



Metropolitan Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation founded in 1962 at 525 West Douglas Avenue, Wichita, Kansas. Courtesy of Jay M. Price.

Dixie's Disciples:

The Southern Diaspora and Religion in Wichita, Kansas

by Jay M. Price

On the eve of Armistice Day in November 1926, the Defenders of the Christian Faith hosted a series of lectures in Wichita, Kansas, about the dangers of modernism, evolution, and textbooks that they asserted replaced sound religion with “the philosophy of evolutionary doctrine.” Founded just a year earlier, the Defenders hoped to use a series of daytime lectures at South Lawrence Baptist Church, followed by evening sessions at the city’s Arcadia Theater, to expose a dangerous secularism that was undermining American society. Local papers found that the daytime events seemed to involve internecine conflicts among clergy, as when Rev. Morton Miller, chairman of the convention, railed against modernist bishops in his Methodist Episcopal denomination.¹

The evening events, however, were dominated by the event’s star speaker, Minnesota Baptist preacher W. B. Riley. Wichita had seen its share of traveling evangelists, most notably Billy Sunday, who had conducted a six-week revival event in 1911. Now the arrival of someone of Riley’s stature connected Wichita to a profound shift that was taking place in American religion. Riley had been a major figure in the emerging fundamentalist movement. He was the key organizer of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association and was instrumental in promoting the term “fundamentalist.”² Riley was a friend of William Jennings Bryan, the charismatic antievolution icon who had conducted the legal defense for the state of Tennessee in the Scopes trial, and also of J. Frank Norris, the colorful and controversial Texas evangelist who helped shape modern fundamentalism in spite of a series of scandals that dogged him during the 1920s.

Jay Price is chair of the Department of History at Wichita State University, where he also directs the Local and Community History Program and the Great Plains Studies Certificate Program. He has authored and coauthored several photographic histories of Wichita-area topics. His other projects have covered topics from ethnic entrepreneurship to religious architecture to local rock music. He is currently leading a team of students and artists to tell the history of the Chisholm Trail in the form of a graphic novel. He has recently served on the boards of the Kansas Association of Historians, the Kansas Humanities Council, the Wichita Sedgwick County Historical Museum, and the University Press of Kansas.

1. “The Defenders Score Waldorf as Modernist,” *Wichita Beacon*, November 10, 1926; “Check Modernism or Prepare for a Reign of Terror—Warns Riley,” *Wichita Eagle*, November 10, 1926.

2. For context, see George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): 151–52.

Just a year earlier, biblical literalists seemed to have won a victory in upholding the Tennessee antievolution law in the trial against teacher John Scopes. Riley, whom the *Wichita Beacon* called the “eloquent Minnesota monkey-baiter,” was among the key figures to continue the fight in places such as Kansas in the wake of Bryan’s death. Riley proclaimed, “We have won in Tennessee. . . . We have won in Mississippi. We have won in Texas. We have won in Oklahoma. We have won in Florida. And we are going to win in Kansas.”³ Fighting evolution was more than just about how to teach the origin of humanity. He saw in evolution a creeping atheism that has “the ultimate destruction of American government” as its objective.

While Riley was perhaps the best-known figure at the two-day event, the main organizer, the founder of the Defenders, Gerald B. Winrod, gained notoriety of his own. Winrod articulated the goal of the event by saying that “we are not going to be satisfied” until “we split the church wide open. We are going to ‘smoke out’ every modernist minister and preacher to take a definite stand. There is no middle ground.”⁴ While Winrod later said that he did not intend to actually encourage churches to split, he did insist that there were two paths, that of the true faith and that of apostasy and heresy. Splitting open the church was to reveal what he saw as the corruption that permeated institutional Christianity.⁵

Winrod’s home base of Wichita was a fulcrum in a shift that involved demographics as much as theology. A growing body of scholars, including Darren Dochuk, Ferenc Szasz, and James Gregory, has explored how the migration of southerners profoundly transformed the religious makeup of places such as Los Angeles, where evangelicalism and other major religious movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries became nationwide phenomena. A similar shift took place in Wichita, where a combination of southern migration and realigning theological attitudes transformed the city from a “mainline” Protestant community to one more in line with the southern Bible belt.

Gerald Burton Winrod was born in Wichita in March 1900 to John and Mabel Craig Winrod. John Winrod was a

bartender at the 410 in the Carey House Hotel, the same bar that later that year Carry A. Nation would smash as one of her first “hatchetations.” John Winrod later suggested that this event helped steer him back to religion. By the 1910s, John and Mabel had become evangelists, and their son, Gerald, shared this ministry. At first it was a side effort while he worked as the El Dorado associate editor for the Kansas Gas and Electric Company’s *Servicescope*. This start in publishing led to his taking over the editorship of a small religious journal, setting him on course to become a regional evangelical voice under the title *The Winrod Bulletin* and later *The Winrod Messenger*.

Winrod’s publications emerged as American Protestantism was wracked by debates between modernists and religious conservatives. Worse yet from the conservative perspective, denominations such as the Northern Baptist Convention and the Methodist Episcopal Church should have been bulwarks against these perceived threats to western civilization but instead were in many quarters complicit regarding evolution, Prohibition, and biblical criticism. Several major figures in those bodies were openly supportive of these corrosive elements to the Christian core.⁶

By the 1920s, organizations of conservative Christians across the country had started to give voice to what they saw as social, spiritual, and moral threats to society. One such organization was the Defenders of the Christian Faith. The Defenders, as they were commonly known, formed in 1925, the year that saw the Scopes trial take place in Tennessee and John and Mabel Winrod found their Wichita Healing Tabernacle. In November, Gerald Winrod invited a group of religious conservatives to meet in Salina to form a body “to consider methods for arousing the people to a sense of impending danger by their silent assent to the wicked doctrines that are being fostered in the pulpit and classroom.”⁷ While Winrod was the central organizing figure for the group, he was not yet the figure who would exclusively dominate the body. The president was Rev. A. L. Carlton of Beloit’s First Methodist Church. Leadership rested with a body of men known as the Cabinet and included E. L. Quigley of Winfield, who led an unsuccessful campaign to stop the teaching of evolution at Southwestern College; Rev. Morton Miller, a Methodist preacher from Plainville, Kansas; Howard

3. “Evolutionists Leave Children Broken in Soul Says Riley,” *Wichita Eagle*, November 11, 1926.

4. “‘Split Church Wide Open’ Is Defender Idea,” *Wichita Beacon*, November 12, 1926.

5. “Preach Today on Subjects Dealing with Modernism,” *Wichita Eagle*, November 14, 1926; “A Split Church Not the Object,” *Wichita Beacon*, November 14, 1926.

6. See, for example, “The Cuckoo’s Nest in the Northern Baptist Convention,” *Defender*, October 1926, Gerald Winrod Papers, Wichita State University Department of Special Collections, Wichita, Kansas.

7. “President Carlton’s Message,” *Defender*, April 1926.

Snyder, a McPherson candy merchant and member of the Gideons; Lester Davis, a coffee merchant from Lindsborg; and Rev. T. L. Rydbeck, a Lutheran minister from Lindsborg and professor at Bethany College. The Defenders gained supporters such as Ross Campbell, president of Sterling College, who invited the group to hold its 1930 convention at that institution.⁸

At this time, Winrod and the Defenders still functioned within a larger fundamentalist movement. In contrast to the group's later incarnation as Winrod's organ to promote a virulently anticommunist, anti-New Deal, and anti-Semitic message, an edition of the *Defender* from December 1926 featured an article from the Reverend H. G. Hamilton in support of a Jewish presence in Palestine that referred to Jews as "the apple of God's eye." In the 1920s, W. B. Riley served on the editorial board of the *Defender*. The *Defender* published regular features on supportive colleges in Indiana, Missouri, and Kansas and also included articles from the Bryan Bible League. While the Defenders began as a mainly Kansas-based body, in a few years, they were aiming to be a larger, regional voice. The third convention, in 1929, took place in Indianapolis. By 1930, there were even discussions about relocating the Defenders to Oklahoma City, where Winrod oversaw the Oklahoma City Tabernacle.⁹

The Oklahoma City efforts of the Defenders developed early in the group's history. Oklahoma, like much of the South, was emerging as a promising field for the antimodernist movement. Although some key figures hailed from the North (for example, Riley was from Minnesota) and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles was a key promoter of fundamentalism, it was the Texas theology of Norris and the campaigns against teaching evolution in southern states such as Tennessee that came to define the movement's regional makeup. Winrod himself admitted that the South was the leading edge for religious conservatives. Popular commentators at the time increasingly identified the South with fundamentalism and religious



A key figure in establishing Southern Baptist congregations in Kansas was Orbie Clem. Clem helped found Airline Baptist Church in Wichita and then served as the editor for Kansas Southern Baptist Beams. Courtesy of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, Topeka, Kansas.

conservatism. In 1925, satirist H. L. Mencken described Dayton, Tennessee, as the "bright, shining, buckle of the Bible belt" in his coverage of the Scopes trial. For him, places such as Dayton were indicative of a region that was increasingly under the sway of the "babble of hedge theologians, led by blood-sweating fanatics and followed by a docile tail of crooked politicians and boot-licking editors."¹⁰ However, even Mencken did not confine what he saw as religious fanaticism to the South. In a piece on American Protestantism printed in the *American Mercury* in 1925, he referred to "those parts of the Republic where Beelzebub is still real—for example in rural sections of the Middle West and everywhere in the South save a few walled towns."¹¹ Nor was Mencken alone: Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* was set in the fictitious Kansas town of Gritzmacher Springs.

