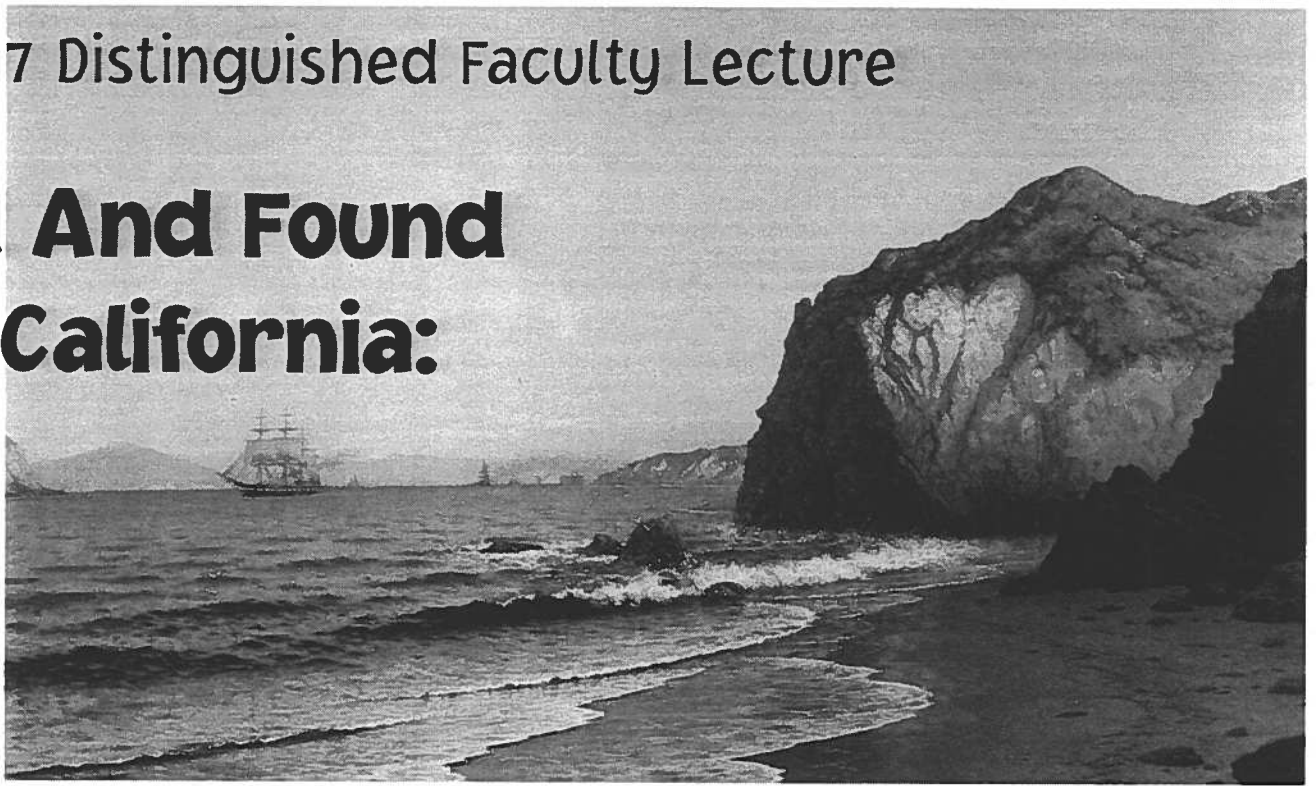


The 1997 Distinguished Faculty Lecture

# Lost And Found in California:



## Religious Historians Discover the Pacific



Presented by Dr. Eldon Ernst  
Professor of American Church History  
American Baptist Seminary of the West

Wednesday, November 19, 7:00 PM  
Chapel, Pacific School of Religion  
1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley

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## LOST AND FOUND IN CALIFORNIA

### AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORIANS DISCOVER THE PACIFIC

Eldon G. Ernst

On Sunday, October 23, 1983 a notable event occurred in San Francisco. A celebration of music, word, and prayer commemorated the 500th birthday of the great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther. Leaders of the Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Lutheran traditions took part in the service. Representatives of many other denominations marched in the processional singing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Choral settings from the Greek Orthodox Service framed the liturgy. Most remarkable, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Francisco opened the ceremony, and the event took place in St. Mary's Cathedral.

Reformation-rooted Protestant Christianity thus was recognized by a broad panorama of world Christian traditions that had lived side-by-side for well over a century in the strongly Catholic City of Saint Francis by the Golden Gate. Representing American Baptists, while a member of the Franciscan School of Theology faculty, I felt much at home at this interfaith gathering --as a "Baptiscan."

