



Religion & ETHICS
NEWSWEEKLY

V I E W E R ' S G U I D E

With Essays, Discussion Questions and Resources on America's
Changing Religious & Ethical Landscape

A Production of Thirteen/WNET

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Educational Resources Center Ruth Ann Burns,
Director

Publisher Robert A. Miller

Supervising Editor Joyce Bermel

Associate Editor Benjamin Alsup

Designer Diane Adzema

Proofreader Stephanie Fleischman

Advisors Margaret Gillmore, Executive Director
National Conference
Greater New York Region

Rushworth Kidder, President
Institute for Global Ethics
Camden, ME

Roy Larson, Director
Garrett-Medill Center for Religion
and the News Media
Evanston, IL

Reverend James Wind, President
Alban Institute
Bethesda, MD

For Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

Executive Editor & Host Bob Abernethy

Executive Producer Gerry Solomon

Series Producer Ricki Green

Executive in Charge Tamara E. Robinson

Managing Editor Kim Lawton

Associate Producer Christopher Roberts

Senior Production Manager John F. Schwally

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*Executive Editor and Host of
Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly, Bob Abernethy*



Dear Reader and Viewer,

All of us working on *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, and at Thirteen/WNET in New York, are proud to present this Viewer's Guide–13 thoughtful, provocative articles about religious practices and ethical choices by some of this country's most respected scholars and journalists.

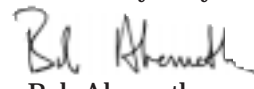
Like our television program, the guide explores the new diversity of America's spiritual life, the beliefs of the major faith traditions, and the profound ethical dilemmas facing us all. Indeed, there may never have been a time in this country's history of so much religious diversity and so many simultaneous ethical challenges.

We hope the guide will be informative for those who want to know more about their own religious traditions and the religious traditions of others. We also hope families and groups—at home, in places of worship, and in schools and other community organizations—will find it a springboard for stimulating conversation.

In the months to come, we intend *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly* to continue to report the news that grows out of these and other ongoing conditions and conflicts. We also plan lively discussions with informed and sensitive participants in the country's rich spiritual life.

We welcome your comments about the guide and the program, and we hope you find both of them interesting and useful.

Yours very truly,



Bob Abernethy
Host and Executive Editor



Gerry Solomon
Executive Producer

ABOUT THE VIEWER'S GUIDE

The *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly* Viewer's Guide is designed to provide material for further thought and discussion about issues related to the series. The guide may be photocopied and distributed to adult education organizations, community groups, teachers, and individual viewers.

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AMERICA'S NEW RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE by Diana L. Eck



A Chinese Buddhist nun and a Benedictine nun exchange views.

In the past 30 years, since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, new immigrants have settled in the U.S. from all over the world, bringing with them their religious traditions—Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Zoroastrian, and others. They have also brought a new diversity to American Christianity and Judaism. Today “we the people” of the United States include people of many religious traditions, new and old, all of us challenged to appropriate once again the pluralism that comes with America’s commitment to religious freedom.

Boston’s Other Face

Let me tell you about Boston, since most people think first of its white steeples and colonial heritage. Today the white tower of a new Hindu temple, deco-

rated ornately with the images of Hindu deities, rises amidst the maples of Ashland, not far from the starting point of the Boston marathon. The day it was dedicated in 1990, thousands of Boston-area Hindus circled the temple in a festive, colorful procession, following 12 Hindu priests, each bearing on his head a large pot of consecrated water—from the Ganges River in India and from the Mississippi, Missouri, and Colorado rivers of America. These mingled waters—poured over the temple towers and sprinkled as a blessing on the tumultuous crowd—powerfully evoked the Indian and American traditions that now nurture this Hindu community as it grows here in New England.

Today such events are not unusual in Boston, as new immigrants settle here. South of Ashland, in the suburb of Sharon, Muslims celebrate the end of the Ramadan month of fasting at their new Islamic center, built in the fields of a former horse farm. It is one of some 20 Muslim communities that have formed the Islamic Council of New England. On a quiet residential street in Norwood, the Jains, heirs of a religious tradition more than 2,500 years old in India, gather in what was formerly a Swedish Lutheran church. In the town of Milford, Boston-area Sikhs, also from India, sing out their devotions in their house of worship, called a *gurdwara*, located in what was formerly the Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

A wide array of Buddhist temples have also sprung up—Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, and Korean temples, along with a dozen Euro-American meditation centers. On a steamy summer day, more than one hundred Chinese Buddhists from the temple communities in Quincy and Lexington charter a boat to the outer waters of Boston harbor to release

live lobsters back into the sea—a traditional act expressing compassion for all living things. In the old industrial city of Lynn, a young Cambodian man, who has come to the U.S. as a refugee, is ordained a Buddhist monk. He kneels, his head shaven, to receive his robes, surrounded by a Khmer community that now has three temples in the northern suburbs of Boston.

Across the Nation

Boston’s new religious landscape is mirrored in virtually every major city in the United States—not only in cosmopolitan cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Houston, but even in the heartland of America. One of America’s most spectacular new mosques rises from the cornfields near Perrysburg, Ohio, outside Toledo; and one of our most beautiful Hindu temples sits on a hillside in the suburbs of Nashville, America’s country-music capital. There are Cambodian and Lao Buddhist communities in the farmlands south of Minneapolis, Vietnamese temples in Oklahoma City, and Sikh *gurdwaras* in Glen Rock and Bridgewater, New Jersey.

While there are no precise statistics on these new communities, the 1996 Encyclopedia Britannica estimates 5.5 million Muslims in the U.S.—far more Muslims than Episcopalians and almost as many Muslims as American Jews, estimated at 5.9 million. Hindus are estimated at 1.3 million, and Buddhists at 600,000, probably not including all the native-born American meditators who identify themselves as Buddhist. The truth is we don’t really know, because the U.S. census doesn’t ask about religious affiliation. But one thing is certain: This far more complex multi-religious America is here to stay.



Groundbreaking for the Islamic Center of New England, Sharon, Massachusetts.

Coping with Diversity

Ours is a country where the religious landscape is constantly changing, as newcomers and experimenters seek their place on the horizon. This is the essence of America; it is our distinctive history and our distinctive future. As citizens of this pluralistic society, we continually face new questions about religious diversity. These show up on the agendas of our school boards, zoning boards, legislatures, courts, and hospitals. Are local zoning codes adequate to the religious requirements of a mosque or a Vietnamese home temple? Can a Sikh wear a turban on a hard-hat job? Are hospitals prepared for the needs of a multi-religious patient population? How do schools cope with the growing religious diversity of the classroom?

While tolerance is important, knowledge is even more crucial. Too many of us have only a sketchy knowledge of the faith of our neighbors. Studying the world's religious traditions in public schools is essential today—not only for world citizenship, but increasingly for American citizenship.

New religious questions also challenge the heart of each person of faith (see discussion questions, right). These are vital questions as Muslims and Christians, Jews and Buddhists are now “next-door” neighbors here in America. Christian and Jewish schoolchildren might well have Muslim and Hindu friends; their parents have colleagues and co-workers of other faiths.

Interfaith Dialogue

Today churches, mosques, and synagogues have a new opportunity to consider carefully the ways in which they portray neighbors of other faiths in their own teachings. In America today real interfaith dialogue is possible. Christians and Muslims, for example, can speak directly to one another, rather than relying on stereotypes or media images, and they can work together on community projects.

Pluralism is not simply diversity. It is engagement with diversity, through encounter and dialogue, in the give and take of civil society. Pluralism is also not relativism, for engagement does not require us to relinquish or water down our commitments, whether religious or secular. The pennies in our pockets bear the motto *E Pluribus Unum*, “Out of Many One.” In America today the engagement of the many in the creation of a common society is more complex and challenging than ever before—and it is a challenge for people of every religious tradition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do I understand and relate to my neighbor of another faith?
2. Does encountering the faith of my neighbor threaten my own faith?
3. How could this encounter enable me to understand my own faith more deeply?

SUGGESTED READINGS

On Common Ground: World Religions in America, a CD-ROM produced by the Pluralism Project at Harvard University and edited by Diana L. Eck. Columbia University Press, 1997. It surveys the new religious landscape of America with portraits of 18 cities and regions, looking at 15 religious traditions and their encounters with one another. It includes histories and timelines, visits to mosques and temples, thousands of images, music and chanting, and the voices of adherents of the major religious traditions.

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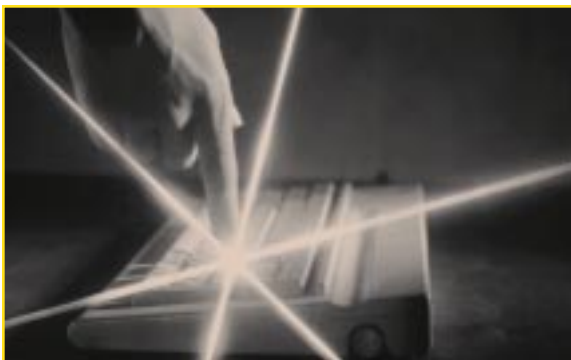
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DIANA L. ECK is professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard University.