8. "Gerald B. Winrod: Prophet in Politics," in Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1983), and Barbara Jane Beale, "Gerald Burton Winrod: Defender of Christianity and Democracy in the United States" (master's thesis, Wichita State University, 1994). See also various editions of the *Defender*, including "The Cabinet," November 1927, and "Great Defender Convention," October 1926. A discussion of Winrod's early career appears in the May 1927 edition of the *Defender*.

9. Gerald B. Winrod, "Report of the Third Annual Convention of 'The Defenders,'" *Defender*, January 1929; "The Oklahoma City Tabernacle," *Defender*, November 1930.

10. H. L. Mencken, "Law and Freedom," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, July 15, 1925, reprinted in "Coverage of the Scopes Trial by H. L. Mencken," <https://archive.org/stream/CoverageOfTheScopesTrialByH.L.Mencken/ScopesTrialMencken.txt>. See also H. L. Mencken, "God Help the South," *Prejudices*, sixth series (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 136–45, quotation from 144.

11. H. L. Mencken, "The Collapse of Protestantism," *American Mercury*, March 1925, reprinted in *A Mencken Chrestomathy, Edited and Annotated by the Author* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 76–79, quotation from 79.



When the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists formed in 1946, N. J. Westmoreland served as its first executive secretary, guiding the organization through an impressive era of growth. Courtesy of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, Topeka, Kansas.

The connection between religion and region was becoming more acute. The 1920s saw activist evangelicalism transition from a nationwide phenomenon to one more specifically identified with a specific region. In the 1800s, evangelicals interested in a range of causes from abolition to Prohibition could be found across the nation. Upstate New York was a center for revivalism; Princeton, New Jersey, was a center for orthodox Calvinist thought as defined by theologian Charles Hodge; revivalist icon Charles Grandison Finney was located at Oberlin College; evangelists Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey operated out of Chicago; and it was at the Niagara Conferences of the 1870s where American evangelicals developed John Nelson Darby's dispensationalist concepts such as the rapturing of the faithful as an early phase of the End Times. As the twentieth century unfolded, however, the old northern evangelical bodies were transitioning into broad-based mainline denominations, and it was now the southern religious thinkers and southern denominations that took up the call to maintain what conservatives saw as a threatened Christian orthodoxy. With figures such as Harry Emerson Fosdick guiding a modernist synthesis of science and faith, it fell to southerners such as J. Frank Norris to become the voice of conservative evangelical Christianity. Norris was a key figure in the development of the movement that came to be called "fundamentalism" and began to make itself known on the state level though antievolution

laws in places such as Tennessee. These trends came to a head in 1925 at the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, inspiring Mencken to coin his concept of the "Bible belt." Meanwhile, the first waves of southern migrants were heading to places such as California, taking with them what historian Robert Wuthnow has called "Texas Theology." As Wuthnow and Darren Dochuk have noted, it was not that Texas or the South was necessarily more fundamentalist than other parts of the country. In many portions of the South, the Southern Baptists were so dominant that they functioned like a mainline Protestant institution. However, the South in general, and Texas in particular, seemed to embody fundamentalist Protestantism to outside commentators and to shape the fundamentalist conversation. Even if one was not

southern in ancestry, a person of a biblically literalist bent increasingly looked to southern bodies such as the Southern Baptist Convention and figures such as J. Frank Norris as the voices of their views.¹²

These were the issues that were at play in 1920s Wichita. For most of the history of the community, its religious makeup has reflected Kansas's mainline, midwestern consensus that historians such as Robert Wuthnow see as a guiding force. In his book *Red State Religion*, Wuthnow argued that in spite of the images of a wild-eyed John Brown, a crusading Carry A. Nation, and a media-focused Fred Phelps, these figures are exceptions. Rather, the proverbial white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, temperance-lean-

12. Robert Wuthnow, *Rough Country: How Texas Became America's Most Powerful Bible-Belt State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Robert Wuthnow, *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America's Heartland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Stanley D. Brunn, Gerald R. Webster, and J. Clark Archer, "The Bible Belt in a Changing South: Shrinking, Relocating, and Multiple Buckles," *Southeastern Geographer* 51 (2011): 513-49; Mary Elizabeth Mathews, "Building the Bible Belt: How America Came to View the South as Fundamentalist" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2002); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Charles A. Heatwole, "The Bible Belt: A Problem in Regional Definition," *Journal of Geography* 77 (February 1978): 50-55; James R. Shortridge, "Patterns of Religion in the United States," *Geographical Review* 66 (October 1976): 420-34.

ing Methodists and the German/Irish/immigrant-connected Catholics formed the core of a moderate conservative religious culture that valued continuity and community. These two traditions grounded the state, joined by Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterians, and Baptists on the Anglo side and Lutherans and Mennonites on the immigrant side. In contrast to the southern-leaning Baptists of Oklahoma and Missouri and the midwestern Lutherans of Nebraska, the Methodist core of Kansas Protestantism represented a more complicated story. Whether the issue was slavery, liquor, or Populism, Kansas's Methodists and other mainline Protestants could side with radical groups but then return to work and live with neighbors of opposing persuasions once that issue's passions had subsided.¹³

Wichita highlights Kansas's complicated, even contradictory identity as a border state. It is easy to forget that alongside the Free State and immigrant traditions are portions of the state that have long related to Missouri, Arkansas, and the Ozarks. Even before the pro-southern LeCompton government attempted to bring Kansas into the union as a slave state, southern missionary efforts had been undertaken among Native American groups. The Potawatomi Baptist Mission and the Wea and Piankashaw missions, for example, all operated under the auspices of Southern Baptist-affiliated groups. In the decades that followed, individual congregations may have sympathized with Southern over American Baptist¹⁴ policies and views but officially could not join southern-leaning Baptist bodies due to a series of "comity agreements." In the best known of these, the Fortress Monroe Comity Agreement of 1894, the American and Southern Baptists

agreed to restrict missionary activity to their respective regions. The argument was that it was counterproductive for two competing Baptist missionary efforts to operate in the same region. While the exact boundaries were not always clear, both sides generally understood Kansas to be on the northern side, with Missouri divided between the two.¹⁵

Wichita itself had long been on the border of regions. Initially, its religious makeup paralleled that of other midwestern/Great Plains cities. It is located at the place where the Little Ozarks give way to the Flint Hills. Even today, a traveler along I-35, cutting diagonally from Kansas City to the Oklahoma border, will see how the Flint Hills divide the Kansas and Missouri River watersheds to the north from the Arkansas River watershed to the south. Just to the west lies the 100th meridian with the High Plains beyond. The Arkansas River made Wichita nearly the midway point between the Rocky Mountains and the cotton lands of the Mississippi. The city straddles the border of the mainline Protestant/Catholic midwestern consensus commonly associated with the Midwest, the Southern Baptist/evangelical flavor of the South, and the independent spirit coupled with the Latter-Day Saints and Latino Catholic communities of the West.

Wichita's business community did look south and west, along the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway line, to Indian Territory, later Oklahoma; the Texas Panhandle; and New Mexico as natural markets. In a commercial sense, Wichitans saw themselves as solidly part of the Southwest. Culturally, however, the city was midwestern in makeup. One snapshot comes from the 1875 state agricultural census, five years after the city was officially incorporated. The census listed the place of ori-

13. Wuthnow, *Rough Country and Red State Religion*; Ferenc Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000); Ferenc Szasz, "Religion in the American West: Its History and Probable Future," *Word and World* 24 (Summer 2004): 233–42. See also Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuk, *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Place, Space, and Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Gary R. Entz, "Religion in Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 28 (Summer 2005): 120–45; Mathews, "Building the Bible Belt"; Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001); Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Heyrman, *Southern Cross*; Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Power and the Glory: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992).