St. Mary's Cathedral had burned in 1961. Ground-breaking for construction took place in 1965, and the new Cathedral was completed in 1970. It was the first Roman Catholic Cathedral in the world built according to the precepts of the Second Vatican Council. New in many ways, including ultra-modern architecture, the old tradition remained intact with a brick floor in the sanctuary representing the Spanish mission heritage of early California. For me, an American religious historian living on the Pacific Rim, the 1983 ecumenical celebration in this architectural landmark of California sacred spaces was a magnificent event of symbolic historic proportions --the place, the people, the event.

I arrived in California from Connecticut thirty years ago (1967) to teach in the five year old Graduate Theological Union (GTU). Culture shock was intense but brief. That Summer the streets of Haight Ashbury and Telegraph Avenue became internationally famous. In the wake of the 1964 free speech movement had come waves of anti-Viet Nam war demonstrations, thrusting the long-time famous University of California into a new lime-light, even as student rebellions spread nationwide.

My office at the Baptist seminary overlooked Peoples' Park, a new sacred place for "revolutionary" rallies against "the establishment" (meaning police, businesses, government, the University, churches, etc). We in the GTU became caught up in the mayhem, pulled between the "revolution" and the "establishment," for there was no escape from the turmoil and its causes. Walking across the University of California campus between Dwight Way and "holy hill" meant passing through the occupied military zone. Religion either was at the heart of the matter or irrelevant, "relevance" being the test of everything. Old religious traditions (such as the GTU schools represented) struggled within the explosion of new religious movements that represented aspects of the counter culture. In this atmosphere we intended to carry on innovative theological education and doctoral programs in religious studies. The challenge was not unique to the GTU, but the Berkeley scene was distinctive, and the GTU itself was an experiment that some even then said could happen only in Berkeley.

During my first year the young GTU completed its roster of nine member schools. I too was young, a 28 year old novice just completing my Ph.D. and starting my first regular teaching job. But in another sense I also was old, for the prevailing claim on the street and in the classroom was "you can't trust anyone over thirty." I had less than two years of credibility left, enough at least to see me through my first appointment. Besides, I was new to the scene, and never before had I been to a place where "new" carried such weight.

I had come on a one-year appointment as instructor in church history. My Yale mentors, with an air of rich New England provincialism that only later would I recognize as such, had encouraged me to accept this tenuous appointment, arguing that one should not miss an opportunity to spend a year in Berkeley (like a once in a lifetime chance to visit some far off exotic foreign land); but they cautioned me not to get lost "out there." By lost, they meant don't stay too long, so as to become addicted, but return to civilization after a spell; come back to your intellectual home --as if it never could be that one might be "lost" in New England the way one might be lost in California. But were one actually to settle in this far Pacific rim of the continent, I was led to believe, it should be in Berkeley --once known as "the Athens of the West."

Alas, I did become lost in Berkeley --lost in an historiographical quest for a new Pacific Coast perspective on American religious history. Asking the historical questions what? when? where? why? and so what? in California became an intellectual and religious adventure.

When I began teaching in Berkeley, like most seasoned graduate students I thought I had a firm grasp of my specialized

field and discipline. Why not? I had studied with a master (Sydney Ahlstrom) in one of the centers of historical studies. Like most newly-credentialed professors I could enter the classroom cautiously confident that although I had but scratched the surface of my field, at least I probably knew more than would most of the students.

At least I new lots about the Puritans, their old world ancestors and new world descendants, the "stamp of Geneva" in Protestant New England surrounded by the stamp of Trent in Catholic New Spain and New France. I knew about the Great Awakening, the enlightenment, and the First Amendment to the new Federal Constitution. I knew about religion on the moving western frontier, about the new multi-ethnic immigrant Roman Catholics and Jews, about abolitionism and the rise of southern evangelicalism both black and white. I knew about world missions in the context of American manifest destiny ideology. I knew about urbanization, industrialism, new social sciences contributing to new theologies and social gospels, and increasing religious diversity as the twentieth century dawned; and finally I knew about modernism and fundamentalism, then neo-scholasticism and neo-orthodoxy, process theology and the ecumenical movement, and so forth.

It was a clear but complex story that commonly was given meaning within the centuries of relentless westward movement of Christian civilization from the Mediterranean northwestward across Europe, then the Atlantic, then in the spirit of manifest destiny across North America to the Pacific and beyond. It was, essentially, the American religious history within the context of European church history that I had been taught at one of the North Atlantic community's great old centers of learning.

This history thus carried the authority of time-tested historiographical orthodoxy, and it could be interpreted in a very enlightened mid-twentieth century manner, with modern sensitivity to the various races and ethnicities and religious cultures that had appeared along the way. One could even interpret the American religious narrative as the rise and culmination of the great Puritan epoch, as my teacher Sydney Ahlstrom did in his monumental book entitled A Religious History of the American People, published finally in 1972 after twenty years of research.

In this great book Ahlstrom told a convincing story because, of course, it was a true story --as true as history stories can be. But even though it included more of the American people than ever before had appeared in such a story, it still was not the whole story and not the only possible perspective for the telling of such a story. Indeed, one might say that it was not the only true story about the topic. It was "A history" not "the history."

