. Finney, like Lyman Beecher, had earlier left Connecticut to put into practice an innovative, controversial, and highly effective series of "new measures" in his evangelistic preaching, directed especially at the displaced New Englanders who had left that region's harsh soil to seek their fortunes in upstate New York and a swatch across the lower Great Lakes region. Their spoor, still visible today, consists of the Federal and Greek Revival churches they built in the New England-style towns they founded, as well as in the plethora of liberal arts colleges originally based on firm religious principles. They were soon joined in this enterprise by Baptists, Catholics, Disciples, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Quakers, and other newcomers

who shared their confidence in the efficacy of a combination of literacy and disciplined faith in building a new commonwealth, morally upright and economically prosperous.

A final note on the establishment of a pan-regional (and incipiently national) religious and moral ethos in the region makes the transition from a primarily rural and small-town population to an urban predominance, especially east of the Mississippi. Chicago, which was rapidly emerging after the Civil War as the region's metropolis, came to symbolize nationally the power of commerce and its related virtues—efficiency, grand scale, and the subordination of all but the most powerful individuals to the good of the common enterprise. All of this was based, perhaps ironically, on the belief that individual perseverance would inevitably pay off in fortune, a conceit wasted on the immigrant stockyard workers of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. It is therefore not surprising that this most American of cities should become home base for the premier evangelists of the age, who practiced a calling distinctively American in origin and character.

During the 1870s, Dwight L. Moody forsook his job as a shoe salesman in Massachusetts for new opportunities in Chicago. Moody soon became successful not so much as a businessman but as a business-like promoter of evangelical religion, and before long became a free-lance religious professional. Following in Finney's footsteps, he and his musical director, Ira D. Sankey, attracted crowds in the tens of thousands through their combination of business-like efficiency, which attracted the support of newly rich tycoons with names like Armour and Wanamaker; "new measures," such as the calculated use of music in their programs; and a simplified, sentimentalized version of traditional Reformed Protestantism that appealed to the emotions and made few intellectual demands.

Moody's convert and successor, Billy Sunday, who began adulthood as a professional baseball player, continued in this strain by adding vaudevillian hi-jinks and an appeal to an emerging regional nativism to protract the success of Chicago-based evangelism into the World-War-I era. In his heyday, Sunday (derived, ironically, from the German *Sonntag*) played to the sensibilities of the time by denouncing the twin evil legacies of the "Hun": biblical criticism and beer. (He delighted his audiences by observing that, if Hell were turned upside down, one would find "Made in Germany" stamped on the bottom.) Sunday's popularity was eventually eclipsed in the 1920s by an incipiently national popular culture that was now neither religious nor anchored in the ethos of a particular region.

The Midwest as Microcosm and Mosaic

Another take on the Midwest arises from a consideration of its character as a mosaic of a wide variety of cultures in miniature, with each reflecting a continuing process of *immigration*—the in-coming of peoples from foreign climes—and

of *in-migration*—the movement of peoples from one part of the American nation to another. Although both of these processes have been characteristic of the nation as a whole since its inception, their playing out in the Midwest has had a distinctive character that has been significantly constitutive of the region's unique configuration. More particularly, we might say that the Midwest has been—and, to a significant degree, continues to be—a place in which peoples from the widest variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds have come and, after having arrived, have continued to preserve distinctive life-ways even while becoming in other important ways Americanized. It is a region in which the apparently conflicting processes of resistance and accommodation to “mainstream” norms have paradoxically taken place simultaneously. This is, to be sure, a matter more of degree than kind—much the same could be said of the New York and Los Angeles metropolitan areas—but here the process has been as much rural as urban.

Ohio—the author's home for the past third of a century—is a particularly good example of this phenomenon in its mix of urban, suburban, and rural population. Since 80 percent or more of its people live in the first two environments, the state is typical of the divide, roughly corresponding with the Mississippi River, between the more urban and industrial states of the eastern Old Northwest, and the more agricultural character of life on the prairies and plains to the west (though this would include a fair amount of Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin as well) Ohio remains remarkable for the persistence of distinctive cultures, usually involving a sizable religious component, in its various “micro-cultures.”

The northeast corner of Ohio was, in its earliest European-American phase, very intentionally a western extension of New England. This Western Reserve of Connecticut was comprised in part of “firelands” designated by that state as compensation to its residents who had suffered depredations by the British during the Revolution. Its primary city was named after Moses Cleaveland, a Connecticut man, and the region's early architecture and “churchscape” are deliberate echoes of a recently departed New England. These origins are illustrated vividly in the “typical New England meetinghouse on the village green” represented by the Congregational church in Tallmadge—a suburb of Akron—that graced the cover of *Life* magazine's Thanksgiving issue in 1944 as an icon of “traditional American values” during the years of world war.

Somewhat to the south and west, Holmes County is still home to the Amish people, whose landscape is notable for the absence of automobiles, telephone poles, and other artifacts of the technological culture these peaceably minded people (selectively) eschew in their nostalgia for the sixteenth-century Switzerland of their origins. Descending further to the south, one finds a continuing Quaker presence in Wilmington, as well as the descendants of Welsh Calvinists in Jackson and Gallia counties, where Greek revival chapels are still in

occasional use for gymnasiums—festivals of preaching and hymn-singing—now frequented mainly by Columbus-dwellers of Welsh origin. Westward and northward, several counties in west central Ohio—Greene, Mercer, Auglaize, Darke—boast landscapes consisting of flat, rich farmlands punctuated by aluminum-capped silos and a plethora of German Catholic churches designed in the fusion of Gothic and Romanesque styles popular in southern Germany at the time of this migration during the late nineteenth century.