14. The American Baptist tradition emerged in the 1840s as a northern, ecumenical and antislavery expression of the Baptist

worldview in contrast to the Southern Baptists, who leaned toward proslavery views and a "landmark" theology that rejected ecumenical activities. In 1907, several American Baptist groups came together to form the Northern Baptist Convention. In 1950, the body renamed itself the American Baptist Convention, and in 1972, it became the American Baptist Churches USA. In this work, Northern Baptist and American Baptist refer to the same tradition.

15. See, for example, Wuthnow, *Red State Religion*; Entz, "Religion in Kansas"; Jon Lauck, *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2013) and James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989); Philip Barlow and Mark Silk, eds., *Religion and Public Life in the Midwest: America's Common Denominator?* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2004); Marjorie Stith, *Making a Difference: A Fifty-Year History of Kansas-Nebraska Southern Baptists* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 12–50 and 42–62; and Paul Putz, "Toward a Bibliography of Religion in the Midwest," Religion in American History blogpost at <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2015/01/toward-bibliography-of-religion-in.html>.

gin of Sedgwick County's residents and shows that 2,500 were from Illinois, three times the figure of the next-largest group, from Missouri. After Missouri, residents' next-most-common places of origin were Iowa, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. By 1875, Wichita had been a railhead for the Chisholm Trail that brought Texas cattle and Texas drovers into the area for three years, but few drovers stayed to put down roots. Just forty-six residents hailed from the Lone Star State in 1875.¹⁶

Regarding religion, the city's early history was tied firmly to northern religious denominations and the northern European immigrant faiths. It was not that different from similar cities in Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois. In Wichita proper, Germans were a presence as well, ranging from German Catholics and Lutherans to Jews, with German Catholic enclaves in western Sedgwick County. These influences gave the area a cultural flavor not unlike that of the rest of what was coming to be called the Midwest. Into the early twentieth century, the main congregations were northern leaning. Methodists were the Methodist Episcopal Church, not the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. First Baptists were part of the American Baptist tradition. Even a congregation whose name might suggest a southern connection, the Central Church of Christ, had as its pastor Ohio-born Edgar William Allen (although his successor, Walter Scott Priest, was from West Virginia). Perhaps the most visible southern-leaning traditions were those of the African American community, most notably Tabernacle Baptist and New Hope Baptist.¹⁷

Social issues such as Prohibition were not yet specifically southern causes. In Wichita, Hiram Lewis, a major force behind the creation of the local YMCA, was an active member of the Presbyterian Church. A tireless crusader for the enforcement of the state's Prohibition law in the

city, Lewis came from Trumbull County, Ohio, near the shores of Lake Erie. His protégé, Mentholatum Company founder A. A. Hyde, came from Massachusetts. Such efforts paralleled those of William Jennings Bryan in Nebraska or Charles Sheldon in Topeka. The New York-raised pastor of Central Congregational in Topeka, Sheldon was a leader in statewide temperance circles. His book *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* became a standard for the movement known as the Social Gospel that argued the need for Christians to live out the Gospel message through helping the poor and marginalized.¹⁸

Kansas's most famous prohibitionist, Carrie (later Carry A.) Nation, did have southern roots, hailing from Kentucky and Missouri. She described her slaveholding father as "a union man, but a southern sympathizer." Her marriage to her second husband, David A. Nation, took her to Texas in the 1870s and 1880s. They later came to Medicine Lodge, Kansas, in 1889 after being on the losing side of a Texas county feud between supporters of integration and victorious segregationists. A decade later, Nation catapulted herself into the temperance pantheon by smashing the bar at Wichita's Carey House Hotel in December 1900, followed by a similar campaign against "joints" in Topeka in early 1901. She was never a resident of Wichita, having spent only a handful of nights in local hotels (and most infamously the local jail) before moving on to national fame. Her ties to Wichita were cemented in history, however, because of a media storm that Nation intentionally cultivated. The press was captivated by her eccentricities, her "unwomanly" actions, her height, and even her age but made little mention of her southern roots. Nation was thought of as an extreme, even radical member of the temperance movement but not necessarily a southern one.¹⁹

The area was a regular stop for evangelists, religious teachers, church planters, and missionaries. Examples ranged from Mary Schopf, who traveled the Midwest to establish congregations affiliated with the New Thought movement known as Unity,²⁰ to prominent revivalists

16. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City* (Wichita, KS: Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Society, 1988); Jay M. Price, "'Peerless Princess of the Southwest': Boosterism and Regional Identity in Wichita, Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 38 (Summer 2015): 80–106; Roy Wenzl, "Entrepreneurship in Wichita—A Best-known Trait Now Old History?," *Wichita Eagle*, September 26, 2015. For context, see James Shortridge, *The Middle West, Cities on the Plains: The Evolution of Urban Kansas* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), and *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995) as well as David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002). See also *Fourth Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture*, (Topeka, KS: George W. Martin, Public Printer, 1875).

17. Wuthnow, *Red State Religion*, 17–66; Entz, "Religion in Kansas"; Price, "Peerless Princess of the Southwest"; Jay P. Dolan, "Catholics in the Midwest," <https://www3.nd.edu/~jdolan/midwest.html>.

18. See Wuthnow, *Red State Religion*, 67–109; O. H. Bentley, ed., *History of Wichita and Sedgwick County Kansas, Past and Present, Including an Account of the Cities, Towns, and Villages of the County* (Chicago: C. F. Cooper & Co, 1910); W. G. McAvoy, *McAvoy's Wichita City Directory for 1904–05*, <http://mhgswichita.org/1904-1905-City-Directory.pdf>. See also "A Great Year's Work," *Wichita Eagle*, November 13, 1910.

19. See, for example, *Wichita Daily Eagle*, December 28, 1900; Carry A. Nation, *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (Topeka, KS: F. M. Steves & Sons, 1909).

20. See, for example, Mary Macklin, "New Thought Churches in Wichita, Kansas: History and Structure" (master's thesis, Wichita State University, 2007, 29–33).

such as Billy Sunday, whose six-week crusade in 1911 resulted in the construction of a massive wooden auditorium, or “tabernacle,” on North Waco Street. By the 1910s and 1920s, a number of small evangelical, Pentecostal, and Holiness congregations began establishing themselves in Wichita. Founded in Texas, the denomination known as the Church of the Nazarene established itself in Kansas in the early 1900s in cities such as Topeka. A series of revivals started to take place elsewhere in Kansas, with both male and female evangelists working with the aid of denominational officials, including the Oklahoma City Holiness College. In May 1912, a monthlong series of tent revivals resulted in the formation of the “Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene.” The congregation held services in the Rescue Home on Market Street with J. H. Estes from Peniel, Texas, as pastor. The next year, the congregation erected a small church building on Ida Avenue. By the 1920s, the membership had grown in size, and the tradition that once called itself “the poor man’s church” now had the resources to build a more substantial edifice at Kellogg and Lulu Streets that was dedicated in 1925. Although the denomination was formed in Texas and its first pastor was a Texan, the congregation was not just a group of transplanted southerners. A listing of the sixteen main charter members (among them nine women) included individuals from Massachusetts, Illinois, and Nebraska. R. E. Gilmore, one of the founders of the original tent revival in 1912, was from Illinois. Several were born in Kansas, with the birthplace of their parents including places such as Pennsylvania. A few were from Missouri but with parents from Ohio and northern parts of the country, not southern ones. Some names were too common to track down accurately, but the names that could be found in the census indicate that the early founders of the congregation mirrored the Midwest and Middle Atlantic backgrounds that were common in Wichita at the time.²¹

Pentecostals also started making modest inroads. Modern Pentecostalism owed its roots to Iowa-born Charles Parham. It was at Parham’s Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, that a prayer meeting on New Year’s Eve 1900–1901 included the presence of the Holy Spirit, enabling one member to speak in tongues. By the early 1900s, Parham’s evangelistic career had relocated to

21. First Church of the Nazarene, *The First Church of the Nazarene: The First 100 Years* (Wichita, KS: First Church of the Nazarene, 1912). See, for example, “Evangelistic Services,” *Chanute Times*, March 15, 1912; “Nazarene Revival Meetings,” *Topeka State Journal*, June 2, 1910.

