

Concluding Reflections

Alternative Routes and Roads Not (Yet) Taken

ABSTRACT Thinking about religion in the American West helps us understand more fully both religion and the American West. Beyond that, by putting these terms together and thinking about “religion in the American West,” we are able to see clearly the role of religion in the extension of U.S. empire and in the negotiation of and resistance to white Protestant cultural, economic, and military dominance. This essay forms the conclusion to “Religion in the Nineteenth-Century American West,” a special issue of *Pacific Historical Review*. **KEYWORDS** religion, American West

As a native Oregonian, I have visited Multnomah Falls more times than I can count. I remember one visit in particular, staring at the falls and realizing that although Multnomah Creek ran over and around boulders bigger than houses, its route was not set in stone—the creek, and the falls, had not simply appeared one day in the formation in which I then saw them, and someday they would look very different again. Perhaps Multnomah Falls would wear down, losing its distinction as the second-tallest year-round waterfall in the United States.¹ Maybe other geological events would reroute the creek, leading it to find its way into the Columbia River by another path. Surely the footpath over the bridge and up the switchbacks to the top of the falls would become overgrown or wash away eventually. Perhaps one or more of these things, or something else entirely, would happen in my lifetime, or perhaps they would occur in another millennium. The geological time frame required to narrate the “life span” of Multnomah Falls yawned, a gaping chasm wider than the falls are high, dwarfing my sense of human chronology. I recount

1. A sign at the falls during my childhood said that it was the second-tallest year-round waterfall in the United States. This claim has largely been acknowledged as an exaggeration. Jamie Hale, “Sorry, Multnomah Falls Is Not the Second Tallest Waterfall in the US (It’s Not Even Close),” *OregonLive*, February 23, 2016, https://www.oregonlive.com/travel/2016/02/multnomah_falls_is_not_the_second_tallest.html.

this admittedly trite episode of wonderment to remind us how difficult it is to conceptualize, or even realize the existence of, intersecting, overlapping, and conflicting frames of reality—of time, space, and being. And yet it is precisely the multiplicity of frames of reality with which we must grapple. The contrast between human and geological frames may be especially obvious in the North American West because the region is geologically younger than the eastern side of the continent. The mountains are taller, the canyons are deeper, and the environment presents more challenges to human habitation. The significance of land (and its apparent abundance) and water (and its manifest scarcity) in the region has long led Western historians to attend to such environmental factors. The articles in this issue show us that multiple frames of reality may also exist among different human groups, even those in the same geographic location. Tracing their intersections, overlaps, and conflicts allows us to see the many ways people have made meaning in, and of, the West.

In what follows, I draw together some of the threads that run through the articles in this issue. I start by discussing how they help us think about where, or what, the American West is. I mix and match articles from the configurations that special issue editor Tisa Wenger created in order to highlight some of the less obvious connections among them. I next turn to the question of religion—what it is, what it does, and how these articles help us to a more fruitful perspective on the topic. Finally, I consider the topic of religion in the American West and suggest some strategies to expand our understanding.

THE WEST

The West emerges, in these articles, as a place called into being by the imaginations of those intent on controlling it, shaping it, making it “the [American] West.” As many scholars have pointed out, after all, it is only “the West” when one’s frame of reference centers “the East.” As they incorporated the West into their frame of reality, white Protestants and settler colonists called the region into being, *qua* West, positioning it in their mental and physical maps on the left side of the page. They also positioned it in other schema, making judgments about (among other questions) its level of civilization, its racial character, its utility to the nation, and its role in divine providence.

Several of the preceding essays show clearly that white Protestants and Eastern intellectual and political elites saw the West as a place in need of

protection and management, both for its own good and for the good of the American nation. At the same time, the West could be a useful site from which to effect change in the East. For Carleigh Beriont's Protestant missionaries, for example, the West—as a place to be protected and from which to influence the American nation, conceived of as centered in the East—extended past the horizon of the western North American coast, all the way to the Marshall Islands and perhaps beyond. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) missionaries worried about the effects of U.S. military and economic presence in the Pacific and explicitly hoped to counter the influence of “an infidel, corrupting civilization” they worried would soon be introduced to Pacific Islanders by “traders, whalers, or the other ‘great many bad men’ who roamed the Pacific.”² At the same time, the fundraising campaign for the ABCFM's mission ship, the *Morning Star*, trained children in the ways of capitalism, making them shareholders in the ship and promising them a return on their investment. Beriont notes that the *Morning Star* was explicitly marketed to children in an effort to teach them “that [American Protestants] had a right and a responsibility to intervene in Micronesia as American Christians.”³