Ohio's cities, much like their regional counterparts, are similarly complex in their mosaic-like ethnic qualities. Cincinnati, in the far southwest, shares with its Ohio River sister-city, Louisville, a fusion of British, German, and African-American cultural influences. Unlike the cities of the Great Lakes, the “New Immigration” of the late nineteenth century largely by-passed this area. Instead, the founding stocks included British Protestants, especially Presbyterians from Pennsylvania and Virginia; Germans of all religious persuasions, including Jews; Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed, freethinkers, and eventually American-generated German Methodists; Irish Catholics; and, in the twentieth century, significant numbers of African Americans from the South and white Appalachians, primarily from Kentucky and West Virginia, all heading north in an attempted escape from adverse social and economic conditions. The latter group, which has populated southern Ohio in increasing numbers since World War II began offering major employment possibilities, has brought with them the conservative evangelical strains of Holiness, Pentecostal, and Southern Baptist churches that have mushroomed in the region. They range in scale from tiny rural meeting houses to the giant megachurches that abound on the interstate highways and ring roads that surround Cincinnati and Dayton.

At the other end of the state, Cleveland—a city, like Detroit, eponymous with the collapse of “Rust Belt” urban centers beginning in the 1960s—is much more similar to its Great Lakes counterparts than to Ohio River valley communities. More like Chicago than Cincinnati, Cleveland is a mosaic of ethnic neighborhoods dating back to the “New Immigration” era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when vast numbers of southern and eastern Europeans came to meet the high demand for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs that the region's nascent industries—steel in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, automobiles in Detroit, meat-packing in Chicago—were rapidly creating. These newcomers settled in neighborhoods that developed along ethnic lines—Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Italians, Croatians, Greeks, Ukrainians—most of them Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Uniate Catholic (i.e., in communion with Rome but using liturgies of Orthodox provenance). Churches were the main institutions in these neighborhoods, frequently vast in scale, dominating the skyline visually, and offering both a symbol of continuing identity as well as social services not readily available in the public realm.

Urban politics in such cities became an exercise in the building of serviceable ethnic coalitions through the provision of relief, sympathy, and patronage positions in municipal agencies in return for unquestioning electoral allegiance. This "boss" system had developed earlier in East Coast cities such as Boston and New York, where the Irish perfected it to the degree that it became known as a political "machine." It was highly functional in these newer cities as well, and was often led by Irish Americans who had been, together with the Germans, the earliest of non-British Protestant stock to settle there. Chicago's Irish-American Richard Daley, the father of his namesake and eventual successor, was among the last of the big-city political bosses, who ruled unchallenged until his heavy-handed tactics and rhetoric against Vietnam War protesters aroused national revulsion during the 1968 Democratic-convention.

Yet another pattern of urban polity developed in Toledo during the 1890s. Sam "Golden Rule" Jones, a Welsh-born Methodist, made a substantial fortune in manufacturing. In contrast with many of the regional industrialists of his era, however, he attempted to manage his enterprise following what were essentially Social Gospel principles, and placed a sign in his factory proclaiming:

The Rule That Governs This Factory: "Therefore Whatsoever Ye Would That Men Should Do Unto You, Do Ye So Unto Them."⁶

Jones was elected mayor of Toledo, an ethnically mixed and financially troubled industrial city in northwest Ohio, in 1897. During his several terms in office, he attempted to apply a similar mixture of political progressivism and social Christianity to the city's affairs, with positive but limited results.

Washington Gladden, one of the best-known of the Social Gospel preachers, similarly used his base as pastor of the First Congregational Church located on Columbus's Broad Street—then as now a main artery boasting a variety of prestigious Protestant churches as well as the Catholic cathedral—to promote a similar application of Christian ethics to social issues. William T. Stead's best-selling *If Christ Came to Chicago* of 1894 is a prime Midwestern example of the Social Gospel novel genre, in which readers are urged to put Christian principles to work in the social interactions of everyday life.

Institutional churches, such as Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian and Cleveland's Plymouth Congregational, were another manifestation of the Social Christianity impulse. Such urban churches had facilities not only for worship but also for large-scale programming including cafeterias, both religious and secular education, and wholesome recreation such as billiards, bowling, and basketball. Although these programs were intended primarily as outreach, especially to the young, they have also been viewed as means of social control designed to co-opt workers rather than encourage them to address politically the root causes of their problems. The same appraisal has been applied to urban ventures such as

Chicago's Pacific Garden Mission, which combined material relief and spiritual evangelism to the poor. Protestant urban outreach, in any case, manifested itself in a variety of ways and presumably for a variety of motives, but seldom took very radical political form.

Urban churches served many of the same social functions as their rural counterparts, but in a much more intense and competitive fashion. As with organized labor, a movement that developed among the same urban ethnic constituency, the Roman Catholic Church offered "careers open to talent" as a parallel path for ambitious young men. Bishops and clergy of large parishes often became prominent and powerful community figures through various combinations of charisma, claims to spiritual authority, and political influence, especially on issues perceived as moral.

Perhaps the most conspicuous success in the broader political arena was Father Charles Coughlin of Royal Oak, Michigan, a northern suburb of Detroit. During the Depression era of the 1930s, Coughlin became nationally known as the "radio priest" who first avidly supported FDR's New Deal, then turned against Roosevelt and began to espouse anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi sympathies until he was silenced by his bishop. Catholic clergy throughout the region, such as Cincinnati's Peter Dietz and Chicago's Bishop Bernard Sheil, gained regional reputations as advocates of organized labor and helped educate their constituents in Catholic social teaching such as the "just wage" doctrine that had roots in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* ("Of New Things") in 1891.