SEARCHING FOR GOD IN CYBERSPACE by Joan Connell



The lost tribes wandering in the Sinai desert saw God as a column of smoke and a pillar of fire. In the days of empire, God was a king on a distant throne. But democracy demands a more intimate deity, and these days believers tend to see God as a father, a mother, a lover, or even a friend.

Images of the divine reflect the realities of the people who seek it. So it was perhaps inevitable that theologians and scholars met recently at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to discuss the Internet as an emerging metaphor for God.

From Matter to Mind

Some of these “info-mystics” see the Internet as a redemptive vehicle to carry humankind into a new era, as flawed matter evolves into pure mind. This is not a new idea. In 1925, the visionary French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a geologist, paleontologist, and Jesuit priest, predicted that humankind would eventually evolve from the “biosphere” we currently inhabit to a disembodied state he called the “noosphere,” (from *noos*, the Greek word for mind). To “info-mystics” at the MIT conference, Teilhard de Chardin’s transcendent vision sounds remarkably like the borderless realms of cyberspace.

Transcendent or not, this new electronic territory is attracting spiritual seekers of all kinds. Their mission: to carry on the age-old search for God, raising new questions about the nature of prayer, congregational identity, and spiritual authority.

The Web is too big and too fluid for accurate measures, but at last count, 154,000 sites contained the word “God.” The online search engine Yahoo! has established 950 categories to sort out more than 12,000 sites related to various faiths and practices.

From Pope to Pagans

From Pope John Paul II to practicing pagans, virtually every major religious body maintains a Web site. Baptists, Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons, and Muslims have established their presence online, as have newer religions, from the Church of Scientology to the UFO-worshipping members of the Heaven’s Gate cult, whose mass suicide shocked the world.

The Internet is also a new medium of dissent, challenging traditional notions of religious authority. French Bishop Jacques Gaillot of France, silenced by the Vatican for his liberal views, now preaches his progressive gospel from a virtual diocese in cyberspace.

We have yet to see confession by e-mail, online healings, or the administration of virtual sacraments, but the potential of cyberspace as sacred space is just beginning to be explored. Prayer chains, healing circles, and Bible studies proliferate online, as do discourses on the Talmud and Koran that transcend national, denominational, and cultural boundaries.

Grieving Online

When Princess Diana of Wales died, more than 2,000 electronic “condolence books” popped up online, inscribed with e-mail expressions of sympathy for the family. And as Mother Teresa was buried with military honors in India, on more than 3,000 Web sites, mourners around the world came together to pay tribute, express their grief, and lift their hearts in prayer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it possible to be touched by God in cyberspace?
2. Is praying online any different from gathering to pray in a house of worship?
3. When religious authorities are unable to silence their critics on the Internet, are traditional notions of authority endangered?
4. How can a person tell if a religious figure on the Internet is genuine?

ONLINE RESOURCES

Searching for the sacred in cyberspace? You may not have a religious experience, but you’ll find lots of information. Here’s a brief list of Web sites to get you started. For further listings, see page 21.

- Yahoo! providing information on faiths and practices, access to chats and programs, and a guide to houses of worship near you. [http://www.yahoo.com/Society and Culture/Religion/Faiths and Practices](http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion/Faiths_and_Practices)
- The Association for Religion and Intellectual Life, a global guide to the best religion sites and resources. <http://www.aril.org>
- Religion scholar Phillip P. Cunningham on Teilhard de Chardin. <http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/mar/cunning.html>
- Religion scholar Charles Henderson on the Internet’s emerging faith communities. <http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/mar/hend.html>

JOAN CONNELL, formerly senior editor of Religion News Service, is currently opinions editor at MSNBC on the Internet.

TOBACCO CHURCHES: AN ETHICAL DILEMMA by Gayle White



Dorothy Robertson lives in a world where Jesus is Lord and tobacco is king. The body may be the temple of God, but money from growing tobacco keeps it fed, clothed, and sheltered.

"This is how we make our living, right or wrong," says Robertson, whose family farm in

Bethel, Kentucky, includes ten acres of tobacco. "It's how our grandfathers and fathers made a living."

The Problem

As evidence against tobacco mounts, tobacco farmers across the southeast are faced with a growing ethical dilemma: How can they justify producing a crop that causes disease? And how can they stop when they know no other way of life?

The relationship between religion and tobacco is played out on grand scales. Should denominational pension funds be invested in tobacco companies? Should divinity schools accept donations from families made wealthy by the tobacco industry? But in many small churches, there is little choice. Without tobacco, there would be no church.

Robertson is a lifelong member of Bethel Christian Church, where all four dozen members are tied to the tobacco business. The Rev. D. B. Kent Duke,

who came to the parish a year ago, says he is still "working through" the theological and ethical questions. He looks to some of his past ministries among people who worked in chemical and weapons plants. "There was no assault upon those businesses similar to the attack on the tobacco church and the tobacco culture," he says.

The Rev. Bennett Poage, regional minister for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), recalls his time as an Army reserve chaplain. "I was there to support the soldiers, not the war," he says. Poage has heard the defenses of church members who produce tobacco: They say people are not forced to use tobacco. They accuse tobacco critics of ignoring other hazardous products. And they say they will quit growing tobacco if they find anything else that will pay the bills.

Unwilling Pawns

Poage sees growers as unwilling pawns when tobacco companies target young people or minority groups or foreign markets. But that does not ultimately justify making a living off tobacco, he says. Because tobacco is addictive, people don't really have "free choice" whether to smoke, he points out. "I think it's unethical to produce a product that's addictive."

Poage sees his role as "trying to save tobacco farmers, not tobacco." A former agricultural economist, he advocates finding alternative crops to support the economy of tobacco-growing areas. That will take time. "It's a moral contradiction we are bound to live with in the short run," he says. "And we don't know how long the short run is going to be."

Guidance For Churches

The Kentucky Council of Churches, an ecumenical Christian group, passed a resolution on "The Tobacco Farm Crisis in Kentucky" in October 1994. Here are excerpts:

- *Do not blame the victim. In many ways, farmers have been victimized in being urged and supported to grow tobacco only.*
- *Pastors are urged to hear and share the pain of farmers and their families....Confrontation from the pulpit is discouraged.*
- *Churches need to assist in educating community members as to why people have chosen to grow tobacco and what can be done to deal with the crisis.*
- *People of faith need to advocate for research and support for alternative crops....*
- *People of faith need to be in prayer....*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What products or services could pose ethical questions for people whose work helps provide them? What alternatives might avoid the dilemma?
2. Have you faced an ethical dilemma in your own life over how you earn your living? How did you resolve it?
3. Do religious institutions and charities have an obligation to examine the origin of the money they receive? How should they weigh the good money can do versus the harm it may have caused?
4. Is it moral to minister to people whose work might cause harm to others without directly addressing the concerns and encouraging change?

SUGGESTED READING

Poage, Bennett D., ed. *The Tobacco Church II*. Richmond KY: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1995.

GAYLE WHITE covers religion for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. She is the author of *Believers and Beliefs*, (NY: Berkley Publishing, 1997).

BEING WHOLE IN THE WORKPLACE by Lynn Garrett

Should people's religious practice be confined to weekend sabbath observance, their spirituality relegated to private life? Or should religious belief shape behavior in the workplace? Today, as many Americans have reawakened to their spirituality, more want to integrate their faith into their work by living out the ethical principles a particular religion teaches. We asked seven people from different religious traditions and professions to describe how they weave their belief systems into the fabric of their working lives.



Azizah al-Hibri, law professor at the University of Richmond in Virginia and former corporate lawyer, is a Muslim:

We do not have a hierarchy of authority in Islam—God tells me that everybody is equal, and that I should treat everyone the same. So when I was a corporate lawyer, there

were some areas of conflict because the legal profession is very hierarchical—it divides the world into camps and strata. Also, the adversarial system requires you to argue a case only from the perspective of your client, not taking into account what might be fair or just for all. Teaching is more satisfying, because I feel that each time I go into the classroom I'm following the Prophet's teachings, doing my best toward a goal more worthy than just winning. I'm concerned that my students learn the principles underlying the law, so they can become the best and most ethical lawyers.



Senator Joseph Lieberman, (D-CT), is an Orthodox Jew: In the Bible, Isaiah, speaking in the voice of God, tells us that our ritual observances and sacrifices are worth nothing if we are not acting ethically, and I'm honored to embrace that principle. It can be challenging to fit my work around the requirements of Jewish law,

and most of the conflicts come around Sabbath observance. I've tried to make a distinction between doing things on the Sabbath that are political—which I do not do—and doing things on the Sabbath that are part of my official responsibility and affect people's lives. In any office I've held, I wouldn't go to political meetings, testimonials, or conventions on Friday night. But if I have to make an important decision that affects the people of my state, I will take a call on the Sabbath, or walk over to the Senate and cast my vote. I feel comfortable with that, because the purpose of the Sabbath—which is to stop and honor God's name, express gratitude, and spend more time with the family—is still fulfilled.