Kansas Southern Baptist Beams

Anniversary Issue

“The Field is the World”

“Preach the Word”

VOLUME 2

WICHITA, KANSAS, APRIL, 1947

NUMBER 4

State Headquarters Established In Downtown Wichita



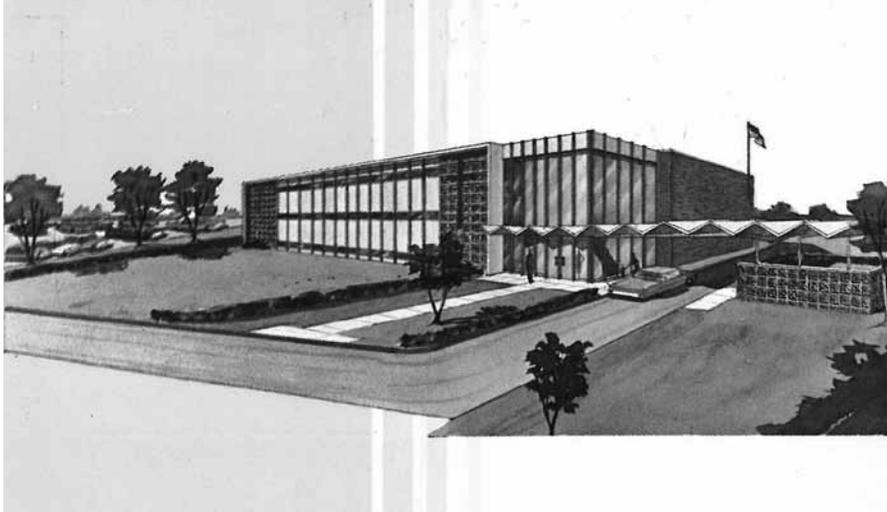
A suite of rooms on North Broadway between Douglas and First Street in the heart of Wichita's busy business district, housing the Convention and State W.M.U. offices. Editorial office of the BEAMS and the Baptist Book Store has been obtained. The state headquarters of Kansas Southern Baptists is located at

138^{1/2} North Broadway
Wichita 2, Kansas
Phone 2-2948

This issue commemorates the organization on March 19, 1946, of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists which took place at First Baptist Church, Chetopa; an account of steps leading up to this organization is found in the editorial and also in the article giving history of Trinity Baptist Church, Ness City.

An early edition of Kansas Southern Baptist Beams, highlighting Wichita as the administrative hub. Courtesy of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, Topeka, Kansas.

Nevada; Missouri; and the mining towns around Baxter Springs and Galena, Kansas, before eventually relocating to Houston, Texas. From there, the movement spread to Azusa Street in Los Angeles, but Parham ended his days in southeastern Kansas, where his Apostolic Faith denomination had had its early successes. In 1914, Pentecostals who gathered in Hot Springs, Arkansas, formed the denomination known as the Assemblies of God. With its headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, that denomination set about planting churches in the region, including Kansas. In Wichita, the first activities of Pentecostals took place in the wake of World War I, resulting in the formation of an Assembly of God/Apostolic Faith community in the 1910s. In January 1921, Charles Parham even came out from Baxter Springs to give a sermon. Even so, growth in Wichita was slow. There was only one Assembly of God congregation in Wichita during the 1920s until the formation of Glad Tidings in 1929.



Constructed in 1963, the denominational office of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists in Wichita reflected an organization that had grown tremendously in the postwar years. When the convention organized in 1946, it contained 1,000 members in seven congregations, one of which was Wichita's first Southern Baptist congregation, itself just a year old. In 1947, Wichita became the headquarters for local Southern Baptist activities, and by 1963, the SBC had grown to serve 168 churches and 40,000 members. Courtesy of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, Topeka, Kansas.

For much of the early twentieth century, groups connected to the Pentecostal and Holiness traditions had at best a modest presence in Wichita, and several specifically southern-leaning religious groups were all but nonexistent. The 1936 U.S. Census of American religious bodies showed Wichita with two Assembly of God congregations with a total membership of 247 and one Pentecostal Church of America congregation with another 100 members. With a population of 1,300, Jews in 1930s Wichita were double the number of Pentecostals and Holiness combined. By contrast, the Methodists had nearly 9,000 members and were the largest single denominational group in the city, followed by the Northern Baptist Convention with just over 5,000 members. There were no Southern Baptist congregations in the city. Moreover, the Methodists in Wichita were the northern-leaning Methodist Episcopal Church. The 1936 census listed African Methodist Episcopal and Colored Methodist Episcopal congregations but no Methodist Episcopal Church, South, also known as the "Southern Methodists." Presbyterian congregations included eight of the northern-leaning Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and one of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based United Presbyterian Church but no congregations of southern-leaning bodies such as the Presbyterian Church in the United States or the Cumberland Presby-

terians. In this regard, Wichita paralleled the northern-leaning religious trends of Kansas as a whole. Southern Baptists, Southern Methodists, Southern Presbyterians, and the Churches of Christ were not numerous enough to even merit their own columns in the county-by-county breakdown of religious groups in Kansas in the 1936 religious census.²²

Meanwhile, maintaining the Baptist Comity Agreement division between northern and southern bodies proved difficult. Initially, Baptists in Indian Territory maintained ties to both groups, but eventually, Oklahoma moved into the Southern Baptist orbit. Debates between the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Northern Baptist Home Mission Society over missionary work in New Mexico resulted in a set of talks in 1911 and 1912 that affirmed the territorial boundaries for mission work but also

affirmed Baptist congregational autonomy regarding how individual congregations could function. In places such as Kansas, the Southern Baptists emerged as voices of protest to the mainline establishment, and congregations began to look to the Southern Baptists as a voice for their concerns. First Baptist Church of Burden, Kansas, founded in the 1880s, by the 1910s had developed strong Southern Baptist leanings, particularly in the wake of a series of revivals, including one connected with students from Oklahoma Baptist University and a 1913 revival under the guidance of James Rider from Carthage, Missouri. After this, the congregation called C. B. Coleman. After Coleman came pastor Frank C. Medearis, also from Carthage, Missouri, who guided the congregation in its affiliation with the Oklahoma Baptist Convention. The congregation

22. Paul Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 276–315; James R. Goff Jr., "Charles F. Parham and His Role in the Development of the Pentecostal Movement: A Reevaluation," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 7 (Autumn 1984): 228–29; Entz, "Religion in Kansas," 139–42; "Kansas: Wilderness Voice," *Time*, August 1, 1938; "Church to Be Completed in Two Months," *Wichita Eagle*, August 17, 1929; "Wichita Churches Invite You Today," *Wichita Eagle*, January 23, 1921; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Religious Bodies, 1936*, compiled by T. F. Murphy, vol. I (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 707–08 and 755–58.

remained in the Northern Baptist Convention until 1919, when the Northern Baptist General Assembly voted to support the Inter-Church World Movement. When the Southern Baptists did not, Rev. Medearis, who attended both conferences, encouraged the congregation to leave the Northern Baptists and join the Southern. As a result, the congregation affiliated with the Oklahoma Baptist Convention and the Perry Baptist Association. The shift was more than a matter of congregational affiliation. Burden's decision had lasting consequences for Baptists in Kansas, including Wichita.²³

During the 1930s, Southern Baptist-leaning congregations began to take root across southern Kansas, particularly as an alternative to an American/Northern Baptist worldview that seemed too willing to compromise theology and practice for the sake of remaining part of the establishment. The Baptist Congregation of Chetopa, located about 160 miles southeast of Wichita near the Oklahoma border, dated from 1869 but had undergone a considerable decline before reviving along Southern Baptist lines under the leadership of Max Pendley. By 1940, Southern Baptists had made a presence, either through planting new congregations or transforming existing ones across southeastern Kansas in towns such as Baxter Springs, Wirtonia, Chautauqua, and Coffeyville. Those communities were near Oklahoma, the Ozarks, and southwestern Missouri, so their connections to the Southern Baptists make sense. However, the Southern Baptist presence in Kansas was not limited to the southeast. One congregation was in Ness City in western Kansas. There, the family of T. E. Bondurant, among others, including that of C. B. Coleman, organized Trinity Baptist Church in October 1940. They called as their pastor Orbie Clem (who married Bondurant's daughter, Lois) and voted to affiliate with the northwestern Oklahoma association of Southern Baptists. Meeting first in members' homes, the congregation moved to a rented building in Ness City and soon after invited Clyde Fowler from Burden to lead a revival. The revival did more than support the efforts of Trinity. During the event, Fowler met with Clem, and the two discussed the need to better organize Southern Baptists in the state. As an article in *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams* recalled, "At that time there were a number of Southern Baptist Churches in Kansas. These

were affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention through the states of Oklahoma and Missouri, and there were individual Southern Baptists scattered throughout Kansas with no church home at all."²⁴