In a very different way, Dylan Yeats demonstrates, U.S. president Rutherford B. Hayes traveled through the West to prosecute a culture war in a religious register. As he proposed implicitly Protestant management strategies for the West, Hayes also pursued a political agenda based in the East. Promoting policies to address the issues known as “the Indian Question, the School Question, the Mormon Question, and the Chinese Question,” Hayes outlined a strategy for securing white Protestant dominance in the West and thereby persuaded Eastern voters to cast their ballot for the Republican ticket, setting the political agenda well beyond the tenure of his own administration.⁴

The American West was and remains a crossroads, where settlers from many locations encountered Indigenous people and each other in conditions of uncertainty. As Jeffrey Turner shows, the U.S. government contributed to

2. “Survey of the Missions of the Board: *Missionary Herald* (January 1859), 10, quoted in Carleigh Beriont, “The Children's Mission Ship: The 1856 American Board Mission to Micronesia and the Making of a New American West,” *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023), n21; Hiram Bingham Jr., *Story of the Morning Star* (Boston: American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, 1866), 21, quoted in Beriont, “The Children's Mission Ship.”

3. Beriont, “The Children's Mission Ship.”

4. Dylan Yeats, “The Religious Politics of Empire in the Gilded Age: President Rutherford B. Hayes's Tour of the West,” *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023).

the conditions of uncertainty that confronted those who followed “imperial paths” to the West. Repurposing a question meant to identify religiously undesirable Mormon immigrants from Europe, agents of the Bureau of Immigration asked Sikh and Muslim migrants about polygamy to identify racially undesirable immigrants from India and the Philippines. But many of those immigrants were able to shift the terms, responding to a religious question with an assertion of ethnic identity, or answering a question about race by talking about religion. Deliberately overlaying the Bureau of Immigration’s frame of reality with alternative frames, these immigrants successfully negotiated the legal immigration process and charted their paths into the American West.⁵

Wenger notes in the introduction that white Protestants struggled to establish hegemony in the West. Instead, they found themselves contending with uncertainty as well, competing for the hearts and minds of the people they found in the West. This situation sometimes enabled members of marginalized groups to exercise a measure of power. Jonathan Calvillo’s article nicely demonstrates this point: the conditions of uncertainty that prevailed as El Río Abajo transitioned from Spanish to Mexican to U.S. jurisdiction, and as the Roman Catholic Church changed the religious leadership in the area, inadvertently created opportunities for Protestants to gain a foothold. The political and religious instability of the region gave rise to tensions through which Hispanos negotiated regime change in both arenas and shaped a distinctly Hispano Protestantism in the region.⁶

Indeed, negotiation is a thread that runs throughout this special issue. In every case, the settler colonial state looms in the background, threatening if not actually inflicting violence and often setting the conditions of negotiation, making possible some choices and not others. The roles of those participating in the negotiations are complex: in some ways oppressed by the state, they also frequently participate in the creation and maintenance of that state. That complexity shapes the frames of reality within which these historical actors operate.

5. Jeffrey J. Turner, “Mormon, Muslim, and Sikh Migration to the West: Empire and Religion in Federal Immigration Law,” *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023).

6. Tisa Wenger, “Making Religion, Making the West,” *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023); Jonathan Calvillo, “The Conversion of Ambrosio Gonzales: Fueling a Westward Movement through Sustained Memorialization,” *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023).