Everyone in the field knew that Ahlstrom's great book (known by his students as "the book") had ended one stage and introduced a new stage in American religious historiography. He had balanced his Puritan epoch theme (which was quite conventional) with the new theme of religious pluralism that by the 1960s had become a major motif. Still, "the book" had amassed such a vast expanse of the story that those left out became conspicuous. This was true for those who had lived very long in California or anywhere in the Pacific Far West. They appeared in about a dozen of the 1,158 pages of Ahlstrom's magisterial history. Indeed, over 99 % of this most expansive account of American religious history ever written confined the story to the eastern half of the continent, as if little of significance or interest had occurred in the western half.

Apparently by the end of the 1960s the guild of American religious historians had not yet discovered the Pacific. But that was about to change --slowly, but surely; and the GTU has figured centrally in the discovery. Or, one might also say that the GTU has thrived as an indigenous expression of the Pacific region that only recently has made a significant appearance in American religious historiography.

A major such appearance took place in June of 1977 when the GTU hosted a National Conference on the Study of New Religious Movements in America, with support of the Ford Foundation. The conference helped inaugurate the GTU's new program for the Study of New Religious Movements in America, including development of a major archival collection of sources documenting the wave of new religious movements that had flourished since the late 1960's. By then California had become established in popular journalistic and academic circles as the nation's new "burned over district" of religious innovation and fervor (recalling western New York of a century earlier). Now California commonly would appear twice in overviews of American religious history --the romanticized early 19th century Spanish missions, and the new counter culture religions of the 1960s. Few, however, knew much about what of any significance might have happened religiously during the century and a half in between.

California had become a touchstone for those believing that a new era had dawned in American religious life, thought, and experience. As one interpreter of the region's "impact on our religious consciousness" put it: "California is the laboratory - -'the great crucible,' so to speak, where new religious forms are being forged." Scholars had begun debating the causes, the distinctiveness, even the significance of this California environment of new religious movements. Where else than Berkeley might a new religious conference be better placed? Where else might the new religions phenomenon better be documented on site? So scholars came from around the nation to give addresses, present papers, and speak on panels, the results of which were

published in a volume entitled Understanding The New Religions.

Among the major speakers was Sydney Ahlstrom. His address reflected on the old theme and brought California into the picture -- "From Sinai To The Golden Gate: The Liberation Of Religion In The Occident." According to this perspective, newness in religion had gone hand-in-hand with evolving liberation, and its history began centuries ago with the great westward trek from Mediterranean shores to European Atlantic shores to North American Pacific shores, and beyond. It was a brilliant presentation of the "westward the course of empire" theme, but one not finally appropriate to California history (despite the fact that Berkeley was named after the author of that famous "westward the course of empire" poem --English philosopher George Berkeley).

One sensed that only the conference itself brought California, or the whole Pacific region, into the substance of the story. When critiqued that his remarks had not paid sufficient attention to what he called "the allegedly distinctive role of Californians," he noted that "California leads the nation in proliferation of diverse religious movements" simply because of its rapid growth and heterogeneity. Simply? California might be, he suggested, "an extreme form of American civilization," but otherwise only the South could be called a distinctive region in American religious history (New England, of course, not being thought of as a distinctive region but as the normative region against which other regions might be judged extreme or weak replicas). Yet Ahlstrom admitted, in private correspondence, that were he to revise his magnum opus for a second edition, surely he would bring the Pacific Far West into the story at appropriate moments --old religious traditions as well as new religious movements. It is tragic that he never had the opportunity to do this, but he did stimulate others to try.

Meanwhile, the conference made the case for a new period emerging in American religious history. The delegates from Harvard and Chicago wore colorful beads and well-tailored dashikis during free time, trying to blend into what they expected to be Berkeley's religious street culture, not realizing that they could not thus avoid being spotted as tourists on Telegraph Avenue. The scene long had moved beyond the late 1960s atmosphere, and some of the older conventional religious institutions had been asserting themselves on the streets among the people for some time (the Berkeley Free Church movement, for example). New religions had become normative; or perhaps it is more perceptive to note that they had simply taken their place in the long century of innovative California religious life, thought, and experience that itself was something of a Pacific regional tradition. The conferees also did not fully realize that while they perceived a new popular movement of Atlantic-oriented Americans "turning East" religiously during the 1970s, their new

religious movements conference was happening in a Pacific region where other Americans had been practicing their old eastern world religions for well over a century.

What the conference really demonstrated, in retrospect, was that American religious historians were discovering the Pacific. This discovery brought three emerging themes in American religious historiography together: (1) region and religion, (2) religious diversity and pluralism, (3) and the significance of the post World War II years in American religious life.