It was in Wichita, however, that a significant Southern Baptist presence in Kansas first made itself felt. The connection made sense, given the city's long ties to Texas, Oklahoma, and the Ozarks. World War II brought a significant wave of southern laborers to work in the aircraft industry. Statistics from the Chamber of Commerce noted that by 1945, 8.9 percent of residents had been born in Missouri, followed by 8 percent from Oklahoma, over 2 percent from Texas, and 2 percent from Arkansas. Wartime housing authorities erected whole communities adjacent to the plants of Boeing, Beechcraft, and Cessna. After the war, these communities transitioned into neighborhoods. Other workers settled near the plants, as in a small collection of houses near the Beechcraft plant sometimes called "Travel Air City," which even locals referred to as "Dogpatch" after the hillbilly community in the popular comic strip *L'il Abner*. With the exception of those in Beechwood adjacent to the Beechcraft plant on East Central Avenue, the biggest collection of workers' housing, and, later, aircraft workers' neighborhoods, was located south of Kellogg Avenue, which had become something of a local Mason-Dixon Line. These often southern-connected workers developed a regional variation of the ethnic immigrant community, including re-creating religious traditions similar to those back home. A parallel conversation can be seen in the story of South High School, which opened in 1959 to serve this Wichita population of former southerners. Until the civil rights movement led to pressure for a change in mascot to the Titans, South High's athletic teams were originally designated the "Colonels," with the mascot depicted as a Confederate Civil War soldier, and were just as often referred to as the "Rebels" or "Rebs." A review of yearbooks during the school's first decade reveals an enthusiastic embrace of southern and Confederate imagery that included playing "Dixie" at school events and references to "southern hospitality." It is difficult to determine whether these southern ties were solely a takeoff from the school's name, derived from its location, or indicated a southern-leaning

23. "Burden Church Has Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams* (hereafter KSBB), May–June 1947, 2–3; "History of First Baptist Church, Burden, Kansas, 1885 to 2009," <http://www.ecchistory.org/BurdenBaptist.htm>; Stith, *Making a Difference*, 60–62.

24. "Meet the Churches—Chetopa," *KSBB*, January 13, 1946, 1; "Meet the Churches—Chautauqua," *KSBB*, December 16, 1946, 1; "Interesting Facts about Southern Baptist Churches in Kansas," *KSBB*, March 13, 1946, 1; "Trinity Baptist Church, of Ness City, Kansas," *KSBB*, November 1947, 14. See also Stith, *Making a Difference*, 11–24.

identity in that part of the city. However, informal and anecdotal accounts suggest that the arrival of southerners did impact everything from local accents to support for segregationist attitudes within the city. While cultural connections and perspectives are hard to prove, the growth of evangelical, fundamentalist, and Pentecostal congregations in the city provides concrete evidence of an expanding presence of southern-leaning attitudes, if not specifically southern people, in Wichita during the post-war years.²⁵

This was the setting that nurtured Wichita's first Southern Baptist congregation, Airlane, which was organized in June 1945. The congregation initially met in private homes, but as World War II drew to a close, it acquired a lot at 520 S. Hydraulic Avenue and began construction efforts in spite of limits and restrictions on building materials that were still in place. One of the most critical changes for the congregation in those early years was one of leadership. In the summer of 1946, the church had dismissed its first pastor, W. R. Preboth, and called Orbie Clem from Ness City. An energetic leader, Clem was one of the key figures in organizing the Kansas Southern Baptist Association. He was already editor of the organization's newsletter, *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams*, and thus was intimately connected with evangelism efforts across the state. Lois Clem was an important presence in her own right as head of the association's Women's Missionary Union.²⁶

Following the end of World War II, the Clems and their colleagues again turned their attention to organizing Kansas's Southern Baptists. Clem and Fowler initially planned to begin with a breakfast meeting as part of the Oklahoma General Convention in Tulsa. As a result, pastors from Burden, Ellinwood, Coffeyville, Chautauqua, and Ness City went to Tulsa, where they advocated for the creation of a Kansas missions fund. In December 1945, the leadership of the thirteen congregations that made up what was then known as the Kansas Southern Baptist Fellowship outlined a plan to hold regional fellowship meetings in Baxter Springs, Chetopa, Ellinwood, and

Coffeyville.²⁷ By early 1946, the group had a constitution and bylaws, and in a gathering held in Chetopa on March 19 and 20, 1946, the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptist Churches came into being with nine charter-member congregations from Ness City, Ellinwood, Wichita, Burden, Chautauqua, Chetopa, Coffeyville, Treece, and Wirtonia.²⁸ By the time the convention's first official meeting took place in Burden in October 1946, four more congregations had petitioned to join: Russell, Winfield, Cambridge, and a second Wichita congregation, South Side, with plans for a congregation in Osawatimie in the works.²⁹

By October 1947, the congregation had expanded enough to erect a larger, permanent location at 741 S. Hydraulic Avenue. The growth was in more than just construction. As the new editor of *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams*, Clem became one of the leading voices in regional Baptist circles. A young member of Airlane, Lonnie Wells, organized a Baptist bookstore at the church before it moved to offices downtown. By 1948, the congregation had moved down the street to the larger facility, which included a Sunday school and room for a blue-and-white church bus emblazoned with the church's theme, "Prayer changes things." The change in location also corresponded with a change in name. No longer just Airlane Baptist, the congregation renamed itself First Southern Baptist, as it had become that denomination's leading congregation in the city.³⁰

From its earliest days, Airlane/First Southern Baptist was engaged in the planting of other congregations in the vicinity. When the Airlane congregation was not even a year old, it sponsored a mission congregation farther south in Wichita, closer to the Boeing Plant and near the

25. Bliss Isley, "Who Lives in Wichita Today and Why," in Wichita Chamber of Commerce, *Wichita People* (Wichita: Wichita Chamber of Commerce, 1946), figures from 13. See also Julie Courtwright, "Want to Build a Miracle City? War Housing in Wichita," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 23 (Winter 2000): 218–39; Sondra Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools* (Wichita: Wichita Public Schools, 1977), 361. For context, see Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 3–50.

26. "Airlane Baptist Church," *KSBB*, April 1947, 5.

27. "A Missionary Tour," *KSBB*, January 6, 1946, 1; "Which Path Shall We Follow as Southern Baptists in Kansas?" *KSBB*, January 17, 1946, 2–4.

28. "Organize Kansas Convention of Southern Baptist Churches," *KSBB*, March 26, 1946, 1–2. See also "Our Infant Convention" and "Joining Our Convention" in the same edition.

29. "Organize Southern Baptists in Kansas," *KSBB*, December 3, 1945, 1; "Trinity Baptist Church, of Ness City, Kansas" and "First Annual Meeting of Kansas Southern Baptist Churches," *KSBB*, October 1946, 1; "Five New Churches" and "Convention Post Office Address," *KSBB*, November 1946, 1; "1948 Program for Day of Prayer for State Missions," *KSBB*, August 1948: 3–11, 3–4; N. J. Westmoreland, "Significant Dates and Events in the Development and Growth of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists," *KSBB*, March 19, 1953, 3. See also Stith, *Making a Difference*, 11–29.

30. "Airlane Baptist Church" and "Airlane Church Changes Name," *KSBB*, February 1948, 3; "Second Annual Meeting of Kansas Convention of Southern Baptist Churches—October 13–15, 1947" and "Convention Officers at Annual Meeting," *KSBB*, November 1947, 1; "Convention



Southern diaspora churches included both African American and white congregations. Here, a congregation gathers at a modest church building on the edge of the downtown, in contrast to the more substantial edifices of the Baptist and Methodist congregations that served the community's more established families. Courtesy of Yvette Harris, Wichita, Kansas.

workers' communities of Planeview and Hilltop Manor. In October 1946, this mission organized into its own congregation, South Side. Under the leadership of Bob Maulsby as pastor and Howard Cheney as Sunday school superintendent, South Side met at first in Cheney's garage. By 1947, however, its weekly Sunday school attendance had grown from fifteen to fifty-five. By April 1947, Kansas's Southern Baptists supported a "state evangelist," Ray T. Hart, who conducted a revival in South Side's recently completed basement; the rest of the building was not yet finished. Maulsby later went on to serve as the pastor of First Baptist in Burden from 1947 until 1951 before heading a mission effort in El Dorado. Nor were Airlane's mission efforts confined to Wichita. In late 1947, Airlane sponsored the creation of a Southern Baptist mission in Cunningham, a congregation that began with twelve members in the wake of a revival at which Ray T.

Hart was the evangelist. Airlane/First Southern was regularly one of the top contributors to home mission efforts and an important hub or stop on statewide mission/revival tours. The following year, First Southern Baptist sponsored two additional missions, one to Fairmount, near the University of Wichita, and the other to urban Native Americans who were often migrants from Oklahoma.³¹

Southern Baptist leaders decided to make Wichita the base for their efforts in Kansas, given the city's size, resources, and proximity to the majority of the state's Southern Baptist groups. On October 13, 1947, Kansas's Southern Baptists gathered at Airlane for their second annual convention. The organization that became known as the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists later estab-

Adopts Baptist Book Store," *KSBB*, November 1946, 1; Westmoreland, "Significant Dates and Events in the Development and Growth of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists." See also Stith, *Making a Difference*, 272-7.