Catholic outreach in the region's cities often took forms parallel to those maintained by Protestants, with an eye to protecting Catholics from Protestant influence. The earliest Catholic efforts in the realms of education and welfare were primarily responses of the needs of their—largely immigrant—constituencies, who could hope for little support from government at any level. Vast institutional complexes, staffed primarily by priests, brothers, and especially by orders of sisters, sprang up throughout both larger and smaller cities of the region and to some extent in rural areas as well.

Virtually every Midwestern city of any size boasted by the 1920s, and in many cases earlier, an institutional infrastructure consisting of churches and rectories, primary parochial schools and convents for teaching sisters, seminaries at both the high school and college levels maintained both by dioceses and religious orders, mother houses for orders of women religious, central Catholic high schools, private secondary academies staffed by religious orders, colleges for men and women, hospitals, orphan asylums, YM/YWCA-like urban shelters for newly arrived single young people, cemeteries, and in a few cases full-fledged universities.

The purposes of these complexes included the provision of social and cultural essentials both to the ordinary faithful, most of whom belonged to the immi-

grant working classes and were thus not sophisticated in the workings of the American social system, as well as to those in the particularly vulnerable situations of sickness and poverty. The Catholic leadership was sensitive to what they perceived as alternating Protestant hostility and outreach to these constituencies, and were notably successful in providing a set of alternatives to non-Catholic institutions to help insure group loyalty over the generations.

To a lesser extent Jews, who were generally content to utilize secular schools, mimicked Catholics in creating distinctively Jewish hospitals and cemeteries for their own people. In one significant court case, Jews, Catholics, and freethinkers made common cause in Cincinnati in 1869/70 in opposing the use of the King James Version of the Bible in the "common" (public) schools of that city and won on appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court. This decision resulted in a "deprotestantization" of the public-school system which like its counterparts in many American cities had been controlled by a non-denominational but nevertheless solidly Protestant group of middle-class citizens. Although Catholics enjoyed their symbolic victory they, like a number of traditional Jews and more conservative Lutherans and other evangelicals, nevertheless continued to maintain a parallel school system not only free of competing creeds but also aimed at instilling a positive, highly particularistic religious content.

Although Ohio at the state level and Chicago at the urban are particularly vivid examples of the mosaic character of regional settlement patterns, other examples easily adduce themselves and call attention to the heterogeneous character of ethnic and religious distribution across the region. Western Michigan, for example, is known as an enclave of Dutch settlement, as witnessed in tulip festivals and bumper stickers reading "If you're not Dutch, you're not much." Holland and Grand Rapids are also the homes respectively of Hope and Calvin colleges, affiliated with the more mainline Reformed Church of America and the strongly conservative Christian Reformed Church. This region tends to be strongly conservative in political issues, counterbalancing to some degree the overwhelmingly Democratic makeup of Detroit. Further west, other Dutch in Iowa and the Bohemians of Nebraska, which Willa Cather celebrated in her *My Antonia*, constitute significant regional ethnic enclaves.

As noted in essays in this volume by Lagerquist and Noll in particular, the most distinctive ethnic presences in the trans-Mississippi Midwest are those of Germans and various brands of Scandinavians, large numbers of whom continue to maintain allegiance to various branches of the Lutheran tradition. The numerical strength of German Americans, which also runs high in much of Ohio, is diluted in religious terms because of the division of Germans and their descendants into Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Jewish, and freethinking camps. Scandinavians, though divided originally along ethnic lines (German,

Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish), tended overwhelmingly towards Lutheranism—a tradition much more of an effective public presence on the American scene today than in its European homelands, where its established status, together with broader patterns of secularization, have deprived it of much of its influence. Even so, the Lutheran influence in the upper Great Plains region is less than hegemonic, since Methodists and Catholics also have deep roots in the region and continue to command allegiance. This phenomenon of ethnic and religious balance continues to be one of the region's distinguishing features—unlike the South, where an informal alliance of Evangelical denominations has maintained a virtual lock on regional religious culture for two centuries.

Religious Cultures and Civic Culture in the Region

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Midwest, or "Rust Belt," was a region that had seemingly touched bottom after a lengthy and painful exodus of its citizens to the Sunbelt, the younger in quest of employment and the older fleeing harsh weather. Even harder hit than the industrial territory to the east was the farm country of the Plains, where many towns were losing even the minimal critical mass of population to maintain their independent identity. Serious proposals have been advanced by environmentalists that the region had never been suited for sustained agriculture, and small-scale experiments in letting the area revert to prairie grasses have been launched here and there.

Nevertheless, the Midwest is still in business, even though its demographics have been changing in ways reflecting similar trends elsewhere. As a way of summarizing contemporary trends, we might look *ad seriatim* at the persistence of traditional religious communities and the impacts respectively on in-migrants, primarily from the South, and immigrants, mainly from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

Roman Catholics have from its beginnings played a major role in the settlement of the Midwest, with major concentrations in the cities abutting the Great Lakes, but widely distributed in farming communities as well. Philip Barlow's treatment of Midwestern demography notes that denominational numerical preponderance means—in every state in the region—a compound of Catholics and one or more other groups. Yet although the Catholic hierarchy has exerted considerable influence on civic affairs, especially in Chicago, and has built up an institutional infrastructure similar in scope to that of the Northeast, its ability to act as a hegemonic presence has been complicated by several factors.

In the first place, the Catholic population of the Midwest has been much more ethnically diverse than in the Irish-dominated Atlantic seaboard region. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Germans and Poles, as well as smaller groups such as Lithuanians, have challenged the power of the Irish, especially in

the sensitive areas of the creation and staffing of ethnic parishes in cities such as Chicago and Detroit. Germans and Poles both petitioned the Vatican to recognize this diversity officially, and by the early twentieth century Rome began to respond by appointing bishops of non-Hibernian descent. Although more extreme requests, as for separate ethnic dioceses, were ignored, a system of de facto ethnic parishes corresponding to urban settlement patterns was maintained for several decades. The shrill nativism of the Great War put an end to attempts to maintain the use of the German (or any other foreign) language in regional schools, including those maintained by the Catholic Church, and even German-descended bishops promoted administrative centralization and cultural standardization within their bailiwicks.

