



Southern Crossroads: Perspectives on Religion and Culture (Religion in the South)

From The University Press of Kentucky

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The South has always been one of the most distinctive regions of the United States, with its own set of traditions and a turbulent history. Although often associated with cotton, hearty food, and rich dialects, the South is also noted for its strong sense of religion, which has significantly shaped its history. Dramatic political, social, and economic events have often shaped the development of southern religion, making the nuanced dissection of the religious history of the region a difficult undertaking. For instance, segregation and the subsequent civil rights movement profoundly affected churches in the South as they sought to mesh the tenets of their faith with the prevailing culture. Editors Walter H. Conser and Rodger M. Payne and the book's contributors place their work firmly in the trend of modern studies of southern religion that analyze cultural changes to gain a better understanding of religion's place in southern culture now and in the future. *Southern Crossroads: Perspectives on Religion and Culture* takes a broad, interdisciplinary approach that explores the intersection of religion and various aspects of southern life. The volume is organized into three sections, such as "Religious Aspects of Southern Culture," that deal with a variety of topics, including food, art, literature, violence, ritual, shrines, music, and interactions among religious groups. The authors survey many combinations of religion and culture, with discussions ranging from the effect of Elvis Presley's music on southern spirituality to yard shrines in Miami to the archaeological record of African American slave religion. The book explores the experiences of immigrant religious groups in the South, also dealing with the reactions of native southerners to the groups arriving in the region. The authors discuss the emergence of religious and cultural acceptance, as well as some of the apparent resistance to this development, as they explore the experiences of Buddhist Americans in the South and Jewish foodways. *Southern Crossroads* also looks at distinct markers of religious identity and the role they play in gender, politics, ritual, and violence. The authors address issues such as the role of women in Southern Baptist churches and the religious overtones of lynching, with its themes of blood sacrifice and atonement. *Southern Crossroads* offers valuable insights into how southern religion is studied and how people and congregations evolve and adapt in an age of constant cultural change.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Southern Crossroads will overturn old ideas that southern religion is, above everything else, emotional and anti-intellectual and apart from and opposed to the direction of the modern world. . . . It is exciting to see so much good scholarship on southern religious life, past and present."?Ted M. Ownby, author of *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865–1920*?Ted M. Ownby

"An indispensable collection of essays as varied and engaging as the region they interpret. Using a diversity of approaches and considering multiple traditions, this landmark volume analyzes religion's diverse expressions in music, food, art, literature, and politics. Especially useful for courses in American Studies, U.S. religious history, and Southern Studies."?Thomas A. Tweed, author of *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*

"These essays vividly illustrate the diversity of religious life in the South and the myriad ways in which religion is joined with civil devotions to music, literature, folkways, food, manners, landscape and other aspects of everyday life in the region. This is fascinating reading and a perfect introduction to the complex and volatile interplay of tradition with the shifting priorities of Southern culture."?John Corrigan, Department of Religion, Florida State University

"Dissects the intricacies of Southern religion and the interplay of religion and culture in daily life."?UNC Wilmington News"?UNC Wilmington News

"Anyone with even a passing interest in the ways religion is in, with, and under the multiracial culture of the American South will find Southern Crossroads an absolute treasure. Everyone who focuses attention on religion in the South should?and most will?thank Walter Conser, Rodger Payne, and the University Press of Kentucky bringing this important and immensely useful anthology to us. We are shown a rich variety of southern places where religion lurks unnoticed, with imaginative and insightful perspectives, by many of the region's superstar interpreters. No one can emerge from its pages without being more enlightened and even more intrigued by the South and its increasingly diverse religious style. What more can you ask of a book? ? Andrew M. Manis, Macon State College"?Andrew Manis

"Taken as a whole, these essays help illuminate perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the most self-conscious region of the nation."?F. M. Szasz, *Choice*

"The list of contributors to Southern Crossroads reads like a who's who in southern religious studies."?Southern Historian

"Southern Crossroads puts the new religious history squarely at the center of the question of what religion meant and did in making many Souths over the past two centuries. It is the story of people expressing their religious selves on their own terms more than a history of churches. That is the South to tell about, as these authors know so well."?Randall M. Miller, *The Journal of Southern History*

"A number of thoughtful and provocative essays that collectively confirm the centrality of religion in southern history and culture."?North Carolina Historical Review

About the Author

Walter H. Conser Jr. is professor of history and religion at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. He is the author of *A Coat of Many Colors: Religion and Society along the Cape Fear River of North Carolina*. Rodger M. Payne is associate professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and is editor of the *Journal of Southern Religion*. He is the author of *The Self and the Sacred: Conversion and Autobiography in Early American Protestantism*.

Users Review

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Gale Taylor:

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