31. "Five New Churches," *KSBB*, November 1946, 1; "South Side Baptists of Wichita Are Building," *KSBB*, April 1947, 15; "Another Church Organized," *KSBB*, January 1948, 1; N. J. Westmoreland, "Home Missions," *KSBB*, June-July 1948, 2; Westmoreland, "Significant Dates and Events in the Development and Growth of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists."

lished a headquarters office at 138½ N. Broadway Avenue. The convention's executive director was N. J. Westmoreland, who relocated to Wichita after serving as pastor of Immanuel Baptist in Coffeyville. The convention began with thirteen congregations in late 1945 but just three years later had grown to thirty-seven. Congregations ranged from southeastern Kansas, near the Oklahoma border, to Ness City in the west to a recently formed congregation in the state capital of Topeka. The group now had an ambitious goal: to create 100 new Southern Baptist congregations across Kansas in just five years. To aid that endeavor, the convention organized a "100 Club" to provide financial support and commissioned Ray T. Hart, who headed evangelism efforts in Oklahoma, to be Kansas's state evangelist. These efforts seemed to produce fruit. Although several Kansas counties had no Southern Baptist churches, the number of congregations planted was impressive. A 1948 report of the Women's Missionary Union in *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams* proclaimed proudly that Southern Baptists, with modest resources, had planted congregations in homes and rented storefronts while the more established Northern Baptists, with more impressive edifices, had shrunk in number. In addition, evangelical Protestants tended to be resoundingly congregational in polity, with splits, mergers, and breakaway groups resulting in the formation of several congregations out of one or two core groups.³²

The Southern Baptists were interested in more than just planting congregations. They wanted to establish a presence in a community, bringing their understanding of the Christian message to bear on the local area. Merely having full pews was not enough. Rather, the pews were just the first step in what evangelists hoped would be a larger transformation of the society or at least a transformation of elements of it through a Gospel-inspired view and participation in certain causes. The first main cause was alcohol. With Kansas having been officially dry since 1881, the main issue was not supporting Prohibition but maintaining it. By the late 1940s, however, there were growing calls across the state to get rid of

statewide Prohibition, in part because it was difficult to enforce and in part due to waning public support for the measure. Statewide Prohibition had always been difficult to enforce, which was the main reason for Carrie Nation's efforts, and by World War II, waves of new workers in places such as Wichita had no interest in limiting their desire for a drink.

In 1948, a measure to repeal statewide Prohibition went onto the ballot. Southern Baptists joined other "drys" to defend Kansas's Prohibition laws. Journals such as *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams* had regular features about "The Liquor Scandal," providing testimonials about how alcohol was linked to personal crises as well as larger patterns of corruption and vice. They worked with "wets" to retain Prohibition, with campaign messages enhanced by articles, cartoons, and editorials and preachers admonishing members about the dangers of alcohol. Their efforts, however, failed to sway the larger Kansas voting public, which soundly repealed the measure with a vote of 422,294 to 358,310. Meeting at the Broadview Hotel in Wichita, the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists lamented, "So-called Christian America is guilty of this monstrous crime. Worse yet our own state, that for years has been noted for its sobriety and chastity, has repudiated our dry law."³³ Baptists and other evangelicals retreated to lick their wounds, with *Kansas Southern Baptist Beams* arguing that the vote was the result of intense lobbying from corrupt liquor interests. Later editions featured "I told you so" editorials about how alcohol was ruining society and how Baptists continued the fight through campaigns such as the ban on "liquor by the drink," which banned the serving of liquor in clubs except to members. Meanwhile, Kansas continued to be known as a state of quirky, restrictive liquor laws, a practice that critics charged was due to the influence of rural groups and evangelicals in the state—groups that seemed out of touch with the patterns of modern society.³⁴

32. Wuthnow, *Red State Religion*, 256–58; "1948 Program for Day of Prayer for State Missions," *KSBB*, August 1948, 3–11, 3–4; S. F. Dowis, "A Visit to Kansas," *KSBB*, August 1948, 1; "State Evangelist Employed," *KSBB*, February 1947, 1; "Our State Convention" and "Convention Name Changed," *KSBB*, November 1947, 1; "Second Annual Meeting of Kansas Convention of Southern Baptist Churches—October 13–15, 1947," *KSBB*, September and October, 1947, 1–2; N. J. Westmoreland, "The

Five Year Plan and the 100 Club," *KSBB*, July 5, 1946, 3; Westmoreland, "Significant Dates and Events in the Development and Growth of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists." See also Stith, *Making a Difference*, 29–31.

33. Minutes of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists in Wichita, Kansas, November 1–4, 1949, 24, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

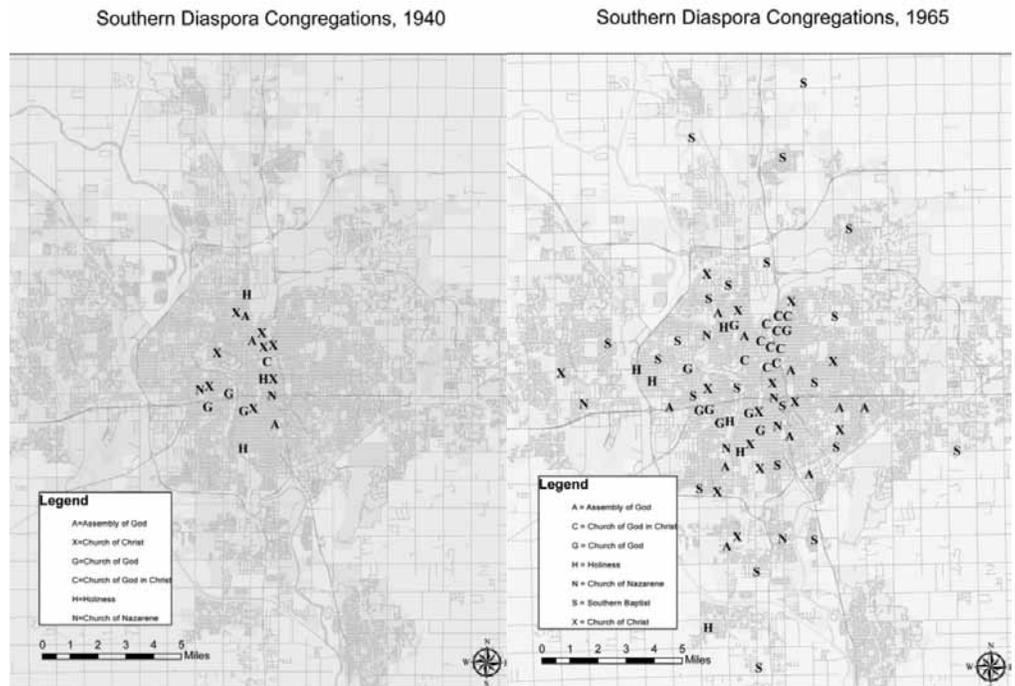
34. Robert S. Bader, *Hayseeds, Moralizers and Methodists: The Twentieth Century Image of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 93–113; Robert S. Bader, *Prohibition in Kansas: A History* (Lawrence:

While limited in their influence on political and social causes, the Southern Baptists were markedly successful in planting and growing congregations. By the 1950s, however, the Southern Baptist effort in Wichita was not an isolated phenomenon. In 1951, the city directory listed twenty-four Baptist congregations, including Northern, Southern, and African American traditions, among others. Just four years later, the 1955 directory listed more than twice that figure, nearly half of which were Southern Baptist.

The postwar years saw a flurry of church growth and creation nationwide. Denominations of various stripes planted new, small congregations that, it was hoped, would expand and grow. The mission field seemed unlimited as young families nurtured the children of the baby boom and youth and family events were bursting at the seams. This time of prosperity allowed a wide range of evangelical, Pentecostal, and Holiness congregations to expand and grow.

Congregational planting among these southern-leaning traditions not only outpaced the efforts of mainline Protestants but, in some cases, took place at the expense of the mainline congregations. Southern Baptists experienced some of the most marked growth, with no Southern Baptist-affiliated congregations in the city in 1940 and nearly thirty just twenty-five years later. In 1955, the Methodists counted twenty-six congregations, just two more than at the close of World War II. Among the Campbellites, a similar pattern of southern growth and northern stagnation appeared. Until World War II, the more northern-leaning Disciples of Christ/Christian Church was the dominant Campbellite body in Wichita.