Cori Tucker-Price's article demonstrates how Black arrivants in California used religious rhetoric and identity to negotiate their place in Western society and the meanings they and others found (or invested) in the region. Arguing for their full citizenship, Black arrivants participated thoroughly in the settler-colonial capitalist system and used their accumulation of wealth and property to support their claims. Black Californians like Mary Ellen Pleasant adopted, to a large degree, the frame of reality offered by the U.S. settler-colonial system, using tactics of misrecognition, ambiguity, and hiding in plain sight to conceal the ways they did not fit into the structure while searching for ways to force the structure to acknowledge their full belonging.⁷

But the forces of settler colonialism are not strong enough to overwhelm the myriad frames of reality in the West. Rather, the region has been a stronghold, a zone of safe haven and perhaps even liberation, for those in the crosshairs of the imperial impulses that drove white Protestant settler colonists and the U.S. government. Here, the multiplicity of frames becomes particularly salient: despite settler colonial efforts to suppress them, for example, Tiffany Hale shows that Native Americans also hid in plain sight, but for very different purposes than the Black arrivants whom Tucker-Price discusses. For Indigenous peoples in the West, these strategies allowed the cultivation of frames of reality—*realms*, in Hale's telling—that offered Native people both protection from the violence of settler colonialism sponsored by the U.S. government and the promise of a future beyond it, even as they continued to be subjected to state-sponsored violence and dispossession.

More often, perhaps, these negotiations resulted in a standoff, in historical actors participating in a system that they also resisted. We see this dynamic in Tucker-Price's study, but it emerges even more clearly in Danae Jacobson's study of the Sisters of Providence, who "became federal government employees, relied on the labor of Indigenous 'helpers,' and begged for money . . . from gold miners" in order to create Catholic places in the West that they envisioned as standing apart from the white settler-colonial capitalist realm that the American state was building in the region.⁸ "The Sisters of Providence never acknowledged the conquest and exploitation in which they themselves

7. Cori Tucker-Price, "Household Gods on the Altar of Freedom: Religion, Race, and Citizenship in California, 1850–1900," *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023).

8. Danae Jacobson, "'To Obtain the Gold . . . for the Needy and Poor': Nuns' Begging as Gendered, Environmental, and Settler Colonial Labor," *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023).

participated,” Jacobson writes. “In their efforts to convert and civilize the ‘good savages’ in the ‘infidel land’ they believed themselves to be alleviating suffering and doing good.”⁹

RELIGION

Above all, in the preceding articles, the West emerges as a place of intense religious activity, if by “religious” we mean something that includes, but also goes well beyond, institutional expressions of religion that historians have traditionally recognized, such as churches, synagogues, and mosques. In her introduction to this issue, Wenger gestures to the complexities of “religion-making” and the necessity of attending to the details of this process. The articles in this issue demonstrate the benefits of doing so. Religion emerges here as a constellation of institutions, ideologies, and people, but also as much more than that.

The multiple frames of reality at play in the West are often shaped by religion. Religion provides a frame, a lens, through which to understand and enact a present and imagine and work toward a future “otherwise.”¹⁰ But we should not mistake this understanding and imagination for wishful thinking, for religion also designates the tools, techniques, and infrastructure necessary to function in that present and to call that future into being. They include both tangible and intangible items: chili peppers, conversion stories, and Methodist class meetings, for example, in the case of Ambrosio Gonzales; fog, prophecy, dances, and tule reed rope in the case of the Ghost Dance.

But religion also provides a frame for conserving a present and enacting a future that extends existing patterns—a future *not* otherwise. And it designates the tools, techniques, and infrastructure here, as well: sailing routes, share certificates, and the unshakeable conviction that American Christians had a duty to bring the gospel to the South Pacific, in the case of the ABCFM’s *Morning Star*; xenophobic rhetoric, the specter of “voodoo,” and editorial cartoons, in the case of white Californians opposed to Black citizenship.

9. Ibid, quoting A.L. Castonguay, trans., “Nomination for the Oregon Mission” (Unpublished, April 6, 1864), *Mt Chronicles of the Asile de la Providence*, Montreal, vol. 1, Montreal Providence Archives.

10. Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 2.

At no point on this spectrum does religion act autonomously (even though I have written “religion provides . . .” as if it does). Instead, human actors avail themselves of imaginative, emotional, physical, economic, and human resources and connect these resources to *make* religion. Humans *do* things, alone and together; they experience emotions, they make plans, they hope and dream about a future in this world or in the next. They find—and make—meaning and refuge and rest and liberation and ambiguity and ambivalence and power and identity. Perhaps it is helpful to think of religion, for participants, as a method and motivation for aligning the self with, and participating in, the community—and of aligning the community with, and participating in, larger forces—the supernatural and the natural, the tangible (e.g., the land) and the intangible (e.g., capitalism).