Dorothy Marcic, author and director of the graduate program in human resources at Vanderbilt University, is a Bahá'í from Nashville, Tennessee: Bahá u'lláh [founder of Bahá'í] said that trustworthiness is the foundation for all virtues, that "every affair doth depend on it." And I teach that, in business, if you treat people unjustly, they pull back some of them-

selves, becoming unmotivated and cynical. When people say, "business is business," it's usually an excuse for being unethical. But business is not separate from the rest of the world—it operates on the same principles. Doing the right thing is good for business in the long run. It wasn't that long ago you couldn't say "God" to many people, certainly not in companies—they'd shrink away from you. Now there's a hunger for spirituality, and people are talking about it, even at work.



Tekki Lomnicki, advertising copywriter and playwright/actor, is a Roman Catholic from Chicago:

As a freelance copywriter, I work for a lot of people with different values and styles. Usually they call me in because they're in trouble and need bailing out, and my faith shapes my approach, because I see myself as a servant, like Jesus would have.

That enables me to work with grace and less inner conflict. And as a playwright and actor, [I find] a lot of audiences are jaded right now, so I view myself as healing them. If I can touch one person, I have succeeded in that performance. Finally, as a disabled person [Ms. Lomnicki is three-and-a-half feet tall and uses crutches], the world is a pretty dangerous place for me physically. But because of my faith, I know that I am being cared for. A lot of people don't understand that I'm the same as they are. My Christianity helps me realize that these people are not the enemy—they're my brothers and sisters.



Mushim Ikeda-Nash, writer and editor, is a Buddhist from Oakland, CA: The first and most important Buddhist precept is not to kill, but to cherish all life. If you harm other people or beings or even things, you're harming yourself. That principle of non-harm is central to the ethical choices I make in my daily life. Some people

with my skills are making big bucks as technical writers for corporations, but I don't want to do that. I work instead for religious nonprofits and individuals who are making a spiritual contribution. I try not to charge top dollar to organizations that can't afford it—my lower fee is a way of donating to that cause. It takes the principle of non-harm in an active direction. Another ethical issue for Buddhists is food. Many, though not all, Buddhists are vegetarians. In our household—I'm a wife and mother—we try to eat that way. We subscribe to an organic farm, not only for my family's health, but also to preserve the lives of the insects, because organic farming kills fewer of them.

David Rowland, furniture designer in New York City, is a Christian Scientist: I started with absolutely nothing, living in a \$40-a-month room in New York City. I only got little jobs, just enough to keep me alive. Then it occurred to me to develop a stackable chair, where you could stack 40 chairs in a height of four feet. The ideas flowed as I attended church. One might say that's sacrilegious, because you're supposed to be thinking about God. But the attitude expressed in the services—of overcoming the limi-



tations of matter—gave me specific ideas that I would take back to the workshop. During those years I had a fight with God. I had difficulty seeing why, if God gave me this idea, it wouldn't be perfect the first time. I constantly had to go back and refine. But in the end the idea worked, and it won first prize at the [world-renowned] Triennale di Milano. The struggle I went through was invaluable, and the sense of “being in church” through that process was crucial.

P. K. McCary, author, motivational speaker, and storyteller, is an Evangelical Christian from Houston, Texas: When I was on the road with my book [Black Bible Chronicles, which “translates” the Bible into street slang], it was controversial—some pastors thought I was disrespecting and “bastardizing” the Bible. I told them that when God didn't want me to do it anymore, He'd stop me. About that time, my publisher went under and everything started falling apart. I questioned whether those ministers were right and I was being punished. But then I'd see a kid carrying my book, and I realized people were still buying the book! Now, I'm not seeing a dime of royalties, and people are telling me to sue. But I have a ritual I call a blessing box—I make up a box and mentally put whatever trouble I'm having into it. Then I gift-wrap it and give it to God, and I never have to open that box again, because usually He fixes things better than I could ever imagine. That's where my faith takes me.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When people confront an ethical conflict or interpersonal problem at work and tap into their religious faith to arrive at a resolution, should they be outspoken about it or keep their beliefs private? What could be the advantages and disadvantages of being explicit?
2. At what point should a worker consider leaving a job or profession that conflicts with personal religious beliefs? If an employee decides to leave, should he or she openly state the reason? What might be the consequences?
3. Have you encountered conflicts with your own beliefs in the workplace? How did you deal with them? What do you wish you had done differently?

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LYNN GARRETT is religion editor for Publishers Weekly, the international trade magazine of publishing and bookselling.

NEW WAYS OF MAKING BABIES by Paul Lauritzen

Like many in our generation, my wife and I postponed having children until we had launched our careers. When we finally decided to start a family, we discovered that conceiving a child is not always easy. Nine months later, frustrated and still childless, we entered the high-tech, roller-coaster world of modern reproductive medicine. Almost four years would pass before we conceived a child.



The Options

Once our infertility was diagnosed, clinicians explained the forms of assisted reproduction available to us. We could try artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, or donor insemination. Each was presented as one possibility among many; if one option failed, we could simply turn to another. No significant medical or moral distinctions were made; no religious questions were asked. This struck me as odd, given the ongoing debate about the morality of assisted reproduction. Yet consider some of the issues my wife and I confronted, issues that are likely to face most infertile couples.

With new options in reproductive technology, a child can have as many as five “parents”: an infertile couple, an egg donor, a sperm donor, and a surrogate mother who carries the child to term. In this expanding world of artificial reproduction, who are the child’s “real” parents?

Redefining Parenthood

Some believe we should continue to define parenthood genetically, that intentionally separating the genetic component of parenthood from the social component—as sperm and egg donation do—is intrinsically wrong. Others argue that parenthood should be viewed primarily in social terms: As in adoption, if you love and care for a child unconditionally, you are the parent, whether you are genetically related or not. If the latter is true, does it follow that all forms of artificial reproduction are equally acceptable? Or could some pose an obstacle to the development of a healthy parent-child relationship?

If you pay enormous sums of money to create a child, could that lead you to think of the child as a commodity? If you don’t have a genetic relationship to a child, could that make it hard to love the child unconditionally?

What happens if a child created by artificial means is born handicapped, as has occurred? What if the third party involved—for example, a sperm donor or surrogate mother—seeks an ongoing relationship with the child? The fact of so many unanswered questions leaves us a bit uneasy about the future of artificial reproduction. Can we satisfy all those who long to have children and still protect their offspring?

Common Methods of Assisted Reproduction

- **Artificial insemination (AI) with husband’s or donor’s sperm.** (*The Catholic Church has censured this practice.*)
- **In-vitro fertilization (IVF) within a marriage.**
- **IVF with donor eggs or donor embryos, fresh or frozen.** (*Among other uses, this technology allows post-menopausal women to give birth.*)
- **IVF with preimplantation genetic screening.** (*Doctors use this technology to screen out embryos with certain deadly hereditary diseases, and they could use it to choose the sex of the child, at the parents’ request.*)
- **Surrogate motherhood with or without egg donation.** (*A surrogate mother, generally paid for her services, carries a child for another woman.*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways could preimplantation screening and other technologies lead to genetic engineering?
2. Should the law regulate how people can procreate?
3. Should women over 50 be allowed to use this technology? Cite reasons for and against.
4. Should medical insurance plans pay for assisted reproduction? What ethical issues does this raise?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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- PAUL LAURITZEN** is professor and director of the program in applied ethics at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the author of Pursuing Parenthood: Ethical Issues in Assisted Reproduction (Indiana University Press).

WHEN A PATIENT WANTS TO DIE by Joseph J. Fins



Imagine a grandfather with prostate cancer. After his diagnosis, he undergoes radiation therapy and lives an active life for six years. Over the past year, however, he has often felt unremitting pain. He finds it hard to move or sit. He sleeps fitfully. He feels angered that

his cancer has spread to his bones. He has lost his appetite and his will to live.

After a particularly difficult night, he tells his wife he will ask his doctor to give him “enough sleeping pills to end it all.” He prefers to end his life in a dignified manner, he explains, before he becomes immobilized by pain, totally dependent upon others, and condemned to aggressive medical care that he does not want.

Mixed Messages

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that state prohibitions on physician-assisted suicide are not unconstitutional. But the Court also held that individual states are free to pursue this debate and legalize physician-assisted suicide. Oregon has become the first state to do so (see “What Oregon’s Voters Want”), although assisted suicide has been turned down by voters in other states. The policy debates

surrounding this issue reflect profound ethical conflicts within our society, which hinge on fundamental beliefs, rights, and obligations.

At one pole, most religious traditions view physician-assisted suicide as a moral wrong. To engage in this practice fails to acknowledge that human beings are but stewards of life, which is a gift given by God. A case against assisted suicide can also be made on the grounds that society has an obligation to preserve the dignity of life.

