



Southern Religion and Christian Diversity in the Twentieth Century (Religion & American Culture)

Wayne Flynt

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Southern Religion and Christian Diversity in the Twentieth Century is a collection of fifteen essays by award-winning scholar Wayne Flynt that explores and reveals the often-forgotten religious heterogeneity of the American South.

Throughout its dramatic history, the American South has wrestled with issues such as poverty, social change, labor reform, civil rights, and party politics, and Flynt's writing reaffirms religion as the lens through which southerners understand and attempt to answer these contentious questions. In *Southern Religion and Christian Diversity in the Twentieth Century*, however, Flynt gently but persuasively dispels the myth—comforting to some and dismaying to others—of religion in the South as an inert cairn of reactionary conservatism.

Flynt introduces a wealth of stories about individuals and communities of faith whose beliefs and actions map the South's web of theological fault lines. In the early twentieth century, North Carolinian pastor Alexander McKelway became a relentless crusader against the common practice of child labor. In 1972, Rev. Dr. Ruby Kile, in a time of segregated churches led by men, took the helm of the eight-member Powderly Faith Deliverance Center in Jefferson County, Alabama and built the fledgling group into a robust congregation with more than 700 black and white worshippers. Flynt also examines the role of religion in numerous pivotal court cases, such as the US Supreme Court school prayer case *Engel v. Vitale*, whose majority opinion was penned by Justice Hugo Black, an Alabamian. These fascinating case studies and many more illuminate a religious landscape of far more varied texture and complexity than is commonly believed.

Southern Religion and Christian Diversity in the Twentieth Century offers much to readers and scholars interested in the South, religion, and theology. Writing with his hallmark wit, warmth, and erudition, Flynt's *Southern Religion and Christian Diversity in the Twentieth Century* is a vital record of gospel-inspired southerners whose stories revivify sclerotic assumptions about the narrow conformity of southern Christians.

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