We now can see the impact of World War II on American religious life with geographic reference both outwardly and inwardly. Globally the immediate post-war years witnessed violent shuffling of political-racial-ethnic alignments and interactions in the Atlantic and the Pacific, and in the northern and southern hemispheres: the independence of India, the upsurge of African nations, formation of the new State of Israel, eruption in the Far East with revolution in China. Within these social-political upheavals burst forth a global great awakening - a resurgence of cultural-religious consciousness with varieties of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians asserting their identities in changing regional expressions and dynamic interaction. Moreover, in retrospect we now can observe the impact of these global stirrings in the United States. We can trace a similar rise in racial-ethnic religious consciousness and assertiveness within American life as well, marking the post world war II years as transitional to the coming of age of religious pluralism as the defining theme, especially when regional variations are taken into account.

In ~~this~~ pursuing this theme, we note that modern technocracy, including increasingly rapid communication and transportation, and the global migration of peoples, has increased the mutual awareness and interaction of diverse religious cultures. Religions now flourish in countries and regions hitherto foreign to their predominant life, not only Christianity outside of Christendom, but other religions as well (such as Buddhism in Brazil, Mormonism in Japan, Islam in Chicago, Pentecostalism in Africa, etc.). Indeed world religions have become truly global. As this has happened, historians have developed a new sensitivity to the seeming contradiction of indigenous expressions of foreign religious traditions, and of the significance of "indigenuity" in understanding the potential complexity and richness of any religious tradition.

Global events thus has stimulated historians' interest in region and religion, and I am suggesting that this new regional consciousness has reached the North American Pacific rim. Rather than assuming that regional concentration and orientation suffers from provincialism in a sense of narrowness and isolation, historians increasingly have recognized that attention to



province (or region) broadens our understanding of the varied and complex manifestations of religious traditions as they actually have lived in particular times and places.

In this historiographical vein historians of religion in America began to search for places where religion had expressed a distinctively visible or powerful development --distinctive, that is, apart from the conventional depiction of outward-expanding New England Puritanism and its mainline denominational successors as the mold of American culture. They turned first to the South, specifically to the enormous 19th century rise and 20th century solidification of southern evangelicalism both black and white. Where else in the world could one find, for example, such an anomaly as Baptists becoming the quasi established churches of a vast society and its culture?

Then a kind of historiographical westward movement set in. First came the nation's midwestern mainline Anglo Protestant heartland, dotted with pockets of 19th century immigrant multi-ethnic Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic Christians. This regional perspective came closest to fulfilling what historian Philip Schaff had described at the 1893 Chicago World's Parliament of Religions as "The Reunion of Christendom" in America.

Historians then looked seriously at the long heritage of Roman Catholic New Spain on the Mexican frontier borderlands (a northward and southward frontier movement), out of which developed the religious diversity of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona as integral parts of American religious history. Meanwhile, the Great Plains and Mountain West also gained historians' attention, including the Mormon Empire, bringing religion into the lively debates of the "new western historiography" (What is West? Where is West? West of what? The Yangtze? Europe? Yale? Chicago?).

But what about the Pacific region, reaching from the Mexican border to Alaska? What religion handle would give reason to grasp onto this region for productive scrutiny? Obviously no religion has dominated this region overall except in very isolated or short-lived situations. Furthermore, this region always has been unusually non-churched according to conventional ways of measuring a population's religious identities (the lowest of any region in the nation) --at first glance a rather boring outlook for historians of religion. Why study religion in a particularly secular place?

The other, apparently contradictory characteristic of the Pacific region, however, is that historically there has existed a remarkably vigorous, diverse, and pluralistic religiosity, multicultural as well. It is this intense religiosity within an ethos of secularity that began to catch scholars' attention in the late 1960s, when counter-culture movements seriously



challenged traditional institutions nation-wide; and nowhere could this kind of religious phenomena be seen more dramatically than in California history. Not that plurality and diversity were unique to California, for that describes the nation's history. Rather, what distinguishes California religiously is the particular configurations of diversity, plurality, and multicultural experiences that have developed historically --not beginning in the 1960s but reaching back to early 19th century colonial settlements that in turn touched indigenous North American cultures many centuries old. Continual new migrations of diverse peoples has dominated California history like no other. In this sense California presents a distinctive perspective on the religious history of American people, not simply added documentation of the conventional story usually told.

Certain questions became vital in the California environment (shall we say relevant?). How do old traditions persevere, become shaped, and in turn make a public impact, along with continually emerging new religious movements and groups in a society where traditions and conventionalities acquiesce to the new and innovative, where all religious traditions must live with almost unprecedented equality, where no religious tradition or denomination enjoys hegemony, where there is no quasi establishment, where there is no mainstream but only many streams of various sizes flowing every which way? In this kind of place, then, the region itself, as well as the religion in it, became the focus of analysis. That is, region and religion became seen as deeply intertwined.