Countering these views, civil libertarians appeal to the rights of self-determination, individual liberty, and personal autonomy. They argue that physician-assisted suicide is an extension of a competent adult’s right to refuse unwanted medical treatment. It should be viewed as a personal choice in a pluralistic society.

How to Proceed

It is difficult to reach an informed opinion on this divisive issue in the abstract. Ultimately, the quality of our judgment depends upon the quality of the information we possess. To return to our opening case, the patient’s pain and distress may prompt us to sympathize with his request before we consider all the dimensions of his case. Is a treatable depression or poorly managed pain prompting his desire to die? Does he feel he is a burden to his wife of 50 years? Is he worried about mounting medical bills? Although he believes nothing more can be done, he should be informed of all we can do to ease his pain and extend his life. With full information, even the most deeply held positions can evolve and change for caregivers, policymakers, and patients.

What Oregon’s Voters Want

In November 1997, by a vote of 60 to 40 percent, Oregon upheld its Death with Dignity Act, which had narrowly passed in 1994. The law, which can now go into effect, permits doctors to prescribe a lethal dose of drugs to a patient who has stated in writing that he or she wishes to die. Two doctors must agree that the patient has less than six months to live. While the American Medical Association opposed the Oregon law, many individual doctors supported it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you were terminally ill, and considering physician-assisted suicide, would you feel comfortable sharing your concerns with your physician? How do you think he or she should respond to such a request?
2. How important are your religious beliefs and background when you consider this question? Do you think your physician’s religious beliefs or background should influence your decision?
3. Do you think physician-assisted suicide is an individual choice or should it be discussed with loved ones?
4. How might the care of dying patients improve if we legalized physician-assisted suicide? How might it deteriorate?

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JOSEPH J. FINS, M.D., F.A.C.P., is director of medical ethics at the New York Hospital and assistant professor of medicine at Cornell University Medical College.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES 1998



BAHÁ'Í

Feb. 26-Mar. 1 - Ayyám-i-Há. The Intercalary Days for festivities, gift giving, and charitable acts.

Mar. 2-20 - Bahá'í Fast. Fasting from sunrise to sunset.

Mar. 21 - Feast of Naw-Rúz. Bahá'í New Year.

Apr. 21-May 2 - 12 Days of Ridván.

Commemorates the 12-day period of the formal declaration of Bahá'u'lláh to His family and followers in a garden outside Baghdad, Iraq, on the eve of His second exile in 1863. Work is suspended on the first, ninth, and twelfth days.

May 29 - Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh.

Anniversary of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God), the Prophet Founder of the Bahá'í Faith.

July 9 - Martyrdom of the Báb. Anniversary of the martyrdom of the Báb, the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh. As a result of religious persecution, He and 20,000 of His followers were martyred for their beliefs during the mid 1800s.

Oct. 20 - Birth of the Báb. Anniversary of the birth of the Báb, one of the twin Prophet Founders of the Bahá'í Faith. His 19 disciples, known as Letters of the Living, taught His religion throughout 19th-century Persia.

Nov. 12 - Birth of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God), the Prophet Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was born to a wealthy and noble

family. He and His family were imprisoned and lost all their possessions after He announced His new religion.



BUDDHISM

Feb. 11 - Magha Puja Day: Dhamma Day.

Commemorates the day that the Buddha gave a sermon to 1,250 enlightened monks who were ordained by Him.

Feb. 15 - Nirvana Day. In the northern tradition, the anniversary of the Buddha's passing away. In the southern tradition, commemorated during Visakha.

Apr. 8 - Wesak. In the northern tradition, the anniversary of Buddha's birth. In the southern celebrated during Visakha.

May 10 - Visakha Puja Day: Buddha Day. The day the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and passed away.

May 16-17 - Celebration of Visakha Puja Day.

July 8-Oct. 9 - Rains Retreat Observance. Three-month retreat observed by southern Buddhist monks to train themselves in Dhamma study, meditation practice, and giving religious services to the people.

Dec. 8 - Bodhi Day. In the northern tradition, the anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment. In the southern, celebrated during Visakha.



CHRISTIANITY

Jan. 4 - Epiphany. Meaning "manifestation" or "appearance." Ends 12 days of Christmas and celebrates the visit of the Three Kings to the Christ Child. Celebrated on this date in the Catholic tradition and on the 6th in the Protestant tradition.

Feb. 25 - Beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday. Name derives from the symbolic use of ashes to signify mortality and penitence. Some churches impose ashes on the forehead on this day. Lent is a period of Christian preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Usually 40 days.

Apr. 5 - Palm Sunday. Opens Holy Week. Palms recall the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Celebrated on the 12th in the Orthodox tradition.

Apr. 10 - Good Friday. The day of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. Celebrated on the 17th in the Orthodox tradition.

Apr. 12 - Easter. Commemorates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Celebrated on the 19th in the Orthodox tradition.

May 31 - Pentecost. Celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles following the ascension of Jesus; sometimes called the "birthday of the Church." Name indicates 50th day after Easter. Some churches celebrate confirmation on this day. Celebrated on June 7 in the Orthodox tradition.

Nov. 1 - All Saints Day. In the Catholic and Protestant tradition this day celebrates the

lives of those saints, known and unknown, whose witness to the faith touches the lives of others and who to this day continue to aid Christian pilgrims by their prayer and example. **Dec. 25 - Christmas Day.** Celebrates the birth of Jesus.



HINDUISM

Jan. 20 - Swami Vivekananda Jayanti.

Celebrates the birth of Swami Vivekananda who brought Hinduism to America at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions.

Feb. 25 - Maha Shivaratri. A night devoted to worship of Shiva with vigil and fasting.

Mar. 12 - Holi. One of the most popular of Hindu festivals. People throw colored powder or spray colored water to celebrate episodes in the life of Sri Krishna.

Apr. 5 - Ramnavami. A nine-day celebration in honor of the birth of Rama. Stories from the life of Rama are narrated and religious dances called Ramalila, depicting scenes from his life, are performed.

Aug. 8 - Narali Purnima or Rakhi. Celebration marking the end of the monsoon by throwing coconuts to Varuna, the sea god. Girls also tie amulets around their brothers' wrists for luck.

Aug. 15 - Krishna Janmashtami. Celebrates the birth of Krishna. People listen to sacred stories and perform worship of Krishna.

Aug. 26 - Ganesh Chaturthi. Celebrates the birth of Ganesh, the remover of obstacles and bringer of luck.

Sept. 21-29 - Navaratra. Nine-day celebration devoted to Durga, the Divine Mother. During this period, the Divine Mother is worshipped through fasting and prayer.



ISLAM

Jan. 26 - Laylat al-Qadr. Night of Power or Destiny. Commemorates the night when the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Jan. 30 - 'Id al-Fitr. The Feast of Breaking Fast. A major holiday, this festival marks the end of Ramadan and usually lasts two or three days. Also known as "The Lesser Feast," it is an occasion of joy at the successful subordination of physical instincts and needs to morality and religion as well as an opportunity to commiserate and share with the poor and needy. The first day begins with a communal prayer and may also include performing acts of charity, visiting family and friends, preparing special foods, dressing in new clothes, and giving gifts.

Apr. 8 - 'Id al-Adha. Festival of Sacrifice or The Great Feast. A major holiday, this three-day festival, often celebrated in connection with the Pilgrimage ceremonies, commemorates the Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael in obedience to God. After the morning communal prayer, pilgrims and other Muslims throughout the world slaughter an animal in commemoration of the angel Gabriel's substitution of a lamb

as Abraham's sacrificial obligation, and then share the meat with family members, neighbors, and the needy.

Apr. 28 - Ra's al-Sanat al-Hijriyah. Muslim New Year.

May 7 - 'Ashurah. For Sunni Muslims, it is a voluntary fast day, the observance of which is considered commendable and beneficial. Many important events are believed to have occurred on this day such as Noah's leaving the Ark and the freedom and departure of the Children of Israel from Egypt. For Shi'i Muslims, it is a time of mourning commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn, grandson of the Prophet.

July 7 - Mawlid al-Nabi. The birthday of the Prophet Muhammad.

Nov. 17 - Laylat al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj: "The Night of the Journey and the Ascent."

Commemorates Muhammad's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascent to heaven and return the same night.

Dec. 4 - Laylat al-Bara'ah. Night of Repentance. According to Muslim tradition, on this night God approaches the earth to call humanity and to grant forgiveness of sins.

Dec. 20-Jan. 18, 1999 - Ramadan. This is the month of fasting.



JUDAISM

Feb. 11 - Tu B' Shevat. Joyous celebration of the coming of spring including the planting of trees and the consumption of fruits native to Israel.

Mar. 12 - Purim. A joyous holiday celebrating the rescue of the Jews of ancient Persia from a plot to destroy them. The holiday includes reading the Megillah (Scroll of Esther), graggers (noise-makers), exchanging gifts, and special pastries known as hamantashen.