Another feature of Midwestern Catholicism that may correlate with this ethnic diversity has been the less imperial tone utilized by its spokesmen in public discourse. Although regional clergy and bishops could be no less authoritative (not to say authoritarian) towards their own flocks than their Northeastern counterparts, they have been less likely to emerge as nationally visible advocates for Catholic issues as, say, Cardinals Spellman and O'Connor in New York or Cardinals Cushing and Law in Boston. On the other hand, as Jay Dolan notes, moderate to liberal figures such as Chicago's late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Milwaukee's Archbishop Rembert Weakland—the latter embarrassed into resignation by the revelation of a youthful sexual peccadillo—have also added a note of moderation to regional discourse both on ecclesiastical and civic issues. A recent study of American Catholicism cites two Midwestern dioceses—Lincoln, Nebraska, and Saginaw, Michigan—as striking examples, respectively, of conservative and liberalizing forces at work in the American Catholic community.⁷

Regional Catholicism has also been affected significantly by broader demographic trends both within the Church and in the broader society. Chicago, Detroit, Omaha, and Toledo, to name only a few of the region's cities, have become hosts to a significant influx of Mexicans seeking work no longer primarily as migrant agricultural laborers but now in urban factories, such as meat-processing plants. These immigrants are predominantly Catholic and, following a time-honored pattern, have displaced older urban ethnic populations as the latter have moved to the suburbs. St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Chicago, for example, still serves the substantial Polish-American population reflected in its name, but has added a side altar dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe as a balance to another named for Poland's Our Lady of Czestochowa. Here, an established but diminishing Polish-American community is sharing a parish with more recently arrived Spanish-speaking co-religionists. In other cases, parishes have been closed down or consolidated.

It is in the realm of education that the Catholic presence within the broader society has been most apparent, both in the Midwest and elsewhere. As noted ear-

lier, the development of a separate Catholic-school system, from elementary through college, took place during the era in which Catholic-Protestant tensions were at a height in the region—Illinois and Wisconsin, around 1890, enacted laws, rapidly repealed, that placed significant limits on religiously sponsored education. The Catholic system flourished through the mid-twentieth century and expanded with the population explosion into the suburbs following World War II.

By the late 1960s, however, major changes were to become increasingly visible. The ecumenical spirit promoted by Vatican II, together with the election of a Roman Catholic president in 1960, began to defuse interreligious tension, and the need for an exclusively Catholic system of education designed to insulate children from the larger world began to seem doubtful. In addition, a precipitous decline in the number of Catholic religious professionals—teaching sisters as well as clergy—started to undercut the possibility of maintaining a cadre of celibate women dedicated to religious work and willing to teach at subsistence wages. The rapid flow of previously urban, ethnic Catholics out of the cities and into colleges—now increasingly state-supported—and the religiously heterogeneous, post-ethnic suburbs, did not so much erode Catholic loyalty to the Church as call into question the earlier “ghetto” mentality that undergirded a separatistic educational system. Catholic schools hardly disappeared; they did, however, become pricier as their staffs became increasingly secular and as their religious curriculum grew less rigid and defensive, and more social-ethics oriented.

Those parochial schools that remained in the urban cores began to shift their missions away from socializing the children of Catholic immigrants into the faith and toward providing inner-city youngsters, frequently non-Catholic African Americans, with a more disciplined educational experience than that perceived by their parents as available at local public schools. This broadening of social mission has correlated with the movement for government-funded vouchers that would enable families to enroll children in schools of their choice, whether publicly or religiously supported. Such programs were enacted in Milwaukee and Cleveland during the 1990s, and their constitutionality was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002 in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, a case in which the Cleveland program had been challenged. Although religious schools are maintained in the Midwest by a variety of religious groups, ranging from Reform Jews to Seventh-day Adventists to Black Muslims to Missouri- and Wisconsin-Synod Lutherans, the Catholic-school system is by far the largest and most likely to be affected should voucher programs expand significantly in future years. Catholics have perceived this not so much as a Catholic issue but, as in many other areas of public policy, one where their perception of civic right has allied them with other like-minded religious communities.

The Jews of the Midwest similarly have a history in some important ways distinct from that of their Eastern seaboard counterparts. During the nineteenth century, Cincinnati was a major area of German Jewish settlement as a river port where Jewish newcomers settled or from which they departed through the region, seeking their fortunes as itinerant merchants equipped with a backpack or wagon load of household goods. Those traveling retailers who did well frequently opened dry goods stores in the region's towns and cities, some of which—Lazarus and Elder Beerman, for example—grew into major department stores and chains. Cincinnati also became the eventual home of the Bavarian-born rabbi, Isaac Mayer Wise, who founded the nation's first rabbinical seminary and a variety of other pioneering organizations and institutions in the Queen City for the nation's emergent Reform movement. Although the headquarters of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (renamed in 2003 the Union for Reform Judaism) left Cincinnati for the more densely Jewish city of New York during the 1950s, Hebrew Union College retains the main campus of its seminary in its original Ohio venue.

Although Jews of a wide variety of origins and religious persuasions, including some Hasidim, eventually found their way to the Midwest, the character of the Jewish community in the region has never very closely resembled that of New York City, the national benchmark. The early and successful presence of German-speaking Jews was never rivaled by the later-arriving Eastern Europeans to the degree that it was further east, and the regional Jewish population base was never really sufficient or distinctive enough to provide a platform for the take-off of the wide variety of Jewish-American cultural production to which New York has been host for well over a century.