But for those on the outside, the category of religion also becomes a crucial way to define the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the polity and delineate acceptable and unacceptable modes of being in the political and economic system. Here, religion (understood from the outside as a category of human activity) functions as a tool of the state and of economic and cultural elites who are concerned with the this-worldly project of constructing and maintaining a modern liberal society. Anthropologist Talal Asad explains that “modernity is a *project*—or rather, a series of interlinked projects—that certain people in power seek to achieve [and that] . . . aims at institutionalizing a number of . . . principles,” including secularism.¹¹ The U.S. government pursued this project vigorously in the nineteenth century, and its conquest and management of the West was crucial to the development of the modern U.S. state.

Anthropologist Saba Mahmood deftly identifies what she calls a “*generative contradiction*” embedded in political secularism: “On the one hand, the liberal state claims to maintain a separation between church and state by relegating religion to the private sphere. . . . On the other hand, modern governmentality involves the state’s intervention and regulation of many aspects of socioreligious life, dissolving the distinction between public and private and thereby contravening its first claim.”¹² Thus, the U.S. government intervened in the domestic lives of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, regulating with ever-increasing ruthlessness the Mormons’ marital

11. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 13.

12. Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 3, 4 (italics in original).

arrangements and pursuing legal action to outlaw the religious practice of polygamy all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Bureau of Immigration agents also became concerned about the ostensibly private religious beliefs of potential immigrants, especially as these pertained to marriage. In Mahmood's framing, it is clear that for the Bureau of Immigration, a question about marriage practices—manifestly an aspect of the private sphere—spoke to a public concern about religious identity that could, sometimes, be satisfied with an answer about racial/ethnic heritage. In a similar maneuver, first lady Lucille Webb Hayes, through her well-known religious activities, manifested the private religious convictions of President Hayes without his having to make a public pronouncement on the matter. With this sleight of hand, the (private) religious underpinnings of President Hayes's (public) political platform could appeal to voters and legislators without violating the public/private divide or the separation of church and state. The management of the West, then, was a key element of the larger secularist project of modern America.

RELIGION IN THE AMERICAN WEST

I hope I have shown, in the preceding discussion, that thinking about religion in the American West helps us understand more fully both religion and the American West. Beyond that, by putting these terms together and thinking about “religion in the American West,” we are able to see clearly the role of religion in the extension of U.S. empire and in the negotiation of and resistance to white Protestant cultural, economic, and military dominance. The clarity with which these themes emerge in the articles in this issue gives the lie to the image of the West as a “non-religious” space and lays bare the tangled ways in which religious and secular actors, motivations, and practices shaped the West's past and present—and the past and present of other regions: the eastern United States, the islands of Micronesia, northern Mexico, eastern Canada, and so on. We are also able to see how the West shaped religion beyond its ever-shifting borders, prompting a Protestant mission board to embrace the capitalist concept of monetary investment to fund its endeavors and providing a site from which to inflame religious prejudices among eastern Protestants to achieve political ends. The goal of getting to the West inspired—or required—immigrants to reframe their religious identities, disguising them or translating them to remain on the “imperial paths” that (it might seem) all led to the West. And Black boosters used the language of

religion to shape perceptions of—and frame their aspirations for—the West, even as white westerners used the rhetoric of religion in attempts to discipline Black arrivants like Pleasant.

Thus far, I have hewed rather closely to the long-debated questions of Western history and religious studies: Where (or what) is the West? And what is religion? In what remains, I consider what new questions, we can—we *ought*—to ask about religion, the West, and religion in the West. Turning as it does on the sometimes deliberate mismatch between question and answer on the part of migrants caught in the U.S. government’s bureaucratic web, Jeffrey Turner’s article inspires me to wonder whether we might find new analytical purchase by deliberately mismatching our question words. Perhaps we would be well-served by trying some of the other “Five Ws,” picking more creatively from *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* to shake up our thinking.