Apr. 11-18 - Pesach: Passover. Festival commemorating Israelite exodus from Egypt and release from bondage. The story is told during a festive meal known as the Seder, read from a book known as the Haggadah. Special dietary practices accompany the holiday including eating no leaven, but rather matzo (specially prepared unleavened bread).

Apr. 23 - Yom Hashoah. Holocaust Memorial Day. Commemorates the murder of six million Jews (and five million gentiles) by Hitler and the Nazi regime.

May 1 - Yom Ha'Atzmaut. Independence day for the state of Israel.

May 31-June 1 - Shavuot. A festival celebrating the harvest of the first fruits and also commemorating the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

Aug. 2 - Tisha B'Av. A solemn day of mourning and fasting for the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem and other tragedies in Jewish history coinciding with this date.

Sept. 21-22 - Rosh Hashanah. Initiates religious New Year and begins a ten-day period of repentance and introspection. Rosh Hashanah marks the anniversary of the birthday of the world. The worship service is highlighted by blowing the Shofar (Ram's Horn).

Sept. 30 - Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement. Worship begins with Kol Nidre, asking forgiveness for unkept promises and vows. A full day of prayer and repentance is accompanied by fasting. Referred to as the "Sabbath of Sabbaths," it is the holiest single day of the year.

Oct. 5-11 - Sukkot: Festival of Tabernacles. Symbolized by booths (sukkot) which serve as a reminder of the huts in which the Israelites

lived during the wilderness years; also recalls the temporary field dwellings which Jewish farmers used during the harvest season.

Oct. 13 - Simchat Torah: Rejoicing with the Torah. Joyous festival in which the reading cycle of the Torah is completed and its first book begun again. Symbolized by singing, dancing, and marching around the synagogue with Torah scrolls.

Dec. 14-21 - Chanukah - Festival of Lights. Eight-day celebration of the Jews' victory over Syrian-Greek oppressors in 165 B.C.E. and reestablishment of their political and religious freedom.



LATTER-DAY SAINTS

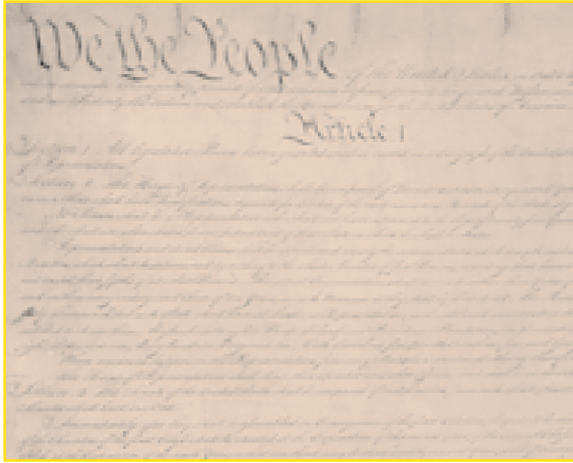
Apr. 6 - Anniversary of the Founding of the Church. Annual World General Conference of the Church held on Saturday and Sunday closest to this date of the year.

June 27 - Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and His Brother Hyrum. The Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were assassinated in 1844 while incarcerated at Carthage, Illinois.

July 24 - Pioneer Day. Celebrated yearly as the anniversary of the entry of Latter-day Saint pioneers to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake following the historic trek across 1,300 miles of wilderness.

Adapted with permission from the National Conference.

CHURCH AND STATE: A DELICATE BALANCE by Richard N. Ostling



They are 16 of the most glorious—and troublesome—words of American liberty: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” Supreme Court applications of these first two clauses in the Constitution’s Bill of Rights produce continual legal fireworks.

Supreme Court Rulings

The “establishment” clause has been the basis for a long series of Court rulings since World War II enforcing strict separation of church and state. But the justices are divided, and their “establishment” decisions confuse even the experts. For instance, the Court decided by a one-vote margin in the 1997 *Agostini* case that religious day schools may receive federal aid for remedial training of disadvantaged pupils. In doing so, the Court overturned one of its own rulings just 12 years before.

As for the “free exercise” clause, things used to be far more placid. Well-settled legal doctrine held that government could limit religious practice only if a “compelling state interest” was being achieved, using the “least restrictive means” available. But in

the 1990 *Smith* ruling, which dealt with Native Americans’ ritual use of peyote in violation of drug laws, the Court wiped out those limitations and gave government far more leeway. In reaction, the U.S. Congress overwhelmingly passed the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act to reinstate the former ground rules. Four years later, the Supreme Court’s *Boerne* ruling tossed out the Act as an unconstitutional power grab by the legislative branch.

Amending the Constitution

Meanwhile, some are agitating for a brand new Constitutional amendment to circumvent the Supreme Court’s church-state separation rules, especially the bans on prayer in public schools and on various types of aid to religious schools. Representative Ernest Istook, an Oklahoma Republican, has proposed an amendment stating that “the people’s right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. The government shall not require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, initiate or designate school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion.”

Istook is backed by many Protestant conservatives, including the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. More liberal Protestants, and most Jewish organizations, are opposed; the Catholic Church has been notably silent. But almost all factions of organized religion are alarmed over *Smith* and *Boerne*, and feel the nation needs a broader guarantee for religious “free exercise.”

Muslim Students, Public Schools

Islam, a fast-growing U.S. faith, increasingly asserts “free exercise” rights in public schools. A new “educator’s guide” from the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Religions notes, for instance, that cafeteria menus raise the same kind of problems for Muslims as they do for Orthodox Jews. Due to modesty rules, Muslim students must often shun sex education, gym outfits, coed swimming, dances, and shaking hands with teachers of the opposite sex. Schools are asked to let students skip strenuous exercise during the month of daytime fasting, and to excuse them for annual festival days, midday worship on Friday, and two prayer times during each school day.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it incidental that the two “religious clauses” are the first provisions in the Bill of Rights, or is religious freedom somehow fundamental for all other freedoms?
2. Have you ever felt that government inhibited “free exercise” of religious belief, expression, or activity?
3. Have you ever felt government supported faith or groups in a way that created an “establishment of religion”?
4. Can schools accommodate all the diverse religious observances of their students? Is it constitutional not to do so?

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RICHARD N. OSTLING is a veteran religion correspondent for *Time* and PBS’s “NewsHour with Jim Lehrer” and broadcasts the “Report on Religion” on the CBS Radio Network.

FAITH HEALING GOES MAINSTREAM by Peggy Fletcher Stack



For decades spiritual healing was a popular, if underground, movement. When modern medicine seemed to fail them, people looked to traditional religious sources such as faith healers and medicine men as well as to unconventional techniques such as acupuncture and therapeutic touch. Books by New Age doctors such as Deepak Chopra and Andrew Weil, though scorned by many established medical centers, sold in the millions. But as the 1990s come to a close, spirituality in healing is enjoying new respect as faith healing in its many manifestations goes mainstream.

Signs of Change

Three years ago only three medical schools offered courses dealing with spirituality in clinical practice. Now 19 have them and up to 60 more (roughly half of all medical schools in this country) have expressed interest in adding the topic to their curriculum.

In 1992, the U.S. government established the Office of Alternative Medicine as part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Medicaid and Medicare now will cover an array of nontraditional medical services, including Christian Science nursing facilities. Several private insurers likewise pay for alternative treatments such as acupuncture.

Earlier, the National Institute for Healthcare Research (NIHR) was set up in Rockville, Maryland, as a private, nonprofit organization to explore the link between spirituality and medicine. Funded in part by the John Templeton Foundation, its associates comb the medical literature, searching for relevant research. They have discovered more than 200 such scientific studies, says Dr. David B. Larson, NIHR president and former NIH researcher.

Research Findings

According to recent findings, for example, smokers who attend church regularly are four times less likely to have high blood pressure than smokers who don't. Cardiac patients who received prayers on their behalf had fewer cases of congestive heart failure and pneumonia. And devout beliefs in elderly women were an aid in recovery from broken hips.

More and more hospitals are using chaplains drawn from specific faith groups to provide on-site spiritual counseling. And, in the last few years, healing centers that build on the Jewish tradition have emerged in San Francisco and New York City.

For the past five years Harvard Medical School, in conjunction with Boston's Mind/Body Institute, has offered a course in Spirituality & Healing in Medicine. Driven by the enthusiasm of Dr. Herbert Benson, a Harvard professor and best-selling author, the course is designed for nurses, doctors, social workers, and psychologists. It looks at African, Buddhist, Jewish, Catholic, and Islamic healing traditions.

All these efforts, says Larson, are "long-overdue steps in improving the integration of religious and spiritual factors into the health-care setting."