The demographics of Midwestern Jewry, however, have been similar to that of their counterparts across the nation in significant ways. The movement of virtually entire neighborhoods from the inner city to the nearer suburbs to more remote suburban regions is illustrated in many Midwestern cities. In Cincinnati, for example, Jews abandoned their Auburndale enclave during the 1960s for Amberley Village, which boasts at least four temples or synagogues, together with two Jewish-oriented country clubs, one for those of German descent and the other for "Russian Jews," as Eastern European immigrants were generally known. The older synagogues along Reading Road in Auburndale have been appropriated by African-American Baptist and Pentecostal congregations. Similarly, in Detroit, the racially based riots of 1967 led to a rapid and nearly total movement of the Motor City's Jewish community from the city's West Side north across Eight Mile Road into Troy, Birmingham, and other suburban communities.

On the whole, Jewish Midwesterners have maintained strong senses of local community. Non-religious organizations such as the Federation of Jewish Agencies have played a role in fostering such identity. So have housing patterns

brought about in part by voluntary neighborhood formation, which ensured access to houses of worship and other communal needs, as well as by earlier patterns of discrimination, such as the "point system" employed by realtors in Detroit's posh suburb of Grosse Pointe to exclude Jews and other allegedly undesirable ethnic, religious, and racial groups. There have been a few instances over time in which Midwestern Jews have asserted themselves in the public realm. During the 1920s and 1930s, for example, Detroit Jews became quite vocal over the public anti-semitism displayed by Henry Ford and Father Charles Coughlin, and generally succeeded in forcing them to tone down their obnoxious rhetoric. Similarly, a march by Neo-Nazis in Skokie, Illinois, a Chicago suburb with a large population of Holocaust survivors, became something of a *cause celebre* in 1979, although the marchers were legally successful in holding their demonstration. Most of the time, however, the region's Jews have chosen to avoid the public spotlight, and have quietly maintained their roles as good citizens and frequently successful players in business and professional circles. Michigan's Senator Carl Levin is a good but rather unusual example of a Midwestern Jew who has achieved high political office.

African Americans have lived in the Midwest since early times—one is reputed to have been the founder of Chicago—but began to arrive in massive numbers during the World-War-I era, attracted by the promise of jobs as well as freedom from the virtual serfdom in which they had been forced to live in much of the South. They settled overwhelmingly in urban areas, close to employment and sheltered frequently in neighborhoods recently abandoned by white ethnic groups, as illustrated earlier in our discussion of Jewish demographic patterns. The hierarchy of black denominational clusters asserted itself here, with the middle class supporting the various Methodist churches, Baptists further down the pecking order, and storefront congregations of "sanctified"—Holiness and Pentecostal—churches at the bottom.

It was in Depression-era Detroit, however, that a considerably less traditional movement arose in a black neighborhood. It was here that half-legendary W.D. Fard—one of several variants of his name—briefly carried on a career as a door-to-door silk peddler, spreading the message of the Nation of Islam—the "Black Muslims"—as he went until he vanished. His movement was continued by Elijah Poole, who renamed himself Elijah Muhammad and went on to recruit his most famous, but ultimately disloyal, disciple, Malcolm Little—later Malcolm X—originally from the vicinity of Lansing, Michigan. Although the movement would flourish in New York, Boston, and other cities as well, Detroit and Chicago remained major centers until the movement split and dwindled after Elijah Muhammad's passing. Other leaders of new religious movements, such as Detroit's Prophet Jones, attracted short-run followings as well.

More successful, however, have been more "mainstream," usually Baptist, clergy such as Detroit's C.L. Franklin—father of the singer Aretha Franklin—as well as Chicago's Jesse Jackson, sometime candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, father of a Chicago Congressman, and highly visible political activist. Large urban black churches and their clergy have frequently been active in municipal politics, especially as a number of regional cities—Cleveland, Detroit, Gary—developed predominantly black populations.

Predominantly white Protestant churches have generally followed national trends, although with some intraregional diversification. The "mainline" denominations, which once dominated urban thoroughfares such as Detroit's Woodward Avenue and Indianapolis's Meridian Street, often shifted their bases of operation to the suburbs as their congregations moved in that direction. Their old houses of worship, when not demolished, have often been taken over by newcomer groups, at times within the same denomination, or have occasionally managed to draw a substantial congregation from throughout a metropolitan area, as in the case of Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian Church. The impact their clergy once exerted on municipal affairs—as illustrated in Reinhold Niebuhr's pastorate of a German Reformed parish in Detroit in the 1920s—began to dwindle as their constituencies shifted and as the old mainline style of quietly working behind the scenes to influence civic leaders began to give way to the more confrontational and controversial tactics of the Civil Rights era. Nevertheless, the continuing reality of the "Lutheran Belt" west of the Mississippi, together with a quiet but persistent presence of middle-class religious folkways throughout much of the region—less dramatic than in the South but much deeper than in most of Protestant America—makes the mainline churches an on-going force in the shaping of regional public culture.

Another major challenge to mainline Protestantism has been the rise of evangelicalism, beginning especially in the 1970s with the rise of the New Religious Right. Fundamentalism was not without roots in the area, as demonstrated vividly in the career of William Bell Riley at Minneapolis's First Baptist Church during the 1920s. Indiana has also been for some time an enclave of religious and political conservatism, with much of the state's public life during the 1920s having been dominated by the Ku Klux Klan. The state's distinctive demographics, with much of its population arriving from the South rather than the North and East, has much to do with this phenomenon and accounts for similar tendencies in parts of southern Illinois and Ohio. In the latter state especially, extensive in-migration from Kentucky and West Virginia in recent decades has brought with it a proliferation of Southern Baptist and Pentecostal churches. Together with the southward outflow of Rust Belt refugees, who have tended to be ethnic Catholic and union-oriented (albeit with many "Reagan Democrats" among them), this demographic shift may account for the state's rightward tilt in politics in recent years.