University Press of Kansas, 1986). See also "Beautiful Wichita Polluted by the Abominable Liquor Traffic" and "Liquor Causes Law Problem," *KSBB*, May 1950, 1, 7; "The Booze Question in Kansas," *KSBB*, January 1949, 2-3; Stith, *Making a Difference*, 27.



Map 1, "Southern Diaspora Congregations, 1940," and Map 2, "Southern Diaspora Congregations, 1965," created by Dr. David Hughes with geolocator services from the Sedgwick County GIS Department.

By 1955, the southern-leaning Churches of Christ numbered more than the Disciples/Christian tradition. The Assemblies of God listed two congregations in 1936 but by 1955 had eight.

Maps 1 and 2 show congregations representing several major denominations with ties to southern religion: Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God, Church of God, Church of Christ, Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Church of the Nazarene, and Holiness. Many of these congregations are located in southern Wichita, near the aircraft plants, illustrating how evangelicalism was tied to blue-collar workers who were establishing themselves in new suburban neighborhoods on the city's southern and western edges.

The maps also show growth in the number of congregations affiliated with the COGIC, a primarily African American Pentecostal tradition. These churches appear primarily in the central part of the city, the heart of the city's black population in the postwar years, and reveal that this trend was not limited to white denominations. Among African Americans, too, southern-leaning religion was changing the religious landscape. Into the early twentieth century, the dominant congregations of the African American community were Baptist and Methodist, with Calvary Baptist and St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal

the leading congregations. These congregations, along with Colored/Christian Methodist Episcopal churches and even Catholic missions such as St. Peter Claver, defined the religious life of Wichita's African Americans and were the spiritual homes of its leading citizens. Ronald Walters, one of the participants in the 1958 Dockum Drug Store sit-in, recalled that "there was no small amount of status that went with being 'up South.' We often considered ourselves better than southerners, and the original Blacks of Wichita even disdained the migration into their midst of the more southern and country "Okies" from Oklahoma."³⁵

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, however, recent African American arrivals from the South as well as evangelism campaigns from Pentecostal, Holiness, and other groups started to change the African American religious landscape of Wichita. African American Pentecostals, such as COGIC congregations, began holding revivals in Wichita in the 1920s, resulting in a small congregation on N. Mosley Avenue that was initially under the guidance of A. J. Jones. At the close of World War II, there were two congregations. By the late 1940s, however, things started to change with the arrival of new African Americans from the South, bringing with them Pentecostal bodies such as the COGIC. Their leaders included figures such as C. J. Taylor, who came to Wichita from Luther, Oklahoma, to work at Beechcraft. In 1948, Taylor became a member of the Murdock Church of God in Christ and later became a minister in this Pentecostal denomination. It was while attending a service at a gathering of the International Holy Convocation of the Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, that Taylor became inspired to return to Wichita and found a congregation of his own. In 1956, his church moved out of its small storefront and into a new building at 730 N. Cleveland Avenue to become the Greater Pentecostal Church of God in Christ. Taylor was part of a growing trend of African American Pentecostalism in the city. Evangelism such as

his and others' helped that denomination expand in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1955, there were twelve COGIC congregations.³⁶

Pentecostal, evangelical, and Holiness congregations may have started in modest structures in modest neighborhoods but were now establishing themselves on major thoroughfares in middle-income and even upscale areas on the city's edges as aircraft workers who had started in the wartime housing communities of Hilltop Manor and Planeview moved to new suburbs. With aviation companies, the Coleman Company, and other industries providing well-paid blue-collar jobs, working-class families could afford ranch houses, cars, and other amenities alongside their professional and white-collar neighbors. In time, many a worker who had started on the line at Boeing, Beechcraft, or Cessna moved up the ladder to more skilled work and even into management. This post-war prosperity, along with prefabricated building materials and loan programs, allowed even modest congregations to erect the soaring spires and unusual rooflines that were the hallmarks of the era's great religious building boom. Across the religious landscape, from Episcopalians to Pentecostals, the pattern was the same. In the 1940s and early 1950s, congregations and missions were planted, perhaps meeting in homes or in school classrooms. When resources permitted, there was the purchase of a piece of land followed by the erection of the first unit. Given that the baby boom was in full swing, education wings often followed next. The Southern Baptists' Sunday School Board even offered stock building plans that congregations could purchase and adapt to their own construction needs. Hundreds of congregations followed the "unit plan" approach that involved erecting a modest first unit that served a variety of purposes but would become a social hall or chapel or education space as the congregation grew in numbers and resources and erected additional wings. Finally, by the 1960s, the congregation could look back with pride as it dedicated the new, modern worship space.³⁷

35. Ronald Walters, "Standing Up in America's Heartland," *American Visions* (February 1993): 22-3. For context, see Deon Wolfenbarger, African American Resources in Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2011, http://www.kshs.org/resource/national_register/MPS/AfricanAmericanResourcesinWichitaKS.pdf; Judith R. Johnson and Craig L. Torbenson, "Stories from the Heartland: African American Experiences in Wichita, Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 21 (Winter 1998-99): 220-33; Gretchen Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-72* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

36. "A. J. Jones," *Negro Star* (Wichita), April 28, 1933; "Church of God in Christ," *Negro Star*, August 25, 1922; "Enjoy Dinner with Chief Apostle," *People's Elevator* (Wichita), April 21, 1927; "Property Won," *Negro Star*, November 25, 1932. See also, for example, web page of Greater Pentecostal COGIC, http://www.gpcogic.org/about_founder.php.

37. C. Harry Atkinson, "The Church Building Boom Is Only Beginning," *Protestant Church Administration and Equipment* 3 (Spring 1955): 7-9; "Building Boom, or Christians Creating?," *Christian Century* 74 (March 27, 1957): 381-82; "Temples Still Undone," *Protestant Church Administration and Equipment* 5 (September 1957): 56; "\$630-Billion



By the postwar years, many Pentecostal, holiness, and evangelical congregations constructed substantial new facilities, indicative of an increase in membership and resources. First Church of the Nazarene erected a substantial house of worship on Kellogg Avenue. As this picture indicates, the congregation, though concerned about theological modernism, was clearly quite open to modern architecture. Courtesy of Jay M. Price.

In some cases, the growth involved moving to new locations. First Southern Baptist relocated to the former Hillside Christian Church because Hillside Christian had itself relocated east of town. Immanuel Baptist, meanwhile, broke ground on its new facility on Broadway in 1947, followed by an education wing in 1949. An aggressive building program continued through the 1960s with the construction of a new, even larger sanctuary designed to seat 1,650 in what one article termed “efforts to become one of the religious leaders in the Midwest.” The trend was not limited to Southern Baptists. Postwar prosperity allowed First Church of the Nazarene to construct a substantial new facility on Kellogg Avenue. The Churches of

Christ, meanwhile, consisted initially of a handful of small congregations that grew in size and prominence. A small gathering that came together in 1903 eventually grew to acquire the church building at Cleveland and Douglas in 1941 when the prior occupants, the Grace Presbyterian, decided to move to the city’s eastern edge. Thirty years later, the congregation known as Cleveland Church of Christ decided to relocate to a more prominent part of downtown, rename itself Central Church of Christ, and construct an unusual modern octagon-shaped building that the congregation dedicated in June 1971.

Construction was not just for church buildings but also for camps, administrative offices, and other facilities. The Kansas Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, for ex-

Building Boom Predicted,” *Catholic Property Administration* 23 (May–June 1959): 148, 150, 162, 164; “Church Building Levels at High Altitude,” *Church Management* 35 (March 1959): 7; C. Harry Atkinson, “How BIG Is the Protestant Building Boom?,” *Protestant Church Administration and Equipment* 8 (September 1960): 11, 26–27, 30; Glenn D. Everett, “Church Construction Tops One Billion Dollars a Year,” *Church Management* 37 (May 1961): 22–25. For context, see Gretchen Buggeln, *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Jay M. Price, *Temples for a Modern God: Religious Architecture in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Wuthnow, *Red State Religion*, 169–214; Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945: A History* (New

York: Columbia University Press 2003): 1–64; William M. Newman and Peter L. Halvorson, *Atlas of American Religion: The Denominational Era, 1776–1990* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Kevin Michael Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Will Herberg, *Protestant Catholic Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Batsell Barrett Baxter and M. Norvel Young, *New Testament Churches of Today: A Book of Brief Sketches and Pictures of Twentieth Century Churches of Christ*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1960), 111–20.

ample, began operating out of a room at the home of N. J. Westmoreland, executive secretary-treasurer. By the 1950s, the convention was operating out of rented buildings on North Main Street. By the early 1960s, however, Southern Baptists had established themselves to construct a new headquarters. Dedicated in 1963, this modern brick-and-steel edifice on Western Kellogg Avenue was a point of pride for a religious community that had formed less than twenty years earlier.³⁸