The Dark Side of Prayer

If prayer can heal, it can also harm, says Dr. Larry Dossey, author of Healing Words. Curses, hexes, spells, and malevolent wishes—even if unknown to the recipient—have been known to cause ill effects, Dossey says in his new book, Be Careful What You Pray For. A 1994 Gallup Poll found that five percent of Americans have prayed for harm to come to others, "and that's just one in twenty who will admit it," Dossey says. Dossey also offers anecdotal evidence that people can be "prayed to death" by shamans and enemies. Prayers of protection are available in every religious tradition, he says, but the best antidote to negative prayer is understanding, inner harmony, and balance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever sensed the impact of prayer or meditation on your physical health?
2. Do you think doctors and patients should pray together?
3. Do you think doctors should be trained in alternative healing methods?
4. Should the government support nontraditional healing treatments?

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PEGGY FLETCHER STACK is religion writer for the Salt Lake Tribune.

FINDING THE REAL AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH by Eugene Kennedy



FIVE
RELIGIONS

FIVE
VIEWS

Catholicism has taken root and succeeded in the United States as it has in no other country in the history of the world. It has prospered in America where immigrant peoples built a vast educational system that, paired with their churches, brought their children within a few generations into the mainstream of American life.

Then and Now

This successful landing was made against a tide of misunderstanding and prejudice, that, in the “Know Nothing” movement of the mid-19th century, set convents aflame, denied jobs to Catholics, and challenged their American loyalty. Those seem improbable memories now as Catholics, over 50 million in number, find their religion no impediment to advancement in any field of national life. Today, over one-third of the CEOs of the Fortune 500 companies are Catholic. The Catholic school system, which now embraces the new Hispanic and immi-

grant classes, is cited for its sustained service in America’s inner cities.

That the Catholic Church is an institution in the agonies of growth and change is often reported as a sign of its decay. I suggest, however, that the debates and discussions within Roman Catholicism in the United States are signs of the active faith of its members. Catholics profess not a brittle creed but one supple enough to remain at the center of their personal and professional lives. So it has been described by Lewis Gerstner, head of IBM, and New York’s Mayor Rudolf Giuliani, who point to their Catholic educations as the source of their public and personal integrity. For millions of Catholics, faith lies in applying ancient formulations freshly to the circumstances of the day. They thereby fulfill the goal of Vatican Council II (1962-65), called by Pope John XXIII to end the Church’s exile from the contemporary world.

Vatican II’s Legacy

Although the bishops of the Catholic Church are referred to as a “hierarchy,” with orders coming down from the Pope through the bishops to priests and people, the Church turned away from that model in Vatican Council II. Perhaps the greatest work of that gathering was to restore the form of the college of the apostles established by Jesus Christ. The new model views the Pope as the head of a college of bishops who do not receive their authority from the Pope but possess it in their own right as bishops. The entire Church, down to the most remote parish in the furthest country from Rome, is now organized in the same manner. This transformation places the responsibility for the Church on believers themselves, demanding their participation

and involving them more closely with their priests and bishops.

Catholicism is, therefore, not well understood when it is reported solely in terms of the activities within and around its institutional structures. That vast and intricate enterprise is of great interest to priests, religious, and others who work inside it. Newspapers and magazines think they cover the Catholic Church when they report the comings and goings, aspirations, or gains and losses of such figures in church politics. But that is not the Catholic Church in America.

The Real Church

That Church consists of millions of people so caught up in their work and family life, their neighborhoods and national policy that they hardly ever think about institutional preoccupations such as whether women should be priests or whether clergy should remain celibate. These believers want good priests and bishops to serve and inspire them, but they do not worry about who will be named the next archbishop of New York, who will be made a cardinal, or even who the next Pope may be. They are too caught up in applying their beliefs to their lives.

And that, in the long run, is the test of any faith. If you want to understand American Catholicism, look away from the headlines and news flashes into the lives of believers. In those conversations and concerns—about peace, social justice, healthy family life, and the recognition of moral and ethical standards across all levels of life—the true seeker will find Catholicism alive.

Kennedy, cont'd.

The Under-Reported Church

Two pastoral letters, written 20-odd years after Vatican II, symbolize the post-Vatican II Church in action. The Challenge of Peace (1983), drafted under the chairmanship of the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago, focused on the moral admissibility of nuclear war. Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy (1986), written under the coordination of Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, raised significant questions about a wide range of economic issues. These public meditations focused on matters critical to the well-being of the whole world.

Composed by the American bishops, their conclusions arose from extensive dialogue with employers, workers, academics, and labor leaders, working together in open forums to reflect on the relationship between religion and real life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following do you think are of greatest concern to most ordinary Catholics? Priestly celibacy. Marriage and family life. Money. Women priests. Happiness for their children. Keeping up standards in a standard-deprived culture.
2. How do ordinary Catholics form their consciences on sexual matters, on political matters, on what is right for their family, on the requirements of their jobs?

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EUGENE KENNEDY is professor emeritus of psychology at Loyola University. His latest book, My Brother Joseph (St. Martin's Press, 1997), tells the story of his 30-year friendship with Joseph Cardinal Bernardin.

ISLAM: LIFTING THE VEIL by John L. Esposito

Islam is at one and the same time among the most visible and yet misunderstood religions. But the significant presence of Muslims in the world and in the United States requires that Americans overcome their ignorance and stereotyping and come to understand the rich diversity that is Islam in America today. Who are these Muslims? What do they believe? What is the relationship of Islam to Judaism and Christianity? What obstacles and challenges do Muslims in America face?

In contrast to Europe where many Muslims were immigrant laborers, many who came to America were well-educated professionals and intellectuals. Increasingly, Americans get treated by Muslim doctors and nurses and defended by Muslim lawyers. They study with Muslim professors, buy products from Muslims, and benefit from the talents of Muslim engineers.

The foundation stones of Muslim belief and practice are the Quran (or Koran), which is the literal and complete word of God, and the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that Allah revealed his will first to Moses (the Torah), then to Jesus (the New Testament), and finally to Muhammad (the Quran). Muslims, like Jews and Christians, worship the One God, accept God's revelation to the prophets and in scriptures, and believe in moral responsibility and accountability. As old worlds give way to new realities, a predominantly Judaeo-Christian mindset needs to recognize the presence of all the children of Abraham and with it a common Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition.

Five Pillars

Like Judaism, Islam emphasizes practice. Law defines Islam's way of life; a good Muslim is an "observant" Muslim. The Five Pillars of Islam guide Muslim practice:

1. The Profession of Faith (*shahadah*). "There is no God but the God and Muhammad is the messenger of God."



Muslim family celebrates 'Id al-Adha in Massachusetts.

2. Prayer (*salat*). Facing the holy city of Mecca, Muslims throughout the world pray as individuals or in groups, five times each day, reinforcing their link to a single, worldwide community of believers.
3. Almsgiving (*zakat*). This religious tithe on Muslims' wealth and assets, not only on their income, is used for the social welfare of their community.
4. The Fast of Ramadan. Once a year, during the month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from food and drink from dawn to dusk, engaging in spiritual self-discipline and reflection, and performing good works.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (the *hajj*). Every adult Muslim, if physically and financially able, is expected to perform the *hajj* to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once. Thus, each year, almost two million pilgrims come from all over the world to reenact major events in the sacred history of Islam.

The Challenge

Today, second and third generation Muslims in America face the challenges of preserving their identity, community, and faith within a society dominated by Christian and/or secular culture and val-

FIVE
RELIGIONS

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VIEWS

Esposito, cont'd.

ues. Can they become part and parcel of a pluralistic American society? Are they Muslims in America or American Muslims?

Muslims want to practice their faith, preserve Islamic family life and values, and maintain an Islamic identity for their children. This entails taking time from work for daily prayer, attending mosque on Friday, celebrating their religious holidays, eating *halal* (religiously permitted) food in schools and the military, and—for women who wish to do so—wearing a headscarf (*hijab*).

Fundamentalist Fears

Muslims also face discrimination and fears about whether they can be loyal citizens or will bring “fundamentalist” violence to the West. While the media instinctively distinguish between the mainstream faith of Jews and Christians and the twisted use of that faith by religious fanatics, they do not always make an equivalent distinction with Islam. Like Judaism and Christianity,

Islam has been used or abused by extremists to justify violence and oppression. If some Muslims distort the meaning of *jihad* (the “struggle” to be virtuous as well as to defend Islam and Muslim interests) in order to legitimate violence and terrorism, the majority “struggle” to worship God and fulfill their obligations to their families and society.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Americans need to realize that Muslims are fellow citizens and neighbors. Beyond the differences that divide are the beliefs, values, and shared human concerns that make Islam and Muslims a rich and colorful part of the fabric of American society.

Growth and Diversity

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States. Many believe that in the 21st century, Islam will become the second largest religion in America. While estimates of the number of American Muslims vary significantly, there are minimally four to six million Muslims and over 1,100 mosques and Islamic centers in the United States. About two-thirds (60 percent) of America's Muslims are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Africa. The other third is composed primarily of Afro-American converts to Islam plus a smaller percentage of white American converts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How much do you know about Islam?
2. Where have your impressions come from?
3. What links Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?
4. In what ways are American-Muslim concerns similar to or different from those of other minorities that have come before them?