Although Ohio's Republican leadership has tended towards the political center, the forces of the Religious Right have been substantial enough to result in extensive hearings on the inclusion of "intelligent design"—a variant of the earlier anti-evolution movement known as "creationism"—in the state's public school curricula in 2002, even though this movement was ultimately defeated. Such a policy was briefly adopted in Kansas in 1999, although it was speedily rescinded after the 2000 elections. In another sensitive area of public policy, a number of court challenges to the display of religious symbols, especially the Ten Commandments, on public property have arisen in the region. These challenges have been uniformly opposed by conservative evangelicals while being sustained by the courts. In most cases, however, these cases have arisen in Indiana and southern Ohio, areas that are more culturally aligned with the South than with other parts of the Midwest.

Even though many evangelical churches, especially in the southern reaches of the region, are small and rural, maintaining school buses to collect lower-income followers, the same terms can hardly be used to characterize religious enterprises such as the Willow Creek Community Church in the suburbs of Chicago. A "megachurch" by any set of criteria, with membership well into the five-digit range, Willow Creek is a study in cultural adaptation, with a physical plant and extensive programming designed in the light of market-research surveys conducted to see what would appeal to the middle- to upper-middle-class residents of the emergent surrounding area. Although Willow Creek's doctrinal statement is profoundly conservative, its staff publicly utilizes an idiom based on popular culture and psychology, with little outward emphasis on neo-Calvinist doctrine. Similar megachurches—often preferring terms like "Christian Life Center" rather than the more traditional "church" as self-descriptors—flourish in many other of the southern part of the region's metropolitan centers, especially along the interstate beltways that surround cities and provide easy on-off access to a widely distributed clientele. Sophisticated agents of evangelicalism can be found in Minneapolis, where Billy Graham's ministries are based, as well as in academically rigorous and respected colleges such as Wheaton near Chicago and Calvin in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A final major theme in delineating the contemporary Midwestern religious landscape is the influx of religious traditions primarily from Asia and the Middle East that has resulted from the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965. Such religions are not entirely new to the region; in fact, the oldest Muslim mosque in the nation can be found in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and the most significant long-established Muslim community can be found in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn. Much newer, though hardly confined to the region, is the phenomenon of the Islamic center, a distinctively American combination of worship space—that is,

a mosque—with cultural, social, educational, and athletic facilities, on the model of the old urban Protestant institutional church, the Catholic parish, the Jewish synagogue-community center, and the more recent evangelical megachurch. It is not clear which example of this hybrid is the oldest in the nation, although the one that lies in the western suburbs of Indianapolis has been around for some time.

Of these ancient but, in the American context, relatively new religions, Buddhism is not conspicuous in the region, although small temples can be found in many metropolitan areas. Hinduism is more visible; such Hindu temples as those on the outskirts of Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio, for example, follow the general patterns of American temple design analyzed by Joanne Punzo Waghorne in her seminal essay focused on an example in suburban Washington, D.C.⁸ In these structures, the lower level functions as social and cultural space—on the model of the Islamic center and its precedents—while the upper level displays images of a variety of deities, reflecting regional patterns of worship in India and here arrayed in a juxtaposition unknown in the mother country.

Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims are too new to the region to be significant players as yet in the various public discourses, alliances, and battles over political and civic culture. Sociologically, they tend to resemble the Jewish example, since many bring with them from their ancestral homelands considerable cultural capital in the form of education and success orientation that have permitted them to skip over the usual first-generation sojourn in the inner city and attain very rapidly instead a secure place in suburban prosperity. There are certainly exceptions to this generalization: the older Muslim communities, for example, are populated largely by blue-collar families who left the Middle East for the opportunities offered by Ford and other heavy industries, and by no means all of their descendants have successfully made the climb into the white collar world and beyond. The newer immigrants are in some ways caught between two political worlds: while their economic interests and traditionalist morals may ally them with conservative forces, their outsider status may make them sensitive to the sorts of nativist suspicions engendered by the September 11, 2001 debacle.

Concluding Unscientific Postscript

It would be easy to conclude that the Midwest is a figment of the imagination. As noted earlier, the region has no specific boundaries other than those imposed by the arbitrary political divisions represented by state lines. Eastern Ohio and Michigan have more in common with western Pennsylvania and New York than with North Dakota and Iowa, while the latter are in some respects cultural soulmates more of eastern Colorado and Montana than their Great Lakes counterparts. The Mississippi is arguably the most important regional dividing line.

Of course, ambiguous cultural boundaries to some extent characterize all regions. Hence, for pragmatic purposes in the Religion by Region series, a rather separate Alaska has been grouped with Washington and Oregon to form the "Pacific Northwest" region; landlocked Nevada has been paired with California to make up the "Pacific." Even comparatively and traditionally coherent New England requires discerning eyes to apprehend what remains distinctive about it and what is merely an expression of national trends. And like the Pacific, the Pacific Northwest, and every other region, New England can be variously divided into subregions. As Stephen Prothero makes clear in New England's contribution to this series, Essex County, Vermont, with 6,000 people, is a very different place than Fairfield County, Connecticut, with nearly 900,000.

So Midwestern identity may be distinctive for being indistinct, but it is not unique. And as previous chapters have demonstrated, the Midwest has its own subregions; as elsewhere, these could, for varying purposes, be conceived of as smaller regions in their own right. Keeping all this in mind allows context for generalizations concerning what we have defined as the Midwest that might otherwise be dangerous.