For example, we might ask: Who, or for whom, is the West? Who has religion (and who does not)? Who gets to decide, and on what basis? From the nineteenth century through the present day, one persistent trend has been to view the West as a place of refuge from persecution in the eastern United States. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the example *par excellence* of this trend, but the Exodusters also found hope and possibility in the idea of moving west.¹³ Hale identifies the Ghost Dance and other examples of what she calls “fugitive religion” as places of refuge for displaced Indigenous groups in the nineteenth century and beyond.¹⁴ More recently, the potential to find a space to live unmolested by outside society has motivated groups as diverse as the followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and the Branch Davidians to relocate to western locations. The federal government has rarely allowed these quests for refuge to succeed without complication. The imperative to regulate religion, and the refusal of many groups to restrict their religious practice to the confines allowed by the secular state, have brought the government into conflict with religious groups time and again.

In addition to thinking about people, we might also wonder about chronology: When is religion in the West? That question, it seems, we should ask in several tenses: When is, was, and will be religion in the West, if ever?

13. Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: Norton, 1986).

14. Tiffany Hale, “Indigenous Religious Traditions and the Limits of White Supremacy,” *Pacific Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (summer 2023).

Regardless of the time period we pick, the answer might be a simple “Yes.” Was religion in the West in the nineteenth century? As the articles in this issue have shown, it absolutely was. Was it there before that? Of course that depends on how we define “religion,” but many scholars would say yes—Native American people were doing things that we can (anachronistically) classify as religion long before such a term was invented. The arrival in what we now call the American West of Spanish, and later Russian, colonists introduced activities that we might recognize more easily as religion as early as the seventeenth century. Even now, although the West has generally outpaced other regions of the United States in the growth of the proportion of its population that claims no religious identity, it is also home to significant religious diversity and it regularly serves as the launching pad for influential religious innovations such as, in the twentieth century, Pentecostalism and the Jesus Movement.

As the proportion of “nones”—people who claim no religious affiliation—continues to grow, we might raise the question of whether religion will ultimately vanish from the West. I think the answer is “No,” for several reasons. First, on a practical level, is Utah: although the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is more numerous outside the United States than inside it at this point, the cultural weight of the church remains centered in Salt Lake City and the Great Basin, and it shows no sign of moving. Second, on a theoretical level, Mahmood reminds us that secularism is “a discursive operation of power that generates [the spheres of public, private, political, religious, and so on] . . . , establishes their boundaries, and suffuses them with content, such that they come to acquire a natural quality for those living within its terms.”¹⁵ As long as the U.S. Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion and American jurisprudence and political culture insist on the separation of church and state, then, the secular American state will continue to produce the sphere of religion, designate content that belongs in that sphere, and regulate its boundaries.

We are accustomed to debating the location and boundaries of the West, but we should also ask, Where is *religion* in the West? What space is afforded or accorded to it in the organization of communities? In the *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, Philip Barlow (updating the atlas that Edwin S. Gaustad first published in 1962) used demographic data to visualize rates of religious adherence at the county level throughout the nation: the higher the

15. Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age*, 3.

rate of adherence in a county, the darker the green with which Barlow shaded it. East of the Mississippi was a patchwork of forest greens; west of the Mississippi, the map was a blend of washed-out minty tints, except in and around Utah and major urban areas.¹⁶ Critics have rightly raised questions about the quality of the data: how is religiosity quantified? Many of the marginalized populations that appear in the preceding essays would not have been counted in surveys that focused on church membership as the central marker of religious adherence. Nevertheless, these maps are useful prods to our thinking about the location of religion in the West, and they suggest that one helpful focus for further study of religion in the American West is its role in the growth and development of the urban West.

When I taught a course on religion in the American West at the University of Wyoming, my students were inclined to see Laramie (a city of approximately thirty thousand people at the time) as the West, but they were reluctant to include Denver, and they clearly did not believe that Los Angeles was part of the West. When pressed, they began to articulate a distinction between rural and urban that, they believed, indexed important cultural markers distinguishing West from not-West. For them, the West was a state of mind, perhaps even more than a location. Then, too, these students—nearly all of them from Wyoming or other parts of the Rocky Mountain West—were largely not affiliated with religious institutions. However, they did find spiritual succor in nature: one student wrote, for example, that the mountains were his sacred space. Taking such sentiments seriously, and taking into account the large proportion of the American West that is public land, pushes us to think about other ways of being religious beyond institutional affiliation. Lynn Ross-Bryant's work on the national parks is exemplary, but there is much more to do.¹⁷

The question of the space given to religion in the organization of communities might seem, at first, to echo early assumptions that building churches was part of the settler-colonial “civilizing process” in the West, converting the “Wild West” to settled nation. In some ways, indeed, the presence of churches did function as an index of the extension of American

16. Edwin Scott Gaustad and Philip L. Barlow, with the special assistance of Richard W. Dishno, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, new ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 352.