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Goddard, Hugh. *Christians & Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding*. Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1995.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck and Wadi Z. Haddad. *Christian-Muslim Encounters*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.

JOHN L. ESPOSITO is professor of religion and international affairs and director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. He is the author of 17 books and over 80 articles and the editor in chief of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*.

WHAT IS A JEW — AND WHY by Blu

What is a Jew? A member of a faith community? Part of a family? An ethnic person? A racial identification? A national subject with a homeland and language? All the above?

A Jew is an ancient yet contemporary human being. In Judaism's self-conception, every Jew today lives not only his or her present and immediate life, but is intimately connected to all Jews who have ever lived. The image—and feeling—is one of a link in a chain, separate yet inseparable from every other link.

In the Beginning

It all began with Abraham and Sarah, ancestors of the Jewish people. Abraham entered into a binding covenant with God, pledging to be faithful to the one God of the Universe, and to go on a journey that God would reveal. God pledged to care for Abraham and bring him to the promised land, which would be a homeland for Jews of all nations. God also pledged that through Abraham all nations of the earth would be blessed. Since this promise would take millennia to achieve, the covenant had to bind not only Abraham and Sarah, but all their future descendants, unto eternity. Through birth, then, a Jew simultaneously became a member of a faith community and of a particular family, automatically inheriting the covenantal responsibilities and rewards.

This family/faith nexus shows up everywhere. For example, when one converts to Judaism, he or she takes a Hebrew name with the surname “ben Avraham” [son of Abraham] or “bat Sarah” [daughter of Sarah]. Also, Exodus-redemption is reenacted every year at the Seder, a family feast. Why? Because, in the words of the Talmud, the great collection of Rabbinic writings, “In every generation, a man must see himself as if he personally went out from bondage in Egypt [over 3,000 years ago].” Quite a feat!



Jews gather at the Wailing Wall.

Being a Jew also means living in a particular way. This way of life was defined in yet another covenant with God, entered into by Moses and the Jewish people at Sinai. It too became binding on all descendants of that band of ex-slaves in the desert. That is what the concept “chosen people” means—chosen to live bound by the laws and precepts of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

In succeeding generations, the Prophets emphasized the ethical message of Sinai—help the poor, free the slaves, feed the hungry. They were followed by the Rabbis, who developed a corpus of law known as *halakha*, which means the proper way of walking through life. The Rabbis defined a Jew broadly: one born to a Jewish mother. No mention of *halakha*; no parameters of behavior or belief. Yet what about those who entered the community through conversion? Here the laws were explicit: converts must accept the parameters of *halakha*, in other words, the whole package.

Modern Times

Now, fast-forward to modern times. In the encounter with modernity, three major denominations have developed. Orthodox Jews significantly maintain the binding nature of inherited tradition and law. Reform Judaism emphasizes adapting to contemporary realities. And Conservative Judaism—somewhere in between—articulates a philosophy of tradition and change, with inherited law having a vote but not a veto. In addition, secular Jews reject ritual and belief yet feel a connection to the Jewish people, to the family.

American Jews are fortunate to live in an open and democratic society and are accepted today in all spheres of life. Thus, the rates of intermarriage have soared, reaching 50 percent and raising to the fore with great urgency the question: “Who is a Jew?” Reform Jewry’s response has been to introduce patrilineal descent whereby a father, as well as a mother, may determine Jewish election. Reform Judaism also omits the requirement of *halakha* as the norm for converts. These two challenges to traditional belief by Reform Judaism have caused a considerable controversy and rift in the Jewish community.

There is hope that these matters will be resolved, for ultimately more unites Jews than divides them—memory, history, monotheism, a sense of family, Hebrew as the national language, and Israel as a homeland, even though one doesn’t necessarily speak the language or reside in the land. Above all is the powerful sensation of sharing the covenants made by our ancestors. That alone should serve us into the next 4,000 years.

The Sinai Covenant’s Torah

The Torah (or Pentateuch) establishes the overall concept that human beings are created in the image of God, or the obligation to love one’s neighbor as oneself. It also sets forth the details—for example, the injunction against being a bystander in the face of evil behavior or another’s misfortune; care of the widow and orphan, the lowly and disenfranchised; and respect for differentiated species. Included too are the Ten Commandments, the basis of all ethical society and dignified human life. Finally, God’s great gift to humanity, the Sabbath—with its revolutionary idea that all human beings, free person and slave alike, are entitled to one day a week of rest—also comes to us through the Torah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Faith communities often build themselves up by establishing in-group/out-group polarities. What are the gains and the costs?
2. How can a religious community celebrate its internal diversity?
3. How far can a religion go in changing its basic definitions without losing its authenticity and continuity with the past?
4. How can one respond with genuine tolerance and acceptance to those who hold very different truths?

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BLU GREENBERG writes and lectures on contemporary issues in the Jewish community. She is the author of *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* (JPS, 1981).

FIVE
RELIGIONS
FIVE
VIEWS

MAINLINE PROTESTANTISM: SEEKING THE HIGH GROUND by Gustav Niebuhr

Protestants have played a profoundly influential role in shaping America's religious culture, going back to the time that the Puritans envisioned creating an intensely spiritual commonwealth in Massachusetts, one that would be, as one of the leaders wrote, like "a city upon a hill," an example to all people.

Enriching Society

Although such theocratic ambitions soon faded, Protestants enriched society across the nation by founding colleges and universities, hospitals, charitable organizations, and architecturally imposing houses of worship from Riverside Church in New York to Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco.

FIVE RELIGIONS
FIVE VIEWS

But mainline Protestants (to use the term that distinguishes them from the evangelical or born-again branch of the faith) face a great challenge in the loss of their once religiously dominant position. At the 20th century's end, the mainline denominations are confronted by the question of how to make their voices heard in a nation whose population remains essentially religious, but grows ever more diverse.

Other Voices

Organized religion's public presence is increasingly defined by evangelicals (who have long seemed more comfortable in using television and radio to communicate their message); Roman Catholics, whose voice is amplified by a powerful bishops' conference; and emergent groups of Mormons, Muslims, Buddhists, and others.

Contributing to the loss of Protestant influence are declines in membership within several major denom-



inations, such as the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church, since the early 1970s.

Still, Protestantism has not become marginalized, as some have suggested. Recent polls have shown that about a quarter of Americans identify with the mainline churches, a slightly higher proportion than the number of people who identify themselves as Catholics.

Ecumenical Efforts

And despite denominational divisions, Protestants share much, starting with a history in the movements that grew out of the Reformation, the 16th-century break with Rome led by Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and others. Protestants reject papal rule, hold that the Bible is the primary authority in matters of faith, and assert that faith alone is necessary to receive salvation through God's grace.

With such common ground, many within the mainline churches have worked for a greater unity, especially since World War II, resulting in the denomi-



national mergers that created the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and, most recently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

But even as such efforts have succeeded, many Protestant denominations (and individual congregations within them) have suffered internal divisions in struggles among their members over how to deal with certain issues, such as how to regard homosexuality, that have proven highly contentious within the larger society.

Battling Social Problems

It is not clear that the ecumenical movement among Protestants has the momentum it once did. But even so, many clergy members and actively involved lay people assert that the Protestant churches will remain influential and creative forces on the local level, by engaging in cooperative efforts against social problems like poverty and homelessness, and, as they have always done, by providing their particular brands of religious community to those who seek it.

Niebuhr, cont'd.

The Role of Black Churches

A dynamic sector within American Protestantism belongs to black churches, which have played a vital role in giving a social focus and political voice to African-American communities.

Black churches provided meeting places and black clergy provided leadership in Southern cities during the civil rights movement, whose primary figure was, of course, a minister, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Within their neighborhoods, African-American churches have also worked to boost economic development and civic involvement, founding credit unions, building housing, rallying support for black-owned businesses, and registering voters.

“The black churches have been comprehensive service institutions,” said Robert M. Franklin, president of Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. “In addition to their role in promoting spiritual and ethical well-being,” he said, “they also have been incubators of economic self-help efforts.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In an increasingly pluralistic society, is it possible for any faith group to become a culturally dominant force?
2. How can a religious organization avoid becoming divided by major controversies, such as the debates over homosexuality and abortion rights, that produce sharply conflicting opinions within the larger society?
3. Can the civil rights movement be understood apart from the influence of African-American Protestant churches?

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GUSTAV NIEBUHR is religion correspondent for the New York Times.

EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS: A BRIEF HISTORY by Mark A. Noll

Evangelicals now constitute the largest and most active component of religious life in North America. But what does the term mean? A Christian Reformed parishioner in Grand Rapids, a Southern Baptist in Birmingham, and a member of the Assemblies of God in Los Angeles will answer very differently, yet all are evangelicals.

Evangelical Protestantism is not a specific “-ism” like Presbyterianism or Catholicism. Rather, it is a name observers assign to various groups of Christians with certain common beliefs, even though they may not think of themselves that way.