In the western (trans-Mississippi) Midwest of the plains and prairies, population is thin and getting thinner; agriculture—though challenged at the level of the family farmer—is still highly important; and cultural and religious diversity is less dramatic than farther east. Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists are the largest religious groups; with the exception of Lutherans in the northern stretch of the region, however, none is dominant. The traditional, if eroding, division of the twin cities into St. Paul (the cathedral site) Catholics and Minneapolis Lutherans parallels that of Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon, where Catholics and Lutherans each drive the automobile brand, Fords or Chevys, sold by their coreligionist dealers. Although none of these groups is exactly noted for its irrepressible liberalism, the political independence of the region certainly reflects something of the spirit of civic responsibility and ability to coexist gracefully with theologically incorrect neighbors that has emerged out of generations of shared experience and cooperation.

The lower part of the western region is well populated with the same ethnic and religious mixes, but its political culture differs somewhat from its northerly counterpart. Although cities such as Kansas City and St. Louis remain reliably Democratic, reflecting their substantial minority populations, the rural dominance of the region is reflected in its increasingly conservative politics: the impulse of distrust of urban culture permeates much of the political and moral culture of this seedbed of William Jennings Bryan-style populism. Even here, the quirkiness of Iowa, home of the early Democratic caucuses, does not exactly counterbalance the region's ethos, but does demonstrate its complexity.⁹

The Great Lakes and Ohio River valley parts of the Midwest are even more complicated. As in the western region, the southern tier of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, abutting the Ohio and the former slave-holding border states to the south, tends towards religious and political conservatism anchored in a mix of German Catholic and evangelical Protestant religious cultures. The northern, Great Lakes area, which begins in Buffalo and culminates in Milwaukee, is a great urban expanse that has experienced dramatic economic and social decline followed by modest, scattered recoveries during the past few decades. Once dominated by labor unions and big-city political bosses supported by a broad ethnic mix and the Catholic Church, the region's "Reagan Democrats"—the product of a post-Vietnam era disillusionment of working people with the perceived cultural left turn of their traditional party, especially with regard to abortion and other issues of sexuality and sexual identity—have become something of a political wild card. Ohio has been especially affected by this rightward drift, most likely reflecting its growing Appalachian population. Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, however, along with neighboring Pennsylvania and Minnesota, still contain enough residual social and economic progressive sentiment to make them resistant, for example, to the "red state tide" of the 2000 presidential elections.

What gives the Midwest whatever consistency it may possess as a region arises more out of a system and spirit of balances than any universal specific characteristics. City, country, and suburbs; manufacturing, farming, and commerce; immigrants from the Hmong in Minneapolis to Armenians in Detroit; Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus; and white evangelical, African-American, and mainline Protestants; all play their roles in the region in general and in many of its constituent states and metropolitan areas as well. Seldom radical, Midwesterners can be liberal, middle of the road, conservative, or quirky; Good Government Progressives or xenophobic urban populists. In short, don't expect readily and consistently to discover some Midwestern "essence;" look instead at the mix and at the dynamics at work within the particular mixture under examination.

While it is difficult to point to a Midwestern essence, the closer look made possible by the essays in this volume do reveal a region with its own character and its own manifestations of religion in this particular public culture. The Asian and Middle Eastern religionists who have poured into the region in the past generation have forced, by their presence, a renegotiation of the civic culture they found here. The negotiations are, as Raymond Williams correctly points out, local versions of a national story. Yet the immigrants' negotiate with more than a nation; they negotiate with local and regional neighbors.

These neighbors are not wholly interchangeable with those in other regions. Proportionately fewer immigrants and proportionately more long-term Americans than on the East and West coasts conduct this informal negotiation in

the Midwest, and this mix changes the cultural consciousness from what it might otherwise be. Similarly, the Midwestern region into which the immigrants enter is more Caucasian than anywhere in the United States except New England. The region is, in a broad vertical band in its western side, more thoroughly religiously affiliated than the rest of America.

While not truly dominant in most places, every state in the region is nonetheless suffused with a Catholicism that is, by comparison, absent in the South. And the Catholics who reside in the Midwest are the different breed written about by Jay Dolan, a breed more German and with an (admittedly eroding) legacy more open to reform and experiment than, say, the Irish Catholic legacy that confronts other immigrants when arriving in New England. The Midwest immigrants encounter is also more diffusely Methodist than anywhere outside the South, and beyond even the South it is Methodist in such a way that makes Methodism the largest of all denominations in nearly 200 counties in a horizontal belt spanning the region from Kansas and Nebraska to Ohio. This diffusion of Methodism into the culture has expression in ways worth remarking and begging further inspection.

As the political scientists John Green and James Guth have put it, United Methodism is at once the "church of the golden mean" and the "church of the large standard deviation;" that is, it's a church that holds the middle ground while encompassing a wide range of viewpoints among its members. Methodism emphasizes personal spiritual discipline (like the more conservative evangelical denominations) and social reform (like the rest of the liberal mainline denominations). Traditional Methodists, Green and Guth have found, combine relatively conservative views on social issues like abortion, school prayer, pornography, and the "traditional family," with relatively liberal views on economic issues like social welfare spending and aid to minorities. All in all, Green and Guth propose, "the distinctive contribution of Methodism may well lie in its potential to both contain diverse social stands and knit together gaps within the social fabric."¹⁰ This, it seems clear, precisely encapsulates the characteristic Midwestern style.

Furthermore, if Mark Noll's provocative speculation holds under further scrutiny, the Methodist (and even broader Holiness) sensibility may be finding its latter-day expression in the Midwestern megachurches that are influencing American notions of what denominations are. In the Midwest (though not necessarily in other parts of the country) this new form of community seems linked to a deeper impulse to subordinate partisan politics to community building—a theme treated, among other places, in DeAne Lagerquist's probe of Midwestern Lutherans and Raymond Williams's examination of recent religious immigrants.