In the Pacific region (in the largest sense the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific) geographic location and the physical environment within it became important ingredients in studying religious life and thought. Where, for example, is California in the world? That it is a gateway to and from Asia, half way between England and China, has affected the religious consciousness of a variety of settlers from both Europe and Asia from mid-19th century on. That California has touched Mexico in the South and Alaska in the North likewise has figured in the religious consciousness of a variety of settlers coming from both directions. That the traditional American frontier lies East rather than West to Californians has contributed to the Pacific regional sense of religious identity. ("West," in a sense, has been partly an ideological, political, even theological invention by the western-moving Atlantic-oriented Anglo European Christendom consciousness, which helps account for the long Puritan epoch idea.)

Likewise the physical environment within the region has been a religious factor. Varied landscapes in large geographical spaces have mattered in religious life and thought --the mountains and valleys, the deserts and farmlands, the different kinds of waterways, the diverse climates. Not only have these

"landscapes of the sacred" affected the theological and artistic expressions of religious communities in California, but physical environment has helped determine how religious communities have organized their lives within and outside of the region nationally and internationally.

The final ingredients in this regional-religious historical phenomenon, then, are the people themselves. Suffice it to say that California history is molded by continuous migrations of peoples from all parts of the world --people dislocated from whence they came and relocated in the new foreign land. Naturally they brought their religiosity with them; and often they hoped to transplant their religious cultures into the soils of California societies, only to discover that their presence at best helped fertilize the growth of yet new species in an evolving garden of spiritualities nourished by an equally diverse multicultural climate.

Now, lest this sound too far fetched or simplistically grandiose as I resort to such flowery phrases, let me sketch a hypothetical narrative outline of California's contribution to American religious history --five chapters within an overall framework.

The story might well be framed by two decades of transition in California history that related regional life to momentous United States national and global developments. The first transition came during the 1840s when the United States secured California by conquest and treaty after the war with Mexico, followed immediately by the discovery of gold causing the world to rush in and the territory almost overnight to become the thirty-first state in the Union (1850). The second transition came a century later during the 1940s when The world went to war in the Pacific as well as the Atlantic, after which the American Far West was transformed both internally and in its relationships to the external world. When one of San Francisco's Jewish temples, Congregation Sherith Israel, hosted a founding session of the United Nations, it could be said that California had come of age religiously as well as socially, politically, and economically as a place of national and global significance.

(1) Chapter one introduces the pre United States colonial period when, eight centuries after the great East-West schism within Christendom, these two historic religious traditions met on California soil. Spanish Roman Catholics came into contact with Russian Orthodox Christians during the early 19th century in the North American Pacific region. One group originally came westward across the Atlantic, while the other came eastward over Pacific waters. Each became intimately (albeit often violently) involved with Native American peoples including their diverse and complex spiritual cultures, resulting in indigenous American manifestations of European-rooted Christianity. The Spanish

Catholics had come through Franciscan missions beginning in 1769 led by Father Junipero Serra out of Mexico northward up the California Pacific rim. The Russian Orthodox had come a few years later southward from their Alaskan stronghold, finally establishing a settlement at Fort Ross just North of Bodega Bay in 1812, a move that stimulated the Spanish to build their northern-most mission at Sonoma. During the next three decades the Fort Ross settlement flourished. It brought Russians, Russian Alaskans, and Native Alaskans into contact with Native Californians, Californios, Mexicans, and Spaniards. An Orthodox Chapel was built in 1824, visited by the great Russian priest, John Veniaminov, "Apostle of Alaska," in 1836. The Russian international trading enterprise brought plants, tea and spices, pottery and metal work, art and artifacts from China, Hawaii, Europe, and South America into California.

In 1841 the Russians formally left California, and five years later Mexico formally left as well; but the three decades of their coexistence bringing North, South, East and West together in the San Francisco Bay Area had produced a remarkable multicultural phenomenon that only now, a century and a half later, has caught the serious attention of historians. The next century and a half, to the present day, would witness continuous waves of Russian Orthodox and Protestant Christians, and Jews along the North American Pacific Rim from Mexico to Alaska, often by way of China and South America. Meanwhile, in California the original meeting of Spanish Mexican Catholics and Russian Alaskan Orthodox Christians had made an early 19th century indelible imprint on California's subsequent religious heritage. They had set the stage for a whole new drama in which they would be joined by a multitude of new actors.

(2) Chapter two, then, introduces the many other religious traditions both old and new that suddenly appeared in California during the gold rush years. With the rush for gold came also the rush to American statehood, thereby instigating pressures to U.S.Americanize the region socially, politically, economically, and culturally. Though similarities to American religious freedom and diversity naturally emerged in great contrast with the recently ended Spanish Mexican and Russian colonial establishments, no standard United States configuration of institutionalized religious life could be transplanted. The range of religious pluralism and diversity was unprecedented; no single tradition could mold the civil order, try as some might.