17. See Lynn Ross-Bryant, “Sacred Sites: Nature and Nation in the U.S. National Parks,” *Religion and American Culture* 15, no. 1 (2005): 31–62; and Ross-Bryant, *Pilgrimage to the National Parks: Religion and Nature in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

hegemony. But how might we map the kinds of “fugitive religion” that Hale discussed in this issue? How should we account for the religions that immigrants brought with them on the imperial paths that Turner analyzed? How shall we think about my students’ nature-centered spirituality? How has the development of a modern, secular American West affected the boundaries and content of the category of religion? Asad called for an anthropology of the secular, and such a line of inquiry might be particularly fruitful in the West.¹⁸

Perhaps most foundationally, we might start to question, Why is the West? Why is religion? What work do those categories do for those who consider themselves of the region called (at any given time) “the West” and/or of a group of people classified as “religious” and what do they do for those who do not so consider themselves? What work do they do for us as scholars? Classifying the region in question as “the West” places it in relationship to “the East,” as I suggested above, and prioritizes narratives that privilege that relationship. As many scholars have suggested, our accounts change if we think of the region as *el norte*, the southern frontier of Canada, the eastern shore of the Pacific Rim, or the center place. The historiographical weight of Western history makes it difficult to privilege other orientations in our narratives, or perhaps even to *think* stories in other directions: the articles in this collection, for example, largely accept the dominance of the East-West directionality (though they do not do so entirely).

Similarly, labeling a group of people, a set of propositions about reality, a collection of activities, or any other set of elements as “religious” makes those elements legible in certain kinds of ways, often for particular ends, and sometimes with unintended consequences. It is, in fact, an integral part of the secular project to identify and categorize “the religious” for the purposes of generating and regulating the content of that sphere. Controversy over the stone monolith known as Mato Tipila, or Devils Tower, is illustrative: members of the Lakota Sioux nation and other Native nations, who consider Mato Tipila a sacred site, used the framework of religious freedom to seek a ban on climbing on the monolith, arguing that the damage that climbers inflicted on the stone tower harmed their ability to practice their religion. This argument was made legible to the National Park Service and the federal court system by categorizing ceremonies like the Sun Dance and objects like prayer bundles under the rubric of “religion.” However, it left illegible the

18. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 21–66.

essential relationality between Native nations and the land. As scholar Vine Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux) explained, “that location is sacred enough it should have time of its own. And that once it has time of its own, then the people who know how to do ceremonies should come and minister to it.”¹⁹ By accepting and working within the framework of the U.S. Constitution’s religion clauses, the argument that climbing activity at Mato Tipila should be restricted also, paradoxically, made possible the argument that regulations protecting Native American religious practices on federally controlled land (such as Devils Tower National Monument) comprised an unconstitutional establishment of religion by the federal government.

Remixing our questions allows us to rethink our approaches to religion in the American West, suggesting other sources, offering new ways of looking at our stories and, at least occasionally, giving us a glimpse of other frames of reality that impinge on the ones with which we are familiar. The articles in this issue offer a wealth of new ideas for the study of religion in the American West. I hope that in a decade or two we will be able to see that each of these essays represents a trailhead, with one or more paths into the study of religion in the West leading off into the wilderness. I hope we will see evidence of many scholar-hikers walking these paths—alone and together—exploring the terrain and finding new vistas from which to see, and understand, this subject. Inevitably, some of those paths will lead into other areas of study—and those connections can only strengthen the trail network. Connections to other fields will allow us to offer valuable insight to scholars in other areas, and to invite those in other fields to think with us about our field. The trails await!

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NOTE

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19. Vine Deloria, interviewed in *In the Light of Reverence*, directed by Christopher McLeod (Olney, Penn.: Bullfrog Films, 2002), DVD, 14:34–51.