Every region of the United States is idiosyncratic in the local variations of its religious composition; the Midwest is no exception. Such local differences naturally affect public policy and culture. In Ohio's Wayne County, south of

Cleveland, for example, the Amish and Mennonites outnumber all other denominations. Further south, in Holmes County, Old Order Amish alone constitute one-third of all religious adherents, while Amish and Mennonite groups combine to make up 63 percent, three times their proportion in Pennsylvania's celebrated Lancaster County. In Holmes and adjacent counties, in fact, resides the largest concentration of Amish in the world, 50,000 strong. Virtually no crime occurs in Holmes county; the first gun-related homicide since the 1950s took place in 2003. The Amish ordinarily shun state and national elections, but, encouraged in a particular stance by their bishops, they can control local ones when an issue important to them arises.

In 1998, public Highland High School in eastern Holmes County built a new gymnasium. Behind this success, though, was much community exertion. When the need for the gym was first pushed forward, the Amish, who cease schooling after eighth grade and deemed it unjust to have to pay for the gym, turned out in force to defeat a general levy. In response, non-Amish "English," in good Amish fashion, solved the problem by privately collecting funds. This precise event could not have occurred in Arizona or Vermont or Georgia.

Despite all local variations, though, the Midwest is perhaps the region that more than any other retains a strong influence of mainline Protestantism, anchored by the Lutheran and Methodist aspects earlier alluded to and augmented by the considerable presence of The United Church of Christ, American (northern) Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian Church (USA), and, in smaller spheres, the Episcopal Church. The tolerant inclinations deriving in good part from this mainline influence, combined with the vertical and national "Bible suspender" of religious adherence to which Philip Barlow drew attention in laying out the region's demography, may even make it possible to assert something more. Perhaps the Midwest combines the pluralist religious ethos of the Mid-Atlantic with the churchgoing habits of the South.

When we add to all this the unique timing and history of the region's settlement, immigration patterns, and economic thrust; when we recall religion's competition with political and economic power in the great cities of the former "Rust Belt," exemplified here by Elfriede Wedam and Lowell Livezey's account of Chicago, "nature's (transforming) metropolis;" when we attend to the region's peculiar patterns of rural, urban, and suburban relations and their cultural and religious dynamics and implications explored by Rhys Williams; we can glimpse, at last, a distinctive cultural recipe. In the context of this recipe, the intersections of religion and the public realm provide the potential for striking and subtle fascinations that belie the region's reputation as bland.

Although there is, then, a distinctive region to be discerned within various artificial boundaries, it remains true that, more than any other region in the country,

the Midwest's identity is blurred. As suggested in this volume's Introduction, this blurred identity is, at least in part, because the Midwest is so often taken, symbolically and demographically, by insiders and by those without, as America's embodiment, its most encompassing microcosm. In this construction, the Midwest is the "America" region, the country's "common denominator" (to call again upon the language of the sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd, who believed, almost a century ago, that they had found the nation's "Middletown" in Muncie, Indiana). And we have seen that the secular and religious Midwest does indeed reflect many American traits. It would be a mistake, however, for any Midwesterners to conclude that they are just like the rest of the country, and the rest of the country just like them. For the Midwest is measurably and intuitively distinct from the "Fluid Identities" of the Pacific region, the "None Zone" in the Pacific Northwest, the evangelical cast of the "Distinctive South," and every other region in the United States. If the Heartland is extraordinarily ordinary, it is so in relation to an imagined composite nation, not to any one of its constituent parts.

Endnotes

1. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).
2. The correct pronunciation is "GRAA-shitt"
3. Barbara M. Cross, ed., *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), I, 253.
4. T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).
5. See Elliott J. Gorn, eds., *The McGuffey Readers: Selections from the 1879 Edition* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998).
6. Andrew R.L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 222.
7. Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), chapter 15.
8. Joanne Punzo Waghorne, "The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World: The Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington, D.C.," in Robert A. Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 103-130.

9. See Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (3rd ed.) (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 8.
10. John C. Green and James L. Guth, "United Methodists and American Culture: A Statistical Portrait," in William B. Lawrence, Dennis M. Campbell, and Russell E. Richey, eds., *The People(s) Methodist, Vol. 2: Forms and Reforms of Their Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press: 1998), 23, 43, 45.

APPENDIX

In order to provide the best possible empirical basis for understanding the place of religion in each of the regions of the United States, the Religion by Region project contracted to obtain data from three sources: the North American Religion Atlas (NARA); the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS); and the 1992, 1996, and 2000 National Surveys of Religion and Politics (NSRP).

NARA For the Project, the Polis Center of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis created an interactive Web site that made it possible to map general demographic and religious data at the national, regional, state-by-state, and county-by-county level. The demographic data were taken from the 2000 Census. The primary source for the religious data (congregations, members, and adherents) was the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Survey (RCMC) compiled by the Glenmary Research Center. Because a number of religious groups did not participate in the 2000 RCMS—including most historically African-American Protestant denominations—this dataset was supplemented with data from other sources *for adherents only*. The latter included projections from 1990 RCMC reports, ARIS, and several custom estimates. For a fuller methodological account, go to <http://www.religionatlas.org>.

ARIS The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2001), carried out under the auspices of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York by Barry A. Kosmin, Egon Mayer, and Ariela Keysar, replicates the methodology of the National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI 1990). As in 1990 the ARIS sample is based on a series of national random digit dialing (RDD) surveys, utilizing ICR, International Communication Research Group in Media, Pennsylvania, national telephone omnibus services. In all, 50,284 U.S. households were successfully interviewed. Within a household, an adult respondent was chosen using the "last birthday method" of random selection. One of the distinguishing features of both ARIS 2001 and NSRI 1990 is that respondents were asked to describe themselves in terms of religion with an open-ended question: "What is your religion, if