What happened during the twenty three or so years between the change from Mexican to United States occupation of California in 1846 and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 is so remarkable that were it made up as a fictional piece it would be critiqued for being too far-fetched to believe. It goes like this. In San Francisco alone were founded at least eighty new congregations with places of worship representing

eighteen different religious traditions. The Mormons arrived first, unsure whether California or Utah would be the headquarters of their Zion in the wilderness. Following them appeared various Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Reformed, Disciples of Christ, Quaker, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, Seventh Day Adventist, Swedenborgian, and Spiritualist churches, plus the Russian-Greek Slavonic Orthodox Church and Philanthropic Society, Jewish Synagogues, and Chinese Temples representing mixtures of popular religions and Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

These churches, Temples, and Synagogues served at least the following national and racial ethnicities: Spanish, Mexican, Portuguese, African, Chinese, English, Irish, Scottish, Scandinavian, French, German, Italian, Russian, Greek, and Polish. They also created schools, humanitarian institutions, and newspapers. Often they cooperated harmoniously in these ventures, altogether making a multi-religious impact on the otherwise near chaotic society of early U.S. San Francisco and surrounding Bay Area towns. We know, too, that during these years the still frontier-like Los Angeles developed a similar (though less broad in scope) multicultural and religiously pluralistic society.

Already during this first brief United States period of our story the traditions of all nine GTU Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Unitarian schools plus the Orthodox, Jewish, and Buddhist centers and institutes had found their California rootage.

We must not romanticize this chapter in our story, however. Whereas an unusual degree of interreligious activity took place, especially between Christians and Jews and Buddhists (and even among Christians), not all was harmonious, and some apparent harmony was actually indifference. But compared to positive coexistence of plural religions, outright negative race relations set in motion a tragic pattern in subsequent California history. The "racial fault lines" run deep in this region, in some ways unique in American experience due to the peculiar quake-like circumstances and explosive multicultural relationships between the conquered and the conquerors, the oppressed and the oppressors, the privileged and the underprivileged during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Race proved a closer bond than did religion. California native Indian communities were nearly destroyed. Californios were deprived of their land and pressed to the margins of society. Persons of African and Chinese heritage struggled against violent deprivations of their civil rights. The religious identities of these people usually mattered little in how they were treated, with some notable exceptions. Interreligious harmony, in other words, did not translate into interracial harmony, despite the fact that race ethnicity and religious identity were closely intertwined. Some

Americans with a California dream experienced dislocations and relocations in a regional valley of the shadow of death.

(3) Chapter three takes us through the late 19th century gilded age and the early 20th century age of progressive reform. The half-century of urban-industrial revolution, scientific discovery and invention, and new forms of communication and transportation by land, sea, and air transformed the world in which people lived. The major port cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver enhanced the Pacific region's awareness of being a link between the eastern and western worlds. The Spanish American War and the Russian-Japanese War stimulated new Pacific Asian immigration of Filipino and Japanese people into the U.S. Pacific States, while completion of the Panama Canal facilitated more rapid transportation from Atlantic waters as well. Massive new immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe reached California by land and by sea. While most Europeans came through Ellis Island to New York, many Pacific Islanders and Asians came through Angel Island to San Francisco.

California's religious pluralism and diversity proliferated under these circumstances. Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans brought new varieties of Buddhism, Taoism, and Shintoism, as well as their ethnic versions of Christianity. A new religious denomination, now named The Buddhist Churches of America, was founded in 1899 with its headquarters at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco. New ethnic congregations of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches appeared, as well as Orthodox Jewish synagogues to complement the already strong Reform tradition. Muslims had arrived by 1900. In that same year the Vedanta Society of Northern California was established; and Ellen Gould White, founder of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, settled in California, after which the Adventists flourished in the State building schools and hospitals in the North and South out of which emerged a world-wide missionary program. Also flourishing in the California religious environment were new metaphysical groups, especially Christian Science and New Thought.

We might conclude that when the 1893 Chicago World's Parliament of Religions exposed American citizens to the religious traditions of China, Japan, and India, in California communities of these religions already were living side-by-side with many others in a most remarkable multicultural social environment.

Meanwhile, midwesterners had migrated to Southern California and settled in such numbers as to suggest that the Protestant empire finally would be transplanted to Pacific shores. But this was not to be, for new contra-mainline evangelical movements soon took hold after the turn of the century in the greater Los Angeles area and then spread northward and eastward. Holiness,

Pentecostalism, and dispensational fundamentalism would so flourish in 20th century Southern California that the mainline Protestant churches never would be able to wield the kind of hegemonic social-political- economic power that they had known in other regions of the Country. In retrospect, it appears that the great "Puritan epoch" (and therefore its historians) never quite made it to California.