Wichita had long been a probusiness city, with its leading citizens supportive of free enterprise; skeptical of organized labor; and, in the wake of the Red Scare, finding communism and federal programs threatening. They may not have openly supported the radically anti-Semitic rants of Gerald Winrod, who, in his unsuccessful bid for the Senate in 1938, referred to Franklin D. Roosevelt's program as the "Jew Deal." However, postwar Wichitans such as Fred Koch lent their support to the John Birch Society. Some were alarmed when Beat poet Allen Ginsberg arrived in Wichita, fearful that he would violate local obscenity laws. Others were concerned that civil rights activism on the part of Chester Lewis and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People would undermine the once accepted racial barriers in the city.³⁹

While city leaders tended to still be affiliated with mainline Protestant congregations, mainline denominations had become identified with liberal and ecumenical causes, leaving those who questioned such approaches to look to southern bodies as more sympathetic to their views. In the congregationalist polity of the Baptist tradition, some of those decisions became highly contentious when there was no clear majority on a particular issue. Not infrequently, one faction would become so unhappy that it would break away and form its own congregation. In Wichita, such a division happened within the city's most prominent Baptist congregation, First Baptist. Since its founding in 1872, First Baptist had identified with the

northern wing of the Baptist tradition, participating in the Walnut Valley Baptist Association (renamed the Wichita Association of Baptist Churches in 1949), the Kansas Baptist Convention, and the Northern Baptist Convention (renamed the American Baptist Convention in 1950). William Coffin Coleman, founder of the Coleman Company, was perhaps the congregation's best-known member and even served as president of the American Baptist Convention. After Coleman's death in 1957, however, several figures within the congregation, including Baylor-trained pastor F. B. Thorn, moved to have the congregation leave the American Baptists. In 1960, the finance committee presented a motion for First Baptist to withdraw its financial support from the American Baptist Convention, "the reason being that said American Baptist Convention and its affiliated organizations are apparently in full support of the policies and plans of the National Council of Churches." Thorn and his supporters rejected the perceived liberalism and ecumenism of the National Council of Churches, a view that was consistent with that of many in the congregation. Members voted 1,174 to 235 to no longer support the American Baptist Church and, later in 1960, passed a second resolution by 739 to 294 to no longer support or affiliate with the Kansas and Wichita American Baptist bodies.

The struggle between those who wanted to leave the American Baptist Convention and those who wanted to stay became contentious, resulting in a case that went to the state supreme court. In *Huber v. Thorn*, both sides argued that they were the legitimate voice of the congregation. The American Baptist portion argued that the congregation had been founded as missionary effort of the Kansas body that later became part of the American Baptist tradition. Since the congregation was an extension of American Baptist missionary efforts, it existed as an extension of the denomination. Those wanting to leave the American Baptists argued in favor of Baptists' congregationalism, holding that the congregation was bound to align with the wishes of the majority. The court ruled that First Baptist was the manifestation of denominational missionary efforts, regardless of what the membership chose. In response, some 1,600 members of First Baptist decided to leave and in August 1962 organized their own Southern Baptist congregation, Metropolitan Baptist Church, with Rev. F. B. Thorn as pastor. More than a minor schism, this split took with it many of the wealthier leading figures of former First Baptist, enabling the new congregation to acquire a prime parcel of land downtown on the west bank of the Arkansas River and to erect one of the city's largest church buildings. Dedicated in June

38. For Immanuel Baptist, see "Break Ground for \$120,000 Immanuel Baptist Church," *Wichita Eagle*, September 25, 1947; "Five Churches Plan to Build: Permits Wednesday Top \$400,000," *Wichita Eagle*, June 10, 1954; "New Church Work Well under Way," *Wichita Eagle*, December 8, 1961. For Central Church of Christ, see Jean Barnes, "Octagonal Church of Christ Design Complements River Beautification," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, June 27, 1971. See also Stith, *Making a Difference*, 260-64, 272-83, and 284-94.

39. See, for example, Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right*; Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*; Fred Koch, *A Business Man Looks at Communism*, 3rd ed. (published by author, 1961). For larger context, see Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, and Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora*.

1965, the massive sanctuary with its high white spire signified that Southern Baptists were now a major presence in the city.⁴⁰

By the 1970s, two of the most visible elements of the city's downtown skyline included the spires of Central Church of Christ and Metropolitan Baptist, representing traditions that had been only minor players in the local religious scene a generation earlier. The city was still predominantly mainline Protestant and Catholic in nature, but the situation was changing. In 1950, the Southern Baptists consisted of just a few small congregations. By 1980, they were rivaling the United Methodists in size.

These shifts were taking place just as evangelicalism and fundamentalism were emerging in the national scene. The growth in these tendencies began to attract the attention of scholars and writers who began untangling the concept of the Bible belt, a term that went back to H. L. Mencken's derisive comments about southern fundamentalists during the 1920s. Now figures such as Charles Heatwole, Stephen Tweedie, and James Shortridge struggled to determine the boundaries of the region just as evangelicalism was reshaping approaches to worship, social issues, and political realignments. In a 1976 article, Shortridge concluded that the country contained several places where conservative religion was influential, including the South, the Great Basin, and the Great Plains. However, he suggested that these areas contained markedly different expressions of conservative religion. Shortridge argued that "Jackson, Mississippi, could perhaps be called the 'buckle' of the Bible Belt, but Oklahoma City is definitely marginal, and Kansas is not in it." Wichita was certainly conservative, but not in the same way as Tulsa or Memphis.⁴¹

Shortridge's assessment from the mid-1970s described a state that was on the edge of transition, and Wichita's story provides valuable insight into the process. When Shortridge wrote his piece, Wichita was still a city where mainline Protestants and Catholics were the largest religious groups. These were also the affiliations of Wichita's influential business and civic leaders, even the conservative ones. This was still a city where figures who were part

of the John Birch Society's anticommunism campaigns, or at least were in sympathy with anticommunism efforts, were also pillars of the mainline Protestant churches downtown. Southern evangelicals had by now become an important part of the city's mix and were a presence in issues such as race relations but were not yet the social force that they would become in just a few years.

Seen from the vantage point of Wichita, the Bible belt was less a place than a process. Those who described Wichita as part of the Bible belt referred to congregations and groups that had arrived only one or two generations earlier. Throughout the 1930s, Wichita's religious scene mirrored that of cities of the Midwest and Great Plains. Southern evangelicals functioned as small pockets in a society in which northern-leaning mainline Protestant congregations dominated. That changed during World War II, when the southern diaspora brought with it significant changes to local culture, including religion. Certain religious traditions affiliated with the South were absent or limited in Wichita before World War II. After the war, that situation changed, with congregations from a host of southern-leaning denominations appearing across the city. At first these congregations were modest, serving specific communities such as ethnic Catholic parishes served specific immigrant groups. In time, evangelicalism in Wichita became increasingly southern-looking if not southern in origin, with religious figures from the South guiding congregations and movements made up of a mixture of transplanted southerners, the children of World War II-era southern migrants, and individuals who claimed third- and fourth-generation ties to Kansas farm families, among others. These shifts set the stage for the Bible-belt activism that captivated pundits in the 2000s. During the course of the twentieth century, southern-inspired religion started reorienting this once solidly midwestern community southward on Sunday and, by the 2000s, on Election Day. As the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first, activist evangelicalism connected to southern theological views came to have an increasing presence in the city, a story that will be explored in more depth in the second half of this study. [KH]

40. "Metropolitan Baptists to Open Church," *Wichita Morning Eagle*, June 5, 1965; "Baptist Church Selects Site for New Sanctuary," *Wichita Morning Eagle*, February 18, 1963; "Metropolitan Baptist Church Formed with 1,700 Present," *Wichita Eagle*, August 13, 1962. *Huber v. Thorn*, 189 Kan. 631 (1962) 371 P.2d 143.

41. Charles A. Heatwole, "The Bible Belt: A Problem in Regional Definition," *Journal of Geography* 77 (February 1978): 50-55; Wilbur Zelinsky, "An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United

States: Patterns of Church Membership," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51 (June 1961): 139-93; Stephen F. Tweedie, "Viewing the Bible Belt," *Journal of Popular Culture* 11 (Spring 1978): 865-76; James R. Shortridge, "Patterns of Religion in the United States," *Geographical Review* 66 (October 1976): 420-34, quotation from 427. See also, for example, Shortridge's "The Heart of the Prairie: Culture Areas in the Central and Northern Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 8 (Fall 1988): 206-21.