Good News

The word “evangelical” goes back to the Greek word for “good news” (*euangelikos*). Christians throughout history used the term to describe God’s redemption of sinners by the work of Christ. In the 16th-century Reformation “evangelical” was a rough synonym for “Protestant,” which explains why many Lutherans still employ the term (as in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). The most common sense today, however, stems from revival movements among English and American Protestants in the 18th century, movements led by charismatic individuals like John and Charles Wesley, founders of Methodism, and George Whitefield, the most dynamic public speaker of his age.

Throughout the 19th century, such movements were the most influential religious groups in the United States, starting churches, working for the reform of society, and shaping the discussion of public issues. Like their forebears, modern evangelicals stress the need for religious conversion, emphasizing “the new birth” as a life-changing religious experience. They take the Bible as the ultimate religious authority.



They value meeting contemporary needs over defending religious traditions. And they feature the person of Christ, especially his death on the cross, which saved humankind.

Spreading the Message

Since the Second World War, the most visible evangelicals have worked in para-church organizations. They lead voluntary agencies like the college ministries InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Campus Crusade for Christ or the relief agency World Vision. They run publishing companies like Christianity Today, Inc., radio-driven conglomerates like Focus on the Family, and educational institutions like Moody Bible Institute.

Evangelists have always been good at communicating a simple message to a broad audience. Think of revivalist Billy Graham, who has preached before more people than any one else in history; psycholo-

**FIVE
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Noll, cont'd.

gist and broadcaster James Dobson, who heads up Focus on the Family; politician and broadcaster Pat Robertson, who ran for the Republican nomination for President in 1988; and Charles Colson, the one-time White House assistant to Richard Nixon who now heads a Christian ministry to prisons.

Political Links

In 19th-century Britain and America, some evangelicals were political conservatives, while others led the fight for liberal social reforms against slavery and alcoholism, and for better treatment of women, children, prisoners, and the mentally ill. But in recent decades the picture has changed. While elsewhere in the world evangelicals tend to be non-political, white Protestant evangelicals in America

have been linked with politically conservative movements such as the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition. African-American evangelical churches, however, have more liberal political attitudes, shaped by their history of oppression and their role in the civil rights movement.

Some commentators believe that evangelicals are now entering a new phase. Will they regroup for political action, or will their political energies flag? Will squabbles over the nature of biblical authority or the role of women fragment the movement? Or will renewed commitment to the Bible and the cross of Christ lead to a new era of spiritual insight? Evangelicals are far too diverse to allow for easy generalizations. But the movement will almost certainly remain activist, Bible centered, and populist, as it has been for more than two centuries.

A Numerical Profile

In 1996, 26 percent of Americans were members of evangelical denominations or churches, according to a national poll carried out by the Angus Reid Group. Another 9 percent belong to African-American Protestant churches like the Church of God in Christ or the National Baptist Convention. The poll also revealed that more than half of mainline Protestants (who constitute 15 percent of the total population) and two-fifths of Roman Catholics (who represent 21 percent of the total population) hold at least some traditional evangelical beliefs concerning salvation in Christ, trust in the Bible, and the need to encourage non-Christians to convert. The numbers indicate that close to half of all Americans belong to evangelical churches or hold evangelical beliefs and values.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What reasons can you think of—historical or contemporary—why the vast majority of African-American Protestants do not promote conservative political causes while many white Protestant evangelicals do?
2. When thinking about evangelicals (and many other religious groups as well), why is it important to distinguish between religious beliefs and practices, and the social or cultural activities of the believers?
3. Denominations (for example, Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic) have been the most common way of identifying different strands of religious believers. Are denominational categories the most effective way to understand who evangelicals are and what they do?

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Heyrman, Christine Leigh. The Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt. New York: Knopf, 1997.

Noll, Mark A. The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

MARK A. NOLL is the McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College.

IMPLEMENTATION

The *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly* Viewer's Guide is designed to raise important issues that can be discussed in the home or in more formal educational settings. Another way of further exploring the issues raised by both the program and the guide is by starting a *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly* discussion group. A group can be formed in your place of worship, local library, school, or other neighborhood setting.

Discussion groups tend to work best when they have five to twelve members, and focus on one or two issues per meeting. This guide contains questions at the end of each essay which are intended to serve as a springboard for stimulating conversation. A moderator—permanent or rotating—can help keep the conversation moving by encouraging everyone to participate and not allowing the discussion to become bogged down or dominated by one person.

Members of the discussion group should keep in mind that the purpose of the meetings is the exchange of information, ideas, and experiences. While friendly disagreement is appropriate and valuable, it's important that everyone be aware of the difference between discussion and heated debate.

Sometimes the most fruitful discussions take place when a new viewpoint is introduced. You might consider inviting people of other faith traditions into your group in order to discuss religious and ethical issues from differing perspectives.

On a practical note, it's important to keep the scheduling of your meetings consistent and to make a commitment to attending as often as possible. Try to keep the atmosphere relaxed and friendly so that people see the group as a pleasure and not a duty.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Buddhism: Tricycle, the nation's leading journal of Buddhist thought, maintains a site at <http://www.tricycle.com>

The Catholic Church: Vatican Web site at <http://www.vatican.va>
Catholic Information Network at <http://www.cin.org>
Catholic Radicals at <http://www.radcath.html>
Jacques Gaillot, dissident Bishop of Partenia at <http://www.partenia.org>

Comparative Religion: The internet search engine Yahoo! has links to a wide variety of sites at <http://www.yahoo.com/Society and Culture/Religion/Faiths and Practices>
The Association for Religion and Intellectual Life at <http://www.aril.org>
Harvard University's Pluralism Project explores the changing face of religion in America at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism>

Evangelical Christians: Christianity Today at <http://www.christianity.net>

Hinduism: Global Hindu Electronic Network at www.hindunet.org

Islam: General information and resources relating to Muslim belief at <http://islam.org>

Judaism: Project Genesis Torah Study, sponsored by Jewish Learning Network at <http://www.torah.org>

Mainline Protestants: United Methodist Church at <http://www.umc.org/>

Orthodox Christianity: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at <http://www.patriarchate.org>
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America at <http://www.goarch.org>
Greek Orthodox dissidents at <http://www.voithia.org>

Paganism: A California-based group of believers in pre-Christian religions of Europe at <http://www.asatru.org>

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OUTREACH ASSOCIATES

American Jewish Committee: 165 E. 56th Street, New York, NY 10022
Contact: Rabbi James Rudin
tel: 212-751-4000 (ext.260/1) fax: (212) 751-4018 e-mail:
76001.2122@compuserve.com

Congress of National Black Churches: 1225 I Street, NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20036
Contact: Ms. Sullivan Robinson, Interim Executive Director
T: 202-371-1091 fax: 202-371-0908

Ethics Resource Center: 1747 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Suite 400, Washington, DC 20006
tel: 212-774.0207 fax: 202-737-2227 web site: www.ethics.org

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: 8-10 East 79th Street New York, NY 10021
Contact: Rev. Fr. Philemon Sevastiades, Ecumenical Officer
tel: 212-774-0207 fax: 212-774-0215 web site: www.goarch.org

Hindu Temple and Cultural Society of USA, Inc.
780 Old Farm Road Bridgewater, NJ 08807
Contact: Dr. M.G. Prasad, Chairperson of the Education Committee
tel: 908-725-4477 e-mail: mprasad@stevens-tech.edu

Islamic Cultural Center of New York: 1711 3rd Avenue New York, NY 10029-7303
Contacts: Dr. Abdel-Rahman Osman, Senior Imam or Dr. Muhammad Salem Agwa, Imam
tel: 212-722-5234 fax: 212-722-5936

The National Conference: 71 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1150, New York, NY 10003
Contacts: Greater New York Region
Mr. Sheldon R. Friedberg, Director of Community Relations & Interreligious Affairs
or Ms. Margaret Gillmore, Executive Director
tel: 212-807-8440 fax: 212-727-0166

National Conference of Catholic Bishops and US Catholic Conference
3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1194
Contacts: Monsignor Francis Maniscalco, William Ryan, Sister Mary Ann Walsh,
or David Early
tel: 202-541-3200 fax: 202-541-3173

National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
Office of Interfaith Relations: 475 Riverside Drive, Room 868, New York, NY 10115-0050
Contact: Rev. Dr. Bert Breiner, Co-Director
tel: 212-870-2156 fax: 212-870-2158 e-mail: bert@nccusa.org

National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods and Jewish Chautauqua Society
832 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10021-7064
Contact: Mr. Doug Barden, Executive Director
tel: 212-570-0707 fax: 212-570-0960 e-mail: nftb@uahc.org or jcs@uahc.org

National Spiritual Assembly of The Bahá'is of the United States
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120, New York, NY 10017-1822
Contact: Ms. Pamela Zivari, Director of Public Information
tel: 212-803-2500 fax: 212-803-2573 e-mail: usopi-ny@bic.org

Thirteen · wnet

356 West 58th Street
New York, New York 10019