(4) We enter chapter four when San Francisco's 1915 Panama Pacific American Exhibition, which displayed the regions's Anglo-Hispanic-Asian cultural interaction, gave way to the Great War "over there" in Europe. Again we enter a new period in California history marked by vast demographic changes that altered the religious landscape. California religious life, both rural and urban, bore the marks of incessant immigration during the previous seventy-five or so years. Indeed, agricultural California, such as in Fresno County at the Center of the Great Valley, may have been the most multicultural county in the State alongside San Francisco. But the restrictive immigration laws of the early 1920s, amid the renewed Anglo-Saxonism and isolationism following the Great War, stifled the subsequent addition of multi-cultural foreign-born peoples nationwide. However, the quarter century bridging the world wars witnessed continuing changes in California demographically, and therefore religiously, by resurgent internal continental migrations to the Pacific Region. Five major population shifts significantly altered the already broad cultural-religious heterogeneity of California.

First came the massive trans-continental migration from all points East to the Pacific Coast during the 1920s. They came especially to Southern California where the population of Los Angeles alone increased fourfold within a decade. Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and every religious group alive in America came along with the non-religious, bringing their Atlantic-oriented regional cultures (or trying to escape them) to the Pacific community. The climate, the natural environment, and the seemingly unconstrained opportunity to start a new life stimulated this first great migration via the automobile, a phenomenon described as "one of the great internal migrations in the history of the American people."

Already a cosmopolitan community of global cultural proportions, Southern California integrated these new urban settlers into its social fabric while contributing a distinctive character to the nation's 1920s revolution in morals and manners. Rapidly becoming one of the nation's media and entertainment centers, it is not surprising that the greater Los Angeles Area during these years became a national and international symbol of urban frontier modernity. It would take only a new wave of international immigration a half century later to produce there what would be described as "the most culturally complex society ever seen on the face of the earth."

Successive migrations made the automobile caravan westward a constant factor in the region's social environment. The second population shift came when the Great Depression added misery to the victims of dust-bowl droughts in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, and Missouri, giving rise to an "American Exodus" and the "southernization" of the Pacific region, including southern evangelical Protestantism.

Meanwhile, also drawn by the opportunity for livelihood afforded by California agribusiness, there came a third population shift with workers from Mexico. Many settled, but many more continually migrated to where work was available from New Mexico and Arizona northward through California and Colorado into Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Montana. With them California's hispanic Christian heritage found rejuvenation in both Catholic and Protestant (especially pentecostal) expressions.

The fourth population shift came during the early 1940s when West Coast shipyards and other wartime industries brought in a surge of new settlers, most notably African Americans whose California population dramatically increased during these years. With them, too, a distinctive church-centered religious culture planted a century before in California soil blossomed anew with nourishment from its varied twentieth century eastern and southern expressions.

Finally, while war in the Pacific brought newcomers to California homes, the fifth population shift occurred as many Japanese American citizens were forcibly removed from their homes in the Spring of 1942. They were relocated in isolated camps as far East as Arkansas. They thereby added another chapter to the history of enforced far western American population shifts that included placing native communities in wilderness ghettos called reservations and deporting Mexican migrant laborers when their services (having been recruited) were deemed no longer economically fortuitous. In each case religious identity made little difference in how persons were treated; but the blatant injustices inflicted upon Japanese Americans, as on other racial minority persons during these years, for the world to see, began to raise consciousness that would lead to a bus boycott in Montgomery and to striking United Farm Workers in Fresno.

(5) Our final chapter begins in the second decade of transition in our overall story --World War II and the 1940s. It has been said that the war was cataclysmic, not a harbinger of change so much as change itself. This was true especially for the American Pacific region, which suddenly came of age to become a national pace-setter economically, politically, and socially, in science and higher education --dare one say theological and religious studies education as well? In the arena of religious life, post World War II change was less a jarring new experience



than an acceleration of what had been developing during the previous century. Before long one could say without much exaggeration that Los Angeles, City of Angels at the "edge of history," and San Francisco, City of Saint Francis, Herb Caen's "Baghdad by the Bay," and all the towns in the great spaces around them, contain the peoples of the world and their religions in every imaginable multicultural arrangement.

Hints of change came during the six years following the War. Naming a few examples is suggestive. In 1945 the Berkeley Interfaith Council was founded, as if anticipating the broadening of religious parameters to come. Two new population shifts opened the post-war era. First, what has been called one of the great migrations in Jewish history had begun from New York to California (especially to Los Angeles). Second, native American Indians were about to begin their migration to urban centers, such as California's Bay Area where about 200 tribes have become represented over the years. Their ancient spiritualities have persevered and developed in altered forms within drastically new environments.

Meanwhile, symbolic of visionary religious aspirations for the changing post-war society (something reminiscent of California's past and prophetic of California's future), in 1944 Howard Thurman had left his position as Dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University in Washington, D.C. to become minister and co-founder of the nondenominational Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco. Here was a pioneering venture in racial integration, ecumenical membership, interfaith fellowship, intercultural and international programs within a single independent congregation.

In 1946 the Mormon Institute opened in Berkeley, just as the Church began to move outward from Salt Lake City in disciplined missionary fashion to become by the 1990s a truly world religion (nearly 10 million in 165 countries). In 1947 Fuller Theological Seminary was founded in Pasadena, providing alternative nondenominational "new evangelical" Protestant theological education. Yet the Protestant mainline persevered. In 1949 organized American Bible Society work in California celebrated its centennial with a great San Francisco gathering including a reading of the 19th Psalm by a Jewish Rabbi and consecutive readings of John 3:16 by nine racial ethnic groups in their tongues: Chinese, Greek, Filipino, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and English. That same year (1949) the Buddhist Study Center opened in Berkeley, a stage in the development of the Institute for Buddhist Studies. In 1950, not only did the Lutherans begin seminary instruction in Berkeley, but Georgia Harkness came to Pacific School of Religion from Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois to become the first woman to teach theology in a mainline Protestant seminary.

Finally, also in 1950, a national Eucharistic Congress at the State Fair Grounds in Sacramento celebrated the centenary of organized Catholicism in the State. It had become apparent that during the 1940s much of Catholic Church life in the Pacific Far West had undergone virtual transformation with a massive influx of new Catholic population, the growth of parishes and proliferation of new ones, parish schools bursting at the seams, a reinvigorated Catholic press and social mission through Catholic Action. Bishop Robert J. Armstrong, the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento's first American-born bishop when appointed in 1929, observed that "We are no longer an isolated Christian community, but an integral part of the heart and soul of the Church all over the world." California religious life, it seemed by 1950, had come of age nationally and internationally.

Historians began analyzing the 1950s as soon as those "happy days" (for some) or "dark ages" (for others) ended. They gave mixed reviews of the postwar religious "revival", "resurgence", "upswing," "spiritual marketplace" of America's three (or more) civil religious faiths, noting that "the power of positive thinking" only helped camouflage and assuage the deeper moral-ethical and spiritual crises plaguing the nation.

They soon became enamored with the "turbulent sixties, singing, "this land is my land...from California to the New York Island." They celebrated the onset of "the new frontier," Vatican II and the Consultation on Church Union, freedom riders and peace corps volunteers and small steps on the moon. They devoured books titled Stride Toward Freedom and Strength to Love and Why We Can't Wait and Where Do We Go From Here?, books about The Secular City and The Noise of Solemn Assemblies and The Suburban Captivity of the Churches and Honest to God and God is Dead and Theology in Red, White, and Black. They struggled with political movements of the new left and the new right, "consciousness-raising" about race and gender and sexual orientation, counter-culture "piety for the Age of Aquarius" and Turning East for spiritual enlightenment After Auschwitz when religion as usual no longer seemed possible.

In such an environment the GTU was born!

In more recent years analysts of the American religious scene have proclaimed the decline of the mainline as pentecostalism and Mormonism and Islam grow by leaps and bounds both nationally and internationally. Noting effects of the less restrictive Immigration Act of 1965, they now reflect on the new influx of East Asian and Middle Eastern peoples, among others, often coming in through Pacific ports and bringing yet new religious varieties.

In this ethos, California's peculiar religious history now appears quite "relevant" to the nation's spiritual heritage

overall, and perhaps to global trends as well. Not only new religions emerging, but also old religions persevering mark this history. Here Christians and Jews of all varieties make their way at the edge of Christendom and its ghettos. Here Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims of all varieties make their way at the edge of Asia. Here Latter Day Saints and Southern Evangelicals find a home outside their respective cultural empires. All of this has happened in a place where the population doubled every twenty years between 1860 and 1960, again doubling since the early 1960s --a place with the highest percent of foreign-born population by far of any State in the Union.

This, then, is the historical religious environment within which the GTU was born and received nourishment through its early years. The GTU represents the perseverance of several world religions in California (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Judaism, and Buddhism) plus a reaching out to new religious movements. Not all world religions in California are represented (Mormons, Muslims and Hindus, for example), but there may be room for more.

The GTU also has contributed strongly to the discovery of the Pacific in American religious historiography. Over the past three decades doctoral dissertations, M.A. theses, and faculty publications have explored the religious history of California and the larger Pacific far western region of North America. This substantial scholarly literature now contributes to a more holistic, and therefore more accurate, portrayal of the American people's religious history spanning an entire continent --and beyond.

Were I able to speak with Sydney Ahlstrom one more time, I might quote from a recent New Yorker article entitled "Go West" to the effect that "regular pilgrimages to California have become necessary for anyone who means to keep track of the national scene" (Nov. 17, 1997, p. 118). (Of course the New Yorker author, Alex Ross, implies that his readers aren't actually living "out there" in California.) Then I would assure my teacher that here on the Pacific Rim where I once was lost, I have been found. I found myself among my GTU students and faculty colleagues of diverse religious and racial-ethnic identities, here in Berkeley where we try to do creative theological and religious studies education in such a time and place as this.

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Presented as the 1997 Graduate Theological Union  
Distinguished Faculty Lecture on Wednesday, November  
19, 1997 in the Chapel of the Pacific School of  
Religion in Berkeley, California.